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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Dare to wear: performing the prohibition of *indiennes* on the streets of Paris

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This chapter analyses a set of Paris police documents from 1727–1738 that record infractions of the protectionist ban on wearing *indiennes*. These were popular colourful fabrics imported from the East, which were also imitated by European manufacturers. Enforcement of the multiple legislations passed in France during the long period of prohibition (1686–1759) was draconian and inequitable. Women, predominantly from lower and middle classes, were spied upon, named, shamed and fined. As with present day controversies over the hijab, women’s dress was a flashpoint for wider societal debates. The series of *ordonnances* issued by René Hérault, Lieutenant Général de Police, exhibit a dual performance of upholding and breaking the law, enacted through textual, visual and spatial strategies. As the scopical gaze is lured by the exotic and feminine, the subversive properties of *indiennes* present an opportunity for wider social change.

KEYWORDS Calico, Hérault (René), *indiennes*, law, police, surveillance, Paris

One summer’s day in 1729, a woman with the surname Saint-Claire, a stocking maker from the rue de Charenton, was seen out walking in Paris. She was wearing a ‘robe de chambre’—a loose-fitting garment usually worn indoors—and a skirt, made from ‘toile des Indes’, a fabric with a white background covered with interwoven red and black

\* I would like to thank Exeter colleagues, Adam Horsley and Fabrizio Nevola, for opening my eyes, respectively, to the imaginative possibilities of legal texts, and to the lurking visual records of street behaviour.

flowers. Neither the clothing, nor the sighting, were innocuous, for Saint-Claire was breaking the law. Since 1686 a ban had been in place in France on the trading, wearing and usage of *indiennes* or *toiles peintes*, the name given to printed or hand-painted cottons imported from Asia, and their European imitations. Saint-Claire's actions soon came to the authorities' attention and, along with eighteen other women and one man, she was summoned to a hearing on 30 June at the Police headquarters at the Châtelet de Paris.<sup>1</sup> A large fine of 200 *livres* was imposed, of which two thirds was paid to the unnamed spies who had denounced her. Her clothing was confiscated and handed over to the trading company, the Compagnie des Indes, which had a licence (*privilège*) to sell such wares overseas.

Beyond these summary facts we know nothing about Saint-Claire, not even her first name. We do know that she was one of nearly 500 Parisians, mostly female, who were charged and punished over an 11-year period for wearing or possessing *indiennes*. The incidents are recorded in thirty-eight *ordonnances*, or legal rulings, that were published across the city between 1727 and 1738. These comprise a subset of the plentiful legislation issued across France during the long period of prohibition of *indiennes* between 1686 and 1759.<sup>2</sup> A protectionist measure resulting from a national policy of mercantilism, these laws were at once draconian and ineffective, whereas the taste for *indiennes* remained consistently strong.

The Paris *ordonnances* relating to *indiennes* are not well known, and the present study adds both quantitatively and qualitatively to existing understanding.<sup>3</sup> What will henceforth be referred to as the *indiennes* papers are striking for their concentration and consistency. Far from being the tedious tracts of legal stereotype, they offer intriguing glimpses of the actions of individuals ('particuliers') as they navigate their physical surroundings, and knowingly confront authority. The cultural prescriptions of Ancien Régime Paris, notably around gender, are in evidence. So too are the self-justificatory tactics of the law as it spies, punishes, and seeks to deter. Close scrutiny of the documents will enable the construction of what I call a clandestine visual culture of *indiennes*, contained in words, visual imagery and performance.

## The potential and threat of *indiennes*

Imports of *indiennes* from India to France began in the late sixteenth century, as part of a nexus of trading routes between China, the Levant and Europe.<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Ordonnance*, 5 July 1729.

<sup>2</sup> See Edgard Depitre, *La Toile peinte en France au XVIIème et au XVIIIème siècles: industries, commerce, prohibitions* (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1912); Gillian Crosby, 'First Impressions: The Prohibition on Printed Calicoes in France, 1686–1759', PhD thesis, Nottingham Trent University, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See Philippe Haudrière, 'La contrebande des toiles indiennes à Paris au XVIIIème siècle', in *Tisser l'histoire l'industrie et ses patrons, XVIe-XXe siècles: mélanges offerts à Serge Chassagne*, ed. by René Favier, Gérard Gayot, and Jean-François Klein (Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 2009), pp. 169–82 (pp. 172–74). My corpus is larger than Haudrière's, as shown by comparison of total offences: in 1727-PH and MP both 20; in 1729-PH-36, MP-50; in 1735-PH-50, MP-55; in 1736-PH-148, MP 181. Further *ordonnances* may one day come to light.

<sup>4</sup> See *Féerie indienne. Des Rivages de l'Inde au Royaume de France*, exhibition catalogue, Musée de l'Impression sur Etoffes, Mulhouse (Nov 2008-May 2009), Musée de la Compagnie des Indes, Lorient (June-Dec 2009), (Paris: Somogy, 2008).

fabrics were attractive to Europeans, being lighter and easier to wear and launder than home-produced wool or hemp. Colour-fast dyes meant their brightly patterned motifs kept their vibrancy; in that, together with their smoothness and brightness, they mimicked the luxury of silks and taffetas but for a keener price. Some decades ago, economic historians identified the central role of cotton printed fabrics in Europe's 'consumer revolution' at the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> More recent scholarship has provided a tempered view of the so-called 'calico craze', regarding it instead as a 'slow process of "familiarization" with the new fabric'.<sup>6</sup>

*Indiennes* formed a key part of what Joan DeJean has labelled the 'age of comfort', frequently being made into loose-fitting attire inspired by eastern banyans or kimonos.<sup>7</sup> *Le Mercure Galant*, closely attentive to the new phenomenon of seasonal fashion in Paris, observed in 1678: 'Les Manteaux que l'on fait sont toujours assez négligez; & la plupart des Robes sont faites à l'Indienne'.<sup>8</sup> Soon Paris fashions reached court, and a multi-coloured *robe de chambre* made of Indian cotton was delivered to Versailles for the King in 1681.<sup>9</sup> In 1699, the Duchesse de Bourgogne arrived for a ball at Versailles wearing a *robe de chambre*, eliciting the waspish remark from the Princess Palatine that she looked 'ready for bed'.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the consumer appetite for *indiennes*, there were fears for the livelihoods of French cloth workers. The root cause was a technical inability to manufacture printed fabrics to the same quality as eastern imports, a reality that was at odds with France's self-image as a producer of preeminent luxury goods. The 'Arrêt du conseil d'etat' of 1686 targeted the manufacture and sale of *indiennes*, with further legislation from 1705 also outlawing their wearing.<sup>11</sup> Prohibition arguably compounded the desire for *indiennes* and led to substantial illegal trade. In a sense the ban was nothing new, since for centuries European sumptuary laws had regulated the type of clothing that people could wear, only finally being rescinded in 1793.<sup>12</sup> Laws against *Indiennes* do not, strictly speaking, count as sumptuary laws since they were not banned on anti-luxury grounds (*indiennes* being a hard-to-categorize non-luxury product); however, the underlying reason—the preservation of French trade—was identical.<sup>13</sup>

In England, a similar dispute over imported calicoes was abrupt and brutish. Around the time of an act of prohibition in 1721, several women were stripped

<sup>5</sup> Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1983), p.14. Also Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism* (Columbia University Press, 1983), chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>6</sup> Giorgio Riello, *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 112.

<sup>7</sup> Joan DeJean, *The Age of Comfort: When Paris discovered Casual and the Modern Home Began* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> *Mercure galant*, 1 Oct 1678 (p. 367).

<sup>9</sup> De Jean, p. 14

<sup>10</sup> Cited in De Jean, p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> BNF MS Fr. 21778 : 26 Oct 1686; 17 Feb 1705.

<sup>12</sup> See Evelyn Welch, ed., *Fashioning the Early Modern: Dress, Textiles, and Innovation in Europe, 1500–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> See Johanna B. Moyer, 'Sumptuary Law in Ancien Régime France 1229–1806', PhD dissertation, Syracuse University, 1996.

naked on the streets and even had acid thrown at their clothing.<sup>14</sup> The *indiennes* papers are evidence of a less violent but more sustained campaign in France, in which, to apply Faith Beasley's description, women acted as 'agents of resistance'.<sup>15</sup> Scholarly attention has tended to focus on upper-class women, whereas the *indiennes* papers show how a broad cross-section of urban French society was mobilized.

## Legislation and policing the everyday

Today the *indiennes* papers can be found in different parts of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (see [table](#)). Police records are arranged chronologically, and so each *ordonnance* is juxtaposed with other everyday rule breaches, for example, on buying and selling food and drink, fire safety, pornographic imagery, brothel-keeping and even physical assaults on teachers. It was the capital offences that captured Michel Foucault's imagination in his seminal study of the sublimation of violence into the modern penal system, yet here it is the quotidian, with its endless contingencies, that prevails.<sup>16</sup> Social historians have used these materials to elucidate the lives of ordinary Parisians, but they remain an under-utilized resource for the cultural historian.<sup>17</sup>

Three or four pages long, each *ordonnance* was written following a formulaic template, and is visually almost identical.<sup>18</sup> Offenders are listed by name, profession or that of their husband, home address, the site of the offence, and what banned items were worn or possessed. Details follow of fines and sanctions, and any mitigations. The number of offences recorded in each *ordonnance* ranges between two and over forty.<sup>19</sup> Perpetrators comprised servants, wives of artisans, merchants, or liberal professions such as lawyers and architects; and the occasional actress or musician.<sup>20</sup> As might be expected, quite a few people had links with the textile trade: cloth sellers, upholsterers, laundresses, second hand clothes dealers, the wife of a clerk to the Compagnie des Indes. They came from all parts of the city: wealthier quarters like St Germain and St Honoré, artisanal districts like the Faubourg Saint Antoine, and right in the centre, in the vicinity of the Grand Châtelet.

The *indiennes* papers coincide closely with the tenure of René Hérault as Lieutenant Général de Police de Paris (1725–1739).<sup>21</sup> In that position Hérault steadfastly pursued disparate causes: the quelling of Jansenists and freemasons, improvements

<sup>14</sup> Riello, *Cotton*, p. 119. The *indiennes* papers contradict Riello's assertion (p. 121) that 'the law was upheld only occasionally'.

<sup>15</sup> Faith Beasley, *Versailles Meets the Taj Mahal: François Bernier, Marguerite de la Sablière, and Enlightening Conversations in Seventeenth-Century France* (University of Toronto Press, 2019), p. 249.

<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

<sup>17</sup> See Arlette Farge, *Vivre dans la rue à Paris au XVIIIème siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> The 1738 *ordonnances* break with this established format, being printed on a larger single page.

<sup>19</sup> The usual fine for infringing the *indiennes* ban was 200 livres, which was raised to 300 livres in 1735.

<sup>20</sup> With a smaller sample of *ordonnances*, Philippe Haudrère (see note 3) calculates the social demographics as follows: 35% artisans, 33% merchants, 19% servants, 11% 'intellectual' professions.

<sup>21</sup> On the role of the Lieutenant de police see Hervé Bennezon, *Un inspecteur de police parisien sur le terrain: Les missions de Jean Poussot* (Paris: Les Indes savants, 2019), pp. 29–33. On Hérault, see Vincent Milliot, 'Le Système policier parisien', in *Les histoires de Paris*, ed. by Thierry Belleguic and Laurent Turcot, 2 vols (Paris: Hermann, 2012), I, pp. 53–77.

TABLE 1.

Hérault, <i>ordonnances</i> against <i>indiennes</i>					
Table of locations in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France					
Year	Day, month	BnF Manuscript MS Fr 21778	BnF Manuscript MS Fr 21780	BnF Imprimés F23715. Folio number:	BnF Gallica
1727	17 Dec			99	
1728	15 Jun	•		146	
1728	14 Jul	•		152	
1728	18 Sep		•	159	
1728	27 Nov	•	•	178	
1729	25 Jun			214	
1729	05 Jul		•	422	
1729	27 Aug		•	454	
1730	19 Apr		•	291	•
1730	17 May		•	299 BIS	•
1730	27 Aug		•	310 BIS	•
1735	06 Aug		•	546	
1735	13 Aug		•	547	
1735	06 Sep		•	553	
1736	29 May		•	588	
1736	09 Jun		•	591	
1736	13 Jun			592	
1736	19 Jun			594	
1736	03 Jul		•	598	
1736	06 Jul		•	599	
1736	10 Jul		•	601	
1736	24 Jul		•	605	
1736	07 Aug		•	608	
1736	28 Aug		•	612	
1736	11 Sep		•	615	
1736	20 Oct		•	620	
1736	28 Nov		•	626	
1737	19 Jan		•	638	•
1737	20 Feb		•	644	
1737	16 Apr		•	651	
1737	29 May		•	657	
1737	14 Aug		•	672	
1737	12 Oct		•	681	

*Continued*

TABLE 1.  
CONTINUED

Hérault, <i>ordonnances</i> against <i>indiennes</i>					
Table of locations in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France					
Year	Day, month	BnF Manuscript MS Fr 21778	BnF Manuscript MS Fr 21780	BnF Imprimés F23715. Folio number:	BnF Gallica
1737	27 Nov		•	687	
1738	16 Apr		•	705	
1738	02 Jul		•		
1738	13 Sep		•		
1738	30 Dec		•		

to sewage disposal and fire prevention, and attempts (despite opposition from rich property-owners) to establish a system of street signs with names and numbers. The job of Paris police chief was prestigious, having been set up by Colbert, and involved regular contact with ministers as well as provincial representatives. It is therefore plausible that Hérault's systematic campaign against *indiennes*, unparalleled at other times or elsewhere in France, resulted as much from personal ambition as being leant on by higher authorities.

Hérault oversaw a team of twenty inspectors, and also depended on a well-developed system of 'mouches' or spies that included *concierges*, tavern-keepers, servants and second-hand dealers.<sup>22</sup> Scholars hold different views on how 'enlightened' this system of surveillance was, but at best it kept the social order in a rapidly changing urban environment.<sup>23</sup> From a present-day perspective, much of the business looks like obsessive micromanagement of people's ordinary lives.

## A dual performance: upholding and breaking the law

In her study of rules in European history, Lorraine Daston repeatedly finds a contrast between adherence to abstract purity of the 'rule', and a messy subservience on the ground. She writes: 'rule makers and rule-breakers were locked in an endless cycle of prohibition, evasion, innovation, and revised prohibition'.<sup>24</sup> What was it like to be at the forefront of these disputes, in a state of hyper-awareness of what the other side was up to? What mental convolutions did it take to uphold a law that was failing in its objective to deter offenders? What was the risk-to-benefit ratio for the people so numerous in flouting it?

<sup>22</sup> See Vincent Milliot, *L'admirable police: Tenir Paris au siècle des lumières* (Ceyzérieu: Champ Vallon, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> See *La Police des lumières: ordre et désordre dans les villes d'Europe au XVIIIème siècle*, exhibition catalogue, Archives Nationales Paris, 18 Sept 2020–18 Jan 2021 (Paris: Gallimard, 2020), and online at: <https://criminocorpus.org/fr/expositions/la-police-des-lumieres-ordre-et-desordre-dans-les-villes-au-18e-siecle/>

<sup>24</sup> Lorraine Daston, *Rules: A Short History of What we Live By* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022), p. 164.

The *indiennes* papers provide many micro-behaviours with which to explore these questions. They contain two elaborate and interlocking performances: on the one hand the law, and on the other hand the offenders. Each uses a combination of strategies—linguistic, visual, dramatic—to achieve their objectives. There is an imbalance since the perpetrators are silent, their actions being conveyed solely through the language of the *ordonnance*. But it is possible to read in an implied resistance.

Linguistically speaking the *ordonnance* would have been at several removes from the site of transgression. A likely scenario is that a spy would give an oral report to an officer, which (probably transcribed or notated) would then be brought to the Châtelet tribunal. Those outcomes would be further transcribed and collated before reaching the desk of the Lieutenant de Police and being published as the *ordonnance*. The rhetoric of this end-product is one of bureaucratic competency and shutting down of variability and opposition. The repetitive format, and deference to ranks and processes, convey a sense of inevitable judgement.

Textual strategies are complemented by the visuality of the documents, which are high-quality, printed materials (Fig. 1). At the time the ‘imprimeur de la Police’ was none other than Pierre-Jean Mariette, the influential connoisseur of eighteenth-century Paris. Alongside running the family printing business, Mariette was a renowned collector of prints and drawings, and a patron of Jean-Baptiste Greuze. Each *ordonnance* is inflected with authority and grace, with a decorative ‘head-piece’ on the first page and a variety of typefaces: the weighty upper-case lettering of the word ‘ordonnance’, Hérault’s prominent name and job title, and a headline description of events in italics.

There is a reason why such care was given to text and page, for the officer of the court (Huissier) doubled up as town crier (Crieur ordinaire du Roy), and each *ordonnance* would have been ‘Lûë et publiée à haute & intelligible voix, à son de Trompe & Cry public en tous les lieux ordinaires & accoutumez’. The orality of such repeated, rhyming phrases as ‘vûë dans la ruë’ becomes salient. The display of the document around Paris, and public reading of its contents, accompanied by as many as three trumpet players, meant that crimes were redramatized on the street, entirely reframed to serve as a moral example. Like other performative justice of that era, including executions, everything coalesced in a multimedia performance.

Working against the law is the disruptive power of detail. A typical section reads as follows:

[Sentence is given] à la nommée Fournier, Blanchisseuse, ruë Fromenteau chez la nommée Piot, Marchande Fripiere, vûë dans la ruë avec une demie robe de Toile peinte, fond blanc à petites fleurs de differentes façons; à la Dame Beauregard, ruë Baffroy Fauxbourg Saint Antoine, à l’enseigne de la Fleur de Lys d’or, vûë avec un Casaque à fond blanc & grandes fleurs rouges; à la femme du Sr Desprez, Marchand de Vin, ruë Saint Victor, à l’enseigne des Trois Bouteilles, vûë dans la ruë avec une Jupe de Toile peinte fond bleu & blanc (18 Sept 1728).

Rather than a set of numbers or identical categories, offenders are individualized through key facts. With each person having a set of identifiers, a



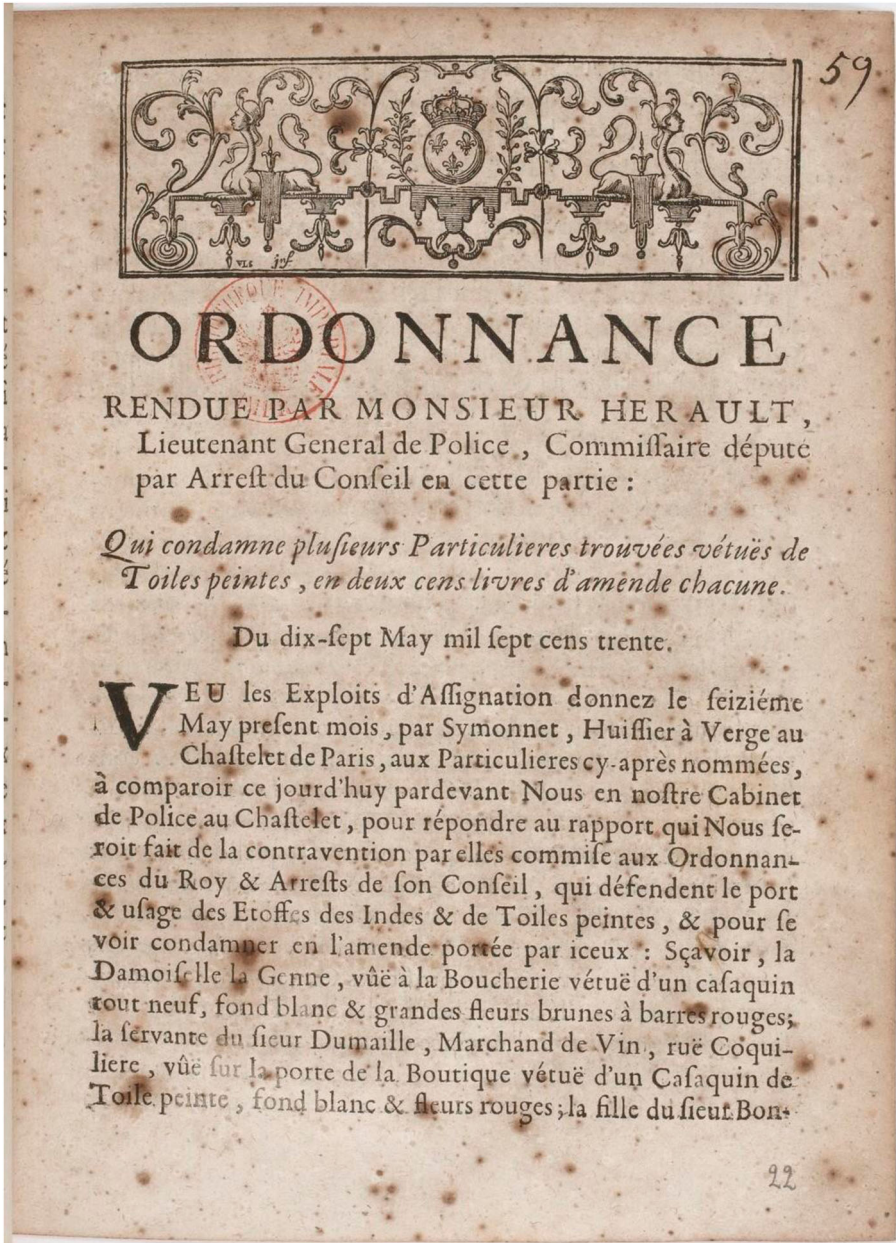


FIGURE 1. Ordonnance rendue par M. Hérault, Lieutenant Général de Police, 17 May 1730. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

cumulative message is given: that each woman despite her different circumstances has chosen to risk being seen in forbidden clothing. The description brings to mind Michel de Certeau's theories of navigating everyday life in

urban environments.<sup>25</sup> Within his conceptual framework, wearers of *indiennes* are not passive consumers but opportunistic tacticians, seizing the moment to subvert prescribed behaviours.

The *ordonnances* replay a lived moment when the clandestine was made visible. Rapid vignettes are created as women are glimpsed on the street, at the market, in shops, and very occasionally in a café or church; their skirts, dresses, jackets, aprons and handkerchiefs variously floral, striped or checked, and of reds, blues or other hues.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes the vignette becomes a full-blown tableau, for instance an architect named Cochois with his wife and two daughters appearing on a balcony, all of them ‘vestus de Robes de chambre, Jupons & Casaquins de Toiles peintes’.<sup>27</sup> In the same *ordonnance* the child of a dancing master named Duval is seen, also on a balcony, in a dress, and one can perfectly imagine them practising their airs and graces. The unintended capacity of the *indiennes* papers to evoke picturesque scenes, implicitly enjoyable and with the frisson of the forbidden, undermines their overt moralizing and deterrent purpose.

## Fetishization and the exotic

Women, as previously stated, greatly outnumber men in the *indiennes* papers. Additionally for women the transgression was bodily, whereas for men, many more were charged for possession than wearing. Two sides of a confrontation are played out: firstly women, otherwise solidly respectable *bourgeoises*, wives and working women, who are emboldened into a public display of law-breaking that is simultaneously high-stakes (because expensive) and banal (wearing clothes in public); secondly the intrusive gaze of the law, patriarchal, moralizing and yet, fearing its own impotence, looking to punish and be seen to do so. Here present is the age-old dynamic of women’s dress and appearance becoming the focal point for wider societal ills, something that also manifests in modern-day France around the Muslim veil. In the *indiennes* papers there is an undercurrent of desire and eroticism, compounded by the material properties and cultural understanding of *indiennes*.

While many women were caught in public, the eye of the law was empowered to look in more private places. Women were spied upon in their homes, in liminal spaces such as doorways, courtyards or balconies. Frequently they were spotted at an upper-storey window, a location infused by hints of the bedroom. Their soft loose clothing would have added to this atmosphere of relaxed intimacy. These spectacles, and their suggestive allure, have resonances with contemporary genre paintings, for example the scenes by Jean Raoux of seductive women at their window.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, there is a closeness with theatrical tropes: at the

<sup>25</sup> Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, vol. 1: *Arts de faire* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1980).

<sup>26</sup> See mention of the Café de la Régence (28 November 1738) and the Eglise des Quinze-Vingts (13 August 1735).

<sup>27</sup> 3 July 1736.

<sup>28</sup> John Chu, ‘Windows of Opportunity: The French Fantasy Figure and the Spirit of Enterprise in early Eighteenth-Century Europe’, in *Fancy in Eighteenth-Century European Visual Culture*, ed. by Melissa Percival and Muriel Adrien (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 49–67.

Comédie Italienne, an upper window was a well-established site for theatrical flirtation and comic improvisation, while exotic themes and goods on sale were a popular feature of fairground theatres.<sup>29</sup> Hence these legal documents, and the women's experience that is mediated through them, tap into a wider cultural imaginary.

In these more private spaces the fictive legal gaze of the *indiennes* papers is scopic, an uninvited guest, all-seeing because it is anonymized and disembodied. Seemingly it can look through walls and into homes, penetrate the recesses of wardrobes, clothing chests, even pockets. Repeat sightings of the same person underscores the persistence of the surveillance.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, a wider sense of collapsing boundaries between inside and out, private and public, and proper and improper behaviour, can be discerned from the seasonal pattern of infractions: more common in spring and summer, when people are out and about, subject to the allure of light seductive fabrics.

Details of the textiles are captured in the police reports. Typical reds and blues are interspersed with more 'exotic' colours: 'safran', 'tirant sur le violet', 'à fond citron et fleurs rouges & bleuës', 'couleur de lie vin', 'ardoise'.<sup>31</sup> Striking designs are observed: 'une jupe de Perse à fond blanc & fleurs de différentes couleurs en forme de parterre, avec une bordure', 'une jupe d'Indienne à fond sablé, à grandes rayes en colonnes torsés couleur violette', or 'une jupe de Perse à bouquets à fleurs couleur de roses, vertes & violettes, avec de petits Oyseaux façon de Canetons bectans d'autres petites fleurs'.<sup>32</sup> These descriptions inspire visual and tactile pleasure, rather like perusing fabrics in a shop. Now and then a judgement is made about quality ('très-belle') or cleanliness ('très-propre') as the legal process strays into the language of advertising and sales.<sup>33</sup> Among the spies who collectively functioned as the omniscient eye of the texts, some may have had a professional interest in fashion or textiles, and paused to admire a fine piece of cloth even as they denounced the wearer. Some of the wearers too may have been commercially motivated: an attractive cloth merchant's wife parading a dress may have been good advertising, especially if the fine could be appealed. But this was not systematic; by and large people wore the fabrics because they liked them.

## Conclusion

This essay has explored women's self-expression and defiance of the law in eighteenth-century Paris. Access has been gained to their agency and circumstances by unpicking the multiple strategies of legal texts. The women's actions are both ordinary and extraordinary: they constitute a sort of collective resistance, albeit non-organised, a power that is further strengthened by the variety of walks of

<sup>29</sup> Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 48–52; Isabelle Martin, *Le Théâtre de la Foire: Des Tréteaux aux boulevards*, Oxford Studies in the Enlightenment 2002:10 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002), p. 197.

<sup>30</sup> 6 July 1736; 27 Aug 1729.

<sup>31</sup> 5 July 1729; 6 Sept 1735.

<sup>32</sup> 6 Sept 1735.

<sup>33</sup> 6 Sept 1735; 27 Nov 1728.

life that they come from. Behind the seemingly measured tone of the *ordonnances* lurks misogyny, masquerading as desire and attraction to the illicit properties of exotic garbs. Also revealed in this essay is the capacity of *indiennes* to undo prevailing social, economic and cultural forces. As has been argued elsewhere, they constituted a threat both to French taste and to the system of absolutism.<sup>34</sup> The *indiennes* papers dramatize anxiety around the weakness of a trade policy, fears about national manufacturing capability, and the wider process of liberalization and modernization as people freed themselves from the feudal imprint of sumptuary laws and asserted the right to dress as they pleased. It was not until the 1750s that a chorus of commentators finally broke through the status quo.<sup>35</sup> With the lifting of the ban in 1759, new centres of production opened up, including the Oberkampf manufactory at Jouy-en-Josas, thereby commencing a new chapter in French textile production.

### Biographical note

*Melissa Percival* is Professor of French, Art History and Visual Culture at the University of Exeter and a specialist in the art, literature and history of ideas of eighteenth-century France. Key publications include: *The Appearance of Character: Physiognomy and Facial Expression in Eighteenth-Century France* (1999); *Fragonard and the Fantasy Figure: Painting the Imagination* (2012); *Figures de fantaisie du XVIème au XVIIIème siècle* (2015), and *Fancy in Eighteenth-Century Visual Culture* (2020). In September 2023 she takes up a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship to write a study of ‘Indiennes’ and ‘Toile de Jouy’ in a global context.

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### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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<sup>34</sup> Beasley, *Versailles Meets the Taj Mahal*, p. 249.

<sup>35</sup> Depitre, *La Toile peinte*, chapter 6; Crosby, ‘First Impressions’, chapter 7.