

Timothy Tackett, *The Glory and the Sorrow: A Parisian and His World in the Age of the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 360 pp. Appendix, notes, bibliography, and index. \$24.95 U.S. (cl.). 9780197557389. \$9.99 U.S. (eb). 9780197557402.

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If someone had asked me, before I read this book, how could we learn about the revolutionary experience of the Parisian popular classes, I probably would not have pointed them to a biography of a lawyer. And yet, to open up *The Glory and the Sorrow* is not just to follow the life of lawyer Adrien Colson, it is to breathe in the Revolution as encountered by dozens of his neighbors on the rue des Arcis. Timothy Tackett harnesses Colson's interactions to reconstruct, in inspiring and exhilarating detail, how Parisians experienced the Revolution through community dynamics, political creativity, and everyday uncertainty. Throughout the book, Tackett offers a double perspective on the popular classes and bourgeoisie as Parisians radicalized. First, he reveals how Parisians experienced and processed revolutionary events through a highly local lens. Second, he offers concrete insights on the central paradox of the early Revolution: How could a lawyer and many of his middle-class peers remain somewhat ambivalent about popular activism while fully embracing the growing legitimacy of "the people" and, eventually, calls for a republic?

Tackett harnesses more than one thousand of Colson's letters and other sources to paint sparkling portraits of the diverse people in his neighborhood, section, and city. In the house containing his apartment, Colson maintains an easy relationship with the master candle maker's family downstairs (p. 17) and sometimes escorts their two daughters out into the street. Colson writes of the women's panic after General Dumouriez deserted the nation and later reports when they become reassured that the Revolution is saved once again (p. 145-146). However, many residents of Colson's section were of artisanal and modest background (p. 24) and Colson documents his encounters with them at places like Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie, his local parish, or in the food markets. From his apartment's central location, Colson has a privileged vantage point on heated political moments and crowd activity within the capital. At the nearby Place de Grève, Parisians received the king after the fall of the Bastille, masses of people gathered before the October Days march, and executions of legal and extralegal variety unfolded. By merely looking out his window in July 1789, Colson watches the "law clerks from the principal court houses, students from the Sorbonne across the river, even parish priests placing themselves at the head of processions of their parishioners" as they streamed toward the Hôtel de Ville to join the militia (p. 88). Beyond the section des Lombards, the reader encounters other Parisians with Colson as he meanders through the streets to visit contacts and run errands (p. 33). The throngs of people at the Palais Royal frequently figure into Colson's letters since he listens to "the latest news and rumors" there (p. 87).

Tackett draws on his archival expertise to contextualize Colson's letters and the people and places within them. In doing so, Tackett rivals Mercier in his ability to immerse readers among the

inhabitants of eighteenth-century Paris.[1] *The Glory and the Sorrow* boasts 25 maps and illustrations that are seamlessly integrated into the text. All but one of the revolutionary images feature masses of people, and they bolster the continuous sensory scape of sights, sounds (p. 28), and smells. All this serves to draw the reader within Colson's "world" as much as within his personal life. Complementing existing studies of life in Parisian neighborhoods, Tackett's rich details remain deftly accessible to readers unfamiliar with the capital.[2]

Tackett convincingly argues that the lawyer's correspondence illustrates how central Parisians radicalized and how "moments of intense enthusiasm and... periods of terrible anxiety" pervaded this process (p.4). As he has done so successfully in his previous works like *When the King Took Flight*, Tackett refuses to draw boundaries between the political and nonpolitical but instead shows the pervasive, often willing, and sometimes inescapable participation of everyday individuals in revolutionary politics.[3] The Revolution pulsed through individuals' neighborhood communities, through their personal friendships, through their (in)ability to put food on the table, and through new civic institutions. For Colson's neighbors, revolutionary developments demanded in the very least their attention (as in city-wide observations of national festivals), often their participation (as in sectional assemblies), and sometimes (in the case of war recruits) their lives.

While tracking the real-time reactions of Colson and his neighbors to revolutionary events, Tackett also reveals how increased public discussion fed local political practices. For example, Tackett illustrates how Colson's neighborhood experienced pre-revolutionary events through "the great flood of brochures" that were read aloud in public squares, cafés, and wine shops. Pamphlets and newspapers encouraged debate over the king's struggles with Parlement, his calling of the Estates General, the process of electing representatives, and the compilation of grievances into cahiers (p. 165). Tackett observes that "Colson and others of the 'elite' were eager to discuss contents with friends and neighbors" (p. 71-72). Although Colson worked for a noble family, he and the majority of his contacts initially shared the political fate of popular classes neighbors as co-members of the Third Estate. From this inside perspective, it is easy to see how questions regarding the Estates General galvanized the diverse Third Estate and paved the road to a widespread popular Revolution and bourgeois enthusiasm. Tackett further unpacks how, after the establishment of the National Assembly, "a spectacularly new value system based on freedom, equality, fraternity, and democracy was driven home for Colson and his neighbors through their participation in first the district and then the local sectional assemblies and in the battalions of the national guard" (p. 166). In short, political discussion quickly begot neighborhood action in official and unofficial ways.

*The Glory and the Sorrow* sheds light on the messy uncertainty and local reactions that propelled popular activism. For their part, Colson and his neighbors *indirectly* experienced the storming of the Bastille since it was one kilometer away. To establish the limited extent to which men from Colson's section were involved in the attack, Tackett notes that only eight men from nearby districts can be found among the 600 "victors of the Bastille." Yet, news of the event energized the section. Tackett describes how "word spread rapidly through the neighborhood, describing both accurately and inaccurately the events of the extraordinary day... [Colson] and his neighbors were outraged by the stories they heard of the 'perfidiousness' and 'treachery' of those defending the Bastille" (p.89) Despite their distance, Colson and his neighbors felt acutely betrayed by the "vile barbarism" of the royal defenders (p. 90).

Pinning down such emotional transformations within communities is analytically difficult. However, through Colson's letters, Tackett can quantify the fear running through the section des Lombards. Between the fall of 1789 and the fall of 1793, Colson documents "close to a hundred distinct rumors circulating in his neighborhood, the vast majority entailing dangerous and frightening conspiracies thought to be perpetuated by various enemies of the patriot cause" (114).[4] In this way, readers repeatedly glimpse the emotional turmoil and local networks that catalyzed revolutionary politics in the streets.

As Tackett argues, Colson's "marginal" socioeconomic identity—by which he means a lawyer from a family of tanners whose income came from wine merchants and a family of nobles—makes Colson particularly attuned to the interests of multiple segments of society (p. 36, 51, 56). Despite Colson's more modest heritage, his attitude is not always predictable towards members of the popular classes. On the one hand, Colson is eager to understand his poor neighbors' challenges and to follow popular political activity. Before the Revolution, Colson felt for the hungry poor and did not blame them for rioting or stealing (p. 61). Tackett productively speculates that this sympathy may have stemmed from Colson's "own relatively humble origins," his concerns with his own health, and a religious call to help those in need. Tackett hypothesizes that these attitudes could later translate to a "radical position close to that of the 'sans-culottes'" (p. 62). Indeed, daily life in Colson's parish, the rise of sectional assemblies, and the July 1792 incorporation of all armed men into the National Guard increased opportunities for Colson to identify with his poor neighbors. On the other hand, Colson sometimes wrestles with the legitimacy of popular violence and struggles to recognize the independent agency of some groups. For example, he condemned the participants in the Réveillon riot of April 1789, calling them "rabble" and "riffraff," especially after they killed soldiers (p. 81). Likewise, the lawyer expressed disgust when hungry crowds attacked bakers (p. 118). Colson thought that popular class women in particular lacked independent initiative and were easily led astray. He was convinced that counter-revolutionary "aristocrats" tricked them into rioting in the summer of 1793 (p. 149).

Even while periodically uneasy about the agency of Parisian crowds, Colson's ideological position transformed in step with calls for popular legitimacy and sovereignty from below. Tackett insightfully discerns how, in his letters, Colson starts using "we" to associate first with all fellow Frenchmen (p. 55) and later more specifically with fellow revolutionaries (p. 64). My one minor disappointment was that, in the six sample letters published in the appendix, the press did not mark the English "we"s as "nous" or as "on" for the reader to see this effect too. In Colson's post-Bastille letter, for example, he writes that "The exile of Monsieur Necker having increased *our* anxiety over the large army that now surrounded *us*, it was decided on the 13<sup>th</sup> to form *our* own armed force in case *we* were attacked. Thus, that very day *we* created a bourgeois militia, with one legion for each quarter of the city" (my emphasis, p. 171). As Tackett argues in the body of the book, the choice between "nous" and "on" must greatly impact the degree of collective association here. Despite this minor quibble, however, the appendix gives readers a tantalizing taste of Tackett's rich sources. One can easily see how Colson deploys "le peuple" as a new socio-political category in the correspondence around revolutionary events. It is a treat to read these letters firsthand, and the press has done the reader a great service in publishing them.

In closing, Tackett's own historical challenge parallels that of Colson in describing July 14 to his friend. Colson writes, "It is unbelievable... with what boldness and courage a crowd of individuals,

without rank, without orders, moving in uncoordinated groups, and who never in their lives had witnessed a siege, went forward to confront such danger” (p. 90). But herein lies the beauty of this book: the reader can believe it, understand it, and even feel it through Tackett’s insightful work. *The Glory and the Sorrow* is a stunning account that integrates a lifetime of research, knowledge, and deep understanding of one’s historical actors. It wrestles with enduring questions regarding the local nature of popular activism and the political radicalization of most Parisians. It is a masterclass in animating history as experience, and it will be a gift for generations of scholars and students to come.

## NOTES

[1] Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 volumes (1781-1788).

[2] With the notable exception of David Garrioch and Haim Burstin, historians of everyday life in revolutionary Paris tend to analyze neighborhoods as inroads to other questions of politics, culture, demography, trade, or state surveillance rather than take them as individual objects of analysis. Consequently, our understanding of life within specific Parisian neighborhoods remains scattered, and Tackett’s work offers a welcome addition in this regard. For various approaches to neighborhood-level analysis, see David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge, 1986); David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley, 2002); Haim Burstin, *Une révolution à l’œuvre. Le faubourg Saint-Marcel (1789-1794)* (Seyssel, Champ Vallon, 2005); Katie Jarvis, *Politics in the Marketplace: Work, Gender, and Citizenship in Revolutionary France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Steven Kaplan, *Provisioning Paris: Merchants and Millers in the Grain and Flour Trade during the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Raymonde Monnier, ed., *À Paris sous la Révolution: Nouvelles approches de la ville* (Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2008); Clyde Plumauzille, *Prostitution et Révolution: Les femmes publiques dans la cité républicaine (1789-1804)* (Paris, Ceyzérieu, 2016); Marcel Reinhard, ed., *Contributions à l’histoire démographiques de la Révolution française. Études sur la population parisienne* (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, 1970); Marcel Reinhard, *Paris pendant la Révolution* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1962); Daniel Roche, *Le Peuple de Paris: Essai sur la culture populaire au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Éditions Aubier Montaigne, 1981); Morris Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde* (Harvard University Press, 1986); Albert Soboul, *Les sans-culottes parisiens en l’an II: histoire politique et sociale des Sections de Paris: 2 juin 1793-9 thermidor an II* (Paris: Clavreuil, 1958).

[3] Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[4] Rumor has been a longstanding theme in revolutionary historiography and in work on eighteenth-century France more broadly. One strand, like Georges Lefebvre’s landmark study of the Great Fear, has focused on how rumor shaped a historical event or period, while the other, like Arlette Farge’s groundbreaking work on the Parisian popular classes, has focused on how rumor was woven into the fabric and relationships of daily life. Georges Lefebvre, *La Grande Peur de 1789* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1932); Arlette Farge, *La Vie fragile: violence, pouvoirs et solidarités à Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1986). For the trajectory of scholarship on rumor in

history, psychology, and sociology followed by one recent application, see Côme Simien, “Rumeurs et Révolution: la saison des massacres de septembre 1792,” *Annales Historiques de la Révolution française* 402, 4, (2020): 3-31. On rumors in the capital, see Lindsay Porter, *Popular Rumor in Revolutionary Paris, 1792-1794* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017); For Tackett’s own close case study, see “Rumor and Revolution: The case of the September Massacres,” *French History and Civilization* 4, (2011): 54-64.

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