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Katie Jarvis, *Politics in the Marketplace: Work, Gender, and Citizenship in Revolutionary France*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. xii + 334 pp. Figures, notes, and index. \$47.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9780190917111.

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It is mindboggling that no book-length study of the revolutionary market women of Paris—les Dames des Halles—existed before Katie Jarvis’s *Politics in the Marketplace*. The dramatic role the Dames played in the Women’s Bread March of early October 1789, which resulted in the king and queen’s move from Versailles to Paris, is, of course, well-known. The event is depicted on the cover of George Rudé’s *The Crowd and the French Revolution*, and the contemporary illustration of the women wheeling a canon in “The March of the *poissardes* to Versailles” has become a stock image in French Revolutionary iconography.[1] Yet, little is known about who these women were and the role they played in revolutionary politics more generally.

Politics in the Marketplace fills this gap while making several important historiographical interventions on the themes indicated in the subtitle: work, gender, and citizenship. Jarvis’s main aim is to show how the Dames leveraged their loyalty to the Revolution and the civic value of their work to make political claims and defend their interests. Far from being pushed out of the public sphere by a sexist social contract, as Carole Pateman and her followers argue, the Dames secured a legitimate and profitable place in it by turning the new political culture to their advantage.[2]

This meticulously researched study takes the reader from the din and grit of the marketplace to courtrooms and assembly halls, where struggles over market regulations, profit-margins, and taxation were fought out. Jarvis weaves social and cultural analysis together, exploring rhetoric and symbolism while never losing sight of experience and agency. The Revolution is not something that happened to the Dames. It is something they helped to make.

In 1789, there were roughly one thousand Dames selling fish, fruit, vegetables, butter, cheese, and eggs in the cramped spaces of les Halles and satellite markets in Paris. Although they did not constitute a guild, the Dames’ privileges gave them a collective identity much like the guilds. These privileges stretched back to the thirteenth century, when Louis IX authorized poor women to sell in the marketplace as a form of almsgiving. Throughout the early modern period, the Dames embodied the moral economy, linking the crown’s authority with the people’s subsistence needs. The symbolic place of the Dames in Old Regime society was ritualized: each Feast of the Assumption (August 15), they offered flowers to the queen, and each New Year, they paid homage

to the king. It was not uncommon for the king to delegate a group of Dames to convey royal policy to Parisians. In the eighteenth century, their reputation for gruff manners and simple virtues made them a popular literary and artistic symbol of the common people and the third estate.

The outbreak of revolution posed a number of political and economic challenges for the Dames. How to continue symbolizing the people while ventriloquizing sovereignty became complicated since sovereignty and the people's relationship to it changed profoundly. The abolition of privileges and liberalization of markets between 1789 and 1791 also presented problems for the Dames. It rendered the old language for making claims and defending interests ineffective. Much of the book (chapters three through seven) tells the story of how the Dames navigated the transition from subjugation and privileges to market freedom and citizenship.

The Dames navigated the political challenge relatively quickly. They went from being loyal subjects to patriotic citizens without losing their status as the voice of the people. They threw their political support behind the National Assembly in 1789, regularly appearing before the deputies to pledge their allegiance and offer the nation modest gifts. They demonstrated their patriotism by confronting the Revolution's opponents. They marched to Versailles in October 1789 not only to demand bread but also to demand the punishment of the king's bodyguards, who had reportedly stomped on the revolutionary cocarde during a recent banquet. In 1790, a delegation of Dames travelled to Turin to try to persuade the king's counterrevolutionary brother, the comte d'Artois, to return to France, but to no avail. D'Artois agreed to see them but opted to stay put. When nuns in Paris began punishing children who had taken confession with constitutional priests (priests who had sworn an oath to the new order), the outraged Dames retaliated by dragging them from their cloisters, exposing their buttocks, and spanking them in turn, much to the amusement of onlookers and journalists.

Despite the efforts of counterrevolutionaries to co-opt them, the transfer of the Dames' loyalty from the crown to the National Assembly was completed by mid-1791. But navigating the socioeconomic challenges of the Revolution proved to be more difficult. The abolition of privileges deprived the Dames of their traditional basis of legitimacy. Making demands and defending interests required a new language and new tactics. Among their most important demands were securing space in the marketplace from city officials (chapter three); securing small enough currency to conduct business and manage credit, since early *assignat* notes were too large for retailers (chapter four); securing reasonable profit margins once the government, under *sans-culotte* pressure, began regulating prices in 1793 (chapters five and six); and securing license exemptions, or at least reasonably-priced licenses, to work between 1791 and 1799 (chapter seven). In the course of these struggles, the Dames developed a rhetoric that emphasized the civic nature of their work. Rather than appealing to the sovereign's generosity as humble and needy servants, the Dames asserted the public utility of their labor. Work was conceived of as a form of property—property that engendered rights (to sell) and duties (to pay taxes).

Treating the economic dimensions of the Revolution is not easy. It requires a mastery of institutions, laws and regulations, and social practices, all of which were in flux over the decade. But anyone seeking to understand how taxation, money, licenses, and market regulations evolved in this period will do well to read this book. These topics are presented with just enough detail to grasp the chronology, stakes, and mechanics without dragging the reader too deep into the weeds. Moreover, these political and economic processes are deftly woven into broad cultural

arguments about the meaning of work, gender, and citizenship. The two chapters on the Maximum are especially well-crafted. The first (chapter five, “The Cost of Female Citizenship”) cogently explains the politics and problems surrounding the Law of the Maximum while also throwing new light on the gender politics of the radical phase (1793 and 1794). Jarvis offers a fresh reading of the well-known clash between the Dames des Halles and the Société des citoyennes républicaines, a radical women’s club closely aligned with the *sans-culottes*. The clash culminated in the Convention shutting down the club in October 1793, followed by a ban on all women’s clubs. Historians have seen the ban as indicative of the fundamentally gendered (and Rousseauian) nature of revolutionary political culture, which divided society into two gendered spheres: a public-political sphere for men and a private-domestic sphere for women.[2] While not denying the gender dynamic, Jarvis foregrounds the economic stakes of the episode. The Dames, supported by Jacobins in the Convention, wanted price ceilings set higher to turn a profit while the Citoyennes, with consumers in mind, wanted price ceilings kept low by cutting out as much profit-making as possible along supply chains. “The primary stakes in the fall 1793 disputes among women [the Dames and the Citoyennes],” Jarvis concludes, “were economic, whereas the primary discourses defending these stakes were gendered” (p. 165).

On a still deeper level, the struggle between the Dames and the Citoyennes turned on competing ideas about citizenship. While the Citoyennes “tied citizenship to innate rights and embraced new democratic institutions such as voting, serving in the militia and acting in political clubs,” the Dames “portrayed citizenship as contingent and earned through public utility” (p. 165). This is an important insight. Much of the historical literature on revolutionary rights stresses how contemporaries conceived of them as universal and natural—something one gets for being a human, albeit with qualifications regarding race and gender.[3] Framing rights as contingent upon duties is a different proposition. Although contemporaries spoke often of duties, historians have tended to neglect the discourse. But as Jarvis shows, the civic duty of being useful to society served as the basis upon which the Dames claimed rights and defended their interests. “According to the Dames, individuals earned citizenship in the body politic by serving society through useful work,” (p. 231). Reciprocity, not human rights, constituted the core of the new civic morality.[4]

Readers of *Politics in the Marketplace* may question how representative the Dames’ experience was for women during the French Revolution. The fact that the Dames loomed so large in the public’s imagination suggests they stood out as exceptional. If so, then older narratives about women’s exclusion from public sphere may hold more validity than Jarvis appears willing to concede. Jarvis might be overly optimistic about the effectiveness of the Dames’ civic rhetoric as well. We are presented with many successes, but what about the failures, such as during the Directory, when the Dames lost their licensing exemptions? Even in this, Jarvis looks for the upside: by paying the license, a tax on their work, the Dames demonstrated their civil autonomy and status. I wonder if the Dames who now had to pay it under conditions of economic hardship saw it that way. We don’t know, however, since, unlike the rest of the book, the chapter on the licenses has little evidence of the Dames’ agency and experience. It is very much a top-down story.

But these are minor criticisms. *Politics in the Marketplace* brings to life the contentious and colorful world of the Dames des Halles while teasing out the vital role they played in shaping revolutionary politics and the world in which they worked.

NOTES

[1] George Rudé, *The Crowd and the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967 [orig. 1959]). The famous image of “The March of the Poissardes” can be found at <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-march-of-the-poissardes-or-market-women-to-versailles-during-the-french-53965372.html>.

[2] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988). Historians of the French Revolution who stress its exclusionary impact on women from the public sphere include Olwen Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Anne Verjus, *Le cens de la famille: Les femmes et le vote, 1789-1848* (Paris: Belin, 2002). For a nuanced interpretation of women’s citizenship in the Revolution, see Jennifer Ngaire Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[3] Histories of gender and the French Revolution over the past two decades have emphasized women’s agency and the opportunities the Revolution opened up for women. In this vein, see for example, Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Dominique Godineau, *Citoyennes tricoteuses: Les femmes du peuple à Paris pendant la Révolution française* (Paris: Perrin, 2004); Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[4] Florence Gauthier, *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en Révolution 1789-1795-1802* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992); Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2006); Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009) and *On the Spirit of Rights* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019). For a discussion of *devoirs* during the Revolution, see Marcel Gauchet, *La Révolution des droits de l’homme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), pp. 70-75 and 307-316. For more on “duties,” see the special issue, “Social Rights in French History,” *French History* 33, no. 4 (2019), especially Katie Jarvis’s contribution, “‘In the Name of Humanity’: Redefining Socio-economic Assistance in the Revolutionary Marketplace,” pp. 520-536 and Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, “From Duties to Rights: Revisiting the ‘Social Catholics’ in Twentieth-century France,” pp. 587-605. For an analysis of the concept of reciprocity and its relation to commerce, rights and duties, see Charles Walton, “Capitalism’s Alter-ego: The Birth of Reciprocity in Eighteenth-century France,” *Critical Historical Studies* 5: 1 (2018): 1-43.

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