Rachel Renault

Starvation, Participation, and Exclusion

Friedrich Justus Riedel and the Bread Riot of Erfurt, 1771

Abstract: In 1771, as Germany was experiencing one of the worst famines in its history, the people of Erfurt turned against the city's mayor, Siegmund Lebrecht Hadelich. The mayor, who was also a professor of cameral sciences at the university, was accused of hoarding grain, speculating on the shortage and publicly advocating the virtues of free trade. This upheaval provides an opportunity to analyse how the demand for the fundamental right to food has led to a dual process of attempts to expand and contract political participation rights. Surprisingly, the rioters received unexpected support from another university professor, the aesthetic philosopher Friedrich Justus Riedel (1742–1785). For Riedel, the riot was an opportunity to examine the place of the common man in society, his right to speak, and his political competence. This article summarizes the initial results of a project carried out as part of a French *habilitation à diriger les recherches*.

Keywords: famine, political participation, popular politics, early modern Germany, Erfurt, Friedrich Justus Riedel, Enlightenment

1. Introduction. The (im-)moral economy of early modern Germany

Historians have long shown how food shortages were an opportunity to expand political participation:[1] for an extended period, the outbreak of the French Revo-

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Rachel Renault, Institut Universitaire de France, University of Le Mans, Avenue Olivier Messiaen, 72085 Le Mans, France; rachel.renault@univ-lemans.fr

1 John Bohstedt, The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition in England, c. 1550–1850, Farnham 2010; Steven L. Kaplan, Provisioning Paris. Merchants and Millers in the Grain and Flour Trade During the Eighteenth Century, Ithaca/London 1984; Edward P. Thompson, The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century, in: Past & Present 50 (1971), 76–136; Louise A. Tilly, The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France, in: Journal of Interdisciplinary History 2/1 (1971), 23–57.

lution itself was attributed to a famine.[2] While what and how one eats was – and still is – a vector of distinction and social differentiation, the right to sufficient food and subsistence was unquestionably one of the most seemingly consensual rights in pre-modern European societies. This right was moral in nature; it was neither written nor formalized, yet it powerfully structured relations between the rulers and the ruled. Despite the apparent consensus on this fundamental human right, questions of supply were constantly debated, as grain was central not only to the economy but also to the maintenance of the social order of Ancien Régime societies.[3] From the mid-eighteenth century, with the emergence of the first theories of free trade, new divisions emerged, reconfiguring the way in which food issues – and bread and cereals in particular – were addressed.[4]

In 1971 E. P. Thompson's seminal article demonstrated that in the mid-eighteenth century, riots over the price of grain and bread could not be interpreted as mere automatic reactions to hunger, in a "spasmodic view of popular history".[5] People rose up in the name of principles that fell within the scope of fundamental rights.[6] But far from being a matter of consensus, supply was a subject of constant conflict, particularly as free trade theories were supported by the central authorities in London, while local authorities remained more paternalistic. Thompson's interpretation is based on the concept of class struggle: local authorities acted not, or not only, out of the goodness of their hearts, but under the threat of insurrection, and were thus *obliged* to implement regulatory measures in the event of a crisis. Thompson's "moral economy of the English crowd" therefore taught us to regard the demands of the rioting mob as a fundamental but unwritten right, to be enforced by force if necessary. The revolt thus resulted in two distinct forms of participation: firstly, through the expression of demands, and secondly, through direct interven-

2 Historians today tend to play down the direct causality between famine and revolution. See for instance Jean-Clément Martin, "La Révolution est fille de la misère", in: Jean-Clément Martin, Idées reçues sur la Révolution française, Paris 2021, 23–26: "But the winter of 1709 was disastrous. Tens of thousands of French people died of hunger and cold, while trees cracked from frost and wine froze in carafes. While the war weighed heavily on the country outside and in the Cévennes, there was no revolt and even less revolution." Ibid., 23.

3 On the concept of the 'grain society' (*Getreidegesellschaft*), see the excellent and inspiring recent book by Dominik Collet, Die doppelte Katastrophe. Klima und Kultur in der europäischen Hungerkrise 1770–1772, Göttingen 2019, especially 97–101.

4 Steven L. Kaplan, Bread, Politics and Political Economy in the Reign of Louis XV, The Hague 1976; Steven L. Kaplan/Sophus A. Reinert (eds.), The Economic Turn. Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe, London 2019. For the German context, see the recent PhD thesis by Lena Kaiser-Kulin, Zu Abwendung eines Mangels an benöthigten Korn-Früchten und zu Verhütung einer übermäßigen Theuerung. Getreidepolitisches Vorsorgehandeln und mangelindizierte Krisenbewältigung in Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, 1745–1790, 2022, https://duepublico2.uni-due.de/receive/duepublico_mods_00077380, especially 122–148, and Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 269–270.

5 Thompson, The Moral Economy of the English Crowd, 1971, 76.

6 Ibid., 79.

tion in the form of collective action. Rioting, uprising, and uproar were informal and non-institutionalized ways of imposing popular participation in decision-making.[7]

1.1. Extending and narrowing political participation

In times of supply crises and shortages, the balance of power between the common people and the authorities became increasingly tense, leading to forms of direct action that are now well documented in the literature, such as blocking export convoys, taxing prices, or seizing stocks. The protesters included, depending on the case, well-established merchants, servants, and a floating population of 'poor' people, a term with vague and fluctuating contours depending on the context and the speaker. Their access to political representation was consequently heterogeneous: some were entitled in their own right, enjoying the full rights of citizenship, while others were completely excluded, starting with a large proportion of women. In this sense, riots over food supply saw an extension of informal political participation to the "outsiders" of the community.[8] They tended to reconfigure the usual dividing lines that structured urban society, between citizens and non-citizens, burghers and inhabitants, masters and journeymen, foreigners and locals, men and women, patricians and plebeians, nobles and commoners, and so on.[9] The various authorities tended to link the legitimacy of political expression to social respectability: while the demand for the right to eat could not be denied, the very form of the protest itself could be interpreted as a means of gaining undue control over public affairs and therefore condemned. The challenge for the protesters was thus to legitimize their action, in order to legitimize their demands. This gave rise to new questions: who had the right to protest publicly and who had a legitimate voice? Who should speak on behalf of the group?

Nevertheless, this extension of political participation was in itself ambiguous, as it was also an opportunity for a series of exclusions. Crises in general, and food crises in particular, have been pivotal moments for redefining rights and entitlements, socio-spatial boundaries, and status – often in the sense of tightening community ties: in Norbert Elias' words, reconfiguring the established/outsider configuration.

7 On riot as control over authorities, see Rachel Renault, Popular Control of Taxation, Accountability, and the Redefinition of Political Subordination (Germany, Seventeenth–Eighteenth Centuries), in: Journal of Social History 2024, 58, 1, 124–143.

8 Norbert Elias, John L. Scotson, The Established and the Outsiders, London 1965.

9 On the "city as a difference machine", see Engin Fahri Isin, Being Political: Genealogies of Citizenship, Minneapolis, 2002, 1–51, who shows how differentiating citizens from "immanent" and "distant" others was constitutive to citizenship itself.

The right to collective solidarity was limited to narrower geographical and/or social boundaries.[10] Who was part of the community and, as such, had the right to receive assistance? But the question went even further, for the crisis almost always led to the naming of enemies who were accused of benefiting from or creating the crisis. As we shall see, however, there was much disagreement about who these crisis profiteers actually were, and naming enemies was part of the process of protesting and reconfiguring community allegiances.[11]

Ultimately, two processes seem to have taken place simultaneously: on the one hand, faced with the threat of a plebeian population that was in principle disenfranchised from political participation, most of those in power sought to reassert their authority by relegating them to their 'right' place – that of silent, obedient subjects. At the same time, they attempted to deflect popular indignation towards external adversaries. However, the contours of the community were also redefined from below by the protesting group, who also participated in the process of identifying enemies. A series of symbolic or actual exclusions were then enacted, based on the designation of enemies to be excluded from the social body due to their misdeeds: "foreigners", market intermediaries or hoarders, but also peasants, bakers, or millers, all suspected of exploiting the crisis to enrich themselves.[12] These events provided an opportunity for a theoretical and practical confrontation with questions of political representation, entitlement, and the contours of the common.

1.2. Food riots and politicization in early modern Germany

While the study of subsistence conflicts is a very important field in French, English, and Italian historiography, it has long been less prominent in eighteenth-century German historiography, which has concentrated primarily on the period from 1770 to 1847, and even more so on that from 1817 to 1847.[13] Georg Schmidt has explained this tendency by the comparatively low number of revolts in the Holy Roman Empire, which he related both to the judicialization of social conflicts and to the fact that the German authorities remained sufficiently paternalistic due to the

10 Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 147–148.

11 Ibid., 117–131; Kaplan, Bread, 1976, and Steven L. Kaplan, The Famine Plot Persuasion in Eighteenth-Century France, Philadelphia 1982.

12 Kaplan, Bread, 1976, especially 1–51.

13 Manfred Gailus/Heinrich Volkmann (eds.), Der Kampf um das tägliche Brot. Nahrungsmangel, Versorgungspolitik und Protest 1770–1990, Opladen 2013. Manfred Gailus, Straße und Brot. Sozialer Protest in den deutschen Staaten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Preußens, 1847–1849, Göttingen 1990. Michael Hecht, Nahrungsmangel und Protest: Teuerungsunruhen in Frankreich und Preußen in den Jahren 1846–47, Halle 2004.

political fragmentation, so that the subjects would had comparatively less reason to protest.[14] I would like to qualify these observations slightly: as in every other part of Europe, townspeople regularly protested against the high cost of grain and bread when prices rose rapidly. This article focuses on a riot in Erfurt in mid-July 1771. But several other episodes occurred regularly in the highly fragmented Thuringian region – as repeatedly in Jena during the Seven Years' War, or in Gotha a few days after Erfurt.[15]

However, the way in which these revolts were structured in Germany had a number of unique features that distinguished them from the French and English situations. These include a specific term that has recently come to the attention of the scholarly literature: the hoarder, in early modern Germany, was regularly referred to in the category of the 'corn Jew' (*Kornjude*). While the semantic[16] and iconographic[17] contours of the term have been the subject of some, still scattered, investigations, the history of the concrete and practical use of the word in context remains completely unexplored. Nevertheless, the documented antisemitic nature of certain food riots, such as the one in Gotha in 1771, illustrates how this semantic repertoire could be transformed into a "contentious repertoire":[18] while the 'corn Jew' could be a Christian,[19] the antisemitic connotations associated with the term could also have tangible consequences for Jews. The German food riots are therefore a key observation point for the dialectic of expanding and narrowing participation rights in times of crisis.

This article does not directly address the classic questions of "contentious repertoires", violence, or crowd demands, although these topics are referenced. Instead, the focus is on debates about the sociological profile of the participants and the logic of enemy naming. The contribution first examines the riot of mid-July 1771 against Mayor Hadelich (2); it then analyses the social composition of the crowd and its interpretation by the authorities as a practical extension of political participation (3). In the next step, it shows how a famous philosopher, Friedrich Justus

14 Georg Schmidt, Die frühneuzeitlichen Hungerrevolten. Soziale Konflikte und Wirtschaftspolitik im Alten Reich, in: Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung 18/3 (1991), 257–280.

15 The Jena riots are documented in Staatsarchiv Weimar (StAW), Bestand Kunst und Wissenschaft, Hofwesen: Universität Jena, A8339, A8340, A8342, A8354, A8355, A8356, A 8366. About Gotha, see Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 220–225, based on Staatsarchiv Gotha (StAG), Geheimes Archiv (GA), ZZ Va Nr. 7.

16 Manfred Gailus, Die Erfindung des 'Korn-Juden'. Zur Geschichte eines antijüdischen Feindbildes des 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts, in: Historische Zeitschrift 272/3 (2001), 597–622; Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 260–264.

17 Robert Jütte, Das Bild vom 'Kornjuden' als Antifigur zum frühneuzeitlichen Prinzip der 'guten narung' und der 'moral economy', in: Aschkenas 23/1–2 (2013), 27–52.

18 Charles Tilly, Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834, in: Social Science History 17/2 (1993), 253–280. The term refers to a set of available means of protest from which rioters could draw.

19 See the dictionaries and the literature mentioned in Gailus, Erfindung, 2001, especially: 598–604. Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 259–264.

Riedel, emerged as an unexpected ally of the rioters, supporting their demands for political participation and for sufficient food supply, thereby providing theoretical support for the practical extension of participation (4). Finally, I analyse how these demands were based on a series of exclusions. The focus is on the individuals or groups responsible for making these exclusions, the individuals or groups who were to be excluded, the reasons for their exclusion, and the extent to which these exclusions were ultimately successful (5).

2. Oatbread, academics, and riot in Erfurt (1771)

The study concentrates on a single protest that occurred in Erfurt, during one of the most severe famines Germany has ever experienced.[20] Erfurt was a Thuringian town with a population of 14,000 to 15,000, surrounded by large areas under its jurisdiction with a population of 20,000 to 25,000. From 1664 it had been politically subordinate to the Archbishop-Elector of Mainz, who resided more than 300 km away, and was represented locally by a *Statthalter* – a governor who had died at the time of the crisis and had not yet been replaced. The city was governed by both municipal and electoral institutions. Although Erfurt's economic and cultural heyday was between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, it remained a central, well-served market town in Thuringia. The crisis therefore hit the city a little later than the rest of the region, but it hit hard: mortality rose by almost 50 per cent in 1771 and by almost 150 per cent in 1772[21]. As was so often the case, the famine was accompanied by an epidemic that ravaged bodies weakened by malnutrition.

On 11 July, in response to the still recent food crisis, the city council of Erfurt decided to bake oat bread with oats from the princely domain and sell it cheaply; but this bread made people feel dizzy and sick to their stomachs, causing them to vomit, and rumours spread that it was poisoned.[22] People gathered in front of the town hall to protest and demand their money back. A stuff-weaver (*Zeuchmacher*) asked whether "the citizens of Erfurt were to be turned into dogs that they be fed

20 See Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 54–79, for the general context. The weather anomaly, which corresponded to an exceptional peak in the Little Ice Age, was the result of a combination of multiple factors. It had a significant impact on the whole of Europe, and its dramatic consequences were partly due to its exceptional duration (1769–1772).

21 See the mortality tables in Constantin Beyer, Neue Chronik von Erfurt… vom Jahr 1736 bis zum Jahr 1815, Erfurt, 1821, 161–164: 1045 deaths in 1770, 1453 in 1771, 2498 in 1772 (the numbers are for the city and its land).

22 Landesarchiv Sachsen-Anhalt, Standort Wernigerode (LASAW), A 37b I, II XIII Nr. 21, fol. 44, 51. On the 'famine plot' topos, see the many configurations examined in eighteenth-century France by Kaplan, Plot, 1982.

oat bread".[23] It is clear here that consumption is a matter of status, rank, and quality, not just quantity.

Shortly afterwards, a "crowd" (*Haufen*) chased the car in which the mayor, Siegmund Lebrecht Hadelich, was sitting, followed him to his home, and smashed the windows of his house with stones.[24] The mayor was also a professor of cameral sciences at the local university, and in January 1770 he had published a text offering a reward of 20 thalers to anyone who could find a way to *raise* the price of grain.[25] In March 1771, he published another text defending exports as beneficial to the country, even in times of crisis,[26] and two days before the riot, a demonstration based on a long calculation proving that Erfurt would never run out of grain or bread.[27] As was often the case in early modern Europe, the fact that he wrote anonymously did not prevent the whole city from knowing that he was the author of these texts.

These statements, made at a very inopportune moment, earned him the enmity of the public when the crisis began to rage. Finally, he was also accused of trading grain himself with merchants from Nuremberg, which he seems to have done in part indeed. Hadelich was at once a free trader, a hoarder, a speculator, *and* a mayor, which made him an ideal target for popular punishment. Due to Hadelich's function and responsibilities, the protest also took the form of a radical challenge to ordinary political representation. He escaped the mob by fleeing, hiding under hay in a cart, avoiding "public streets". He spent six weeks in neighbouring electoral Saxony, pleading with the Erfurt authorities to investigate and bring charges. But in the highly tense context of widespread hunger across Germany, Erfurt's electoral government councillors (*Regierungsräte*) refused to do so, arguing that it would risk worsening the situation and "adding fuel to the fire".

As a result, there are few sources on the demands of the crowd itself. Unlike in other riots, there are no records of arrest, interrogations, or trial transcripts, and the voices of the protesters themselves are largely absent. The main accounts of the uprising are given by representatives of the various authorities of the city of Erfurt,

23 "ob man aus den Erfurtischen Bürgern Hunde machen wolle, daß man ihnen Haferbrod zu freßen geben wolle", LASAW, A 37b I, II XIII Nr. 21., fol. 38.

24 Ibid., fol. 44, Regierungsrat Strecker's account, s.d.

25 Erfurthisches Intelligenz-Blatt, 1770, vol. 2, 13 January, 13.

26 Wohlgemeynte Gedanken über die Frage: Ob es einem Lande nützlich sey, daß man die Ausfuhre des Getraides aus demselben verbiete?, in: Erfurthisches Intelligenz-Blatt 11 (1771), 84–87, and 12 (1771), 93–94. This was actually a new version of a text he had published almost a decade earlier, in 1762, in the treatises of the Academy of Sciences of Erfurt: Siegesmund Lebrecht Hadelich (ed.), Übersetzungen und deutsche Abhandlungen die zum Theil bey der churfürstlich mainzischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Erfurt übergeben und abgelesen worden, vol. 2, Langensalza 1763, 117–123.

27 LSAW, A 37b I, II XIII Nr. 21, fol. 56-57: "Ganz unmaßgebliche Gedancken über den itzigen Brodmangel in Erfurth".

including: representatives of the Elector of Mainz (*Statthalter, Stadtschultheiß, Kammerräte,* and *Regierungsräte*); members of the city council and city authorities (*Stadträte*); members of the military. They were primarily interested in two things: firstly, to ascertain whether the mayor was responsible for inciting the rebellion against him, and secondly, to determine the sociological profile of the participants in the uprising, which would establish their legitimacy. The Erfurt uprising therefore mainly documents how a plebeian riot was able to break the united front of the authorities and established notables, but does not allow us to write anything like a history from below.

All the more so because the people here received the unexpected support from the eminent university professor and renowned philosopher Friedrich Justus Riedel. This situation, in which an actual popular uprising is linked to the Republic of Letters, is quite unique. A few weeks before the uprising, in early May, Riedel published an anonymous satirical pamphlet entitled *Humble Suggestions for the Benefit of the Poor on How to Remedy the Present Shortage of Bread in this Town, Presented by Master W.A.O., a Local Pewterer, Out of Philanthropy*.[28] In this text, Riedel pretended to write as a pewterer and offered a scathing critique of the free trade advocated by Hadelich. Although the mayor was not named, his caricatured positions were clearly identifiable. Hadelich explicitly cited this pamphlet as a contributing factor in the uprising.[29] And although Riedel was by no means a genuine spokesman for the insurgents, the paper war between the two university professors contributed to shaping relations between the plebeians, the general urban public, the university, the municipal authorities, and Mainz, giving visibility and legitimacy to the crowd's demands.

3. Honourability and entitlement to political participation: the "dregs of the worst" *(sentina malorum)* or "a large part of the discerning public"?

From the perspective of the authorities, the social status of the individuals participating in a protest directly influenced their legitimacy to claim rights on behalf of the group. However, it appears that there were different types and degrees of illegitimacy. Accounts vary as to the composition of the crowd, with some sources describing it as a gathering of beggars (*Bettelhaupt, Bettelvolck*), common people

28 [Friedrich J. Riedel], Ohnmaßgeblicher Vorschlag zum Besten des Armuths, wie dem gegenwärtigen Brodmangel in hiesiger Stadt abzuhelfen seye, aus Menschenliebe eröfnet von Meister W.A.O., Zinngießer allhier, n.p. 1771.

29 "Unter die gelegentlichen Ursachen zum Tumult kan man eine satyrische Schrift des Prof. Riedels zählen", LSAW, A 37b I, II XIII Nr. 21, fol. 38.

(*Pöbel*), poor people (*Arme*), street children (*Gaßenjungen*), and/or women. The only thing these disparate categories had in common was their deprivation of political rights. However, two contentious issues emerged: the mayor's culpability and the extent of support for the riot by a "reasonable public".[30] Unsurprisingly, according to the Mayor Hadelich, this "barbaric tumult" against him was incomprehensible; he wanted "to ask the instigators" "what they ha[d] against [him]".[31] He wrote that he was "attacked by the scum of the meanest street rabble (*von dem Abschaum des gemeinsten Gaßenpöbels*)".[32] On the other hand, the good and honest citizens of the city, according to him, all disapproved of this tumult:

> "[A]ll honourable citizens have themselves demanded an investigation by their parish captains (*Pfarrhauptleute*) and have declared that they will take no part in this abominable uproar (*Lerm*) of the hateful mob (*des verhetzen Pöbels*). Therefore one has nothing to fear [and one can investigate the riot], since one has all the upright citizens (*rechtschaffene Bürger*) on one's side."[33]

Hadelich seems to believe that the oat bread was the main cause of the unrest and that the riot had nothing to do with his theoretical stance on free trade or his actual grain trading and hoarding practices. He claimed that no honourable citizen in Erfurt would have endorsed the riot against him, and identified this as a key distinction between the events that transpired two days later in Gotha, where the food riot escalated into an antisemitic pogrom, leading to a petition in which the Gotha bourgeoisie threatened the Duke with an exodus from the city unless the Jews were expelled.[34] In Gotha, he wrote, "the bourgeoisie itself participated", whereas "here it was only *sentina malorum*, street boys, and such riffraff".[35] The acceptability of the claims made by the crowd was contingent on their social status and political privilege. This was a strategy to discredit the crowd's actions and re-establish Hadelich's own legitimacy.

In contrast, City Provost (*Stadtschultheiß*) Strecker's account imposed a different narrative and clarified the sociology of the riot. He introduced the presence of women ("the rabble of some of Erfurt's begging women and boys")[36] and even referred to the

30 *Vernünftiges Publicum*, ibid., fol. 54, 58b, 170b.
31 Ibid., fol. 30, Hadelich to the Mainz Regency, 16 July 1771.
32 Ibid., fol. 34, Hadelich to the Kurfürst, 24 July 1771.
33 Ibid., fol. 40, 29 July 1771.
34 Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 220–225. StAG, GA, ZZ Va Nr. 7, fol. 1–3b: "wo die Judenschafft nicht daß Land reinen muß so werden wir in der zeitfolge uns genöthiget sehen den wanderstab zu ergreiffen und Ew. Hertzog. Durchl. werden ein Land voller Bettler haben". The petition is signed by the "Unterthänigste gehorsamste getreue sämdliche Bürgerschafft in dero hertzogl. Resiedenz".
35 LASAW, A 37b I, II, XIII, Nr. 21, fol. 40.
36 "der Pöbelhafte Haufen eines theils Erfurter Bettel-Weiber und Jungen", ibid., fol. 44, Strecker to unknown recipient, n.d.

uprising as a "women's riot" (*Weiber-Tumult*)[37]. Government Councillor Genau also described the gathering as a "group of women who have banded together".[38]

Nevertheless, while people came together in front of the city hall, it was a stuff-weaver (*Zeuchmacher*), neither plebeian nor female, who took the stand to inquire whether Erfurt's citizens would be "turned into dogs" by the oat bread. It is possible – but unlikely – that the assembled crowd then dispersed, with only the most plebeian fraction following the mayor to his home. This leads us to qualify these assertions, given that the crowd initially appeared to be a mixture of different people, bourgeois and non-bourgeois individuals, men and women, established tradesmen, beggars, and plebeians. Strecker also emphasized Hadelich's unpopularity among the general urban population:

> "[N]ot only the plebs alone but also a large part of the discerning public (*scharfsinniges Publicum*) remains dangerously upset about Mayor Hadelich and his previous, allegedly self-serving behaviour."[39]

In contrast to the mayor's narrative, which distinguished between a respectable public that would have sided with him and a plebeian public that had become unruly, the provost emphasized the convergence of both sectors in the mayor's detestation. Strecker attributed the unrest to the mayor's actions, particularly his involvement in the grain trade and his promotion of free trade: eight days before the riot, he had already been chased through the streets, pushed around and insulted.[40] Moreover, he had contributed to his own downfall by purchasing "as much grain as he could get in and outside the Erfurt lands and piling it up for usury" and then selling it to the Nurembergers.[41]

In times of crisis, the concept of the 'public' expanded to include a diverse range of non-citizens who sought to challenge their representatives. The demand for the fundamental right to have access to food and for accountability of the authorities

37 Ibid., fol. 70.

38 Ibid., fol. 94: "die von einem Haufen zusammengelaufener Weiber wieder Ihme [Hadelich] verübten Mißhandlungen", von Genau to the Regency of Mainz, 22 August 1771.

39 Ibid., fol. 47b, Strecker to unknown recipient, probably to Mayence, s.d.

40 Ibid., fol. 50b.

41 "daß der Bürgermeister Hadelich schon eine lange zeit her, mit Eingang dieses Jahres und sofort sowohl selbst als durch seinen Emissaire, in und auserhalb der Erfurter Lande allenthalben soviel er Früchte zu kauffen bekommen können, solche aufgekaufet, und zum Wucher aufgeschüttet haben soll, […]. Das […] hat sichtbarlich vor denen Augen der gantzen Stadt Erfurth nicht verborgen bleiben können, daß er der Bürgermeister Hadelich […] eine übergrose Quantität Frucht auf seinen Böden, in seinem Hauß aufgeschüttet, dergestalt, daß die alle nach einander gehaltenen Frucht-Geschirre und beladene Wagner von Erfurther Thore biß in das Hadelichische Hauß die Strasen bedecket haben, welche Frucht insgesamt an die Nürberger wiederum verkaufet, und mit ungemeinen grosen und ofentlichen Aufsehen und Krachen der Wagner, nacher Nürnberg und anderer Orten abgefahren worden ist", fol. 54b–55.

in maintaining an affordable livelihood served as a catalyst for the politicization and extension of the concept of the 'public'.[42] This extension of participation was viewed as a potential threat by all those in power who sought to reinstate the distinction between the 'honourable public' and the 'miserable plebs', although it was not likely that the opposition was relevant here. At the same time, however, the people's demand for affordable subsistence could not be entirely denied, and the mayor was held responsible by some of his colleagues, which resulted in these convoluted interpretations of the social composition of the crowd. Within the established group, however, one person, Friedrich Justus Riedel, took a slightly different view of the political participation of the 'common man'.

4. Riedel: from aesthetics to politics, from common sense to common men

Before and after the uprising, Riedel (1742–1785) wrote several pamphlets, which have not attracted much scholarly interest. Some of them were included in his posthumous highly incomplete and erroneously called 'complete' works published by Kurzbeck in 1786–1787,[43] but I can establish that at least three of them were not written by him.[44] Until now, literary historians have concentrated primarily on Riedel's contributions to the field of philosophical aesthetics and on his edition of Winckelmann's work, which is widely regarded as containing significant shortcomings.[45] As a result, it is mainly his works published in Jena at the end of the 1760s

42 See Andreas Würgler, Unruhen und Öffentlichkeit. Städtische und ländliche Protestbewegungen im 18. Jahrhundert, Tübingen 1995.

43 Friedich Justus Riedel, Sämmtliche Schriften, 5 vols., Vienna 1787.

44 Riedel's body of work paradoxically includes a text written by (or on behalf of) Hadelich (Meine Gedanken über den Zinngießer O., in: Friedrich Just Riedel, Sämmtliche Schriften, Vienna, Zweyter Teil, 1787, 398–407) as clearly appears in LASAW, A 37b I, II, XIII, Nr. 21, fol. 2–28, where Riedel defends himself against the accusations made by Hadelich in this very text. Moreover, Johann Michael Reißers Oberpfarrhauptmans zu Erfurth, Vertheidigung seiner Unschuld gegen die Zunöthigungen des Herrn Professor und Bürgermeister Hadelichs, und abgelegtes Zeugniß wegen des letzten Tumults and the Johann Michael Reißers zweytes Buch (ibid., 365–380 and 381–397) are signed – if not written – by a real representative of the parish, whose activity is attested in the documentation (for instance LASAW, A 44, Nr. 274, fol. 323), and who was named by Hadelich in his anonymous Gedanken über den letzten Tumult, nebst einer Nachricht an das Publikum, von einem rechtschaffenen Bürger, n.p. 1771, 9 and in his Wahren Ursachen des zu Erfurth Entstandenen Tumults, in einem Sendschreiben an den Herrn Regierungsrath Genau zu Erfurth aus dem Lauchstädter Bade, dargestellet von C.L. Hadelich, 6.

45 Eckart Feldmeier edited Riedel's Briefe über das Publikum, Vienna 1973. See also Rita Terras/Friedrich Justus Riedel, The Aesthetic Theory of a German Sensualist, in: Lessing Yearbook 4 (1972), 157–183; Richard Wilhelm, Friedrich Justus Riedel und die Ästhetik der Aufklärung, Heidelberg 1933; Kasimir Filip Wize, Friedrich Justus Riedel und seine Ästhetik, Berlin 1907; Dietmar Till, Friedrich Justus Riedels "Philosophie des Geschmacks", in: Kunst und Empfindung (2012), 103–114. Most of

and in Vienna in the 1780s that have attracted interest – and even this has been rather limited. In the late 1760's, Riedel was well known for his reflections on the German "public",[46] and by 1771 he was at the height of his fame. In 1768, at the age of 27, he was offered a professorship in Erfurt to revive the university, along with Carl Friedrich Bahrdt, Johann Georg Meusel, and soon Christoph Martin Wieland, who owed his position in Erfurt to Riedel.[47] This clique of 'new professors', apparently arrogant enough, soon came into conflict with the 'old professors', including Hadelich, and especially with the Catholics because of their materialistic positions and suspicions of atheism.[48] Riedel by then was already quite famous and a rising star of the German Enlightenment, but he was also seen as a creature of Christian Adolf Klotz, who had been his teacher at Halle, and this brought him many powerful enemies, as did his writings, which were often satirical and acerbic.[49]

Hadelich was the exact opposite of Riedel: a notable, a pious man, a man of no literary standing or reputation in the Republic of Letters, but an entrepreneur, a businessman, a landowner, and a mayor, keen on respectability and enthusiastic about the new economic ideas. Riedel's strong opposition to free trade undoubtedly raises more questions than it resolves. But his various pamphlets are not only highly entertaining, they also address the issue of the moral economy defended in the Republic of Letters, thus linking the question of the 'radical Enlightenment' to political economy in a way that is often neglected.[50] Describing the form and structure of the controversy between the two men (scandal or controversy?), the mobilization of different audiences (popular, citizen, German?), and the nature of the exchange (science or insult?) would go beyond the scope of this article, but is an integral part of the overall project.

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these authors have tried to determine whether Riedel's philosophy could be characterized as 'innovative'; most of them remain in the tradition of the history of ideas, without any social context.

46 Friedrich Just[us] Riedel, Über das Publikum. Briefe an einige Glieder desselben, Jena 1768.

47 Erich Kleineidam, Universitas studii Erffordensis. Überblick über die Geschichte der Universität Erfurt im Mittelalter 1392–1521, Leipzig 1988, 160–170. On Bahrdt, see Andrew McKenzie-McHarg, Überlegungen zur Radikalaufklärung am Beispiel von Carl Friedrich Bahrdt, in: Aufklärung 24 (2012), 207–240.

48 See the Heinrich Schwarz case, LASAW, A 37b I, II, XVI Nr. 80, 81. Heinrich Schwarz was a student of Wieland and was accused of blasphemy in late 1769. Riedel and Wieland themselves were suspected of atheism. Kleineidam, Universitas, 1988, 197–198.

49 Christian Adolf Klotz (1738–1771), professor of philosophy at Halle from 1765, was known for his provocative insights and his penchant for polemics. Among the anti-Klotzians, who were also very opposed to Riedel: Lessing and Herder. See Terras, Riedel, 1972, 158–159.

50 Antoine Lilti, Comment écrit-on l'histoire intellectuelle des Lumières ? Spinozisme, radicalisme et philosophie, in: Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales 64/1 (2009), 171–206; Margaret C. Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment. Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans, London/Boston/Sydney 1981; Jonathan I. Israel/Martin Mulsow, Radikalaufklärung, Berlin 2014; Andreas Pečar, Damien Tricoire, Falsche Freunde. War die Aufklärung wirklich die Geburtsstunde der Moderne?, Frankfurt am Main 2015.

While Hadelich accused Riedel of sedition, of setting himself up as the leader of the angry plebs, Riedel claimed that he was defending the rights of the common man (also referred to as the *Mittelmann*) against the powerful, the wealthy, and the nefarious. The various pamphlets written by or attributed to Riedel in 1771 against Mayor Hadelich have in common that they (allegedly) let the common man speak. Occasionally he assumed the identity of a pewterer, at other times that of a non-citizen resident (*Schutzverwandt*), of a pedantic schoolmaster, and even of the city dogs.[51] It is evident that these rhetorical attitudes, which were not intended to be believed, were designed to provoke irony and amusement – and for this reason raise the question of laughter in times of crisis. However, they also served to advance a strong philosophical postulate: the assertion that all individuals possess the rational capacity to defend fundamental human rights and the common good. This stance is also consistent with Riedel's aesthetic principles, which espouse the rejection of expertise (*Kunstrichter*) and uphold the notion of a universal judgement of taste from a sensualist perspective.[52] When applied to political economy, this critique of expertise culminated in the assertion that the collective wisdom of the general public was inherently on a par with, if not superior to, expert economic knowledge.

The controversy between the two men therefore implied a theoretical decision about the role of the common people in politics. While Hadelich, who considered himself an expert in political economy, used the conventional discourse on the seditious plebeians, Riedel resolutely affirmed the people's capacity and legitimacy to speak out and to express their political opinions. This is exemplified by the pewterer at the beginning of his text:[53]

51 Ohnmaßgeblicher Vorschlag zum Besten des Armuths, wie dem gegenwärtigen Brodmangel in hiesiger Stadt abzuhelfen seye aus Menschenliebe eröfnet von Meister W. A. O. Zinngiesser allhier, s.l., 1771; Gedanken über den letzten Tumult von einem Schutzverwandten, s.l., 1771; Der sich selbst entlarvende Schutzverwandte, s.l., 1771; Widerlegung des Zinngiesserischen Vorschlags, wie dem Brodmangel in hiesiger Stadt abzuhelfen sey, verfertigt und an das Licht gestellt von Adam Riese iuniore, Schulcollegen, wie auch Schreib- und Rechenmeister allhier, s.l., 1771; Memorial derer allhier Lebenden Hunde wegen der jetzigen Theurung, und des künftighin noch mehr zu besorgenden Brodmangels: Uebergeben im September 1771, s.l., 1771. The attribution to Riedel could not be proved for this last text.

52 Terras, Riedel, 1972. Friedrich Justus Riedel, Theorie der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften, Jena 1767; Riedel, Publikum, 1768. In 1766, in Jena, Riedel defended a thesis entitled *Philosophiam popularem: philosophis amplissimis consentientibus*, based on Scottish philosophical theories of common sense. See Universitätsarchiv Jena, Bestand M, 149.

53 The pewterer (*Zinngießer*) may be an allusion to the fact that Hadelich called Riedel a "politischer Kannengießer" ("political pewterer" or bar room politician) in [Hadelich], Meine Gedanken über den Zinngießer O., 2. It may also be an allusion to a Danish play written in 1722 by Ludvig Holberg, Den politiske kandestøber ("the political pewterer"), in which a simple bourgeois wants to try for the post of mayor, but finally gives up because of the arduous nature of the task.

> "I am merely a common man; but I have learned what is rightfully mine, and I do not want to boast, but it is truly true, and my wife also says it, that I sometimes have wiser ideas than many a highly esteemed doctor and professor."[54]

There is an obvious inclination to use wit and literary devices to challenge Mayor Hadelich's scholarly stance. However, it is plausible that there is more to it than meets the eye. An identical introduction can be observed in a second pamphlet written by Riedel,[55] in which he claimed to be a non-citizen resident (*Schutzverwandt*), explicitly as a response to a text written by or on behalf of Hadelich, *Gedanken über den letzten Tumult von einem rechtschaffenen Bürger*, s.l., 1771 (*Thoughts About the Recent Uproar, by a Respectable Citizen*). The *Schutzverwandt* text began with this assertion:

> "Although I am only a poor resident (*armer Schutzverwandt*), I do not refrain from being as concerned about the *politicum* as the greatest scholar. I read my journal (*Staatsbote*) and explain it to my neighbours. All the more do I believe that I am entitled to read and judge on a writing that is mainly written for simple burghers (*einfältige Bürger*)."[56]

Riedel argued that all individuals should be entitled to assess the common good, irrespective of their level of education or technical expertise. In his various pamphlets, Riedel emphasized the political capacity of the so-called *Mittelmann*[57], and in particular his ability to judge economic issues, not only through the use of wit and irony but also through the powerful description of the misery that gripped the population. Beyond the conventional and witty literary stance, Riedel's common man adamantly challenged the mayor's free trade logic. For Riedel, the emphatic affirmation of the fundamental right to subsistence led to a defence of human rights based on a Christian ethic, as evidenced in his *Adam Riese*:

> "To the distinguished gentlemen who would like to say: what is the common man to us? I would like to point out that the common man is as good a citizen and a human being (*Mensch*) and a Christian as they are, and that it is precisely the common, industrious man who is a more important body in the state than they are."[58]

Citizen, human being, Christian: Riedel advocated a Christian (and male) universality of fundamental rights that placed the common man at the centre of the state. Fur-

54 Riedel, Zinngießer, 1771, 3.
55 LASAW, A 37b I, II, XIII, Nr. 21, fol. 181. On 19 August 1771, Superintendent Mosch from Arnstadt identified Riedel as the author.
56 Riedel, Schutzverwandt, 1771, 3.
57 Riedel, Adam Riese, 1771, 32.
58 Ibid., 22.

thermore, he frequently emphasized the impact of inequalities of wealth and rank. Posing as a master of writing and arithmetic, he sarcastically mocked the ridiculous deference of estate society, addressing his audience as follows: "Most highly esteemed and valued readers of rank, birth, and dignity."[59] In the same text, he also drew a table of the winners and losers of the food crisis and concluded: "One would have to be bad at arithmetic not to realize that the winners are one against a hundred in relation to the losers." The winners were: the brokers (*Mäkler*), the corn hoarders (*Kornaufschütter*), the sack carriers (*Sackträger*), and a few peasants who still had supplies (*einige wenige Bauern, die noch Vorrath haben*). The losers were: "the schoolteachers (*die Schulkollege* – that is, the pseudo-writer of the pamphlet –), the merchants, the manufacturers, the craftsmen, the day labourers, most farmers who have nothing left to sell, the brewers, the innkeepers, all those who have no livelihood and no wages, the poor". [60] What is interesting here is the mobilization of the *quantitative* argument in favour of the majority, against a small class that was becoming wealthier. Towards the end of the *Adam Riese* pamphlet, which presents itself as an alleged rebuttal of the pewterer's text, he stated that 99 per cent of the population supported the pewterer's proposals:

> "I can only say that I am somewhat annoyed by the praise that this vile piece of paper has received. I do not know what the honourable gentlemen (*vornehme Herren*) think of it […]. But according to my late grandfather's account book, even the honourable gentlemen amount to only 1/99 of the entire respectable public, and so I must say with dismay that almost the entire public, at least as far as I know it, has praised and extolled the pewterer."[61]

Not only did Riedel claim to make the people speak, but he also purported to speak *to* them and to be read by them – although this cannot be verified. Similarly, the pewterer's text concluded with this statement:

> "But to the rest of you, craftsmen, day labourers, residents, and especially to my dear fellow citizens and countrymen in the suburbs, it cannot be indifferent how high the *Metze* of grain will rise by then, or how much a pound of bread will cost. And it is only for your sake that I have this time set my pen to work and opened this proposal, for which I promise myself many thanks from you all and God's reward."[62]

59 "Nach Stand, Geburt und Würden höchst-hoch- und werthgeschätzte Leser und Leserinnen", ibid., 3.
60 "Man müßte schlecht rechnen können, wenn man nicht einsehen wollte, daß sich die Gewinner zu den Verliehrern verhalten, wie Eins gegen hundert", ibid., 28.
61 Ibid., 5.
62 Riedel, Zinngießer, 1771, 14–15.

Prior to and following the uproar, Riedel took to the public stage to speak out on behalf of those opposed to the free trade in grain and the undue profits it would have generated. The rationale behind his actions remains largely obscure. Was he driven by conviction? Was he instructed to oppose the mayor, and if so, by whom? Was he motivated by personal animosity towards the mayor due to their conflicts within the university? He was acting as the representative and mouthpiece of a public he claimed to be plebeian and numerous. In doing so, he established this public in theory, although its actual existence remains to be investigated. But by using the urban lay public as witness and party, he distanced himself from the scientific controversy and moved closer to the 'cause célèbre' and the court of public opinion.[63]

The food crisis thus resulted in an extension of political participation to groups that were institutionally excluded. The assembled crowd here seemed to have been a mixture of established and affluent groups, perhaps some students,[64] and a crowd of women, suburban residents, boys, beggars, and day-labourers. This practical extension of participation through rioting was supported here by a kind of philosophical-theoretical extension of the concept of the legitimate 'public' to include the plebeian strata, carried out by Riedel. Consequently, the defence of fundamental rights was associated with an increase in political participation. Yet, conversely, the same movement also resulted in a series of exclusions.

5. Them versus us. Naming enemies and casting exclusions

In the early modern cities, urban populations were rife with conspiracy theories that sought to explain supply crises in terms of deliberate manoeuvres by the authorities, the court, the government, the prince, or the powerful. Against a background of vital concern, these quasi-mythological narratives also aimed to produce explanations or interpretations of the socio-political order.[65] In eighteenth-century France, accusations were levelled at the king's mistress or minister, the East India Company, or the

63 On the intellectual and academic controversy, its ideological and socio-political background, see Markus Friedrich, Die Grenzen der Vernunft: Theologie, Philosophie und gelehrte Konflikte am Beispiel des Helmstedter Hofmannstreits und seiner Wirkungen auf das Luthertum um 1600, Göttingen, 2004; Cyril Lemieux, À quoi sert l'analyse des controverses?, in: Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle 25/1 (2007), 191–212; Antoine Lilti, Querelles et controverses. Les formes du désaccord intellectuel à l'époque moderne, in: ibid., 13–28.

64 LASAW, A 37b I, II, XIII, Nr. 21: "da ich während der Dämmerung erfuhre, daß auch ein Theil von denen Studenten geneigt wären, an dem Tumult Antheil zu nehmen"; fol. 112b, Johann Heinrich Genau, 12 August 1771.

65 See the rumour circulating in Paris in 1750 that a leper princess had kidnapped the children of artisans so that she could drink their blood and cure herself on the backs of the people. Arlette Farge/Jacques Revel, Logiques de la foule. L'affaire des enlèvements d'enfants à Paris 1750, Paris 1988.

princes du sang, such as the Duke of Bourbon.[66] In his *Vorlesungen*, Riedel himself alluded to the legend of Hatto, a cruel archbishop of Mainz.[67] Gottschalk recorded the legend in 1813: in 968, during a famine, the bishop was said to have locked his subjects in a granary under the pretext of distributing grain. Instead, he set fire to the granary and burned his subjects alive. But the hand of God, in the face of injustice, was said to have turned his subjects into tens of thousands of mice, which pursued him to the Binger tower on the Rhine, where he had sought refuge, and devoured him.[68] The legend not only perpetuates the motif of a prince murdering his subjects and rejoicing in their annihilation but also portrays the power of the 'many' against a cruel ruler.

However, in actual political practice, criticism rarely reached the prince or his immediate agents, except in those infra-political, indirect, and discrete forms. This leads to the question of the purpose of naming enemies: was it to designate easy scapegoats in order to strengthen community ties and spare the authorities? This is the interpretation put forward, for instance, by Johann Albrecht Philippi, who saw in the engraving of 'corn Jew' medals a strategy to cover up the negligence of the authorities in the management of supplies.[69]

But is this explanation sufficient? One could ask about the necessity of designating traitors and enemies. Who was behind these designations? Under what conditions were they successful? Like any operation of social (dis)qualification, they were prone to contention. To some extent, they followed the same logic as insults – that is, an informal operation of disqualification that was more or less likely to success depending on the context and the types of capital held by the person uttering it.[70] The logic of naming enemies raised a number of concrete questions that were the subject of conflict. Despite the apparent unanimity in condemning bad market practices such as speculation or hoarding, the grounds for condemnation and exclusion were debated, and these decisions involved choices that each time revealed a cer-

66 Kaplan, Famine Plot, 1982.

67 F.J. Riedel, Sämmtliche Schriften, Zweyter Theil: Satyren, Vienna 1786–1787, 304: "und diese [Kornjuden] sind als Feinde, als hochverräther ihres Vaterlandes anzusehen, und verdienten in dem Mäusethurm zu sitzen, welchen unsere vaterländische Mythologie zur Bestrafung eines korngeizigen Prälaten erdacht hat."

68 Friedrich Gottschalck, Die Sagen und Volksmährchen der Deutschen, Halle, 1814, 240–245; based on: Denkwürdiger und nützlicher Rheinischer Antiquarius…, Frankfurt am Mayn 1744, 590–593.

69 Johann Albrecht Philippi, Der vertheidigte Korn-Jude, Berlin 1765, about the famine in 1694: "Wie war es nun anzufangen, daß man dem Volke die wahre Ursache verhelete? Man gab den Leuten, wie sonst den Kindern, das Unechte für das Echte in die Hand; man ließ zwey Medaillen prägen, auf jeder stand ein Korn-Jude und der Teufel […]. So wurde das Volk besänftiget, und die Korn-Juden mußten die Fehler decken, so von den Vorstehern des Herzogtums waren begangen worden", 151.

70 Pierre Bourdieu, Sociologie générale, vol. 1, Cours au Collège de France (1981–1983), Paris 2015, 29–40.

tain vision of the social world. Crisis situations appear to have been particularly conducive to the strengthening of social ties and community boundaries, especially when it came to coping with a situation of scarcity.

In Erfurt, the designated enemies were the 'foreign' merchants (here from Nuremberg, in Gotha it was a soldier from Hesse), the so-called 'grain Jews', and the mayor, who was seen as an insider agent of the first two groups. In fact, there were two categories of enemy: those who were considered to have *caused* the famine, and those who were not considered to be *part of the group* and were therefore beyond the reach of community solidarity. However, the two often overlapped in the reasoning.

There was consensus on one point among those who advocated a paternalistic economic perspective: immoral market practices, such as grabbing grain and exporting it – at least 'far', which was relative –, were not only selfish acts detrimental to the common good but also directly responsible for shortages. In times of crisis, the prince would often issue explicit prohibitions in this regard.[71] However, as Dominik Collet has rightly pointed out, the centrality of grain to estate society rendered the enforcement of such edicts highly implausible. Large landowners, members of the clergy or the nobility, usually escaped these prohibitions.[72] Furthermore, the political and spatial configuration of the Holy Roman Empire created a distinctive context in which the intertwining of territorial borders meant that 'foreigners' were omnipresent, particularly as social ties and political boundaries rarely coincided exactly. Is this why the famine plot in Germany also fit in with usual antisemitic conspiracies?[73] Finally, in small territories, the prince himself was a prominent landowner, which created an ambivalent situation. While he was obliged to provide his people with affordable food, it was in his material interest to sell his grain at high prices, potentially abroad.[74]

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71 On border politics in times of crisis, see Kaiser-Kulin, Getreidepolitisches Vorsorgehandeln, 273–310 and Dominik Collet, 'Moral economy' von oben? Getreidesperren als territoriale und soziale Grenzen während der Hungerkrise 1770–1772, in: Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte 29 (2011), 45–61.

72 This is one of the crucial points made in Collet, Doppelte Katastrophe, 2019, 41–54, 98–101, 147–168.

73 On these theories and the link between trade, capitalism, and antisemitic plots, see Francesca Trivellato, The Promise and Peril of Credit. What a Forgotten Legend about Jews and Finance Tells Us About the Making of European Commercial Society, Princeton 2019; and Giacomo Todeschini, La ricchezza degli ebrei. Merci e denaro nella riflessione ebraica e nella definizione cristiana dell'usura alla fine del Medioevo, Spoleto 1989, who shows the construction of a concept of usury as the antithesis of charity and as the hallmark of Jews.

74 In Erfurt in 1771, the agents of the *Kammer* were put under pressure to sell the lord's grain quickly and *quanti plurimi* (at the highest price). LASAW, A 44, Nr. 274, for instance p. 48. There was therefore considerable debate as to where the prince's grain had gone. From the different and contradictory versions and testimonies, it seems that a large part of it was sold to neighbouring territories, such as Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, and to more distant ones, such as Eichstätt and Nuremberg. LASAW, A 37b I, II, XIII, Nr. 21, fol. 48–49, 88, 113b–114.

5.1. Malicious bakers or irresponsible mayor?

Mayor Hadelich repeatedly blamed the riot on the "the unmitigated malice of some bakers" (*die ungezeumte Bosheit einiger Becker*), who threatened to cease production if the price of bread was not raised, and engaged in a series of deceptive practices, such as using "bran instead of flour, put[ting] the wretched little bread in the shops and [selling] it as expensive as other bread". They "carried some of the bread in the granaries, left the baker's shops empty, further enraged the plebeians with their ungodly speeches, and made a fuss for no reason, at the wrong time, *as if there were no supplies in the town* [implicitly: although there were]".[75] Hadelich regarded the shortage as a mere fabrication and a consequence of an artificially created fear. This interpretation was a *topos* among advocates of free trade.[76] However, Hadelich's denial of a scarcity and his focus on stocks, to the detriment of prices and therefore the accessibility of bread, reinforced the accusations against him. The accusations against the bakers were somewhat contradicted by Provost (*Stadtschultheiß*) Strecker, who stated:

> "The mob was only embittered against Mayor Hadelich and never attacked the bakers and their open shops, but rather all of them remained untouched on the very day of the riot in front of the mayor's house, and had already been lying openly full of bread the day before."[77]

In a sense, Strecker was tacitly acknowledging the legitimacy of the rioting mob, which appears to be anything but irrational. He was not the only one: several government councillors or members of the city council pointed out that even if Hadelich had not engaged in any illicit activities, which had yet to be proven, his overt and ostentatious grain trading activities, coupled with his public commentary on free trade, were inappropriate and unwise. Raising suspicions, however unsubstantiated, was in itself a breach of the moral duty of good government. By doing so, the mayor had cast doubt on the legitimacy of all those in authority who sought to defend themselves by blaming him.

75 Ibid., fol. 37–38, Hadelich to the Churfürst of Mainz, 29 July 1771: "zum theil das Brod auf den Boden getragen, die Bäckerladen leerstehen laßen, den Pöbel mit gottlosen Reden noch mehr in die Heze gebracht, und ganz ohne Grund zur Unzeit den Lerm gemacht, als ob gar kein Vorrath in der Städt wäre, da doch, wie (14) die Beÿlage sub B. beweiset, ein reichliches Vorrath bis zur Erndte in der Stadt wircklich gewesen, wenn auch keine Meze durchzuführen gekommen wäre".

76 See also ibid., fol. 74: "Woher ist solcher [Brodmangel] entstanden, aus Mangel, oder aus Bosheit?"

77 Ibid., fol. 52–52b: "allein diese sind die Ursache nicht des nur wieder den Bürgermeister Hadelich erbitterten Pöbels, welcher niemahlen sich an denen Beckern und deren ofenen [sic] Läden vergriffen, vielmehr alle dieselbe so noch eben an den Tag, als der Tumult vor des Bürgermeisters Hadelich Hauß sich ereignet, und schon den Tag vorher voller Brod offentlich gelegen, ruhig und ohnangetastet geblieben sind."

In contrast, Riedel's various pamphlets portrayed the enemies of the people as socially, ethically, and geographically alien, and often combining all three characteristics inseparably. The typical enemy was simultaneously wealthy, foreign (or cooperating with foreigners, such as the mayor), and immoral. It is noteworthy that, unlike many others, Riedel never blamed peasants or bakers for inflated prices. Instead, his political philosophy was based on an assumed – and somewhat contrived – unity of the working classes against those who exploited poverty for personal gain and were proclaimed as both powerful and foreign, with Hadelich as the epitome of immoral enrichment.

In the first published text, the *Zinngießer*, written some six weeks prior to the riot,[78] Riedel named the Nuremberg merchants as the primary enemies: the redefinition of the community began, rather banally, with the exclusion of 'foreigners'.[79] But in fragmented early modern Germany, defining who was a 'foreigner' and who was not was anything but straightforward. Three distinct issues were at play:

1. The entangled territorial situation outlined earlier rendered the political border a pervasive reality, with the proliferation of exclaves and enclaves. The political territory was rarely in one piece.
2. Consequently, the political border did not correspond to the social or economic borders that people experienced. Social, matrimonial, and family ties, property, residence, and economic exchange operated according to their own logic and spaces. But it was the scale of political and economic regulation.
3. As a result, there appears to be a clear distinction between those who were considered near and those who were considered far foreigners. However, the criteria for making this distinction were vague and informal, and therefore open to debate.

Was Mainz 'foreign' to Erfurt? From a political-jurisdictional perspective, it was not. But in the experience of ordinary people, the distant lord might have been perceived as more 'foreign' than the neighbouring Schwarzburg territory. In the sense of *fremdherrisch* (having another lord), the neighbouring village was foreign, yet often linked by trade and mutual knowledge.

By contrast, the Nurembergers served as a convenient scapegoat. According to Riedel, they had come to "take the bread out of the mouths" of the people of Erfurt,

78 Ibid., fol. 184.

79 On foreignness as a complex of rights, work, social perception, the fragility of status and attachment, see Cerutti, Étrangers, 2012.

using a common rhetoric that appeared frequently in the mandates, edicts, and ordinances of the authorities.[80] He concluded his leaflet as follows:

> "By the way, I wish the people of Nuremberg all the best, and I hope that they will find as much grain as the whole of Nuremberg, with all of its leprosariums (*Siechkobeln*), needs, everywhere but here. Live and let live is also my motto. But for this very reason we must first see to it that we can live; then we will gladly let the people of Nuremberg live as well. Our abundance is at their service; but if we ourselves are in need, we cannot possibly be so magnanimous as to remedy the need of others at the expense of our own stomachs. I wish these foreigners who want to take away our bread from our mouths a happy journey. But to you, my dear compatriots, farewell!"[81]

The text plays on regional clichés, and the whole piece is based on a comical and absurd proposition: that the people of Nuremberg should give away as much gingerbread as they buy bread. By addressing the crowd as "dear compatriots and fellow citizens", Riedel assumes a form of community unity that would be threatened by outside traders. The Nurembergers are portrayed here as a predatory threat, and any support for them is regarded as a form of betrayal of the group. The line of opposition in Riedel's texts is therefore inextricably social and spatial. His defence of fundamental rights is based on the defence of the poor against the rich and of the local community against outsiders. It is by no means universal, not to mention women, who seem to have been important protagonists in the uprising, but who, conversely, are largely absent from Riedel's texts, other than as comic figures of incompetence.[82] The contrast between the vulnerable insider and the predatory outsider is particularly evident in his *Adam Riese*:

> "(I) confess that I am horrified by the fact that, on the one hand, my good compatriots, fellow human beings and fellow citizens are starving, while, on the other, the children of St Sebald from Nuremberg are filling their sacks of grain in our Erfurtian Egypt."[83]

But one specific question remained unanswered: how far should community preference apply? Where did 'foreign' begin?[84] Furthermore, authorities and subjects often

80 See for instance Erfurter Stadtarchiv (ES), Städtische Akten (SA), 1–1/16g/1, 8 July 1771. Three days before the riot, "many foreign tradesmen and other idlers, driven out of Franconia, Swabia, and other countries by hunger, have crept into the [city?] through the negligence of the gatekeepers and *snatched the bread from the mouths of the local oppressed poor*".

81 [Riedel], Zinngiesser, 1771, 15.

82 See above, note 54.

83 [Riedel], Adam Riese, 1771, 23.

84 In ibid., Riedel seems to limit the legitimate area to the Thuringian Forest and neighbouring areas: "Denn ich bemerke vorläufig, daß wir nicht nur auf Vorrath für uns zu denken haben, sondern auch

had different conceptions of 'foreign': what was considered 'foreign' when "seeing like a state"[85] could be considered 'neighbour' by the inhabitants.[86]

His advocacy of fundamental rights was in a sense far less universalist than that of Hadelich, who championed free trade on the grounds that every Christian was obliged to help his neighbour. A ban on exports would be an act of selfishness, tantamount to depriving others. If prices were to rise, it would be "just punishment for your harshness and lack of consideration for your Christian neighbour, who also wants to live and was not brought into the world so that you might enrich yourself by harming others. Live and let live, and you'll all have enough to live on".[87] Scarcity thus raised the complex question of internal and external 'outsiders', of 'immanent' and 'distant others,'[88] and of the limits of collective solidarity.

5.3. "Corn Jews"

For all their disagreements, there was one point on which both Riedel and Hadelich agreed: universality was Christian, and it was basically all the Jews' fault. For Hadelich, the rise in grain prices was due not to a shortage of supply but to a shortage of money in circulation – and this shortage was the fault of the Jews.[89]

For Riedel, the metaphor of the 'corn Jew' mobilized another figure of predation, drawing on the antisemitic imaginary of greed and usury, and isolating the disruptive element of the collective body to be eradicated. It was indeed a metaphor: everyone, including Riedel, agreed that the 'corn Jew' was most often a Christian.

für die Waldbauern im Gothaischen und Schwarzburgischen, die uns Holz, Kohlen, Pech, Eisen und andere Nothwendigkeiten des Lebens herbeybringen. Die Hrn. Nürnberger geben uns nichts, als Kinkerlitßgen, die wir alle entbehren können; und gleichwol kommen sie, und nehmen dem armen Waldmanne das Brod vor dem Maule hinweg. Gesetzt aber auch, wir hätten noch zur Noth genug zu essen für uns und für den ganzen Thüringer Wald, so wird doch dadurch, wenn wir unser Korn dreÿßig Meilen weit hinwegsenden, zu einer Zeit, wo überall Mangel ist, dasselbe auf einen unerhörten Preiß getrieben."

85 James C. Scott, Seeing like a state, How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed, New Haven 1998.

86 See for instance StAW, Eisenacher Archiv, Polizeisachen, 12: The subjects of the outlying bailiwick of Großenrudstedt (Saxony-Weimar) were selling their grain to "poor forest dwellers" outside the borders of the territory and were repeatedly called to order in 1698. They claimed to be acting out of "Christian compassion for the needy poor forest dwellers in the neighbourhood".

87 "das ist die gerechte Strafe deiner Härte und Unbesonnenheit gegen deinen Mitchristen, der auch leben will, und nicht deswegen in die Welt gesetzt ist, daß du dich mit des andern Schaden bereichern sollst. Lebe und laß leben, so habt ihr alle Nahrung", [Hadelich], Erfurtisches Intelligenz-Blatt, 23 March 1771, 94.

88 Isin, Being political, 2002, 4.

89 "Der Geldmangel ist die allgemeine Plage unserer Gegenden. Vielleicht sind unsere zu guten Geldsorten, und die heimlichen und öffentlichen Juden, die ihnen nachtrachten, daran schuld", [Hadelich], Erfurtisches Intelligenz-Blatt, 16 March 1771, 87.

He pointed out – as did all the dictionaries – that a 'corn Jew' was not necessarily a 'Jew' in the literal sense, but that the term referred more to a market attitude. He also pointed out that there were good 'corn Jews' who were useful intermediaries, helping distribute stocks in times of shortage – for Riedel had read his political economy.[90] The lexical and iconographic dimensions of the figure of the 'corn Jew' are now relatively well known, as mentioned above.[91] But Riedel's pamphlets give us some insight into the use of the word in context, as an insult with an unmistakably antisemitic and disqualifying character. Its rhetorical and metaphorical use was not without practical consequences, for words shape the way we see and therefore act upon reality. The above-mentioned antisemitic riot in Gotha, two days after the Erfurt riot, shows how quickly the lexical repertoire could be turned into a contentious one and escalate into collective action.

Riedel used it here mainly as a disqualifying category, to designate both the supporters of free trade and the profiteers of the crisis. When he wrote to Mainz in defence of the mayor's pamphlet against him, he said that he was being targeted by "the party of the corn Jews"[92]; he went on to claim that: "Now it is notorious that no one has been offended by [the pewterer (*Zinngießer*)], but only the respective high and low corn Jews", and mentioned their "usury, in which no Ephraim prevails over them".[93] The predatory 'corn Jew' was a figure of the wealthy and the greedy, who showed no concern for the weak and the poor:

> "My adversary ought to prove that the state would be happy if all the money in the country went into the hands of the corn Jews and sack bearers, and the common man starved to death."[94]

The antisemitism here is 'merely' linguistic, but it is also rooted in what is probably a very well-known iconography: the 'corn Jew' medals seem to have been produced in 1694 in Gotha by Christian Wehrmut, and in 1772 in (Gotha-)Altenburg

90 "Ein Kornjude ist also ein Mensch beschnittener oder unbeschnittener Art, der mit Korn und andern nothwendigen Lebensmitteln Wucher treibt – nicht eben allemal unerlaubten; denn es ist noch eine Frage, ob die Kornjüderey überhaupt etwas schädliches sey?", Friedrich Just Riedel, Sämmtliche Schriften, Vienna, Zweither Theil, 1787, Vorlesungen, 302. He is also referring to Johann A. Philippi, Der vertheidigte Kornjude, Berlin 1765.

91 Gailus, Erfindung, 2001; Jütte, Bild, 2013; Collet, Katastrophe, 2019, 260–264.

92 LASAW, A 37b I, II XIII Nr. 21: "Unterdeßen, damit mir die Parteÿ der Kornjuden den Sieg nicht gar zu wohlfeil machen möge", fol. 4b.

93 "Nun ist es notorisch, daß durch [den Zinngießer O.] niemand beleidigt worden, als einig und allein die *respective* hohe und niedrige Kornjuden" (ibid., fol. 9) dessen "Wucher, worinnen ihnen kein Ephraim vorgeht", ibid., fol. 10.

94 "Der Gegner sollte beweisen, daß der Staat glücklich werde, wenn alles Geld des Landes in die Hände der Kornjuden und Sackträger käme, und der gemeine Mann verhungerte", LASAW, A 37b I, II XIII Nr. 21, fol. 14.

by Johann Christian Reich, in the Thuringian neighbourhood of Erfurt.[95] The figure of the Jew – or the Christian acting *like a Jew* – played on the idea of being outside the social body.[96] The community was defined by an ethics that was inconceivable outside Christian moral boundaries – and Riedel, although accused of being an atheist, was the son of a Lutheran pastor in a village near Erfurt, Vieselbach.

The insult was effective, despite being directed at a powerful, honourable, and eminent man. This can be attributed, at least in part, to Riedel's symbolic capital, which was significantly greater than Hadelich's, due to his reputation in the German Republic of Letters, but also to the fact that it named the breach in the moral economy that fuelled popular vindictiveness against the mayor. The mayor was a 'Jew', he had behaved as such, and thus had effectively alienated himself from the urban community he was supposed to represent. His cooperation with the Nurembergers bordered on an act of treason.

6. Conclusion: community, solidarity, exclusion

Although the prince (*Landesherr*), the clergy, and the patricians were the largest landowners and therefore the worst corn-grabbers, they were never called to account in the protest. Only Hadelich, in his defence, accused them of not working for the common good by exporting their harvests.[97]

The Erfurt episode is at once very banal – a riot of the sort that pre-modern Europe was constantly witnessing – and quite unique in terms of the philosophical-pamphleteering controversy with which the riot was associated. A plebeian uprising, supported by a university professor, could overturn the usual balance of power of legitimacy: here it was the mayor who, instead of representing the city,

95 Hubert Emmerig, Die Kornjudenmedaillen in der Sammlung Brettauer, in: Geldgeschichtliche Nachrichten 48 (2013), 258–269, especially 262 and 266.

96 No Jews were allowed to live in Erfurt from the mid-fourteenth century, and this was more or less the case in all the Ernestine duchies of Saxony and Thuringia. However, many Jews lived on the estates of the imperial knights and traded with the inhabitants of the Ernestine duchies. Hans-Werner Hahn/Marko Kreutzmann (eds.), Jüdische Geschichte in Thüringen. Strukturen und Entwicklungen vom Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert, Cologne 2022, especially the contribution of Johannes Mötsch, Juden in Thüringen in der frühen Neuzeit, 81–98.

97 "Warum hat man denn den Klöstern und andern hiesigen Bürgern erlaubt, ihr eigenthümliches und nicht aus fremden Landen hereingebrachtes, sondern größtentheils hier selbst erbauetes Getreide, nach Nürnberg zu verhandeln ? Wie viel ist allein aus dem K.— Kloster dahin verkauft worden? War es unrecht, warum hat denn selbst die Churfürstlich. Cammer nur erst ganz neuerlich Getreide an die sogenannten Nürnberger oder nach Eichstedt, vor 40. Thlr. wie öffentlich vorgegeben wird, verkauft?", [Hadelich], Gedanken über den letzten Tumult, 1771, 12, and Die wahren Ursachen des zu Erfurth Entstandenen Tumults, in einem Sendschreiben an den Herrn Regierungsrath Genau zu Erfurth aus dem Lauchstädter Bade, dargestellet von C.L. Hadelich, s.l., 1771.

became the outsider par excellence – acting like a Jew and working on behalf of foreign interests. Riedel's intervention elevated the riot to a kind of cause célèbre, providing the impetus for a powerful indictment of estate society and material wealth as the basis for honour. In response to Hadelich's accusations of debt,[98] he wrote to Mayence to defend his honour:

> "If I had known the art of having rich parents, or of inheriting otherwise, of accepting gifts when they were offered to me, of recommending professors for money and good words […], without studying books, or even without studying at all, of hardening my heart against those who ask for help, and whatever else these arts may be, or if I had acquired a granary a few years ago, and had made a profit out of the sweat of the peasants and the blood of the bourgeois, then I would undoubtedly be at least as rich as my opponent, whoever he may be."[99]

Shortly afterwards, in late 1771 or early 1772, Riedel left Erfurt for the Academy of Arts in Vienna, where he had obtained a position, but without repaying his debt to the university. What should have been the high point of his career turned into a disaster: he was hounded by rumours of atheism spread by an Augustinian theologian at the University of Erfurt, Jordan Simon, who had fallen victim to his cabals in 1770 and had to go into exile in Vienna.[100] Simon had the ear of Maria Theresia's confessor, and Riedel was soon dismissed. Protected by the Ritter von Gluck and by Kaunitz who appointed him librarian after Maria Theresia's death, he died in a hospital in 1785 at the age of 43, mad, forgotten, despised, and penniless.[101] Although the eighteenth century saw a growing emphasis on merit in the arts and letters, Riedel's sole cultural capital was insufficient to alter the existing balance of power, which was shaped by the influence of powerful social and material interests.

98 On his debts, see LASAW, A37b, I, II, XVI, Nr 77: Riedel owed the university treasury 750 Reichsthalers.

99 LASAW, A 37b I, II XIII Nr. 21, fol. 23b: "Hätte ich die Kunst verstanden, reiche Aeltern zu haben, oder sonst zu erben, Geschencke und Erquickungen anzunehmen, da sie mir angeboten wurden, für Geld und gute Worte Profeßoren zu empfehlen, (…) ohne bücher zu studiren, oder lieber gar nicht zu studiren, das herz zu verhärten, gegen solche, die um Hilfe bitten, und wie die künste weiter heißen, oder hätte ich nur vor einigen Jahren einen Kornboden gelegt, und mit dem Schweiße der Landleute bis zum Blute der Bürger gewuchert; so wäre ich ohne Zweifel wenigstens aber so reich, als mein Gegner etwa seÿn mag, er seÿ auch wer er wolle."

100 Kleineidam, Universitas, 1985, 186–203.

101 Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, 1.2.3.2.A2.566/1785, Verlassenschaftsabhandlung Friedrich Justus Riedel. Konstantin von Wurzbach, Biographisches Lexikon des Kaisertums Österreichs, vol. 26, Vienna 1874, 86–91; Eckart Feldmeier, Nachwort, in: Friedrich Just Riedel, Briefe über das Publikum, ed. by Eckart Feldmeier, Vienna 1973, 142–165.