Domestic Enemies
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8

**Epilogue: The Revolution and After**

*The law does not recognize the state of servanthood [domesticité]; only a bond of solicitude and acknowledgment may exist between the employee and his employer.*

—The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, June 14, 1793

With this ringing statement the Jacobins, who tried to reshape so many other aspects of French society during their brief period in power, sought to reform the institution of domestic service. Throughout the French Revolution the legislators of the successive representative bodies, the National Assembly, the Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, the Convention, worried periodically about the problems posed by domestic service. These were of course only a minor concern in comparison with the legislators’ major tasks of reordering France’s government and legal system, reshaping church-state relations, creating a society that functioned according to the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, and protecting these accomplishments against the foes of the Revolution both foreign and domestic. But the relative lack of urgency of the problem of domestic service did not make it any less intractable.

The issue of domestic service put the revolutionaries in a quandary. On the one hand, they had many reasons to dislike both the occupation itself and those who practiced it. Most of them probably shared the concern of prerevolutionary philosophes and economists that domestic service was an unproductive use of male labor and drained the countryside and the agricultural sector, backbones of *la patrie*, of much needed workers. Many probably also shared the traditional negative stereotypes about servants: that they were lazy, lusty, dishonest, and possessed of a low, animal-like cunning—in short, hardly suitable citizens for the new society of reason and justice. Further, they objected to the dependence and servility that, they believed, the occupation inevitably produced in those who practiced it. Again these were qualities that rendered servants unfit to be part of the new society of free and equal men.
But undoubtedly the greatest drawback of the occupation from the point of view of the men of 1789 was its traditional association with the nobility. Servants had for so long functioned as the public representatives of *les grands*, protecting them against insult and making certain that they received the deference that was their due, that the men of the Revolution found it difficult to conceive of them in any other role. This function, of course, did not endear them to the revolutionaries, committed as they were to a society based on natural equality rather than the distinctions of birth. Even worse, the association of servants with the nobility seemed to pose a threat to the very survival of the Revolution. For if servants remained loyal to their noble masters, would they not constitute a sort of fifth column which could rise up in support of the aristocratic opposition to the revolutionary government?

It was this threat that prompted the men of the Constituent Assembly to deny servants the right to vote and to hold public office. Their debates over the issue show that they were convinced, as indeed the Puritans and Levellers had been during the English Revolution a century before, that no man in a position of dependency on another could make an independent, free, and rational choice when he voted. One member, D’André, even proposed denying the vote and the right to hold office to all wage earners on the grounds that they too were, in effect, servants dependent on their employers: “I believe that everyone who is not only in a state of servanthood [domesticité] but also who is in a state of immediate dependence on another person, be it the king or private citizen, must be excluded from the legislature. Any man who is absolutely dependent on another is not free to express his will.”

In part the legislators’ concern over dependency stemmed from a general fear of the possible corruption of the body politic by monied interests, a major theme in eighteenth-century writings about representative government in England and America as well as in France. This fear was expressed in a later portion of D’André’s speech: “I ask if it is not possible for such men to make a coalition among themselves to fill the legislative body with their people. If they have the means to put men of talent on their payroll . . . could they not then employ seduction, intrigue, even corruption [murmurs] to get them elected?” But their concern also stemmed from the special nature of servant dependency: from the fact that servants were likely to be the tools of noble masters. As a certain M. Thouret pointed out in the course of the debate, “It is not the influence of a simple private citizen that we must fear.” It was rather the influence of *les grands*, an influence inevitably counterrevolutionary.

In light of such fears, it is not surprising that the revolutionaries directed a steady stream of propaganda at servants in hopes of cutting their ties of dependency to their masters and winning them over to the principles of 1789. Typical of this propaganda was the pamphlet *Avis à la livrée par un homme qui la porte*, which was published, probably in Paris, in 1789. Ostensibly written by a domestic for the edification of his fellows, the *Avis* painted a grim
picture of the personal humiliations that servitude entailed: “How many brutalities, how many fits of ill-humor to endure, like the epithets of drôle, coquin, gredin, which rain down on us for the least little trifle!” Why be loyal to masters who refused to recognize that you were their equal, and indeed respected you less and treated you worse than they did their dogs and horses? Instead, the pamphlet exhorted, remember that you were “born citizens, enfants de la patrie”; remember that your family and friends are of the people. Throw in your lot with them and with their revolution: “Therefore, it is necessary, comrades, when our masters sound us out, to declare frankly that we are of the people, and that we will never abandon the people for them.”

The Avis is interesting because it illustrates the ambivalence of the revolutionaries’ feelings toward servants. It shows both why they disliked and feared servants and why, at the same time, they hoped servants might turn out to be good revolutionaries after all. For servants were, as pamphlets like the Avis so frequently pointed out, born good sans-culottes and therefore potential allies of the Revolution. They certainly had good reason to dislike their noble masters. As for their unfortunate choice of occupation, they were after all wage earners who had to support themselves; they could not really pick and choose the work they did. Furthermore, much of their work served a social purpose. The men of the Revolution were, at heart, good bourgeois; most of them employed at least a servante. Therefore they realized how important domestic help was in the smooth running of a home. Indeed, given the revolutionaries’ emphasis on the family as the cradle of virtuous and patriotic citoyens, the contributions servants made to the creation of tranquil domesticity took on some of the lineaments of a patriotic duty.

Thus the men of the Revolution had reasons to both like and dislike the occupation of domestic service and those who practiced it. Given this ambivalence, it is not surprising that revolutionary policy toward servants was contradictory. In essence the revolutionaries wanted, as they proclaimed in the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man quoted at the beginning of this chapter, to do away with “the state of domesticité,” by which they meant the outmoded dependency and inequality which were so deeply embedded in the master-servant relationship. But at the same time they wished to preserve the socially useful aspects of the occupation and to help the good sans-culottes who practiced it. As the founders of a Parisian mutual aid society for servants proclaimed in 1789, they wanted to give “domesticity, which under an arbitrary government is by turn tyrannized and tyrannizing,” its “rightful role, that of a useful part of the family.”

This contradictory attitude led the revolutionaries to deny servants the right to vote and to hold public office and to tax them as a luxury, while at the same time they founded numerous public welfare institutions to aid domestics who were aged, ill, or unemployed. But the heart of the revolutionaries’ policy was their attempt to change the way people thought about domestic ser-
vice. To accomplish this they relied on the introduction of a new vocabulary. During the Terror the terms *laquais* and *domestique*, with their traditional degrading connotations, were forbidden; servants were instead to be called *familiers* or *hommes de peine*. When the Comtesse Dufort de Cheverny wanted to send a servant to care for her ailing husband during his imprisonment, she was informed by her jailer that there was no such thing as a servant: “a French citizen is not a *domestique*.” However her husband could have the help of an “*aide*” if he wished. This attempt to transform the vocabulary of domestic service was less silly than it may appear at first glance. One of the major achievements of the Revolution, after all, was the creation of a new vocabulary for political and social discourse. The revolutionaries recognized that the traditional vocabulary of domestic service had acquired connotations of dependency and inferiority over the centuries. They wanted a fresh vocabulary suitable for a new sort of *domesticité*, in which masters and servants would be, at last, genuine equals, employer and employee bound only by the cash-nexus. Their vision of master-servant relationships is epitomized by this passage in *Le Catéchisme français*, published in 1797 as a primer for use in primary schools:

*What are the duties of masters toward their servants?*
My fellow creature, forced to sell me his labor,
Expect from me kindness, regard, reason, justice;
With money I don’t need I buy long service
In this unequal exchange, it is I who gives less.

*What are those of a servant toward his master?*
That he be reliable, vigilant, sober, active, circumspect.
No duty is too vile; only vice can be that.
A *valet* steeped in vice is nothing but an abject slave;
An honest servant is the equal of a good master.

This new vision of *domesticité* was shared by both the liberal bourgeoisie dominant in the early years of the Revolution and by the more radical Jacobins. They differed only in their optimism about the timing of the transformation. The liberal revolutionaries of the Constituent and Legislative assemblies did not think that they could transform the traditional postures of master and servant overnight; hence their denying domestics the right to vote. The Jacobins were more optimistic. They truly thought that it would be easy to do away with the dependency that had been the hallmark of master-servant relationships in the past. They wanted to do what two enterprising playing-card manufacturers did in 1793 when they produced a deck of cards suitable for the revolutionary era: to replace all *valets* (jacks) with good revolutionary sans-culottes.
Servants' Attitudes toward the Revolution

How well did the revolutionaries succeed in their attempt to change valets into sans-culottes? Did they succeed in winning servants over to the Revolution? These questions are difficult to answer, for the attitude of servants toward the Revolution was every bit as complex and ambivalent as was the revolutionaries' attitude toward them. Both as individuals and as a group, servants had much to lose from the Revolution—but also much to gain.

Clearly many domestics came to despise the Revolution and all its works. They were, after all, viewed with suspicion by the revolutionaries and denied any political role in the new order. This treatment was a cause of much resentment and sparked most of the relatively infrequent servant demonstrations during the Revolution. In August 1789, for example, servants took to the streets of Paris to demand the right to vote, to attend district assemblies, and to enroll in the National Guard. They were only with difficulty dissuaded by the National Guard from staging a march of 40,000 servants down the Champs Elysées.  

Servants also resented the Revolution because of the hostility directed at them by patriotic sans-culottes. As we have seen, the relationship between servants and the rest of the menu peuple had been tense throughout the Old Regime. As symbols for the surrogates of the hated nobility, servants had always been targets for popular attack and abuse. With the coming of the Revolution, such attacks naturally increased in number and ferocity. By the spring of 1791 any manservant who appeared on the streets of Paris in his livery was simply asking to be assaulted. Crowds shouted “A bas des valets” as well as “A bas des aristocrates” whenever they caught a glimpse of a nobleman and his liveried retainers.  

By 1793 even lowly servantes who appeared on the streets in the clean white aprons that were the traditional badges of their calling were liable to insult and injury. One day in the summer of 1793 Mme. de la Tour du Pin’s beloved gouvernante Marguerite was walking in Paris, wearing her customary “spotless” apron, when she was stopped by a cook, who warned her, “An apron like that will get you arrested and guillotined.”  

Subject to discrimination by revolutionary legislation and to attack by militant sans-culottes, many domestics naturally turned against the Revolution. The revolutionaries’ suspicion of the loyalty of servants, like their doubts of the loyalty of priests, had elements of a self-fulfilling prophecy. These groups gradually became antirevolutionary because the Revolution had already turned against them.

Another factor that made at least some servants antirevolutionary was simple loyalty to their noble masters. We have seen that such loyalty was quite common among domestics, and that its roots lay deep within the psychological experience of being a servant. Therefore it was often strong enough to
survive even the outbreak of a revolution whose main enemy was the nobility. A servant like Le Tellier, *valet de chambre* to the Marquis de Barthélemy (see above, chapter 4), who had wholeheartedly adopted his master’s value system, was unlikely to be shaken in his loyalties by revolutionary attacks on the nobility. Nor, on a simpler psychological level, was a servant like Mme. de la Tour du Pin’s Marguerite, who almost looked upon her mistress as her own child, and knew her to be a kindly and decent woman who bore little resemblance to the frivolous and decadent noble of revolutionary propaganda. To such servants the persecution their masters suffered during the Revolution seemed unwarranted. Many expressed their loyalty by saving their masters from the guillotine. The Comte de Périgord was saved by the devotion of his servant Beaulieu, who carefully threw away all the petitions and pleas for mercy entrusted to him by the Comte and his family. Completely forgotten by the Committee of Public Safety, the Comte survived the Terror and was released at Thermidor. A *valet* named Bontemps rescued the daughter of his mistress from a prorevolutionary lynch mob in the Vendée. The elderly Duchesse de Villeroi survived the emigration through the devotion of her *femme de chambre*, who supported her penniless mistress with her own meager savings. Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely, and they clearly show that one of the major causes of antirevolutionary sentiment among servants was loyalty to their persecuted noble masters.

But probably the most important single factor in turning servants against the Revolution was simple self-interest. For with its persecution of the nobility—and, during the Terror, the rich in general—the Revolution caused widespread unemployment among servants. What happened in many noble households is illustrated in the following letter, written in March 1790, by one M. Venez to his uncle, M. de Boissey, one of those Swiss Calvinist bankers so prominent in Parisian financial circles before 1789:

> The bankers will not make loans at any price; you know as well as I do that no one has received a *sou* from *rentes* bought in 1789; therefore I had for my living expenses last year only my revenues from my land, from which I had to deduct all the *lods* and *cens* [feudal dues] which my peasants did not want to pay me, since I did not wish to be burned out or put *à la lanterne*. . . . I have therefore been reduced to firing three servants and selling my horses.

He added, with some prescience, “God preserve us from the evils that threaten us, but I believe that the revolution is a tragedy in five acts, of which we have as yet seen only the prologue.”

Countless other wealthy families experienced economic setbacks similar to those outlined by M. Venez, and countless families took similar measures of retrenchment: they fired their servants. Unemployment among servants grew even greater in 1792, 1793, and 1794, as more and more noble families fled France and the growing radicalism of the Revolution. Few aristocrats
took along their full household when they emigrated; considerations of both cost and safety prohibited that. Some nobles took with them their personal attendants, their *valets* and *femmes de chambre*, but most fled unaccompanied by servants, planning to hire new ones when they reached Germany, Italy, or England. Of every ten aristocrats who emigrated, only one seems to have been accompanied by a domestic. To be sure, at least a few of the servants left behind when their masters fled remained on the family payroll, charged with caring for the houses and furniture so precipitously abandoned. One example was Venier, *domestique* to the Comtesse de Balbi. Throughout the year 1791 he was bombarded with letters from his former colleague, Pierre Farcy, the Comtesse's *valet de chambre*, who had fled to Coblentz with his mistress and who relayed Madame's instructions about the furniture and porcelain left behind. But such employment occupied only a handful of domestics. When their noble masters fled the country or withdrew to their rural estates to ride out the storm, most servants were thrown unceremoniously onto a drastically shrunken job market. Unfortunately it is impossible to find any accurate statistics on the extent of unemployment among servants during the years of the Revolution, but clearly it was substantial. One indication is the estimate that the population of Versailles dropped by as many as 20,000 between 1789 and the Year II, as domestics and other "hangers-on of the *ci-devants,*" unemployed when their masters emigrated, went off to Paris to look for work.

Unemployment was always an economic disaster for servants, and never more so than during the Revolution, when added to the lack of employment opportunities were the hardships of wartime shortages and runaway inflation. The results show up on the rolls of the governmental agencies of public assistance which replaced the private charities of the ancien régime. During the Revolution domestic servants began for the first time to appear as clients of institutions of public assistance in proportions comparable to their representation among the *menu peuple*. Of the inmates of the new *dépôt de mendicité* established at St. Denis in December 1789, for example, 16 percent of the men and 14 percent of the women were servants.

One formerly proud and prosperous domestic driven to seek public welfare during the Revolution was Nicolas Petit, once *officier* in the household of the Duc de Villeroy. His papers, preserved when his widow was arrested, apparently for royalist sympathies, show that during the ancien régime Petit, son of a *manouvrier* from Menecy, had had a successful career as a servant in Paris. When he married in 1761 both he and his bride had substantial savings, and he received a share of the family land, worth 875 livres, as a wedding settlement. During the 1770s and 1780s both husband and wife regularly received appeals for financial help from poor relations. But after 1789 the now elderly couple themselves had to seek help to survive. Petit, once the proud *officier* of a ducal household, was reduced to working as a humble *portier*—when he could find a
job. He paid only three livres in taxes in 1791 and 1792, and during the Terror he was excused from military service on the grounds of indigence as well as old age. He died in a Parisian hospice d’humanité on 11 brumaire an 4. After his death his widow struggled on alone. She was constantly dunned by her landlady for not paying the rent, and she survived only through the help of the Comité de Bienfaisance of her local section, which in the Year 5 described her as being “without any resource whatsoever.”

It is not surprising that servants like the widow Petit eventually fell foul of the revolutionary authorities, for while part of her troubles were simply the natural concomitants of servant old age (see above, chapter 3), her situation was clearly aggravated by the hardships resulting from the Revolution. Police records of the revolutionary years are full of the seditious utterings of servants like Marie Petit who felt themselves victimized by revolutionary politics. For example, domestique Louis Blanchet was arrested in July 1790 while drinking in a tavern in Aix-en-Provence for uttering threats against the National Assembly, which he blamed for the widespread unemployment among servants. He is reported to have said “that the time will come when action must be taken because servants and workers are increasingly unhappy . . . that if that continues, unemployed servants and workers must take to the streets.” And Eugene Gervais, an unemployed Parisian cook, was arrested at the Palais Royal for inciting his fellow domestiques sans conditions against the bourgeois National Guard in the explosive summer of 1789. Gervais reportedly stated “that all the bourgeois guard and all the people who wear the uniform are all j___f____s and that 10,000 servants are capable of f____ing all the j___f____s who wear blue coats with white trim . . . and that there are 60,000 servants in Paris who could unite with the workers of different crafts and that one would then see all the j___f____s hide themselves at home in their f____ing uniforms.”

Gervais is interesting because he was obviously against the Revolution not simply because it had put him out of work but also because to him it seemed the work of the rich and well-born, whom he hated with an instinctive visceral hatred. Such sentiments were of course common among servants, and they prompted servants to support the Revolution as well as to oppose it. For there was another side to the coin. Many domestics were prerevolutionary simply because they hated their masters and therefore identified with a movement which took the aristocracy, and, later, the rich in general, as its targets. Many servants seem to have viewed the Revolution as a perfect opportunity to get revenge for the insults that were so much a part of their lives. Apparently one such servant was the domestique of M. Suard, a ci-devant minor philosophe; at any rate he took advantage of the chaotic conditions in Paris during the September Massacres to rob his employer of 8,000 francs. The theft greatly surprised M. and Mme. Suard, because the servant had been with them for several years and had never before shown any signs of dishonesty or discon-
tent. While there is no real proof of this, it seems probable that servant protest, in its traditional forms of robbery for revenge, ritualized insult and insolence, and the public blackening of a master’s reputation, increased during the years of the Revolution. At least it is clear that many servants denounced their masters to revolutionary tribunals.

Apart from a desire for revenge, servants had other reasons to support the Revolution. Some favored it simply because they approved of its basic principles. Even deep-seated loyalty to a master did not necessarily preclude such sentiments, as Mlle. des Echerolles discovered when she talked to her former gouvernante, who had devoted her life to caring for her mistress’s mentally retarded sister. Mlle. des Echerolles assumed that, since the woman had remained loyal to her employers throughout the upheavals of the period, she naturally shared their counterrevolutionary sentiments. She was astonished to discover that in fact the nurse thought the Revolution had been a good thing and hoped it would triumph.

Still other domestics supported the Revolution because they saw it as an opportunity for a better life. Some viewed the Revolution as a chance to improve the conditions of their occupation. Apparently this hope inspired a group of Parisian domestics who gathered at a theater in the Belleville district of the city to petition the Estates General in August 1789. They demanded that salaries for domestic servants be doubled, that they no longer be required to wear livery, and that the employment of blacks as servants be prohibited.

Other servants saw the Revolution as a chance to leave their occupation behind and find other more satisfying and more lucrative employment. The widespread unemployment among domestics, especially the male servants of noble households, was therefore not necessarily a tragedy. As we have seen, many men servants had abandoned the occupation even before the Revolution, and many more dreamed of doing so and embarking on careers in commerce. For such people the unemployment of the revolutionary period often provided the final spur to make them leave domestic employment behind once and for all and try to make their dreams come true. Although it is impossible to find much evidence about this, it seems probable that the years of the Revolution saw a substantial movement of male servants into petty commerce and the crafts. The one aspect of this flight of the male servant which can be traced concerns the chefs of great noble houses. Many of them were able to turn their inevitable unemployment to their advantage, either emigrating to England, where they were lionized by high society, or staying in France and opening public restaurants. Either way they found not only well-paying employment but also the social recognition as respectable bourgeois which they had desired for so long.

The spectacular career of Bertrand Arnaud is an example of a servant canny enough to take advantage of the opportunities the Revolution offered. His papers, like those of Nicolas Petit, were confiscated and preserved by the
revolutionary tribunals. Before 1789 Arnaud had been a humble lackey in the household of one M. Sevelinge, écuyer and secrétaire du roi residing in Versailles. But even then he was ambitious to make his fortune. Like many other servants he was a moneylender, and once in the 1770s he went to court to collect a debt of only 27 livres. An opportune legacy (of 350 livres cash and all his household goods) from his master, who died in 1792, gave him more substantial funds to invest, and he soon put them to work in the profitable speculations opened up by the Revolution. In 1793, for example, he invested thousands with bankers in La Rochelle, probably in privateering. He became quite rich and made munificent donations to the various forced loans of the revolutionary period. Not surprisingly, Arnaud was strongly prorevolutionary, and he even served for a time in the municipal government of Paris, thus becoming one of the very few servants or former servants to hold public office during the Revolution.32

Doubtless Arnaud was more adept than most in seizing the economic opportunities of the revolutionary years. But even less canny male domestics could turn the Revolution to their advantage by riding out the worst of the unemployment (1792—94) through service in the revolutionary armies,33 and then either setting themselves up as petty commerçants or returning to an occupation now hungry for their labor. For from Thermidor on, employing a servant, even a male domestic, was once again politically acceptable. Therefore unemployment among servants disappeared, and there was in fact an acute shortage of servants, especially men servants. This situation lasted as long as the wars of the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras did, for it was the army's need for men that kept civilian labor in short supply. The Comtesse de Bézémont complained about the shortage in 1809. "In Paris," she wrote, "everyone mounts guard on their employees; for domestiques, portiers, everyone most necessary to a person there are absolutely no replacements."34 Naturally this shortage pushed servants' wages up to very high levels. As table 28 shows, salaries for all types of servants surpassed their prerevolutionary highs during the years from 1789 to 1815, although the general inflation of the period made the gains less striking than they appear at first sight. Clearly once

### Table 28

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<th>1770s, 1780s</th>
<th>1789–1815</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male lower servants</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>152.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male upper servants</td>
<td>190.5</td>
<td>262.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female lower servants</td>
<td>36.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female upper servants</td>
<td>78.6</td>
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*Sources: See Bibliography, section I, D.*
the dangers and dislocations of the early years of the Revolution had passed, domestic service again became one of the more economically advantageous occupations for the lower classes.

For domestic servants the effects of the French Revolution were mixed. To some it brought unprecedented economic and personal disasters. Because of the Revolution they lost the jobs that had brought them not only income but also the vicarious social prestige that came from their association with les grands. They saw their respected masters persecuted, and they themselves were vilified for practicing an occupation unsuited to the new egalitarian society. For other servants, however, the years of the Revolution were years of opportunity. They found in the Revolution a chance to assert the dignity of their calling and their own sense of equality with their employers; to take revenge for a lifetime of insults; and even to leave the occupation behind altogether and try to make their fortunes.

Thus it is not surprising that some servants favored the Revolution while others did not. A domestic's attitude toward the events of 1789 was probably shaped by both his economic and social circumstances and by his perception of them—by his temperament, in short. Among servants, as among the barristers of Toulouse studied by Lenard Berlanstein—and probably among most other social groups as well—it was the adventurous, the ambitious, the far-sighted who most welcomed the Revolution, while those who were more temperamentally inflexible and set in their ways disliked it for the changes it brought to their lives. 35

Their essentially private and personal reaction to the events of 1789 explains the relative quiescence of servants during the revolutionary years. Servants on the whole were not conspicuously politically active either for or against the Revolution. Domestics did not take the lead in the great journées of the Revolution; they were not prominent among the vainqueurs de la Bastille. George Rudé found only 32 servants among his 1,536 identifiable participants in crowd actions and riots between 1787 and 1795. 36 During the Revolution servants did not hold public office (obviously, since this was prohibited in the early years of the Revolution), join the Jacobin clubs, or volunteer for the army or National Guard in any large numbers. 37 Yet servants also did not figure prominently among the émigrés or the victims of Terror. Servants formed a mere 1.7 percent of all those who left France during the Revolution; they contributed only 3 percent of the victims of the Terror. 38 The conflicting loyalties servants felt to both their masters and to their own family and class, plus the fact that the Revolution could both help and hurt them, prevented any widespread politicization of domestic servants. Most of them saw the Revolution solely in terms of its effect on their own private lives, and most, when asked afterward what they had done during the Revolution, would have replied with the Abbé Siéyès, “I survived.”
Even in retrospect servants' reactions to the French Revolution retained a private and personal character. During the Restoration many domestics who were old enough to have been in service before 1789 regretted the passing of the Old Regime. This was especially true of those who had been members of great noble households. In her memoirs the Marquise de Villeneuve-Arifat noted that her mother's cook Naret, who returned to their household after the Terror, constantly complained about the economy that his now relatively penurious mistress enjoined upon him and constantly recalled with regret the good old days before 1789 when he had cooked for twenty, thirty, and forty people a day. Similarly, the Restoration politician Charles de Rémusat recalled that as a child he first learned of the Revolution from the tales of his family's servants, who “spoke of the ancien régime with a certain regret, with a sort of esteem.” But, as Rémusat shrewdly noted, this regret and esteem were rarely translated into political support for ultra-royalism. They were purely private regrets for a “time when they had been part of a great household” and had “nothing of the retroactive enthusiasm for the Old Regime so common later among the enemies of the Revolution.” Among most servants nostalgia for the Old Regime was simply nostalgia for the great noble household with its “public” domestic service which had disappeared with the Revolution.

The Effects of the Revolution on Domestic Service

The impact of the Revolution on the lives and fortunes of individual servants may have been limited and ambiguous, but its impact on the occupation as a whole was clear-cut, obvious, and undeniable. Domestic service in the France of the 1850s was very different from domestic service in the France of the 1750s: private instead of public, bourgeois rather than aristocratic, feminine rather than masculine, egalitarian rather than patriarchal. The Revolution did not initiate these transformations; as we have seen, they had their beginnings in the last decades of the Old Regime. Instead the Revolution acted as a catalyst, speeding up these changes to a point where, with the economic and social changes of the nineteenth century, they became irreversible.

The Revolution had perhaps its most obvious impact on patterns of servant employment. It doomed the great noble household and its public style of servant-keeping. The Revolution created a society egalitarian in theory if not in practice, and such a society had no use for the liveried lackey who demanded public deference for his master. The Revolution also accelerated the replacement of the nobility by the bourgeoisie as the leading employers of servants. During the Revolution nobles had to dismantle their households, and their establishments would never again be so large as they had been before 1789. The noblesse of the Restoration was not only poorer than its prerevolu-
tionary counterpart, it was also, understandably, more discreet about displaying its wealth. With the retreat of the nobility, the bourgeoisie, its ranks greatly expanded by the economic growth of the nineteenth century, came into its own and took the leading place as servant-employers. In the nineteenth century the bourgeoisie employed the majority of servants, and indeed the keeping of a domestic was an almost infallible sign of middle-class status.

The bourgeoisiﬁcation of domestic service of course brought with it a feminization of the occupation. The bourgeoisie had always preferred female domestics; this pattern continued in the nineteenth century. During the Revolution the bourgeoisie adopted the values of domesticity as a badge of class identity. They believed religiously in the home as women’s sphere and housework as women’s work. Middle-class homes were the domain of the ménagère, and cared for by her in partnership with an inevitably female servant.

The feminization that marked domestic service in the nineteenth century was a product not only of the emergence of the bourgeoisie as leading servant-holders but also of the flight of male servants from the occupation. Here again the Revolution was a crucial turning point. The unemployment of the revolutionary years was worse for male servants than for women, and men suffered more from the revolutionaries’ attacks on the occupation as one unworthy of a free man and citizen. Yet, as if in compensation, the Revolution also opened up more alternative employment opportunities for them than it did for their female colleagues. The result was a massive flight of men from domestic service. This trend accelerated in the nineteenth century, when the quickening pace of economic change created attractive alternative employment opportunities for men at first in petty crafts and in the growing commercial sector, both traditional havens of male domestics, and later in factory labor. During the nineteenth century domestic service became progressively less attractive for men as the wages of male servants failed to keep pace with those of other occupations. For women, however, the economic growth and industrialization of the nineteenth century had the opposite effect, narrowing rather than increasing the choice of occupation. In the nineteenth century the wages of a bonne were better than the pittance that a female factory worker could earn, and domestic service continued to provide a chance to save for a dowry and make a respectable marriage. Thus domestic service remained one of the most worthwhile of the dwindling employment opportunities for women. This provided the final impetus for the feminization of the occupation. In Aix-en-Provence in the eighteenth century about 60 percent of the servants were women; by 1835 the figure was 80 percent. And in France as a whole the percentage of women servants rose from 68 percent in 1851 to 83 percent by 1911.

Thus with regard to patterns of servant employment and the sexual make-up of the occupation, the Revolution speeded up transformations already under way, transformations that would be brought to completion by the
economic and social changes of the nineteenth century. In the realm of master-servant relationships, however, the impact of the Revolution was more complex. The revolutionaries took an egalitarian, cash-nexus view of master-servant relationships. They defined servants as wage laborers hired to do housework, thus completing the transition of the occupation from état to métier and ridding it once and for all of those ambiguous types like family members, apprentices, and gentlemanly upper servants. They also made a concerted attack on the remnants of patriarchy and the dependency it entailed. But the postrevolutionary period, and indeed the nineteenth century in general, saw a reversal of the latter trend.

The most striking feature of master-servant relationships in the nineteenth century was the attempt by masters to restore patriarchal values and patterns of behavior to relationships within the household. This effort was clearly visible in the domestic manuals of the postrevolutionary period. Books like François Perennes's *De la Domesticité avant et depuis 1789* (1844) displayed a strong nostalgia for the golden age of patriarchy, "before the Revolution . . . when religion reigned in every heart. . . . The servant was born in the shadow and under the very roof of the château of his master . . . . Between master and servant there was a true union and community of sympathies, affection, and interest. . . . The one obeyed as the other commanded, by a sort of original instinct, without debasement on the one side or arrogance on the other." Nineteenth-century domestic manuals and religious and moral tracts intended for servants showed a clear attempt to restore this mythical golden age. While they revealed traces of the changes in the occupation in the last half of the eighteenth century (servants were deemed responsible for their own sexual conduct, and a major duty of masters was paying their servants promptly), most of what they said about master-servant relationships could have been written in the seventeenth century. Mme. Le Prince de Beaumont, the French equivalent of Hannah More, wrote innumerable novels and tracts for the newly literate servants of the 1820s; her lists of the duties of masters (they should oversee their servants' behavior, provide them with religious instruction, and care for them in illness and old age) and her exhortations to servants to accept the lowly place to which God had called them could have come from the pages of Claude Fleury.

This nostalgia for the golden age of patriarchy was, ironically, a product of the Revolution itself. It was the class war of the revolutionary era that made masters uncomfortable with an egalitarian conception of master-servant relationships. In the last decades of the Old Regime the disintegration of patriarchy had brought a new uneasiness and distancing to the relationships between the "domestic enemies" but it had also brought equality, camaraderie, and even affection. The Revolution killed the latter tendencies; only the uneasiness remained. This uneasiness was manifested in further physical and psychological distancing between master and servant. In the nineteenth cen-
tery, all domestics, even for the first time women, were put into uniforms. And they were banished from the household itself into attic *chambres de bonne*. Some masters even hoped to do without servants entirely. The rise of the *faisuse de ménage*, who “lived out,” is a testimony to this. Another sign of the uneasiness of master-servant relationships in the nineteenth century was the attempt to restore patriarchy to relationships within the household. Nineteenth-century employers tried to exercise a strict control over their servants’ private lives. They restricted their free time, supervised their social contacts (“no followers”), and gave them edifying reading and religious instruction. They took, or at least pretended to take, a personal interest in their welfare. And they demanded discipline, docility, and unquestioning obedience in return.

In general employers got what they wanted, for the work force was young, female, and fresh from the country. In the nineteenth century a new literary image of the servant appeared on the scene, an image different from both the lusty and animal-like creature of the patriarchal period and the proud and ambitious Figaro of the prerevolutionary decades. The new image was that of the peasant heroine of Flaubert’s *Un Coeur simple* and the family cook in Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*. She was inevitably female, a simple country girl, docile and pious, who devoted herself to her employers and had no other life outside the household. This image represented what the worried employers of the nineteenth century desperately hoped their servants would be.

Yet however much they wanted to believe that their servants were like this, nineteenth-century employers did not delude themselves with the notion that this image fit the lower classes as a whole. For yet another heritage of the Revolution to domestic service was the fact that the household ceased to be a laboratory of class attitudes, and employers ceased to project their images of their domestics onto the lower classes. The class war of the Revolution taught employers that their loyal and obedient servants were not representative of the people at large. In the nineteenth century “the people” wore the guise not of pious servant girls but of peasants to be dragged from rural sloth and ignorance and turned into Frenchmen, of factory workers to be made hard-working and industrious, and, above all, of the criminally-inclined “dangerous classes” of the burgeoning urban slums. The very different image of the servant exemplified the effort of nineteenth-century employers to make their households into places apart, havens in the heartless world of industrialization, where the social peace and harmony of an earlier era would prevail. But they could not delude themselves that these havens of peace and harmony were representative of the world outside their walls.

Thus a divorce between the popular image of the servant and that of “the people” was the Revolution’s final legacy to the occupation of domestic service. In the nineteenth century domestic service remained an important occupation for the lower classes, especially for lower-class women. It also re-
mained an important factor in the domestic and family life of the new ruling classes. But it lost its former role as the prime shaper of the social attitudes of both the lower classes and the elite. Domestic service was no longer so central to the social history of the period as it had been in the Old Regime, when the relationships between the "domestic enemies" had both mirrored and shaped those of society as a whole.