Chapter 5

Uniting ‘good’ Citizens in Thermidorian France

On September 20, 1794, a little less than two months after the fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor Year II (July 27, 1794), representative Jean-Baptiste Robert Lindet presented to the National Convention on behalf of the committees of Public Safety and General Security a report ‘On the internal situation of the Republic’. It was a strained report. How else could it be? Having gone through the experience of what has come to be known as the Jacobin Terror of 1793–1794, France was still gasping for breath and was only beginning to ‘recollect the events the memory of which ought never to be effaced’, as the report put it. These events, Lindet purported, ‘will be a useful lesson for us and for posterity’. For ‘[t]he representatives of the people ought not only to pass on to posterity their actions, their glory and their success; they ought to pass on to them the knowledge of dangers, misfortunes, and errors’.

What were these dangers, misfortunes, and errors? And could the Terror represent all these things at once? For weeks the streets had been flooded with anti-Jacobin pamphlets, as the freedom of press was re-established. Gradually, more and more atrocities came to light; Jacobins were denounced everywhere; Robespierre was portrayed as a ‘tyrant’ and bloodthirsty monster; militias of vengeful anti-Jacobin groups of young men scoured the streets of Paris, while thousands of often equally vengeful prisoners were released within less than a month. The downfall of Robespierre set in motion a process of public exorcism that could hardly be kept under control by the National Convention that eagerly tried to re-establish its status as the supreme political authority above that of the committees and the Jacobin Club. It was an extremely vexed and complex process. Many who now renounced Robespierre and the

2 Lindet, Rapport fait à la Convention nationale, p. 607.
3 On this period, see B. Baczko, Ending the Terror. Insightful observations can also be found in F. Gendron, The Gilded Youth of Thermidor, trans. J. Cookson (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).
Terror – including Lindet – had been fully implicated in his ascent to power, and were, to varying degrees, jointly responsible for the atrocities committed in the name of the Revolution. Scapegoating Robespierre was a convenient strategy for political survival. ‘Turncoat terrorists’ such as Jean-Lambert Tallien and Louis-Marie-Stanislas Fréron who wholeheartedly embraced the ‘Thermidorian reaction’ simultaneously tried to find a new political equilibrium – or more cynically put: tried to take hold of power – and secure their own personal safety. Vengeance and reconciliation, selective amnesia, bringing people to justice, mourning the past and projecting a new future, exorcism and internalization; all these – often conflicting – emotions, socio-psychological processes, and shifts in political power and discourse took turns, or were simultaneously at play, in the weeks and months that followed Robespierre’s fall.4

As Bronislaw Baczko and Sergio Luzzatto have argued, Thermidor was first and foremost the moment when leading French politicians came to the realization that the French Revolution could no longer be considered a uniform experience. The Revolution had become a ‘many-headed monster’, Thermidor an ‘unforgiving mirror’.5 Crucially, the monster’s heads were not merely parasitic aristocrats, refractory clerics, stubborn ancien régime monarchists, or hostile foreigners. They also came from within the revolutionary republic’s own echelons, that is to say, from the ranks of ‘citizens’. Hence, the Terror and its aftermath, as this chapter shows, generated a discourse of the ‘good citizen’ in opposition to the ‘bad citizen’. The Thermidorian ‘reaction’, then, was not a counterrevolution, but a reaction of citizens against (other) citizens. How was the notion of ‘good citizen’ reinvented against this background of figuring out a post-Terror social and political order? Could the revolutionary key concept of republican citizenship be maintained after the experience of the Jacobin Terror, and if so, how?6

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5 Luzzatto, L’automne de la Révolution, pp. 341–343; Baczko, Ending the Terror, pp. 124, 250.
6 It has been a commonplace of the ‘classical interpretation’ of French Marxist historians Albert Mathiez, Georges Lefebvre, and Albert Soboul to characterize the Thermidorian and Directorial regimes predominantly as conservative reactions to the unfortunate excesses of the Terror. In their rendering, 1795–1799 was an ‘interlude’ between Jacobin democracy and Napoleonic dictatorship, vexed by multiple crises, corrupt and greedy politicians, and a politically unstable basis ultimately destined to end in dictatorship. On their account, and of
Focusing on 1794–1795, this chapter examines how the Thermidorian centre sought to remodel citizenship. First, I highlight some aspects of the revolutionary political culture of citizenship between 1792 and 1794 so that we can better understand what Thermidorian politicians and publicists were reacting against. I then analyse how centrist Thermidorian tried to detach the citizen from the most important platform of participatory and radical politics: the political clubs. Through restraining, policing, and ultimately closing down ‘popular societies’ (although they did not disappear entirely and were shortly tolerated in 1797–1798), the Thermidorian centre sought to isolate the citizen politically. Second, they invested the meaning of citizenship with depoliticized ideals: the ‘good citizen’ ought to redirect his energy away from politics to ‘society’, that is to say, to labour and industry, commercial activities, and the arts and sciences. Finally, good citizenship became a more pronouncely restrictive category reserved for educated or enlightened property-owners.

None of these arguments were entirely new. As early as September 1791, the phenomenon of popular societies had been criticized as unsound intermediary bodies between the individual citizen and its national representation. Equally, the claim that citizens in large commercial states ought to direct their energy towards agriculture, industry and commerce, societal life, and the arts and sciences, instead of relentlessly devoting themselves to politics and the common good as in the ancient republics, was not particularly new.


Finally, with the contention that (full-fledged political) citizenship in principle ought to be reserved for educated or enlightened property-owners, centrist Thermidorians did not break new ground either. Yet, all these understandings of citizenship gained new relevance and urgency, and were mobilized with explicit reference to the experience of the Terror. The point is that the context in which these elements were expressed as components of a renewed understanding of ‘good citizenship’ had radically changed. The revolutionary experience, and the Terror in particular, had produced different ‘citizenships’. Put differently, there were now different citizenships for a large modern republic on offer. As Lindet put it, it was now up to post-Terror revolutionaries to

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10 Recently, Andrew Jainchill and James Livesey have highlighted currents of Thermidorian and Directorial French political thought that have their origins, they claim, in early modern republicanism, although they differ in their understanding of the nature of post-Terror republicanism. According to Jainchill’s influential study, ‘the political culture of post-Terror France’ was ‘fundamentally defined by a classical-republican language of politics’, that is, a classical-republican language as understood within the Atlantic tradition described by J.G.A. Pocock, and rooted in classical antiquity. Jainchill claims that the post-Terror republican centre rejected Jacobin democracy, sought to restrain and diminish the importance of popular sovereignty, and championed a constitutional order in which civil liberties and property were to be protected; but they did so within a fundamentally classical-republican ‘conceptual matrix’. Livesey, on the other hand, sees 1794–1799 as the breeding ground of ‘commercial’ republican ideals and ‘democratic practices’, and makes the remarkable claim that it was during these five years that ‘a democratic culture was created, that the norm of democracy found content’. In my view, both authors overstate their case. In the Thermidorian centre’s diagnosis of the French Republic and their proposals to remedy its decline, elements of the language of classical republicanism were certainly there. Yet, post-Terror republican thinkers and politicians were deeply aware that the emergence of modern commercial society – and almost a century of inexhaustible theoretical reflection upon it – had reoriented the classical-republican ideals of old. To say on the other hand, as Livesey does, that during these years a ‘new democratic republicanism’ based on ‘universal rights’ was established, runs counter to much historical evidence that suggests the contrary: the (re-)introduction of a two-tier voting system (instead of direct elections), the two-thirds decree of 1795 (ensuring the continuity of two-thirds of the members of the National Convention), low voter turnouts, the frontal attack
decide what ‘dangers, misfortunes, and errors’ should be avoided, and what elements of revolutionary citizenship should be maintained.

Ultimately, I argue that the way for post-revolutionary, Napoleonic subject-hood was partly cleared by the intellectual construction – and its failure – of a more exclusive, isolated and depoliticized ‘good citizen’ under the cloak of an undivided, anti-pluralist nation, as opposed to the ‘bad citizen’ of the factional Jacobin Terror.11

1 The Revolutionary Political Culture of Citizenship, 1792–1794

In the early morning of August 10, 1792, a large crowd of urban and provincial insurrectionists led by the Commune, the revolutionary municipal government of Paris, marched the royal Tuileries palace on the bank of the Seine. The palace had been the official residence of Louis XVI and his family since their forced departure from Versailles in October 1789. The king rushed to take refuge in the Legislative Assembly. Under siege of the militant demonstrators, the Assembly saw no other alternative than suspending the monarch. The journée of 10 August 1792 thus marked the end of the French constitutional monarchy and the birth of the French Republic, which was officially inaugurated on September 21, 1792. As the Legislative Assembly was deposed shortly after the king’s suspension, the revolutionary intervention was also a forthright repossession by ‘the people’ of its sovereignty from representative government. The French republic was born, at least in the public imagination, from an act of direct popular democracy.12

In the weeks following the suspension of King Louis XVI elements were put in place that foreshadowed and would come to be identified with the Terror:

11 Howard G. Brown has convincingly demonstrated how the Directory’s repressive judicial-military practices paved the way for a more submissive and passive form of citizenship under Napoleonic authoritarianism. This chapter suggests that if we wish to understand the emergence of a depoliticized ideal of the ‘good citizen’, we need to ask what specific meanings and ideals were invested in it in the aftermath of the Terror. See H.G. Brown, Ending the Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2006).

the establishment of surveillance committees and special revolutionary tribunals, the arbitrary arrestment of suspicious individuals, and the deportation of refractory clergymen refusing to take the revolutionary clerical oath. In the panic resulting from the threat of invading armies in early September 1792 a series of chaotically executed massacres took place in Paris prisons.\textsuperscript{13}

The founding moment of the French Republic coincided with the dramatic victory of the French revolutionary army against the Austro-Prussian army of the Duke of Brunswick at Valmy on 20 September. The day after the victory, the republic was officially proclaimed. It lent the military triumph a highly symbolic meaning. A republican army of citizen-soldiers, a ‘nation in arms’, was able to defeat the forces of (royalist) evil in an apocalyptic battle of international proportions.\textsuperscript{14} The sense of a free, revolutionary republic fighting enemy forces of royal despotism only increased when in early 1793 the French Republic declared war to England, Spain, and the Dutch Republic. In March 1793, a massive rebellion in the Vendée followed by federalist insurrections in the Summer proved to many French revolutionaries that the republic was not only surrounded by external foreign enemies, but also faced a hostile counter-revolutionary column from ‘within’.

This was the political and mental environment in which the French republic inaugurated a new phase in the revolutionary political culture of citizenship. Universal male suffrage for all men aged twenty-one or over (except domestic servants) was introduced, the distinction between ‘passive’ and ‘active’ citizens abandoned. The urban lower classes and the militant sans-culottes organized in the Parisian sections and popular societies who had played a decisive role in the insurrection of August 10, grew into a serious political force to be reckoned with. Within the newly elected National Convention, the Jacobins rose to power; outside the Convention, the number of Jacobin clubs throughout France grew spectacularly between August 1792 and the Spring of 1794. Popular societies, the Jacobin clubs most prominently, became crucial platforms of citizen political activism. Furthermore, the war mobilization of the nation, reaching its high point in the levée en masse (mass military conscription of all able men) decreed on August 23, 1793, led to an unprecedented militarization of society: citizens were expected to be soldiers, and vice versa. This

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\item \textsuperscript{13} During the so-called ‘September Massacres’ of 2–6 September, between 1,100 to 1,400 prisoners were massacred. See Pierre Caron, \textit{Les massacres de septembre} (Paris, 1935); T. Tackett, ‘Rumor and Revolution: The Case of the September Massacres’, \textit{French History and Civilization} 4 (2011), pp. 54–64.
\item \textsuperscript{14} D.A. Bell, \textit{The First Total War. Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It} (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007), pp. 133–138.
\end{itemize}
war time mobilization went hand in hand with a growing appeal to classical-republican imagery and a rhetoric of virtue, sacrifice, and martyrdom, as displayed in songs, civic festivals, and theatre.\textsuperscript{15}

The new political culture of citizenship was, moreover, characterized by an increased public scrutiny of citizen behavior. In the Spring of 1793, when the Republic’s fortunes seemed at a low point with the outbreak of the Vendée revolt and defeat against the Austrians in the Southern Netherlands, the Committee of Public Safety was instituted as the focal point of a more and more centralized government. An extraordinary law court, the Paris Revolutionary Tribunal, was established to try and convict counterrevolutionary forces. On March 21, the Committee of Public Safety ordered communes to establish surveillance committees to scrutinize strangers, check, inspect, and draw up lists of suspects, and issue ‘civic certificates’ (\textit{certificats de civisme}) to those citizens who had proven their civic virtue and patriotism. Jacobin clubs would come to play an important role in setting up such committees, staffing them, and eventually, issuing the civic certificates. Citizenship was attributed special, highly-demanding moral and political duties. The Law of Suspects of 17 September 1793 declared that anyone who was refused a civic certificate was deemed a ‘suspected person’. Permanent vigilance, distrust, and accusations characterized the new revolutionary civic culture.

The network of corresponding Jacobin clubs was one of the central pillars of the revolutionary government and political culture of 1793–1794. Originally founded in 1789, the ‘Society of Friends of the Constitution’ (which had grown out of the Versailles-based Breton Club) began as a parliamentary political pressure group where likeminded deputies of the National Assembly would prepare the following day’s sessions. It was soon dubbed the ‘Jacobin’ club, referring to the Jacobin Convent at the Rue Saint-Honoré in Paris where the society held its meetings.\textsuperscript{16} Initially open for deputies of the National Assembly only, it soon welcomed non-deputies to its ranks. Affiliated clubs sprang up throughout the country over the next two years, numbering almost 1,000 clubs at the disbandment of the National Constituent Assembly on 30 September 1791. Although there were local variations, Jacobin clubs turned into schools for revolutionary education or ‘schools for political culture’ as Patrice Gueniffey and Ran Halévi put it, as well as training grounds for politicians.\textsuperscript{17} After the

king’s flight to Varenne, unrepairable divisions of opinion within the Parisian Jacobin Club led to the exodus of more moderate deputies advocating a constitutional monarchy (who would subsequently form their own Feuillants society). Opening their meetings to the general public in October 1791, the societies gradually turned into an autonomous political power, and through its corresponding committees and symbiotic relationship with the press, into a source of public opinion formation, popular mobilization, and political action.

It should be born in mind that the Jacobin clubs were one species among a plethora of popular societies that mushroomed between 1789 and 1795. Although it was rivalled in the early years by the constitutional-monarchist Amis de la Constitution Monarchique and the Société des Amis de la Constitution of the Feuillants (moderate ex-Jacobins), the Jacobin Club established itself as the most important and by far the most influential one. Patrice Higonnet has suggested a tripartite division between, first, the Jacobin clubs proper; second, sociétés populaires; and third, the (urban) section assemblies (assemblées sectionnaires). The section assemblies were strictly speaking not voluntary societies, but legally constituted representative assemblies of urban geographical and administrative units (that would replace the older ‘districts’ in May 1790). Until September 1792 only active citizens with the right to vote were officially allowed entrance. But precisely the legal restrictions of the section assemblies prompted the creation of alternative platforms of citizen activity: popular societies with low entrance fees and minimal membership restrictions. Founded in late April 1790, the populist left-wing Société des Amis des droits de l’homme et du citoyen or Club des Cordeliers, in which George Danton, Jean-Paul Marat, and Camille Desmoulins played crucial roles, is perhaps the most famous example of such popular societies.18 The elite societies of the constitutional monarchists and Feuillants of the early years of the French Revolution had little in common with the popular societies such as the Club des Cordeliers. While the Jacobin clubs were initially manned by those from upper middle-class and middle-class professions (some being more elitist than others), after August 1792 some clubs lowered entry requirements. Yet alongside the Jacobin clubs there were numerous sometimes rivalling, more ‘popular’ societies.

In late 1792, the Jacobin Club again split, now into the Girondins under the leadership of Brissot and the energetic, radical left-wing Montagnards (‘Mountaineers’; deputies who grouped at the top benches of the Assembly’s meeting hall). The dramatic polarization between the Montagnards and the Girondins

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resulted in the expulsion of the Girondins in the journées of 31 May-2 June 1793. From June 1793 until the fall of Robespierre on July 26, 1794 (8 Thermidor Year II in the French Republican Calendar), the Montagnard faction would dominate French revolutionary politics. The expanding number of Jacobin clubs turned into the political instrument of the radical Montagnard faction. In the Spring of 1794, according to some estimations, revolutionary France as a whole counted roughly 6,000 ‘popular societies’. So-called représentants en mission, government officials that were sent to the provinces and played an important role in the execution of acts of terror, were mostly recruited from Montagnard ranks. Nearly all members of the Committee of Public Safety and General Security, the executive bodies of the revolutionary government were drawn from the Jacobins. The Jacobin clubs had evolved from vessels of revolutionary education and parliamentary pressure into informal government agencies with executive power. They increasingly received their instructions from the Paris based mother society, while closely cooperating with the représentants en mission. 19 By 1794 the clubs had become arms of the government apparatus. 20

In the Spring and Summer of 1794 revolutionary justice was centralized in Paris. The infamous decree of 22 Prairial II (10 June 1794) gave the Revolutionary Tribunal virtual omnipotence as it denied the accused recourse to a lawyer, an open hearing, and the possibility of calling up witnesses. Anyone categorized as ‘enemy of the revolution’ or ‘the people’, or more generally still, as ‘hostis humani generis’ (enemy of the human race), could become a victim of the Terror: nobles, clerics, counter-revolutionaries, resistant peasants, foreign intruders and foes, and more generally anyone suspected of conspiring against the Republic, including those in the highest echelons who had wholeheartedly supported the Montagnard regime, most notably Georges Danton, Jacques Hébert, and their followers. Under the authority of the Committee of Public Safety, the executive branch of the National Convention, between 35,000 and 40,000 people fell victim to the regime’s repressive violence and atrocities. Around 16,600 victims were sentenced to death by revolutionary courts, approximately 500,000 individuals were imprisoned. 21

Despite the scale, gruesome excesses, ‘extra-legal’ processes and executions, and installation of extraordinary tribunals, a wave of recent scholarship has

argued that it makes no sense to speak of the ‘reign’ or a ‘system’ of Terror. Such characterizations, this body of scholarship suggest, fail to make clear analytical distinctions between uncontrolled mob violence, executions by (flawed and arbitrary) ‘legal’ processes, ‘emergency measures’ necessary to avert the dangers of foreign invasion, (domestic) counter-revolution and regional insurrections, and all kinds of supposed (and real) conspiracies against the Revolution. Instead, the Terror, or ‘recourse to terror’, was above all a drastic, fear-driven instance of evolving wartime politics, not an ideology-driven, proto-totalitarian politics emanating from a rousseauist notion of ‘general will’. There is no monocausal explanation connecting the revolutionary political culture of citizenship and the Terror.

But contemporaries did not enjoy the benefit of hindsight. In fact, as the following chapters show, many who on either side of the Atlantic reflected on the radical phase and political violence of the French Revolution of 1792–94 did come to associate aspects of this revolutionary political culture of citizenship with the Terror – or consciously tried to forge a relationship between them.

2 Good Citizen / Bad Citizen

What were the assumptions and framework of the evaluation of the Terror from which the post-Terror ‘good citizen’ concept sprang? The report of Robert Lindet, a moderate ex-Montagnard, member of the Committee of Public Safety, Représentant en mission in Normandy, and high government official in the National Food Commission, is an instructive starting point as it reflects the ambiguous immediate post-Terror climate. Lindet’s report, which was welcomed with much enthusiasm in the National Convention, has been characterized by Baczko as both a ‘balance-sheet’, marking a ‘pause’ in the early emergence from the Terror, and a premature formulation of a ‘centrist’ program for the future. Lindet’s was a strained call for unity, trying to rally as


23 Baczko, Ending the Terror, pp. 115–125.
much Frenchmen as possible behind the National Convention to the exclusion of extremists. It spoke out vehemently against unchecked vengeance against former perpetrators (which was not entirely without self-interest). In the long run, Lindet’s early call for unity and reconciliation failed miserably. If anything, the Thermidorian period, from 27 July 1794 until 26 October 1795, was a time of nationwide exercises in revenge, popular revolts, and an utter lack of political unity, despite all political rhetoric that sought to suggest otherwise.\footnote{M. Vovelle (ed.), \textit{Le tournant de l’an III. Réaction et Terreur blanche dans la France révolutionnaire} (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 1997).} Nonetheless, read in combination with other statements of the period, Lindet’s report points to a number of broader reflections on what leading Thermidorian politicians thought post-terror citizenship should look like.

First, although Lindet made clear that the crimes and the ‘abuses’ of the past few years could not be denied, he remained deliberately vague as to what exactly these crimes and abuses consisted of. What distinguished acts of terror from noble revolutionary acts was a vexed question he did not want to burn his fingers on. The bloody struggle against ‘counterrevolutionary forces’ could not simply be condemned without the risk of calling into the question the cause of the revolution \textit{en toto}. Instead he argued that most individuals had simply made ‘mistakes’, ‘errors of insight’ committed from the noble conviction that one was serving the fatherland. Individualizing responsibility for the reign of Terror in such a way enabled Lindet and many Thermidorians with him to integrate the experience of the Terror – and, importantly, the heroic emergence from the Terror – within the larger revolutionary drama. Thus, the 9th of Thermidor was juxtaposed in the report with the \textit{journées} of the 14th of July (the fall of the Bastille) and the 2nd of August (the fall of the monarchy). ‘The \textit{journée} of 9 Thermidor’, Lindet stated, ‘will teach posterity that with this epoch the French nation has proceeded through all stages of its revolution’.\footnote{Lindet, \textit{Rapport fait à la Convention nationale}, p. 609.} The Terror did not signify the failure of the revolution, but a necessary, if lamentable, phase.

In addition, attributing the Terror to mistakes of certain individuals implied that the people as a collective did not bear responsibility. On the contrary, ‘We will not regard the errors of some citizens as a derailment of the people. Some citizens were captivated; but the people as a whole, attached to principles and the national representation, have condemned Robespierre and his accomplices’. By stressing the ‘the wise, great, and sublime conduct of the people’ (the people and its representatives were often mentioned in one
breath), Lindet sought to bolster the legitimacy and authority of the National Convention. After all, as the national symbolic embodiment of the people, the representatives had been ‘sufficiently great, sufficiently strong to strike the traitors’. The representatives of the National Convention (the majority of whom actually served during the Jacobin Terror), then, should ‘tighten and draw closer the resources of government’ so as to ‘singlehandedly guide revolutionary currents’. Lindet’s report, thus, articulated the effort and ongoing preoccupation of Thermidorian and Directorial France to re-establish a strong centralized government – and its direct relation with the people. This direct relationship implied the absence of the mediation or interference of popular associations.

For the emerging Thermidorian centre, the individualization of responsibility for the deeds of Terror was a way to purify key political concepts of the revolutionary era – ‘people’, ‘citizens’, even the very notion of ‘revolution’ itself – and detach them from the memory and experience of the reign of Terror. This attempt to save revolutionary language from being permanently stained by the Terror applied particularly to the concept of citizen. On the day of Robespierre’s fall, Bertrand Barère, a prominent Montagnard, member of the Committee of Public Safety, and one of the leading conspirators against Robespierre, repeatedly used the term ‘good citizens’ to refer to those who in his eyes were unduly held in detention under the reign of Terror. Other representatives too began to employ the notion of the good citizen to allow victims, suspects, and those who were relieved that the Robespierrist regime had to come to an end, to rally behind what was still a motley of moderates and ex-Montagnards cautiously seeking to dismantle the institutions of the Terror.

On August 19, 1794 (2 Fructidor II), Tallien, in response to a number of voices in the National Convention that called for ‘the most severe justice’ to be applied to aristocrats, argued that the distinctions between ‘aristocrats’, ‘moderates’, and ‘patriots’ made no sense anymore: ‘In the republic I no longer recognize classes’ Tallien orated in a speech that would be frequently interrupted by applause. ‘I only see good and bad citizens. What does it matter to me that a man is born a noble if he behaves properly? What does a man’s plebeian status tell me if he is a scoundrel?’ Barère’s and Tallien’s terminology of ‘good citizen’

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26 Lindet, Rapport fait à la Convention nationale, p. 609.
27 Ibid., p. 616.
28 Réimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel 21, no. 312, 12 thermidor, l’an 2 (July 30, 1794), Séance 9 Thermidor, pp. 337–348, at p. 340.
29 Réimpression Gazette national ou le moniteur universel 21, no. 333, 3 fructidor, l’an 2 (20 August 1794), Séance du 2 fructidor (19 August), 529–536, at p. 534.
and ‘bad citizen’ would be reiterated over and over again during the Thermidorian period and after.

In a report presented to the National Convention in early September 1794 on the principles of revolutionary government, for example, former Girondin, friend and translator of Thomas Paine, François Lanthenas suggested that the ‘force’ of revolutionary government ‘increases a hundred fold by the everlasting indestructible union of good citizens, and by the simplest purge of the bad [citizens]’.30 Both ex-Montagnards, former Girondins, and those from the Plain (unaffiliated with either faction) appropriated the term ‘good’ citizen as a linguistic and rhetorical vehicle to bring about national unity.

That this terminology would be eagerly picked up can be explained by the need they and others felt to draw new demarcation lines between friend and enemy. In the months following the fall of Robespierre, the perpetrators of the Terror would be branded with a variety of epithets: conspirators, counter-revolutionaries, scoundrels, tigers, blood drinkers, barbarians, cannibals, vandals, and eventually Jacobins. But there was no plausible claim to be made that the Terror was executed by enemy number one during the early years of the revolution: the aristocracy. After the abolishment of feudalism, there was conceptually only one class left, that of citizens. But if a portion of that very class of citizens was guilty of the most hideous crimes, new moral and political categorizations were required. The terminology of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ citizens provided this categorization.

In his report, Robert Lindet also deliberately employed this terminology. He impressed upon his fellow representatives that they had to be inclusive and exclusive at the same time: ‘You founded a republic not only for yourself, but for all Frenchmen who wish to be free; you are not permitted to exclude anyone but the bad citizen’.31 Like Tallien, he called upon his citizens not to judge their fellow citizens by looking back to their former profession or by tracing family origins, for ‘The bad citizen is known through his actions’. The good citizen, in contrast, appeared in Lindet’s recommendations to the National Convention on how to deal effectively with internal rebels (the Vendée in particular). Twice he stressed that it were the ‘good citizens’ who must be reassured of the government’s military strength and ‘good citizens’ who must be protected against the rebels.32

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31 Lindet, Rapport fait à la Convention nationale, p. 611.
was, thus, not only a future-oriented concept forged with a view to reunite Frenchmen from different backgrounds and histories. It would be put forth as the pinnacle of an alternative to the Jacobin republic, emphasising national unity, order, security and prosperity.

The famine of the winter of 1795, the continued political violence, the flagrant violations of the constitution (the two-thirds degree in particular), the purges of legislators, the (First) White Terror in southern France, all exposed the discrepancy between rhetoric and reality.\(^\text{33}\) While the Thermidorian centre sought to reinvent the notion of citizenship in the name of national unification, this discrepancy rendered the post-Terror concept of citizen partial and deprived it of the broadly based legitimacy they hoped for.

The unresolved, crucial, and contested issue was not only what this ‘good citizen’ should look like. It was also to be determined who were or had been ‘bad’ citizens and what kind of justice should be applied to them.\(^\text{34}\) Within only a few months after Robespierre’s fall, step by step the blame was put on the shoulders of the Jacobins. In early October, the National Convention backed away from the language of a vaguely defined collective responsibility and, in the words of Lindet, individuals’ ‘errors, dangers, and misfortunes’, and committed itself to prosecute criminals. The trial of Jean-Baptise Carrier, a notorious ‘representative on mission’ alleged to be responsible for mass drownings in the river Loire in Nantes, was widely reported and commented upon in the press.\(^\text{35}\) The effect of Carrier’s trial was not only that it exposed the horrors of the Terror but also that it laid bare the wider context of the responsibility of government officials, and even of the revolutionary government of 1793–94 itself. Finally, prominent politicians such as Tallien and Fréron publicly turned against the Jacobins and sans-culottes, backed by an increasingly hostile Thermidorian press and vengeful militias of dandyish jeunesse dorée eager to close down on the Jacobin clubs. The ‘bad’ citizen was increasingly identified as the Jacobin citizen. It was in this context that the post-Terror good citizen was detached from the environment of popular societies.


\(^{34}\) Brown, ‘Robespierre’s Tail’.

\(^{35}\) ‘Representatives on mission’ were envoys appointed by the National Convention to act as supervisors of local authorities. Some representatives, such as Carrier, became known for their acts of brutal repression and terror.
3 Isolating the Citizen

The sustained attacks on the Jacobins, in both the National Convention, the press, and on the streets, created the circumstances in which the already weakened network of Jacobin clubs was being dismantled by decree. On 16 October, 1794 (25 Vendémiaire III), a report was presented to the National Convention on the ‘policing’ of popular societies. The National Convention’s debate over the report is particularly insightful as we can find here a sustained effort by a number of centrist Thermidorians to detach the citizen from the highly politicized environment of political clubs. In doing so, they articulated an important aspect of what they thought the post-Terror good citizenship entailed. The report contained a proposal to ban all ‘affiliations, aggregations, [and] correspondences between popular societies’ as ‘subversive to revolutionary government’. It escaped no one that what the report really targeted was the most famous of popular societies, the Jacobin Club.

Upon the presentation of the proposed decree in mid-October 1794, representative Antoine Claire Thibaudeau straightaway pointed to the ambivalent history and nature of popular societies. No one would deny, he thought, that popular societies should refrain from ‘competing’ with formally instituted government bodies. Yet, the individual members who made up the societies ‘have inherent rights in their quality as citizens’ to form societies, rights ‘that are beyond the power of government to take away’. Lejeune backed Thibaudeau and invoked the right, guaranteed by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, of freedom of thought and expression, either through the press ‘or in any other manner’. He went on to remind his fellow representatives of the all-important function popular societies had fulfilled, namely of disseminating amongst the people ‘social virtues and the hate against tyranny’. As such popular societies had played a vital part in the illustrious unfolding of the early revolution. The former Jacobin Joseph Augustin Crassous concurred. ‘Sprung in the very bosom of the revolution’, popular societies ‘became one of her strongest pillars’. And it was because of their influence that ‘the public spirit was elevated to such a level of energy’ that they had become ‘safeguards of liberty’. Among a significant number of representatives, popular societies, including the Jacobin societies, still enjoyed a venerable reputation although they also agreed that the Jacobin Club had transgressed its original purpose and boundaries.

36 AP 99, Séance du 25 vendémiaire an 111 (jeudi 16 octobre 1794), p. 204.
37 Ibid., p. 207.
38 Ibid., p. 212.
Other representatives saw the debate over the proposed decree as an opportunity to frontally attack the internal and external workings of the Jacobin Clubs. Merlin de Thionville started out by arguing that without the assistance of the Jacobins, Robespierre and his accomplices would never have been able to dominate French politics (and as a prominent ex-Montagnard he could know). The societies put power in the hands of men ‘placed outside the Convention’. He subsequently asked, ‘What is representative government?’ ‘Is it not where representatives shape the public voice? If you admit that some citizens or societies are not subjected to laws and are able to rise against the national representation, then government is merely anarchic’.39 This accusation of forming a parallel centre of political power next to the National Convention was elaborated by others in a number of ways. One argumentative strategy was to analyse the popular societies in terms of a new form of corporatism or as resembling the constituted bodies of the ancien régime. The future Director Jean-François Reubell, for instance, acknowledged citizens’ rights to communicate among each other, but objected to ‘men who wish to put themselves above the law, men who, communicating amongst each other as citizens, wish to be more than other citizens, wish to communicate like a corporation’. According to Reubell, it was ‘the abuse of these corporations’ that had caused ‘all calamities’.40 François Louis Bourdon compared popular societies with a convent of ‘friars’ where its members are selected ‘amongst each other’. Popular societies smacked of aristocratic, constituted bodies challenging centralized government, he argued. ‘Aristocracy starts where a group of men, through their correspondence with other groups, makes other opinions triumph than those of the national representation’. The contrast with the National Convention, Bourdon suggested, could not be more obvious. ‘We are a democratic republic; our government is representative; it is composed of men who are chosen by the people; but what are popular societies? An association of men who elect themselves’.41 Jacques-Alexis Thuriot complemented Bourdon’s argument by simply saying that ‘the people does not reside in the societies. Sovereignty resides in the universality of the nation’.42

39 Réimpression Gazette Nationale 22, no. 28, 28 vendémiaire, l’an 3 (Octobre 19, 1794), Séance du 25 vendémiaire (16 octobre 1794), p. 256. The Archives Parlementaires does not contain this speech of Merlin de Thionville.
42 Ibid., p. 214.
The fundamental objection against popular societies was not only that they presented a threat to the ‘unrivalled centre of authority’, as one representative put it, or established an alternative ‘centre of opinion’ as another had it. Political societies, and the Jacobin Club in particular, were accused of cooking up opinions that neither citizens nor their representatives would ever come to entertain if they would be left reasoning on their own. That is to say, if they would form opinions independently and on the basis of their individual mental capabilities and judgment. Popular societies, in short, were seen as having a malignant influence on public opinion formation. They will ‘force the people and its delegates’, as Merlin de Thionville put it, ‘to have opinions which will never enter their intention’. A similar dismissive analysis was put forward by Pierre-Louis Roederer in an anonymous pamphlet on ‘Popular societies’ published on 20 November 1794. Roederer concurred that it is an ‘inalienable right of man to assemble in popular societies’. But the essence of such societies of ‘friendship and instruction’ is contemplative, not political. They should be prohibited, as societies do not have the freedom of opinion as individuals do, to make ‘interruptions on political matters’. For

A collective opinion exercises on individual opinions a kind of authority that is contrary to the formation of public opinion, which can only emerge spontaneously in the bosom of liberty and wisdom; opinions of a brotherhood, a corporation, a sect, a party, are substituted for the opinion of the people, which, revealed by herself, is solely attuned to the general interest.43

Popular societies stand in the way of what Roederer called ‘impartiality’, which could only be achieved by leaving individual citizens to reason on their own.

Supporters of popular societies feared that the attack on popular societies as unlawful ‘corporations’ deprived citizens of a vital platform of public organization, civic engagement and political participation. During the debate about the report, representative Joseph-Nicolas Barbeau du Barran expressed this fear most sharply: ‘The proposed measure is apolitical’. What is needed, he went on, is that representatives ‘multiply and strengthen the very ties of union and fraternity that exist amongst citizens’, instead of weakening them. After all, ‘We wish to form good citizens; we don’t condemn then into isolation’, for

isolation is nothing less than the ‘lethal poison of republican energy’.\textsuperscript{44} The arguments in defence of the popular societies by Barbeau du Barran and others could not turn the tide against them. The decree was passed with only a few small amendments. Less than a month later, on 11 November (21 Brumaire), the Jacobin Club was closed, although the closure of all popular societies was only ordered in late August 1795.

The model of the citizen detached from popular societies and standing in an unmediated relation to the national representation became a mainstay of centrist Thermidorian political thought. In his famous speech delivered at the presentation of the constitution proposed by the Commission of Eleven on 23 June 1795, Boissy d’Anglas echoed the thrust of argumentation deployed against the popular societies in the debate of October 1794. He called the Jacobin club the ‘most formidable and most dangerous of all political associations’. ‘We believe that no society can be called popular without infringing on the right of the people as a whole. There are no popular assemblies but the legally instituted parts of the great assembly of the entire people. For a society to be popular, it is necessary that each citizen is called to it’. There is only one popular society with one national representation, and it is through this relationship alone that ‘he is citizen’.\textsuperscript{45}

Although it is important, as Baczko suggested, to note the continuity and persistence of the ‘unitary conception of the political arena’ as articulated in both the earlier stages of the revolution and by centrist Thermidorians, the experience of, and reflection on, the Terror added extra dimensions to the evaluation of the phenomenon of popular societies. The popular societies, and the Jacobin clubs in particular, became identified with, and perceived as the embodiment of, faction and party spirit. In 1791, the critical analysis of popular societies as intermediary bodies had been largely theoretical.\textsuperscript{46} After 9 Thermidor, critics of popular societies drew on the experience of 1792–1794 as an empirical argumentative basis. Because of its alliance with the Parisian sans-culotte movement, faction as represented by the Jacobin Club became intimately bound up with the direct involvement of the masses in politics, the danger of political passions and fanaticism, and the interaction between demagoguery leadership and mob dynamic. The Terror, it was now argued, was caused by a combination of an explosion of unchecked dangerous passions,

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\bibitem{44} AP 99, Séance du 25 vendémiaire an 111 (jeudi 16 octobre 1794), p. 213.
\bibitem{45} Boissy d'Anglas, \textit{Projet de constitution pour la République français, et discours préliminaire prononcé par Boissy d'Anglas au nom de la Commission des onze} (Paris: Imprimerie de la république, 1795), pp. 12, 80.
\bibitem{46} Rosanvallon, \textit{The Demands of Liberty}, pp. 16–21.
\end{thebibliography}
the vicious exploitation of ideas by demagogic leaders, ferocious party spirit, and a specifically lethal interaction between the uneducated mass and its leadership.

These allegations became a mainstay argument against popular societies throughout the period of the Directory of 1795–1799. One example is the book *De l’influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* (On the Influence of the Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations) by Anne Louise Germaine, Baronne de Staël-Holstein – Madame de Staël. One of her Thermidorian writings that is hardly ever referred to by historians of political thought, it offered a dissection of the dynamics of Terror, mob behaviour, and political fanaticism as displayed during the Jacobin Republic.47 Written from 1793 onwards and finalized in Coppet, Switzerland, *De l’influence des passions* was one of only two of De Staël’s Thermidorian political writings that was actually published. It was reviewed by Roederer in *Journal d’économie publique*; a second edition appeared in 1797. It was furthermore translated into English in 1798, and received many positive reviews in the German press.48 Although De Staël had already made her entrance into the Thermidorian public sphere with a pamphlet published in 1795, and was a victim of attacks by the republican press and politicians accusing her of being an émigré advocate of the royalist cause, it was *De l’influence des passions* that brought her fame, not only in France but throughout Europe.

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47 Between 1794 and 1798, De Staël wrote four essays that dealt, in various ways, with the experience of the Jacobin regime and the Terror, and, moreover, suggested theoretically informed solutions to prevent the French Republic from falling back into what she considered the popular anarchy of the Jacobin era: Réflexions sur la paix adressées à M. Pitt et aux Français (Reflections on Peace addressed to M. Pitt and the French) was written in October-November 1794. Réflexions sur la paix intérieure (Reflections on internal Peace, 1795), written between late June and September 1795. De l’influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations (On the Influence of the Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations, 1796). Lastly, Des circonstances actuelles qui peuvent terminer la révolution et des principes qui doivent fonder la république en France (On the current circumstances which can end the Revolution and on the Principles on which the Republic in France should be established), written in the (long) aftermath of the anti-royalist coup d'état of 18 Fructidor V (4 September 1797), most likely between May and October 1798. Although only published posthumously in 1799, it was written in close collaboration with Benjamin Constant, whose remarks were scattered through the original manuscript.

While the work is a reconsideration of the role of human passions in public affairs and personal life, and more particularly an enquiry into the question which passions ought to be encouraged and which restrained, it also addressed the relationship between popular societies and faction. Assembled in a ‘body’, De Staël explained, multitudes tend to be governed by suspicion and are easily carried away by ‘exaggerated promises’, since the germ of ‘fermentation’, of turmoil, is always latently present in a large gathering.\textsuperscript{49} Masses, in short, are inconstant, ‘moveable’. Since ‘assembled men communicate only by means of this electricity, and contribute nothing but their sentiments [...] it is not the wisdom of anyone, but the general impulse that produces a result’.\textsuperscript{50} Echoing the arguments of the Convention’s debate over the restraint of popular societies in October 1794, De Staël argued that in revolutionary times people absorbed by political societies lose their individuality, their conscious agency, indeed their very power to influence events and shape the future, because they are dragged forth by the maelstrom of passion and political power play. She argued that this dynamic of mob rule and demagogical leadership destroys the balancing influence of public opinion. The Montagnard political culture of fear and conspiracy, branding anyone remotely critical as counterrevolutionary or simply the enemy, suffocates public reason. In such a climate opinion does not exist anymore; the people command instead of judge; playing an active role in all events, they take sides for or against one or another man. In a nation, there are only combatants left; the impartial power called the public is nowhere to be found.\textsuperscript{51} This spirit of faction and party ‘seizes you like a kind of dictatorship that silences altogether the authority of spirit, reason, and sentiment’.\textsuperscript{52}

A similar analysis was put forth in 1797 by Pierre-Charles-Louis Baudin des Ardennes, national representative, member of the constitutional Committee of Eleven, and member of the National Institute’s Class of Moral and Political Sciences. ‘The idea that most commonly invokes the word faction, taken in its political sense, is that of an association, which, for the interest of one or several individuals, aims at bringing down established government’. Going beyond the revolutionary inability to accommodate political pluralism in the political system, Baudin des Ardennes related factious popular societies explicitly to

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\item Madame de Staël, \textit{De l’influence des passions}, p. 221.
\item Ibid., p. 179.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid., pp. 223, 229.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
enthusiasm, political utopianism, and finally, to the crimes of the Terror. Drawing on the history and memory of the Terror, Baudin explained that faction is governed by the ‘spirit of unsteadiness and disorder’ mixed with a ‘universal and salutary impulse aimed at regenerating everything’. It ‘appeals to little attentive spirits through the impetuosity of a zeal which appears to raise the energy of other citizens’ and ‘raises crime to system, heinousness to doctrine’.53

The Thermidorian centre, both in and outside the National Convention, thus dismantled the popular society as the main platform for civic spiritedness. The ideal of citizenship they articulated was that of an independent, reflective individual, free from factional forces and the inconstancy of passionate politics. The model of citizenship they ended up with was at the same time that of a harmless, isolated, citizen who should redirect his energy and purpose, away from politics.

This model did not go unchallenged. As Isser Woloch and Bernard Gainot have shown, during 1795–1799 a severely weakened but persistent neo-Jacobin current remained alive and committed to a more democratic form of republicanism and participatory citizenship. This persuasion was publicly articulated in journals such as Journal des hommes libres and embodied in revived clubs, both in Paris and the provinces.54 After the anti-royalist coup d’état of 18 Fructidor Year V (September 4, 1797) carried out by the three republican Directors Barras, Reubell, and La Révellière-Lépeaux and backed by the military, the resurgence of clubs was tolerated to some extent. The neo-Jacobins of 1795–1799 did not opt for a class war and the redistribution of wealth as Babeuvist egalitarians did. Instead, they firmly defended the right of private property, while emphasizing everyone’s ‘right of subsistence’. And at least for the time being, they accepted the Thermidorian constitution of 1795, as they perceived the biggest threat to be coming from the right. Unlike centrist Thermidorians, they viewed popular societies as a constitutive element of a healthy ‘representative government’. As one pamphlet put it: ‘One might say that representative government is the natural domain of petitions, discussions, clubs, newspapers, civic banquets, political parties, and polemical disputes. Out of this turbulence wisdom emerges; from all these elements liberty is nurtured’.55

55 François de Nantes, Coup d’Œil rapide sur les Mœurs, les lois, les contributions, les secours publics, les sociétés publiques... dans leur rapport avec le Gouvernement représentatif
The neo-Jacobin revival that in late 1797 and early 1798 for a time seemed to develop into a genuine opposition, that is, within the constitutional framework of the republic, was, however, quickly snuffed out. On March 29, 1798, the National Convention decreed that a Jacobin party would essentially not be tolerated. With the anti-Jacobin purge of the 22 Floréal Year VI (May 11, 1798), and the subsequent closing down of the Jacobin press, ‘[t]he momentum of the Jacobin resurgence was broken’. One last time, in the Summer of 1799, the neo-Jacobin movement flickered, as Jacobin newspapers again began to reappear and new clubs were formed. Late August and early September witnessed the French Revolution’s final debate on popular societies. Jacobin representatives, proposing a law that would protect the rights of popular societies and leave them relatively unhindered, considered the ‘droit de réunion et association’ of the pillars of citizenship in a republic. In their view, popular societies were platforms of public opinion formation, and checks on representative government. Representative government required active citizens who ‘censure’, ‘applaud’ and ‘criticize’ their representatives. In popular societies, ‘with the assistance of conversation, [and] discussion’, a citizen ‘informs and educates himself; there, he becomes aware of the benefits of laws and administrative acts’. The anti-Jacobin counter proposals were more numerous and much more repressive. One telling response is that of the physician and philosopher Pierre-Jean-George Cabanis, member of the Council of Five Hundred and the French National Institute, and future conspirator in Bonaparte’s coup in November 1799. Cabanis recalled that political societies had been ‘the cause or instrument of the greatest disorder, the cruellest calamities’ and ‘the most powerful weapon against order and the rule of law’. His reasoning was based on ‘fatal experience’, echoing centrist Thermidorians that popular societies tend to be overtaken by ambitious demagogues and ‘conspirators’. Discussions there only sowed ‘distrust and division’. Popular societies, he argued, challenge public authorities, exercise ‘illegal’ influence and thereby transgress the sovereignty of the people who have never elected them. Cabanis defended ‘the
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Calm and industrious’ citizen who must not be terrified, ‘the frail momentum of industrial or commercial enterprise’ must not be ‘suffocated’ by popular societies bringing chaos and disorder. Like his conservative colleagues then, Cabanis proposed severe restrictions on ‘meetings of citizens’. In the end, the legislature did not agree on a new law. But several months later, in November 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte’s seizure of power wiped out Jacobin clubism, and with it, civic activism. French subjecthood under Bonaparte was a continuation of the model of isolated, depoliticized citizenship advocated by centrist Thermidorians and conservatives under the Directory.

4 What Is a Good Citizen? Redefining Civic Virtues

As we have seen, the identification of bad citizens during the Terror as bloodthirsty criminals at worst and deluded enthusiasts at best, was increasingly related to the internal and external workings of the Jacobin clubs, up until 1799. In redefining good citizenship, the ‘bad’ citizen of the Jacobin Terror became the negative other. But if the citizen should turn away from politicized clubs, faction, and avert inflamed involvement in politics, what alternative model of citizenship was offered instead? In other words, what kinds of more substantial visions on the good citizen developed over the course of post-Thermidor 1794 and early 1795? And who were deemed qualified to become full-fledged citizens?

The post-Terror model of citizenship was anything but settled, but a general picture can be formed by piecing together fragments from speeches and public statements made by the Thermidorian centre that would appear throughout Thermidor and into the Directory. Again, Lindet’s report contains some first constitutive elements. Absolutely central to the report is the ‘useful and industrious citizen’, which is ‘known by his sacrifices, by his multiple hardships, by his services, [and] by his active and industrious life’.

The model of the industrious citizen was of course anything but new. It had been one of the centre pieces of early revolutionary discourse and a powerful rhetorical symbol placed in opposition to the idle and unproductive aristocrat. Indeed, the most important pamphlet of the French Revolution, Sieyès’s What is the Third Estate, defined the nation as productive, industrious citizens. Because they did not contribute to society, idle aristocrats were branded as foreign, in both an economic and political sense. Useful and industrious citizens, Sieyès

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60 Option de Cabanis, p. 8.
61 Lindet, Rapport, pp. 612, 616.
argued, constituted the political community, the locus of national sovereignty. Economic utility was a condition for the exercise of popular sovereignty.62

What distinguishes post-Terror expressions of the ideal of the industrious citizen was that they were more explicitly set alongside, and in opposition to, the politically active citizen. Certainly, Sieyès’s model of representative government, predicated on a complex modern society, was not particularly well known for its robust (republican) ideals of politically active citizenship in the first place. But after the Terror, there was a sense that the Terror had proven just that: that an exaggerated public spiritedness among broad layers of the population was not only dangerous, but also impaired the economic well-being of society. As Lindet’s report urged: ‘The voice of France now recalls to their labours and their professions a great number of citizens who had suspended them to fill public functions’. This call was addressed to ‘proprietors and farmers’, but equally to ‘sages and artists’, who, according to the report, had been persecuted and oppressed under the regime of Robespierre.63

It is no grave exaggeration to say that the attempts made by Thermidorians to refocus civic energy on labour was a victory of the language of political economy over classical republicanism. An elaborate and profound expression of a more socioeconomic interpretation of citizenship, partly articulated in reaction to militant Jacobin patriotism and the growing influence of the Parisian populace, can be found in a series of lectures delivered by the political economist and journalist Pierre-Louis Roederer at the Lycée between January and June 1793 (before the ‘Great Terror’ of 1794).64 In his lectures entitled Cours d’organisation sociale, Roederer had offered an elaborate defence of a model of citizenship that he thought was appropriate for a large modern republic like France.

His vision entailed, first, a critique of the économiste or physiocratic exclusive focus on agricultural production and the corresponding ideal of the landed property-owner as the foundation of wealth, and hence, society. Second, it was also a rejection of the Montagnard ethics of self-sacrifice steeped in ancient republican ideals, an ethics Roederer thought was reanimated in the works of Rousseau and Mably, and subsequently adopted by Robespierre and

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63 Lindet, Rapport, p. 610–611 (italics are mine).
Marat. Both conceptions, Roederer maintained, were inappropriate for a modern, commercial republic. According to Roederer, whereas, on the one hand, the Physiocrats had a flawed conception of social organization and hierarchy, favouring large land-owners at the expense of (landless) agricultural workers, manufacturers, artisans, and industrialists, the Montagnards, on the other hand, seemed antithetical to the reality of division of labour and softened manners that characterized modern commercial societies. Instead of radical changes in the form of government, a return to a classical-republican public ethics, ceremonies and festivities, in his theory of ‘social organization’ Roederer singled out the institution of labour as the primary institution: ‘It is this all-encompassing institution of labour in a great nation that I call the great and true principle of [...] good mœurs’.65 As men were in Roederer’s view fundamentally self-interested, he thought that labour can motivate people to acquire riches, and, thus, contribute to the general welfare. Yet, labour had a much broader social and moral significance in Roederer’s vision. Labour furthers the cultivation of talents, ‘domestic’ as well as ‘social’ virtues, and establishes enduring relations between the rich and the poor. As such labour is the great ‘maintainer of order’.

Commenting on the tumultuous developments he had witnessed in 1792 and early 1793, Roederer maintained that when a people emerges from ‘long and continuous convulsions’ and is agitated by ‘irregular movements’, the only way to bring citizens back under the rule of law is by ‘putting them back to work, which means to let them stay away from factions [and] popular assemblies’, and make their way again ‘into the workshops of agriculture, arts, and trade’.66 An almost identical point was made by Lindet who deemed it vital that commerce would be reanimated. The more specific point Lindet’s report wanted to convey was that citizens should again feel confident to engage in commercial activities, private entrepreneurship, as well as the arts, sciences, and manufacture. Lindet urged his fellow representatives: ‘Declare solemnly that every citizen who employs his days usefully in agriculture, science, arts, or commerce, who elevates or supports factories, manufactures, can neither be hindered nor be treated as a suspect’.67 The report explained that this confidence could be restored by guaranteeing citizens ‘individual liberty’ and equality before the law. The appearance of the industrious citizen in Thermidorian political discourse, thus, went hand in hand with a broadly shared desire for

66 Roederer, ‘Cours d’organisation sociale’, p. 266.
67 Lindet, Rapport, p. 612.
economic recovery. The majority view was that this could be achieved by adopting *laissez faire* economic policies and by stimulating (foreign) commerce and industry. Rather than political engagement and civic virtue, economic liberty and the legal protection of property were to characterize post-Terror conceptions of the ‘good citizen’.

The figure of the industrious good citizen would reappear in many public statements and speeches of representatives in the aftermath of 9 Thermidor. On 9 October (18 Vendémiaire) a public address was presented to the French people in the name of the committees of Public Safety, General Security, and Legislation (which made it to American newspapers). It was ordered by the National Convention by a decree agreed upon a week earlier which demanded clarity on ‘the principles around which the friends of liberty are to be reunited’. Like Lindet’s report, it called upon the French to ‘value [...] industrious and modest men, these good and pure beings’. The Convention’s address is in another respect noteworthy. It was at pains to make sure that the industrious and modest citizen practices ‘*republican* virtues’, but, ‘without ostentation’. ‘The warrior virtues give rise to the hero’, it went on, ‘the domestic virtues form the citizen, and these domestic virtues ‘maintain and reinforce an invincible attachment to republican principles’. As their statements demonstrate, these Thermidorian politicians sought to uphold their republican credentials, while simultaneously articulating elements of a post-revolutionary vision of good citizenship centred on the domestic sphere and industry. In the debate that took place after the presentation of the address, Tallien wholeheartedly confirmed the report’s message. Closely associated with Roederer at that time, Tallien echoed the thrust of the latter’s lectures, stating that ‘[g]ood citizens are useful men, industrious farmers, robust artisans, zealous defenders of the fatherland’. Representative François-Louis Bourdon from Oise agreed and commented approvingly that the address ‘can produce an excellent effect on the spirit of good citizens’.

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70 *Reimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel* 22, no. 21, 21 vendémiaire, l’an 3 (12 octobre 1794), p. 201.

71 Ibid., p. 201.


73 *Reimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel* 22, no. 21, 21 vendémiaire, l’an 3 (12 octobre 1794), p. 201.
These arguments for a shift from political activism to labour, as expressed by Roederer, Tallien and others, became a mainstay of Thermidorian conceptions of citizenship. The issue was poignantly addressed in Boissy d'Anglas’s speech for the constitution proposed by the Commission of Eleven: Boissy made clear that ‘to make France a country in continual assembly was to deprive agriculture of those men who should attend to it with assiduity; it was to deprive commerce and the workshops of industry of those men who would better serve the country with their diligence than by useless speeches and superficial discussions.’\(^7^4\) Outside the Convention, prominent members of the French National Institute, such as Jean-Baptiste Say and Pierre Cabanis, as well as many others, would in their writings reiterate the centrality of labour as the ‘maintainer of order’ and the kernel of citizenship.\(^7^5\) The post-Terror ideal of the industrious citizens implied a turn away from public service and political participation as the main platform of citizen activity.

5 Narrowing Down Political Citizenship

The debates and many publications surrounding the draft constitution of 1795, as well as the final version of the constitution that was accepted in August, contain important further indications of the ways in which the scope of citizenship was limited. During the winter and spring of 1795, many centre-republican and constitutional royalist Thermidorians began to expand their analysis, in writing and speech, of what had caused the reign of Terror, and consequently, on what should be done to prevent it from happening again. Instead of attributing the Terror simply to Robespierre and his accomplices, or primarily to the infernal workings of Jacobin clubs, their focus shifted: toward the constitution of 1793, and more generally, toward the involvement in politics of what they considered to be the uneducated, or minimally educated, unpropertied masses.

In the spring of 1795, after an extremely harsh winter of food shortages and towering price levels, a ‘Commission of Eleven’ was charged with revising the Montagnard constitution of 1793.\(^7^6\) They ended up devising an entirely new

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\(^7^4\) Boissy, *Projet de constitution pour la République français, et discours préliminaire*, p. 25.


\(^7^6\) First a Commission of Seven was installed on 3 April, including Jean-Jacques Régis de Cambacérès, Jacques-Antoine Creuzé-Latouche, Denis-Toussaint Lesage d’Eure-et-Loir, Jean-Baptiste-Charles Mathieu, Phillipe-Antoine Merlin de Douai, Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, and Antoine-Claire Thibaudeau. On April 23 and May 4, the commission was
constitution. The commission began its work under circumstances of severe crisis. Vengeful acts of slaughtering Jacobin perpetrators were committed in the south and south-east. Voices for a royalist restoration, both those of ultraroyalists, pre-1789 royalists, and the moderate constitutional royalists of 1791, cropped up, although they were unable to get a foothold. On April 1, 1795 (12 Germinal), an armed crowd invaded the Tuileries and the Convention. This scene was repeated on 20 May (1 Prairial), when an even larger armed crowd occupied the Convention demanding bread and the (Montagnard) Constitution of 1793, and famously presented the head of deputy Féraud on a pike to Boissy d'Anglas who then occupied the central chair as speaker of the Convention.

The political and symbolic significance of the Germinal-Prairial popular uprisings cannot be underestimated in order to understand the anti-populist mentality that came to overshadow the constitutional committee, its proposed constitution, and the Convention's constitutional debates over the summer of 1795. Above all, centrist politicians used the uprisings as a pretext to purge the National Convention of Montagnard strongholds.

Likewise, anti-Jacobin conventionnels latched onto the uprisings to push through a large-scale disarmament of remaining (urban) Jacobin militias. Both in the Convention then, as on the street, the radical left was dealt a final blow; the uprisings turned out to be its last convulsion. The ideal of the high-spirited armed citizen became irreversibly seen with suspicion. Finally, the invasion of the National Convention by a mass of predominantly lower-class militant Parisians deepened the centrist suspicion of popular and direct democracy. The crowd's rallying cry, ‘bread and the constitution of 1793’, only reinforced the centrist conviction that the republic desperately needed a new constitution that would put a strong curb on popular involvement. The question that gained prominence in the spring and summer of 1795 was, thus, not merely what kind of model of post-Terror citizenship should be adopted, but also who were eligible to be or become full-fledged citizens. In June-July 1795, moreover, an invasion of counter-revolutionary émigrés troops in southwest Brittany was defeated by the Republic’s army, which enabled the Thermidorian centre to represent themselves as the moderate middle party.
On 23 June, the Commission of Eleven offered a draft constitution to the National Convention, where it was debated over the summer, and accepted on August 22, 1795. The constitution of Year III, as it has come to be known, was formally implemented in late October and lasted until the coup of 18 Brumaire Year VIII (November 9, 1799). It would be the longest existing constitution of the French Revolution, but also the one that would be most often breached.

The diagnosis of prominent centrist Thermidorian politicians and publicists of the Jacobin version of popular democracy generally focused on three aspects: theoretically, it was claimed, the Jacobins had lost themselves in utopian metaphysical abstractions about equality; on a more sociological level it was argued that the derailment of popular democracy demonstrated that the propertyless class had no genuine interest in order and stability; and finally, it became widely held that mass popular politics was particularly dangerous because it seemed inextricably bound up with an excess of (political) ‘fanaticism’ or ‘enthusiasm’. Popular democracy thus had resulted in a catastrophic experiment. Accordingly, their diagnosis led them to reformulate the ideal of equality, restating the central importance of owning property, and suggesting remedies to avoid outbursts of dangerous political sentiments and passions. I will deal with these issues in that particular order.

Although it is doubtful whether the ‘Jacobin regime’ can be said to have developed a unified and consistent political philosophy that proposed far-reaching programs aimed at a socio-economic levelling of society, it became a commonplace among centrist Thermidorians that the Jacobins had been collectively chasing philosophical fantasies of ‘abstract’ equality. In his speech that accompanied the presentation of the draft constitution of 1795, Boissy d’Anglas, after recounting the ‘tyranny’ of the past few years, concluded that ‘the illusionary principles of absolute democracy and unlimited equality are unquestionably the most formidable pitfalls for true liberty’. The constitutional commission was keen to put across their own reformulation of equality instead: ‘Civil equality is indeed all that a rational man can demand. Absolute equality is a chimera’. Criticisms of the allegedly abstract, or even metaphysical, nature of the ideals of the French Revolution had of course from early on been put forth from various sides, catholic anti-

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77 See however, J.-P. Gross, *Fair Shares for All: Jacobin Egalitarianism in Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Generally, Jacobins were committed to the right of private property.

78 Boissy, *Projet de constitution pour la République français, et discours préliminaire*, p. 31.

79 Ibid.
Burkean conservatives most prominent among them. But the rejection of philosophical utopian thinking by moderate Thermidoran republicans was different in kind. They still embraced 1789 as well as the idea of a declaration of rights, but ‘[t]he liberty France wishes for is a liberty for every day, customary, practical’, as representative Louis-Marie La Révellière-Lepeaux stated, so as not to ‘get lost in metaphysical spheres’. It is in this respect also highly significant that, as representative Joseph-Jacques Defermon des Chapelières critically noted in early July, the proposed constitution did not contain the provision ‘All men are born and remain free and equal in rights’. In fact, the declaration of the rights and duties of man and citizen did not contain any reference to natural rights, natural equality, or any reference to nature whatsoever. The first article of the declaration reads: ‘The rights of man in society are liberty, equality, security, property’. The third article addresses equality: ‘Equality consists in this, that the law is the same for all’.82

This language of civic equality was deployed as part of a larger Thermidorian agenda of national unity and conciliation, while explicitly reserving a conceptual space to advocate what in their eyes were legitimate forms of inequality or ‘distinction’. Deputy and member of the Commission of Eleven Jean-Denis Lanjuinais, for example, echoed the conciliatory inclusive Thermidorian language of citizenship by emphasizing that ‘The French republic will have a regime of fraternity; she will guarantee all her citizens the full and complete enjoyment of their rights’. However, he hastened to add that the French Republic ‘will endorse the distinctions which result essentially from virtue, talents, and the very necessity of assuring rights to all’.83 A few months earlier, Boissy too had stressed that men, although ‘everlastingly equal in rights’, can never be equal in ‘virtue, talents, and fortune’.84

The criticisms centrist Thermidorians filed against the Montagnard conception of equality comprised two aspects: first, that one should not strive after a socio-economic levelling of society; and second, that not everyone is equally equipped to participate in political decision-making processes, in particular

83 Réimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel 25, no. 295, 25 messidor, l’an 3 (13 juillet 1795), Séance 21 messidor, p. 196.
84 Réimpression Gazette national ou le moniteur universel, no. 173, 23 ventôse, l’an 111 (13 Mars 1795), Séance du 21 ventôse (11 March), p. 660.
those people who do not own property. Equality of fortune, Boissy maintained, is ‘a system of crime masked as patriotism’ forged by ‘sophists’ such as Robespierre who merely had the intention of elevating themselves. Significantly, Boissy illustrated his attack on ‘equality of fortune’ by referring to François Chabot, a son of a simple cook who had made a career under the Jacobin regime and had become a notoriously ruthless representative on mission, confiscating estates of émigrés and imposing draconian war taxes on the aristocracy and wealthy moderates. Boissy suggested that Chabot’s poverty and simple background went a long way to explain his ‘system’: ‘This equality of fortune’, Boissy concluded, ‘is nothing else than the ruin of the social state and the return of the savage state’.85

The Thermidorian alternative conceptions of civic equality, on the one hand, and moral, economic, and political distinction, on the other, were ultimately cemented in the constitution of Year III, although not without debate. It was decided that elections were to be organised in two stages. The first stage of voting took place in the so-called primary assemblies. They would elect the members of ‘electoral assemblies’, the electors. The requirements for citizenship and admittance to the primary assemblies were the following: a minimum age of 21, born and residing in France, registration in the civic register, and paying direct personal or property taxes (or a sum equivalent to three days of work), making the electoral base in fact wider than in the constitution of 1791.86 Power really resided, however, in the electoral assemblies, as they were exclusively authorized to elect the representatives for the Council of Five Hundred and the Council of Elders directly. For the electoral assemblies, qualifications were set much higher. Only citizens over 25 years old, owning property equivalent to one- to two hundred days of work (varying to local circumstances), were eligible to become electors.

The draft constitution of the Commission of Eleven originally proposed that electors in the electoral assemblies were to own ‘landed’ property. In his critical observations on the proposed constitution, the économiste and former Feuillant Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours agreed with this requirement, but argued that it should apply to citizenship in general, not only to electors. Dupont de Nemour’s argumentation resembled that of Boissy d’Anglas. ‘Robespierre and his accomplices’ had waged a war against property owners in

86 Foreigners could acquire citizenship after they had attained the age of 21, signed a declaration of intent of settling in France, resided in France for seven consecutive years, and possessed landed property or an agricultural or commercial establishment, or were married to a French woman.
the name of abstract equality. Assigning the ‘eminent droit de cité’, or political rights, to ‘sans-culottes’, to those ‘without a house, without inheritance’, to those ‘who possess no part of the land at all’, was in Dupont de Nemours’s view like ‘arming’ a class of people ‘who have nothing to lose’ and ‘who form no political society’. Granting the propertyless class political rights amounted to placing them ‘in a state of open revolt against the nation’. Limiting political rights to property owners, on the other hand, would ‘everywhere stimulate a love for labour’.87 In good Physiocratic fashion, Dupont de Nemours’s ‘nation’ consisted of landed property owners (‘propriétaires du sol’); they form a ‘political society’ and are entitled to the ‘droit de cité’. ‘Property owners’, as he put it, ‘without whose consent no person in the country is able to lodge or eat, are citizens par excellence’.88

The requirement of land ownership was attacked both within and outside the convention, by Roederer among others.89 Significantly, the constitution that was ultimately accepted did not specify what counted as ‘property’: electors were to either own property ‘yielding a revenue equal to the value of 200 days of work’, be tenants paying rent which equals 150 days of work, or own rural property yielding a revenue equivalent to 200 days of work.90 The silence of the constitution of year III on the precise nature of property suggests that industrial and commercial assets, stocks, and real estate were also deemed adequate, which indicates that many believed that propertied citizens engaged in commerce and industry were to be fully included in the republic’s ruling class.91

The severe limitations placed on the number of those citizens eligible to elect national representatives were challenged from the left, but never endangered. One representative who strongly opposed the property requirements was none other than the ‘transatlantic patriot’ Thomas Paine. Revealing of the

88 P.S. Dupont de Nemours, Observations sur la constitution, pp. 7–8.
89 Cf. Jainchill, Reimagining Politics after the Terror, pp. 44–45. Jainchill sees the Commission’s original proposal of the requirement of land ownership for becoming an elector as another indication of the classical-republican views of Thermidorians. It is telling that this requirement was in fact ultimately rejected by the National Convention.
90 Titre iv, article 35 reads: ‘celle d’être propriétaire ou usufruitier d’un bien évalué à un revenu égal à la valeur locale de deux cents journées de travail, ou d’être locataire, soit d’une habitation évaluée à un revenu égal à la valeur de cent cinquante journées de travail, soit d’un bien rural évalué à deux cents journées de travail’.
91 As one of the requirements stipulated for foreigners to become French citizens the constitution mentions in title 11, article 10 landed property or an agricultural or commercial establishment.
new wind that was blowing, however, was that his passionate plea for universal suffrage, and his accusations addressed at the Convention for betraying ‘the grand object of the Revolution’, hardly seem to have made any impression.\footnote{Thomas Paine delivered his speech in the National Convention on July 7, 1795. Réimpression Gazette national ou le Moniteur universel 24, pp. 171–172.} Paine would never again return to the floor of the Convention.

The language of property, of having a stake in society, thus, found its way into the constitution’s stipulations on becoming an elector. The Thermidorian’s insistence on the necessity of labour as the foundation of citizenship and ‘order’, a language that was by nature less exclusivist but instead potentially more expansive in its implications for the scope of citizenship, found its way in the definition of ‘regular’ citizens who only had a voice in the primary assemblies. Next to the requirements already mentioned, ‘young men’ had to prove that they could read and write, and had a ‘profession’ (‘profession mécanique’). The reasoning behind the inclusion of this last requirement is different from the property requirement for electors, and seems directly related to the fears Thermidorians frequently expressed about men getting absorbed in revolutionary politics, especially young men.

Why was the condition of owning property considered to be so important? First of all, it was widely assumed that only property owners had a particular concern for good government and stability. As Adrien Lezay-Marnésia, a publicist known for his public quarrels with Benjamin Constant, summarized, property-owning citizens not only ‘have the right to rule the city, but they alone have an interest to rule it well’.\footnote{A. Lezay, Les ruines ou voyage en France pour servir de suite à celui de la Grèce (Paris: Migneret, 1796), p. 31. Lezay’s Les ruines ou voyage en France was first published in 1794 and went through four editions between 1794 and 1796.} Property owners and the propertyless, then, not only differ in ‘nature’, Lezay-Marnésia explained, but more fundamentally differ in ‘spirit’: the spirit of the ‘have’s’ is one of preserving; they desire ‘an order that preserves’. The spirit of the ‘have-not’s’ is one of overthrowing; they wish ‘disorder to replace it’.\footnote{Lezay, Les ruines ou voyage en France, p. 31.} Men without property were dismissed by Lezay-Marnésia as a wandering and savage horde. The ‘propertyless inhabitant’ was in his view simply an ‘inhabitant’. A citizen, on the contrary, is a ‘member of the cité’, an ‘inhabitant-property owner’. The terms of the arguments expounded by Lezay-Marnésia, Boissy, and Dupont de Nemours – ‘savage state’, ‘wandering horde’, vis-à-vis ‘political society’, ‘the cité’ – reflect their preoccupation with a civilizational minimum one has to attain in order to be assigned full citizenship. The crucial marker for this minimum level of civilization was, in their view, the ownership of property. Owning property, then, was deemed a fairly
reliable indicator of one’s general independent standing, both materially and intellectually. Only property owners were thought capable of living up to the civilizational standard.

Finally, the notion of the property owner as the model of centrist-Thermidorian citizenship discourse arose in close connection with the idea that citizens ought to be autonomous, ought to think independently, and in a general sense, show a measure of enlightenment. Again, this idea was hardly new of course. But it gained new prominence and became explicitly related to the experience of the Terror. In a speech delivered on July 9, Lanjuinais asked his audience: ‘Who of us can still recall the hideous spectacle of political assemblies in the grip of grime ignorance, founded on greed, on villainous ex-hilaration’\(^95\) He was quick to draw the implications from his recollection:

\>[I]t’s impossible that all men enjoy their political rights; it is permitted to determine the conditions required for their exercise. Undoubtedly this requires no more than asking those to whom they obtain, reason, intelligence, and the necessary will and interest to maintain order. [...] Will we call up men who own nothing to exercise their political rights, even if need puts them to the mercy of the former who pays them? The time of popular flattery is over; we will give a negative response.\(^96\)

The prerequisite of a citizen’s ‘independence’ especially came to the fore in the discussions about literacy and the requirement of exercising a ‘mechanic profession’ on 12 and 14 July. Boissy had stated in his preliminary speech in name of the Commission that in order to ‘exercise political rights’, a citizen must be ‘free and independent’.\(^97\) This condition of freedom and independence comprises ‘the faculty of knowing how to read’, which ‘ought to be regarded as a sixth sense, the development of which can only render us real men, and by consequence, citizens’.\(^98\)

The requirement of literacy proposed by the commission drew heavy criticisms, despite extensive speeches made in its favour. Deputy and member of the Commission of Eleven Jacques Antoine Creuzé-Latouche, who supported the requirement, was appalled by ‘the idea that a man, who, although healthy

\(^95\) Réimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel 25, no. 295, 25 messidor, l’an 3 (13 juillet 1795), Séance 21 messidor, p. 196.

\(^96\) Ibid.

\(^97\) Boissy, Projet de constitution pour la République français, et discours préliminaire, p. 34.

\(^98\) Ibid., p. 35.
and strong, is reduced to appealing to the assistance of someone else’. ‘What useful part can he play in the political affairs of society’, he asked, ‘if he doesn’t know how to judge them, how to examine them, how to ascertain his own proper will?’ Critics such as the representatives Charles Lacroix and Jean-Jacques Cambacérès pointed out that France had not yet reached the point at which the means of education were adequately dispersed throughout the nation. ‘Do you want to establish a genuine scientific aristocracy?’, Charles Lacroix bitingly asked. After this first session of debate, the articles were not put to the vote but returned to the Commission. A few days later, chairman of the Commission Pierre-Claude-François Daunou reported the deliberations of the Commission to the National Convention. They had taken the objections seriously, he said. Significantly, Daunou drew a connection between the Montagnard regime and the supposed lack of intellectual capacities of the mass. ‘We have all witnessed the dangers of admitting in the primary assemblies men who don’t know how to read or write’, Daunou had earlier reminded the National Convention. Taking a step back Daunou made the observation that the revolution as such was made possible by the ‘progress of philosophy’, and, moreover, by the ‘communication between enlightened men and the most numerous part of the people’. During the ancien régime the ‘oppressors’ had deliberately kept the people ignorant and knowledge from spreading. Under the Jacobin regime, however, ‘the fierce bandits [...] aimed at the same goal, arrived at the same results’ but ‘with another language’.

It was no longer the case that the people were declared unworthy for education, it was education that was denigrated as superfluous or perilous within the bosom of the people who were said to be free and regenerated. Ignorance was called reason, incompetence wisdom. Enlightened men were denounced as enemies of equality. Every man who was more enlightened than another was judged a less good citizen, less worthy of public confidence, inept for social functions; it is in this way that the factious always flattered part of the people, in order to degrade and subjugate them; as they plunged them in the thickest darkness, in the vilest corruption,

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99 Réimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel 25, no. 299, 29 messidor 111 (17 juillet 1795), Séance du 24 messidor (12 July) p. 224.
100 Ibid., p. 227.
101 Ibid.
102 Réimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel 25, no. 301, 1 thermidor, l’an 111 (19 juillet 1795), Séance du 26 messidor (July 14), p. 243.
they said to them: you are good, you are wise, you are sovereign; No one has the right to be more than you.  

Daunou’s argument that the Jacobins’ alleged scorn of intellectual distinction left so many French citizens in a state of political and intellectual subjection served to make a more constructive case for forging an independent citizenry. The requirement of literacy would serve as an incentive to bring that about. Daunou, then, simultaneously wanted to restore and defend a legitimate degree of ‘distinction’ within the body politic, which, as we have seen, was a commonplace of Thermidorian rhetoric. Lanjuinais stated it thus: ‘[I]t is necessary that the blind are led by those who can see; it is necessary that those, to whom intelligence was not given, agree to select those others as guide.’  

But the paramount expression of the need for a distinct class of citizens was Boissy’s, who linked it to the condition of owning property:

We must be governed by the best; the best are the most instructed and most interested in maintaining the laws; for, with a few exceptions you will find such men among those who possess property, are attached to the country which contains it, [and] to the laws that protect it [and to] education which renders them suitable to discuss with sagacity and accuracy the advantages and inconveniences of the laws which determine the fate of their country.

A distinct class of wealthy, enlightened citizens, sometimes referred to as ‘notables’, were considered the rightful backbone and ruling elite of the post-Terror French Republic. The ‘good citizen’ of the Thermidorian center, which was originally employed as a term to rally broad segments of the French population behind the post-Terror regime and create national unity, had become an exclusive notion. This model of citizenship meant a drastic reorientation compared to the, at times militant, patriotic and politicized understandings of citizenship in the period 1793–1794. The citizen was detached from the popular societies so as to render him harmless, isolated, and in an unmediated relationship to the centrali
dized national representative body, the sole legitimate site of politics. One of the

103 Réimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel 25, no. 301, 1 thermidor, l’an 111 (19 juillet 1795), Séance du 26 messidor (July 14), p. 243–244.
104 Réimpression Gazette nationale ou le moniteur universel 25, no. 295, 25 messidor, l’an 3 (13 juillet 1795), Séance 21 messidor (9 July), p. 196.
105 Boissy, Projet de constitution pour la République français, et discours préliminaire, pp. 32–33.
main legacies of Thermidorian reflection on the Terror was the association of faction with popular societies. From then on, popular societies, and by extension, organised opposition, were by default suspect. The Thermidorian attempt to nationalise citizens through a discourse of ‘good’ citizenship failed, partly because large numbers of citizens were denied access to the political sphere. This failure of rallying diverse groups of citizens behind the Republic paved the way for Bonaparte’s takeover.

The citizen was expected to put his energy into labour, commerce, industry, the arts, and education. Equality was redefined in terms of the equal protection of one’s (civil) rights by the law. Often explicitly referring to the involvement of what were considered the propertyless and uneducated masses, the Thermidorian centre considered only the propertied and educated (or enlightened) to be eligible for full-fledged citizenship. Taken together, the notion of post-Terror citizenship that dominated Thermidor and the Directory was a depoliticized model of citizenship. The following chapters on the American and Dutch republics reveal both patterns similar to those in France, and processes determined by the national circumstances of the country in question.