

2020

The Incroyables et Merveilleuses as Separate Entities

Allyson Payne

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/vulcan>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Payne, Allyson (2020) "The Incroyables et Merveilleuses as Separate Entities," *Vulcan Historical Review*. Vol. 24, Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/vulcan/vol24/iss2020/4>

This content has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of the UAB Digital Commons, and is provided as a free open access item. All inquiries regarding this item or the UAB Digital Commons should be directed to the [UAB Libraries Office of Scholarly Communication](#).

THE INCROYABLES ET MERVEILLEUSES AS SEPARATE ENTITIES

Allyson Payne

The execution of the ringleader of the Reign of Terror, the Incorruptible Maximilien Robespierre on the 27th of July in 1794—the ninth of Thermidor—brought about a chain of events including the revocation of the Law of 22 Prairial, which, summoned much celebration and conspiracy from the royalist population in Paris. Within this highly political time period, twin movements famous for their respectively garish clothing styles known as the *Incroyables et Merveilleuses* were born. When writing on the *Incroyables et Merveilleuses*, historians consider the pair irrevocably linked. However, in order to rightly understand the two movements, it is crucial to their individual integrities to consider them separate entities rather than as a pair. When one examines each as a separate entity, one finds that though they share a genesis, they accomplished unique political agendas and distinct timelines.

To best understand the *Incroyables et Merveilleuses* movements respectively, one must first have a grasp on two subjects—the political climate at the time and the reigning importance of clothing styles in France.

After the execution of Louis XVI, the revolutionaries ruled with an iron fist, executing anyone and everyone suspected of “treason”—a word in that time synonymous with royal sympathies. These thousands of executions found justification with the Committee of Public Safety by way of the Law of 22 Prairial which states, among other distinctions, “the following are deemed enemies of the people: those who have instigated the reestablishment of monarchy, or have sought to disparage or dissolve the National Convention and the revolutionary and republican government of which is the center.”¹ This event was then followed by the chilling proclamation: “The penalty provided for all offenses under the jurisdiction of the Revolutionary Tribunal is death.”² Not only could anyone be executed but the law also gave the people the right to turn anyone in rather than have any sort of orderly process.³ This time period from 1791 to 1793, known as

““ The *Incroyables et Merveilleuses*, a group of men and women respectively who used fashion as a weapon, began as a part of the Thermidorian reaction. ””

the Great Terror, engulfed France in a wave of royalist blood.

At the center of this bloody movement was a man named Maximilien Robespierre who—once he executed two of his dearest friends and fellow revolutionaries Georges Danton and Camille Desmoulins in a bout of insecure conspiracy—found himself in the middle of a coup d’état and at the mercy of the guillotine’s blade. Not long after this, the Law of 22 Prairial was revoked, and the people of France, especially those in Paris the epicenter of the Revolution, took to the streets rejoicing, believing that the conspirators had executed Robespierre because they wanted to stem the flow of blood across the country.⁴ Though this was a misunderstanding as this was not the intention of the conspirators, the conspirators, including one Louis-Marie Stanislas Fréron and one Jean-Lambert Tallien, made the self-preserving decision to go along with the people’s enthusiasm—making the two men key leaders in the Parisian Thermidorian reaction. According to Morton, “If the people wanted to make heroes of them, so much the better. Terror they regarded as a means for keeping themselves in power. If they could remain in power without it, that would suit them equally well.”⁵ Out of this embrace of misunderstanding for personal gain on part of Tallien and Stanislas, the *Incroyables et Merveilleuses*, a group of men and women respectively who used fashion as a weapon, began as a part of the Thermidorian reaction.

France found its beginnings as the fashion capital of the world with the reign of Louis XIV—affectionately known by the French as the Sun King. Dressed often as pictured



Figure 1. Rigaud, Hyacinthe. Portait of Louis XIV (1638-1715), King of France, 1701, Oil on Canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

in the painting done by Hyacinthe Rigaud titled *Portrait of Louis XIV (1638-1715), King of France* commissioned for his nephew Phillip V of Spain in his royal robes, blue silk drapes, and white and red shoes, it is no surprise historians view Louis XIV as the father of French fashion.⁶ At face value, the superfluous style of dressing during the Rococo period seems needless; however, luxurious clothing represented more than just frivolity to Louis XIV. In fact, the import of luxury goods made up a key component of France's economy during Louis XIV's reign as acknowledged by his minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert in his famous quote, "Fashion is to France what gold mines are to the Spaniards."⁷ Paradoxical as it seems, the frivolity of the French court at Versailles kept the economy thriving. In fact, the more frivolous the higher Louis XIV promoted a courtier or noble in his social circle at Versailles. Instead of constituting a "superfluous waste" luxury goods "served as

a crucial instrument in asserting one's social position in a highly hierarchical society."⁸ In short, extravagant clothing made of the most expensive materials meant status and power to those under King Louis XIV and held an essential part of life as well as in the economy during the seventeenth century.

This quest for the most luxurious of goods made the monarchy and those associated with it by title and by livres detested by the common people of France who spent their days in the fields working hard. These common people—or serfs—had no representation in government either as France still practiced serfdom at that time.⁹ To give example to such frivolity, one only has to look to Louis XV the king who reportedly spent 16,000 livres on silk per month during his reign.¹⁰

Thus, there is no wonder in that by the time Marie Antoinette, often referred to by the moniker Madame Deficit, was brought to the French court and embraced the luxurious lifestyle she caught the full brunt of the ire of the people. Brought from Austria to the court of Louis XV at a very young age, Antoinette's carriage stopped at the boundary separating Austria from France where French handmaidens "entirely undressed [Antoinette], in order that she might retain nothing belonging to a foreign court (an etiquette always observed on such an occasion.)"¹¹ Thus it follows that rather than just a sheer misunderstanding of finances and self-involvement, a far more likely explanation follows that as an outsider thrown into French court Antoinette felt the pressures to fit in to the extravagant court as she had been stripped—quite literally—of everything else. A description of Antoinette's morning ritual left by her première femme de chambre Mme. Campan states that a book of styles including samples of fabrics which included fabrics and design inspirations for "dresses, formal robes" and "informal dresses" to be presented to Antoinette "on her awakening." Antoinette also received a pin cushion with which she pinned in the book what she desired to wear that day—one formal robe, one dress, and one informal dress.¹² Needless to say, Antoinette shed her Austrian austerity and embraced French frivolity. This was all she could afford to do with the social clothing requirements of the court along with the pressing rumors circulated that

she and Louis XVI had not consummated their marriage. At the French Court, extravagance and frivolity represented status and presence, and there must have been pressure on Antoinette to indulge.

In the end, the proletariat had had enough and Antoinette's status could not save her nor her relative innocence, for with the immortal words uttered in Paris by both Revolutionaries Danton and Marat along with many others, "Je vote pour la mort du tyran," her husband, King Louis XVI faced the guillotine on 21 January 1793.¹³ Even in the end of her husband, Antoinette reached for clothing once more as she requested mourning clothing for herself and her children.¹⁴ She too followed Louis XVI in death on 16 October 1793, ironically in a simple shift dress, a decision made by the revolutionary leaders to strip her of her humanity and status. The importance of clothing carried on in the practices of the *Incroyables* and the *Merveilleuses*. First documented officially by their individual names in art by Horace Vernet in his 1814 engravings, the *Incroyables* and the *Merveilleuses* evoke the days of Louis XIV with their extravagant dress.¹⁵ As described by Alexandre Dumas in his chronicles,

This jeunesse dorée ... appeared with either long queues, - a fashion revived from the time of Louis XIII and called 'cadenette' (from the name of its inventor Cadenet, a scion of the house of Luynes), - or else with hair falling loose on the shoulders and beside the face in locks then called 'dog's-ears.' They revived the fashion of powder and used it plentifully. In the morning they wore very short surtout coats, with velvet breeches, black or green. When in full dress the surtout was replaced by a light-colored evening coat cut square in front and buttoned across the pit of the stomach, while the tails hung down behind to the calves of the legs. The muslin cravat was high, with enormous ends, and stiffly starched. The waistcoat was white, made of piqué or dimity, with broad lapels and rufflings; two watch-chains dangled on satin breeches that were either pearl-gray or apple-green; these breeches came to the middle of the calf of the leg, where they were buttoned with three buttons, from which hung a mass of ribbons. Silk stockings, striped crossways with yellow, red, or blue, and

pumps, - considered the more elegant the thinner, lower, and more flaring they were, - an opera hat under the arm, and a monstrous stick, or club, with a huge handle, completed the costume of an incroyable.¹⁶

When comparing Dumas's view of the *Incroyables* to that of Vernet, there is little deviation, though Vernet's work presents a more understated picture of what these men looked like. However, there is no doubt that the *Incroyables* encompassed a style of dressing wild for the time. Many of Vernet's engravings include a watch chain peeking out from the waist or pocket of the trousers.¹⁷ Vernet also captures the vivid colors Dumas describes as well as the ties said to be at the bottom of each pant leg.¹⁸ However, one looming difference remains between the two descriptions—the manner of the subject. When one reads Dumas's description, one gets the idea that the Incroyable is somewhat of a crazed person. In contrast, Vernet engraves his subject as a quite regal entity that seems somewhat incapable of the *Incroyables'* violence.¹⁹ Though difficult to compare the *Incroyables'* dress to other contemporary men's clothing styles as "costumary sobriety" seemed prudent during the years of the Reign of Terror, two engraved fashion plates in particular shed light onto what men of the time wore and how the *Incroyables* differed.²⁰ The first plate offers insight into revolutionary dress at the time. Though the plate of an officer, many aspects translate across all ranks—long pants, a color palette of navy, white, red, and black, and the tricolor.²¹ The second plate depicts the average male of the time with his "simple" yet sophisticated style—coat cut high just below the chest, simple shirt with colored collar, and shorter trousers with boots—with copper buttons the only fancy element involved.²² Obvious differences exist between the officer's uniform and the *Incroyables'*, but the differences between the *Incroyables* and the regular gentleman of the period have a subtler nature. Take for example shoe style: men with "democratic leanings" were more prone to wearing boots.²³ Though a boot is pictured in a few of Vernet's engravings, most *Incroyables* were prone to what can only be described as men's kitten heels, many times with spats.²⁴ The typical French man, as stated previously, dressed in a way that embodied style but



Figure 2. Horace Vernet, Gooden Hazlitt & Fox. Horace Vernet 1789-1863: *Incroyables Et Merveilleuses*: 25 Watercolours from the Collection of the Duchesse De Berry. London: Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 1991.

simplicity, while those of the *Incroyable* inclination dressed more outlandishly with brighter colors, larger cravats, and bigger hats. An interesting similarity, however, comes in the hair category. Both the typical French man and the *Incroyable* embraced the shorter hair as opposed to a powdered wig—though, interestingly, Robespierre had sported one. This change in preference can be explained uniquely for each group: the typical French man cut his hair and got rid of the wig to symbolize their break from the ancien régime, while the *Incroyable* may have done so as an ode to those lost to the guillotine. Perhaps, more simply, the wigs itched or proved too hot. The *Merveilleuses*, often referred to as the counterparts to the *Incroyables*, merit a lengthy description from Dumas as well:

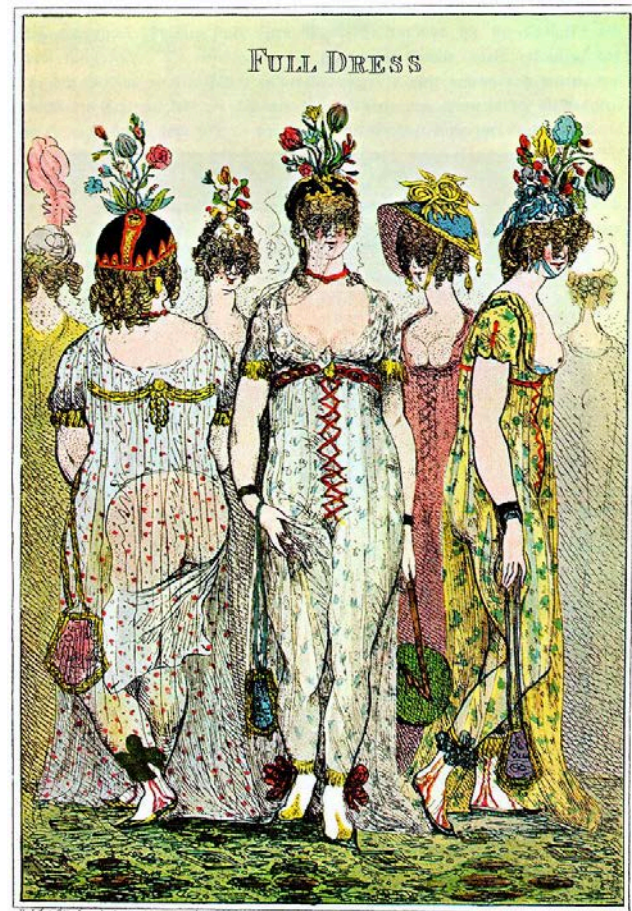
She borrowed her garments, not like the incoyable from modern fashions, but from the Greek and Corinthian draperies of the Phrynes and Aspasia. Tunic, mantle, peplum, all were cut to an antique pattern. The more a woman managed to make herself naked, the more elegant she was. The true meiveilleuse—or merveilleuse [marvelous] for that of course was the derivation of the word—went bare-armed and bare-legged. The tunic made like that of the Hunting Diana, was often slashed open at the side, with no other fastening than a cameo clasp holding together the slashed sides just above the knee. But that was nothing. The ladies made the excuse of summer heat to appear at balls and on the public promenades in filmy garments less concealing than the cloud that enveloped Venus when she led her son to Dido. Eneas did not recognize his mother until she came out of her cloud... But these ladies did not need to step out of their cloud to be seen; they were perfectly visible through it, and whoever took them for goddesses must have been at some pains to do so. This diaphanous airiness—Juvenal speaks of it—became altogether the fashion.²⁵

Unlike that of the *Incroyables*, the description of Dumas and the engravings of Vernet of the *Merveilleuses* have vast differences. According to Dumas, the *Merveilleuses* walked about in barely even a slip dress. Satirist George Cruikshank's widely publicized colored etchings of the *Merveilleuses*—which paint the women in completely see-through chemises—only serve to enforce this view of lurid anti-goddesses running around France.²⁶ Vernet's interpretation of the *Merveilleuses* engraves an exceedingly different picture: one of demure haute couture. While the neoclassical "empire" bust line presents itself, the women in Vernet's engravings are hardly naked.²⁷

Each finds herself covered from neck to ankle with fine materials, although with less skirts and bodices, the female form presents itself more fully to the average onlooker. With regards to the average women's dress of the day, women did continue to dress in a more fashionable way than previously thought by revolutionary scholars as evidenced by the new abundant circulation of fashion

plate magazines.²⁸ The difference comes in the fact that the fashions were no longer sequestered with the upper class. The revolution indeed made higher quality garments and patterns more readily available to the middle and lower classes. In fact, many women went to great lengths to get their hands on socially acceptable pieces. Only the revolutionary lower class continued to dress in more appropriate, simple work attire.²⁹

However, the political agendas of the two groups also function as a separating factor. No doubt surrounds the political agenda of the *Incroyables* based on their known enemy and political tactics. The *Incroyables* saw themselves as the direct response to the *sans-culottes*—the toughest revolutionaries. The term *sans-culotte* comes from the fact that they chose to not wear breeches but instead full-length trousers so as to distinguish themselves from the elite.³⁰ Historian Albert Soboul describes the *sans-culottes* as “outwardly recognizable by [their] dress, which served to distinguish him from the more elevated classes of society.”³¹ Soboul also states that a “social component” accompanied trousers and informal dress.³² By wearing the trousers, the *sans-culottes* made a political statement that they would not be forced into the old subordinate position by the outdated manners of ancien régime. They asserted with the trousers that they now had body politic autonomy. Both the *sans-culottes* and the *Incroyables* used the best political tactic of the time period: the newspaper. In revolutionary France, the publisher determined the skewed sentiments of each newspaper. Thus, newspapers are better understood as propaganda rather than objective news sources. Take the *National Gazette* for example. Though arguably the most widely read newspaper in all of France, it consisted of brief segments of news, and pages upon pages of word for word dialogues that took place in the national convention that day. This paper, though great for revolutionary purposes, held nearly nothing by way of news and information.³³ Such exists the case of the *sans-culottes* and the *Incroyables*. One of the *sans-culottes*’ brightest and most leftist political figures, François-Noël Babeuf, better known by the name Gracchus Babeuf, edited the movement’s most notable newspaper—*Le Tribun du Peuple*. One of the most well-known issues of



PARISIAN LADIES in their WINTER DRESS for 1800

this newspaper came in 1795 and urged the populace to continue moving towards French national goals as “since the fatal Thermidorian reaction patricians and royalists have managed to lead the people towards the counter-goal, towards common unhappiness.”³⁴ However, Fréron had the upper hand in the newspaper scheme as his father Elias had been a master newspaper editor of the *L'Année Littéraire*. This gave Fréron a childhood and young adulthood full of experience that allowed him to effectively smash his opponents in the newspapers both he and Tallien edited *L'Orateur du Peuple* as well as *Ami du Citoyen*. Each publication spewed his venom denouncing the Jacobins and the *sans-culottes*.³⁵ Unlike the political agenda of the *Incroyables*, that of the *Merveilleuses* existed as more of an undertone since their access to



Figure 4. Horace Vernet, *Gooden Hazlitt & Fox*. Horace Vernet 1789-1863: *Incroyables Et Merveilleuses*: 25 Watercolours from the Collection of the Duchesse De Berry. London: Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 1991.

public resources and platforms hit limitations due to their gender. However, if one compares the *Merveilleuses* to more contemporary women's movements, their own movement becomes clearer. The *Merveilleuses* movement follows the typical trend of women's movements in three large ways—club meetings, style changes, and patriarchal denunciation. Though Sorosis and the New England Woman's Club receive credit as the first true influential culture clubs—both founded in 1868—it can be reasonably stated that influential culture clubs had their start much earlier, specifically with the *Merveilleuses*.³⁶ Consider the French salons—especially that of Madame Tallien. Though French men as well as women had been meeting in salons to discuss political thought and the Enlightenment since the early eighteenth century, the salon of Madame Tallien skewed from the traditional path because a

common cause united those that met there rather than just the various rounds of political thought that swirled as they did before the revolution took hold. As mentioned previously, all who attended Madame Tallien's salon had been affected in some way by the Terror, and all longed for a renewal or for a taste of the ease of the luxury gone by. Take for example Josephine Beauharnais—future wife of Napoleon Bonaparte and Empress of France. After the execution of her first husband, the Marquis Alexandre de

Beauharnais, on 23 July 1794, Josephine was released from prison and immediately began to try to cement her place in royalist society once more receiving council to seek out Tallien and join his circle of friends.³⁷ Josephine writes beamingly that “the generations which are to come after us will owe their existence to Madame de Cabarrus and the representative Tallien.”³⁸ This praise comes after Tallien as well as his new wife Madame Tallien nee Cabarrus took Josephine in and wove her into their salon. Josephine then goes onto say subsequently, “If I wished to speak of a lady peculiarly dear to my heart—one of those friends who, as Cicero says, make prosperity brighter and adversity more tolerable—I should name Madame Tallien, at present Princess of Chimène.”³⁹ Evidently, from her memoir, Josephine felt the comradeship of the group, and even felt so comfortable as to insist that Napoleon Bonaparte, upon their courting stage, attend the salon as her guest.⁴⁰ Though criticized by patriarchal historians from the early twentieth century, such as J.B. Morton, as a “pest-house,”⁴¹ many indeed admit that Tallien's salon had considerable influence on the political conversation of the day.⁴² In this way, Tallien's salon shares stark similarities with the women's clubs founded later in the century—joining together under a common cause to influence the conversation. That alone seals the *Merveilleuses'* place in women's movement history, but more than that they also share a pattern of eschewing the common dress of the day to embrace the outrageous. Compare the *Merveilleuses* to the 1970 feminist movement. Though a large part of women's culture during the 1960's, women's fashion lost popularity in the 1970's as women began to reject feminine stereotypes and embraced disillusion with conforming within a patriarchal society, women stopped taking the advice of fashion designers and began to wear

more work attire such as pants.⁴³

Finally, similar to many if not all other women's movements before and after their time, the *Merveilleuses* receive a type of condescension from historians only reserved for women reaching beyond their means. Take for example Morton's description of Madame Tallien's salon mentioned previously. He writes, "For nearly two centuries the wittiest, the most learned, the most accomplished men and women of France had made conversation a high art, and had set a standard for the intellectual activities of the nation... The aim of Cabarrus was a less exalted one. Yet this pest-house exercised a conservable influence on the politics of the day."⁴⁴ Even Madame Tallien's husband did not reserve his criticisms of the movement.

The good citizens are these respectable women who stay at home to look after their household to raise their followers and not as one of our colleagues said, these guillotine furies that always saw in the stands of Jacobins not knowing nothing knowing nothing applauding wrongly through all that was good and bad. It is not such people who form the opinion of the people, but those good citizens who have sent their children to the frontiers whose hearts and fortunes are at home, which are nothing but wishes for her, who desire nothing so much than to see her prosper.⁴⁵

Consider yet another instance—James Gillray's portrayal of the *Merveilleuses*. He draws a lewd scene in which Madame Tallien and Empress Josephine dance naked for the viewing pleasure of Napoleon and Barras published in London.⁴⁶ While not a completely surprising portrayal as the English tended to satirize the French and indeed satirize the *Merveilleuses* on yet another occasion,⁴⁷ one should note just how much Gillray's portrayal of these ladies degrades the power of the *Merveilleuses* movement to mere oversexed women.

Chronology makes up the final detail when distinguishing the *Incroyables* from the *Merveilleuses*. As mentioned previously, the two movements share a genesis in the death of Robespierre and the revocation of the Law of



Figure 5. Gillray, James. "Ci-devant occupations-or-Madame Taliah and the Empress Josephine dancing naked before Barrass in the winter of 1797.-A fact! / Js Gillray dest & fact." 1805, etching, France.

22 Prairial. When the terrorists released the "treasonous" prisoners—of which the prisoners took as admission that they remained imprisoned unfairly—Parisians slowly began to feel safe telling their stories and being more open with their loyalties. The Terror had done away with thousands of "humble people," and the people needed someone to blame in the midst of their rejoicing.⁴⁸ This marks the split between the two movements. Upon realizing their need to get out in front of the riots against the Terrorists,⁴⁹ Fréron and Tallien began working tirelessly to turn the tide of the Thermidorian reaction in their favor. Gathering young elite men from those that had been imprisoned and those that just had a grudge against the Terrorists and the Jacobins, Fréron led his group of *Incroyables* through the streets causing havoc and eventually shutting down the Jacobins Club—though some question how much damage the young men actually did as they had little experience in the art of war.

In addition, a distinction must be made between the *Incroyables* or *muscadins* of Paris and those in the Lyonese region, the Rhône valley, and in Provence. Though there has been some effort to link the two groups broadly as

they were made up of the same type of middle class young man, the *Incroyables* were their own separate entity. Those *muscadins* not in Paris but in the three aforementioned areas took part in a sect of the Thermidorian Reaction known as the White Terror, which was largely contained to those specific regions due to the high population of royalists there. Arguably the *Incroyables* did not have a part during the White Terror but instead made up a special group of *muscadins* known also as the *Jeunesse dorée de Fréron*—middle-class young men as well as more elite whose headquarters was the *Café de Chartres*.⁵⁰ As far as an endpoint for the two groups of *muscadins*, historians agree that both movements ended with the directory period in 1799.

On the other hand, after the revocation of the Law of 22 Prairial, the Merveilleuse movement began with the release from prison of twenty-one-year-old Theresia Cabarrus who then married Tallien and began work on setting up her salon to welcome the newly freed Parisians. At this time, a certain sect of the *Merveilleuses* began to have something called the *bals des victims*. Though primary material eludes, the most revered historians of the French Revolution and the Directory period have all commented on the existence of these balls.⁵¹ One such historian Thomas Carlyle wrote this of the balls

Among the innumerable kinds of Balls [in post-Terror Paris], let the hasty reader mark only this single one: the kind they call Victim Balls, Bals a Victime. The dancers, in choice costume, have all crape round the left arm: to be admitted, it needs that you be a Victime; that you have lost a relative under the Terror. Peace to the Dead; let us dance to their memory! For in all ways one must dance.⁵²

Though all have credited the *Incroyables* and the *Merveilleuses* as the responsible parties for the balls, the best argument states that the *Merveilleuses* alone held responsibility. This argument, of course, has foundations in the distinctions previously mentioned. Like the *Merveilleuses*, the attendees wore neoclassical style dress with the differentiating pieces being red accent pieces and guillotine-style hair in honor of the dead.⁵³ Jules Goncourt describes the balls fittingly,

France is dancing. She has been dancing since Thermidor. she dances to avenge, she dances to forget! Between her bloody past and her dark future, she dances! Scarcely saved from the guillotine, she dances.... France, still bloodied and all ruined, turns and pirouettes and spins about in an immense and mad farandole.⁵⁴

The Merveilleuse movement did not stop with the *bals des victimes* or with Madame Tallien's salon. It did not even end when, according to Morton, "Bonaparte put an end to her reign."⁵⁵

Upon Napoleon Bonaparte's seizure of power in France in 1799 along with his subsequent crowning as emperor in 1804, all men's clothing—even the *Incroyables*—took a turn for the more natural. Clothiers made the adopted three-piece suit "of good cloth in plain, subdued colours" with "only the waistcoat offer[ing] a modicum of dash and colour."⁵⁶ This very clearly marks the end of the *Incroyable* period in 1799; however, the Merveilleuse movement does not end there. In fact, instead of calming down, fashion became a true women's sport, as during this time publishing houses pushed out various and many fashion journals directed at women for the first time.⁵⁷ Coming out of the eighteenth century, middle class women had more confidence in regard to clothing choices—a confidence given by the Merveilleuse movement which provided the "opportunity for vice"—as stated previously—to middle class citizens for the first time.

Also, at this time French fashion heavily influenced the English, and a pattern of copied dress style emerged and began developing. The best example of this phenomenon is the "empire" bust and waistline dress. Though many fashion historians believe that the empire waist was a product of Napoleon's French First Empire, there is more accuracy in stating that the empire line actually has its roots in key Merveilleuse figure and wife of Bonaparte—Josephine Beauharnais—and has its origins in the late 1790's rather than the early 1800's.⁵⁸ Josephine used her extensive time in Madame Tallien's salon wisely, and when she became Empress, she used her knowledge of the movement and women's fashion to encourage style in the middle classes and acted as a great sponsor



Figure 6. Lefèvre. Robert. Pauline Bonaparte, Princess Borghese (1780–1825), 1806, Oil on Canvas, Wellington Museum, Wellington. France.

of troubador painters who propagated this neoclassical style.⁵⁹ Even those that despised Josephine, like her sister-in-law Pauline, tried their hand at imitating her style as particularly seen in Robert Lefèvre.⁶⁰ Without

Madame Tallien, Empress Josephine, and the Merveilleuse movement as a whole, no sudden rise in women's fashion would have occurred. Thus, even after the end of Madame Tallien's salon, the spirit of the Merveilleuse movement kept moving through history in the form of the movement's greatest political attribute—clothing style—and should be thanked for the freedom it provided women of France.

While both the *Incroyables et Merveilleuses'* movements began shortly after the revocation of the Law of 22 Prairial on August 1, 1794 the two movements had different lives and to lump them together as previous historians have done as counterpart movements is evidence of a complete misunderstanding of the time period. The *Incroyables'* movement, led by Monsieur Fréron, had a short life of violence within the time between 1795 and 1799. The goal of the *Incroyables* was self-preservation and revenge as they fought their political enemy, the *sans-culottes*. Unlike the *Incroyables*, the *Merveilleuses* embodied the freedom that came with the end of the Reign of Terror and became the embodiment of one of the first women's movements with their timeline stretching long past 1799 into the nineteenth century. When one studies the two groups as separate entities, one preserves the intended natures of the *Incroyables et Merveilleuses*, but not doing so misses the mark on a key portion of the Thermidorian Reaction.

ENDNOTES

1. "The Law of 22 Prairial Year II (10 June 1794)," Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, accessed November 17, 2019, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/439>.

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. Bertrand Barère de Vieuzac, Mémoires de B. Barère, membre de la constituante, de la Convention, du Comité de Salut public, et de la Chambre des représentants, vol. 2 (Paris: J. Labitte, 1842), 205-6. Excerpted in Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution, Jack R. Censer and Lynn Hunt, eds. (American Social History Productions, 2001).

5. J.B. Morton, Brumaire, the Rise of Bonaparte; a Study of French History from the Death of Robespierre to the Establishment of the Consulate.

London: T. W. Laurie, 1948.

6. Hyacinthe Rigaud, Portrait of Louis XIV (1638-1715), King of France, 1701, Oil on Canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

7. Elisabeth Mikosch, "The Manufacture And Trade Of Luxury Textiles In The Age Of Mercantilism" (1990). Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings. 612. 53.

8. Ibid, 54.

9. Serfdom was not abolished in France until 11 August 1789 and not even by King Louis XVI, but rather by the National Assembly.

10. Mikosch, "The Manufacture And Trade of Luxury Textiles In The Age Of Mercantilism," 54.

11. Jeanne-Louise-Henriette Campan, Secret Memoirs of the Court of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France : with Sketches and Anecdotes of Her

Private Life Limited ed. London: Grolier Society, 1900.

12. Genviève d'Ossun, Garde Robes de la Reine, Gazette pour l'année 1782, Archives de France, No. Ae 16, no.2; Alice Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion : 500 Years of Fashion Illustration New York: Costume & Fashion Press, 1997. 68-69.; Henrietta Campan, and Jean-François Barrière, Mémoires Sur La Vie Privée de Marie-Antoinette, Reine de France et de Navarre: Mis En Ordre et Puliés Par M. Barrière. Baudouin frères, 1826. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433071382000>. 13. Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur, seule histoire authentique et inaltérée de la révolution française depuis la réunion des Etats-généraux jusqu'au Consulat (Mai 1789-Novembre 1799). Vol. 15. Paris: Plon Frères, Imprimeurs-Editeurs, 1848. 198

14. Ibid, 271.

15. Horace Vernet, Gooden Hazlitt & Fox. Horace Vernet 1789-1863: *Incrovables Et Merveilleuses*: 25 Watercolours from the Collection of the Duchesse De Berry. London: Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, 1991.

16. Alexandre Dumas, The Romances of Alexandre Dumas : Illustrated with Photogravures and Engravings from Paintings by Maurice Leloir [and Others]. New York: P. F. Collier, 1910. Page 262

17. Vernet, Horace Vernet 1789-1863: *Incrovables Et Merveilleuses*

18. Ibid

19. Ibid

20. Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion, 83.

21. "Officer de chasseur." Engraved fashion plate from Le Journal de la mode et du goût, No. 7, 25 April 1790, Plate I. Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. As pictured in Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion, 82.

22. "Petit-maître en habit brun rougeâtre, collet cramoisi, gilet blanc brodé de carreaux tricolores, culotte de peau de daim." Engraved fashion plate from Le Journal de la mode et du goût, No. 27, 15 November 1790, Plate I. Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. As pictured in Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion, 83.

23. "Petit-maître en habit brun rougeâtre, collet cramoisi, gilet blanc brodé de carreaux tricolores, culotte de peau de daim." Engraved fashion plate from Le Journal de la mode et du goût, No. 27, 15 November 1790, Plate I. Cabinet des Estampes, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. As pictured in Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion, 83

24. Vernet, Horace Vernet 1789-1863: *Incrovables Et Merveilleuses*

25. Dumas, Romances of Alexandre Dumas, 264.

26. "The Merveilleuse." Cruikshank, George. Fashion. 1817. Page 81

27. Vernet, Horace Vernet 1789-1863: *Incrovables Et Merveilleuses*

28. Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion, 83.

29. Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion, 85

30. Albert Soboul, The Parisian *Sans-culottes* and the French Revolution, 1793-4. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964. 19.

31. Ibid, 18.

32. Ibid, 19.

33. Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur, seule histoire authentique et inaltérée de la révolution française depuis la réunion des Etats-généraux jusqu'au Consulat (Mai 1789-Novembre 1799). Paris: Plon Frères, Imprimeurs-Editeurs, 1848.

34. Gracchus Babeuf, "Prospectus for *Le Tribun du Peuple*." *Le Tribun du Peuple*, 1795, accessed 15 November 2019. <https://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/conspiracyequals/1795/tribun-people.htm>

35. Morton, Brumaire, the Rise of Bonaparte, 33.

36. Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist : True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914 New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980.

37. Josephine Beauharnais, Memoirs of the Empress Josephine. Paris: Société des Bibliophiles, 1903. Vol 1. pg 117.

38. Ibid, 132.

20

39. Ibid, 132 footnote.

40. Morton, Brumaire, the Rise of Bonaparte, 93.

41. Ibid, 33.

42. Ibid, 33.

43. "Gender in the 1970's: Women's Fashion." The History Engine, accessed 18 November 2019. <https://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/5835>; no single author found or clear editor.

44. Morton, Brumaire, the Rise of Bonaparte, 33.

45. Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur, seule histoire authentique et inaltérée de la révolution française depuis la réunion des Etats-généraux jusqu'au Consulat (Mai 1789-Novembre 1799). Paris: Plon Frères, Imprimeurs-Editeurs, 1848. Vol 22. 508.

46. James Gillray, "Ci-devant occupations-or-Madame Taliah and the Empress Josephine dancing naked before Barrass in the winter of 1797.-A fact! / Js Gillray dest & fect." 1805, etching, France.

47. George Cruikshank, "The Merveilleuse." Fashion. 1817. Page 81.

48. Morton, Brumaire, the Rise of Bonapart, 30-31.

49. Revolutionaries who perpetrated the terror.

50. Morton, Brumaire, the Rise of Bonapart, 33.

51. F.A. Aulard, (François-Alphonse), and Miall, Bernard. The French Revolution; a Political History, 1789-1804. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965.; Thomas Carlyle, and Holland J. Rose, The French Revolution. Vol. 2 G. Bell and sons, Ltd., 1913. 366. Accessed on 17 November 2019. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015066051247>

52. Carlyle, The French Revolution: A History, 366.; Ronald Schechter, "Gothic Thermidor: The Bals Des Victimes, the Fantastic, and the Production of Historical Knowledge in Post-Terror France," Representations, no. 61 (1998): 78-94. doi:10.2307/2902948. 78

53. Schechter, "Gothic Thermidor, 78-94.

54. Ibid, 78-94.

55. Morton, Brumaire, the Rise of Bonaparte, 34.

56. Mackrell, An Illustrated History of Fashion, 85.

57. Ibid, 110.

58. Ibid, 110.

59. Ibid, 116.

60. Robert Lefèvre. Pauline Bonaparte, Princess Borghese (1780-1825), 1806, Oil on Canvas, Wellington Museum, Wellington.