Outrage on the Streets: Disobedient Parisians and the *outrages par paroles*

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On July 18, 1871 two police officers entered a bar near the Rond Point de Boulogne to restore order among the rowdy customers. As they left to resume their patrol, they passed an elderly woman who reproached them with "Saloperie de gendarmes, tas de crèves la faim, dire qu'on fout de pain dans la gueule à ça ?"[1]. When asked by the officers to explain herself, this woman, 74-year-old Louise Doually, smacked one of the officers in the face with her umbrella. Not surprisingly, she was arrested and taken to the police station, where she denied that she had insulted the officers, adding that her umbrella was very small, and that while the handle may have touched one of them, she had not intended to hit him. At her trial she was found guilty and sentenced to six days in jail. Beyond that, however, the archival record is silent on Louise Doually, as it is on many ordinary Parisians accused of the criminal infraction known as "outrage par paroles à un agent de la force publique."[2]

The crime of *outrages par paroles* is still on the books in France, and anyone who verbally assaults a Parisian police officer with the same words used by Louise Doually would face the same charge.[3] Literally, an *outrage* is just an insult, but in practice, something quite a bit more. The Larousse defines an *outrage* as an "extremely serious offense": a "word, gesture, or threat, written or drawn, attacking the dignity or the respect due to an agent of the public force in the exercise of his/her functions."[4] An *outrage* is an attack that undermines, whether by poking fun, insulting, or threatening, the respect and authority

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[1] That is, "fucking cops, pile of miserable losers, to think that we're shoving bread into those faces?" [author's trans.], Archives de Paris [henceforth AP], Archives judiciaires [henceforth Aj], D2U6/8, Rapport, 18 juillet 1871, Doually, Louise.

[2] In other words, a "verbal outrage toward an agent of the public service" [author's trans.].

[3] The definition and punishment of the *outrages* is set out in Article 433-5 of the French penal code: "Constituent un outrage puni de 7500 euros d'amende les paroles, gestes ou menaces, les écrits ou images de toute nature non rendus publics ou l'envoi d'objets quelconques adressés à une personne chargée d'une mission de service public, dans l'exercice ou à l'occasion de l'exercice de sa mission, et de nature à porter atteinte à sa dignité ou au respect dû à la fonction dont elle est investie." https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/article_lc/LEGIARTI000044376061.

[4] http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/outrage/56942?q=outrage#56612.

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due to someone's public function. And since it is the publicness of the victim's function that produces the dignity and respect owed, it is also the publicness of the assault on that person's dignity that counts, the fact that the *outrages* occur in public, often on the street and within earshot of other people.

The crime of *outrages par paroles* first became French law in 1810 as Article 224 of the Napoleonic Penal Code and applied to anyone insulting any type of public official.[5] But the great bulk of the police reports in the period I examine, 1868–1914, concerned people who insulted police officers.[6] To speak "outrageously," then, usually entailed insulting a policeman, and usually on the street.[7] By mid-century, officers had become visible parts of the neighborhoods they policed, circulating on city streets as "literal representative[s] of authority."[8] And while that visibility made them easy to turn to when help was needed, it also made them easy to scapegoat.[9] In short, officers were the perfect targets for *outrages*, and their zone of authority—the city street—the perfect stage.[10] By the second half of the nineteenth century, Parisian streets, historically viewed as disorderly and disobedient spaces, had become zones of intense supervision and attempted regulation.[11] Officers were part of an effort to discipline a space that ordinary people would have viewed as theirs, and thus resisting that discipline meant resisting officers.

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[5] In fact, upon entering any post office in the city of Paris today, one will find a sign warning of the consequences of speaking an *outrage*: "All physical or verbal aggression toward a member of the personnel will automatically lead to the lodging of a complaint with the Police Services by the Administration of the Post Office." [author's trans.].

[6] Significantly, this pattern continues into the present: today in Paris most complaints of *outrages par paroles* are made by police officers (and not, say, by teachers or lockkeepers), leading some activists to advocate for the abolition of the charge of *outrages* as an infringement of the right to free expression, and as a pretext for arresting young people, particularly from the suburbs. See Olivia Müller, "La police est notre pire ennemi," in *Les Inrockuptibles*, 28 octobre 2015, 36–45; http://codedo.blogspot.com/2008/09/8-raisons-de-depenaliser-le-delit.html.

[7] While my work dovetails with, and benefits enormously from, historian Quentin Deluermoz's exhaustive and invaluable work on the history of the Paris police, *Policiers dans la ville. La construction d'un ordre public à Paris (1854–1915)* (Paris : Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2012), the focus of this article will be on the "outrageous speech," its aims, and its speakers, rather than on its targets themselves.

[8] Quentin Deluermoz refers to the period after the 1854 reform as a new era, "founded on visibility, proximity and movement." [author's trans.] (Deluermoz 2012, 13).

[9] One of the goals of that 1854 reform of the Paris police was, in fact, to "make the police loved." Deluermoz quotes from a highlighted statement in an 1857 manual for police officers: "To love the police is to love the government." [author's trans.] Seduction, he notes, was a governmental technique, carried out at least in part by newly reformed police department and its agents (Deluermoz 2012, 37).

[10] Throughout this article I will be using the terms "police officer[s]" and "policeman[men]" interchangeably. In nineteenth-century Paris, however, the common names for police officers were more complicated. Before 1870, police officers in Paris were known as "sergents de ville" (literally "sergeants of the city"), a term with clear military connotations. After the fall of the Second Empire, and the founding of the Third Republic in September 1870, the Prefect of Police in Paris renamed his officers "gardiens de la paix publique," or "guardians of the public peace," usually shortened to "gardiens de la paix." (Deluermoz 2012, 149–150).

1868-1914 were years of almost constant political and social tension, punctuated most dramatically by the Paris Commune, a revolt by the working people of Paris in 1871 against the French government in the humiliating aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. In the months between March and May of 1871, Paris was governed by an elected municipal council known as the Commune, and administrative posts, abandoned by the national government which had fled to nearby Versailles, were filled by ordinary citizens. The Commune ended with the slaughter known as Bloody Week, when French army troops invaded Paris, slaughtering thousands of people and setting fire to many municipal buildings. Not surprising, then, the years after the Commune saw many types of angry speech.

But the *outrages* were a type that offered ordinary people the chance to speak face-to-face with the representatives of those they held responsible for any one of an array of wrongdoings; the chance to publicly deride, mock, and deflate; and the occasion to experience a moment of visceral satisfaction that other, more proper types of speech could not provide. The *outrages* were statements of public rebuke and humiliation, and as such, they emerged from and created communities of people who heard and saw that censure. The hundreds of incident reports and judicial dossiers concerning offenders whose crime was nothing more than a publicly-spoken "je t'en merde" speak volumes about the importance that Paris officials placed on the *outrages*.[12] The Parisians who mocked and insulted the police were using a creative tactic that expressed discontent and embodied community sentiment just as effectively as voting, demonstrating, striking or political organizing.[13]

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[11] W. Scott Haine argues that "nineteenth-century Parisian authorities slowly succeeded in taming the anarchic and turbulent eighteenth-century street," and that while the Paris street had traditionally been an important space of community for the city's working classes, municipal officials succeeded by the end of the century in turning them from "places to live" to "places of passage." While I'm unsure that officials were as fully successful in this goal as Haine suggests, I certainly agree that this was the goal of many municipal policies during the nineteenth century. W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability among the French Working Class, 1789–1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 154–155. More broadly, Dominique Kalifa, in his book *Les Bas-fonds*, notes that the nineteenth-century "underworld" was intrinsically an urban space, that it was the city and its corrupting and perverting influence that created the misery, crime, and vice that characterized this underworld. Dominque Kalifa, *Les Bas-fonds. Histoire d'un imaginaire* (Paris : Seuil, 2013), 26. By extension, then, efforts to police this underworld would have meant policing city streets.

[12] My primary material comes from 111 instances of *outrages par parole* I examined in the judicial records of the Archives de Paris and the police records housed in the Archives de la Préfecture de Police. Between 1868 and 1914, episodes of *outrages* occurred in all 20 arrondissements. People spoke *outrages* throughout the day, although the great majority—73 cases—occurred between 6pm and 6am, with only 25 between 6am and 6pm. In other words, most *outrages* were spoken after the day was over, when people had been freed from the discipline of the workday and celebrated their free time with a visit to a café, the perusal of a newspaper, a conversation with mates, or, perhaps, a drink. While the hours of 6am–6pm might have been understood as belonging to employers, the hours of 6pm–6am were one's own. See Deluermoz 2012, 124.

Outrages as Angry Talking Back

The most common feature of the *outrages* were insults, ranging from the purely crass to the explicitly political. In March 1908, for instance, Charles Jean-Marie Ozamme let out an impressive stream of insults to the arresting officers who had stopped him on the Place de la République: "Trous de cul, fausses couches, crétins, vaches, lâches, fainéants!"[14] Marguet Alphone was arrested for having yelled "Les agents sont des cochons qui se baladent tout le temps."[15] Sometimes the insults involved no words at all, as with one man who unbuttoned his trousers and displayed his naked buttocks to an officer in a gesture of obvious disdain.[16]

Many speakers of *outrages* used a sarcasm designed, above all, to humiliate and offend, as in the case of Théophile Martin, arrested for having taunted two gendarmes on the Pont d'Arcole by counting "Un, deux, un, deux" as they walked by, and then motioning to the river below, saying "Viens ici. La Seine est là; ça mouille," either a suggestion that the two officers jump in or a threat that they might be thrown in.[17] Ferdinand Chazeilles jeered at officers with the remark "Messieurs, au lieu de me faire une contravention, il aurait mieux fait de s'acheter une paire de souliers," *implying* their shoes were unfashionable given that they were part of a municipal uniform, and likely old and worn, given the time officers spent walking their beat.[18]

Many *outrages* crossed the line from insulting to menacing, like those of Elisabeth Baricey, who called two officers "lâches, fainéants, assassins de Versailles, pourriture," and threatened to "les faire pendre au bec de gaz."[19] Or Nicolas Haas, originally from

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[13] The term "tactic" is associated with Michel de Certeau, who uses the term *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 36–37.

[14] That is, "assholes, miscarriages, cretins, pigs, cowards, idlers." [author's trans.] Archives de la Préfecture de Police [henceforth APP], Série Cb, Cb.10.22, 4 mars 1908.

[15] "Officers are pigs who stroll around all the time." [author's trans.] APP, Série Cb, Cb.53.9, 1 août 1898.

[16] APP, Série Cb, Cb.48.32, 10 août 1903. There are a few cases in which police or court records distinguish between *outrages par paroles* and *outrages par gestes*, or insult by gestures. I found several cases of showing one's buttocks to a police officer, and had hoped to find them classified as "outrages des fesses" (or "outrage by buttocks"). Sadly, these acts were always classified simply as *outrages*.

[17] "Come here. The river Seine is there; it's sloppy wet." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/90, Rapport, 29 janvier 1890, Martin, Théophile Jules.

[18] "Gentlemen, instead of giving me a traffic ticket, it would be better to buy yourselves a pair of shoes." [author's trans.] APP, Série CB, Cb.64.13, 30 juin 1895.

[19] "Cowards, idlers, Versailles assassins, garbage," and then "have them hung from the lamppost." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/7, Rapport, 6 août 1871, Baricey, Elisabeth. Denying the charge, Baricey was asked why, then, she was out on the street at a quarter past two in the morning. She responded that the police officers were, in fact, lying: that she was arrested at ten o'clock at night, not a quarter

Luxembourg, who menaced policemen with “Je me charge de vous dépouiller comme on dépouille les lapins dans mon pays.”[20] Despite the threat of being “skinned,” the reference to rabbits also denotes a sarcastic contempt for officers. Like them, rabbits were far from intimidating, and thus Haas’ warning was as sneeringly dismissive as it was menacing.

Sometimes the threats warned of future reprisals, as in the case of Jules Simon, who warned the arresting officer that “Tu ne seras pas toujours agent! On se retrouvera bien!”[21]. Similarly, Martial Vialle, stopped for having jostled three officers, responded that “Le trottoir est plus à moi qu’à vous et si vous n’étiez pas trois je me chargerais de votre affaire.”[22]

Often the threat of violence turned into real violence, neither of which were the exclusive practice of men. Whereas Louise Doually used her umbrella, Julia Ancery, arrested in 1895 for insulting officers as imbeciles and thieves, used her hat pin in an effort to stab one of them.[23] Threatening to hang someone from a lamppost, ridiculing someone by calling them “cowards and idlers,” waving around an umbrella or a hatpin in a hostile gesture: all were tools fully accessible to women, who regularly took advantage of them.

Outrages as Shaming Rebukes

Other speakers of *outrages* reprimanded officers, explaining why they should be ashamed and what they had done that was disgraceful. Reproaching *outrages* drew attention to misguided policing that focused on the wrong culprits, scapegoating ordinary people while ignoring “real” criminals. Take the case of Félix Dodier, who told officers that “…ils avaient l’air d’une bande d’escrocs, et que si la Préfecture n’avait que des agents comme eux, elle était bien mal servie.”[24] Or the case of Marie Chandelier, who when arrested for public urination, responded to the officers with the scolding “on arrête les honnêtes femmes et on laisse courir les voleurs.”[25]

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past two in the morning, and that she had been out buying a pastry and was walking along peacefully when she was stopped.

[20] “I’m going to skin you like we skin rabbits in my country.” [author’s trans.] APP, Série Cb, Cb.76.35, 12 mai 1899.

[21] “You won’t always be an agent! We’re going to see each other again!” [author’s trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/90, Rapport, 16 octobre 1910, Simon, Jules.

[22] “The sidewalk is more mine than yours, and if you weren’t three, I’d take care of you.” [author’s trans.] I am borrowing this episode from Deluermoz 2012, 11. The original threat can be found in APP, Série Cb.77.4 (janvier 1871-août 1873).

[23] APP, Série Cb, Cb.10.16, 26 novembre 1895. Ancery had been having a violent public argument with her lover. When police officers intervened, she assaulted them verbally and physically.

[24] “[the officers] seem like a band of con artists, and if the Prefecture only had agents like them, it was being really poorly served.” [author’s trans.] APP, Série Cb, Cb.53.9, 30 mars 1899.

[25] “…you arrest honest women and let the thieves go.” [author’s trans.] APP, Série Cb, Cb.40.26.

Sometimes the reproach was more serious, and references to the crimes that officers had committed during the Commune were frequent. A common feature was the accusation that officers were in fact, Prussian, and thus responsible for the miseries inflicted on Parisians during the siege of the city. In September 1871, August Wallard, a 64-year-old bookkeeper, appeared in court for having insulted two officers drinking at a café. According to the officers, Wallard often passed the café where they drank, addressing a few words to them. But this time his comments took a decidedly political tone when he said "Vous n'avez pas passé le Rhin – vous devriez prendre le café à Berlin plutôt qu'à Paris."[26] In other words, these officers, having supported the Versailles government, were akin to the Prussians who had besieged the city. [27] As Prussians, then, shouldn't they be home, drinking their coffee in Berlin rather than Paris?

Sometimes the reproach focused on what officers had done to the city of Paris itself. In October 1871, Émile Gardette was arrested for having assaulted another patron in a wine shop, resisting arrest, and calling officers "des valets de bourreaux et d'incendiaires, d'assassins."[28] As he was driven to the police station, passing the Hôtel de Ville, he pointed to its ruins, and said, "Rougissez sur les cendres que vous avez laissées dans Paris car vous n'êtes que des voleurs mais votre temps est bientôt fini."[29] The ruins of Paris had tarnished the honor of the police, and they should feel mortified by what they had done.

Given the horrors of Bloody Week, it is not surprising that the period immediately after would be rich in *outrages* that featured references to it. [30] But the memory of the Commune would be evoked long after. In July 1896, when coachman François Jirot was arrested for drunken driving, his response to the officers was first to reproach them for being dishonest men who were preventing him from earning a living, and then to say that "il ferait mieux de s'en retourner dans son pays que de rester en France y manger le pain des Français."[31] Or when Lucien Goudin was stopped in 1896 by officers for impeding traffic with his fruit and vegetable stand and scolded them with a piece from the Commune repertoire: "Il est malheureux de voir un Prussien empêcher un Français de vendre."[32] In short, decades after the Commune, publicly rebuking Paris policemen as "foreign" was still a relevant term of abuse.

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[26] "You haven't crossed the Rhine; you should be having coffee in Berlin rather than Paris." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/10, Audience, 20 septembre 1871, Wallard, Auguste Constant Francis. W. Scott Haine also mentions Auguste Wallard and his outburst in *Paris Café*. See Haine 1996, 171.

[27] And police officers had quite manifestly supported the Versailles government at the expense of Paris. According to Quentin Deluermoz, 3,900 of the original 4,083 police officers in Paris in March 1871 had abandoned Paris for Versailles and the National Government by April 1871. See Deluermoz 2012, 154.

[28] "Servants of executioners and arsonists, of assassins." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/12, Rapport, 13 octobre 1871, Gardette, Émile.

[29] "Blush at the ashes that you left in Paris, since you are nothing but thieves, but your time will soon be at an end." [author's trans.] Ibid.

[30] Haine writes that "the jet of proletarian vituperation unleashed by the crushing of the Commune did not abate until the mid 1890s." (Haine 1996, 222).

[31] "They'd be better off returning to their own country instead of staying in France and eating the bread of French people." [author's trans.] APP, Série Cb, Cb.23.20, 2 juillet 1896.

Outrages as Mobilization of Public Opinion

The third type of *outrages* were those designed to sway public opinion, using outrageous words, an audience, and a public setting. The case of Eugène Ponsinet and his common-law wife Adèle Gaillard, drinking with two other women in a café near the Bois de Vincennes in November 1871, is a perfect example. In full view and earshot of two officers, also drinking in the café, both Ponsinet and Gaillard boasted of having shouldered arms on behalf of the Commune, and of having shot at "les coquins de Versailles." Ponsinet then raised his cap and said, "Voici une casquette qu'a été à l'épreuve des balles et des projectiles des coquins de Versailles." When the officers responded angrily, Gaillard pulled her husband out of the café, saying "Viens donc, c'est s'abaisser que de parler à ces crapules-là, sale peuple." [33] Everything about this incident points to a conscious effort to sway other customers. The choice of a café as the stage for their insults; the boasts about disobedient behavior; the theatrical use of the cap; and then the dramatic exit from the café, complete with one final insult: all was designed to attract an audience and to win supporters.

Drawing a sympathetic audience, however, did not necessarily require the truth. When the presiding judge sent a police officer to investigate, he found that Ponsinet and Gaillard were known as people of radical political ideas, but also as people who liked to drink. It was not even clear that they were in Paris during the Prussian siege or the Commune.[34] But if this couple's claims were indeed just fabrications, their behavior becomes even more interesting. Making a scene, drawing a crowd of listeners, and gaining their support could be just as easily accomplished using a pack of lies as the truth.

In the process of mobilizing public opinion, candor and simplicity, along with a bit of dramatic spectacle, were key. A case in point was carpenter Ernest Bourdin, arrested in 1899 for disturbing the peace in the workshops of the Belleville Tramway. As officers tried to move him from the workshop onto the street, Bourdin dropped to the sidewalk, yelling

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[32] "It's a great shame to see a Prussian prevent a French person from selling." [author's trans.] APP, Série Cb, Cb.23.20, 22 juillet 1896.

[33] The full script of Ponsinet and Gaillard's outburst was "the rascals from Versailles;" "Here is a cap which suffered through the bullets and the shells of the devils from Versailles;" and finally, "Come on, it's lowering yourself to speak to scum like that, dirty people." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/17, Rapport, 25 novembre 1871, Ponsinet, Eugène Jean-Baptiste.

[34] AP, Aj, D2U6/17, Rapport, 20 novembre 1871.

"Vous avez un fusil à la main pour m'emmener, tas de fainéants, de lâches, de salopes."[35] Bourdin's words were certainly simple, but alongside his accompanying behavior they effectively drew a sympathetic crowd. First there were the insults, and then the rebuke of officers bullying and persecuting someone weaker than themselves; whereas the officers had weapons, Bourdin had nothing. Next there was the spectacle of the officers dragging Bourdin along the sidewalk, which would have appeared callous, even violent, to onlookers.[36] By this time, the gathered crowd numbered in the hundreds, and Bourdin tried to rally its solidarity, yelling "À moi, les aminches," Parisian slang for friends, or comrades. Behind this last appeal was the assumption that spectators understood the power differential between himself and the armed officers; that they agreed the officers were a bunch of loafers, cowards, and bastards; and that they would, if they could, help him.

The *Outrages* as "Sensory Politics"

The choice to express an *outrage* was a dangerous one, punished either by a jail sentence or a fine, both of which would have been burdensome to ordinary working people. So, why do it when there were legal ways of expressing anger and disapproval—for instance, voting, demonstrating, attending public meetings, striking—as well as illegal ways—shouting seditious cries, scribbling graffiti, or sending anonymous letters—all much easier to accomplish with impunity? [37]. Ordinary Parisians made this dangerous choice, I think, because speaking an *outrage* offered them something no other form of disobedient speech did: the chance to engage in a "sensory politics" in which their words could be heard, seen, and felt, and in which the confrontation with their adversary could be experienced directly.[38] When Prosper Allemand walked up to an officer on the rue Saint-Jacques and said: "vous êtes un gardien des Prussiens," there was nothing covert about his actions. [39]

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35 Bourdin's words were "You have pistols in your hands to take me away, you pile of loafers, cowards, bastards," and then later, "Help me, friends!" "Aminche" is a slang term for friend. [author's trans.] APP, Sêrie Cb, Cb.76.35, 12 juillet 1899.

36 Deluermoz notes that while violence against police officers began to diminish by the end of the 1880s, falling to the ground became a more familiar gesture vis-à-vis officers (Deluermoz 2012, 258–259).

37 Susanna Barrows referred to anonymous letters as "written dissidence." She scrutinizes these anonymous letters in her article "Quand les plumes étaient plus puissantes que les barricades. Lettres politiques pendant la crise du 16 mai 1877," in *Sociétés & Représentations* 38 (automne 2014) : 225–239." Her phrase "written dissidence" can be found on page 231 of that article.

38 I am gratefully borrowing the notion of "sensory politics" from the phrase that historians Pierre Karila-Cohen and Patrick Fridenson use in an article about the work of Susanna Barrows. Their original phrase is "la politique s'est faite sensible," or "politics was made sensory." Pierre Karila-Cohen et Patrick Fridenson, "Éloge de la désobéissance. Susanna Barrows, l'histoire de la France et la crise du 16 mai 1877," in *Le Mouvement social* 256 (2016) : 15.

39 "You are an officer of the Prussians." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/4, Audience du 8 juin 1871, Allemand, Prosper Alfred.

Instead, Allemand stood in front of the officer, looked him in the eye, uttered his derisory rebuke, and saw the officer's reaction. This was a direct political confrontation, deliberately chosen because of the "angry catharsis" that it provided the speaker.

Because speaking *outrages* risked sanctions, it is unsurprising that once taken into custody, speakers—no matter how deliberate their *outrages*—offered excuses to avoid punishment. Some defendants argued that they had been provoked by officers, who had insulted them first; others explained their arrest as the product of a misunderstanding. In his defense, Paul Garnier, arrested for insulting a police officer, denied that he had used the insult "espèce de fainéant," but admitted the use of "tu peux aller te taper le cul par terre," explaining that he had used these words in a friendly manner, since he himself had once been a police officer and knew that these types of words were regularly used among officers.[40] Or 44-year-old Philippe Latterner who used cultural norms to rationalize his behavior, admitting to having been drunk when he insulted officers, but also pointing out that "je suis Bavarois" in an effort to explain his drunken insults as a particularly Bavarian, and thus excusable, inclination.[41]

But in their efforts to escape punishment, most people excused their words by offering the simplest and least political explanation: inebriation.[42] So familiar became these "I was drunk and I don't remember" excuses, that the Paris police started noting evidence of sobriety in their reports: the suspect did not "look" drunk or he tried to escape, thus demonstrating his clear-headedness.[43] There is, of course, no way of knowing whether these people really *were* drunk. Officers would have had to rely on visual cues alcohol on the breath, slurring of words or highly idiosyncratic factors: a person's degree of aggressiveness, the words they spoke, or the time of day or night.[44] It would, in fact, have been advantageous for a person accused of an *outrage* to convince the arresting officers of their inebriation. Public intoxication was a much less serious offense than *outrages*, and the official red-tape involved meant that officers tended not to strictly enforce the law prohibiting it.[45]

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[40] "You can go smack your ass on the ground, you lazy thing." [author's trans.] APP, Série Cb, Cb.10.22, 13 août 1908. A colleague also proposed "Pound sand, you lazy thing" as a possible translation.

[41] "I am Bavarian." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/4, Rapport, 9 juin 1871, Latterner, Philippe.

[42] Haine also notes that Parisian workers "showed a growing tendency to use drunkenness as an excuse to hide the political nature of their actions" and that "charged in court with insulting public authority, the defendants claimed that drunkenness, rather than politics, explained their actions." (Haine 1996, 111).

[43] "I remember trying to flee, that's true, but that's all." [author's trans.] AP, Aj, D2U6/4, Audience du 8 juin 1871, Allemand, Prosper Alfred.

[44] A particularly interesting case concerns 26-year-old Auguste Rembourg, who was arrested in 1897 for beating his father, and charged not only with battery but with *outrages par paroles* for the insults that he hurled at the arresting officers. When questioned, Rembourg claimed that he was drunk and could not remember anything about what he had done or said. The arresting officers, however, offered a different analysis of his behavior, noting that "he expressed himself and gesticulated with extreme violence, but that was more an effect of his character than of drunkenness, since even though he had drunk some, his gait had nothing uncertain about it. His drunkenness was more superficial than real." [author's trans.] The officers' interpretation clearly carried some weight since Rembourg was slapped with a guilty verdict and a heavy jail sentence. AP, Aj, D2U6/111, Rapport, 26 mars 1897, Rembourg, Auguste Louis.

But even if the intoxication were real, historians have been wary of the inclination to dismiss a person's words because of it. How drunk is too drunk for someone to know what they are saying and what they mean when they say it?[46] The genuineness of words uttered while "drunk" was noted in 1872 by a judge who, when confronted with someone accused of having called a policeman a "Versaillais" and now claiming drunkenness, said "one can suppose that your drunkard's ideas are the same when you are sober."[47] In short, this judge recognized that alcohol may provide "liquid courage" to someone who might otherwise keep quiet around those in authority, but it does not create the sentiments themselves.[48]

The *Outrages* and Community

While Parisians certainly chose to speak the *outrages*, it seems doubtful that the choice was premeditated. Unlike scribbling graffiti, which required some advance preparation, an *outrage* was likely the result of someone seizing a coincidental yet opportune moment to blurt out an insult. Was it bravery caused by a few drinks? Or the chance appearance of a policeman just as one was railing against the government with a comrade? Whatever the circumstances, the combined effect of all those features of an *outrage*—the humiliating insults, the menacing threats, the jokes and rebukes, the pleas for support– was to create a community, one that probably dissipated as soon as the speaker was arrested, but a space of convergence nonetheless, between people who thought in similar ways, and a single individual who chose to speak those thoughts aloud.

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[45] W. Scott Haine, "Drink, Sociability, and Social Class in France, 1789–1945: The Emergence of a Proletarian Public Sphere," in Mack P. Holt (ed.), *Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 133.

[46] As Haine notes, "the tremendous amount of reflection that workers obviously devoted to describe the drinking experience is at odds with the traditional notion that the intoxicated state diminishes, distorts, and eventually destroys the brain's ability to reason." (Haine 1996, 101). Thomas Brennan, in his work on drinking in Old Regime Paris, notes that trying to analyze drunkenness is a complex problem. The sources "do not lend themselves to quantification;" there are gaps and discrepancies in the sources themselves; the prejudices and biases of those writing the material that ends up in the archives as historians' "sources" always need to be factored into any analysis; and finally, "drunkenness" is a remarkably vague and imprecise term that can cover a range of behaviors and a range of alcoholic effects. Thomas Brennan, "Social Drinking in Old Regime Paris," in Susanna Barrows and Robin Room (eds.), *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 64–65. He makes a similar argument in his earlier article "Towards the Cultural History of Alcohol in France," in *Journal of Social History* 23 (1989): 71-92. W. Scott Haine notes that workers themselves developed a variety of terms for the myriad conditions between "full drunkenness and stone-cold sobriety." (Haine 1996, 104).

[47] Haine, *The World of the Paris Café*, 113. The original citation for this episode was "Chronique," *Gazette des tribunaux*, 3 juillet 1872, 653.

[48] Timothy Mitchell, *Intoxicated Identities: Alcohol's Power in Mexican History and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9.

Such an individual was Louise Doually with whom I began. It was upon leaving a neighborhood wine shop that the officers encountered Madame Doually. The shop itself was full of rowdy customers, possibly annoyed by the police intervention into their good times. Some of the drinkers inside would have heard Mme. Doually berating the officers, and most of them would have seen the physical altercation between the elderly woman, the officers, and her umbrella. Everything here was set for the formation of an ephemeral community: the public setting; the crowd of listeners; the spectacle of her profanity and violent use of her umbrella; the reference to the trauma of the Commune; her creation of an opposition between "us," ordinary people who are only ever treated badly, and "them," the officers who only ever harass and persecute. For a brief moment, until Madame Doually was ushered away and customers returned to their glasses, her words and actions would have created a moment of shared experience between the elderly lady and at least some of those who had listened to her utter the sentiments that they themselves had often felt.

Of course, not everyone listening to the words of Louise Doually would have been swayed by them. To some, her words may have sounded like the histrionics of a crazy old lady with a very small umbrella. It would have been easy for some listeners to ignore the *outrages* as just drunken rants or meaningless verbal abuse flung by the ignorant and boorish. What I want to suggest instead, is that the *outrages* were a significant type of political speech, used by ordinary Parisians because they accomplished what other forms of speech could not. Voicing an *outrage* offered speakers the possibility of seeing and hearing onlookers agree with them, forming communities—no less satisfying for being fleeting—that gave them the sense of being part of a greater whole. Rather than substitutes for organized political activism and articulate political demands, the *outrages* operated alongside those legal forms of political speech. The speakers of the *outrages* were willing to run the risk of punishment because this particular weapon allowed them to confront their opponents directly and unambiguously with a like-minded crowd at their backs. And thus, when she uttered her angry words to the two officers, elderly Louise Doually, like the other speakers of *outrages* I have plucked from the obscurity and silence of the archival record, would have experienced this speech as cathartic, satisfying, and unambiguously political.