

Aristocrats, Republicans, and Cannibals:
American Reactions to French Women in Violence

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses the reactions of American newspapers and elite individuals to French women in violence as perpetrators and victims during the French Revolution. Canvassing the years between 1789 and 1799, it includes papers, especially politically aligned ones, from across the states of America and attempts to assess the prescriptive nature of various reports. It includes case studies of common/working-class women, aristocratic revolutionaries (Charlotte Corday and Madame Roland), and Queen Marie Antoinette. Using newspapers with and without political affiliations, to either the Federalist or Democratic-Republican Party, it argues that the dividing ideological lines between these factions were not as steadfast and rigid as previously believed during this period. Though papers and individuals did adhere to party lines, their opinions toward women in violence were affected by other factors, such as their ideologies about violence. Building on historiographies of colonial and revolutionary American attitudes toward women in violence, gender ideology in the early Republic, and political parties in the 1790s, it seeks to illuminate American views toward women in violence during the years of the early Republic.

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Introduction

The concluding decades of the eighteenth-century brought about widespread political and social change throughout the Atlantic World. Revolutions in America and France gave rise to fluctuating and contradictory ideas about economics, politics, slavery, war, women, and violence. The French Revolution represented one of the largest attacks on aristocratic and monarchical rule in the Western world. Though a formal structure of nobility or aristocracy never existed in the American system, both revolutions sought to break down dependent relationships to monarchies, so Federalists and Democrats applauded the revolutionaries' republican project.¹ Both nations rhetorically posited their struggles as against oppressive, tyrannical regimes in search of independence, and placed the ideas of equality and liberty at the forefront of their new, republican governments. However, these egalitarian ideals did not apply to everyone during or after either revolution. Women, though largely participating in the fighting, boycotting, and other activities of the revolutions, found themselves legally outside of the polity they helped to establish. This exclusion from formal, organized politics remained a rhetorical project through the 1790s, as women continued their involvement with grassroots/outdoor politics, established benevolent charities and societies, and committed violent acts.

This thesis concentrates on the presence and place of women in violence, as one of the most extreme forms of political participation, particularly in the French Revolution but also broadly in the new American republic. French and American women represented the largest and most vocal group for inclusion in the rights and privilege of citizenship. They also zealously

¹ William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 86, 90-91.

criticized the revolutionaries for rebelling in the name of equality and liberty but refusing to extend these ideals to all segments of the population. This project mostly concerns itself with American reactions to French women as both victims and perpetrators of violence. Yet, it uses Americans' colonial and Revolutionary ideas of women in violence—and America's relationship with France—to understand the attitudes and opinions toward French women and how these accounts sought to instruct American women on their proper place in society.

Although not all violent events solely involved women, French women of all classes perpetrated revolutionary violence through the threat of violence, such as carrying weapons or marching; physical violence, in the form of rioting, insurrections, and murder; and verbal violence. Women's violence sometimes took on a more political motivation as the Revolution progressed, as it became a tool for communicating dissatisfaction with the monarchy and revolutionary factions, principally the Jacobins.² Since French women could neither hold office nor vote, violence remained the most extreme form of political action open to them. Boycotting, rioting, marching, and insurrections had been used prior to the French Revolution, but women engaged in violence on a larger scale throughout the Revolution.³ The French Revolution began and progressed as a harshly violent affair, and the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) marked the climax of revolutionary violence. Over the course of roughly eleven months, thousands of men and women from all backgrounds were tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal—except Louis who stood trial in front of the National Convention—and executed by the guillotine. These trials,

² For more information, see Lisa Beckstrand, *Deviant Women of the French Revolution and the Rise of Feminism* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009); Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Elizabeth Kindleberger, "Charlotte Corday in Text and Image: A Case Study in the French Revolution and Women's History," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 4 (1994): 969-999; and Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011).

³ For a study into the Old Regime on this topic, see Joan Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

however, did not always represent cases of due process, but sometimes as mere instances of quick sentencing without any testimony by the accused.

Before the American Revolution, colonial women participated in public life by subverting patriarchal marriage through affairs and self-divorces, filing suits in court, influencing their families to be pious, convincing men to establish new religious congregations, and so forth.⁴ These actions occurred in the extra-political realm, since women were not considered part of the citizen-state relationship. American men employed the language of female marital subordination to sanction the break from England. Colonists represented the “mistreated wife who takes the understandable and legitimate action of leaving the ‘arbitrary and cruel’ [husband] Great Britain.”⁵ Women’s reality during the American Revolution rested not only in the sacrifice of their men and British imports, but also in their participation in boycotts, petitions, and crowds alongside men. However, by not utilizing the critique of Great Britain as an ‘abusive husband’ to change or jettison coverture laws, the male revolutionaries upheld women’s status outside the political realm. In response to these political efforts as well as appeals for legal reforms of education and coverture, however, the ‘woman question’ became an intensely debated topic in the new Republic. Because they were considered politically irrelevant and excluded from full citizenship, what did it mean to Americans for French and American women to be involved in politics, especially during a time when America was a nation in flux? How did the violent actions of French women impact the gendered prescriptive literature of American newspapers? Furthermore, how did the violence used by and against French women affect how American

⁴ Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Claire A. Lyons, *Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

⁵ Lyons, 237-238.

publications communicated their visions of the political and cultural structures of the new Republic? What was the difference in opinions of women who perpetrated violence as opposed to the victims of violence? Were the reactions to the violence against women different from that used against their male counterparts? How did discussions of women and violence change American perceptions of their Republic during the 1790s? The early American government advocated that women take up the role as republican mothers, wives, and sisters to educate their husbands, sons, and other male relatives on how to be proper and courageous republican men.⁶ Although not extended individual rights, women were expected to maintain full national loyalty, at least to the current regime. Women largely heeded this call, while simultaneously resisting it through education, charitable societies, and increased sexual/marital autonomy.⁷

Declaring certain French women and their actions of violence as acceptable, reprehensible, or somewhere in between, American men and women simultaneously prescribed proper American gender roles in the early Republic. In some instances, women perpetrators of violence were presented as deviant and too masculine, whereas other times, they represented patriotic and loyal individuals—though still not citizens. Violence perpetrated against women, on the other hand, was generally not explicitly discussed and seemed secondary to their behavior. However, when women stood trial and—or—were executed for committing crimes, it sent a

⁶ Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1980); Jan Lewis, “The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1987): 689-721.

⁷ Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America’s Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic*; Lyons; Lucia McMahon, *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980); and Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

message to all that women could and would be considered legally accountable for their actions like male citizens of the nation, especially if their actions appeared disloyal to the state. Only in tribunals and in the use of the guillotine did the French revolutionaries extend the same liberties and rights of citizenship to women as men. Even though the revolutions required female support and participation, women still found themselves as subordinate, and even outsiders, of formal politics in eighteenth century America.⁸

American newspapers and individuals reacted in similar, opposing, and contradictory ways to ‘political’ French women and the violence used by or against them based principally on political affiliation and gender. Historians of early Republic America tend to present the dividing lines between Federalist and Democratic Republican factions as concrete indicators of opinion and reactions.⁹ I argue that while politically aligned newspapers and individuals commonly maintained the views of their camps, reactions to the violence perpetrated by and inflicted on French women were not always predictable based on party lines. In other words, the views and receptions to political French women did not fall into two rigid categories of against or for, even if those leaning Federalist generally did not support the Revolution while Democratic Republicans felt favorable. After the Reign of Terror (1793-1794) and the ensuing executions of King Louis, Queen Marie Antoinette, and other individuals, Federalists widely turned against the Revolution. Democratic-Republicans largely remained willing to give the violent male revolutionaries the benefit of the doubt.¹⁰

⁸ Dayton; Jennifer Ngeire Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); and Smart.

⁹ For more on this trend see Stanley Elkins and Eric L. McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Joseph J. Ellis, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 2007); and Robert McColley, *Federalists, Republicans, and Foreign Entanglements, 1789-1815* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

¹⁰ Branson; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence From Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jonathan Den Hartog, "Trans-

Through reports, American newspapers began to articulate proper behavior for American women over the 1790s. By condemning women's participation in mob violence for its unbridled passion and praising guillotined women for their firm, upright, and graceful behavior, papers communicated that if women were going to be political, they should act like men, not women. If women acted in ways that matched ideas of masculine virtue, they could be accepted into the political. However, even as American women acted in virtuous and nonviolent ways during the 1790s, any widespread acceptance into the legal system was yet to be seen. Since French women were recognized for their political capability, then logically American women would receive the same treatment. It was in this call of women's virtue and logic, which remained largely unacknowledged in America, that women advocated for reforms in education, inheritance, and divorce laws. Attitudes toward women and violence were never unconditionally split into dichotomies whether good and bad, public and private, or feminine and masculine, but remained fluid subjects that caused dissension within and between the Federalists and Democratic Republicans.

This thesis recognizes the rhetorical eighteenth-century difference between the public/political and private/domestic as outlined by American male politicians, but it ultimately seeks to show that these barriers did not actually exist during the late eighteenth-century. During the French Revolution, French feminists and activists took part in boycotts, mob actions, salons, and literary publications, while female aristocrats fervently fought to protect their way of life. Similarly, American women performed domestic duties such as sewing, participating in spinning bees, and becoming cooks, nurses, and laundresses for military regiments, which took on a political meaning during the American Revolution. War also tasked women with overtly political

Atlantic Anti-Jacobinism: Reaction and Religion," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 11, no. 1 (2013): 133-145; and Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*.

acts, including boycotts and mobs, petition writing, serving in the military, and writing for various newspapers and other publications. All of these actions are considered as “public” in this thesis, even if they stem from domestic duties—cooking, cleaning, nursing, etc. Political in this thesis stands for an action not necessarily undertaken for its role-changing ability but one that moved women (consciously or inadvertently) from unseen or unconsidered background figures to acknowledged, public players. I also embrace Rosemarie Zagari’s definition of early politics as that based on “more informal and capacious politics of the street,” in essence, a grassroots movement.¹¹ Although women were not considered full citizens in the new republics, they undertook duties that introduced them more formally to the realm of male politics.

Looking through a gendered lens, the often discussed and taken for granted primary fissures between the two early American factions appear quite a bit more flexible. Though it does not suggest that reactions and opinions followed no discernable pattern of political affiliation, this thesis challenges the view of mutual exclusivity in early American politics. My project complicates studies of the rise of the Federalists and Democratic Republicans by looking not merely at the words and actions of leaders and members of these “proto-parties,” but also by extending the analysis out into politically and culturally charged literary sources, such as newspapers and letters.¹² By focusing on ideas of gender and the meanings of violence to 1790s Americans, the wealth of increasingly available digital material offers new and original interpretations. Overlapping ideologies as well as the similarities and differences between the presentations of women and violence provide illuminating evidence on how Americans talked

¹¹ Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 8.

¹² Roger Sharp uses the term “proto-party” to describe the factional conflict between the Federalists and Democratic Republicans in the early Republic, since the two groups did not represent the modern two-party system that materialized in the nineteenth-century. Roger Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). For more information to how this system affected gender relations in the early Republic see Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

about French women and used these discussions to understand the place of American women.

Not directly caused by debates on women's rights and roles in France, American conceptions of gender in the early Republic were reactions to and against the Atlantic revolutions as well as political and social aspirations of new states.

Newspapers, magazines, and letters are relied upon to illuminate American perceptions and representations of women in French politics and violence. They provide intriguing examples of how Americans' reactions sought to communicate, publically and privately, proper gender roles to women. Specifically, newspapers in the 1790s were epicenters of public opinion and discussion, and they competed with each other over facts and the truth. Papers from across the United States throughout the 1790s have been examined, focusing on urban areas such as Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Charleston, and Richmond, since these cities were some of the first centers in which American culture grew. The database, "America's Historical Newspapers," offers a wealth of digitized sources for the decade of my project. Mostly run and funded by elite men, newspapers exemplified how commentary about revolutionary women and violence in France helped to engender women's roles in American politics.

Women's politically-charged violent actions of boycotting, rioting, and occasionally murder, posed a paradox in French and American society. If women were not citizens, could they be held to the same punishment as men? What were the legal repercussions of their actions? Furthermore, the newspapers that self identify as aligned with either Federalists or Democratic Republicans provide evidence that reactions and opinions did not always follow strict faction lines. Independent newspapers also help to reveal the numerous, contrasting viewpoints and complicate the two-party dichotomy in the 1790s. Personal letters between influential American men and women showcase how the debates in the French Revolution on women, and the

violence used by and against them, within a more private setting. I focus on politicians and their families as they represented very influential and prominent members of the early Republic's political society. Most of this correspondence will come from the Founders Online database from the National Archives for the politicians and their wives. Furthermore, in no way do I wish to suggest that debates on women's rights in America were *caused* by the French Revolution or that individuals always consciously used these reports to prescribe gender roles. I mean to show how the dialogue on the violence of French revolutionary women offered another platform for discussion, debate, and instruction on women's place in the American Republic and the ideology of its political parties. Therefore, I employ rhetoric and discourse analyses to probe how selected language and texts convey ideas of American politics through discussions of the French Revolution.

My work engages the historiographical scholarship on gender and politics in the early American Republic, America's relationship to the French Revolution, women in violence, and media studies to show how events in France affected America's ideology on women and violence. This project exhibits how the association between France and America was informed by politics and culture, whereas previous scholarship has relied on political connections. I highlight the precarious nature of the establishment and building of the American Republic by politicians and laypersons. This process was affected by debates on gender in France and America and not as exclusively domestic experiences, as previous histories have presented.

Historians of gender ideology in America often interact with two paradigms: republican motherhood and the public versus private sphere debate. My project addresses both of these historiographical debates and seeks to deepen and complicate these areas. Coined by Linda K. Kerber in her *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*,

“Republican Motherhood” has been used by American historians to discuss the rhetorical pressure on women after the American Revolution to portray their patriotism to the state by raising good, republican sons and running a virtuous, republican household.¹³ Academic works that employ this framework usually focus on how ideas of Republican Motherhood affected women, but not on how women subverted or challenged this ideology outside of lobbying for legal changes. Other American historians, such as Jan Lewis, have begun challenging the idea of Republican Motherhood and instead suggest that American male politicians instead called for a “Republican Wife.”¹⁴ My work builds on the growing scholarship of what American women were actually doing during the eighteenth-century to show that while the ideology of republican mothers and wives existed, women often challenged these roles through not only political lobbying but also violence and the formation of charitable societies. Following American gender historians such as Rosemarrie Zagari, Susan Branson, and Clare A. Lyons, I further add to the knowledge of American women during the late eighteenth-century by highlighting the female activity that led to the formation of Republican Motherhood ideology in the 1790s, and highlighting how French women’s actions also influenced Americans’ views.

Gender historians, over the last twenty years, consistently and ardently complicate and challenge the dichotomous nature of the public and private spheres, once an accepted reality of eighteenth-century American society and politics. Lucia McMahon’s *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early American Republic* argues that American men and women only began to advocate a type of separate spheres in reaction to the early Republic experimentation with egalitarian rights for men and women. Instead of a realistic experience of women in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, the notion of separate spheres symbolized the growing

¹³ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*.

¹⁴ Lewis.

discomfort of politicians over the challenges to patriarchal authority.¹⁵ Claire A. Lyons takes a similar stance in *Sex Among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender and Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830*. Although always subordinate to men, women increasingly participated in autonomous activities, especially in regards to their sexuality, which threatened the gender hierarchy in colonial, revolutionary, and republican America. Women used their sexual choices to assert their political and social participation in early America.¹⁶ My work interacts with and deepens this strand of scholarship by adding Americans' reactions to French women in violence. Americans' contradictory responses to both perpetrators and victims highlighted not only that Americans understood their actions as political, but that sometimes they were supported and praised, suggesting that men did not only place women in private. However, other times these papers upheld women's separation and exclusion from politics.¹⁷ Thus, we cannot think about women's actions and place as purely private or public, but as both.

Principally, my work engages with Susan Branson's *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* and Rachel Hope Cleves' *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* to present America's relationship with the French Revolution in a new fashion. Branson explores how American women could understand their political and social place in America by reading about the events of the French Revolution. She argues that these reports, especially about women expressing their political and violent agency, offered a lens through which to compare

¹⁵ McMahon.

¹⁶ Lyons.

¹⁷ For more information see Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *American Historical Review* 89, no 3 (1984): 620-647; Kelley; Linda K. Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women* (Chapel Hill: University of Chapel Hill Press, 1997); Norton; Marylynn Salmon, "The Limits of Independence, 1760-1800," in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. Nancy Cott (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 109-178.

revolutionary and early Republic experiences to the French. Rioting, petitioning, and writing by French women helped American women to acknowledge and accept their own political activities and position within the political sphere.¹⁸ On the other hand, Cleves offers a politically focused narrative on the relationship between American political parties and the French Revolution with an attention to violence. She argues that the constant and horrifying acts of violence that occurred from 1792 through the years of the Terror caused Federalists to pull their support from the French Revolution and also convinced party members of the pitfalls and consequences of ‘excessive’ democracy. While the Democratic-Republicans were more apt to continue their support for the French cause and give the violent revolutionaries the ‘benefit of the doubt,’ Republicans eventually became distrustful of violence and the Revolution as well.¹⁹ While most works on the relationship between America and the French Revolution focus on key American, male politicians, my work builds off of these two historians to show other ways that Americans interacted with the French Revolution.²⁰ From the countless reports on French women in violence, I portray how American men and women concerned themselves with the political and cultural landscape of France. Instead of relying on reports from and stories about men such as Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and different ambassadors, my project highlights the important of violence used by and against French women on Americans’ cultural and political identities.²¹

¹⁸ Branson. For another study into the French Revolution’s impact on the political consciousness of American women see Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*.

¹⁹ Cleves.

²⁰ For more information see, Jennifer T. Kennedy, "Parricide of Memory: Thomas Jefferson’s Memoir and the French Revolution," *American Literature* 72, no. 3 (2000): 553-573; Melanie Randolph Miller, *Envoy to the Terror: Gouverneur Morris and the French Revolution* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2005); Conor Cruise O’Brien, *The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution, 1785-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Daniel I. O’Neil, “John Adams versus Mary Wollstonecraft on the French Revolution and Democracy,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 3 (2007): 451-476.

²¹ For more on this trend see Lisa L. Moore, Joanna Brooks, and Caroline Wigginton, *Transatlantic Feminisms in the Age of Revolutions* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

For the historiography on women in violence, I use studies of colonial, antebellum, and Civil War America for their valuable insights into employing frameworks of gender and violence. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich discusses the different ways female perpetrators of violence were presented. In *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*, she argues that when Americans employed pious and womanly rhetoric, women's violence stemmed from God's will and represented their resolve and hardiness. However, if women deviated from their prescribed feminine roles, their violence made them masculine and aggressive.²² Bruce Dorsey's chapter "Immigration" from *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* focuses on men and women's involvement in nativist riots in Philadelphia. Women used religious and domestic rhetoric to legitimate their participation in violent riots as well as ornate Fourth of July celebrations as speech givers and organizers. Even if these women attributed their conduct to their feminine nature, they also contradicted the gendering of the political space that prohibited their public speech and demonstrations.²³ In *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, Stephanie McCurry suggests that the tightly regulated process of staging riots and boycotts highlighted the political consciousness of women. As in the early Republic, women who were supposed to be educating the men in their life remained active and involved in political events and discussions.²⁴ Though all three of these works deal with time periods outside of mine, they provide key insights into the continuation of and changes in American's ideology toward women in violence from the colonial period to the Civil War. Further, they offer a methodology for understanding how men and women comprehended the place of American women in violence

²² Ulrich.

²³ Bruce Dorsey, "Immigration," in *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 195-240.

²⁴ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

and politics, which I then extend to make claims about the foundations for their reactions to French women. I add to this conversation also by presenting a study into American ideas of violence during this seemingly overlooked period of the 1790s and early Republic.

For the literature on media studies, my work principally interacts with Jeffrey L. Pasley's "*The Tyranny of Printers*": *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, as it offers a foundational study of the American press during the 1790s. Pasley argues that before the American Revolution, newspapers represented commercial endeavors and only became politicized as an effort to "organize, standardize, and spread a political movement's ideas across large numbers of people and places".²⁵ Through the ratification crisis and into the 1790s, newspaper became more politically charged as the profession split between profit-seekers and political journalists. "Republican journalists of the 1790s would become the mechanics of the American party system, the forerunners of the political spokesmen, manipulators, and operatives who would dominate American politics evermore."²⁶ My study deepens this work by arguing that through reports on French women in violence, not just French revolutionary politics, we can further see this didactic purpose of newspaper editors and publishers. Newspapers not only reported news but also interpreted it and attempted to present certain events and people in order to influence public opinion. As most papers affiliated themselves with some party, they also acted as politicians by participating in debates about and setting guidelines for women and gender roles.²⁷

²⁵ Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers: Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 34.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 47.

²⁷ For a more editor-focused work, see Marcus Daniel, *Scandal & Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Similar to Pasley, Daniel argues that these American partisan newspapers served as public sites of political debate during the 1790s. A more specific study of the French Revolution in the American Press is given in Jaci Cole and John Maxwell Hamilton, "Another Test of the News," *Journalism History* 34, no. 1 (2008): 34–41; and

This thesis is structured around case studies of common and aristocratic women who perpetrated violence and who were victims of violence. American women's experiences and actions during the American Revolution are highlighted throughout each chapter to provide domestic context for American attitudes toward women in violent conflicts and to offer a comparison between American and French women. Chapter one focuses on crowds of women and individuals who carried out acts of violence, which included—but are not limited to—boycotts, rioting, marching, and murder. Laying out the events that French women largely participated in, this section gives a general outline of the Revolution from 1789 to 1799. As female perpetrators of violence, how were these women received in America? Was harsher judgment passed on aristocrats or non-noble women? From being cast as Amazons to being hailed as patriots, American newspapers and individuals employed a wide array of language to describe these events.

Chapter two principally considers women guillotined by male revolutionaries, with case studies of three aristocratic women, Charlotte Corday, Madame Roland, and Marie Antoinette. It discusses how perpetrators and victims represented not two exclusive categories, but that they occasionally overlapped, as in the case of Charlotte Corday. An interesting question is added of how the American portrayal of women who fell into both categories changed when they had violence thrust upon them. When women once again became passive actors as victims, were they received more positively than women who carried out violence? Did the reactions of Americans actually stem from their opinions about male revolutionaries and not from their attitudes toward the women themselves? I argue that the belief in the feminine nature of women, the image of

Beatrice F. Hyslop, "The American Press and the French Revolution of 1789," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 104, no. 1 (1960): 54-85.

French licentiousness, and the growing contempt for the French cause created varied and contrasting perspectives in America.

Chapter three brings the analysis and discussion of women in violence back to America and largely uses secondary sources and the interpretations of the first two chapters to understand how American attitudes toward gender changed during the 1790s. This chapter focuses slightly more on the later years of the Revolution than the first two chapters. During this time, Americans could concentrate on more domestic matters, which included the expression—or the beginning of one—of proper American gender roles. With the fresh memory of France’s violently and politically charged women, newspapers reacted in a way to guide American women to become more moderate and curtail actions mirroring those of the French. The language of separate domestic and political spheres did not take root until the early decades of the nineteenth-century, but the foundations of this policy can be seen in the prescriptive reactions of the 1790s. However, American women largely ignored these prescriptions and continued on in the fight for their own political identities through reforms in education and family structure, charitable works, etc. Even if women claimed these rights as stemming from their motherly, feminine duties, women took a stand against the growing late eighteenth-century rhetoric of the political and natural inferiority of women

Chapter One – Perpetrators

“On Monday morning the general alarm of the people as to the intentions of the court, and a scarcity of bread, brought on a gradual insurrection in every quarter of Paris. The women particularly, flocked in the most riotous manner to the Place de Louis XIV, they were armed with stronger weapons than they could wield, and as they advanced, pressed every woman they met with into their service.”¹

This article from *The Worcester Gazette* described the events of October 5 and 6 of 1789, where a crowd of women and men marched to Versailles, the Parisian countryside palace of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Frustrated with food shortages and rising bread prices, working- and lower-class women from Paris, accompanied by other revolutionaries, ransacked the armory in Paris, walked for hours to the royal family’s countryside palace, and besieged it. Not originally granted an audience with Louis, the revolutionaries became violent and attempted to sneak into the palace, which resulted in a showdown with members of the palace guard. The mob forced the king to meet with them and demanded that he and the royal family move to Paris to live among the people.² This report did not attempt to hide its dissatisfaction with the women’s actions. By using the terms “insurrection,” “riotous,” and “armed,” the article suggested that these women and their actions were highly illegitimate. Not only the use of violence but the gender of the crowd seemingly trumped the general feeling of support for the French Revolution for this paper. Each side suffered only a few casualties, but the marchers’ actions represented one of the first instances of violence used by the people to achieve a political end.

¹ *The Worcester Gazette*, “European Affairs. France. New Disturbances in France. Paris, October 6. Twelve O’Clock at Night,” December 3, 1789.

² Godineau, 98-99.

In this chapter, I first trace some of the main events of the Revolution, paying close attention to those that involved women as perpetrators. The timeline is not meant to be exhaustive or complete, but it is used to outline and provide background for some of the major events of the Revolution that will be discussed later in this chapter as well as in the second and third chapters. For the second section of this chapter, I focus on the relationship between the political affiliation of American sources and perceptions of French women, principally in mobs, who carried out and participated in violence. In the early years of Revolution, it appeared that newspapers held similar sentiments toward women in violence. Crowds of women were seen as animalistic and threatening. Although this portion of the chapter does not comprehensively analyze the ideological shifts and implications of these reports, it provides an overview of trends in the depictions of the violent events in France. The third section begins with a brief biography of Charlotte Corday, then analyzes some newspaper accounts specific to her assassination of Marat, and concludes with a short comparison of between Corday and the mobs of women. Corday's case is important because she remains one of the few women during the Revolution to murder a political figure. She was widely written about in American newspapers. Furthermore, as a woman who both perpetrated and experienced violence, she offers a valuable case study into the different ways newspapers portrayed perpetrators and victims.

I

Louis XVI convened the Estates General on May 5, 1789 for the first time in over a hundred years. The Estates General was split into three units with the First Estate representing nobles, the Second consisting of the clergy, and the Third being the middle and bourgeois classes. Historically, the first and second estates would join forces to outvote the third estate, and it seemed that the deputies of 1789 would perpetuate this trend. However, dissatisfied with their

minority status, the Third Estate separated from the Estates General and named themselves the National Assembly in June of 1789.³ On June 14, 1789, the French Revolution began with the storming the Bastille in Paris, which also initiated the violent chain of events in the remaining months of 1789. Later in July, peasants revolted against feudalism in what was known as the Great Fear.⁴ Although women most likely participated in these events, it was not until the march on Versailles in October that women began to use widespread violence. The October Days represented one of the final mass violent events until 1791.

Aside from the march in October, the time between 1790 and early 1791 brought legal reforms that impacted French politics and society. Starting with the Declaration of Rights of Man in August of 1789, the revolutionary deputies of the National Assembly abolished feudalism and primogeniture. Representatives also introduced equal inheritance legislation to all children, including females.⁵ These progressive measures still did not grant women full political citizenship, so women continued to fight for their revolutionary expectations of equality. In July of 1789, the National Constituent Assembly was formed out of the National Assembly. The Legislative Assembly replaced the National Constituent Assembly in September of 1791.⁶

Violence returned to the French Revolution in June of 1791 after the king and the royal family attempted to flee from Paris to royalist regions on the border with Austria. On the night of

³ James McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 15-16.

⁴ Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press: 2003), 13-14.

⁵ For more information on these decrees and their affects see Jane Abray, "Feminism in the French Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (1975): 43-62; Beckstrand; Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Godineau; Jennifer Ngaire Heuer; Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); R. B. Rose, "Feminism, Women and the French Revolution," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 21, no. 1 (1995): 187-205; and Smart.

⁶ Tackett, 210.

June 20, under the cover of darkness, the royal family and some of their attendants left their residence in the Tuileries Palace for safer lodgings in the counterrevolutionary areas to the east of Paris. Their flight lasted until they reached the town of Varennes, after which they were forced to take up residence in Paris under tighter security. Revolutionaries lost most of their trust and confidence in the king's support for the Revolution, and charged him and Marie Antoinette with treason, for which they later stood trial.⁷

Some revolutionary deputies, however, still retained hopes for a constitutional monarchy, and made an announcement that one had been set up under Louis on July 17, 1791 at the Champ de Mars, a large green space in Paris. Angered by this decree, other revolutionaries—who did not want any form of monarchy—met later that day in the same place to sign a petition calling for the removal of Louis as king. The marquis de Lafayette and other members of the National Guard dispersed the crowd, but more men and women returned to fight the declaration. When Lafayette attempted a second time to dispel the crowd, they threw stones and other objects at the soldiers, who returned with warning shots. Since these warning shots did not convince the crowd to leave, the guardsmen opened fire into the mob. Death tolls for either side remain unknown, but the reputations of Lafayette and his National Guard carried the stench of their actions on this day for the duration of the Revolution.⁸

The year 1792 ushered in violent mass movements in Paris and around France, introduced the guillotine, gave women more authority in divorce, and abolished the monarchy. For the first three to four months of 1792, food riots plagued all sections of Paris. Women, principally in charge of buying bread, grains, and other groceries for their families, once again became fed up with the rising prices and shortages of bread and other grains. Forced to stand

⁷ Tackett, 57-87, 151-202.

⁸ McMillan, 23; Tackett, 147-150.

outside all night in lines in front of bakers' shops, where the inventory quickly ran out, women missed valuable hours of work and sleep. Not only did women attack businesses and carts in markets during these riots, but also stopped and ransacked transports of foods from the provinces around Paris. Mostly, these women were lower- or working-class, and they believed the lack of subsistence to be an aristocratic plot to starve them out and end the Revolution.⁹ The year that began with violence included a violent event in almost every month following March.

On June 20, crowds of men and women stormed the Tuileries Palace in Paris, where the royal family was quartered, to confront the king, again, about the food and water conditions in Paris.¹⁰ Although this episode remained relatively calm, the next attack on the Tuileries Palace proved much more violent. From August 10 to 13, revolutionaries descended upon the Parisian palace, killing hundreds of Swiss Guards and arresting Louis XVI.¹¹ Revolutionaries' frustrations with Louis increased in 1792 after the revolutionary government declared war on Austria in April, which was followed by the Brunswick Manifesto.¹² This early August manifesto, decreed by Charles William Ferdinand, the Duke of Brunswick, attempted to guarantee the safety of the royal family by threatening violence against French civilians if any harm fell on any member of the royal family. However, this Austrian intimidation tactic failed, as the National Convention—meeting for the first time on September 22, 1792—eventually dissolved the monarchy and put the king and queen on trial.¹³ Louis was brought before the National Convention on December 3.¹⁴

⁹ Godineau, 155-156, 310, 331-337.

¹⁰ William Doyle, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 50, 110.

¹¹ Godineau 110-111; Tackett, 215.

¹² Tackett 214.

¹³ Tackett, 215

¹⁴ Tackett, 215-216.

September of 1792 experienced both violence and legal progression for women. From September 2 through 7, radical revolutionaries—who feared that an invasion of foreign armies would incite insurrection among the prisoners of Paris against Parisians—massacred thousands of inmates, ranging from Catholic priests to common criminals. Similar executions followed in other cities after the initial action in Paris.¹⁵ However, the Legislative Assembly also granted women the right to divorce in September. Previously, the predominance of Catholicism in legal matters prevented divorce, with a few rare cases often brought and won by men. The revolutionary government largely believed that marriage represented a civil contract, not a religious one, and therefore both parties should be able to end the ‘agreement’.¹⁶ Although it remained harder for a woman to provide necessary grounds for a divorce than a man, this legal move worked alongside the egalitarian measures of 1790 and 1791 to offer women more social and legal authority. Such positive measures basically stopped after 1792, and violence became the crux of the people’s revolutionary project.

The Reign of Terror, the bloodiest episode of the Revolution, began in 1793. Starting with Louis’ execution on January 21, 1793, the Jacobins and the Committee of Public Safety—established between May 31 and June 2—used any violent means possible to eradicate all perceived counterrevolutionary threats.¹⁷ Of course, for the leaders of the Terror, counterrevolutionary meant anything that differed from the views of the Committee or Maximilien Robespierre and his followers. The guillotine became the standard method of execution during the Reign of Terror and was used widely on various individuals. Although the Jacobins and the Committee carried out atrocities and remained overly paranoid, their fears of counterrevolution were not entirely unfounded. In March of 1793, a counterrevolutionary revolt

¹⁵ Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 51.

¹⁶ Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France*, 15-140.

¹⁷ Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 111; Tackett, 216.

broke out in the Vendée region on the west coast of France. Led mostly by royalist sympathizers, the republican army quickly and violently stopped the insurrection.¹⁸ Also, over the summer, a revolt erupted in Lyon due to frustration with constant economic crises since the outbreak of the Revolution. This insurrection, however, was not quelled until October.¹⁹ From then on, not only royalists posed a threat to the Revolution, but all those who did not conform to the Jacobin platform.

Although 1793 remained a strenuous and stressful year for political clubs, women manipulated the period of upheaval and unrest to establish their own factions in order to illuminate and challenge the unequal political place of women. Women helped to form as well as participate in political clubs, such as the Jacobins, the Girondists, the Cordeliers, and the Society of Friends of Truth before 1793, but the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women represented the most coherent and prominent all-female political club.²⁰ Formed by Pauline Léon and Claire Lacombe on May 10, the club attempted to lobby the revolutionary government for more egalitarian measures for women, particularly their inclusion in French citizenship and the right to bear arms.²¹ However, their project remained short lived, as Claire Lacombe, then president, the Jacobins accused her of being sympathetic to the Girondin faction—a rival of the Jacobin leadership—on September 16. She was arrested in March of 1794, but released in August of 1795.²² After October 30, the National Convention outlawed all women’s clubs, in an attempt to keep women out of political organization.²³

¹⁸ Godineau, 370; Doyle, *The French Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*, 111, 52-54.

¹⁹ Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 54; 111.

²⁰ Godineau, 369.

²¹ Godineau, 119-124.

²² Godineau, 187-188.

²³ Godineau, 205.

In March of 1793, the National Convention set up a unique Revolutionary Tribunal for the trial of all political criminals, and it eventually became one of the principal tools in the Reign of Terror. Though originally organized to try royalists, priests, and those suspected of counterrevolution, members of the Committee (particularly Robespierre) and Jacobin club used the tribunal to eliminate personal adversaries.²⁴ While the National Convention served as the setting for the trial of Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, many members of the Girondin club, and followers of Georges Jacques Danton (a previous Committee president accused of being too lenient on revolutionary enemies) and Jacques Hébert (a French journalist who supported the Terror) were sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal.²⁵ The only sentence given by this court remained a constant one of death, which could never be appealed or turned over.

Starting in June, the Committee sanctioned widespread, swift arrests and indictments of the Girondists and other political opponents. On October 16, Marie Antoinette was guillotined followed by Olympe de Gouges on November 2 and Madame Roland on November 8.²⁶ The charges against de Gouges accused her of being a royalist and attempting to reinstate the monarchy, since she defended Louis during his trial.²⁷ Although the Tribunal allowed both Marie Antoinette and de Gouges to defend themselves,—even though they denied de Gouges the right to a lawyer—Madame Roland was not afforded the same courtesy. Having prepared a defense during her time in prison, she never received the opportunity to deliver it to the Tribunal.²⁸ Whereas these women were executed because of their political status, actions, and opinions, Charlotte Corday received her meeting with the guillotine for the assassination of Jean-Paul

²⁴ Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 55-56; Philip G. Dwyer and Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution and Napoleon: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2002), xviii.

²⁵ Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 56.

²⁶ Beckstrand, 130-133; Godineau, 317.

²⁷ Beckstrand, 129-130.

²⁸ Beckstrand, 124-126.

Marat, an influential and significant revolutionary politician.²⁹ It seemed that the guillotine and the politicians behind it targeted French individuals without reference to their status as friends or foes of the Revolution.

Until July of 1794, the Reign of Terror continued the killing of political figures not associated with the Jacobin Club or the Committee of Public Safety. In the first half of 1794, politicians became increasingly tired of the relentless violence and executions occurring in Paris and many other French provinces. The Thermidorian Reaction in 1794 was a revolt against Jacobin control over the Committee and Tribunal, and officially began after the Convention voted in July to arrest and execute Robespierre and other Terror leaders. On July 27, Robespierre and other Committee members were rounded up and executed the next day. After the executions of the principal leaders, a White Terror ensued, which largely targeted Jacobin members.³⁰ Although numerous revolts and uprisings against the Thermidorian Reaction occurred, it effectively put an end to the Reign of Terror and ushered in the Directory that lasted until Napoleon's rise to power in 1799.³¹

The years between 1796 and 1799 were mostly punctuated by war that pitted France against Austria and its allies. Napoleon came to power in 1799, naming himself the First Consul of France and eventually instituting himself as Emperor of France. He undid many of the egalitarian and republican measures of the French Revolution with his Civil Code in 1804. All the gains in inheritance, marriage, divorce, and other legal matters for women vanished as the Code overturned all reform legislation. The Code effectively reverted France's legal structure back to the patriarchal model of the Old Regime.³²

²⁹ Kindleberger, 974.

³⁰ Desan, *The Family on Trial*, 249; Godineau, 191-193.

³¹ Godineau, 372.

³² Desan, 283-310; Smart, 121-191.

II

In “an exact account of the circumstances which preceded, accompanied, and followed the taking of the Bastille,” *The Herald of Freedom*, a newspaper in Boston, praised the actions of Parisian citizens and soldiers. Citing the “zeal and ardor worthy of the courage that [the National Guard] had already shown on so many occasions,” the article discussed how the men of the National Guard patriotically sacrificed their lives not in a rebellion against the French monarchy but in defense of Louis XVI. The article included a declaration to Louis, stating “Thou, Monarch, who art a citizen!...Thou, King, loved by all virtuous French man! O Louis XVI, thou hast seen what thy faithful subjects can do for their own defence and thou hast seen what they can do for thine, whenever thou wilt again approach towards them with the confidence of a father. They love thee; they revere thee; and wait only the expression of the heart to seal it with their blood.” It ended with an address to the “brave soldiers of the Nation” and tells them that they should never again raise their guns to one another, but only “against the enemies of your Nation.”³³

This article heralded the actions of the National Guard during the taking of the Bastille on July 14, 1789 for their protection and adoration of the King. Taking of the Bastille in 1789 was not meant to dismantle the monarchy, but represented more of a violent culmination of the people’s frustration with their problems not being heard by Louis. Perhaps this paper understood and appreciated the link between France and America in their decisions to resort to violence after their respective kings ignored their petitions and pamphlets. Women were not mentioned in the article, although the word “Citizens” could signal the participation of men and women in the crowd that helped the National Guard. Women’s actions in their march on Versailles were depicted as terrifying whereas the use of violence by these men was presented as courageous and

³³ *The Herald of Freedom*, “Siege of the Bastille,” September 25, 1789.

in defense of liberty. Knowing that most sources disliked the presence of mobs of women in violence, it appeared that American newspapers appreciated and supported the organization of men's violence and maintenance of gender roles. As the first episode of violence, it raised important questions about the legitimation of violence. Violence became necessary for many reasons, including the protection of the government, defense of the people, prevention of more violence, and securing of equal subsistence rights, while sometimes sources outright condemned it.

The October Days marked the first instance when women represented the majority of perpetrators in a mob. The same *Worcester Gazette* article that began this chapter, from December of 1789, went on to detail the violent, murderous actions of the women who marched to Versailles. "Five young noblemen were immediately sacrificed to [the women's] vengeance—one ran through the body—and two beheaded. The Marquis de la Fayette came in time to save the lives of about twenty others. Tuesday morning many of the mob returned from Versailles. The heads of the officers of the Gardes du Corps were borne on Pikes throughout the streets of Paris." Simultaneously, the article recognized the political and social implications of the actions undertaken by these women, who descended upon the royal family to ask for bread. The violence instigated by women allowed men and troops, discontented with the government, to join their march and carry out their frustrations with the royal family outside of the political arena of the National Assembly.³⁴ However, this source definitely did not condone the unorganized use of violence as perpetrated by these women and their followers and communicated this point to its readers in the negatively charged words it used to describe the women and the event. These women were unable to control their passions and instead became unruly and hysterical. It, thus,

³⁴ *The Worcester Gazette*, "European Affairs. France. New Disturbances in France. Paris, October 6. Twelve O'Clock at Night," December 3, 1789.

communicated to women that they should always remain in control of their emotions or risk falling into anarchy and mania.

In an article, published by *The Argus*, in August of 1791, French women received a somewhat positive reaction. “Among the wonders produced by the French Revolution, few would have dared to hope that a race of AMAZONS would have sprung up to astonish the world with their martial deeds; this is however actually the case. The women in the small town of Guine, are at this moment formed into a regiment and call themselves the National Guards of Guine.”³⁵ Though this article did not depict the women of Guine as normal women, but a kind of female perversion known as the Amazon, who possessed masculine traits such as inhuman strength, it also did not depict their actions as reprehensible. If cast as something not endowed with the feminine ways of a woman, but beings that permeated the boundaries of masculine and feminine, perhaps women’s violent actions could be understood and accepted. Newspapers attempted to create female characters that American women could not identify with in order to dissuade them from imitating such behaviors. In truth, American women could still identify with these French women and their actions because they had participated in regimental and unorganized fighting and violence of the American Revolution. This article implied an air of violence within the article, but seemingly accepted women’s participation, as their actions remained controlled and organized. If women remained virtuous and structured, then they could take part in the violence.

Otherwise, negative portrayals of French women in American newspapers continued into 1792. In an article detailing the trial in the National Assembly of Lafayette on the charges of treason after marching on Paris to disband political clubs, *The Federal Gazette*, a paper in

³⁵ *The Argus*, “[French Revolution; Amazons; Guine; National Guards; Guine; Clergymen],” August 19, 1791.

Philadelphia, recounted the frustration French women exhibited upon his acquittal. “As soon as the House adjourned, a mob gathered round the Hall, and as the Members who had voted for La Fayette were coming out...some of them were collared, other spit upon, and all most shamefully abused; the [illegible] women were the most outrageous—they cried out ‘Ye villains! After to-morrow shall be the 14th of July for you. We want to see some bloody heads again!’” The article speculated that the mob was upset about the results because they felt that “the acquittal of the General seemed to presage good to the Monarch.”³⁶ Although no direct violence by women occurred in this account, the article named women as the most ferocious actors of the mob. While it might seem that spitting and cussing did not represent violent actions, the threat of violence and verbal attacks appeared as disruptive as physical violence. This article communicated to American women that if they possessed an opinion about a legal or political occurrence, they should not act on it, especially in an emotional manner and in public. If women could not remain calm or controlled, then they were not suited to attend political meetings or trials.

When women did not participate in violent events or actions, their revolutionary activities received praise. According to the *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, in 1792, “In Paris, the women as usual, are among the ardent in the display of patriotic actions. From five hundred to a thousand work during the whole day, in public places, preparing knapsacks and other articles for the army. This service is entirely voluntary, and they pursue it with steadiness, which even the frequent applause of the populace do not divert.”³⁷ So, women’s additions seemed considered patriotic and valuable when put to use to provide aid for the men who fought for the revolution. This paper seemed to prescribe nonviolent behaviors as the only legitimate way to participate or

³⁶ *The Federal Gazette and Philadelphia Daily Advertiser*, “Further Intelligence. Paris, Aug. 9,” October 3, 1792.

³⁷ *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, “Foreign Intelligence,” December 7, 1792.

interact with war or a revolution.³⁸ Men and women's voluntary service, then, were completely different. During the American Revolution, men volunteered to serve in the army and militias, but women were expected to volunteer to sew, clean, and be nurses. Clearly, this source conveyed that women should continue to stay away from fighting, and that their efforts were better served by sticking to their domestic chores.

As 1793 represented the first year of the bloodiest episode of the French Revolution, so too was it the most active year for women perpetrating violence. Reactions to women in violence took a clearer split between endorsement and revulsion during this time. Interestingly, the violence of mobs of women retained the contempt of American sources. As in the previous two years, newspapers gave women more attention and gratitude for standing behind revolutionary men and knitting than physically participating in the Revolution. An article republished in the Federalist *The New Hampshire Gazette* in November of 1793 detailed an altercation between the republican troops at Dieppe and their enemies. It described how “The influence of the women (irrestable in France,) was employed to keep alive the flame of patriotism: and on every lady's cap was displayed the republican cockade.”³⁹ Although—and maybe because—women did not participate in the fighting, they were seen as important in the revolutionary effort. Similar to the previous article, this Federalist paper preferred women's nonviolent action of sewing or wearing clothes and attempted to define these as the most appropriate for women during violent times.⁴⁰ During the American Revolution, women were expected to boycott British imports and make clothing from homespun yarn. Although these situations were not identical, articles such as these

³⁸ Donald Henderson Stewart, *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1969), 892.

³⁹ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, “From France-via Salem. From the Salem Gazette, of the Tuesday Last,” November 30, 1793.

⁴⁰ Stewart, 878.

clearly prescribed republican dress, clothes making, and other nonviolent efforts as women's most important contributions to any war effort.

Women could also be venerated for their engagement in the army, or at least training with it, within the same source. *The New Hampshire Gazette* published an article in August of 1793 that commended women for filling men's places at the garrison at Montpelier while the men went to the frontiers in the war with Austria and its allies. "They are clothed in short jackets and long trowsers; they exercise every day, and are very expert at firing, and are said to observe the strictest discipline."⁴¹ Again, women did not figure directly in fighting or violence, but are positively associated with the armed forces. Compared to the *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, this also emphasized the potential utility of women who took on male roles of defense, but who did not actually participate in any violence or fighting. The Amazons from the earlier report and the women at Montpelier represented disciplined 'regiments' of women. Instead of going out, amassing a large crowd along the way, and attacking shops or people, these women were organized and under control. Accounts such as these communicated to American women that it was not necessarily bad to be part of a defensive unit so long as they did not do any fighting, unless absolutely necessary.

Women's undisciplined participation in the food riots of 1793, however, did not help women sustain this patriotic and virtuous image. *The New Hampshire Journal* recounted one such riot in Paris as "a general scene of disorder and pillage. The people and particularly the market women, in prodigious numbers, entered the shops and warehouses of the grocers and other tradesmen and distributed their commodities at very low prices. Many robberies were committed, and several of the national guards assaulted." Throughout all the chaos and confusion, however, "The National Convention, in order to appease the people, immediately

⁴¹ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, "Cape-Francois," August 20, 1793.

decreed, that seven millions of livres should be advanced to the city of Paris, to enable it to lay in a sufficient store of provisions of all kinds.”⁴² In effect, the women and men who carried out the bread riots again used violence, with the purpose of securing subsistence goods and fair prices, as a political tool. The end of the account in this Federalist source effectively undermined its message.⁴³ By communicating that violence sometimes led to desired outcomes, this article made that option potentially seem fruitful to American women. Though it described the scene as “pillage” and “disorder” and named women as assaulters and robbers, the statement that the women sort of got what they wanted outweighed the attempt to paint the scene as horrifying.

The closing of women’s clubs and brute force used by the Jacobins and the Committee of Public Safety during the Reign of Terror effectively discontinued the most mass violent demonstrations by French women. Yet, reports of their activity continued to drift back to America. For men and women in France in the 1790s, the Revolutionary Cockade served as a symbol of their affiliation and loyalty to the Revolution and a French Republic. Specifically for women, this offered them another opportunity to take part in the duties of a citizen, even though they were still barred from citizenship. On September 22 of 1794, as *Edwards’s Baltimore Daily Advertiser* reported, women attacked each other over the issue of wearing the cockade in public. “A woman was flogged by the women in the market called La Halle, for wearing the national cockade, which was torn from her. She went away heartily cursing her assailants, and had hardly proceeded 600 yards farther, when she was again attacked by another set of ferocious women, who beat her for appearing without the cockade!” Although the article reduced the women’s actions to the influence of Brissot and his “partizans,” the attacks actually “induced the convention to pass their rigorous decree, compelling all the women to wear that national

⁴² *The New Hampshire Journal*, “[France; Wednesday; Paris; National Convention],” May 9, 1793.

⁴³ Stewart, 878.

badge.”⁴⁴ Unlike the case of the bread riots, political change was not the intended outcome of the events, yet violence again served as a tool for political influence. Since women previously used violence to garner ‘fair’ grain prices, American sources seemed fearful of the uncontrolled violence of these French women. Thus they presented them as violent beasts to dissuade American women from the same courses of action and to bolster the nonviolent activities of women.⁴⁵ Though this newspaper leaned somewhat Democratic, it prescribed similar appropriate nonviolent behaviors of wearing Republican clothing that the previous Federalist sources did.⁴⁶

Ferocious, as used to describe violent women, occurred again in 1795. *The Mercury*, a Boston paper, printed an article in June of 1795 about more bread riots, carried out by “an immense mob, above half women, who under a pretense of asking for Bread, urged on, no doubt, by the Royalists and Anarchists, or both.” When General Pichegru attempted to quell the rioters in Paris, they tried to assassinate him and killed one of his young officers after which he was “seized by the women, who tore off his clothes, and were actually beginning to eat him alive, when he was rescued. (It is worthy of remark, that the women were by far the most ferocious part of the mob, and most sanguinary and abrasive in their language when in the Convention.)”⁴⁷ These women had given themselves over to their emotional, feminine ways that they became uncontrolled animals. Being so disillusioned with the violence of the French Revolution, this Federalist source reduced these women to cannibalistic beasts.⁴⁸ Not only were their physical actions reprehensible but also their verbal violence rivaled their animalistic actions. Interestingly, the article appeared to suggest that violent influences came from all factions in France, including

⁴⁴ *Edwards’s Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, “Foreign Intelligence,” January 4, 1794.

⁴⁵ For more on the trend of newspapers as purveyors of public opinions, see Pasley.

⁴⁶ Stewart, 874.

⁴⁷ *The Mercury*, “Commutations in France,” June 2 to June 5, 1795.

⁴⁸ Stewart, 875.

the revolutionaries, the “Anarchists,” and the “Royalists” and women, especially, who remained susceptible to their goading.

III

By 1793, the fissures among Americans who aligned with either the Federalists or the Democratic Republicans became more steadfast. In the remaining years of the 1790s and the French Revolution, the two proto-parties increasingly appeared at odds about affairs in France (except the topic of women’s mob violence). As the majority of American accounts of French women as perpetrators of violence were negative, so too were the representations of Charlotte Corday. The political underpinnings and implications of Corday’s murder of Marat allowed a platform for American newspapers and politicians to discuss the state of affairs in France, as well as the place of a woman in assassination/violence. The majority of articles about Charlotte Corday condemned her actions and commented negatively on her character. While it might have seemed that Federalists would have supported her actions, since she murdered a deputy Americans disliked, reports in newspapers of both factions remained critical. As many of these articles were published in the years after 1792 and the presumed solidification of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties, they offer valuable evidence of the fluidity of political ideology in the 1790s, especially in reference to violent women.

Born in 1768 as Marie-Anne Charlotte de Corday d’Armont, she grew up in a modest aristocratic family in Normandy. After being sent to a convent in Caen, Corday became interested in the Enlightenment writings of Rousseau and Voltaire. With the radicalizing of the Revolution and the ensuing violence, Corday sympathized with the Girondin party in Caen.⁴⁹ As

⁴⁹ Nina Rattner Gelbart, “The Blonding of Charlotte Corday,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (2004): 201-221, 202; Chantal Thomas, “Heroism in the Feminine: The Examples of Charlotte Corday and Madame Roland,” *The Eighteenth Century* 30, no. 2 (1989): 67-82, 69; Various, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition, volume 7, slice 4 "coquelin" to "costume," Project Gutenberg.

the Girondin party increasingly distanced themselves from the policies and actions of the Jacobins and other radical factions, she followed suit. Jean-Paul Marat, a journalist and revolutionary politician, represented for the Girondins and Corday one of the most radical leaders of the Revolution, along with Robespierre. Opposed to attempts to extinguish all competition to and dissent from the Jacobin party—as partially introduced and upheld by Marat—Corday felt it her revolutionary duty to murder him. The death of Marat could alleviate tensions in France by putting an end to the violence she believed he perpetuated. Corday assassinated Marat on July 13, 1793 and only four days later, she was guillotined. Corday’s decision to kill Marat stemmed from her belief that this one instance of violence could save France from further widespread violence.⁵⁰ In a similar manner to the women who marched on Versailles or participated in riots, Corday exemplified the prevalent belief that violence could be used as a political tool when all other courses (elections, petitions, legislative meetings) were blocked.

An article published in 1793 by the Philadelphian *National Gazette* began with the funeral procession of Marat and then detailed the trial of Corday. “Charlotte la Corde was tried yesterday for the murder of Marat, *the Friend of the People*, by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Her countenance displayed heroic disdain, and her answers, by their boldness, struck every spectator with astonishment.” After briefly describing some of her answers to questions as well as her sentencing and execution, it went on to give an account of some other events in France.⁵¹ This article remains interesting because it did not explicitly condemn or support Corday’s action. Although using words such as “heroic” might have seemed positive, the report simultaneously

⁵⁰ Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson, *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1795: Selected Documents Translated With Notes and Commentary* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 172; Godineau, 297, 371; Kindleberger.

⁵¹ *National Gazette*, “Paris, July 18,” October 2, 1793.

demeaned her for being “bold.” “Astonishment” here seems to suggest repulsion at her audacity to address the Revolutionary Tribunal in the way she did, not as being in awe of her.

Furthermore, the article referred to Marat as the friend of the people twice, but gives no other indication as to whether it agreed with Marat’s status as a ‘friend.’ As the Democratic-Republicans continued their support for the Revolution through its increasing violence, Corday’s attack on Marat, for this Republican source, seemed analogous to an attack on the Revolution itself.⁵² Corday was just as much a revolutionary for the French cause as Marat, but she stood against Marat and the terror of the Jacobins. Since she aligned herself with the wrong political faction, her actions were seen as negative and disruptive to the Revolution. If she had acted for the Jacobin party, perhaps the Democratic-Republicans would have held her in higher esteem.

One article in *The Philadelphia Gazette*, published almost a year after the *National Gazette* article, argued that Robespierre influenced Corday to assassinate Marat. “Marat died in the full conviction that the poison by which he was consumed, had been administered by Robespierre, who employed Grangeneuve and Fauchet to bring Charlotte Corday from Calvados to Paris, and to prevail upon her to murder Marat, whom they represented to her as merely aiming at the ruin of the Republic, and the plunder of all private property.” Grangeneuve and Fauchet were members of the Girondin party, which Corday associated herself with, but their direct influence on her decision to assassinate Marat cannot be sustained. Mostly concerned with the “character of Robespierre,” the article held him more responsible for the violence of the Terror—not completely incorrect—than Marat.⁵³ It portrayed Corday as an impressionable woman that these deputies manipulated in order to carry out their bidding, effectively removing her agency from this action. Perhaps denying her agency in the act of assassination also took

⁵² Stewart, 886.

⁵³ *The Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, “Character of Robespierre,” October 11, 1794.

away the blame from her and transferred it onto Robespierre. Though this source tended not to reveal its political affiliation, it appeared to agree with the Federalists and their partisans that these male revolutionaries were villainous.

In the eighteenth-century, a medical theory that marked women as second-class subjects, championed by Benjamin Rush, became widely popular in America and throughout the Western world. Rush, along with other enlightenment medical thinkers, set in motion “a new ideology of womanhood.”⁵⁴ “For this singularly influential [author] of republican womanhood, women’s moral role was derived from their unique sensibility, underpinning and quicker and more sensitive moral sense, more than any novel appreciation of their rational capabilities.”⁵⁵ Thus, reason was considered the faculty of men, while sensibility became associated more with women. Since reason and sensibility were incompatible, women were driven by their moral and emotional capabilities, not logic. Thus, since American women, as much as Charlotte Corday, were driven solely by emotion, they were easily influenced and should stay out of politics for that reason.

In 1796, *The New York Magazine, or Literary Repository* cited Corday as a republican. “The *demoiselle* Cordet was zealous for freedom; rich, young, beautiful—a woman—she was, nevertheless, a republican. An enthusiast, but not a fanatic; she possessed the warmth of the one character without the extravagance of the other.” This article referenced Corday’s womanly and feminine nature, but in support of her actions. Although a woman, she still represented a republican in the battle for liberty, especially because of her well-balanced character. It went on to suggest that “To this woman Greece would have erected statues; Rome, temples. France may some day insert her name in the calendar of her martyrs.” Barely referencing her murder of

⁵⁴ Sarah Knott, “Benjamin Rush’s Ferment,” in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills, England and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 649-666, 658.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 660.

Marat, except in alluding to her killing of a ‘monster’ and in the words of the title, the article clearly held her in high esteem.⁵⁶ In describing Corday as “not a fanatic” and “without... extravagance,” it suggested that she remained calm and in control of her emotions, as opposed to the overly passionate actions of the mobs of women. Since *The New York Magazine* was a literary magazine, it might not have held a political affiliation as a newspaper would, or it might have at least boasted that it was independent. However, even a publication such as this could not escape the political discussion around Charlotte Corday. Her feminine nature represented not a negative characteristic but helped her to be a republican for the revolutionary cause. Thus, it communicated to women that they could and should be involved in the politics of the day, even if that meant using violence.

Most publications, though, used her moral character to negate her actions as reprehensible. In *The Minerva, & Mercantile Evening Advertiser*, an article cited Corday’s unmarried status as one motivation of her actions. “She had revolved a long time in her mind the project of assassinating Marat. She did not put it in execution, on account of her intention of marrying a young man to whom her parents had promised her...Had she been married, she would not have committed this action, for fear of disturbing the tranquility of her husband...Her morals had always been strictly irreproachable.”⁵⁷ Thus, it was not her desires for freedom or republican virtues that caused her to murder, but her single status. As a Federalist source, this article was interesting for the fact that it seemingly took a similar stance to Democratic-Republican newspapers at the time.⁵⁸ Again referencing the sensibility, or lack thereof, of a woman, it further prescribed American women’s place as outside of politics since they clearly could not think

⁵⁶ *The New York Magazine, or Literary Repository*, “Sketch of the Character of Marie Anne Victoire Charlotte Cordet, who was executed under the Reign of Robespierre, for the Assassination of Marat,” December, 1796.

⁵⁷ *The Minerva, & Mercantile Evening Advertiser*, “Charlotte Corday,” August 19, 1797.

⁵⁸ Stewart, 881.

logically without men. Also, the article communicated that women should only imitate women who were pious and married.

Similarly, *The Bee*, a strongly Democratic newspaper, accused Corday of being “deaf to every sentiment of justice or public good,” and a woman who “forsook her parents, her friends, and all the blandishments of social life, and forfeited her existence by an act of the most atrocious and premeditated assassination... the enemies of liberty have had the consummate arrogance to speak of her as an innocent and virtuous martyr.” It further asks, “Can a virtuous maid commit murder? Is assassination consistent with bravery, tranquility, heroism, nobleness, and holiness of the soul? Was it a heavenly resolution to resolve on perpetrating the greatest of crimes?” The article described Marat, not Corday, as a republican and fighter for justice and liberty. Although *The Bee* might argue that Corday never possessed any morals, they definitely did not consider her action to be of any righteous nature. She should not be celebrated as a martyr because her crime was not “god-like.”⁵⁹ This Democratic-Republican leaning paper agreed with the previous Federalist source that women overstepped their bounds due to their passion and sensibility.⁶⁰ It attempted to instill in American women the belief that only under the guidance—or control—of virtuous men could they truly participate in appropriate and proper womanly behavior.

Much like the case of the mob violence of general women, most accounts of Corday were extremely negative. As with descriptions of women’s reprehensible and animal-like crowd violence, newspapers found Corday’s act and character similarly deplorable. Only one article discussed considered Corday as a calm and controlled woman, while the rest felt that she acted in the same overly passionate manner as the women who participated in unorganized mobs. Though

⁵⁹ *The Bee*, “For the Bee. Communication. Of Charlotte Corday,” November 8, 1797.

⁶⁰ Stewart, 870.

dissenters for both cases existed, they surfaced later in the 1790s as the debates surrounding the Reign of Terror and Revolution became heated and contributed to the growing boundaries between the Federalists and the Democratic Republicans. Yet, for a time these newspapers remained fairly even on their accounts of women in mob violence and Charlotte Corday. The ideological underpinnings of why papers reacted so harshly to mobs and Corday will be considered in the third chapter.

Chapter Two – Victims

“During this time, the Lanterne is fixed—the pully is greased, and the cord is prepared, and the names of a thousand victims strike the ears. One calls for the Queen—another for the Priests—a third for the Traitors—a fourth for the Body Guards—a fifth for M. *Baillie*—and a sixth for M. de la *Fayette*; the Representatives of the Commons being much insulted, for some days past, by M. *Marat*, author of an incendiary paper, called ‘The Friend of the People,’ he saves himself by flight.”¹

During the Reign of Terror (1793-1794), over 16,000 French subjects were guillotined, as well as tens of thousands of others murdered in some other fashion.² As referenced in the quotation above, execution, especially by guillotine, represented a threat to all French individuals, no matter their age, gender, class, occupation, or political affiliation. The Queen, aristocratic and common women, priests, traitors/émigrés, guardsmen, and revolutionary deputies all met extremely violent deaths. Furthermore, the executions also became a very public affair, attracting Parisian citizens as spectators and commentators, almost as if they were attending plays or shows. This *Massachusetts Spy* article reflected the mass involvement of the people of Paris by suggesting that their voices called out for these “thousand victims.” The report communicated its distrust for the increasing violence of the Revolution not only at the hands of the Jacobins and their allies, but also the crowds of France.

This chapter is concerned with French women as victims of violence, and how Americans understood and represented these events. Although women experienced multiple types of violence, such as being attacked or insulted, this section focuses on executions, mostly by guillotine, since these accounts occur most frequently in American sources. The first section

¹ *Massachusetts Spy*, “L’Orient. October 20. Extract of a Letter to a Merchant in Nountz. Dated Paris, Oct. 8, 1789,” December 3, 1789.

² Donald Greer, *The Incidence of the Terror During the French Revolution; A Statistical Interpretation* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1966), 26-29.

deals exclusively with general accounts of the execution of common, working, and aristocratic women. Some were guillotined because of their professions of support for royalty or the monarchy, others for defending their husbands and fathers, and one for participating in violence. Though these women came from different backgrounds, reactions to their deaths were often similar across political lines. Aristocratic women received a larger share of the information in American papers, suggesting that Americans considered them most newsworthy.

Articles about the trial and execution of Charlotte Corday form the second section. Her case allows us to see how American sources understood her crimes as compared to her punishment. Many articles (mostly Federalist) presented her as dignified and heroic during her execution while others (Democratic-Republicans) thought her punishment fitting. Contrary to the depictions of her as a perpetrator of violence, reports about her trial and execution followed stricter political lines. Corday offered a further outlet for Americans to discuss appropriate instances of the use of the guillotine during the French Revolution.

In the third section, responses to the trial and execution of Madame Roland are examined. As opposed to Corday, though both women belonged to the aristocracy, Roland's reception was far more positive, most likely because she did not perpetuate any violence. This part begins with a brief biography of Madame, and then traces numerous articles about her trial, execution, and personal writings. Roland's case is important because her execution occurred simply due to her different political leanings than those of the Jacobins. Though Americans knew of her involvement in politics due to her relationship with her husband, they seemed not to shame this behavior, but adored her and continuously reprinted her writings after her death. Americans did not believe politics a proper place for women, yet Roland was often praised for her political connections and writings. The execution of Roland proved that anyone, man or woman, could

fall prey to the violence of the guillotine simply for having different opinions than that of the Jacobins. Similar to Corday, however, many reports did not discuss the guillotine or the violence behind it, but focused instead on Roland's countenance and behavior up until her execution.

The descriptions of these women served as indications by American newspapers and individuals as to how a woman should act under extreme duress. When these sources praised the women's countenances, they did not officially uphold or challenge the revolutionaries' decision to execute these women since the French deputies, or the guillotine, were rarely mentioned. Similar to reports on violent perpetrators, the articles about victims cast some variety of judgment on female victims, though they often received positive attention.

A detailed case study of the trial and execution of Marie Antoinette constitutes the fourth section of this chapter. The most visible woman during the French Revolution, Marie Antoinette became one of the most discussed and disliked figures, regardless of her gender. Antoinette served as the literal and figurative center of counterrevolutionary activity and symbolized the threat of luxury and foreignness to republican insurgents. Not only did countless American sources comment and report on her trial and execution, but they also spent many months detailing the reasons why she should and did receive the same fate as her husband, Louis XVI. Americans began their widespread distrust of royalty before the French Revolution, so their reactions to the killing of a queen are intriguing. Following the death of Louis, the French and Americans remained unsure of what to do with Antoinette. Many newspapers pitied Antoinette and her unfortunate circumstances. Antoinette possessed more political power and influence than any other woman in France at a time when politics was seen as a man's world. Had Antoinette minded the roles and duties of a proper French queen, perhaps the revolutionaries would not have sentenced her to death, but her constant involvement in political matters and

communication with her brother (to mount a possible counterrevolution) made her a political target (similarly to Corday and Roland) without respect to her gender.³

This chapter mostly deals with the years between 1793 and 1797. Although this time frame extends farther than the Terror itself, the accounts and memories of the women in this chapter continue through the 1790s. I broadly trace several major trends in Americans' depictions of this type of violence. When possible, especially with Charlotte Corday, the trends in American reports will be briefly juxtaposed with those of perpetrators from the first chapter. How are the representations of women, according to their roles, different or similar? As the women in this chapter represent higher-class individuals, how did Americans depict these women compared to lower-class victims as well as the lower- and working-class crowds from the previous chapter?

I

The South Carolina Gazette printed an article in 1793 that spoke of “the condemnation and execution of Madame Contat, the celebrated French actress.” “She was tried by the revolutionary tribunal for some slight expressions in favor of royalty, and on the evidence of one witness was condemned.” This second sentence seemingly looked down on the Revolutionary Tribunal, as it executed this famous, well-known actress based on the testimony of one person. In the absence of negative statements towards the act of killing Contat, the use of the phrase, “some slight expression,” appeared to suggest that the article did not completely agree with the extreme punishment for the crime. These sentiments were not surprising when considering the subject matter of the majority of the article. In detailing the capture of Brittany by the royalists, the article described how patriot forces, “finding themselves defeated,” slaughtered men and women

³ Thomas Kaiser, “From the Austrian Committee to the Foreign Plot: Marie-Antoinette, Austrophobia, and the Terror,” *French Historical Studies* 26, no. 4 (2003): 579-617.

whom they had placed in prison before royalist forces could rescue them. When the royalists entered the prisons and found the dead victims, they took their revenge on the patriots through the “justifiable service...of the Guillotine” that “daily devoured several victims.” Printed in what appears to have been a Federalist newspaper, this article portrayed the popular distrust and opposition to the mass use of the guillotine by French deputies for something as minor as a few words.⁴ Furthermore, it showed the Federalist campaign to turn public opinion against the revolutionaries of the mid-1790s in its gruesome depiction of the scene at Brittany. The account went on to say that “three other inferior women suffered with her,” without mention of the accusations against these other women, suggesting that Contat’s experience remained more newsworthy than these lower-class women.⁵

In an article published by *The American Star, or, Historical, Political, Critical and Moral Journal*, instances of the executions of one upper class woman and a workingwoman were described. “Amongst the women condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal, one (Madame Kolly) has survived but a few months[;] the Farmer General, her husband, executed like her, for holding correspondence with the emigrants; another (Marie Magdalene Coutelet) who worked in the manufacture of hemp has been decapitated for having hawked about some writings tending to the establishment of royalty.” As with the previous report, the article seemed to suggest that their crimes and punishments did not correspond. The account also reads, “The Revolutionary Tribunal has sacrificed to it, in the space of eight days, persons of every age, sex, state, and even it may be said of every opinion; women on divers classes, strangers, nobles, men of letters,

⁴ Stewart, 889.

⁵ *The South Carolina Gazette*, “Confirmation of the Taking of the Capital of Brittany by the Royalists, Dated Nantz, April 24,” August 13, 1793.

labourers, brokers, sheriffs, millers, lock-smiths, bricklayers, tillers, coopers, &c.”⁶ The article, in line with its other Federalist counterparts, argued that the Jacobins and their followers were fanatical and lacked virtue with their ruthless killing of thousands of victims, without reference to class or gender.⁷ Groups of aristocratic and common women met their deaths at the guillotine for merely some words expressed or exchanged about royalty/monarchy.

Similarly, *Gazette of the United States AND DAILY EVENING ADVERTISER* used the death of seemingly aristocratic women to communicate the horrors of the guillotine in an “extract” from a larger literary piece entitled “A Bone to Gnaw, for the Democrats.” “*Mademoiselle [illegible]*, a lovely young woman of about eighteen years of age, was executed because she would not *discover the retreat of her father!* ‘What!’ (said she nobly to the democratic committee) ‘What! betray my father! impious villains, how dare you supposed it?’ *Madame Cochet*, a lady equally famed for her beauty and courage, was accused of having put the match to a cannon during the siege [of Lyons], and of having *assisted in her husband’s escape*. She was condemned to suffer death...her head was severed from her body amidst the death howl of the democratic brigands.” This Federalist report simultaneously signified the growing discontent with the French Revolution during the Terror and it implicated that, for women, dying for loyalty to one’s father and husband was a “worthy crime.”⁸ Though not the original words of the author or publisher, the newspaper reprinted this account most likely because it agreed with the depiction of the event. Unlike the other two accounts, these women were executed for their patriotic actions and participation in violence against the savagery of the Terror. Although killed

⁶ *The American Star, or, Historical, Political, Critical and Moral Journal*, “Extract of the Leyden Gazette, from the 7th of November, [Illegible] to - of the Same Month. Paris, November, 1793,” March 11, 1794.

⁷ Stewart, 885.

⁸ *Gazette of the United States AND DAILY EVENING ADVERTISER*, “Extract, from Part II. A Bone to Gnaw, for the Democrats. Siege of Lyons,” June 8, 1795; Stewart, 886.

by a tyrannical regime that rested on the guillotine, these women's deaths were not undeserved punishments, but brave ends for valiant efforts. Though women were not considered full citizens, Americans expected women to remain loyal to the nation and their men. Newspapers thus communicated to American women that dying in protection of their men was extremely virtuous.

II

In a letter from Angelica Schuyler Church, British parliamentary member John Barker Church's wife, to Thomas Jefferson, Church briefly mentioned "the *Republicaine* Cordét, who suffered Death with the fortitude and tranquility of Innocence."⁹ This sentence was only part of a letter listing some "situations" and "horrors" occurring in Paris, such as the imprisonment of "La Fayette," the political accusations against Condorcet, and the trial of the Queen. Church also included the assassination of Marat by Corday in her retelling of events, but she did not provide any indication of her thoughts or opinions about his death.¹⁰ Although her words might not have signified sympathy Corday, Church seemed to believe that Corday properly carried herself as a lady even in the face of the guillotine. Furthermore, Church did not say whether she attended the execution or not, so she might have just relayed rumors or gossip she heard from others in Paris. This letter, however, shows that even without referring to the violence of an execution or pronouncing sympathy for the victim, American women and men discussed and established, often together, guidelines of respectable behavior for women as victims of violence. In

⁹ Stefan Bielinski, "Angelica Schuyler Church," *New York State Museum*, first uploaded February 15, 2013, <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/bios/s/angschuyler1279.html>.

¹⁰ "To Thomas Jefferson from Angelica Schuyler Church, 19 August 1793," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-26-02-0640>, ver. 2014-05-09). Source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 26, 11 May–31 August 1793, ed. John Catanzariti. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 722–723.

Jefferson's response a few months later, he replied to her news about Lafayette but said nothing about Charlotte Corday or Marat.¹¹

Throughout the years following the tumultuous period of the Terror, newspapers were more apt to comment on Charlotte Corday's death than those of other women. In the *National Gazette* (Democratic-Republican), Corday's sentence and execution received a mere sentence in a longer article about her crime and the funeral of Marat. "Sentence of Death was pronounced upon this [illegible] woman, and she was executed in the evening." The report, however, also contained some of Corday's words from her trial that read: "But happen what will, if I have the honours of the Guillotine, and my clay-cold remains are buried, they will soon have conferred upon them the honours of the Pantheon, and my memory will be more honoured in France than that of JUDITH in [illegible]."¹² These words appeared to give Corday an air of overconfidence or cockiness without explicitly suggesting that the article agreed with her execution. The historical validity of these statements is not important here, but the light in which the report cast Corday. Here she was not a sympathetic character, but just a murderer who stood trial for a crime and was then punished. As a Democratic-Republican source, the article suggested that Corday got what she deserved for her attack on Marat and, by extension, the revolution. However, the article made no mention of Corday's violent end except the reference to the 'Guillotine' in her speech. Nor does it offer any implicit suggestions for proper behavior when facing death. Thus, the *National Gazette* seemingly implied that when a woman committed an act of passionate violence, state violence—guillotine—represented a reasonable response, much in the same way as for men.

¹¹ "From Thomas Jefferson to Angelica Schuyler Church, 27 November 1793," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-27-02-0416> [last update: 2015-03-20]). Source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 27, 1 September–31 December 1793, ed. John Catanzariti. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 449–450.

¹² *National Gazette*, "Paris, July 18," October 2, 1793.

A 1796 article in *The New York Magazine, or Literary Repository* included a description of Corday's behavior on the day of her execution. Similar to Church, the account applauded Corday for her ladylike and calm demeanor. "At the place of execution she uttered not a single word. Her face still possessed an heroic calmness; and she seemed conscious of future glory, and approaching happiness. Although silent, her gesticulations were, however, eloquently impressive; for she frequently placed her hand on her heart, and seemed to say, 'I rejoice in having exterminated a monster!'" Contrary to the previous article's apparent attempt to present Corday as overconfident and presumptuous, this report presented a mild-tempered Corday. Not only did she graciously and "heroically" accept her punishment, but according to the article, she rightly surmised that she would live on in French memory as a republican martyr. It further went on to provide a letter from Corday to her father in which she stated, "'PEACE is about to reign in my dear native country, for Marat is more! Be comforted, and bury my memory in eternal oblivion... I have lived long enough, as I have achieved a glorious exploit.'"¹³ The words used in the daughter-father correspondence upheld the article's general feeling of implicit sympathy for Corday and explicit admiration of her courage before her trial and execution. It further highlighted that the violence, and any discussion of it, behind her guillotining was secondary to her feminine, yet virtuous, countenance. As long as a woman met a sentence of death with a firmness of character, the violent horrors of the guillotine could be overlooked.

An article in *Porcupine's Gazette*, a Federalist publication, also focused on the demeanor of Corday, but added in a slight reference to the violence of the execution. After detailing the "heroic" and "dignified" act of killing Marat while maintaining the "manners...of a girl," the report detailed her trial and execution. "She might have escaped immediately after [illegible] the

¹³ *The New York Magazine, or Literary Repository*, "Sketch of the Character of Marie Anne Victoire Charlotte Cordet, who was executed under the Reign of Robespierre, for the Assassination of Marat," December, 1796.

god-like blow, but her heroic and noble soul disdaining so base an act, she voluntarily gave up her life as a sacrifice, for the useful murder she had committed. It was said, that she wished her blood to wash away the stain, which the awful step she had taken, left upon her glory... Her soul constantly tranquil, she wrote to her father, asking pardon of him for having disposed of her life without his consent. She appeared before her judges not with the fury of one possessed with the devil, not with the studied language of innocence, but with the unaffectedly dignified compliance of one who found it very easy thing to devote herself to the welfare of her country... She excited the admiration of even those who were paid to curse and deride her; and her beautiful head, as if encircled by a brilliant rainbow, held itself up with candour and dignity.”

This article made no attempt to gloss over the crime that Corday committed in assassinating Marat by calling it a “murder.” However, the report clearly favored Corday since it included such words as “useful” and “sacrifice” in the description. The blood she caused to run and her blood given up in retribution for her crime were not in vain, but for the greater good of France.¹⁴ As a Federalist source, it made sense that the report presented Corday in favorable terms, since the paper considered Marat too violent a politician.¹⁵ Furthermore, she remembered her place as a woman by writing to her father to ask for his forgiveness, in case he felt that her act was selfish. The use of the word “compliance” was very telling. Instead of reacting overly emotional by cursing the judges or people, she remained complacent and cooperative throughout the entire process. Her compliance made her calm and dignified; her compliance made her worthy of admiration and dignity. The representation of Corday’s actions in this way suggested to American women that they could remain heroic figures to admire even when facing death.

¹⁴ *Porcupine's Gazette*, “Marie Antoinette Charlotte Corday,” October 30, 1797.

¹⁵ Stewart, 887.

Not all articles, however, felt so positively about Corday and her actions during her trial and execution. A report in *The Bee* challenged the opinions of other newspapers and individuals as to the disposition of Charlotte Corday. After outlining “all we know of this since celebrated character,” the article accused “the enemies of liberty” of having “the consummate arrogance to speak of her as an innocent and virtuous martyr.” It quoted a writer in *The New York Gazette* who described Corday as “extraordinary,” “brave,” and “heroically dignified,” and insisted that this was “absurdity and falsehood.” “She might have been amiable in other parts of her life, (though you know not that she was); but she was a *murderer*, and suffered death most justly, without making her judges whit more ‘fiends of hell’ than they were before.” Contrary to the “useful murder” as described in the Federalist *Porcupine’s Gazette*, this Republican paper thought it was a heinous act. As with other reports, *The Bee* focused not as much on what Corday did but more on who she was: a very ungod-like murderer. Instead of inciting admiration for her firmness in accepting her punishment, this article argued that the punishment she suffered was just. According to the report, no matter her countenance during her trial or execution, Corday was not a martyr but a killer, not a republican but an ‘enemy of liberty.’ I do not mean to argue that *The Bee* supported the Terror or the actions of its revolutionaries (although it considered Marat and Corday’s judges as republicans), this article seemed to point out contradictions in other papers’ reactions to violence. It raised the question of why Corday’s assassination was seen as divine or angelic, when murder represented a terrible and horrific crime. In calling her “the bloody Corday,” the account went beyond discussing the proper trial and execution behavior of women victims to argue that death was the logical sentence for a woman who committed murder, as it was for men.¹⁶

¹⁶ *The Bee*, “For the Bee. Communication. Of Charlotte Corday,” November 8, 1797.

In contrast to the reports on her as a perpetrator, many Federalist sources lauded her for her firm, virtuous behavior in the face of death. No longer did she represent a woman who gave into her emotional, womanly ways, but instead embodied masculine traits of dignity and calm. Democratic-Republicans continued their attempts to rip apart her moral character and present her as a devilish figure. However, whereas most articles about her crime directly mentioned her murder of Marat, many did not reference the guillotine as the method of execution. Corday's demeanor and behavior became more important than the names of the judges who tried her, the place where she stood trial and died, and even the method of her death. Instead of suggesting that murdering women was terrible or unthinkable, Americans generally focused on how she carried herself throughout the ordeal. Some presented her as a valiant and noble figure, while others felt that her punishment matched her crime. The dialogue here between Americans centered not on the violence this woman endured, but how a respectable woman was supposed to act when put on trial and ultimately faced death. Although Republican papers disagreed with Federalist ones that Corday represented a virtuous woman, Republican accounts still communicated to women that behaving on uncontrolled passions was not acceptable for women who wanted to be political.

III

Madame Roland's execution represented one of the most written about by Americans not for any crime that she committed, but due to the political nature of her death. Born Marie-Jean Phlippon, she married Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière, who eventually became a revolutionary deputy with the Girondin faction, in 1780. Their marriage allowed Roland to cultivate her political and literary talents.¹⁷ Collaborating with her husband on a number of pamphlets and

¹⁷ Mona Ozouf, *Women's Words: Essays on French Singularity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 45.

other writings, Roland never attempted to step out of the bounds of French femininity by keeping her author identity a secret while alive.¹⁸ As the Rolands and the Girondin faction gained popularity throughout 1792 and 1793, the Jacobins came to see them as a threat to the Jacobin way of revolution. In June of 1792, Roland penned a letter to the king in an attempt to convince him to pledge his loyalty to the Revolution or risk increasing civil unrest in Paris. This letter cost her husband his ministry appointment, and after more instances of speaking on behalf of accused persons against the National Assembly, she was arrested in June of 1793.¹⁹ During her time in prison, she wrote her famous memoirs, *An Appeal to Impartial Posterity*, in which she constantly struggled to understand her place as a woman in politics. To reach the political and literary influence she gained during the 1790s, she hid behind her husband and in his shadow, whereas her memoirs represented her personal legacy.²⁰ For helping her husband escape from Paris and other political crimes, she was sent to the guillotine on November 9, 1793.²¹

The *General Advertiser* published a brief article entitled “Miscellaneous Intelligence” with two sentences about Roland’s trial. “Madame Roland is at present on her trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Her behaviour is firm, and her answers to the questions put to her [illegible] much presence of mind.”²² Although this report neither touched on her execution nor the reasons for her standing trial, it emphasized how she acted in front of the Tribunal. Standing firm and calm, the account presented Roland as a woman of sound character and intelligence. The title of the piece does not mention Roland or the trial, but the substance admired her demeanor at trial. Thus, what remained important for this article was not the events that led to the potentially violent end that Roland might meet, but how she carried herself during the

¹⁸ Ozouf, 47-52.

¹⁹ Ozouf, 45.

²⁰ Ozouf, 62-63.

²¹ Ozouf, 45.

²² *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), “Miscellaneous Intelligence,” January 24, 1794.

judicial proceedings. As a Federalist source, this article communicated to American women that if this woman could remain virtuous under extreme duress, then American women could do the same in every day life, especially if they wanted to be political like Roland.²³

On the same day as the previous article, *The Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser* fleetingly touched on Roland's trial. Unlike the *General Advertiser*, however, its report alluded to the possibility of a violent end to Roland's life. "The wife of Roland is shortly to appear before the Revolutionary Tribunal, to give information respecting the retreat of her husband, or to undergo the punishment which was reserved for that ex-minister."²⁴ Not even referring to Madame Roland by her own name, the article highlighted the political link between Roland and her husband, in which Monsieur Roland was the more public figure. Although not acknowledging that Madame Roland helped her husband with any of his political platform, the article did not explicitly suggest that the potential for Roland to receive her husband's punishment was outlandish or unreasonable. This article applauded her decision to save her husband by not revealing his whereabouts and remain loyal to him as her rightful duty as a woman. Contrary to the previous report, the focus of this account was Monsieur Roland, not Madame Roland who actually stood trial, in part for his crimes.

An article in the *Hampshire and Berkshire Chronicle* printed a section of Roederer's "History of the Tyranny of Robespierre" that provided a portrait of Madame Roland. "Though certain of the fate that awaited her, her fortitude was not shaken. She had passed the bloom of youth, but still possessed many charms. Her shape was tall and elegant; her countenance was lovely and intelligent; but her misfortunes and imprisonment had impressed on it the marks of melancholy... Her language was that of a true Republican... There was moments, however, in

²³ Stewart, 886.

²⁴ *The Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, "Execution of Philippe Egalite," January 24, 1794.

which the woman prevailed, and she was seen to weep bitterly at the mention of her husband and her daughter... On the day when she was interrogated, she showed great fortitude... On the day on which sentence of death was passed on her, she dressed herself in white, and with unusual care... When sentence was passed, she [illegible] much joy. She was ordered to be executed in company with a man whose fortitude was inferior to her own... As soon as she arrived at the place of execution, she bowed to the statue of Liberty, and exclaimed—‘Oh, Liberty! what crimes are committed in thy name.’”²⁵

Though this article was not the first American printing of Roederer’s words, the newspaper seemingly agreed with his characterization of Roland. More than other articles, this report touched on the violence of Roland’s execution in references to “death” and “place of execution.” As a Federalist source, it probably used this information to convince its readers of the horrifying nature of the violence in France, even though it was printed a year after the end of the Terror.²⁶ Furthermore, this article highlighted the proper behaviors of woman facing the public at a trial and execution when it detailed the inappropriately feminine act of crying. Although it did not scorn her for this momentary lapse, the report generally favored her “fortitude” and strong countenance. The comparison of Madame Roland to a lesser man suggested that women who exhibited strength and firmness in the face of death could be considered worthier of the title ‘Republican’ than their male counterparts. Again, Roland’s behavior became more important than the French men or circumstances that led to her trial and death.

In the “Sketch of the Biographical Part of ‘The Secret History of the French Revolution’,” *The Time Piece, and Literary Companion* details different trials and actions of the

²⁵ *Hampshire and Berkshire Chronicle*, “Paris, Jan. 5,” May 11, 1795.

²⁶ Stewart, 877.

Revolutionary Tribunal, including Roland's story. "We have now come to a period of the revolution when patriotism consiled in dirty linen, ragged, slovenly apparel, cropt hair, and a woollen red cap. The nation became precisely the *round-heads* of Oliver Cromwell's time... At this same period one of the most wonderful women that France ever produced terminated her existence on a scaffold; this was madame Roland, the minister's lady. She maintained a great character, and superior talents of more than one kind. When several individuals were sentenced together to the guillotine, they could only be executed separately...so that he whose turn came last had to suffer a punishment almost equal to death itself, every time he saw the fatal axe fall, and the blood flow over the scaffold. To die first was counted a great favor; and this was granted to madame Roland, in consideration of her sex; but when she saw the despair, and trouble of an unfortunately companion in death, she begged the executioner, that her companion might suffer first."²⁷

From the first words of this section that presented the French "patriots" as dirty and disheveled and compared them to Oliver Cromwell's men, readers could tell that this article did not like or trust the Terror or its leaders. As with the preceding article, this one mentioned the terrifying and violent guillotine in its discussion of the process of executing multiple people. However, in passively stating that Roland "terminated her existence on a scaffold," the article removed agency from the Tribunal and Jacobins in deciding to end her life. Roland did not commit suicide, as this phrase suggested; the judges at her trial sentenced her to death. Interestingly, this Democratic-Republican source did not agree with its counterparts in their reverence of the Terror revolutionaries, seen in the negative portrayal of them and emphasis on

²⁷ *The Time Piece, and Literary Companion*, "Sketch of the Biographical Part of " the Secret History of the French Revolution," Being a Specimen of the Author's," May 10, 1797.

the violence of this affair.²⁸ Yet, she retained her calm and firm countenance, and was even granted the first spot of execution! It later revealed that she allowed the person after her to take her spot, but only to prevent any further suffering for this “companion.” Though this article discussed the inherent violence of execution by guillotine during the Terror, it still placed Roland’s behavior and character in the spotlight. With no mention of her crime or her trial, the article chose to remember Roland’s death not for the men and circumstances that brought it about, but for her courageous and steadfast actions.

After her death in 1793, Americans remembered and celebrated Madame Roland’s life by paying tribute to her writings. The *Hampshire Gazette* (Federalist) published an article entitled “Character of Brissot, traced by Madame Roland, who was intimately acquainted with him, and who was so admirable a judge of character” in 1795.²⁹ Although the subject matter of this particular article is not important, the headline gave tribute to Roland for not only being a friend of Brissot, but also for possessing sound and correct moral judgment. Similarly, Dover, New Hampshire’s *Sun* (Federalist) printed a transcribed letter that included a brief sketch of Thomas Paine written by Madame Roland.³⁰ “As some of our readers may be curious to know that character which the late Mr. PAINE has acquired in France, I send you a slight sketch made by Madame ROLAND, the wife of the minister of that name so famous for his letter to the king of the French... It is taken from the second part of her historical notes, published in Paris by LOUVET.”³¹

Though more focused on her relationship to her husband than the *Hampshire Gazette*’s article, the *Sun* considered her writings as “historical notes,” suggesting that she represented

²⁸ Stewart, 882.

²⁹ *Hampshire Gazette*, “Character of Brissot, traced by Madame Roland, who was intimately acquainted with him, and who,” November 11, 1795; Stewart, 876.

³⁰ Stewart, 877.

³¹ *Sun*, “Columbia,” February 17, 1796.

more than a wife. Americans, thus, wanted to read Roland's writing and thought it distinguished enough to reprint in newspapers and discuss in letters. John Quincy Adams, in two letters to John Adams in 1797, agreed that Roland was a good judge of Thomas Paine's character while Paine stayed in France.³² In a letter from John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, also in 1796, John placed Madame Roland's memoirs, for their constant reprinting, on the political and literary level of Louvet (a self-proclaimed philosophe and revolutionary), Dumourier (a French general during the Revolution), and Sieyes (a Catholic abbey and writer).³³ Americans, thus, considered Roland important not just her role as the wife of a revolutionary politician, but they also thought her writings significant enough to discuss and reprint many times. Politicians' wives in America served very important roles during the American Revolution and into the early republic. As such, American men and women probably honored Roland for her unbreakable loyalty to her husband and even her political prowess and connectedness for the assistance it provided her husband.

As with many of the reports about Charlotte Corday, Madame Roland's behavior and countenance proved more important than her violent end or the events that led up to it. Even though Roland committed no violent crime, unlike Charlotte Corday, they both received admiration in articles, with Roland's being more consistent across newspapers and individuals. Roland's political connections appeared as a positive attribute in the accounts of her execution, not as a gender perversion that one might expect to see in American sources. Though her importance was commonly linked with her husband, sources also praised her independent writings and republished them numerous times. Some articles suggested that Roland received

³² "John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 3 Apr. 1797," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-01-02-1379> [last update: 2014-12-01]) and "John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 11 Sep. 1797," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-01-02-1538> [last update: 2014-12-01]).

³³ "John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, 28 Feb. 1796," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-01-02-1016> [last update: 2014-12-01]).

preferential treatment due to her sex, but none of them seemed outraged that this woman was sent to the guillotine to suffer such a violent end. Brave and firm countenance in the face of death appeared more note- and newsworthy than the men or method included in her execution. Thus, Americans contemplated to a greater extent the actions and behavior of women than the actual violence experienced by these women.

IV

Born in 1755 as the Archduchess of Austria, Marie Antoinette was the daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis I and his wife, Maria Theresa.³⁴ Maria Theresa believed that the marriage of Antoinette to the Dauphin of France, Louis, would result in an alliance between Austria and France. In 1770, Antoinette married Louis and she became the Dauphine of France until 1774 when Louis ascended the throne as Louis XVI.³⁵ Although Antoinette enchanted the citizens of France at first, her entire rule as queen was marred by distrust and dislike by the French people. They blamed the financial problems of France on her luxurious dresses and spending habits, which they believed depleted money from the national treasury.³⁶ Her foreignness and inability to ever fully assimilate to French language and customs made many think that she and her mother wanted to overthrow the French crown and put it under Austrian rule, otherwise known as the Austrian Plot. Maintaining a close relationship with her brother, Joseph II, who replaced his father as Holy Roman Emperor, did not help her situation, as she was partially blamed for war with Austria and the attempted flight of the royal family.³⁷ She was implicated in numerous scandals, such as the Diamond Necklace Affair, even when there existed

³⁴ Marie Antoinette 1755-1793. 2007. *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender: Culture Society History* 3: 945-947.

³⁵ Kaiser, 586-587.

³⁶ John R Cole, *Between the Queen and the Cabby: Olympe de Gouges's Rights of Woman* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 55-56.

³⁷ Kaiser, 587-588, 600-601.

no evidence of her involvement.³⁸ The French people were not opposed to kings or queens during the initial years of her reign, but Antoinette's foreign background and decision not to adhere to French customs of royalty provided part of the fire for the French Revolution. Marie Antoinette did not receive all of the bad publicity, but the people never forgot or forgave her foreignness. She was guillotined on October 16, 1793.³⁹

Reports of violence, or threatened violence, toward the queen dated back to the beginning of the Revolution in 1789. An article in *The New-York Weekly Museum*, reprinted from a London source, provided a description of the events of the taking of the Bastille on July 14. After explaining the decapitation of the governor of Paris, the article reads, "The Queen and the Count d'Artois, are both fled, and a reward is offered for their heads."⁴⁰ Although the validity of the facts in this article cannot be ascertained, it seemed even in 1789 the English and Americans considered the potential killing of the queen by the French as a genuine possibility. Other papers did not take accounts of violence against the queen so seriously. *The Independent Gazetteer* published an article, also from an English source, that reported an attempted attack on the queen. "Some of the morning papers [in London], that delight in the magnifying, forged an absurd and improbable account of the violence attempted on the French Queen, of the populace assailing her apartments in the dead of night, and leading her with halter about the Place de Greve: the truth is, that far from violence having been used, not so much as an insult was offered to her Majesty's person."⁴¹ Since this source did not originate in America, but in England, it highlighted how newspapers were becoming politicized during the 1780s and 90s and how they used foreign reports to further these hardening political ideologies. This article used the report to make the

³⁸ Cole, 55-57, 74-75.

³⁹ Kaiser, 602.

⁴⁰ *The New-York Weekly Museum*, "London, July 14. News from France," September 19, 1789.

⁴¹ *The Independent Gazetteer*, "European Affairs. London, October 16," December 12, 1789.

Revolution appear less violent than others portrayed, thus garnering more support for the Revolution.

Abigail Adams Smith wrote in a letter to her mother, Abigail Adams, about the encroachment of the Duke of Brunswick's forces on Paris. "Upon his nearer approach, I think the King and Queen will fall a sacrifice to the fury of the *mobites*, and is it not even better they should, than that the people should be annihilated by a general massacre?"⁴² Her letter represented one of the few sources that pondered the fate of Louis and Marie Antoinette, instead of explicitly supporting death, imprisonment, or exile. It seemed to suggest that the death of the monarchs in protection of the citizens of Paris—who had placed those monarchs under arrest—might be the best solution to the problems in France. Smith went on to say that she heard numerous contradicting reports of the current situation in France, but she believed and trusted the shocking accounts coming from England. Though Smith does not concentrate her question solely on Marie Antoinette, she, unlike many of the reports to follow, contemplated the affect the death of the monarchs would have on France and its Revolution.

For accounts of Marie Antoinette, American newspapers relied more heavily on English sources than for Corday or Roland, though not for a lack of their own discontent with monarchy. Even before the Terror, many Americans and English began to distrust the Jacobins to the point where they implicated Jacobin Club members in crimes against the queen. *The Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette* printed an article, originally from London, accusing the Jacobins of poisoning the queen. "The rapid decay observable in the Queen of France is attributed to

⁴² "Abigail Adams Smith to Abigail Adams, 13–29 September 1792," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-09-02-0171> [last update: 2014-12-01]). Source: *The Adams Papers*, Adams Family Correspondence, vol. 9, *January 1790–December 1793*, ed. C. James Taylor, Margaret A. Hogan, Karen N. Barzilay, Gregg L. Lint, Hobson Woodward, Mary T. Claffey, Robert F. Karachuk, and Sara B. Sikes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 304–308.

poison, secretly administered by the Jacobines.” Using the word ‘attributed’ could have meant either that the London newspaper was simply relaying rumors or that it was explicitly blaming the Jacobins. Again, the validity of this report remains unimportant, but the account gave no indication how it felt about this action. Other than pointing out the deteriorating state of the queen, it did not condemn or support the actions against Antoinette. However, the next sentence about the king suggested that the newspaper was upset about the treatment of Louis. “The King who loved good eating and drinking as well as any of his subjects, is now supplied with either a very scanty portions; instead of his favorite food, boiled chickens, he must now be content with a-la-mode beef; and as to drink, they do not even furnish him with clean water.”⁴³ As opposed to the brief mention of Antoinette, the report practically breaks down Louis’ eating habits and how he must—unfortunately—go without what he loves. Some sources often emphasized the inhumane actions of and treatment by French revolutionaries during this period. The attempt to implicate the Jacobins in a plot against the queen was overshadowed by the king’s lackluster food options, signaling the king’s plight as more important than the queen’s life.

Just as the English newspapers participated in discussions and debates between themselves about the accurate way to portray the Revolution and Antoinette, American sources also quarreled amongst themselves as to the ‘true’ events of the 1790s. The *National Gazette* reprinted an article from a Boston paper that addressed how Federalist newspapers presented the events of the Revolution and attempted to correct their mistakes.

“Certain papers in this town, and elsewhere, seem as if they were employed to publish those matters (and those only) which place the French in the most disagreeable point of view: and the tear of sympathy is often excited, but accounts fabricated in England, respecting the cruelty of the French to their *murdered*

⁴³ *The Columbian Mirror And Alexandria Gazette*, “Foreign Intelligence,” December 15, 1792.

monarch, to the beautiful and *innocent queen*, and to the pretty little *good-natured* dauphin. Thus we see accounts published with great avidity and a degree of assurance, setting forth in the most pathetic terms, the barbarous and savage manner in which the king was informed of his sentence, and the still more savage manner of his execution—that the queen was thrown into a *dismal dungeon*, with common malefactors, and afterwards most cruelly executed... But far from their being true, our last accounts from our republican allies, contradict in positive terms every such malicious, false and infamous assertion. The queen and her family were still in the Temple, and were treated with as much tenderness as possible.”⁴⁴

This article focused on presenting the actions of the French revolutionaries during the executions of Antoinette and Louis in a favorable light, not on the reasoning or decision to execute them. Instead of arguing whether they should have been executed or not, it sought to negate the claims of other newspapers as to the improper and violent behavior of the revolutionaries. The first article to mention the role of the French deputies in the execution of these women, it downplayed the actual violence of the guillotine. It highlighted the trend in American papers during this period of using reports on events in France to attempt to set and control public opinion about the Revolution, its revolutionaries, and the female victims of the Terror. Furthermore, this report suggested that for representations of the queen, more than any other individual, newspapers followed their political leanings.

In a letter from Alexander Hamilton to George Washington in April of 1793, Antoinette’s execution appeared as a mere post-script. “P.S. I this instant learn that there are English Papers in Town by way of St Vincents which mention that on the 8th of February The late Queen of France

⁴⁴ *National Gazette*, “Reflections on Various Subjects. from a Boston Paper,” May 11, 1793.

was also put to Death after a Trial & Condemnation.”⁴⁵ The date he recorded was incorrect, as she was not executed until October 16 of 1793. In the rest of the letters for 1793 and early 1794 between Hamilton and Washington, no further mention of Antoinette appeared or an attempt to correct the date of execution, owing perhaps to extenuating circumstances that caused both men to learn of the true date at a later time. Or maybe they discussed the matter in person at a later date. However, it remains interesting that Hamilton would not correct such an egregious error, especially when sent to the president of the United States, George Washington. Though this did not suggest that Hamilton or Washington disliked Antoinette, it also did not indicate that they held her in very high respect.

Starting in 1794, more newspapers began to reflect on the actions and emotions of Marie Antoinette, with mostly positive reactions. *The Salem Gazette* provided a detailed article her trial and execution. “Yesterday morning the one all-powerful and beautiful ANTOINETTE, consort of the unfortunate Louis, King of France, the daughter, sister, and aunt, of Emperors, was brought like the meanest malefactor from the vile prison of the Conciergerie, and place at the criminal bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal.” After listing the crimes of which she was accused, the article printed comments exchanged between the queen and the president of the Tribunal, according to witnesses. “After the examination had closed, the Queen was soon condemned... When the sentence was read, the Queen cast down her eyes, and did not raise them again... this morning (the 16th) this unhappy victim of demonic fury was ignominiously carried to the place of execution in a common cart... The Queen was in white loose dress—but they had tied her arms behind her. As she passed along, the multitude frequently cried out ‘bravo.’ At the place of

⁴⁵ “To George Washington from Alexander Hamilton, 5 April 1793,” Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-12-02-0330> [last update: 2014-12-01]). Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 12, *16 January 1793–31 May 1793*, ed. Christine Sternberg Patrick and John C. Pinheiro. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005, pp. 412–414.

execution, she looked firmly round her on all sides...and on the scaffold preserved her natural dignity of mind.”⁴⁶ Though this article addressed the executioners of Antoinette, it did not discuss the violence of her death. Yet as with Corday and Roland, the article focused on Antoinette’s countenance and demeanor. This Federalist newspaper was one that the *National Gazette* report had earlier berated for its “false” and “egregious” charges against the French revolutionaries.⁴⁷ Although this article presented Antoinette in a sympathetic light, it did not lament her execution, but just the manner in which the French carried it out. By contrasting the firmness of Marie Antoinette against the revolutionary savages, this article attempted not to highlight the wrongs of executing a queen, but the inhumane actions of the Tribunal against her. The comments on Antoinette’s behavior were not meant to suggest that she did not deserve to die, but just that such a firm woman should have received better treatment.

The *Connecticut Journal* published an article that presented Antoinette in similar terms: “When she heard her sentence read, she did not show the smallest alteration in her countenance, and left the Hall without saying a single word to the judges or to the people... The Queen was conducted to the condemned hold in the prison of the Conciergerie... At half past 11 in the morning, Marie Antoinette was brought out of the prison, dressed in a white dishabille (outfit). Like other malefactors, she was conducted upon a common cart, to the place of execution. Her beautiful hair from behind was entirely cut off and her hands were tied behind her back... An immense mob, especially woman crowded the streets insulting the Queen and vociferating ‘Long Live the Republic’... The sufferings which she sustained during her captivity had much altered her appearance... The Queen without

⁴⁶ *The Salem Gazette*, “Trial and Execution of the Queen. From Paris, Oct. 16,” January 21, 1794.

⁴⁷ Stewart, 877.

anguish or bigotry...her spirits were neither elevated nor depressed... She even showed a kind of satisfaction in looking for the moment which might rid her of her miserable existence... She ascended the scaffold with seeming haste & impatience... At half past twelve o'clock the guillotine severed her head from her body... The executioner lifted and showed the blood-streaming head from the four different corners of the scaffold...⁴⁸

Unlike the previous report, this one did not discuss the revolutionaries as much but instead focused more, than any other report, on the violence of the execution of Antoinette. It described the severing of her head and how the executioner held it up for every person in the crowd to see, which served as another method by which to show the cruelties of the Terror and its revolutionaries. Without explicitly labeling the Tribunal and the French deputies as savages, this Federalist source used the cruelty shown to Antoinette, to make a larger statement about the horrible conditions of the French Revolution during this time period.⁴⁹ Yet again, it did not make any attempt to suggest that the queen should have been spared, but lauded her strong behavior, even if her appearance had 'suffered.' It seemed that presentations of the queen's execution provided newspapers and individuals the opportunity not to talk about killing monarchs, but about the current state and direction of the French Revolution.

The Mirrour of Concord, New Hampshire further expressed sympathy for the "last sufferings of Marie Antoinette" in a reprinted article from the *Georgia Gazette*. "Her sentence was hawked about in all the dens of the Jacobin faction before it had even been pronounced by the Revolution Tribunal, and we are informed, that Chaumette (Attorney of the Commons of Paris) formed the nefarious project to make the Queen suffer by the depositions of her own

⁴⁸ *Connecticut Journal*, "France. Municipality of Paris, October 19," February 6, 1794.

⁴⁹ Stewart, 870.

child.” For the next paragraph, the article explained further Chaumette’s ugly disposition toward the Queen. “The poor Queen was confined in an obscure and close room; her bed consisted of straw, one mattress, and an old and tattered coverlid, and shameful to tell! the four gendarmes never quitted her chamber even when decency required their absence. Her food was such as was given to common prisoners, her health was visibly declining; her hair became grey; and the monsters, fearing lest a natural death might deprive them of their wretched victim, hurried her to the scaffold.”⁵⁰ In the same vein as the previous two articles, this Federalist report used Antoinette’s treatment during her trial and execution and her changing physical and mental state to comment negatively on the behavior of the French revolutionaries.⁵¹ These articles did not present the execution of the queen as the problem, but the manner in which the French went about the sentencing and execution. Juxtaposing Antoinette’s womanly, yet strong and steadfast, nature against the awful treatment by her imprisoners and judges allowed newspapers and individuals the opportunity to discuss their growing dissatisfaction with the Revolution under the guise of Marie Antoinette’s “sufferings.” These publishers and individuals might have felt sympathy for the queen’s plight, but they rarely debated the repercussions or consequences of killing monarchs.

More than any other woman in this project, the American accounts of the execution of Marie Antoinette focused on the violence of the Terror revolutionaries and their guillotine. Though Americans did not unanimously refer to the year between 1793 and 1794 as “the Terror,” some newspapers acknowledged the violent turn of the Revolution during that period. I argue when the Americans painted Antoinette in a sympathetic light, they did so to juxtapose a woman of fortitude against the barbarous nature of the Tribunal and French deputies. American

⁵⁰ *The Mirrour*, “Some Particulars Relative to the Last Sufferings of Marie Antoinette,” May 19, 1794.

⁵¹ Stewart, 877.

sources did not use descriptions of the revolutionaries' cruelty toward Antoinette to argue for the immorality of the execution of a monarch, but to convince their readers of the negative, savage turn taken by the revolutionaries during the Terror. Other articles, however, used representations of Antoinette to showcase that the Revolution and its revolutionaries remained merciful throughout this time. As with violence, the reports about the execution of the queen followed political party lines more than for any other woman or case. The dividing lines, however, were not for or against the queen, but as supportive or negative toward the male revolutionaries. Articles about Marie Antoinette manipulated depictions of violence for their own ends. Numerous accounts originated in London sources, so American papers used these reports to fit in to their own partisan politics. Antoinette's execution offered American sources the platform to understand and communicate their feelings about the Terror and the direction of the Revolution more so than the legitimacy or ethics of killing a monarch.

Each of the cases analyzed in this chapter possessed close similarities and extreme differences. At least one article in each section (virtually all for Roland) presented these women as strong and firm, with all but Antoinette considered as dying for a noble cause. Unlike with the general reports, Roland, and Corday, the American sources seemed not to generally revere Antoinette as a woman, but as the most extreme example of the lengths and depths of French revolutionary savagery. Similarly in all of the accounts, the correctness or necessity of the deaths of each woman were never debated or discussed in any deep manner. For women being executed or experiencing similar acts of violence, apparently Americans considered a respectable countenance as more important than the reasons or events leading up to the death. Articles about Corday and Roland typically shied away from commenting on the violence of the guillotine, but

reports about general women and Antoinette included (sometimes) detailed descriptions of the terror and horror that was the guillotine. However, the American depiction of the violence used against these women served not to heighten or incite more sympathy for them, but to serve as a metaphor for the state of the French Revolution. Most American sources that presented the violence as nonexistent or insubstantial belonged to the Democratic-Republicans, and they sought to convince their readers that the Revolution was not barbarous or too cruel. On the other hand, Federalists typically depicted accounts of violence to paint the Revolution in a very negative light. Unlike with the reports of women as perpetrators, therefore, reactions to women as victims tended to follow political lines more closely. The violence of female perpetrators and victims will be explored in-depth in the next chapter, as well as the cultural, social, and political underpinnings for their representations in American sources.

Chapter Three – American Reactions

“Saturday last, the 14th of July, the Anniversary of the French Revolution, was noticed in this city, by demonstrations of joy. The vessels in the harbor were dressed in their colors, and a French vessel saluted the day by frequent firings. Several select companies celebrated the day in a convivial manner.—And the evening was closed by a brilliant display of rockets and other fire-works, which met with the greatest applause from a vast concourse of spectators.—The following toasts were drank by the gentlemen assembled at O’ELLERS’S Hotel, after partaking of a splendid repast.—

1. The French Nation; their Constitution, and King.
2. May the Freedom which dawned on this day, encircle the globe.
3. Victory to the French armies over the foes to Liberty.
4. Liberty or Death.
- ...
8. The Fair of France and America; may each weave a Cap of Liberty for a husband.
9. Peace to all the world: May it learn to prize and preserve it.
- ...
11. The United States: May they prove an asylum to Patriots of every part of the world.
12. The Rights of Men.
13. The political virtue of Mirabeau: May they cover his foibles.
- ...
17. Le Jour.—The day.”¹

Published in *The Independent Gazetteer*, this article highlighted the sense of fraternity Americans, especially the Democratic-Republicans, felt with the French nation. Though the article mentioned toasts made to American causes during the celebration, it also used terms like “patriot,” “liberty,” and “freedom” to signal a common interest and bond between the Americans’ nation-building project and the French Revolution. The account included a brief homage to the French king, suggesting that this source supported the French revolutionaries’ treatment of the king, though neither political faction in America supported monarchical

¹ *The Independent Gazetteer*, “Anniversary of the French Revolution,” July 21, 1792.

government. However, this period of widespread approval and identification with the Revolution proved short lived.

Even though Federalists increasingly communicated their discontent and disillusionment with the violent turn of the Revolution, politically aligned American newspapers and their readers feverishly followed the events of the Revolution.² As French women largely participated in and were affected by the violence of the French Revolution, especially during the Reign of Terror, American sources widely commented on their involvement. Dialogue surrounding the violent presence of women in the Revolution not only revealed American attitudes toward the Revolution and French women, but also their expectations for the proper behavior and place of American women. American opinions and reactions to French women as perpetrators and victims of violence were, in turn, just as affected by the shifting cultural and political ideas in France as they were by domestic fluctuation in American cultural and political values.

This chapter incorporates the previously examined newspaper trends into the political and cultural context of 1790s America to understand what shaped elite American attitudes toward French women and violence and the extent to which their opinions influenced behavioral prescriptions in reports. In the first section, the differences and similarities in Federalist and Democratic-Republican ideology are reviewed to help determine what conditioned attitudes toward women and violence in the Revolution. It also includes examinations of the growing fissures between the two political factions as well as their respective reactions to the escalating violence of the French Revolution. Based upon trends explored in the two chapters, I argue that newspapers did not always strictly adhere to their party lines. Accounts within both Federalist and Democratic-Republican newspapers possessed similar underlying themes, including horror at the use of violence by mobs of women and concentration on the countenances and behavior of

² Cleves, 1-19.

guillotined women. Though they might have chosen to emphasize different details, such as Federalists harping on the cruelty and savagery of the revolutionaries and the Democratic-Republicans on the marital status of Corday, all of these reports communicated to American women that if they were going to be political then they must embody the masculine traits of virtue and restrained emotions. In essence, feminine behaviors of uncontrolled passions, seen in the barbarous actions of the crowds of women, should and would be condemned, while those women who behaved like stoic men received praise. Furthermore, by tirelessly focusing on these women's firm, upright behavior during the extreme circumstances of the guillotine, American papers suggested that American women under less pressure should be able to maintain the grace of masculine virtue. Accounts of French women, of course, were not the only factor in the attempt to define women's roles in America in the 1790s, but they did influence elite American views toward women, especially their involvement in violence and politics. More often than not, newspapers tried to dissuade American women from rebellious behavior, which was partly fueled by the widely championed medical theory that "proved" women were not fit for politics.

A comparison between what these newspapers and elite sources tried to instill as appropriate/proper behavior and how women really acted and what they actually did during the 1790s and afterwards forms the second section. With the American Revolution, women had been physically introduced to violence and often participated in violent events. The French Revolution allowed women to observe the political potential of mass women's movements and their use of violence.³ So, how were women's actions during the 1790s and afterward at odds with what those American newspapers prescribed as proper female behavior? Though American papers relentlessly used their papers for the didactic purpose of prescribing appropriate behaviors and instilling correct lessons, American politicians failed to fully realize the political potential of

³ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 1-10; Branson, 1-20, 55-100.

women. If French women has the capability and capacity to act like men in public, then it would follow that American women could too.

I

When it came to ideas of political participation and the threat of French violence on America, the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans sharply disagreed. In the early years, both sides acknowledged the presence of violence and considered it an anomaly, not a political tool.⁴ Whether reported on in 1789 or 1799, though, newspapers on all sides, including independent papers, condemned French women’s participation in violence. The Democratic newspaper, *Edward’s Baltimore Daily Advertiser* chastised a group of women who attacked another woman in the streets as violent “assailants” and “ferocious.”⁵ Similarly, the Federalist newspaper, *The Mercury* noted that women formed “the most ferocious part of the mob” that attacked a Parisian general and described them as cannibals.⁶ However, as historian Rachel Cleves notes, “When news of the violent turn of events in France reached the United States in fall 1792, the crisis acted like a stabilizing agent in the mix, striating the political culture into clearly divided and identifiable camps.”⁷ Beginning in September of 1792, with the September Massacres, the events in France began to politically and culturally polarize America.⁸ Partly as a reaction to the violent turn of the French Revolution and its revolutionaries, the Federalist platform rested on the desire to implement a type of restricted republicanism where political participation was based solely on voting and speeches—open only to white males of course. On the other hand, the fledgling Democratic-Republicans wanted to take to the streets in mass demonstrations in praise of the

⁴ Cleves, 62.

⁵ *Edward’s Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, “Foreign Intelligence,” January 4, 1794.

⁶ *The Mercury*, “Commotions in France,” June 2 to June 5, 1795.

⁷ Cleves, 59.

⁸ *Ibid*, 1-19, 58-103.

French Revolution.⁹ Women were not given individual rights or even considered full citizens in either ideological stance, but were still expected to maintain full national loyalty to their respective parties. The presence of women in the violence of the French Revolution affected Americans' views on a number of topics including "democracy, violence, war," and women.¹⁰ A widespread and pervasive sentiment of anti-Jacobinism swept America in the 1790s. The Federalists were quick to attribute grotesque violent actions and the failure of the Revolution on the Jacobin party and their allies, whereas the Democratic-Republicans only adopted the discourse in the late 1790s as a way to incriminate and denounce the Federalists.¹¹

No Americans felt joy or admiration for the taking of thousands of lives over the course of the French Revolution, but all political factions lacked any widespread condemnation of the killing of French women either.¹² The articles seemed not to indicate that these female victims were bad or even guilty of anything, except Charlotte Corday, so why were some not focused on the execution of women? This trend is partially explained by the fact that these women were first and foremost French women, so Americans, especially men, did not feel a large sense of attachment to them that they had for Abigail Adams, Dolley Madison, or Martha Washington. Many Americans, including Thomas Jefferson, believed that French women were licentious and too involved in politics.¹³ In a letter from Jefferson to George Washington in December of 1788, Jefferson expressed his distaste of French women's involvement in politics within a discussion of the proposed reforms of the French Notables, a congregation of mostly noblemen, clergy, and some very wealthy members of the Third Estate. "How far they can proceed, in the end, towards a thorough reformation of abuse, cannot be foreseen. In my opinion a kind of influence, which

⁹ Ibid, 4.

¹⁰ Ibid, 6.

¹¹ Ibid, 93-94, 103.

¹² Cleves, 59.

¹³ Allgor, 20-22

none of their plans of reform take into account, will elude them all; I mean the influence of women in the government. The manners of the nation allow them to visit, alone, all persons in office, to solicit the affairs of the husband, family, or friends, and their solicitations bid defiance to laws and regulations... Nor can such an one, without the evidence of his own eyes, believe in the desperate state to which things are reduced in this country from the omnipotence of an influence which, fortunately for the happiness of the sex itself, does not endeavor to extend itself in our country beyond the domestic line.”¹⁴ From the women who held and frequented French salons to the Queen to the violent mobs and individuals, Americans felt that French women challenged the male dominated hierarchy of the political realm.

This trend was also explained by the fact that the women sentenced to execution exhibited the virtuous traits of men by remaining upright, firm, graceful, and calm instead of falling victim to their passions, as was expected of the feminine woman. Corday (for Federalists), Roland, and Antoinette jettisoned the stereotypical female traits that made them unfit for political action and received praise from American papers. So instead of focusing simply on the death of these women as a warning not to imitate their actions, Federalist and Democratic-Republican papers used examples of these women’s virtue to instill a deeper lesson. Women’s political place could be accepted as long as they embodied masculine traits of virtue and did not behave like women. Though they exhibited no opinions that these women deserved to die, some Federalists, Democrats utilized the fate of these women to endorse valuable traits in women: firm, dignified, compliant, and quiet.

¹⁴ “From Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 4 December 1788,” Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-14-02-0111> [last update: 2015-02-20]). Source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 14, 8 October 1788–26 March 1789, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, pp. 328–332.

The “new” Federalist party of the 1790s “believed that human depravity made violence an ever-present threat to civil society” and “reacted fearfully to the danger of Jacobinism in France and at home.”¹⁵ In their writings, Federalists often pondered the potential ramifications of the French revolutionary violence on American society.¹⁶ Thus, their general condemnation of French women’s participation in violence stemmed from the potential to disrupt or dismantle the virtuous nature of American society. As seen in *The Mercury* article mentioned above, the women who participated in mob actions no longer represented informed humans, but rabid and ferocious animals that attempted to eat others alive. These women completely gave into their passions and lacked any firmness or grace. However, unlike previous historical notions of strict adherence to party lines, Federalist newspapers occasionally applauded women’s presence in potentially violent situations. An article in *The New Hampshire Gazette* commended the actions of women at Montpelier who trained in the methods of combat and wore men’s clothes.¹⁷ This sentiment closely matched one of the forms of acceptable violence for women as Laurel Thatcher Ulrich identifies: women who acted as surrogates when a town or group could not or would not act.¹⁸ Although Ulrich describes this as a characteristic of colonial American life, this idea about women and violence still applied to America in the early republic. Federalists largely supported the nonviolent actions of women, such as sewing and packing knapsacks. In *The New Hampshire Gazette*, women were praised for their efforts to “keep alive the flame of patriotism” by wearing the national cockade on their caps.¹⁹ As women could remain calm in these situations, they received praise in these roles.

¹⁵ Allgor, 59.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁷ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, “Cape-Francois,” August 20, 1793.

¹⁸ Ulrich, 194.

¹⁹ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, “From France-via Salem. From the Salem Gazette, of the Tuesday Last,” November 30, 1793.

Interestingly, the Federalists did not generally support Corday's assassination of Marat, even though they despised the violence of this Terror revolutionary, but did laud her for her virtuous behavior on trial and leading up to her execution. Even though she momentarily submitted to her disorderly, feminine ways, she ultimately corrected her mistake and virtuously carried herself. Therefore, the violent ways of women could be rectified by taking on more masculine traits of logic and counteract the potentially disastrous effects on American society.

Federalists used their reports of the death of common women, as well as those of Corday, Roland, and Antoinette, to portray the lawless and uncontrolled violence of the Reign of Terror, criticize the Jacobin revolutionaries, and communicate proper virtuous behavior for women. Especially in Federalist reports on Marie Antoinette, such as in the *Connecticut Journal*, newspapers constantly alluded to the harsh and unfair treatment of the Jacobins to their prisoners by making them ride in common carts, cutting their hair, keeping them tied up, and of course being subjected to the guillotine.²⁰ Accounts expressed sympathy for the executed women by describing them as suffering and suggesting that their punishment did not fit their crimes, but they largely seemed more concerned with the character of the women and their violent revolutionary judges. In juxtaposing the nonvirtuous, passionate behavior of the French deputies against the firm and graceful victims, these accounts signaled that not only could women act correctly and be accepted politics, but could be better than their male counterparts. The *Gazette of the United States AND DAILY EVENING ADVERTISER* and the *Connecticut Journal* used the term "suffering" to describe the deaths of a noblewoman and Marie Antoinette. An article in *The American Star, or, Historical, Political, Critical and Moral Journal* described the minor crimes for which some notable women were executed, including being in contact with emigrants and

²⁰ *Connecticut Journal*, "France. Municipality of Paris, October 19," February 6, 1794.

discussing pro-monarchy writings.²¹ Reports by Federalist newspapers communicated that execution, as a punishment, was viable for all genders. They also suggested that under these circumstances women should not act like women, but instead embody masculine virtue by acting upright, firm, and calm.

In response to the horrific violence committed by French men and women, historian Rachel Cleves argues that Federalists and other conservatives believed that a disciplined education would prevent Americans from falling into the same ‘anarchy.’²² Although only men would receive this instruction, women played a vital role as republican mothers and wives tasked with teaching this republican rhetoric. Americans believed that women needed to be informed enough “to converse with their husbands, teach their sons Republican ideals, run efficient households, and understand familial finances.”²³ This new ideology about women’s moral role presented women’s “political behavior as valuable rather than abnormal, as a source of strength to the Republic rather than an embarrassment.”²⁴ Stemming as well from the American social emphasis on masculine virtue, this system attempted to convince women to further demonstrate their virtue by becoming more logical. Though this slight bit of wiggle room allowed women to enter politics by acting like men, they still continued to exist outside of full citizenship with politicians and lawmakers expecting them to maintain their loyalty to the early Republic. American partisans presented women as important to the early republic, and they were, but politicians and conservatives did not want to extend the full arm of citizenship to women.

²¹ *The American Star, or, Historical, Political, Critical and Moral Journal*, “Extract of the Leyden Gazette, from the 7th of November, [Illegible] to - of the Same Month. Paris, November, 1793,” March 11, 1794.

²² Cleves, 9.

²³ Norton, 287.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 284.

Contrary to the Federalists, “Those who shared a more optimistic view of human nature saw the French Revolution—even during its most violent era—as holding the promise for a future of rational humane governance and supported the Democratic-Republican Party.”²⁵ Feeling more connected to the French Revolution, Democratic-Republicans typically rebutted Federalists’ negative reactions to the French and accused the Federalists of betraying the revolutionaries’ cause.²⁶ Instead of turning against the Revolution, they tried to persuade the American populace that things in France were really not as severe as the Federalists portrayed them, seen in the reports on the fair treatment of Marie Antoinette and the royal family from chapter two. Democratic-Republicans wanted to keep believing the in the republican nature of the Revolution, and they did so “by denying, apologizing, explaining or even applauding the violence” (except that of women).²⁷ Also, by buttressing the Federalists’ examples of French women trumping the revolutionaries in virtue, the Democratic-Republican papers tended to suggest that both parties remained calm and dignified, except in the case of Corday. In effect, their message to women to personify masculine virtue in the face of execution as well as their condemning of mob violence for its unbridled showcase of passion was eerily similar to that of the Federalists. Not that the Democratic-Republicans saw these French women as victims less than the Federalists, but they chose not to chastise the revolutionaries because of their ideological difference in supporting or ignoring the violence of the French Revolution. The *National Gazette* accused Federalist sources of being “employed to publish those matters...which place the French in the most disagreeable point of view... The queen and her family were still in the Temple, and were treated with as much tenderness as possible.”²⁸ Furthermore, from the

²⁵ Cleves, 59-60.

²⁶ Cleves, 8.

²⁷ Cleves, 75.

²⁸ *National Gazette*, “Reflections on Various Subjects. from a Boston Paper,” May 11, 1793.

beginning of the Revolution, Democratic-Republican sources constantly tried to convince their readers and all Americans that the Federalists were exaggerating their reports by downplaying any early threats of violence against Antoinette, as seen in *The Independent Gazetteer* from chapter two. Though the Democratic-Republicans ideologically supported a grassroots or out-of-doors style of politics, they passed extremely harsh judgment on the women who participated in these events. In effect, their opinions about and attitudes toward women in violence appeared more similar than different to those expressed by Federalists.

As mentioned earlier, the Democratic *Edward's Baltimore Daily Gazette* shared similar sentiments toward a crowd of women as the Federalist *The Mercury*. However, Republican newspapers repudiated the Federalist claim that Corday represented a martyr for the republican cause, and instead viewed her as evil and abominable, presumably because of her victim. They used the accounts about Corday to celebrate Marat as “the friend of the people” and make snide comments about her character. *The Bee* maintained that Corday’s behavior was immoral and inappropriate, as she was “deaf to every sentiment of justice or public good.”²⁹ Also for *The Bee*, Corday was a murderer and not some angelic savior and that Marat was the true Republican, not Corday.³⁰ For the Democratic-Republicans, unlike the Federalists, Corday committed too grievous a crime as she let her passions get away from her that could not be remedied in the end. However, the underlying message remained the same as in Federalist sources that feminine passion was bad and masculine virtue was good. Although Madame Roland belonged to the Jacobin’s rival party, the Girondist party, Republican newspapers, such as *The Time Piece*, and *Literary Companion*, lamented her death and named her “one of the most wonderful women in

²⁹ *The Bee*, “For the Bee. Communication. Of Charlotte Corday,” November 8, 1797.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

France.”³¹ The positive reception of Madame Roland signaled that those who leaned toward the Democratic-Republicans believed that a woman’s support for political factions was legitimate and acceptable. However, a woman acting on her political partisanship through violence (representing unbridled passion) could be and was criticized for steering too far away from the upright and firm characteristics of proper virtue for political women.³²

The anti-Jacobin rhetoric employed since 1792 by the Federalists, that equated Jacobin with mob violence, permeated Democratic-Republican writings by the end of the 1790s. “No longer did Republicans celebrate, dismiss, or excuse the violence of the Jacobin era; instead, they tried to turn the anti-Jacobin brush against their political and religious enemies.”³³ Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, though still highly attentive to the events in France, began accusing each other of harboring bloodthirsty sentiments and attempting to bring anarchy and violence to America.³⁴ Opinions and attitudes toward foreign and domestic women became embroiled in this political war of words. Though Democratic-Republicans appeared more sympathetic toward mass demonstrations in the streets, that would involve women, they passed some of the harshest judgments on women, suggesting that their loyalty truly lay in the organized—albeit morally wrong or reprehensible—actions of the male revolutionaries, including those involved in the Terror.

Generally, the Democratic-Republicans and Federalists agreed on the horrifying nature of common women’s mob violence as well as what traits remained virtuous: upright, firm, grace, calm. Furthermore, neither Federalist nor Democratic nor independent Americans respected the unorganized or unruly use of violence, so they considered the uncontrolled emotions of these

³¹ *The Time Piece, and Literary Companion*, “Sketch of the Biographical Part of " the Secret History of the French Revolution," Being a Specimen of the Author's," May 10, 1797.

³² Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 21, 158.

³³ Cleves, 93.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 61.

women in direct contrast to the virtuous, logical actions of the National Guard and male revolutionaries. Though men participated in crowd actions as well, Americans did not think that women (French or American) possessed the political knowledge required to coordinate mass demonstrations, so their actions were seen as politically and culturally disruptive.³⁵ These French women stepped out of their social role and place by participating in these actions, so reports acted as warnings and guidance for American women to not partake in this type of behavior. In other words, Federalists and Democratic-Republicans “were often less interested in women’s contributions to the French Revolution per se, than in how the women’s actions confirmed or undermined their own domestic political agenda.”³⁶ While these two political factions often held contrasting opinions, many of their reports and reactions were not so different from each other. In the end, the differences boiled down to the fact that Republicans continued to support the male revolutionaries and Federalists did not.

II

The use of violence by French women coupled with American women’s direct participation in political activism and their claims for equality caused the already existing debates on women’s rights and roles in the early Republic to intensify.³⁷ Politically aligned newspapers during the 1790s attempted to use their platform to prescribe appropriate feminine and womanly behaviors. For them, women should always practice nonviolent participation in wars or other conflicts and support the politics of men without directly interfering. However, American women’s experiences over the course of the eighteenth-century made them less willing to stay second-class citizens. While women always occupied public and private roles within American society and politics, the last half of the eighteenth-century provided women a greater

³⁵ McCurry, 184.

³⁶ Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 103-105.

³⁷ Lyons, 184.

platform for addressing their desire for more formal recognition as part of the new nation and for potentially adjusting their status. As women sought legal reforms and extended rights (education, divorce, inheritance), American men and women attempted to solidify women's place as in the home and "out" of politics. Reports on French women, especially those lauding the virtuous characteristics of the victims, suggested that American women possessed the capacity for politics if they also acted like men. As American papers continued to praise French women for their virtuous political roles, then it should have followed that American women were also recognized and rewarded for their actions. Though American women participated in party politics and became responsible for the education of their families, politicians continued to prevent their equality with men while simultaneously recognizing their logical and virtuous potential. Due to this contradiction, American women found a wedge with which to argue for expanded rights.

Experiences of the American Revolution and interaction with the French Revolution drastically changed the relationship between men and women in America. "New republics in the United States, France, and Haiti broke down traditional hierarchies and reconstituted societies, and competing groups struggled to assert their own rights and contain those of others."³⁸ The eighteenth century revolutions served as an "attack on social hierarchies and a reconstruction of familial relationships" present in American society since colonial times.³⁹ After the American Revolution and into the 1790s, Americans fiercely and widely debated the changing nature of women's roles and rights. Women's participation in the violent and nonviolent events of the American Revolution altered men's and women's understanding of women's connection to the state and their political status. Before the American Revolution, revolutionaries adopted the subordination of women in marriage as a metaphor for explaining their unequal, hierarchical

³⁸ Lyons, 2.

³⁹ Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*, 68.

relationship with Great Britain.⁴⁰ As American men and women wrote and read reports about French women's political and violent involvement in the French Revolution, politicians and their partisans worked to convince women to adopt virtuous male behaviors of firmness, calmness, and grace. Even when women participated in virtuous actions of sewing their own clothes, becoming responsible for farms or households, and rearing Republican men, their apparent capacity for logic did not translate directly into full legal citizenship. But it was in the acknowledgement of women's political potential that they found a ledge from which to lobby for more access to education, reforms in inheritance and divorce laws, and more equitable rights.

As the availability of newspapers and other printed materials allowed politically aligned papers to influence and direct public opinion, so too did it connect groups of women in France, America, and England. The violence of French women and their ability to organize mass demonstrations figured prominently in accounts printed in all newspapers. Beginning with the American Revolution, American women experienced first-hand violence of all sorts. "Their experiences in the twenty years between 1763 and 1783 as decisionmakers, boycotters, rioters, fighters, active patriots, and ardent loyalists shaped their social and political consciousness."⁴¹ "Women living close to the lines of battle had many opportunities to act bravely in the face of danger. Accounts of women serving as spies, carrying messages across enemy lines, and hiding men from their enemies were common throughout the war."⁴² Other "ways in which women obviously entered the new political community created by the Revolution" included "shaming men into service [and] disorderly demonstrations."⁴³ Though many of the actions undertaken by "women who followed the army" represented a continuation of "domestic work," including

⁴⁰ Lyons, 237-238.

⁴¹ Branson, 11.

⁴² Salmon, 141.

⁴³ Kerber, *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*, 84.

“cooking, laundering, and nursing,” they took on a political context as crucial military tasks.⁴⁴ Furthermore, many of these actions seemingly belonged to the masculine definition of virtue by not involving unbridled passions, especially spying, hiding, and nursing. Following the American Revolution, “Women became more visible, more public, and often more controversial, in the last two decades of the eighteenth century as they occupied a greater share of the young nation’s public life.”⁴⁵ “As spectators, protestors, celebrants (official and otherwise), subjects of toasts, and leaders of ceremonies” throughout the 1790s, American women participated in partisan politics and attempted to carve out a larger role in male-dominated American politics.⁴⁶ The messages in American papers about French women’s political virtue suggested a similar potential for American women that was not universally granted. As such, American women were ready to expand their presence and role in public events in the 1790s on the basis of their own unrecognized virtuous capabilities.

Even though politicians and their newspapers attempted to define the place of women as outside of formal politics, both parties utilized women as political agents. Women worked as informants for male politicians, as their networks of gossip and community ties allowed them to be the “eyes and ears of the community and constituency.”⁴⁷ Representing the “flow of political information,” women could “solicit opinions from community members or receive petitions, or written statements of grievances.”⁴⁸ American politicians and their partisans wished to maintain the male-dominated gender hierarchy forming the early republic. While women were included in the nation-building project, they were also derided and ostracized as both political factions manipulated images of women and femininity to criticize political foes and garner support for

⁴⁴ Ibid, 73.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 99.

⁴⁷ Allgor, 240.

⁴⁸ Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 65-67.

their respective faction. If a Federalist newspaper heralded a woman as a heroine, then Democratic-Republicans saw them as a villain and vice versa. “Negative female stereotypes provided the means of attacking political adversaries.”⁴⁹ Federalist and Democratic-Republican newspapers and individuals drew from traditional and well-known tropes about women’s behavior and gender roles, such as “helplessness, sluttishness, passivity, or inferiority.”⁵⁰ Women were again used to further the interests and parties of men. Both sides portrayed women as “damsels in distress to provoke sympathy for their cause” or “portrayed images of masculinized women in order to shame or intimidate the opposition.”⁵¹ Political affiliation seemingly trumped gender in that politicians on all sides allowed women to participate in their movements, but only praised those that joined their side. In their eyes, only the women who belonged to their party were virtuous and possessed political capability. The parties swept women up into their debates and turmoil not as official members or participants but simply as instruments and tropes in order to bolster one side over the other. Yet, women were not extended the same right to vote or hold office as men. So even though male politicians recognized women’s political capacity to be informants and workers, their legal status remained relatively the same. From this contradiction women campaigned for more formal inclusion in early Republic politics.

Another dignified and calm way for women to become political was in the adoption of French dress and customs. “The newspaper advertisements, especially in the capital city, for shopkeepers selling the latest French fabrics, accessories, gloves, fans, laces, and shoes, and the French men and women offering their services as seamstresses and tailors, confirm that some Americans began to prefer French dress over British when it came to imported fashion.”⁵² “Head

⁴⁹ Ibid, 108; 107-111.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 113.

⁵¹ Ibid, 109.

⁵² Branson, 68.

coverings also reflected French style... Another popular piece of headgear displayed by American women was the Phrygian cap... American women had seen this cap as well as the republican style of dress in the circulated portraits of Madame Roland, whom they knew from the newspapers and Roland's published memoirs.⁵³ Through copying French dress and wearing the revolutionary cockade, women boldly made political statements and increased their political activism in the new American nation. The French Revolution allowed women to contemplate and express their political identity through more than just violence.⁵⁴ Even though actions such as these seemed to portray a degree of logic and virtue, American women still found themselves outside of formal politics and without widespread praise they witnessed in reports on French women.

During the 1790s, American women managed to gain some footholds in the legal realm with the establishment of women's academies and reforms in inheritance and divorce. The Philadelphia Young Ladies' Academy was "one of the earliest and most successful female academies" and the Susan Rowson's Young Ladies Academy in Boston "was one of the best academies of the day."⁵⁵ At these institutions, women were taught "reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, composition, rhetoric, and geography."⁵⁶ Independent thinking became a desirable trait for women, so that they could raise independent, republican sons. Americans did not expect women to tell their husbands or sons how to vote or to make their partisanship too public, but Americans began to see women's education not as masculinizing but as necessary for their moral duty to the republic.⁵⁷ During the 1790s Americans realized that a domestic task,

⁵³ Ibid, 69.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 55-100.

⁵⁵ Salmon, 152; 155.

⁵⁶ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 211.

⁵⁷ Norton and Salmon.

educating their sons and husbands to be good republicans, could also represent a political tool.⁵⁸

Women remained at the margins of formal political life, but education became a “justification for female politics.”⁵⁹ Education for women allowed them to transform into virtuous individuals, as they were tasked with rearing republican sons. Thus, women were able to rhetorically link learning and masculine virtue and successfully lobby for access to higher education. While these measures intended not to give women a chance to escape the feminine sphere, women fought for and gained slight improvements in their social and political positions, as education made them more virtuous and increased their political capacities.

Adopting French dress, receiving a better education, and participating in party politics of the 1790s all represented calm and logical ways to enter the political realm. None of these methods required violence or created an atmosphere of uncontrolled emotions, though to be sure American women took part in violence throughout the eighteenth-century. As with the examples of their French counterparts, women embodied the masculine traits of virtue, yet they did not experience similar praise or acknowledgement for their political capabilities. This failure on the part of male politicians did not solely cause women to lobby for and demand more rights during the 1790s. Yet, the message in American papers that French women could assume a political role by copying and personifying these male traits signaled to women that this also applied to them. So American women attempted to adopt these traits and used their similar virtuous capacity to contend for expanded rights and equality. Even as male politicians continually blocked the progression of women and cited their passion and illogical nature as main causes, women relentlessly campaigned and fought for equal citizenship in virtuous and nonvirtuous ways.

⁵⁸ Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 3-12.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 11-12.

The French Revolution and the newspaper representations profoundly affected American politics and culture in the early republic. This chapter used reports on French women in violence from the first two chapters and placed them in the political and cultural background of America during the 1790s to understand why partisan newspapers and individuals reacted in certain ways as well as how conceptions of women changed. I argue that party strife shaped attitudes toward women in violence, but that the underlying messages and themes within newspapers remained similar. Both parties blatantly condemned the women who participated in mob violence, as it represented the consequences of unbridled passion. Most of the papers perceived the stoicism of women before their execution, and they attempted to instill the lesson that women who exhibited masculine virtue would not only receive praise but also have the capability to be political. Partisan newspapers discussed some different topics, such as the Federalists' negative view of the male revolutionaries and the Republicans' emphasis on the marital status of Corday, but their messages largely focused on prescribing proper, virtuous behavior for women. Their moral roles as educators and republican mothers and wives as well as their ability to serve as a link between politicians and the community seemingly gave women a larger role in formal politics, but in reality made them pawns in the schemes of the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans. American ideas of biological sex and sensibility positioned women as inferior to men and unworthy of full citizenship.⁶⁰ Yet, throughout all of these efforts, American women refused to accept their second-class status and continued to lobby for women's rights, participate in direct politics, and utilize violence as a political tool.

⁶⁰ Knott, 650, 658, 660; Lyons, 2; Rosemarie Zagarri, "American Women's Rights Before Seneca Falls," in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, ed. Sarah Kott and Barbara Taylor (Houndmills, England and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 667-691, 672-673, 679; Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*, 7, 168.

Conclusion

American reactions to French women as perpetrators and victims varied based on a combination of domestic and international factors. Political affiliation, Americans' colonial and revolutionary ideas about women's place in violence, gender, and class of the French women represented a few of the components that affected American attitudes and opinions of women in violence during the French Revolution, both as perpetrators and victims. Newspapers in American put forward numerous different reactions and attitudes toward French women in violence that sometimes overlapped and other times seemed completely at odds. Mobs of women who perpetrated violent acts such as verbally accosting French deputies, the queen, and other women; rioting; robbing food carts and stores; murder; etc. were painted as barbaric, animal-like and terrifying across the board. However, if they acted in defense of republican France, such as the case in which the women protected the garrison at Montpellier, or participated nonviolently in the revolution by knitting or wearing caps, then women became patriots and important to the French cause. However, Charlotte Corday, a modest aristocrat and ardent revolutionary, received more mixed reviews. For Federalists, Corday overcame her feminine wrongs during her execution when she acted with masculine virtue, while the Democratic-Republicans maintained that her crime was too heinous and filled with passion to ever be rectified.

As for victims of violence, aristocratic women—some who like Corday happened to also be revolutionaries—and common women appeared to receive similar accounts. Though Americans distrusted the aristocracy and monarchy, they did not seem to believe that noble women, who professed sympathies for the royal family, or Marie Antoinette automatically deserved to die. In most cases about victims of violence, their countenance and behavior during their trial and/or on their day of execution appeared more important to American sources than the

reason behind their death or the events that lead to their demise. The most heartfelt and passionate cases surrounded the guillotining of Corday, Roland, and Antoinette most notably for their stoicism and grace. Common women received passing mentions or glances within reports. American individuals and newspapers passed harsher judgment on lower-class perpetrators of violence than on those who were victims, since mobs utilized uncontrolled passions and victims appeared virtuous. For the majority of the reactions to the victims of the guillotine, Americans did not express deep sorrow or revulsion at the act of putting a woman on trial and executing her. Women, though not having independent rights or being considered full citizens, were still expected to remain loyal to their nation and men. Although women in France did not fall under the same system of coverture in the 1790s of American women, American papers still held them accountable for their male family members' actions as part of their duty to the state. Federalists and Democratic-Republicans often presented contrasting accounts of French women, as victims of violence, while their reactions to perpetrators appeared more similar.

The main and overarching argument of this thesis has been that, unlike previous scholarship on the political atmosphere of the 1790s, the dividing ideological lines of the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans were not steadfast, but fluid. Throughout the 1790s, the Democratic-Republican Party grew and flourished in opposition to the already-established Federalist Party, but their viewpoints did not always come across as entirely different. Underlying and overarching messages of masculine virtue appeared in papers of both parties, seen in their condemning of mob violence but praising of stoic victims. Both parties, however, held dissimilar views about the consequences and harshness of the violence of the Reign of Terror, with the Federalists as steadfastly against and the Democratic-Republicans allowing for more benefit of the doubt for the revolutionaries. These viewpoints, however, did not always

translate into a position as strictly against or supportive of French women as victims and perpetrators of violence.

In the same vein that this thesis adds to the historiography on the nature of American political parties in the 1790s, it also increases the historical awareness of other historiographical trends. Numerous studies have been conducted on women's involvement in and American attitudes toward violence in the Revolutionary and Civil War eras. This thesis expands knowledge of American ideology toward violence, and women's use of it as a political tool, in the post-Revolutionary/early Republic period. Although American women did not participate in mass violent actions or demonstrations during the 1790s, their Revolutionary experiences and empathy with the cause of French women helped create the underlying conscious among American women that translated into their eighteenth-century experiences. Many academic works discussing the relationship of America and France in the 1790s or the internationality of the French Revolution focus on the transnational political exchanges and influences. The revolutionary causes of America and France possessed similar political objectives, such as establishing republics in defense of liberty and equality that was denied to their respective citizens and subjects under previously oppressive tyrannies. However, as this work portrays, the 1790s also provided for a comparable flow of cultural ideas. The age of revolutions in the eighteenth-century did not only send a shockwave of political ideas about republicanism and natural rights, but it also arguably created a transatlantic platform for understanding the social place of women and the use of violence. Furthermore, though this project gives slightly more priority to the political use of newspapers by Federalists, Democratic-Republicans, and Independents to influence Americans and garner more support and loyalty, it also recognizes the cultural impact of the messages of these parties. Another use for these papers became clear

during the 1790s: their ability to affect and shape America's social ideology. The prescriptions on American women's behavior and countenance present within the reports of French women in violence were not always explicit, but their messages seemed clear: this action is good or okay but these other actions are not acceptable. Politicians did not only communicate gender policy through legislation or party platforms, but through newspapers and other popular literature.

This project deepens the historical knowledge of different aspects of America and the French Revolution during the 1790s, but there still exist areas for further expansion. As the sources throughout the chapters were restricted to elite, white male sources, reactions from other segments of the population could add an intriguing perspective on the ideology of women in violence. Newspapers, as largely edited and printed by wealthy men, and higher-class individuals held extremely negative views of common French women as perpetrators of violence, but would lower class American men and women feel the same way? Wealthier American women could afford to adopt French dress and customs as solidarity with the French cause, but how did common women identify and interact with the French Revolution? Furthermore, the incorporation of primary sources from working- and lower-class men and women as well as different kinds of sources from plays, artwork, novels, etc. would also deepen the historical understanding of American politics and culture in the 1790s and the nineteenth-century. Using other classes of Americans and types of material might provide a viewpoint from which to analyze the responses of American men and women to the literary prescriptions discussed in this thesis.

Another avenue for further research and exploration lies with the potential connection between the use of mass movements in the French Revolution and the growth of charitable societies and the use of violence in nineteenth-century America. Though it could be argued that

women's organizations represented virtuous endeavors, the violence of food riots, nativist riots, and boycotts during the nineteenth-century suggest that the message of 1790s partisan papers was not always upheld.¹ Though these organizations did not arise solely out of women's identification and knowledge of women's actions in the French Revolution, it would be interesting to trace how, or even if, the mass coordination of women in France influenced American women's political consciousness. Did American women use the example successful use of violence by French women for legal reform, however fleeting, to inform their own ideas about charitable societies and violence during the nineteenth-century?

The later half of the eighteenth-century brought about intense and sudden political, economic, and cultural change to France and America. Revolutionary efforts in both nations rested on similar principles of liberty and brotherhood and attempted to create egalitarian republics. However, women in France and America remained legally outside of the new republics, even though they fought for and defended the revolutionary cause alongside men. Notwithstanding the attempts by these American newspapers to keep women from imitating their French counterparts through prescriptions of "proper behavior," American women increasingly asserted themselves into violent, and political, actions in the final decades of the eighteenth-century and into the nineteenth-century.

¹ Branson; Dorsey; Karen Hagemann, Gisela Mettele, and Jane Rendall, *War & Politics: Transatlantic Perspectives, 1775-1830* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); McCurry; Norton; and Zaggarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*.

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