

BOUQUET NATIONAL,

DÉDIÉ À HENRI IV,

POUR SA FÊTE.

*National Bouquet, dedicated to Henri IV, for his Name Day.<sup>1</sup>*

CHORUS OF THE PEOPLE<sup>2</sup>

Oh you whom France adores, / Henri, the best of Kings, / Your progeny, our hope, / Has just restored our laws: / Louis, who sustains your glory, / Reminds us of your virtues; / His name, yours, throughout history, / Will always be analogous.

II

Like you he is the father / Of a people most delightful, / Always gay, always true, / Today even more remarkable, / Finally breaking those chains / Once by tyrants forged, / Louis has soothed our afflictions, / And has confounded the great and good.

III

Oh dearest of our princes, / United all the French / Arrive from far flung provinces, / To praise your name, and Louis' too; / Hear our cries of jubilation, / Accept our tributes tender. / See with gladness the exhilaration / That transports all your children.

IV

CORYPHEUS OF THE PEOPLE<sup>3</sup>

To the celebration let us fly, / And admire all these creations; / They honour la Fayette, / The citizen, the champion. / With France and its tranquility / He wishes to enhance his days; / Time, his power, and energy / Will prolong their course.

V

ALL THE FRENCH TOGETHER

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1 This text was added to some examples of de Gouges's play *The Democrats and the Aristocrats, or the Curious of the Champ de Mars*. On 14 July 1790 a massive celebration – the *Fête de la Fédération* – was held on the Champ de Mars in Paris to commemorate the falling of the Bastille in 1789. It was also, fortuitously, the Henri name day thus allowing de Gouges to incorporate both themes in this work. 'Wheelbarrow Days' preceded the festival when thousands of volunteers from all parts of society worked together to create huge structures, triumphal arches etc. to accommodate thousands of spectators and participants. The King and Queen attended, the former vowing to uphold a constitutional monarchy. This peaceful and successful consequence of the preceding revolutionary violence was assumed by most observers on the day to be a realistic long-term outcome.

The cult of Henri IV 'the good king' was given a great boost in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the *philosophes* and the physiocrats amongst others: Voltaire and Rousseau both praised the first Bourbon king of France. His own propaganda (Henri IV had been an able creator of a personal myth, understanding the power of distributing his image in prints around the country, more often than not as a new Hercules) was used to reinvent him as a tolerant monarch, beloved of the people and capable of creating unity where discord had existed.

2 My attempt at translating de Gouges's rhyming verse was so uninspired that I have opted for a less metrical version instead.

3 In classical Athenian drama the Coryphaeus was the leader of the chorus. In later times the title was used to indicate the individual presumed to speak on behalf of a group, or preside as its head.

Of the unfortunate aristocrats / I was always the fear and dread, / I cherish the democrats, / T'is I who delights them. / By showing, with my light, / Mortals the rights they deserve, / I'll see the world in its entirety, / Adore my sainted legislation.

VI

#### THE NATIONAL GUARDS FROM ALL THE PROVINCES

Through the fields of America, / Honour drove my feet. / I forced that British / Despot's soldiers to retreat. / You that I praise, Oh liberty, / By your laws I will fulfil / What I owe my country, / What I owe my King.

VII

#### FRANCE AND LIBERTY

You who so long from my view / Did hide your sweet allure, / You finally came to my rescue, / I now rejoice in your advantages: / As on the Tiber in days gone by / Thanks to you we will see / Reign over a people in liberty / A citizen monarch.

VIII

#### A PHYSICIAN

Of that renowned Athens / We hear tell of their scholars, / Who will be a Demosthenes<sup>4</sup> / Among our own legislators? / By helping France regenerate, / They break irons all around, / Attend their assemblies / The universe they are instructing.

VIII [sic]

#### M. DE L'ECUSSON GENEALOGIST

There will be no more Count, / Nor Marquis, nor Baron, / I cannot manage my account / In this new revolution. / Not much daily bread to eat, / God, how bored I will become, / I sold puffs and illusions / They are out of fashion now.

IX

#### AN OFFICER OF THE PARISIAN GUARD

May peace within this festival / Bring everyone together; / Thanks to Lafayette's expertise / We are united all as one. / This mortal, in whom we hope, / Deserves all our devotion; / He is France's deliverer, / May Heaven be his protection.

What enthusiasm! What cries of joy for this solemn festival. Every good citizen anticipates this day with pleasure. A little dread still intimidates some minds but currently I assume that there is nothing left to fear.

I am alarmed however by the growing rumour that two parties are being provoked; these two parties it is said are that of la Fayette and Orléans, I have complaints to make against both astonishing men: glory and the tranquility of the Motherland is the passion of one, selfish interest, so one assumes, dominates the other; Monsieur Capet, without any reason to be dissatisfied, sacked my son from his corps of engineers by way of thanks for the patriotic writings that I addressed to him and which had nothing about them that could offend a prince.<sup>5</sup> M. de la Fayette is convinced of this and yet he has not seen fit to protect someone who clearly sacrificed themselves in the name of patriotism: my zeal in favour of

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4 Demosthenes (384 BCE – 322 BCE) was a famous Athenian orator and statesman.

this great man is thus clearly disinterested; I no longer see in him my particular interests, but only consider his virtue for the good of my country. May the Public, those Citizens who love order and peace, pay close attention to the manner in which these two antagonists have behaved at all times then they will recognise which one of the two merits their esteem and admiration.

It is pointless to add to my homage the aim of my principles, they are known well enough; I think that their good effect will ensure that, having done my utmost for my Motherland, maybe one day I will not be indifferent to her.

Theatres are crammed with an immense number of plays on the Federation; among them are many offering suppers so at least spectators can leave with their stomachs full. I wish with all my heart that this abundance does not lead to indigestion and that it does not sicken Citizens so much that they lack the strength to read two plays that I have written for the provinces rather than the capital. Here are their titles and a rough guide to their content.

*Time and Liberty, or the French Federation*: play in 2 acts, allegorical.<sup>6</sup> The action takes place in the Palais de France. Saturn comes down with Liberty on a cloud. A well known Archbishop plays himself.

The four corners of the globe come with Mars to consult Saturn; Washington represents America; Tipu Sultan, Asia; Zyméo, Africa, and M. de la Fayette, Europe.<sup>7</sup> Can this subject possibly lack interest if it is well treated? I am not speaking of Melpomene who judged it appropriate a long time ago to break with the Comédie Française, and who enters my play quite felicitously in revenge for that theatre's injustice and despotism towards me.<sup>8</sup> Liberty also takes revenge on my behalf against the colonists who so generously stopped *Black Slavery* by bribing the actors, as is the fashion.<sup>9</sup> They felt entitled to make the fourth performance of this play vanish from the billing, after making every effort to bring it down. When will the Nation attend to the dreadful usurpation of the Comédie Française; but let me return to my novelties and when it is time I will attend to it.

I will add a small extract that I have given to this new production, the performance is imposing, comic and moral.

The second play in one act, entitled: *The Democrats and the Aristocrats, or the Curious of the Champ de Mars*.

A week ago I had given no thought to the first word of these two plays. They will be in print at the end of this week. Perhaps they will be performed at some theatre in Paris. I

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5 Capet was the dynastic family name of the French royal family dating back to 987 of which the Valois-Orléans and Bourbons families were both branches. Louis Capet became Louis XVI's official name in September 1792 when the monarchy was abolished and the former king needed to be addressed as though he were a citizen like everyone else. Clearly de Gouges was slighting the duc d'Orléans by addressing him as Monsieur Capet. Later, when it was politic to use a more republican name, the duc chose Philippe Égalité.  
6 A text likely to be this play, entered as *Le Temps en Liberté*, was listed in the inventory made of de Gouges's papers seized by officials after her arrest. Along with many other documents taken it appears to have been destroyed.

7 Tipu Sultan (1751-1799), the famed Tiger of Mysore, was a renowned warrior and ruler of Mysore. Trained by French soldiers employed by his father he was an implacable enemy of the British East India Company fighting against them until his death at their hands in the Fourth Mysore War. De Gouges spells his name Tipoosaïde, the modern French equivalent is Tipû Sâhib.

The only reference I could find to the African name used by de Gouges that did not post-date her time was *Ziméo* a philosophical short story by Jean-François de Saint-Lambert. Written in 1769 the text's eponymous hero is an enslaved man from Benin who rises up against slavery and leads a successful revolt in the name of freedom. Saint-Lambert was almost certainly influenced by Aphra Behn's abolitionist text *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave* of 1688 translated into French in 1745.

8 In Greek mythology Melpomene is one of the nine muses; she represents tragedy.

9 De Gouges is referring to the disastrous reception of her play *L'Esclavage des Noirs* following its performance in late December 1789.

have been assured, if I can rely on the words of the celebrated men who read them, that many plays could be written covering these occasions, but it was doubtful the imaginative quality or characters could be better rendered than I have done, and in such a short time. I admit that I have more felicity than merit, especially in my dramatic subjects. I can admit it myself since an entire audience [missing word?] with my endeavour at the Comédie Française, endeavour that would not have resolved into performances if it had been bad, and it is under this new regime that an author has experienced the effects of despotism's cane: this author is a woman who has totally sacrificed herself for the good of her Motherland, and who has offered useful projects that have been put into practice by our legislators. Without being aware of it I always fall back on the traits that push me towards revenge, revenge too just and merited, but in this instance I will stifle my resentment. Yes, French people, I have again devoted my nights to you; these plays, though based on lightweight origins, can pass to posterity, they have a historic stamp, thought it is not for me to eulogise my works.

These two plays can be found at Royez, bookseller, quai des Augustins, and the widow Duchesne, rue Saint-Jacques.

I have also involved myself in writing verse, and I add to this notice the couplets that seemed to me to be the least bad. – With these couplets I pay homage to the capital and give them as a *Bouquet* to the French Federation. Happy I will be if I can hear them sung by a choir and repeated by the foreigner and the local inhabitant.

In the play *Time and Liberty*, a statue is erected that represents France supported by Liberty. As, in this country, we resourcefully steal other people's ideas, and since I have been assured that in future France will be represented by the emblem I have proposed, I hasten to communicate it to my fellow Citizens.