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**Shades of Cato and Brutus:
Classical References in the *Révolutions de Paris* and the Rise of Republicanism
June-October 1791**

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Submitted 27 April 2012

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Introduction

“The French Revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately in the guise of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire”

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*¹

“We, we want the republic, but not in the manner of the Greeks, the Romans, the Batavians, the English, the Swiss, etc. [...] The Romans never recognized any declaration of rights but the right of the strongest [*droit du plus fort*]”

Issue 168 of the *Révolutions de Paris*, cited by Philippe Bordes²

The most widely known commentary on the relationship between the French Revolution and Antiquity is without a doubt the famous quote by Karl Marx, according to which the Revolution dressed itself in Roman garb. From a certain point of view, this observation is incontestable: The Revolution sprang forth at the height of the neoclassical movement in art and architecture; revolutionaries frequently invoked Antiquity in their speeches, journals, petitions; sometimes they exchanged their given name for one from Antiquity, as in the case of Gracchus Babeuf or Anacharsis Cloots. Upon the establishment of the Republic, a bust of Brutus (probably the founder of the Republic and not the tyrannicide) was even placed in the meeting-hall of the newly elected National Convention.

For Marx, following the early 19th century theorist Benjamin Constant and of certain contemporaries of the Revolution who were more or less hostile to it, such as the historians Volney and Levesque or the émigré author Chateaubriand, this taste for Antiquity reveals a desire

¹ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Part 1, <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>>.

² Philippe Bordes, *La mort de Brutus de Pierre-Narcisse Guérin*, (Vizille: Musée de la Révolution française, 1996), pp. 60, 87 (n. 75). All translations from French are mine unless otherwise specified.

to imitate it. From the time of these early commentaries on, few historians have closely examined this analysis. Yet one can observe sentiments rejecting classicism among French revolutionaries as well. Even as they “draped” themselves in Antique garb, many revolutionaries doubted that Antiquity could be considered a model of perfection, as art historian Philippe Bordes’ citation of the patriot³ journal the *Révolutions de Paris* illustrates.

I first read this quote, which forms part of this introduction’s epigraph, in Bordes’ history of the revolutionary painting competition of 1793, and as I have since learned, it is drawn from a far more elaborate argument. In this argument, the journal explains that Revolutionary France had surpassed and should continue to surpass all existing models, including those of Ancient Greece and Rome, through its adherence to the philosophy of natural rights enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. I was immediately struck by the contrast between this rejection of the model of Antiquity by a revolutionary journal and Marx’s assertion that the imitation of Antiquity was fundamental to the Revolution.

The two opposing visions of the Revolution that these quotes projected made me wonder which of these Revolutions, the classicizing Revolution or the Revolution that rejected Antiquity as a model most closely resembled the reality of the Revolution, or whether the two could coexist. Then, if the two visions of the Revolution could coexist, if the Revolution could have been at once immersed in a classicizing culture and potentially reject Antiquity as a model to

³ I use the term “patriot” instead of the term “radical,” employed by many Anglophone historians, like Jack Censer, author of a study on what he terms the “radical” press from 1789 to 1791, advisedly. “Patriot” (or “*patriote*”) is the term by which the partisans of the Declaration of Rights and of popular sovereignty designated themselves, in opposition to “aristocrats” (not to be confused with the “nobility,” which designates those belonging to a particular caste rather than a political tendency) or “counterrevolutionaries.” It is important not to stray too far from the terms of the period, especially in examining the ideas and mentalities of revolutionary actors, in order not to lose sight of the mental universe in which they operated. Moreover, imposing a term such as “radical,” a designation which was applied to Englishmen with similar ideas in this period, seems to indicate a desire to fit the concepts, events, and actors of the French Revolution into a foreign mold. Like Robert Darnton’s use of the term “Grub Street,” also cited by Censer, to designate the culture of the clandestine press of the last years of the Ancien Régime, this kind of choice imposes an Anglo-centric point of view without cause. It should go without saying that the choice of terminology does not imply a lack of critical analysis in the use of any terms appearing in this study. Jack Richard Censer, *Prelude to Power: The Parisian Radical Press, 1789-1791*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

imitate, what did it mean for revolutionaries to reference Antiquity? This thesis is an attempt to begin to answer these questions and others that the juxtaposition between these two quotes first raised for me.

Since the quote that first made me want to investigate the nature of the reference to Antiquity during the French Revolution comes from the journal the *Révolutions de Paris*, it seemed logical to begin my inquiry by analyzing the classical allusions from that journal. This thesis is not concerned with artistic representations of Antiquity, nor of classicizing cultural trends more generally, though both are fundamental to the broader understanding of the relationship between the Revolution and Antiquity. Rather, I focus on textual analysis. One reason for this choice, and not the least important, is simply that this line of inquiry has been explored less thoroughly than that of neoclassical art or classicizing nomenclature. On a more fundamental level, textual analysis allows for the study not only of the use of classical references itself, but also of how revolutionaries themselves understood this phenomenon, for they occasionally commented on it themselves. Only textual sources can allow us to see what the revolutionaries themselves believed they were accomplishing by invoking Antiquity.

The citation from the *Révolutions de Paris* by which this thesis begins comes from the first issue of the journal to be published after the declaration of the first French Republic, which is to say the issue covering the week of 22-29 September 1792. As such, it marks not only a new beginning, but also the end point of the processes that had brought about the Republic. This thesis backtracks slightly more than one year from that point, in order to examine the references to Antiquity that this journal made during the events following the king's flight in the summer of 1791, here termed the Varennes Crisis, the moment to which historians like Timothy Tackett and

Raymonde Monnier date the fatal de-legitimization of the monarchy and the development and spread of the republican movement.⁴

While the journal had not yet arrived at the kind of clear articulation of what the French Revolution could and could not learn from Antiquity that can be found in the later article, it is already possible to recognize that the journal's classical references were not made in a spirit of imitation during this period. Rather, they contributed to the advancement of the process of de-legitimizing the constitutional monarchy and the spread of republicanism in public opinion, by allowing the journal to ground otherwise unsettlingly new ideas in a shared classical culture, the meanings of which enjoyed a broad consensus.

This thesis fits into a number of different historiographies. First, of course, it adds its analyses to those of the small number of historians of the French Revolution or of Antiquity who have investigated the relationship between the two. Among these studies, the most important in French or English are the American historian Harold T. Parker's monograph, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolution*, which has understandably aged somewhat since its publication in 1937; the book drawn from Jacques Bouineau's doctoral thesis, published in 1982, *Les Toges du Pouvoir, ou la Révolution de droit antique: 1789-1799*, the principal merit of which is to have undertaken a systematic analysis of classical references in revolutionary discourse by organizing all those recorded in the thirty thousand pages of the *Moniteur universel* into statistical tables; finally the synthesis written for the bicentennial of the Revolution in 1989 for a

⁴ Despite their agreement on this point, it should be noted that the two historians take very different approaches, as R. Monnier herself notes. T. Tackett's analysis privileges what he sees as the foreshadowing of the repression of 1793-94 commonly termed the "Terror" – a term both loaded and imprecise which should be used with circumspection – even as it uncovers how for the first time the idea of abolishing the monarchy began to enjoy wide popular support following the king's flight. R. Monnier's study focuses on the burgeoning republican movement and its philosophical roots. Raymonde Monnier, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005). (See p. 27 for Monnier's discussion of the differences between her approach and that of T. Tackett.) Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

popular audience, *La Révolution française et l'antiquité*, by Claude Mossé, historian of Ancient Greece.⁵

In addition to these books a number of articles and book chapters have been written, mostly in the past twenty to thirty years, tackling different aspects of the relationship between the Revolution and Antiquity.⁶ Among these François Hartog and Pierre Vidal-Nacquet and Nicole Loraux's essays are particularly noteworthy for having interrogated this relationship within the framework of historical memory. Hartog and Vidal-Nacquet's work is especially interesting in that it situates the recent historiography of the relationship between the French Revolution and Antiquity, and even of the French Revolution in general, within the context of older commentaries on this phenomenon that go back to the Revolution itself.⁷

It is important to understand the principal evolution of these commentaries, though it is impossible to present all their complications in detail, since they are at the origin of the historiography of the relationship between the Revolution and Antiquity. Perhaps even more importantly, the two rival schools, the "Marxists" and the "Revisionists," can trace their origins back to these commentaries as well. Since the former dominated the historiography for the better

⁵ Harold T. Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A Study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1937); Jacques Bouineau, *Les Toges du Pouvoir ou la Révolution de droit antique, 1789-1799*, (Toulouse: Association des Publications de l'Université de Toulouse-le Mirail & Éditions Eché, 1986); Claude Mossé, *L'Antiquité dans la Révolution française*, (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1989).

⁶ J. Bouineau, "Caton révolutionnaire: de l'imaginaire social comme genèse de la construction juridique," in *Mélanges G. Boulvert*, (Nice: 1987); M.-T. Bouyssi, "L'Antiquité ténaréenne de Barère" in *Dix-huitième siècle*, 27 "L'Antiquité" (1995), pp. 259-68; M. Rosso, "Les réminiscences spartiates dans les discours et la politique de Robespierre de 1789 à Thermidor," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*. 349 | July-September 2007, pp. 51-77.

⁷ François Hartog, *Anciens, modernes, sauvages*, (Paris: Galaade Éditions, 2005), especially ch. 2, "La dernière Querelle : Révolution et illusion," pp. 55-95, and *Régimes d'historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps*, (Éditions du Seuil, 2003); Pierre Vidal-Nacquet and Nicole Loraux, "La formation de l'Athènes bourgeoise: essai d'historiographie 1750-1850" and Pierre Vidal-Nacquet, "La Place de la Grèce dans l'imaginaire des hommes de la Révolution" in Pierre Vidal-Nacquet, *La Démocratie grecque vue d'ailleurs, Essais d'historiographie ancienne et moderne*, (Flammarion, 1990).

part of the last century, and the latter continues to dominate in some cases, it is all the more crucial to understand these foundational texts.

At the time of the Revolution, or more precisely after 9 Thermidor, which for many historians marks the end of the forward progression of the Revolution, writers hostile to the Revolution's democratic ideals such as Chateaubriand, Levesque and Volney condemned the preceding period for what they described as the revolutionaries' desire to imitate Antiquity. They decried the democratic "anarchy" characteristic of the period of revolutionary government which had just been brought to an end, which resulted, they affirmed, from this imitation of Antiquity. These authors ridiculed the revolutionaries for their alleged failure to understand that the democracy of "ancient republics" had depended upon slavery, that the "citizens" of Athens, Sparta or Rome corresponded more closely to the former aristocrats than to the French people. Only the revolutionaries' own ignorance could have persuaded them that full citizenship could apply to all classes of society. Finally, they concluded that democracy and its foundations in natural rights philosophy were neither possible nor desirable in the contemporary world.

At the beginning of the Bourbon Restoration, first in 1814 and then in 1819, the theorist Benjamin Constant reprised certain aspects of this Thermidorian critique of the revolutionary reference to Antiquity, modifying it to suit his purposes. Where Volney in particular had rejected any notion of rights, which he identified exclusively with the philosophy of natural rights as expressed in the Declarations of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789 and 1793, Constant adopted another Thermidorian idea, that of the rights of man "in society."

During the Revolution, patriots, or partisans of natural rights, believed that rights were individual and collective, personal and political, innate to every human being and inalienable. Not only did they see no contradiction between individual and collective rights or civil and political rights, they believed you could not have one without the other. Drawing on John Locke's

version of social contract theory, they believed that the rights “of man” had already belonged to humanity in the state of nature, but persisted in the state of society, where they became inextricably linked with the rights “of the citizen” which guaranteed them.

When the Thermidorian Convention drafted the Constitution of the Year III which formed the Directory, it rejected this philosophy of natural rights in favor of the “rights of man in society.” As the name implies, these “rights” are neither innate nor inalienable: they are whatever a given society decides. The Thermidorian Convention decided, when declaring the rights of man in society, that there would be a separation between political and civil rights and that the first would no longer be attached to each individual by virtue of his humanity, but rather to wealth.⁸

This is the separation that Constant adopts. For him political rights constitute the “liberty of the Ancients,” civil rights the “liberty of the Moderns.” He even went further, positing the incompatibility between these two kinds of liberty. According to Constant, with the liberty of the Ancients the individual sacrifices his civil rights to the collectivity in exchange for his right to political participation, while with the liberty of the Moderns, the collectivity sacrifices its political rights to a propertied élite on the condition that this élite guarantee the rights of the individual. Drawing on Volney and Levesque’s thesis that the patriots of the Revolution did not understand that democracy is only possibly alongside slavery, he agreed that political participation should remain the prerogative of a propertied élite.

However, Constant does not deny that the political participation of all citizens had been admirable in Antiquity. This is why he calls this the “liberty” of the Ancients. He even appears nostalgic for its attractions, but remains convinced that the only rights that can apply to everyone, since those who would have been slaves in Antiquity had joined the ranks of citizens, are civil

⁸ See Florence Gauthier, *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en Révolution, 1789-1795-1802*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992).

rights, or the “liberty of the Moderns.” For Constant the revolutionaries’ error was one of anachronism. They chose to imitate the Ancients instead of striving to be modern, and the inevitable result was anarchy.

When Marx sought to understand the relationship between the French Revolution and Antiquity a generation later, Constant’s separation between the “liberty of the Ancients” and the “liberty of the Moderns” had enjoyed such great success that the revolutionary theory of natural rights had been utterly forgotten. Thus, without sharing Constant’s agenda, Marx nevertheless reprised his dichotomy, which he then also projected back onto the Revolution. At the same time, it did not escape him that if one had to fit the Declaration of Rights into this dichotomy, the guarantee of the rights of the individual inscribed there would fit more closely with the “liberty of the Moderns” than with the “liberty of the Ancients.” This observation, when taken together with his more famous one that the bourgeoisie as a class had emerged as the “victor” of the Revolution, led him to conclude that the revolutionaries had been, *volens nolens*, the objective allies of “liberals” like Constant. This conclusion would be the basis of the theory adopted by Marxist historians in the 20th century of the French Revolution as a “bourgeois revolution.”

In the meanwhile, as noted above, Marx himself was not unaware of the prevalence of the reference to Antiquity during the Revolution. In order to explain it, he too reprised the thesis that revolutionaries thoughtlessly attempted to imitate Antiquity without understanding their own historical moment. In short, the revolutionaries had tried to be Ancients, failing to understand that they could only be Moderns. Thus, Marx, like Constant, accepted the inevitability of the advent of the liberal bourgeois order, even as he rejected his predecessor’s belief in its desirability and confidence in its durability. Despite all their differences, “revisionist” and “Marxist” historians continue to share, in its broad outlines, this idea of the bourgeois revolution, which ultimately

rests on the thesis that the revolutionaries misunderstood both their own historical moment and the ancient models they were attempting to emulate.

In the last twenty-five years or so certain historians of natural rights or republicanism like Florence Gauthier, Marc Belissa, Yannick Bosc and Raymonde Monnier, along with historians of revolutionary mentalities like Timothy Tackett or Sophie Wahnich, have begun to question the notion of the bourgeois revolution, whether it be the “good” revolution of the revisionists or the inevitable historical phase of the Marxists.⁹ For this historiographical current, if one wants to understand the French Revolution, it is indispensable to take revolutionary discourse and the ideas behind it seriously. In doing so, these historians have begun to discover the multiplicity of revolutionary thought, the various facets of which were continually in dialogue with each other. At its heart they have discovered a synthesis between the traditions of classical republicanism and natural rights and the lived experience of the Revolution.

This thesis fits above all into this historiography. At the critical juncture of the Varennes Crisis, the king’s flight put the entire edifice of the constitutional monarchy into question. A prominent patriot journal like the *Révolutions de Paris* could ill afford, in that moment, to thoughtlessly invoke Antiquity as a simple model to be imitated. Rather, the journal seized the opportunity to use its powers of persuasion in favor of a republican alternative to the corrupted constitution of 1791. In this context, the reference to Antiquity is most often used to legitimize its

⁹ See Florence Gauthier, *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en Révolution, 1789-1795-1802*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1992); Marc Belissa, *Fraternité universelle et intérêt national (1713-1795), Les cosmopolitiques du droit des gens*, (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1998); Yannick Bosc, “1789-1793-1795 : Déclaration, Constitution et terreur de la Déclaration,” in Serge Bianchi and Philippe Bourdin, eds., *Révoltes et révolutions de 1773 à 1802, Europe, Russie, Amériques*, (Nantes: Éditions du temps, 2004), p. 192-208; Marc Belissa, Yannick Bosc, and Florence Gauthier, eds., *Républicanismes et droit naturel. Des humanistes au Révolutions des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*, (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2009); Raymonde Monnier, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005); Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Sophie Wahnich, *La longue patience du peuple, 1792*, (Paris: Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2008).

contributors' own ideas, which were well anchored not only in contemporary politics but also in the theories of natural rights and republicanism developed over the course of centuries.

Since the concept of the republic first emerged in Antiquity, it is no surprise that classical references would be used to legitimize republicanism. The connection between references to Antiquity and natural rights, on the other hand, is indirect. Yet this does not make the latter any less important to understanding the former. The *Révolutions de Paris* used classical references to lend weight to their attacks on the monarchy or their arguments in favor of republicanism. However, the journal's primary reason for suggesting that the time had come to replace the monarchy with a republic was always that the king and the constitution of 1791 flouted the people's natural rights and that a republic would better protect them. The revolutionary synthesis of ideas had created a new, hybrid entity and called it by the old name of republic. Certain attributes of this republic, like its necessary civic virtue, went back to Antiquity, allowing its partisans to claim this legitimizing filiation, but its *raison d'être* was natural rights.

In order to give the reader an idea of the contours of the phenomenon of the journalistic reference to Antiquity during the Varennes Crisis studied here, this thesis will begin by contextualizing the *Révolutions de Paris* and the role of the press and of this journal in particular in the antimonarchical and republican movement that developed following the king's flight. The first chapter will then continue with a discussion of methodology and a statistical analysis of all the classical references made by the *Révolutions de Paris* in the course of the summer of 1791. This analysis will create an overview of the data and give the reader as complete an idea as possible of the kinds of references being made and their relative frequency.

The following two chapters will present a qualitative and contextualized analysis of these references. Classical references in the *Révolutions de Paris* during the Varennes Crisis fall into two principal categories: broadly, those used against the monarchy and those used in favor of

republicanism. Chapter two will then first examine how this journal used references to Antiquity to de-legitimize the constitutional monarchy, or rather to put its self-inflicted loss of legitimacy on display. Chapter three will follow with the analysis of the use of classical references to legitimize republicanism, both as a regime without a king and as the kind of “free state” theorized by classical republican thought and adapted by patriots in light of natural rights philosophy and the events of the Revolution.

Finally, this thesis will conclude by returning to the article from the issue of the *Révolutions de Paris* announcing the advent of the Republic, cited at the beginning of this introduction, in order to reflect, in light of the analyses made in the body of this thesis, on the implications of classical references for the study of political ideas and discourse during the French Revolution more generally.

Chapter One

I. The Journal the *Révolutions de Paris* and its Contributors

This thesis focuses on classical references made in one of the most influential and long-published patriot journals, Prudhomme's *Révolutions de Paris*, at a decisive moment of the French Revolution, the summer of 1791, from the king's flight to the end of the National Constituent Assembly. More precisely, this thesis will look at issues 100-118 (4 June-15 October 1791), which is to say from two issues before the king's flight (21 June 1791) to two issues after the end of the Constituent Assembly (the end of September 1791), in order to better situate the period under examination. As the historians Timothy Tackett and Raymonde Monnier, among others, have demonstrated, though the fall of the monarchy would ultimately have to wait another year, its fall in the eyes of public opinion and the rise of republicanism can be dated to this period. I propose to analyze the role of references to Greco-Roman Antiquity in this process. Though historians disagree about the extent of its influence, the press undeniably played an important role in shaping as well as reflecting public opinion. Therefore, before plunging into the vicissitudes of this turbulent period, it is essential to take a closer look at our principal primary source, the *Révolutions de Paris* and the role it played in a larger press culture.

The *Révolutions de Paris* was founded by the bookseller and pamphleteer Prudhomme in the summer of 1789, one of many new titles that appeared with the Revolution and its newfound freedom of the press. Like so many other rights, this freedom of the press was conquered by the Revolution and not offered by the king. The king had called for his subjects to present their grievances when he convoked the Estates-General, but the response he received quickly outstripped his expectations. From the opening of the Estates-General, his council reminded the public of the prohibition to publish without official permission, but journalists and pamphleteers

ignored the admonition. On 20 June 1789, the Third Estate, along with a certain number of deputies of the clergy and nobility, constituted itself into the National Assembly, known as the Constituent Assembly because of its mission to provide France with a constitution. A month later, 26 August 1789, the Constituent Assembly decreed the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which consecrated freedom of the press among the most fundamental of these rights.

However, the Assembly soon came to realize what had been clear to the royalist journalist Rivarol from the first: rights would not remain the prerogative of the largely bourgeois élite from which the Assembly was drawn, but that now, “The negroes in our colonies and the domestics in our houses can, Declaration of Rights in hand, dispossess us of our inheritances.”¹ Horrified at the idea that the rights they had just declared might also apply to peasants and artisans, let alone servants and slaves, the more conservative elements of the Assembly emigrated, openly joining the counterrevolution. Among those who stayed, a large contingent worked tirelessly to “moderate” the effects of the Declaration, if not to have it rescinded altogether.

Attempts to limit freedom of the press, on the part of these “moderates” from the Assembly or of departmental or municipal governments, nevertheless remained more or less ineffectual against the onslaught of publications, at least until the last months of the Constituent Assembly (July-September 1791), a period characterized by reactionary repression and which saw several of the most prominent “patriot” journals shut down. Even then, once the Constituent Assembly’s successor, the Legislative Assembly effectively ended this period of repression by declaring a general amnesty on 14 September 1791, further attempts to curb press freedom had little effect until the fall of the monarchy 10 August 1792 and the repression of royalist journals.

¹ Rivarol, “Journal politique national,” n° 19, 1789, cited in Yannick Bosc and Sophie Wahnich, *Les voix de la Révolution, Projets pour la démocratie*, (Paris: La documentation française, 1990), pp. 25-26.

In the absence of effective repression, more than 250 new journals appeared in 1789, followed by another 400 in 1790.² Most of these publications were ephemeral, simple pamphlets or periodicals that ceased publication within a matter of weeks or months. Notwithstanding, in the average month, the Parisian could choose between 33 dailies, 12 bi- or tri-weeklies, 19 weeklies, and 14 journals whose publication was more sporadic, without forgetting the provincial journals, which had similarly multiplied during this period. At the moment of the king's flight in July 1791, the numbers were even higher: 45 dailies, 27 bi- or tri-weeklies, 31 weeklies and 17 more sporadically published journals.³

Of all these journals, the *Révolutions de Paris* is among the best suited for a study of the role of classical allusions in Varennes Crisis. As one of the first patriot journals to advocate a republic, *Révolutions de Paris* is an ideal for examining the role of these references in the spread of republicanism in particular. Moreover, since this journal was published without interruption during the summer of 1791, it allows for the analysis of any possible evolution of these references in conjunction with that of antimonarchist and republican ideas. Due to the repression of the summer of 1791, the *Révolutions de Paris* is one of the few patriot journals for which this is the case. Finally, the *Révolutions de Paris* was by all accounts a highly successful publication. Camille Desmoulins even declared in his own journal that the *Révolutions de Paris* had as many as 200,000 subscribers, though one should note that he was inclined to hyperbole.⁴ Every parameter bears witness to it, from competitors' borrowing of similar titles to references in other

² Éric Wauters, "La naissance d'un 'quatrième pouvoir'?" in Michel Biard, ed., *La Révolution française, Une histoire toujours vivante* (Tallandier: 2009), p. 110.

³ Jack Richard Censer, *Prelude to Power: The Parisian Radical Press, 1789-1791*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

⁴ Privately, Desmoulins expressed surprise at the prodigious success of his own journal, the *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, in a letter to his father dated 31 December 1789, when he had less than 3,000 subscribers. Pierre Rétat, *Les Journaux de 1789: Bibliographie critique*, (Paris: Editions du Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), 1988), p. 230.

journals to large number of copies preserved today in libraries to its long survival compared with its rivals.⁵ Its influence on public opinion was undoubtedly correspondingly important.

No single journal can, of course, encompass the entirety of patriot thought, which was always diverse. As influential as it may have been in revolutionary public space, the *Révolutions de Paris* does not, then, represent patriot thought as a whole. Moreover, the *Révolutions de Paris* is not strictly comparable to any other patriot journal, but combined the models of its rivals. Camille Desmoulins' *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, Marat's *Ami du peuple* or Brissot's *Patriote françois* were, like so many journals of every leaning at the time, vehicles for the opinions of a single author, while a competitor like the *Mercure national* had a number of contributors and was largely an informational journal, specializing in foreign affairs. The *Révolutions de Paris* adopted elements of each.

Contrary to most of the *journaux à l'opinion*, the *Révolutions de Paris* aimed to inform its readers as much as to persuade them, but unlike the *Mercure national*, it attempted to create the illusion of a single voice, never specifying its collaborators. Its editor, Louis-Marie Prudhomme, stamped each issue with his seal, which bore the motto: "Prudhomme, sole author and owner of the *Révolutions de Paris*." Historian Pierre Rétat provides two possible explanations for this choice, one relating to Prudhomme's business model, the other to the effectiveness of the journal's rhetoric. The first is quite simply that Prudhomme was seeking to keep control of the journal's profits and avoid another lawsuit like that which his first primary contributor, Tournon, brought against him over the rights to the first issue.⁶ The second is that by maintaining the illusion of a single voice, the journal's discourse could become greater than the sum of its parts.

⁵ P. Rétat, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

⁶ Tournon, granted equal rights to publish a journal under the name *Révolutions de Paris*, left Prudhomme's *Révolutions de Paris* to continue under his own banner, before briefly collaborating with Louise and François Robert at the *Mercure national* in August 1790. Raymonde Monnier, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française*, *op. cit.* p. 158.

Rétat plausibly argues that the single voice that the *Révolutions de Paris* adopted was not a personalized voice like that of Desmoulins or Brissot, but rather that, unmoored from any notion of individual authorship, it could become the voice of the Revolution itself. The journal's ability, noted by J. R. Censer, to support the claims of this impersonal, imperative voice of principle with carefully reasoned argument may explain its immense success.⁷

However it is well known through Prudhomme's own later acknowledgments, as well as mentions in other journals, letters, and in certain cases ulterior republications of certain articles, that a number of different journalists collaborated on the *Révolutions de Paris*. These included first Élisée Loustalot, until his untimely death on 19 September 1790, then Fabre d'Églantine, who, according to his biographer Louis Jacob, was with the journal only briefly at the end of 1790;⁸ Sylvain Maréchal,⁹ doubtless the most important contributor, to whom the most articles, and the anti-clerical articles in particular, can be attributed; Léger-Félicité Sonthonax¹⁰ (until 25 July 1791) and Anaxagoras Chaumette¹¹ who probably authored most of the articles on the colonies; finally, François Robert, obliged to join the editorial team after the financial failure of

⁷ Pierre Rétat, "Forme et discours d'un journal révolutionnaire: Les *Révolutions de Paris* en 1789," in Claude Labrosse, Pierre Rétat and Henri Duranton, *L'instrument périodique : La fonction de la presse au XVIII^e siècle*. (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1985), pp. 151, 173; J. R. Censer, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-25.

⁸ Louis Jacob, *Fabre d'Églantine, chef des "fripons,"* (Librairie Hachette, 1946), p. 78.

⁹ Sylvain Maréchal is the one among all the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* to whom the most articles are attributed, and he stayed with the journal from the death of Loustalot until long after the period of the Varennes Crisis. Having joined the editorial staff of the *Révolutions de Paris* in October 1790, Maréchal used the journal to pursue his anticlerical campaign as well as opining against the king and the royal family and in favor of tyrannicide. He also intervened in the debates on education and against feminist claims, contrary to his ideal of a patriarchal society of modest property owning families, each headed by a strong father figure. See Françoise Aubert, *Sylvain Maréchal, Passion et faillite d'un égalitaire*, (Pise: Goliardica, 1975), esp. pp. 9-17.

¹⁰ Sonthonax is best known for his later role in the abolition of slavery in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, modern Haiti. See Robert Louis Stein, *Léger Félicité Sonthonax: The Lost Sentinel of the Republic*, (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1985).

¹¹ Chaumette's autobiographical notes diverge from the Prudhomme's post-Thermidorian testimony, concerning the date at which Chaumette was hired as a journalist at the *Révolutions de Paris*. Nicole Bossut, a biographer of Chaumette, makes a convincing argument for Chaumette's own version, according to which he began to write for the journal in December 1790. In any case, it is clear that he was already writing for the journal during the period that concerns us here. Bossut attributes several articles from the summer of 1791 to Chaumette, including some which may have been collaborations between him and François Robert. If Bossut is correct, then he was the author, or at least the co-author of the account of the Champ de Mars massacre and the repression which followed. Nicole Bossut, *Chaumette, porte-parole des sans-culottes*, (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 1998), pp. 55-58, 63-64, 92-101, 108.

the *Mercur national*, on which he had collaborated with his wife and founder of the journal, Louise Kéralio, among others.¹²

Biographical information about these contributors can help to contextualize the journal and the milieu that produced it. However, while historians may know the principal journalists, more often than not it is impossible to discover the author of any given article. Thus, this thesis is generally obliged to surrender to the fiction of the single voice, if not to the implication that this voice embodies the principles of the Revolution. While the journal encourages by maintaining a distinctive but uniform style from article to article, it should be noted that the discourse of the *Révolutions de Paris* is not always as uniform as the style, or as historians like Censer, would have us believe. From one issue to the next, if not necessarily from article to article, one can sometimes see differences of opinion on all manner of subjects. Although none have turned out to be pertinent to this thesis, it is important always to keep in mind that the *Révolutions de Paris* did not issue from a single pen, even when one is forced to speak of the journal as a single entity.

In order to understand more fully how the *Révolutions de Paris* operated, a brief overview of the journal's form and content is in order. The *Révolutions de Paris* was one of the few journals started at the beginning of the Revolution to last into the period of the revolutionary government.¹³ Launched 18 July 1789, in the form of a pamphlet describing the events

¹² Raymonde Monnier, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française*, (Harmattan, 2005), p. 159. J. R. Censer also mentions a P. J. F. Robut, about whom he claims he was able to find no information. This "Robut" is doubtless François Robert, whose given names were, in fact, Pierre-François-Joseph.

¹³ Among its rivals, the *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* was ostensibly published from 28 November 1789 to 12 December 1791, but with a notable gap in the summer of 1791. It was at this time that its editor, Camille Desmoulins, fearing the wave of repression begun by the Champ de Mars massacre, was obliged to refer his subscribers to Prudhomme's journal. The *Révolutions de France et de Brabant* would not be reprised until October-December 1792, which is to say after our period. The *Mercur national* ceased publication in June of 1791, even before the Champ de Mars massacre, due to financial difficulties caused by the journal's limited circulation. Marat's *Ami du Peuple*, despite its longevity and theoretically daily publication, appeared only sporadically, due to various attempts to shut it down on the part of the municipality of Paris. Not to mention journals on the more conservative end of "patriotism," such as Brissot's *Patriote François* or J.-B. Louvet's *Sentinelle*, or those founded after our period. See Pierre Rétat, *Les Journaux de 1789: Bibliographie critique*, (Paris: Editions du Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), 1988), for the titles founded in 1789.

surrounding the storming of the Bastille, the first “issue” gave no indication of any intention to make it the starting point for a periodical. However, following a rapid succession of new editions in relatively little time, one of the journal’s co-founders had the idea to extend it into a weekly publication.¹⁴ The *Révolutions de Paris* would conserve this periodicity until its last issue in February 1794.

From the fifth issue on, the *Révolutions de Paris* adopted roughly the same format it would keep until its demise. Each issue begins with several articles on the subject of the events judged important or deserving of reflection, which the journal proceeds to comment upon at length, particularly as regards their relation to the principles of the Declaration of Rights and popular sovereignty. Then, in most issues, several sections deal with the *faits divers* of the Revolution; sometimes there are sections treating foreign or departmental affairs, especially while the *Mercurie national*, for which this was a particular specialty, was still in publication; sometimes there are letters to the editor or reviews of new books or plays, or even analysis of official correspondence (that of the assembly or the king and his ministers) or petitions. Finally, each issue ends with a section entitled “NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,” consisting of a summary chronicle of the motions and decrees of the assembly, lacking in any kind of commentary.

II. Classical Allusions in Issues 100-118 (4 June-15 October 1791) of the *Révolutions de Paris*.

In order to get an idea of the kinds of classical references in the *Révolutions de Paris* during the summer of 1791 and their importance, it is important to start with a general overview of the data. Only once the reader understands the categories to which the references belonged and

¹⁴ This may have been Prudhomme or it may have been Tournon, if one chooses to believe the latter’s testimony from his lawsuit against Prudhomme for the rights to the journal. P. Rétat, “Forme et discours d’un journal révolutionnaire,” *op. cit.*, p. 142.

in what kinds of situations they were used will it be possible to examine them in the context of specific arguments. Then, in the chapters that follow, this contextualized analysis will suggest the ways in which they contributed to the de-legitimization of the monarchy and its partisans as well as to the promotion of republicanism.

First, a note on methodology, in order to shed some light from the beginning on the particular difficulties involved in a study of this nature. This thesis, following the example of Jacques Bouineau's *thèse d'état*, looks at a single source in order to find every classical allusion made over a certain period. This process presented a number of problems. First, it is not always possible to come up with a universal definition of what constitutes a single allusion, since they are often divisible and belong to multiple categories. The phrase "Roman senators under the reign of Claudius" alone contains up to three allusions, referring to the institution of the Senate, to Ancient Rome, and to the emperor Claudius, and could be considered a single reference, a double reference to Claudius and to the "Roman senate," or three separate references.¹⁵ Because all three components are necessary to comprehend the full meaning of the phrase, it seems best, for a contextualized analysis, to understand it as a single reference. However, for the purposes of statistical analysis, conserving complex allusions in all their specificity would make it difficult to see larger patterns in the kind of allusions being made. Therefore, for the quantification necessary to provide a general overview of the data, allusions such as this one will be divided into their primary components, while in the chapters that follow, they will be examined as a whole and in their proper context.

Another methodological problem consists in determining what constituted a classical reference. Unlike Bouineau, this thesis is only concerned with Greco-Roman allusions, excluding

¹⁵ Louis-Marie Prudhomme, ed., *Les Révolutions de Paris*, t. 10, n° 117, p. 9.

references to other ancient civilizations as well as biblical citations.¹⁶ References to other ancient civilizations will not be considered here for the simple reason that, aside from a very small number of allusions to Gaul or to the Franks, which, as they are used by the *Révolutions de Paris*, can be better understood as references to French history than as classical references, there are none to be found in this data.¹⁷

Similarly, biblical allusions tend to spring from a separate phenomenon from classical references. Because they form the basis of a still-widespread religious belief as well as the institution of the Catholic Church, references to the Bible remain imbued with a sacred character that classical allusions lack. This sacred character affected the ways in which even those who had ceased to believe in Church teachings, like the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris*, used these references. Moreover, because the Church still professed to follow the teachings of the Bible, a more direct parallel could be made between them and current Church practice than between Greco-Roman and secular French institutions.

The data collected here differ in yet another particular from Bouineau's, in that they are not confined to explicit references. An allusion which invokes Horace by name is, of course, always an allusion to Horace, but a citation of Horace which does not name him as its author will be considered one as well. This study will also include references to post-classical works when they refer in some way to Antiquity, such as Voltaire's "Brutus" or a citation from Montesquieu on Athens.

Finally, doubtless the most complicated problem with this kind of inquiry is the evolution of various concepts and the vocabulary used to express them over the course of history. Some of

¹⁶ The partial citation of the famous New Testament injunction to "Render unto Caesar" is treated as an exception to this rule, because of the potential duality of the reference as it is used here.

¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that while Bouineau places references to civilizations chiefly known for making war on the Greeks or Romans in a separate category, for the purposes of this study, the two allusions to Porsena and Philip of Macedon are considered to belong to Roman and Greek history, respectively, and will be classified accordingly. See Bouineau, *Les Toges du Pouvoir*, *op. cit.*, Appendix 15, p. 497.

these concepts, like “tyrant/tyranny,” or “republic,” originated in Antiquity, but evolved to such an extent between that time and the end of the 18th century that in most cases the use of these terms no longer qualifies as a classical allusion. This problem is amplified by the fact that French, as a Romance language, derives most of its vocabulary from Latin and one must be careful not to confuse distant echoes of the Roman past with deliberate allusions: the phrase “*père de famille*,” for example, is very rarely a reference to the Roman *paterfamilias*, and in general usage does not have the same connotations. What is more, during this period a large number of Latin and especially Greek words entered everyday vocabulary for the first time, to such a remarkable extent that a songbook of the Year VIII (1797-98) commented that “these days, in order to hear and understand French correctly, it is Greek that one must learn.”¹⁸ Some of these words have fallen out of general usage and remain strange to us, such as “myriagram,”¹⁹ but others, like “meter” or “oxygen” have become so banal for us that it requires some effort to properly recognize their novelty for the French revolutionaries. It is important therefore to always be attentive to potential changes in meaning. The referents “dictator/dictatorship,” for example, always refer to the Roman magistracy. Thus, in order to correctly understand a reference denouncing dictatorship, one should think Sulla rather than Stalin. Moreover, even if dictatorship had already acquired a largely negative connotation, a number of Roman dictators, such as Cincinnatus, were widely admired. This thesis will attempt to guard, therefore, against anachronistic readings.

¹⁸ Cited in Bouineau, *Toges du Pouvoir*, *op. cit.*, p. 50. Here is the entire stanza: “Myriagramme, Panthéon, / Mètre, kilomètre, oxygène, / Litre, centilitre, Odéon, / Prytanée, hectare, hydrogène, / Les Grecs ont pour nous tant d’attraits / Que, de nous jours, pour bien entendre / Et bien comprendre le français, / C’est le grec qu’il faudrait apprendre.”

¹⁹ The term “*myriagramme*” was used to express “ten kilograms” after France adopted the metric system in 1790 (though it was not ready to be implemented until 1795). It has since become obsolete. See Jean Sandrin, “Le système métrique,” in Michel Vovelle, ed., *L’État de la France pendant la Révolution (1789-1799)*, (Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 1988), pp.463-65

Conversely, certain references which may seem classical at first glance should not in fact be counted. It is not always easy to distinguish between genuine and false references, and certain categorizations will necessarily be debatable, but as a general rule, if it is not the journalist who is making the allusion, it will not be counted. Did a massacre take place on the Champ de Mars? Did the king attend a performance of the opera “Castor et Pollux”? The statistical tables presented here will not take either into account. The name of the Champ de Mars certainly refers to the Roman *campus martius*, as the story of “Castor et Pollux” has its origins in Greek mythology, but the journalist had no choice but to use those terms in order to convey what took place; they are not his terms.

Now, referents such as “senate/senators” or “areopagus” complicate this model. According to the above rule, mentions of the Venetian or American senates cannot be counted, while direct allusions to the Roman senate or the Athenian areopagus must be. So far, so simple, but what to do with the numerous instances where the French National Assembly is referred to by the terms “senate” or “areopagus”? Already in 1762, according to the fourth edition of the dictionary of the Académie française, which dates from that year, “areopagus” could be used figuratively to designate “an assembly of Judges, of Magistrates, of Statesmen.” This figurative usage is even older for the term “senate”; the first edition of the dictionary of the Académie française (1694) already explained that “Orators and Poets sometimes call the Parlements and other superior companies of the Kingdom by the name of Senate.”²⁰ Due to this longstanding figurative usage, this kind of reference will not be included in the data analyzed here, though it appears often in the pages of the *Révolutions de Paris*.

²⁰ *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st Edition (1694), s. v. “SENAT,” and 4th Edition (1762), s. v. “ARÉOPAGE,” in “Dictionnaires d'Autrefois,” The ARTFL Project – Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago, accessed 26 April 2012, <<http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=sénat>>; <<http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=aréopage>>.

Finally, this thesis will make one exception to the rule: references to Antiquity made in letters or speeches quoted in part or in whole by the journal will be counted in the statistical tables. While they are of limited use as points of comparison, they can serve as reminders of the ubiquity of classical allusions during this period. It was, moreover, important to include them to provide a truly complete count of the classical references present in the *Révolutions de Paris* in the summer of 1791. However, this thesis takes care to distinguish these outside references from those made by the journal's regular contributors in the statistical tables, where the figures excluding outside references are followed, where applicable, by figures which take them into account, in parentheses.

Before turning to the data, there is one last variable to examine: that of the readers and their knowledge of Antiquity. Those among them who had attended a *collège*, where Latin rhetoric was the principal subject of study would know them as well as the journal's contributors, but former *collégiens* formed a relatively limited élite. The *Révolutions de Paris* did not address only a classically educated readership, however. If its democratic opinions and wide circulation were not enough to suggest this, the fact that the journal almost always translated Latin quotes into French, something that even the most democratic of pre-revolutionary writers had not done, makes this point clear. The question remains, however: to what extent would most readers, without the benefit of a *collège* or private tutor's instruction, have understood the journal's references?

Given how profoundly 18th century French society was imbued with this classical culture, one should not underestimate popular familiarity with it. First, in the course of the 18th century translations of ancient texts multiplied, including the perennially popular Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*, which recounted the biographies of many of the figures cited in the *Révolutions de Paris*. The publication of recent works of history such as Rollin's *Histoire*

romaine also flourished. The great number of prints and reprints in the course of the century attest to their popularity. Considering the relatively high literacy rate at the end of the 18th century, it is likely that many readers of the *Révolutions de Paris* could have been familiar with these works. Moreover, the French Revolution came at the height of the neoclassical movement in the arts: every two years the painting and sculpture salons displayed new artworks representing scenes from Greco-Roman history and mythology to the public. The availability of relatively inexpensive engravings also worked to popularize neoclassical imagery and the scenes and figures it depicted.²¹

Antiquity was likewise well represented in theatrical representations both before and during the Revolution. In particular, Voltaire's two plays, "Brutus" and "La mort de César," which centered on Lucius Brutus, founder of the Roman Republic and his descendant, Marcus Brutus, one of Caesar's assassins, had been reprised starting in the 1780s. These plays were surely responsible, at least in part, for the great popularity of "Brutus," often amalgamated into a single figure. The fine arts and those of the theatre would often reinforce each other: as Voltaire's plays were performed on the stage, Jacques-Louis David, preeminent painter of the neoclassical movement, unveiled his painting "Les lecteurs rapportent à Brutus les corps de ses fils."²² The sculptor Houdon even displayed his bust of the actor Larive in the role of Marcus Brutus in "La mort de César."²³ The probable readership of the *Révolutions de Paris* was surrounded then on all

²¹ See J. Bouineau, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-20 and Claude Mossé, *L'Antiquité dans la Révolution française, op. cit.*, pp. 61-65.

²² This painting depicts the aftermath of a famous episode from the life of Lucius Brutus: his own sons having been found conspiring against the Republic to bring the Tarquins back to the throne, Brutus, as consul, oversaw their execution. Whether his reported impassibility in that moment was a mark of his inhumanity or of his disinterestedness was fiercely debated. David's painting espouses the latter point of view, but not without acknowledging the former. It should be noted, however, that even the most virulent critics of Brutus's comportment in this episode did not contest his status as a fundamentally virtuous figure. See Philippe Bordes, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-52. For a discussion of these themes in connection to revolutionary violence, see Sophie Wahnich, *La longue patience du peuple, La longue patience du peuple, op. cit.*, pp. 464-94.

²³ This bust was recently displayed at the exhibition "Antiquité rêvée. Innovations et résistances au XVIII^e siècle," at the Louvre. Guillaume Faroult, Christophe Leribault, and Guilhem Scherf, eds., *L'Antiquité rêvée. Innovations et résistances au XVIII^e siècle*, (Paris: Gallimard/Musée du Louvre Éditions, 2010).

sides by representations of Antiquity. The classically educated authors of the journal themselves could not escape the influence of these representations, which necessarily inform the kinds of references they made.

This widespread classical culture meant that the journal's contributors could expect that most of their classical allusions, and especially those that referred to the best-known figures, like Brutus, would be understood. As the following chapters will show, the broadly consensual interpretations displayed in these representations would have assured moreover in most cases that these allusions would be understood as intended. In fact, the journal reports only one occasion during the Varennes Crisis when this consensus was contested, when the public prosecutor of the 6th arrondissement, Bernard, denigrated patriots for citing Voltaire's "Brutus."²⁴ This is no coincidence. In this kind of case, the reference fails to accomplish its legitimizing function and far from reinforcing the journal's perspective, the journal must invoke its own principles to defend its use of the reference. This case might well be considered the exception that proves the rule, for this unwelcome inversion is doubtless one of the principal reasons why the journalists at the *Révolutions de Paris* generally chose references that already functioned as well-defined symbols in élite and popular culture alike.

III. Statistical Tables

The four statistical tables which follow give the quantitative results of my survey of the classical allusions found in issues 100-118 of the *Révolutions de Paris*. The first table gives an overview of the data in general, while the three subsequent tables show the results for the categories of Greece, Rome, and mythology respectively, in more detail.

²⁴ *Révolutions de Paris*, t. 9, n°112, pp. 394-95.

References to Antiquity

Antiquity	246 (264) ref. / 53 (59) art.	“Antiquity / ancient / Ancients”	10 (11) references in 8 (9) articles								
		Citations / Latin	15 (20)/14 (17) art.	French	4 (6) /4 (5) art.	Ancient	2 (4) references in 2 (3) articles				
						Modern	2 references in 2 articles				
				Latin	11 (14)/ 11 (13) art.	Citations	7 (10) ref. in 7 (9) articles	With translation (including one partial translation)	5 (7)/5 (7) articles		
								Without translation	2 (3)/2 (3) articles		
						Locutions, maxims, etc.	4/4 art.	With trans.	3/3 articles		
		Without trans.	1/1 article								
		Historical	175 (196) / 48 (53)	Greece	44 (46) / 14 (16) art.	“Greece / Greeks”		6 references in 4 articles			
						Athens	21 (24) / 8 (10) art.	“Athens / Athenians”		9 (10)/6 (7) art.	
								Figures		10 (12) / 9 (11) art.	
								Institutions		2/2 art.	
						Sparta	10/9 art.	“Sparta / Spartans”		7/7 art.	
								Figures		2/2 art.	
								Institutions		1/1 art.	
						Other		3 reference in 2 article			
						Rome	131 (150) / 44 (47) art.	“Rome / Romans”		29 (30) references in 19 (21) articles	
								Figures		47 (64) references in 30 (35) articles	
Institutions / offices		55 references in 29 articles									
Events		1 reference in 1 article									
Mythological	46 (47) references in 24 (25) art.										

References to Ancient Greece

Greece	44 (46) / 14 (16) art.	"Greece/Greeks"		6 references in 4 articles			
		Athens	21 (24) / 8 (10) art.	"Athens/Athenians"		9 (10) references in 6 (7) articles	
				Figures	10 (12) /6 (7) art.	Solon	2/2 articles
						Aristides	1/1 article
						Demosthenes	1/1 article
						Plato	1/1 article
						Anitus	1 (2)/1 (2) art.
						Lais	1/1 article
						Critias	(1)/(1) article
		Institutions	2/2 art.	Areopagus	1/1 article	Ostracism	1/1 article
		Sparta	10/9 art.	"Sparta/Spartans"		7 references in 7 articles	
				Figures	2/2 art.	Lycurgus	2/2 articles
						Institutions	1/1 art.
		Other	7/2 art.	Figures	4/2 art.	Epictetus	1/1 article
Dionysius	1/1 article						
Philip of Macedon**	1/1 article						
Homer	1/1 article						
Other	3/2 art.			The Iliad	1/1 article		
				Syracuse	1/1 article		
Corinth	1/1 article						

References to Greco-Roman Mythology

Mythology	46 (47) / 24 (25) art.	Hercules	3 ref. in 2 articles, including 1 by name		
		Achilles	1 reference in 1 article		
		Telemachus	2 references in 2 articles, including 1 to Fénelon's « Télémaque »		
		Mentor	3 references in 2 articles		
		Circe	2 references in 2 articles		
		Penelope	1 reference in 1 article		
		Sirens	2 references in 2 articles		
		Amazons	1 reference in 1 article		
		Argonauts/golden fleece	1 reference in 1 article		
		Codrus	1 reference in 1 article		
		Atlas	1 reference in 1 article		
		Galatea	1 reference in 1 article (allusion to Florian's « Galatée »)		
		Pegasus	1 reference in 1 article		
		Cerberus	1 reference in 1 article		
		Muses	3/2 art.	« Muses »	1 reference in 1 article
				Melpomene	1 reference in 1 article
				Thalia	1 reference in 1 article
		Olympus/gods	17 (18) / 9 (10) art.	« Olympus/gods »	4 (5) references in 2 (3) articles
				Mercury	2 references in 2 articles
				Apollo	2 references in 2 articles
				Juno	2 ref. in 2 art., including 1 « Lucina »
				Venus	1 reference in 1 article
				Iris	1 reference in 1 article
				Comus	1 reference in 1 article
				Plutus	1 reference in 1 article
				Flora	1 reference in 1 article
Zephyrus	1 reference in 1 article				
Themis	1 reference in 1 article				
Genius	3 references in 2 articles				
Palladium	2 references in 2 articles				

References to Ancient Rome

Rome	131 (150) / 44 (47) art.	“Rome/Romans”	29 (30) references in 19 (21) articles				
		Figures	47 (64) / 30 (35) art.	Brutus (excluding 2 references to the “Junius’s Letters”)	11 (14) art.	Lucius	6 (7) ref. in 5 (6) articles, including 4 (5) allusions to Voltaire’s « Brutus »
						Marcus	3 (4) ref. in 3 (4) articles, including 1 allusion to Voltaire’s « Mort de César »
						Ambiguous References	2 (3) ref. in 2 (3) articles, all of which are probably references to Marcus, since 1 (2) are associated with Cato and the other with Marc Antony
				Cato	4 (7) reference in 3 (6) articles (all probably references to Cato the Younger)		
				Cassius	1 reference in 1 article		
				Cimber	1 reference in 1 article		
				Numa Pompilius	1 reference in 1 article		
				Horatii	1 reference in 1 article		
				Cincinnatus	1 reference in 1 article		
				Tarquin	1 reference in 1 article		
				Porsena	1 reference in 1 article		
				Catiline	1 (2) reference(s) in 1 (2) article(s)		
				Marc Antony	1 reference in 1 article		
				Caesar	3 (4) references in 3 (4) articles		
				« Caesars »	1 (2) reference(s) in 1 (2) articles, including one biblical citation: « Render unto Caesar... »		
				Tiberius	3 references in 3 articles		
				Caligula	3 references in 3 articles		
				Claudius	1 reference in 1 article		
				Nero	2 references in 2 articles		
				Septimius Severus	1 reference in 1 article		
				Justinian	1 reference in 1 article		
				Valentinian	1 reference in 1 article		
				Horace	2 (3) references in 2 (3) articles, including 1 citation by name		
				Cicero	1 reference in 1 article		
				Martial	1 reference in 1 article		
				Livy	1 reference in 1 article		
				Juvenal	1 reference in 1 article		
				Lucretius**	1 reference in 1 article		
				Seneca	(1) reference in (1) article		
				Tacitus	(2) references in (2) articles		
		Spurius Maelius	(1) reference in (1) article				
		Manlius	(1) reference in (1) article				
Sulla	(1) reference in (1) article						
Lepidus	(1) reference in (1) article						
Institutions / offices	55/29 art.	Triumph / triumphal	16 references in 9 articles				
		Civic crowns / laurels	11 references in 9 articles				
		Dictator / dictatorship	9 references in 6 articles				
		Senate / senators	5 ref. in 4 art., including 1 cit. of Voltaire’s “Mort de César”				
		Lictors	3 references in 3 articles				
		Apotheosis	3 references in 3 articles				
		Spectacles	2 references in 2 articles				
		Gladiators	2 references in 1 article				
		Prefects	1 reference in 1 article				
		Vestals	1 reference in 1 article				
Funerary inscriptions	1 reference in 1 article						
Events	1/1 art.	Battle of Philippi*	1 reference in 1 article				

As these tables show, following the parameters laid out above, a careful survey of the journal found 246 allusions (264 including outside allusions) drawn from 53 (59) articles over 19 issues (n°100-118, 4 June-15 October 1791). While there are no issues which do not contain classical references, more articles with titles (77) lack them than contain them. Furthermore, certain articles contain more than others. Classical references may then be said to be prominent but not predominant. This uneven distribution can be explained in part by the fact that unlike Camille Desmoulins's *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, in which classical allusions abound²⁵ – an example of this style can be seen in certain letters written by Desmoulins and published in the Prudhomme's journal – the *Révolutions de Paris* is an informational journal as much as a vehicle for opinion.

Thus, references to Antiquity are almost never to be found in sections such as “ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE,” which aims to give a succinct account of the debates and decrees of the assembly. In all, 27 out of 77, or more than a third, of the articles without references are under this heading or related headings such as “NOUVELLES ÉTRANGÈRES / DÉPARTEMENTALES,” designed to briefly keep readers informed of foreign or departmental affairs. Most of the rest are also informational articles, such as “Assembly on the Champ de Mars,” from issue 105, which invites citizens to come sign the Cordeliers Club's “republican” petition or “Grievances of the former Beauce regiment against the National Constituent Assembly,” the title of which accurately sums up the content. Classical allusions are more at home in articles that comment on events than in those which simply report them.²⁶

One of the most striking aspects of this data set is that references to Rome are much more numerous than references to Greece. In fact, references to Rome are more numerous than

²⁵ Camille Desmoulins, *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant* in Albert Soboul, ed., *Œuvres*, (Munich: Kraus Reprints, 1980).

²⁶ *RP*, t. 9, n°105, p. 29 and t. 10, n°117, pp. 33-39.

references to Greece and mythological references, many but not all of which are Greek in origin, put together. This preference can be attributed to the journal's contributors' likely greater familiarity with Roman history, which can be explained in turn in large part by the kind of education they received. All the major contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* had been educated in the *collèges* of the Ancien régime, where Latin rhetoric was the principal object of study. Study of Greek, on the other hand, had already given way to the vernacular in the vast majority of cases, the final result of a process that had begun in the previous century. It is not surprising then that Roman references should outstrip those to Greece.

Nevertheless, references to Greece, taken as a whole, do not seem to belong to a different register than references to Rome. In both categories are found a mix of positive and negative, justificatory and denunciatory models, often expressed by way of analogy to present circumstances, and generally taken entirely seriously. This is not the case for mythological references, which is why this thesis separates them from historical references, whether Greek or Roman.²⁷ The journalists of the *Révolutions de Paris* used allusions to Greco-Roman mythology to disparage and mock adversaries, in particular the royal family, often employing irony and sarcasm. They applied these allusions chiefly to those who had held power under the Ancien Régime and their allies among the constituted powers. This pattern is so striking that it may suggest a rhetorical analogy between this usage and the manifest contempt of neoclassical artists for the rococo style, associated both with mythology – at least in its more frivolous aspects – and aristocratic mores. The following chapter will discuss this phenomenon further. In the meantime,

²⁷ Moreover, it would be difficult to separate out which elements belong to Greece and which to Rome in a mythology which is properly Greco-Roman. A reference to the Roman god Comus, borrowed from the Etruscans, would certainly count as a reference to Rome, but what of a reference to Juno? The name used is certainly that of the Roman goddess and not her Greek counterpart, Hera, but it was conventional in 18th century France to refer to Greco-Roman gods by their Roman names (in Gallicized form). Why attempt an inevitably arbitrary separation of that which historical as well as linguistic logic brings together?

there are certain aspects of the journal's references to Antiquity which can best be observed through analysis of the quantitative data.

Two characteristics of these data in particular should draw the attention. As noted above, most references are concentrated in a relatively limited number of articles. In turn, most of these articles contain at least two or three references each. A handful of particularly reference-rich articles can contain considerably more. For example, the "*La liberté française* [French Liberty]" alone, from issue 108, alludes to the Greeks, the Romans, "Codrus, king of Athens," Cato and Brutus (twice each), once more to Athens, Sparta, Tiberius, Demosthenes, Philip of Macedon, the areopagus, Aristides, the "Senate of Rome," "Dionysius, king of Syracuse, and schoolmaster in Corinth," the "golden age" of Greece, Athenians, and finally to "citizens of Rome."²⁸ This unequal distribution can be explained in several different ways. As noted, the *Révolutions de Paris* was an informational journal as much as an opinion-based one, but it is principally the articles that reflect this last tendency that include classical references. It might seem obvious, but it is worth noting that the journal cites Antiquity only when it can do so to good effect. Classical allusions are absent from most articles that discuss concrete measures to be taken. The choice of referents reflects this usage: references to individuals are by far the most common type, while the reader is invited only twice to imagine that a practice or institution from Antiquity might be applicable to revolutionary France.²⁹

As far as the distribution of references in the articles that include them goes, it seems that in general the more references an article contains, the more integral they are to its argument. As

²⁸ *RP*, t. 9, n°108, pp. 177-85.

²⁹ In the article "*Sur les subsistances*." from issue 116, the journal supports a policy of public subsidies to bakers by noting that "If is by this means that the prefects of Rome were finally able to oppose the rise in the price of bread," while in the article "VOLTAIRE." From issue 100, the journal gives the funerary practices of the Ancients as a model, but only as far as they are deemed closer to nature, the only true model. What is more, the article suggestions further on that the French people could and should invent their own practices even more closely attuned to nature. *RP*, t. 8, n°100, pp. 447-49 and t. 9, n°116, pp. 574-75.

will be discussed in the chapter three, if “*La liberté française.*” contains so many references, this because the article’s primary goal is to contrast the “golden age” of Antiquity with France under the period of repression following the Champ de Mars Massacre. In other articles, classical allusions are more accessory, as for example in the article describing the Champ de Mars Massacre, where the journalist³⁰ depicts the doomed petitioners as “one of those majestic assemblies, such as one saw in Athens and Rome.”³¹ The reference here legitimates the signers of the petition by comparing them favorably to ancient peoples, in opposition to La Fayette, Bailly and the Assembly “moderates,” who called them “factious” and accused them of fomenting anarchy in order to justify the massacre. The use of the classical reference supports the denunciation of these “moderates” as traitors to the people’s cause, but does not form the heart of the argument.

The last observation the quantitative data allow is that of the kind of referent cited. Taking historical referents first, one finds allusions to peoples, individuals, and, in a lesser degree, practices or institutions from Antiquity. The referents that warrant the most references are those to peoples and civilizations. One finds 29 (30 including exterior references) allusions to “Rome” or the “Romans,” 6 to “Greece” or the “Greeks,” 9 (10) to “Athens” or the “Athenians,” 7 to “Sparta” or the “Spartans” and one each to “Syracuse” and “Corinth.” While these references are often coupled with those to individual figures or institutions, one must concur with Claude Mossé, among others, that the preference given to the names of peoples over particular historical events supports the thesis that the reference to Antiquity, even when it is ostensibly historic, is not historicized, but more abstract. This thesis is particularly strong as regards the Spartans, for

³⁰ For clarity’s sake, though all articles are anonymous and it is likely that at least some were collaborations between two or more journalists, unless a specific attribution has been made, this thesis will use the singular terms “journalist” and “author” to refer to the writer(s) of any individual article.

³¹ *RP*, t. 9, n°106, p. 63.

the seven references to “Sparta/Spartans” aside, there are only three other references relative to Sparta, two to Lycurgus, who is supposed to have given Sparta its laws, and one to the helots, Sparta’s slave underclass. This is doubtless due at least in part to what historians of Antiquity call the “Spartan mirage,” but it is nevertheless apparent that for Greece in general, as for Rome, the symbolism of a term like “Rome” or “Athenians” matters more than the detail of these peoples’ history.³²

Historical personages are the most numerous category of referent, but the journal cites most of them only once. Among the Romans there are 26 of this sort of referent (32 including referents only used by “outside” contributors), counting “Brutus” as a single referent because it is often difficult to tell whether it applies to the founder of the Republic or the tyrannicide. The journal invokes nine Roman referents more than once, but only five three times or more: “Brutus” eleven times, Cato four, Julius Caesar three (four), Tiberius and Caligula three times each. To these one might add Horace, cited twice by regular contributors, but three times if one counts one citation by Camille Desmoulins.³³ The journal cites Brutus and Cato for their virtue; Julius Caesar, Tiberius and Caligula as examples of tyranny; Horace as an author (two times out of three the journal cites his writings without naming him). This distribution reflects that of the Roman historical personage referents as a whole, which include 9 (11) models of virtue, 12 (14) tyrants or conspirators and 6 (8) writers. The prominence of models of virtue and tyrants suggests the conflict between patriots, whose resolve must be affirmed, and partisans of the monarchy, whose traitorousness must be denounced. References to Roman historical personages are rarely neutral.

³² Claude Mossé, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-32, 82-86.

³³ See *RP*, t. 9, n°CXI, “CAMILLE DESMOULINS À PRUDHOMME,” p. 344.

One can see right away that for the *Révolutions de Paris*, Greece means Athens and Sparta above all: among the personage-referents one finds 7 Athenians, 1 Spartan, and 4 from other city-states, including Philip of Macedon, who was not Greek, but who is known for his role in Greek history as the first to conquer Greece, which is to say 12 “Greeks” in all. Of these, only Solon and Lycurgus (the only Spartan) merit more than two allusions, unless one counts an outside reference to Anitus. The journal cites Solon and Lycurgus as wise legislators. With Aristides and Epictetus, they are the four virtuous Greeks. Demosthenes is an ambiguous figure, virtuous at the start, but bought at last by Philip of Macedon’s bribes. In this case the journal references the corrupted Demosthenes, who belongs to the category of negative Greek referents, along with Anitus, Critias, the hetaera(e) Lais, Philip of Macedon, and Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse.³⁴ The first four of these negative referents were Athenians. They represent the corruption often associated with this city-state alongside its grandeur. Philip and Dionysius are simply tyrant figures, which the journal associates with Louis XVI. With the exception of these last two figures, and contrary to the profile of the Roman references, the negative Greek referents tend to be compared to partisans of the monarchy rather than the king himself, perhaps because potential Greek tyrant figures were less well known. Finally, the journal cites Plato and Homer in the same article, in their capacity as philosopher and bard, respectively, in order to persuade the public that the illustrious dead are not best honored by *panthéonisation*.³⁵ The article cites Plato and especially Homer admiringly, but without any implicit suggestion that they should be emulated or that they are like any contemporary figure.

The journal does not allude to many Greek institutions. It approves of the two Athenian institutions it does cite, the areopagus and ostracism, but once again without any serious

³⁴ There was more than one Athenian hetaera by the name of Lais. It is not clear to which one the *Révolutions de Paris* is referring. In the case of Dionysius, tyrant is the technical Greek term, essentially signifying usurper.

³⁵ *RP*, t. 8, n°100, pp. 447-48.

suggestion that revolutionary France should adopt them. Meanwhile, the helots of Sparta are ironically equated with French aristocrats, in a rare confusion between literal slavery and the metaphorical voluntary slavery of republican thought. As in other sources, the institution's connotations remain negative, if not in the way one might expect.³⁶ Like the reference to Rome, then, the reference to Greece is ambiguous, with admirable and deplorable aspects. More importantly, in the case of Greece in particular, the few references cited are never invoked for the purposes of emulation, whether implicitly or explicitly.

References to Roman institutions are much more numerous and central to the discourse of the *Révolutions de Paris* than Greek institutions. In 29 articles, one finds 11 referents, which between them make 55 references. The most important are "triumph/triumphal," with 16 references in 9 articles, "civic crowns/oak crowns/laurels" with 11 references in 9 articles, "dictator(s)/dictatorship" with 9 in 6 articles, and "senate/senators" with 5 in 4. The journal's use of the referents "triumph" or "triumphal" is too diverse to draw any certain and fixed conclusions. Sometimes the journal uses them to make an ironic comparison between the Roman institution and a particular circumstance, as when "the king is brought back in triumph" from Varennes; the irony functions whether the king is the triumphing general or one of his captives. It can also apply, however, with undoubtedly positive connotations, to the "triumphal chariot" on which Voltaire's ashes are borne to the Panthéon.³⁷ Elsewhere, the journal suggests that "if he had dared," La Fayette would have had the Assembly vote "the triumphal honors to his cousin [Bouillé] the butcher [*massacreur*] of Nancy," also one of the organizers of the king's flight. However, since the article aims to ridicule La Fayette, it is clear that the reader is supposed to

³⁶ For an alternative application of the example of the helots see Robespierre's speech denouncing the suggestion that there should be a property requirement for voting rights, insisting that it would turn poorer citizens into helots, discussed in Maxime Rosso, "Les réminiscences spartiates dans les discours et la politique de Robespierre de 1789 à Thermidor," *op. cit.*

³⁷ *RP*, t. 9, n°105, p. 18, 8.

find the idea that this Roman institution might be literally applied to France absurd.³⁸ The reference to the Roman senate is equally variable. The senate invoked may be the virtuous “republican” senate, represented by Brutus the tyrannicide and Cato the Younger, for which the journalist ardently wishes: “may the National Assembly of the monarchy give way to the senate of the Republic.”³⁹ Yet it can also be the corrupt senate of Cato and Brutus’s colleagues, or of the empire, to which the “moderate” majority of the Assembly are comparable.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the journal views the institution of civic crowns favorably, even when it critiques the awarding of this honor to the undeserving. In the pages of the journal the reference is sometimes metaphorical, but it is also unique in that it was the only ancient institution invoked by the journal to be adopted in revolutionary France. Thus, the journal recounts approvingly how the people of Paris really crowned the patriot deputies Robespierre and Pétion with oak branches on the last day of the Constituent Assembly. One might speculate that civic crowns were thus favored for the same reasons that representations of Antiquity featured so prominently in the arts: artists and revolutionaries alike associated its esthetic simplicity with virtue. After all, an oak crown lacks the potential corrupting effect of more concrete recompenses.

Finally, the institution of dictatorship always has negative connotations for the *Révolutions de Paris*. It is not so much that the journal’s contributors feared to see the institution adopted as it existed in Ancient Rome, but rather that the Assembly might give dictatorial powers to aristocratic officers, or even keep them for itself. The journal greets the proposition to give such powers to four commissioners in order to reestablish discipline in the army by recalling Bouillé’s brutal repression of patriot soldiers in Nancy, and draws an equivalence between the

³⁸ *RP*, t. 10, n°118, p. 62.

³⁹ *RP*, t. 8, n°103, p. 609.

⁴⁰ *RP*, t. 9, n°108, p. 181 and t. 10, n°117, p. 9.

terms “dictator” and “tyrant.”⁴¹ When, in the repressive aftermath of the Champ de Mars Massacre, the Assembly passed a decree against sedition, the journal expresses once more the fear that “each officer will be, in his jurisdiction, an absolute dictator who will punish *ad libitum* the most innocent acts as maneuvers and seditions.”⁴² For the *Révolutions de Paris*, dictatorship is synonymous with abuse of power, for it escapes from the people’s control.

As noted above, mythological references form their own, necessarily metaphorical, category. The *Révolutions de Paris* uses them less often than Roman, but less often than Greek historical references. Out of 30 referents, 12 are cited more than once, if one counts references to “muses” and to the individual muses Melpomene and Thalia (3 references in 2 articles), as well as references to “Olympus/gods” and individual gods, together. The journal cites “Olympus” or “gods” four times, (five with outside references), in 2 (3) articles; Mercury, Apollo, and Juno twice each and seven other gods once each. All the gods together are accorded 17 (18) references in 9 (10) articles. As these figures imply, one article will often cite several gods together. To these referents one may add Hercules and “genius,” each cited three times, but only in two articles. How many times a referent is cited matters less, however, than the category of use to which it belongs. As previously noted, the *Révolutions de Paris* uses most mythological references ironically or mockingly, for de-legitimizing ends. The following chapter will discuss this usage more thoroughly and in context.

There are, however, exceptions to the mocking, ironic use of mythology. Hercules represents the strength of liberty; Themis, goddess of justice, becomes its metonym; Telemachus and Mentor are invoked in discussions on education, implicitly or explicitly with reference to Fénelon’s *Télémaque*; the “conserving genius” is said to “still look after France’s wellbeing”;

⁴¹ *RP*, t. 8, n°100, p. 421.

⁴² *RP*, t. 9, n°107, p. 122.

finally, Codrus, mythical king of Athens, exemplifies the only virtuous conduct for kings, “[having] himself killed in order to return liberty to his country by his death.”⁴³ As these examples indicate, however, mythological references cannot bear the weight of the legitimization the way historical references can. The allusion to Codrus is the only one where mythology is taken as a model, and even then it is only a counterexample, for Louis XVI is not the virtuous king who sacrifices himself for his people’s happiness. The manifest fiction of mythology makes it best suited to mockery.

The pages that follow will look at a single journal and its classical references and attempt to analyze them in the context of the events of the summer of 1791 and the debates they generated around questions of monarchy, republicanism and the rights of man and citizen. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of immersion in these debates in order to understand them. After all, the interest of studying a rhetorical tool such as classical allusions lies in how the questions under debate and the references used mutually inform each other. It would be a mistake, therefore, to linger too long on the quantitative data of statistical tables; those examined here can serve to indicate the contours of our data, but not explain its significance. The following chapters will take up that task, demonstrating the ways in which the *Révolutions de Paris* used classical references to de-legitimize the monarchy and its partisans and legitimize a new republican regime.

⁴³ See especially *RP*, t. 8, n°101, p. 507; t. 9, n°109, p. 229-30; t. 8, n°104, pp. 640, 643; t. 9, n°116, p. 561; t. 9, n°108, p. 177.

Chapter Two

I. The Varennes Crisis

On the night of 20-21 June 1791, Louis XVI, also known as the “restorer of French liberty,” took flight with his family. Betraying his oath to reign as a constitutional monarch, he left behind an unequivocally absolutist manifesto. After abandoning the Tuileries Palace in Paris under cover of darkness, the royal family headed for the Austrian frontier in an enormous yellow carriage, the king disguised as the valet of his own wife, Marie-Antoinette, who took on the role of a Prussian aristocrat, the Baroness de Korff, while the young dauphin was dressed as a girl. On the other side of the Rhine an army awaited them to march against the French capital, Louis XVI at its head. Meanwhile, Paris, and France, awoke the morning of 21 June to find themselves in a *de facto* republic.¹ Faced with the incontrovertible fact of the king’s betrayal, all over France people began to ask themselves: does France need a king after all?

The king’s flight marked a fundamental turning point of the French Revolution. According to the historian Raymonde Monnier, it not only de-legitimized the monarchy, but also “revived the democratic and republican movement in the medium term.”² The *Révolutions de Paris* played an active role in these movements, employing classical allusions to legitimize its arguments. This chapter will look at the ways in which this journal emphasized the illegitimacy of the monarchy, using mythological references to ridicule the king and his supporters and framing the debate in terms of recognizable symbols from Antiquity. In order to understand how the discourse of the *Révolutions de Paris* fits into the debates surrounding the monarchy in the

¹ In the sense of a kingless state. See Chapter Three.

² Raymonde Monnier, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2005), p. 25.

summer of 1791, however, it will be useful to spend a moment examining the circumstances of the king's flight and the different reactions it elicited in French society.

The king's flight was important chiefly because it demonstrated that the constitutional monarchy as established over the first two years of the Revolution had become untenable. More immediately, it created a power vacuum. The head of the executive branch was of course literally absent, but more importantly, he had betrayed his oaths of fidelity to the Revolution. The Assembly immediately responded to the first problem, first, by sending envoys to bring Louis and his family back to Paris, and then by a series of emergency measures that temporarily turned France into a *de facto* republic.

The second problem would not be as easily resolved. In the eyes of public opinion, the king's flight definitively de-legitimized the monarchy. In the streets of Paris symbols of royalty were covered or destroyed, while petitions flowed in to the Assembly from all over France calling for the king to be permanently deposed. Some advocated the regency, with the young dauphin as king, in order to preserve the nearly complete constitution of 1791. However, a growing movement, feeling betrayed as much by the violations of the principles of the Declaration of Rights inscribed in the constitution as much as by the king, began to envision a republican alternative. The *Révolutions de Paris* was among the leading mouthpieces of this movement.

The Constituent Assembly had other ideas, however. Fearing the republic and distrustful of the regency, the moderate majority invented the fiction that the king had been kidnapped, in mind if not in body. Bouillé, one of the major organizers of the king's flight, best known for his brutal repression of the supposed insubordination of patriot soldiers in Nancy, came to the Assembly's aid by claiming full responsibility. Once their emissaries had safely escorted the royal family back to Paris, this fiction allowed the Assembly to offer Louis the crown once more,

on the condition that he accept the constitution. However, no one believed the Assembly's version of events. The king had left behind a letter in his own hand, renouncing all his oaths and explaining his decision to take flight. It had undeniably been his choice.

For the nascent republican movement, the Assembly's decision represented yet another betrayal, following on that of the king. The Society of the Rights of Man and Citizen, also known as the Cordeliers Club, because of the former monastery in which they met, decided to petition against the Assembly's decision. The Assembly responded, on 17 July 1791, by having the petitioners massacred by the National Guard.³ This incident, known to history as the Champ de Mars Massacre, marked the beginning of a new period of repression.

The day after the massacre the Assembly voted a decree against sedition that would apply retroactively.⁴ The wording is such that anyone publically disagreeing with the National Assembly's decrees could potentially be implicated. It seems that the Assembly's strategy consisted in removing the most prominent patriots from public life until the king's acceptance of the constitution became accomplished fact⁵. In the days that followed, denunciations and arrests multiplied and a number of presses were seized.⁶ Moreover, during this period the Assembly's

³ More precisely, they persuaded Bailly, mayor of Paris, to declare martial law. Then, the National Guard, with La Fayette at its head, fired on petitioners and bystanders alike, without even issuing the warnings to disperse mandated by law. In the best estimate, at least fifty people were killed. See Albert Mathiez, *Le club des Cordeliers pendant la crise de Varennes et le massacre du Champ de Mars*, (Paris: 1910), pp. 145-49 and T. Tackett, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁴ See Albert Mathiez, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-94.

⁵ This would explain the minimal effort deployed to find those who like Santerre or Camille Desmoulins managed to avoid arrest ("*prise de corps*") by going into hiding or fleeing Paris for a time.

⁶ For a list of those implicated, see A. Mathiez, *op. cit.*, p. 211. It appears, however, that most of the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* were left alone, perhaps because Prudhomme's office was not under the jurisdiction of the tribunal of the 6th arrondissement, home of the nucleus of the republican movement, the Cordeliers Club. François Robert is an exception, for he was the author of the Cordelier petition. Yet the tribunal was forced to release Robert and a few others who according to Mathiez were not considered "sufficiently designated in the testimony of witnesses." A. Mathiez, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

revisions to the constitution of 1791 added to its already numerous violations of the principles of the Declaration of Rights.⁷

Once the Constitution of 1791 had been revised and accepted by the king, 13 September 1791, the Assembly's priorities changed. In order to be sure that this acceptance would bring the rupture created by the Varennes crisis to a close and that there would be no more to fear from democratic or republican claims, the Assembly had to enforce a kind of collective amnesia regarding the events of that crisis and the feelings of betrayal they provoked. And so the Assembly decreed a general amnesty for the "events of the Revolution" the day after the king's acceptance. In historian Sophie Wahnich's words, by this amnesty, the Constituent Assembly "decreed concord" ("*décréta la concorde*").⁸ As the phrase "to decree concord" implies, this was a false concord, imposed from above. The Assembly's aim in voting the amnesty was surely to end the Revolution by preventing future dissensions, but the strategy's artificiality doomed it to failure.⁹ For patriots like those who wrote for the *Révolutions de Paris* there had been betrayals that could neither be forgotten nor forgiven. The Revolution would continue in spite of the Assembly.

In the meanwhile, the Varennes Crisis remains a key moment in the Revolution, for it saw the constitutional monarchy lose all remaining legitimacy and marks the beginnings of a widespread and popular republican movement. Without this crisis, it is unlikely that the monarchy would have been overthrown or the republic proclaimed a year later. In the summer of 1791, however, the suggestion that France should start over with a new republican constitution

⁷ Thus the division of the nation into "active" citizens (men of property who would retain the right to vote), and "passive" citizens (everyone else, who would not) was confirmed. The Assembly added another disposition to martial law, on the urging of Le Chapelier, author of the previous addendum outlawing strikes. They even abrogated the decree recognizing the rights of the "free men of color" ("*libres de couleur*") in the colonies. See Florence Gauthier, *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en Révolution*, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-66.

⁸ Sophie Wahnich, *La longue patience du peuple, 1792. Naissance de la République*, (Paris : Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2008), pp. 58-64.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

was still too new and potentially frightening to stand alone. A republican journal like the *Révolutions de Paris* turned to references to Antiquity, drawn from a shared culture, for rhetorical and material support for these new ideas. In the following section this thesis will therefore examine their role in the de-legitimization of the figure of the king and of the institutions of the constitutional monarchy, before turning in the following chapter to their use in the debates relative to republicanism.

II. The *Révolutions de Paris* Against the King and the Constitutional Monarchy

As soon as they learned of the king's flight, the first reaction of the entire patriot press and of the *Révolutions de Paris* in particular was outrage. Even if, according to Censer, the *Révolutions de Paris* had ceased to trust the king as early as the month of July 1790 and began to be outright suspicious, if not hostile, towards him starting in April of 1791, they had not predicted this eventuality. In the first article of issue 102, dated 18-25 June 1791, and titled "King's Flight, 21 June 1791" ("*Fuite du roi le 21 juin 1791*"), the journal thunders against those whom it accuses of sustaining the illusion that the king had rallied the Revolution, as much as against the king himself:

THE most honest man in his kingdom! (cowardly writers, inept or salaried scribblers [*folliculaires*], that's what you called Louis XVI.) The most honest man in his kingdom, this father of the French, following the example of the hero of two worlds [La Fayette], has also left his post then, and flees in hope of sending us, in exchange for his royal person, a foreign and internal war of many years.¹⁰

The bitter irony directed against Louis XVI may well have been sharpened by disappointment, or even the journalists' anger at themselves for having been unable to predict, let alone prevent, the

¹⁰ *RP*, t. 8, n°102, p. 525-26.

crisis.¹¹ However, on the level of rhetoric, it seems that the author or authors of this article are rather far from blaming themselves for not having been sufficiently vigilant, exclaiming: “Citizens! You owe us justice; remember in this moment that we did not wait for the dénouement of 21 June to tell you what kings are capable of.”¹² This anterior recognition of the evils of kings serves as a way out of any feeling of guilt for not having prevented the flight to Varennes: it is not Prudhomme’s journal’s fault if readers did not take its warnings seriously.

At the same time, the *Révolutions de Paris* exaggerates the trust which the people had placed in the king, in order to highlight Louis’s perfidy. This is the function of one of this article’s two classical allusions. This reference emerges in a sequence contrasting the attitudes of the king and queen in the weeks before their flight with the flight itself – which, it should be recalled, represents an absolute betrayal and, it would have been reasonable to believe at the time, the prelude to foreign and civil war. This particular reference attacks Antoinette in particular, whose instigating role the journal accurately guesses:

In the evening, Antoinette walks the old boulevards, decked in roses like Flora. Zephyrus is on her knees; it’s the dauphin. She smiles; her false face depicts the calm of an honest woman, converted to patriotism. Good Parisians! The air of satisfaction which fools you is the sign of Antoinette’s disloyalty. The clever siren is taunting you; tomorrow, before daybreak, she will accomplish the plan she has so long meditated; she is enjoying in advance the ills of anarchy which she seems to already see you fallen a prey to at the departure of her imbecilic husband.¹³

In this passage, the journalist compares Antoinette to two figures from Greco-Roman mythology: Flora, Roman goddess of flowers and agriculture in general, and a siren, a creature half woman, half fish¹⁴ which draws sailors to their death by seducing them with their beautiful voices. The

¹¹ T. Tackett, *op. cit.*, pp. 102, 136.

¹² *RP*, t. 8, n° 102, p. 526.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

¹⁴ In fact, the siren was originally represented with wings instead of a fish tail, but was already universally known in this latter form long before the end of the 18th century. John Roberts, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), s.v. “Sirens.”

gendered and sexualized nature of these references, which will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter, are used to express Antoinette's hypocrisy and the danger she represents.

The first figure evokes nature, spring, innocence. This is Antoinette's mask. The perfection of this façade explains how the people could have been fooled so easily. At the same time, the contrast between this façade and Antoinette's thoughts completes the picture of her hypocrisy. The third figure appearing in this passage, that of Zephyrus, is accessory to the figure of Flora. Zephyrus, the lover rather than the son of Flora, is doubtless a strange choice to represent the dauphin. Should this be seen, however, as a kind of foreshadowing of the incest charge that would be leveled against Antoinette more than two years later? This seems unlikely, especially given how the journalist employs the couple Flora-Zephyrus here. Zephyrus is a prop in Antoinette's staging of innocence, the danger of which is in its realism. There is no room in the *mise en scène* itself for perversity, since it springs rather from the contrast between the innocence of the projected vision and the well-hidden rejoicing at the thought of public misfortunes.

The figure of the siren accomplishes a similar, though not entirely identical, result. The figure of the queen as siren is not new: historian Annie Duprat has found it alongside that of the queen as harpy in revolutionary but also earlier caricatures.¹⁵ A siren is always a monster, indeed, a sexualized monster, and its use reveals the persistence of the mythos of the dangers of the queen as sovereign going back to the Salic Laws which prevented women from inheriting the crown. But in this circumstance, the reference plays a more specific role, for the siren, symbol of

¹⁵ Annie Duprat, *Les rois de papier: La caricature de Henri III à Louis XVI*, (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2002), pp. 128-30, 315n. According to Duprat an engraving dating from the Diamond Necklace Affair of 1786 and which represents a siren queen (a generic figure in this case, but clearly an allusion to Antoinette as the current queen) was reused as the frontispiece of the 1791 *Histoire des crimes des reines de France*, also published by Prudhomme and often attributed to republican journalist Louise Kéralio, wife of Robert, one of the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris*. It should be noted that I do not share Sarah Maza's sentiment of the "irony" of this attribution. As a republican, Louise Kéralio had no reason to feel any more sympathy for queens than for kings. See Sarah Maza, "The Diamond Necklace Affair Revisited (1785-1786): The Case of the Missing Queen," in Dena Goodman, ed., *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, (New York: Taylor and Francis Books, Inc., 2003), p. 92.

the close union between enticing beauty and death is fundamentally a figure of betrayal. In making Antoinette into a siren, the journalist insists not only on her evil intentions, or on her suspect status as queen but on the real danger that she represents at this particular juncture. In this the reference differs from the image of Flora with Zephyrus in her lap: it is easy to laugh at the idea of the goddess of flowers hatching plots and indeed the slightly ironic tone invites the reader to do so, but the siren is a more fundamental threat, all the more so because she is “clever.” Antoinette as siren is the one who invents these seductive disguises, and her intelligence belongs to the monster, whatever its outward appearance. This passage serves as a warning to the reader not to trust in appearances when it comes to Antoinette, whose true character has been revealed by her role in the flight to Varennes.

While Antoinette becomes a monstrous figure, the king plays the role, in this first depiction of his flight of a criminal tyrant. The *Révolutions de Paris* wonders: “Has the executioner ever stricken, with his homicidal bar [a reference to breaking on the wheel], more consummate scoundrels than those who have just evacuated the château of the Tuileries by night? Julius Caesar stabbed by the Romans, Charles I decapitated by the English, were innocent, in comparison to Louis XVI.”¹⁶ As in the passage on Antoinette cited above, several different rhetorical devices are at work in this citation. First, it establishes a triple parallel between Julius Caesar, a figure from Antiquity and Charles I, a figure from “recent” history, then between these two personages and Louis XVI, and finally between all three and the common criminal. As these parallels suggest, none of these figures was particularly admired by patriots – quite the opposite, in fact. In the case of Caesar, the only “Ancient” of this quartet, the *Révolutions de Paris* is tapping into 18th century conventional wisdom, which, in the centuries-long debate regarding the

¹⁶ *RP*, t. 8, n°102, p. 526

personage's character, came down firmly on the side of Caesar-as-tyrant.¹⁷ There is no need for the journal to make the meaning of the reference explicit; the journal's readership already associated Caesar with tyranny, even, moreover, when a given reader's only exposure to Caesar might have been through a play or a work of art.

The parallel between Caesar and Charles I might seem more controversial. However, it is not original either. The protagonists of the English Revolution, such as Algernon Sydney, had already compared Charles I to Caesar in the 17th century.¹⁸ As Raymonde Monnier demonstrates, theorists from the English Revolution had considerable influence on the patriots of the French Revolution.¹⁹ It is unsurprising then, that the *Révolutions de Paris* would place Caesar and Charles I in the same category as tyrants. Moreover, this parallel signifies that here at least the reference to antiquity is not of a different nature than the reference to more recent history. In this circumstance, the distance separating the era, or eras of revolution(s) from antiquity can be compressed, allowing for a universal judgment that transcends time and place: a tyrant is a tyrant, in whatever era he lives.

These multiple parallels might suggest equivalence. This is doubtless the case for the first three figures, that between the criminal (“*scélérat*”), on the one hand and Julius Caesar and Charles I on the other.²⁰ What is a tyrant, after all, if not the greatest of criminals, who not only breaks the laws but also puts himself above them? It would have been enough perhaps just to mention Louis XVI in such disreputable company. The *Révolutions de Paris* goes one step further, describing Louis, in seemingly hyperbolic fashion, not only as a tyrant, but as the worst

¹⁷ See M. L. Clarke, *The Noblest Roman: Marcus Brutus and his Reputation*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1981), pp. 96-101. It is no coincidence that the *Révolutions de Paris* would cite Sydney elsewhere as a model of virtue. See *RP*, t. 12, n°143, p. 101.

¹⁸ M. L. Clarke, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹⁹ See R. Monnier, *op. cit.*

²⁰ “Scélérat” more literally translates to “scoundrel,” but here the “scélérat” in question is clearly a criminal.

of all tyrants. This is, evidently a kind of a rhetorical device, the logic of which advances by degrees: What is worse than a criminal? A tyrant. Than a tyrant? Louis XVI.

However, one would do well to wonder whether this reference might not contain a more considered historical judgment. Is it merely hyperbole, or is there something that really does make Louis XVI worse than other tyrants? Could it be that for patriots he unites the most dangerous traits of Julius Caesar and Charles I? It has been amply demonstrated that it was Louis's intention to return to Paris as a conqueror (if with the support of the provinces, which he falsely believed he would have), like Caesar crossing the Rubicon. The near certain result would have been civil war, as in Ancient Rome and 17th century England.²¹ Like Charles I, but unlike Caesar, the source of Louis's power had generally been considered legitimate up to this point. Louis and Charles I also shared an unshakeable belief in their divine right to rule. Finally, like Caesar, or at least the Caesar of revolutionary imagining, Louis hid his true ambitions behind a constitutional façade. This duplicity, revealed by flight to Varennes, is perhaps the most important element of this portrait of Louis XVI as tyrant. On a deeper level, the two references complement each other to complete it. Louis XVI joined the "legitimate" power, or, more importantly, power that would have been considered legitimate by most, whether by divine right or the constitution, of Charles I to the audacity and cynicism of Caesar. This combination is what makes him the most dangerous of tyrants.

Despite this status as the supreme example of tyranny that the *Révolutions de Paris* immediately accorded to Louis XVI, after this first account of his flight, the journal turned its attention away from him, making the "moderate" majority of the National Assembly and its supporters its main target. This raises the question of why, after having made such an effort to demonstrate that Louis XVI is the worst of all tyrants, the journal would abandon this target so

²¹ T. Tackett, *op. cit.* p. 55.

easily. The key to this enigma lies in the change in the balance of power indicated earlier: Louis XVI at the head of an army would have been dangerous in and of himself; Louis XVI suspended from power, captive in the Tuileries, was dangerous only through what others, and especially those who held real power, believed about his legitimacy or viability as a king. The contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* understood that now the real danger came from the National Assembly and the institutions behind it: the National Guard, the municipality of Paris, the courts. From this point on then, they would direct most of their criticisms or attacks against these powers.

Initially, the journalists of the *Révolutions de Paris* were wary of the National Assembly, but believed nonetheless that the king's flight had provided the opportunity to persuade or even to force them to adopt a program more favorable to patriots' demands. The author of an article on "the insufficiency of the right of petition," also from issue 102, makes this point: "The great and memorable day of the 21st has lifted many obstacles that it would have been difficult for us to clear; but thanks to the crime of the modern Tarquin, now we have only to follow the simple route of addressing the National Assembly itself directly; the circumstances have reduced it to the happy necessity of listening to us."²² The article here transfigures the king into Tarquin, which is to say Tarquinius Superbus, last king of Rome, who was banished to make way for the Roman Republic. The reference to Tarquin would have made the journal's readers think of this transition between monarchy and republic and suggests the ultimately republican aims of the *Révolutions de Paris*. The story of Tarquin serves as a kind of precedent: because it suggests a republican solution to the problem of tyrannical kings, it allows the journalist to suggest it as well. At this delicate junction, when the king had not yet been brought back to Paris and when France had become a *de facto* republic, it was still possible to believe that the king's flight, like the rape of

²² *RP*, t. 8, n°102, pp. 560-61.

Lucretia perpetrated by Tarquin's nephew, could serve as catalyst for the establishment of a *de jure* republic. It was, at least, within the power of the Assembly to deliberate on this point, and in the king's absence, the journalist could believe that the Assembly would be forced to take the idea seriously.

From the start of the Varennes Crisis, however, the Assembly's conduct did not lend itself very well to these hopes. Already, in the first article recounting the king's flight the *Révolutions de Paris* had been obliged to remark that the Assembly had welcomed "by murmurs" (of disapproval) one deputy's proposal to replace the formula for the promulgation of new laws "Louis by the grace of God" with "the sacramental words: *The National Assembly has decreed and orders.*" And the journalist comments with a quote from Horace (though without naming him): "*O servum pecus!* / Herd of slaves!"²³ The Latin citation's main function here seems to be to give weight to the accusation by establishing the journalist's erudition.

The choice of this particular quote is not random, however; the dialectic between tyrants and slaves constitutes an important motif in classical republican theory. "Slavery" in this context signifies the voluntary abandonment of one's dignity as a free man in choosing to serve a master. When republican thinkers first adopted this idea in Antiquity, it was conceived in literal as well as metaphorical terms and served to justify slavery: if a free man should kill himself rather than submit to slavery, then slaves have no one to blame but themselves for their servitude. By the time of the French Revolution, however, the usage had become purely metaphorical and coexisted with patriots' identification with and sympathy for actual slaves, especially once the insurrection began in Saint-Domingue in August of 1791. This seeming contradiction highlights the way in which patriots adapted ideas originating in Antiquity to their own conception of the

²³ *RP*, t. 8, n°102, p. 541.

universality of natural rights, strengthening the ideal of “live free or die”²⁴ by divorcing it from a justification of slavery.

For the *Révolution de Paris*, in failing to seize the opportunity to rid France of royalty, the National Assembly lowered itself to the king’s level, as the title of an article recounting the royal family’s return to Paris attests: “Louis XVI’s Conspiracy, and Perfidious Conduct of the National Assembly.” Perfidy was now a quality that the Assembly, or at least its “moderate” majority, shared with the king. And if the Assembly was perfidious, it was because its right-wing had already begun to propose, now that the king had returned, the solution which would win out in the end. Louis would be offered the choice to accept the constitution and reign once more, a refusal resulting in the regency for the dauphin.²⁵ This proposition provoked a citation of Voltaire’s “Mort de César” on the part of the *Révolutions de Paris*: “Caesar... Still wants the crown; / The people refuses it, and the senate bestows it.” It is not surprising to see this play of Voltaire’s cited, though it is little known today. Patriots appreciated Voltaire in two main capacities, one of which was as the author of “Brutus” and the “Mort de César.”²⁶ Half of the references that the *Révolutions de Paris* makes to Brutus over this period are actually references to Voltaire’s plays. As previously noted, the figure of Brutus owes its popularity in large part to his portrayal in these works. While the plays are not without their ambiguities, the patriot reading sees them as testaments of liberty against the tyranny represented here by Caesar, in “Brutus” by Tarquin.

As the ellipses indicate, the author of the article modified Voltaire’s verse. In the original play, it is by these lines that Metellus Cimber, one of Caesar’s future assassins, finishes his

²⁴ Motto of the Society of the Friends of the Constitution, or Jacobin Club.

²⁵ *RP*, t. 8, n°103, p. 594.

²⁶ The other was as an opponent of injustice linked to religious intolerance during the Calas, Sirven or La Barre affairs. See *RP*, t. 8, n°100, p. 448, where the journal gives Voltaire three epithets, that of “defender of Calas” and those of “sublime author of the death of Caesar” and “author of Brutus.”

account of the famous scene drawn from Plutarch where Caesar refuses the crown that Marc Antony offers him before the people.²⁷ Cimber fears that the “corrupt half” of the senate will prove more favorable to Caesar’s ambitions than the people have, and so he warns, in the first half of the verse that “Caesar, already too much a king, wants the crown too” (“*veut encore la couronne*”)²⁸. In other words, Caesar already has *de facto* royal power, but wants it made official. In removing the words “already too much a king” from the verse, the journalist changes its meaning so that it applies better to Louis XVI. Louis lost his crown by fleeing, he wants it back *encore*. The basic meaning does not change, however: the Assembly, like the Roman senate, is betraying the people, of whom they are simple delegates, according to the theory of popular sovereignty, in acceding to the guilty ambitions of the tyrant. The authority of such a figure as Voltaire, whose remains the Assembly itself had already planned to place in the newly consecrated Panthéon before the Varennes Crisis, gives added legitimacy to the comparison.

When the Assembly decreed on 15 July 1791, that the king, rendered inviolable by the constitution, would receive the opportunity to reign once more, the classical allusions made by the *Révolutions de Paris* corresponded to patriots’ three principal reactions: disappointment, anger, but also bitter and ironic amusement. Disappointment first: the journalist displays a reluctance, whether sincere or purely rhetorical, to believe that the king could be place back upon the throne: “If this was so, all energetic feeling would be forever exiled from our hearts; there would be nothing left for us but to avert our eyes from Sparta and Rome, to cover them with a funereal band, and to present our heads to the knife.”²⁹ This passage shows a profound discouragement. Paradoxically, it also includes the first positive reference to Antiquity this

²⁷ “Vie de César” in Dacier, trans. *Les vies des hommes illustres de Plutarque*, (Paris: Chez Paulus-du-Mesnil, 1734), t. 6, pp. 309-10.

²⁸ Voltaire, “Mort de César,” in *Œuvres complètes*, (Imprimerie de la société littéraire typographique, 1784), t. 2, p. 329.

²⁹ *RP*, t. 9, n°105, p. 15.

chapter has examined so far. Sparta and Rome do not represent cities mired in history here, places where corrupt senates collaborate with tyrants. Rather, these are Rome and Sparta “in their golden age [*beaux jours*]” as other issues of the *Révolutions de Paris*, and most other sources from the period that cite Antiquity have it, which is to say in a mythical Antiquity where republican virtue reigns.

In references such as this, Antiquity becomes an abstract symbol and it is not so much Rome or Sparta to which the journalist aspires, but the dreamed of republic. This is not to say that the dreamed of republic would take the form of Rome or Sparta; the journal’s patriot ideal remains anchored in natural rights philosophy, unknown to Antiquity. Rather, it is as if the article were saying: Rome (or Sparta) was a republic, we too aspire to republicanism; if we cease to aspire to republicanism, then we will never attain the full measure of what we can achieve. It does not matter that republicanism did not signify the same thing in France at the end of the 18th century as in Antiquity. The journalist knew that it did not and rejoiced in the progress that the Declaration of Rights represents. What mattered was the aspiration itself. In this passage, the journalist makes clear the stakes: the right to aspire to the republic will be lost if the Assembly is allowed to reestablish royalty. One cannot help but think here of Rousseau’s warning, which was doubtless in the minds of the author(s) of this passage as well: “Free peoples, remember this maxim: liberty can be acquired; but it is never recovered.”³⁰ The fear of losing, perhaps forever, the opportunity to become free is palpable. It is in this context that the anger directed against an Assembly potentially responsible for the eternal loss of liberty must be understood.

This anger manifests itself in the same article with two other allusions to Antiquity. These allusions apply to the king, but the attack is directed against the Assembly. One should not forget

³⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du Contrat social ou Principes du droit politique*, (Londres : 1782), p. 76. The journal frequently cites Rousseau and his philosophy, at one point referring to him as the “modern Epictetus.” *RP*, t. 8, n°100, p. 446.

that the Assembly held all power in this moment. The *Révolutions de Paris* was horrified by the farce the Assembly was acting out by alleging the king's inviolability as a pretext to return the reins of power to him:

Go on, vile senators! You are as absurd as you are vicious! [...] Will [his] inviolability shelter him [the king] from all investigation? Yes, say the senators, friends of the civil list,³¹ [his] inviolability extends to everything. An inviolable king! Were he a Nero, a Caligula, a Louis XIV, a Louis XVI, he is inviolable and sacred! Arson, rape, murder, everything is permitted to him; and the citizenry have no right to ask for, and the nation has no right to bring him to, justice!³²

Once more figures from different eras are placed on the same footing. There is no mystery in the choice of referents. Caligula and Nero remain even to this day figures of the tyrant *par excellence* and the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV is the polar opposite of the patriot ideal. Moreover, all these figures exemplify the dangers of absolute power and the impunity that accompanies it. One might find it incongruous to see Louis XVI placed beside Roman emperors known chiefly for their perversity, given his well-published rejection of the debauchery of his predecessors. However, it seems that in this case what counts is not so much the kind of crime, but a ruler's ability to pursue his ends with impunity. Inviolability does not so much turn Louis XVI into Caligula, then, but rather into a more dangerous version of himself, one who can further the counterrevolution, rather than his own pleasures, with impunity.

While the author of this article fears the monster that the Assembly is creating by declaring the king inviolable, the absurdity of the situation does not escape him. The "senators," corrupted by money from the civil list, are "as absurd as they are vicious." Further on, the

³¹ The king's yearly allowance of 25 million *livres* – to which should be added the additional 4 million a year allotted for Marie-Antoinette's personal expenses. To put this in perspective, a middling worker could expect to make 1-1.5 *livres* a day while members of the National Assembly received what many considered to be an excessive daily salary of 18 *livres*. Nevertheless, one of the complaints in the king's justification for his flight was that he was unable to live in the style to which he was accustomed due to lack of funds. Patriots rightly suspected Louis of using this money to corrupt members of the Assembly and others. See, F. Wartelle, "Liste civile" in Albert Soboul, ed., *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1989), pp. 679-70.

³² *RP*, t. 9, n°105, p. 20.

journalist returns to this motif with comical imagery drawn from mythology: the desire to return to the *status quo ante* upon the acceptance of the constitution by the king “Is a turn of the game bag [*tour de gibecière*] worthy of Comus’ valets.”³³ Comus, Roman god of banquets, is here a placeholder for Louis XVI, notorious for his gluttony, to the point that following his flight he was often represented as a pig in caricatures.³⁴ The image of the game bag also attacks his love for hunting, an aristocratic and therefore disreputable passion. The game that his valets, which is to say the Assembly, offer him is, of course, the people. This too is perhaps yet another reference to Antiquity; as the journal remarked already in issue 100, “man-eating kings” is a Homeric locution.³⁵ However that may be, the journalist’s aim is to use the ridicule as a weapon, through the reference to Antiquity, in order to place the Assembly’s legitimacy in doubt by demonstrating that its decision to return Louis XVI to power is a farce.

This device can be found in other articles as well, always using mythological references and in the same mocking tone, often with an added gendered or sexualized dimension. The Assembly, which had ceased to follow the principles of its own Declaration of Rights, “resembles Penelope, who nightly undid what she had embroidered by day.”³⁶ The irony of the allusion becomes clear when one recalls that Penelope is the figure from Antiquity most symbolic of fidelity and employs her ruse in its cause, while this Assembly-Penelope has in no way remained faithful to the people, whom it betrays by the same ruse. The gendered aspect of this image of the Assembly as a wife who has been unfaithful to her husband-people is apparent. Elsewhere, the genders are flipped, however and the Assembly, when represented by its male deputies, can also be unfaithful to its “wife,” the nation, in the arms of a feminized court. The corrupt deputies,

³³ *RP*, t. 9, n°105, p. 27.

³⁴ Annie Duprat, *Les rois de papier: La caricature de Henri III à Louis XVI*, (Paris: Éditions Belin, 2002), pp. 237-242.

³⁵ *RP*, t. 8, n°100, p. 448.

³⁶ *RP*, t. 9, n°105, p. 33.

“transformed into swine, prostitute themselves at the court of a new Circe [Antoinette].”³⁷ In these examples, corruption is feminized, but this is not always the case. In an article which wonders: “Is the Revolution Over Once the Constitution is Accepted by the King?” the journalist chooses masculine figurants to represent corruption: “From the four corners of France, Argonauts ready for anything, are already rushing in for the conquest of the Golden Fleece.”³⁸ The Argonauts are in this case the candidates to the Legislative Assembly and the Golden Fleece the money of the civil list, returned to the king’s control upon his acceptance of the constitution. kings can be corrupting influences as well as queens.

Whenever this kind of gendered or sexualized imagery is present, the question arises of whether it can be attributed to misogyny, and with it the equally important question of the degree to which modern standards can be applied to 18th century discourse, but here there is no simple answer. Chaumette, to whom the article with the reference to Circe-Antoinette is attributed, as well as Maréchal, insisted that women should be confined to the private sphere, and for them it is certainly true that any incursion of women into politics would be a sign of corruption.³⁹ Robert himself, whose wife, Louise Kéralio, was also a journalist and militant of the fraternal societies, did not combat these prejudices about a woman’s proper place.⁴⁰ However, it is important to ask whether these references are actually operating on this register, taking them case by case. First, regarding the Assembly as a kind of perverted Penelope, there is certainly an implicit suggestion in this reference that the defining characteristic of virtuous women is to be faithful to their husbands. This is reinforced when taken together with a reference that blames men’s infidelity on a woman (Circe-Antoinette, in this case). On the other hand, it should be remembered that this

³⁷ *RP*, t. 9, n°107, p. 103.

³⁸ *RP*, t. 9, n°113, p. 443.

³⁹ Nicole Bossut, *Chaumette, porte-parole des sans-culottes*, (Paris: Éditions du CTHS, 1998), p. 99.

⁴⁰ R. Monnier, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

“assembly” is a feminine word in French, if one wished to personify it in order to better criticize it, the logical choice would be as a female figure. Moreover, as the reference to the Argonauts demonstrates, the journal does not privilege women in its mythological gallery of corruption.

The case of Antoinette-Circe, or for that matter of the Antoinette-siren from earlier, is not altogether the same. It is undeniable that for certain revolutionaries, or indeed Ancien Régime pamphleteers, Antoinette was a figure of contempt at least in part because she was a woman with some political influence, if not outright power. It is probable that this fear of women in power (even unofficial power) was an element of the criticism patriots like Chaumette or Maréchal formulated against her. It is however equally undeniable that there were a number of good reasons for opponents of counterrevolution to execrate Antoinette whatever their views on the role of women. She was, after all, as patriots suspected but could not prove, the main instigator of the king’s flight, and she had on every occasion, from the beginning of the Revolution, proved herself the most violent enemy of revolutionary principles. Even before the Revolution she had opposed all attempts at reform. The authors of the *Révolutions de Paris* did not need to read her correspondence to know that she considered them to be “monsters,” and it was only natural for them to return the sentiment.⁴¹ Given all this, I would argue that in turning Antoinette into a mythological monster, the journal is using misogynistic imagery to largely political ends.

Further demonstrating, moreover, that not all gendered or sexualized references are the same, the *Révolutions de Paris* compares the Assembly to a siren toward the end of the summer of 1791, as it did Antoinette at the beginning, but the meaning is altered. In the first issue of September 1791, the journal cites the Roman poet Horace: “For several months now it [the

⁴¹ On Antoinette’s description of revolutionaries as “monsters” in her correspondence see T. Tackett, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

Assembly] has nattered on [*radote*]⁴² or put itself up for sale; just like that monster described by Horace: a beautiful woman to the waist, whose body ends in a fish tail: / *Desinet in piscem mulier formosa superne*. / ART. POET.” As discussed above, the journal began, at the moment of the king’s flight, with an Antoinette-siren deceiving the people with a façade of innocence. The Assembly-siren seems to be of a different character. First, it fools no one. It has no seductive façade; one recognizes it right away for a “monster.” Thus, on the point of transferring its power to the Legislative Assembly, it loses its dangerous character, becoming a pathetic, contemptible figure, ridiculous in its monstrosity. Its betrayal has been known so long that it no longer has the power to surprise.

The transfer of a symbolic language from the royal family to the National Assembly also, of course, signifies a change in the locus of real power, but just as crucially, it allows for a parallel to be drawn between the moment of the king’s flight and that of the Assembly’s repression. At the moment of the king’s flight, the people were at the mercy of the royal family, disarmed by the shock of the betrayal; in the repression of the summer of 1791, the people were disarmed as well, this time by the Assembly. But the second betrayal is worse, for there is nowhere to turn between a traitorous royal family and Assembly and a muzzled republican movement. The only arm remaining to the journalist, powerless before the forces of reaction, at least for the moment, is therefore ridicule, to which the reference to mythology is well-adapted.

Thus, as this chapter has observed, the *Révolutions de Paris* illustrates the illegitimacy of the constitutional monarchy by ridiculing it through references to Greco-Roman mythology or appealing to a network of recognizable symbols: the tyrant, the corrupt senate, the “golden age” of Greece and Rome. The representation of the royal couple themselves remains static during this period, as the flight to Varennes definitively extinguishes any glimmer of hope that might have

⁴² The connotation is one of senility, which repeats itself and talks nonsense; *radoter* has the same root as *dotage*.

still survived that the king had truly rallied the Revolution. From that moment on, the king could only be a tyrant, the queen a monster of corruption. On the other hand one can see the journal waver on the kinds of references to apply to the Assembly. Its contributors hesitated between attempts to shame the Assembly into returning to its original principals and appeals to the people to act as witnesses against the Assembly and its prevarications, before resigning themselves to acting as contemptuous but powerless witnesses against its corruption. They attempted to shame the Assembly by comparing it to Voltaire's corrupt Roman senate or by invoking the authority of a Roman author like Horace. They reminded the people what they stood to lose in failing to impose their will on their representatives by invoking the abstracted ideal of Sparta and Rome. Finally, they used mythology first to make the people see that the Assembly was no longer worth of their trust, this kind of reference ultimately degenerating into a caustic but impotent commentary.

It may be observed throughout this chapter that for the *Révolutions de Paris* the National Assembly betrayed the people not only by allying itself with the king, but also by turning its back on the principles of natural rights and popular sovereignty which the journal considers that it had a mandate to defend. Although the crisis of Varennes was not the first time that the Assembly had violated the principles of the Declaration of Rights, its response to this crisis provided a striking example of its desire to repress the popular movement, making the gulf between the people and their representatives apparent to all. Thus, the de-legitimization of the Assembly had a double character, manifest in its alliance with the king, but also in its rejection of the real sovereign, the people. The crisis of Varennes represented therefore an impasse not only for royalty but for the constitutional monarchy as conceived by the Constituent Assembly.

The final chapter will discuss the *Révolutions de Paris*'s republican response to this impasse. Referencing Antiquity, not only facilitated the de-legitimization of the constitutional

monarchy, but also served to support Republican demands against the enemies of the popular movement and their repressive apparatus. By examining the use of classical references to give added legitimacy to the republican ideal, the final chapter will also deepen the analysis of that second side of the Assembly's loss of legitimacy, its rejection of popular sovereignty in action and how the repression of republican ideas served only to better demonstrate their necessity.

Chapter Three

I. Republicanism

So far this thesis has discussed the Republic and republicanism as if the definition of these concepts were self-evident, or worse, as if they merely constituted an alternative to monarchy in the form of a kingless régime. Now that the central question is that of the flowering of the republican ideal in the pages of the *Révolutions de Paris* during the summer of 1791 and the role that the reference to Antiquity played in justifying it, it is important to define more precisely what republicanism meant to the journalists as to their readers. Defining republicanism is not as simple as it might seem, however. In order to do so, this chapter will begin by looking at two movements of political philosophy and their definitions of republicanism, that of the French Enlightenment philosophers and that of classical republicanism. Despite the distinctions between them, these movements did not function as discreet categories, but were in dialogue for the entirety of the 18th century. Patriot thought borrowed theoretical elements from both, but it is important to note that patriots did not simply adopt the doctrines of any given theorist, but rather created syntheses which adapted certain ideas and analyses to new revolutionary experiences. Moreover, one should keep in mind that while this discussion temporarily puts natural rights philosophy aside in order to provide a clear outline of republicanism before the Revolution, natural rights remain the primordial element of the revolutionary republican synthesis.

Having some idea of the *philosophes'* definition of the republic is crucial to understanding how the revolutionary republican movement developed it. The notion that the French Revolution is the Enlightenment's "fault" is as old as the Revolution itself. While it would be naïve to think that the *philosophes* really "caused" the Revolution, the influence of their ideas, but also of the interpretative frameworks and their use of antiquity that they left to the revolutionaries is

undeniable. The thinkers of the French Enlightenment were not the only influences on revolutionary thought, and one would be wrong to limit any inquiry into its origins to the writings of Montesquieu or Rousseau. However, because they were so widely known and oft-cited by patriots, their definition(s) of republicanism are a good place to start.

For Montesquieu, as for the *Encyclopédistes*, the definition of a republic was a simple question of form. According to Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois*, "There are three kinds of governments; the REPUBLICAN, the MONARCHIST, and the DESPOTIC." When sovereignty, which is to say legislative power, is in the hands of multiple people, a state is a republic, whether democratic, if the majority possesses this sovereignty, or aristocratic if a minority possesses it. In both cases the executive power is in the hands of a "counsel or a senate." Under the monarchy, a single individual possesses the executive power, while an "intermediary body" makes the law. In a despotic government, on the other hand, the executive and legislative powers are held by a single individual, who thus has no check on his power.¹

Although Montesquieu begins by dividing possible governments into three categories, the difference between democracy and aristocracy proves just as important as that between republic and monarchy or monarchy and despotism. The two kinds of republics are alike only in the sharing of the legislative and executive powers among multiple people. One can consider then that Montesquieu's definition of the republic is none other than that which the Dictionary of the Académie française gave already in 1694: "A state governed by many," expanded to include the question of sovereignty as well as governance. The entry "Republic" in the *Encyclopédie* is based on Montesquieu, which suggests that his definition had wide currency among the *philosophes*.²

¹ Montesquieu (Charles de Secondat, baron de), *Œuvres de Monsieur de Montesquieu. Nouvelle Édition, Revue, corrigée, & considérablement augmenté*, (Chez Sanson & Compagnie, 1784), t. 2, pp. 13-29.

² *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st Edition (1694), s. v. "REPUBLIQUE," in "Dictionnaires d'Autrefois," The ARTFL Project – Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago, accessed 26 April

The tradition of classical republicanism, on the other hand, which as its name implies, began its development in Antiquity, but which continued to evolve in the writings of Renaissance theorists such as Machiavelli, as well as those of English, then American and finally French revolutionaries and their sympathizers, defines the republic differently. This tradition defines the republic in terms of liberty. A republic is a “free state.” Classical republicans oppose liberty to “slavery,” or rather domination, for that which makes a slave, even one with an absent or “easy-going” master, is the fact of being subject to that master’s arbitrary will. Liberty, by corollary, consists in not being subject to another’s arbitrary will. It is the same with states. A free state, a republic, or a “commonwealth” (which is essentially a translation of the Latin *res publica*) in the 17th century English texts, is a state where the citizens obey not the arbitrary will of individuals, whether kings or elected magistrates, but laws which they have made themselves or through their representatives. According to this theory, an individual or a people can only be free in this kind of state, since any other would subject the people, individually and collectively, to another’s arbitrary will.³

Rousseau and Mably, two *philosophes* often considered apart from the rest because their writings frequently opposed those of the *Encyclopédistes*, had already begun to synthesize the

2012, <<http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=république>>; Denis Diderot, Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, et. al., *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, Par une société de gens de lettres*, (Neufchâtel: Chez Samuel Faulche & Compagnie, 1765), s.v. “RÉPUBLIQUE,” t. 14, p. 150.

³ It is important to note that this kind of liberty “as non-domination” differs from the Hobbesian, then 19th century liberal definition of liberty most widely accepted today, which the contemporary political theorist Philip Pettit calls “liberty as non-interference.” According to this theory, a slave with an absentee master would be considered free, because no one is constraining his will, since the fact that he remains in his master’s power is relevant only as far as his master uses that power to constrain him. For the classical republican, this state of being subject to another’s arbitrary will is untenable, whether that will ever turns to constraint or not. On the other hand, a believer in liberty as non-interference would view any law that constrains an individual’s choices as a diminishment of his liberty, whereas if such a law were to be decided by the consent of the citizens of the state in which it was passed, for the classical republican those citizens would retain their entire liberty by obeying it. It should be noted as well that classical republicanism, when combined, as it began to be starting with the English Revolution, with natural rights philosophy, demands that a law satisfy the further condition of respecting first the rights of the citizenry, and then, by the time of the French Revolution, those of all humanity. See Phillip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Florence Gauthier, *op. cit.*

French Enlightenment and classical republican definitions of the republic, while adding their own reflections. Rousseau, like Montesquieu, describes in his *Du contrat social*, a tripartite division between “simple” forms of government (which can then be combined in different permutations). According to Rousseau, however, these are rather democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, and it is those who govern who alone determine the difference, because whatever the form of the government, sovereignty always belongs to the people. Thus, for Rousseau a “State governed by many” is not a republic, but democracy. A republic, on the other hand, is “any State ruled by laws, under whatever form of administration that may be: for then alone does public interest govern, and then alone the *chose publique* [literal translation of the Latin *res publica*] is something.”⁴ Rousseauist thought does not, then, abandon Montesquieu’s schemas entirely, but its definition of the republic is that of classical republicanism, to the point of recalling the origin of the word “republic.” Mably arrived at a similar definition of the republic, adding, however, following Locke, that the ultimate goal of the republic is the preservation of the people’s natural rights⁵. The patriots of the French Revolution would adopt a similar synthesis.

Nevertheless, there was often some confusion between the terms “republic” and “democracy,” often used, in the Enlightenment and during the Revolution, as synonyms. Thus, the article “Republic” of the *Encyclopédie* declares that “It is in the nature of a *republic* to have but a small territory; without that it cannot long subsist. In a large *republic* there are large fortunes, and consequently little moderation of spirit: there are responsibilities too great to place in one citizen’s hands; interests particularize: a man feels first that he can be happy, great, glorious, without his country; and soon, that he can be great alone upon the ruins of his country.”⁶

⁴ Rousseau, *Du Contrat Social ou Principes du droit politique*, (Londres: 1782), pp. 63-64.

⁵ Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Des droits et des devoirs du citoyen*, (Kell, 1789). See also, Fl. Gauthier, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-25.

⁶ *Encyclopédie*, *op. cit.*, s.v. “RÉPUBLIQUE.”

Montesquieu and Rousseau agree on this point, if “democracy” is substituted for “republic.” Virtue, defined as the love of the rule of law or of equality; moderation; the necessity of keeping great disparities in fortune at bay, are all elements that the political theorists of the French Enlightenment all consider necessary for the survival of “democracy,” but also for any “republic” according to Mably and to a lesser degree Montesquieu.⁷ Despite the efforts of various theorists, the distinction between “republic” and “democracy” was never sharp enough for a definition of either that would satisfy everyone. Further complicating the picture, during the Revolution, patriots like Robert professed to be both democrats and republicans, while giving these terms new definitions shaped by but not copied from the *philosophes*.⁸

By the time of the Revolution, however, the theory that held that “republican” government, understood, following Montesquieu’s definition, as a kingless government, would be impossible in a large country like France was universally recognized, if not always accepted. It is important to distinguish between the word “republic” and the idea behind it, since patriots were calling for a state under the rule of law that would protect natural rights, close to Mably’s definition of a republic, from the beginning of the Revolution, whether or not they used the term “republic.” The pre-Varennes consensus among patriots, with a few notable exceptions, held to a monarchy in which sovereignty no longer originated in the king but in the people, who would elect deputies to the National Assembly, the legislative power, and of whose will the king would become the executor, a simple agent of the people.⁹ As long as the Assembly respected the

⁷ Mably, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 63-65; Montesquieu, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-34.

⁸ R. Monnier, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-83.

⁹ Though the term “representative” is most often used to designate the deputies to the National Assembly, patriots, familiar with Rousseau’s objection to the notion of “representation” (according to Rousseau, sovereignty, being inalienable, cannot be represented), conceived of representation in the Lockian perspective of trusteeship and thus prefer the term “mandatory” (in the sense of “invested with a mandate”) to that of “representative” in discussions where precision of terms was important. Thus, the Assembly does not represent the people’s will, but rather translates it into law. See Antoni Domènech, “Droit, droit naturel et tradition républicaine moderne,” in *Républicanismes et droit naturel*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

people's sovereignty and the king did not regain any of his former prerogatives, the free state or "republic" was not considered incompatible with this kind of monarchy.¹⁰ Patriots believed that the "revolutions" of 1789, by which the Assembly was formed, privileges abolished, natural rights declared, and so on, had created just such a republic. Accordingly, they founded their critique of the Assembly's policies of granting the king a suspensive veto, decreeing martial law, or dividing the nation into active and passive citizens,¹¹ on the understanding that these policies violated the principals of this original revolutionary republic.

The movement calling explicitly for a republic as a regime not already in place, differentiated itself, meanwhile, from the more general patriot orientation by calling for the abolition of royalty in France. Starting in 1790, writers like Robert, who would become one of the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* in July 1791, or Lavicomterie, author of *Des peuples et des rois* and *Les crimes des rois de France*, began to espouse this kind of republicanism. However, until the Varennes crisis, republican writings remained not abstract, since they take great care to demonstrate how the republican model could be applied to France, but theoretical, due to lack of support in public opinion.¹² The Varennes crisis, which put the king's status into question and with it potentially the whole constitutional edifice, allowed this movement to become more popular, despite the enduring hesitations between this new kind of republicanism

¹⁰ The *Révolutions de Paris* itself even observed, in the middle of the repression of the summer of 1791, that this kind of republic had already existed at the beginning of the Revolution: "In the month of July 1789, Louis XVI was only a king in paint. The name and titles of that tempera monarch covered all the houses, all the walls of Paris; the French people were then truly sovereign." *RP*, t. 9, n°106, p. 78.

¹¹ The Constitution of 1791 established two categories of "citizen," active and passive. To be an active citizen, one had to be a man of at least twenty-five and pay a certain amount of direct property taxes. All active citizens could vote, but a further property qualification was required to be an elector, and to be elected to office one originally had to have enough property to pay a silver mark in taxes, though this last decree was abrogated before the election of the Legislative Assembly. Passive citizens, on the other hand, were excluded from voting. The conditions for the election of the Legislative Assembly were therefore more restrictive than for the election of the Third Estate, which had accorded the vote to every head of household. M. Pertué, "Suffrage," in *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française, op. cit.*, p. 1001-02.

¹² On Robert and Lavicomterie's republicanism, see Raymonde Monnier, *Républicanisme, Patriotisme et Révolution française*, ch. 6, "Le langage républicain en acte," in particular pp. 156-57 and 178-182.

and the preservation of the monarchy, but with another king. The republic had nevertheless become a popular demand.

The republican movement cannot, however, be reduced to the simple demand for an end to the monarchy. It should rather be conceived as an outgrowth of the patriot orientation. As described above, patriot thought was a sort of “republicanism” with a king as agent of the people, and which does not generally describe itself explicitly as “republican.” Republicans espoused the principles behind this kind of general patriot “republicanism,” but added to them the belief that the kind of republic all patriots desire is incompatible with kingship. Moreover, for the republican movement, the republic did not signify only the reign of laws, popular sovereignty, the guarantee of natural rights, and the absence of a king at the head of the government. Republicanism adds two more conditions: hatred for kings and the virtue of citizens. The “republics” of Sparta, Athens, and especially Rome, served as models for that civic virtue as well as the execration of kings, which has been considered an integral part of virtue since Antiquity.

Most of the references to Antiquity from the pages of the *Révolutions de Paris* that the previous chapter examined operated on the register of analogy. This will remain the dominant register in the examples analyzed in this chapter, but added to these will be examples showing the influence of ancient models on reflections on the republic, democracy, citizenship, and how free men – and women – act. As observed in the previous chapters, the use of ancient models of republican virtue does not imply the adoption of ancient institutions, which are mentioned only rarely. Antiquity, then, becomes a kind of symbol of civic virtue rather than a properly historical reference.

Before turning to these examples, the *Révolutions de Paris*’s own definitions of the republic bear examining. The journal defines the republic early in the summer of 1791 by contrasting it with democracy in an article from the second issue after the king’s flight. The

article responds to objections that those who were petitioning the Assembly regarding the fate of the monarchy were attempting to seize the legislative power for themselves. According to the journalist, this is impossible, for “The citizenry is not unaware that due to surface area and population, pure democracy is impracticable in the French republic,” a declaration to which he affixes a rather long note.

It is worthwhile to cite this note *in extenso*, for it defines the republic as the *Révolutions de Paris* understood it during the Varennes Crisis:

Many people are going to think that there is a contradiction in these words: *pure democracy is impracticable in the French republic*, because the republic has often been confused with democracy: but all contradictions disappear once one attends to the fact that democracy is that sort of government where the people, assembled in person, make their laws themselves, while the republic is the government of a people who know how to have a senate declare and execute their will, under reserve of the nation’s *veto*. A small state like Geneva, for example, can govern itself in a purely democratic manner, because all Genevans can gather in the same place and hear each other; but it is physically impossible for 25 million men, spread out over a large surface area, to gather together and deliberate in the same enclosure or on the same plain.¹³

One should observe first that the journalist does not adopt wholesale any of the definitions just examined of the republic. Democracy is not, as it is for Montesquieu, a subcategory of the republic, but a distinct entity. This distinction allows the journalist to admit the inapplicability of democracy to France, while still maintaining the idea of the republic.

The republic, in turn, becomes a kind of hybrid of the definitions of Montesquieu, Mably and Rousseau and of ideas emerging from the experience of the revolution itself. The journalist, like all patriots, refuses the possibility of an aristocratic republic of the kind theorized by Montesquieu. The Assembly had already established this kind of aristocratic republic, where a minority is sovereign, by turning “active” citizens into a kind of “aristocracy of the rich.” Patriots like the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* firmly denounced not only traditional

¹³ *RP*, t. 8, n°103, p. 558n.

aristocracy, but also this decree. They held that sovereignty must belong to the people in their entirety, as in Montesquieu's democracy or in every society according to Rousseau and Mably.

However, in the above note the *Révolutions de Paris* elaborates a new theory of representation, developed in the course of the Revolution itself and shared by most patriots. With this theory, this article resolves a problem posed by Rousseau, that of the abdication of sovereignty. The journalist alludes in the main text of the article to Rousseau's objection to representation. Summarizing one of the arguments of adversaries of the right of petition, he writes: "but a great man [Rousseau] said that the freest people [the English] were only free at the moment of elections."¹⁴ Indeed, the "great man" had denied that the English political system could be rightly considered free, because the King-in-Parliament usurps popular sovereignty, which returns in part to the people only during elections. The journalist responds to this objection by espousing another model of representation, according to which the people never abandon their sovereignty. The "senate" or National Assembly is not autonomous, for its decrees are placed "under reserve of the nation's *veto*." The people do not delegate the Assembly to will in their place, but to transmit the people's will and execute it: hence, the importance of making public opinion known to the Assembly by way of petition.

Thus, to the extent that the republic that the *Révolutions de Paris* advocates is a new entity, formed from revolutionary experience as much as by anterior texts, it cannot therefore correspond entirely to the republics of the *philosophes* or *a fortiori* to ancient republics. Natural rights, universalism, representation of any kind were all unknown to the Greeks and Romans, yet they are fundamental to the revolutionary republican movement's definition of the republic. What then is the use of the reference to Antiquity in the legitimization of republicanism? The response to this question comes back to that other aspect of republicanism: a certain ethos of citizenship

¹⁴ *RP*, t. 8, n°103, p. 558.

designated by the term civic virtue. In defense of Brune, accused in the course of the repression following the Champ-de-Mars Massacre of having “made speeches announcing a spirit of sedition” and, in the *Révolutions de Paris*’s terms, of “having preached republicanism,” the journalist declares: “it is impossible, metaphysically impossible, for all true republicans not to be excellent citizens; they are only that, they can only be that, the republic is everything to them.”¹⁵

This notion that republicanism consists in a heroic devotion to the republic originated in Antiquity, but would be fundamental to both the Enlightenment and the French Revolution’s conception of the republic. Already, when Montesquieu wrote of the mainspring of the republic, he turned to Antiquity: “Greek politicians, who lived in a popular government, recognized no other force that could support it but that of virtue.” And Montesquieu endeavors to prove this belief right:

Athens had within it the same strength when it dominated with so much glory, and when it served with so much shame. It had twenty thousand citizens (2) when it defended the Greeks against the Persians [...]. When *Philip* dared to dominate in Greece, when he appeared at the gates of Athens (4), it had as yet only lost the times. One can see in Demosthenes what pains it took to awaken it: they feared Philip there not as the enemy of liberty but of their pleasures (5). That city, which had resisted so many defeats, which had been seen to be reborn after destructions, was vanquished at Chaeronea, and forever. [...] It was always as easy to triumph over Athens’ strength as it was difficult to triumph over its virtue.¹⁶

As Montesquieu demonstrates here, the dialectic between the necessity of virtue and the fear of losing it is at the heart of the idea of the republic as theorized in the 18th century. Without virtue, the republic falls apart, because every individual puts his private interests above the public interest, and thus divided the republic falls prey to conquerors from abroad or internal greed and ambition. The larger and wealthier a country, moreover, the more difficult it is to preserve virtue,

¹⁵ *RP*, t. 9, n°110, pp. 314-15.

¹⁶ Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois*, op. cit., livre 3, pp. 24-25.

for the more private interests have, the more they want.¹⁷ Indeed, this is one reason why Montesquieu, among others, preferred the supposed stability of the monarchy to a republic's precarious dependence upon virtue. Equally important, if virtue is exemplified by certain heroic figures, it is more fundamentally associated with the people. Once a people's virtue is lost, all the virtue, all the skill of a given individual, even of a Demosthenes, cannot bring that people back from the precipice.

Antiquity is of course, as mentioned, not merely an example to illustrate this idea, but is also at its origin. Take for example the citation of Tacitus at the beginning of the article "Republic" on the *Encyclopédie*: "*Reipublicoe [sic] forma laudari facilius [sic] quàm [sic] evenire & si evenit, haud diuturna esse potest* [It is easier to praise the republican form than for it to come about, and if it comes about, it cannot at all be for long], *says Tacitus, annal. 4.*"¹⁸ The patriots of the Revolution cannot share this pessimism, which imagines the loss of virtue to be inevitable, in every regard. The gaze of those who believe themselves at the beginning of a new era, infused with an Enlightenment belief in progress, cannot be that of an author, writing under the Roman Empire, but nostalgic for Rome's republican past. For most patriots, moreover, virtue emanates naturally from the people, who can be deceived but not easily corrupted, and this virtue acts as a safeguard against the decline of the republic.

Nevertheless, this pessimistic perspective on the republic permeates the terms and notions that patriots had at their disposal to make sense of the events they were observing. Thus, this perspective forms a rubric to categorize and explain the often despairing response to the repeated betrayals of the summer of 1791, which do not exist in a vacuum, but which take place and are understood within this mental universe.

¹⁷ See above, p. 68.

¹⁸ *Encyclopédie, op. cit.*, s.v. "RÉPUBLIQUE," t. 14, p. 150. My translation.

The theme of the necessity of republican virtue and the fear of losing it would thus remain at the heart of efforts to legitimize the republic, especially in the choice of examples from Antiquity. The *Révolutions de Paris* did not respond directly to Montesquieu's intimation that the republic's dependence on virtue makes it fragile during the Varennes Crisis. The journal's choice of classical examples of republican virtue indicates that it was not stability that its contributors sought to find in the republic. Among the most prominent of these were, after all, Marcus Brutus and Cato the Younger, who both failed to preserve the Roman Republic, yet who were generally admired for their virtue at the end of the 18th century. The republic needs virtue to survive, certainly, but even when the virtue of a few individuals is unsuccessful in preserving the republic, their heroic self-sacrifice become a point in republicanism's favor. No one would look for such heroism under the monarchy.

What the republic that the *Révolutions de Paris* and other revolutionary republicans advocated potentially lost in stability, it made up in its unique capacity to preserve natural rights. If the French Revolution could be said to have a single, fundamental ideology, the philosophy of natural rights would be it. The French Revolution did not invent it, but neither did Antiquity. The Ancient Greeks and Romans had the notion that citizens had certain prerogatives, but they were neither innate nor universal. The concept of natural rights first began to emerge in the legal writings of the 12th century. From the 12th to the 18th centuries writers, philosophers and revolutionaries continued to develop the idea, theorizing it in conjunction with republicanism. This vast, multi-secular debate culminated during the French Revolution with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.¹⁹

¹⁹ This is equally true of the Declaration of 1789 and of the Declaration of 1793, which only serves to elaborate on principles already implicit in its predecessor. See Fl. Gauthier, *Triomphe et mort du droit naturel en Révolution*, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-07. See also M. Belissa, Y. Bosc and Fl. Gauthier, *Républicanismes et droit naturel*, *op. cit.*

The Declaration includes individual and collective rights like freedom of speech and the press, assembly, and religion, but it also includes the right to participate, directly or through one's representatives, in the legislative power. This last right, that of political participation, is fundamental because it allows for the preservation of all the others. Political participation, then, is a right, but not an end in itself. One is a "citizen" primarily to protect one's rights as a "man."²⁰ Whether or not Constant was correct in asserting that political participation was an end in itself in Antiquity, it is evident that political participation in ancient societies that had not discovered natural rights cannot have had the same character as in revolutionary France. However, virtue proved as useful and necessary to preserving universal natural rights as to conserving the privileges of a citizen élite. If Revolutionary France can be said to have imitated anything from Antiquity, it is surely the concept of virtue. Yet, even then, it would be more accurate to say that patriots adapted this ancient concept of virtue, harnessing it for their own ends.

II. Models of Republican Virtue

In the pages of the *Révolutions de Paris*, the reference to classic models of virtue serves a dual purpose, legitimizing the republic by comparing modern patriots to widely admired heroes from Antiquity, and inspiring its readers to emulate the virtue of ancient and modern exemplars alike. However, the history of Ancient Greece and Rome provided patriots with examples that invited despair at the inexorable onslaught of despotism as much as hope for a republican future, by allowing them to associate both of these ideas with virtuous figures from that history.

The suicides of Cato the Younger and Marcus Brutus, figures of republican virtue *par excellence*, gave an example to follow if ever liberty were to be suppressed, for once gone, it was

²⁰ Though of course, whatever the intentions of the Constituent Assembly when it issued the Declaration, the universal principles consecrated therein can apply as easily to a peasant woman as to a bourgeois man.

considered lost forever. Commenting on the contemporary suicide of Provant, “lieutenant of the gunners of the battalion of Saint-Nicolas [of the National Guard], and member of the Cordeliers Club,” the *Révolutions de Paris* refer to him as a “modern Cato.” Provant killed himself, the journal reports, because he was “profoundly afflicted by the Champ de Mars Massacre,” and his justification was in his last words: “*I swore to die free, liberty is lost, I die.*” Cato the Younger committed suicide after his defeat by Julius Caesar, who, as explored in the previous chapter, was incontestably a tyrant to the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* as well as to their readers.

The parallel is not exact, since Provant did not suffer any personal defeat, but this is less important to the journalist than the idea of suicide as an appropriate response to the loss of liberty. The journalist’s admiring reaction to this suicide through the reference to Cato supports the long-standing thesis that Antiquity provided an alternative to a Christian perspective. Catholicism, the predominant mode of Christianity in France, regards suicide as a mortal sin. Yet the Romans considered that in certain circumstances it was the only honorable course of action. Moreover, the *Révolutions de Paris* in particular adopted a resolutely anticlerical, if not always antichristian stance on numerous occasions. It comes as no surprise then, that the journal would adopt this alternative model, especially when it can be linked to the republican virtue which Cato the Younger has embodied for many since Antiquity itself.

The journal never evokes Brutus’s suicide as directly, but both the regular contributors and Camille Desmoulins, in what one might consider a “guest column,” allude to the last words that the Greek biographer Plutarch (c. 46-c. 125 CE) attributes to him. The quote comes early in the period for the regular contributors, in issue 101, which is to say before the king’s flight. In this less tense context, the journal is able to express it in the conditional, thus injecting some optimism into the otherwise defeatist sentiment. Moreover, the *Révolutions de Paris* modifies the

quote from “O virtue, you are but a vain name!” to “O liberty! You are but a vain name,” what is more only “if we are still the slaves of rank and privilege.”²¹

One might be tempted to see in this paraphrase a purely rhetorical borrowing. The circumstances are not the same. The Revolution has not been defeated like Brutus at the Battle of Philippi, and so the sentiment expressed cannot be the same either. When Plutarch has Brutus doubt virtue, he is thereby questioning all his actions from the assassination of Caesar onward, concluding at last that they were futile against fate. The liberty that the *Révolutions de Paris* evokes is not a “vain name” in the same absolute sense as virtue is for Brutus. Rather, it is “vain” in the sense that one can declare oneself free and not enjoy the reality of freedom. However, oblique though this reference to Brutus may be, it is enough for the journal to invoke him for its argument to benefit from association with his reputation for republican virtue. By paraphrasing Brutus, the journal can speak symbolically with his voice.

Camille Desmoulins’ allusion, which comes, on the other hand, in the middle of the repression unleashed by the Champ de Mars Massacre, refers explicitly to Brutus. Desmoulins gives over to despair more fully than the regular contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris* ever do, to the point of entirely losing confidence in the people. It is true that Desmoulins, unlike the regular contributors, did have a warrant out for his arrest.²² In an article filled with a number of references to Antiquity as well as to the English Revolution, he wrote:

Let us not await the coming betrayal of the battle of Philippi to recognize this overwhelming truth and cry out with Brutus, in perishing: virtue, homeland [*patrie*], liberty, equality, you are but phantoms, and heaven made the people for tyrants, as it made insects to be food for birds! I despise that imbecilic people too much to expose myself further to hanging for them and to amuse their frivolity by the spectacle of my execution, which they would perhaps applaud.²³

²¹ Plutarque, *Vie des hommes illustres*, Dacier trans., *op. cit.*, t. 12, p. 225, note 23.

²² From the tribunal of the 6th *arrondissement*, which had under its jurisdiction the Cordeliers Club as well as Desmoulins’ home address. A. Mathiez, *Le club des Cordeliers*, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

²³ *RP*, t. 9, n°CXI, p. 344.

Like the ordinary contributors, Desmoulins modifies the original quote. However, the deeper meaning is retained. It is difficult to say whether this display of despair would have reached its logical conclusion: whether Desmoulins really believed that he was on the point of being dragged off to execution or whether he was really contemplating suicide. It seems more likely that this flight of lyricism is designed to emphasize to the reader the depth of his disappointment.

Even so, this radical rejection of a people who have supposed abandoned virtue to return to their primitive state of frivolity represents the crossing of a significant boundary. The French people were had often been portrayed as frivolous under the Ancien Régime, but a major tenet of patriot philosophy held that the Revolution had regenerated the people. Since 1789, virtue resided in them. The importance of the people's virtue to patriots makes the implications of Desmoulins' reference serious indeed. If the king or even the Assembly were without virtue, some hope might still remain, but if the people themselves abandoned virtue, the Revolution would be done for. The *Révolutions de Paris* did despair of the constituted powers, but if the people's ignorance sometimes discouraged its contributors, they insisted that the people had merely been deceived, not corrupted. The journal in general never reached the same depths of despair as Desmoulins because it remained hopeful that the republican movement would be able to undeceive the people and bring them back to the principles of the Revolution.

As established above, Enlightenment, republican and revolutionary thought all establish a close relationship between republicanism and virtue, but there is another dimension to this virtue that this this has not yet discussed, that of the dignity that belongs to virtuous citizens. Because these concepts of republicanism, citizenship, virtue, and dignity are linked, an affront to republicanism could be considered an outrage against the dignity of virtuous citizens. The *Révolutions de Paris* cites the founder of the Roman Republic Lucius Brutus's response to his

enemy Aruns, son of the last king of Rome, from Voltaire's play "Brutus" in order to defend that dignity from those who accused republicans of wanting to bring about "anarchy": "...Stop, know that one must name / The citizens of Rome with more respect."²⁴ It will be recalled that for the *Révolutions de Paris*, republicans are by definition the best citizens. Thus, to insult republicans is to insult the citizenry in its most virtuous component. The quote is not contextualized, perhaps because the reader is supposed to recognize it. "Rome" functions however, whether one knows Voltaire's play or not, first by analogy with France, but then too because it represents the republic, in its form as an ideal toward which patriots bore their allegiance.

It matters little that the reference to Antiquity comes in this case through Voltaire's play. All classical references are mediated by the interpretations and uses of more recent texts, whether implicitly or explicitly. One might even wonder whether the popularity of figures like the two Bruti would have been as great during the Revolution if not for Voltaire's plays about them. Elsewhere the *Révolutions de Paris* considers it possible to measure the virtue of the public based on whether they applaud the "proud accents of liberty that come out of Brutus' mouth" in Voltaire's plays or whether they respond to Racine's "Athalie" with "servile *bravos*."²⁵

More importantly, perhaps, Voltaire was a figure of consensus among revolutionaries in general. The National Assembly itself voted that Voltaire's remains would be transferred to the newly consecrated Panthéon and the ceremony took place right in the middle of the Varennes Crisis. By citing Voltaire, the *Révolutions de Paris* were able to profit from the double legitimizing power of the figure of Brutus and of the *philosophe* who made the two Bruti the

²⁴ *RP*, t. 8, n°102, p. 558; Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, (Société littéraire typographique, 1784), t. 1, p. 318. On the use of anarchy as a dissuasive rhetorical tool during the Revolution, see Marc Deleplace, *L'anarchie de Mably à Proudhon, 1750-1850, histoire d'une appropriation polémique*, (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2001).

²⁵ *RP*, t. 9, n°107, p. 107.

protagonists of his plays.²⁶ In this case in particular, Voltaire's verse finds a way to express the emphasis on the dignity of the citizen which is at the heart of classical republicanism. The *Révolutions de Paris*'s reprise of the quote suggests that even as they recognized the importance of the "man" beside that of the "citizen," in order to define the nature of citizenship itself, they continued to turn to the classical republican tradition.

This recognition of the dignity of the citizen in the republic does not imply, however, that citizens need no encouragement. Just as the Declaration of Rights continually reminds citizens of their rights (and, by corollary, of their duties), so must one also remind them of their dignity by giving them examples of virtue and encouraging them to aspire to them. To that end the *Révolutions de Paris* cites a letter by a certain "M. de Chaumareys, former [*ci-devant*] gentleman of the Limousin": "*Avida est periculi virtus...*, says Seneca. Are there still enough virtues among us for us to be eager for dangers [*avidés de périls*], for us to want to expose ourselves to them, in order to assure a great good to our posterity?"²⁷ Seneca's wisdom is not doubted, or rather, as elsewhere, he is cited because the one citing him already agrees with him, and can use his widely accepted status as a wise philosopher and victim of Nero's tyranny to legitimize his own ideas.²⁸ One can assume then that this "former gentleman of the Limousin" and by extension the journal that cites him, since the *Révolutions de Paris* did not publish letters with which its contributors did not agree without commentary, did indeed agree that virtue is "eager for dangers." One might wonder why, however.

²⁶ For a rare exception to this rule, see above, p. 25.

²⁷ *RP*, t. 9, n°109, p. 243.

²⁸ On at least one occasion, however, the *Révolutions de Paris* cites an ancient author to point out the author of the article's disagreement. In that case, the journalist(s) attack Martial's maxim, "*Parcere personis / Dicere de viliis*" (spare the person and speak of the fault), while pleading in favor of the right to bring a judgment before the tribunal of public opinion. "Men are equal before the law: why wouldn't they be before written or spoken opinion? The press is a tribunal at the foot of which not only individuals, but principally public figures, most appear: It is the only break that can stop them." *RP*, t. 9, n°110, p. 276.

In fact, this notion that “virtue is eager for dangers” is yet another persistent *topos* of the republican tradition. This tradition continued to use many of the same examples of heroic virtue as would have been known to Seneca to personify republicanism. The *Révolutions de Paris* itself provides evidence of this phenomenon, as discussed in this chapter. The most virtuous of the ancient heroes are those who faced, and frequently succumbed to, dangers. The quote from Seneca sums up this tendency and turns it into a prescription: to be virtuous, one must seek those perils, presumably to prove oneself.

This citation extends the idea of a shared culture in the reference to Antiquity from a contemporary shared culture to one for all time. Even more importantly, it creates the illusion that the interpretation of that culture has also been shared through the ages. This fact alone reinforces the legitimacy of that interpretation, for an idea which continues to be considered obvious seventeen hundred years after its first recording carries a certain authority in and of itself. Thus, adherence to Seneca’s words lends weight to the exhortation to take risks for the republic by implying the necessary link between willingness to confront danger and virtue to be an eternal truth.

Aside from the references to the two Bruti, the founder of the republic and the tyrannicide, the most commonly used classical models of virtue were Cato the Younger, and the Greek legislators Lycurgus and Solon. Cato is referenced not only in the context of his suicide, but also for his reputation for inflexible republicanism throughout his life. The *Révolutions de Paris* associates Cato most often with Brutus as symbols of virtue, since they were both adversaries of Julius Caesar, but there are also allusions specific to the former. Upon the closing of the Constituent Assembly, the *Révolutions de Paris* reports on the work of that body by contrasting its corrupt majority with the deputies of the patriot left: “Pétion, Robespierre and the small group of their fellows, never ceased to embarrass their adversaries, so powerful in number

and means: more than once their presence recalled that of Cato at the licentious spectacles of Rome.”²⁹ This passage recalls an incident reported by 1st century CE Roman author Valerius Maximus. According to this author the mere presence of Cato, known for his exemplary morality, interrupted the normal course of a spectacle – apparently a kind of nude pantomime – at the Floralia, until he consented to leave the theatre.³⁰ The journalist, making an analogy between “good mores” and republican virtue, then between “debauchery” and corruption, compares this scene to that of the patriots of the Assembly putting the corrupt “moderate” majority to shame, by their virtuous presence.

The perspective the journalist opens onto Antiquity in this passage is not without ambiguity. First, it reveals the equivocal relationship between private morality and public virtue defined as love of one’s country, the rule of law, and equality, which was present in the classical republican tradition from Antiquity onward; “licentiousness” is not literally equated with corruption, but the traditional association between the two might suggest as much to the reader. Next, the reference paints a dual picture of Antiquity. On the one hand there is the virtuous Cato, but his “good mores” are only brought into focus by the decadence of late Republican Rome in general. Indeed, by this parallel, the journalist suggests to the reader that the state of France at the beginning of autumn 1791 resembled the failing Roman Republic. Despite his wish to recognize the left-wing deputies’ fidelity to principle, the most important message he conveys by this reference is that of the precarious situation of the “republic,” in the primitive sense of “*res publica*,” in France.

Among the few Greek figures cited, Lycurgus and Solon were held in particular esteem. Exemplary of the figure of the wise legislator, their virtue could serve as a model for French

²⁹ *RP*, t. 10, n°117, p. 5.

³⁰ Valerius Maximus, *Valère Maxime ou les actions et les Paroles remarquables des Anciens. Traduction nouvelle avec des remarques*. (Paris: Chez Michel Brunet, 1713), book II, p. 193.

legislators, although the law codes attributed to them were less democratic than the patriot ideal.³¹ As in the case of Cato “at the licentious spectacles of Rome,” the *Révolutions de Paris* used the example of their virtue and wisdom to highlight the insufficiency of these qualities in the Constituent Assembly. In an article whose title, “*Thanksgiving on the happy departure of the constituent body*,” sets the tone well, the journalist speculates: “In the circumstances in which we placed you [the deputies to the Constituent Assembly], what would not Lycurgus, Solon, Confucius, Lhôpital, have done! How well they would have taken advantage of them!”³² The journalist emphasizes the lost opportunity: the Assembly was not up to the task of bringing a constitution in accordance with the Declaration of Rights to fruition.

Once more, the way to wound the Assembly’s reputation is to contest its legitimacy next to universally recognized symbols of virtue, in this case of those recognized as architects of wise constitutions. The detail of these constitutions mattered far less than their reputation. As often happens, too, the journal associates figures foreign to Greco-Roman Antiquity with the Spartan Lycurgus and the Athenian Solon, suggesting that all four are cited for their reputation for virtue and wisdom, which gives them legitimizing power, whatever civilization they belonged to.

When the *Révolutions de Paris* addresses the new Legislative Assembly while invoking Solon and Lycurgus, on the other hand, these figures lend legitimacy to the ideas the journal suggests, rather than highlighting faults the Assembly has had no time as yet to commit. Even so, the reference returns to the theme of the insufficiency of the Assembly to succeed at the task

³¹ Both admitted slavery, and that of Solon institutionalized class divisions, restricting eligibility for political office for the richest among them. *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*, *op. cit.*, s.v.v. “Solon” and “Sparta.”

³² *RP*, t. 9, n° 116, p. 562. The two references not associated with Greco-Roman Antiquity refer to Confucius, Chinese philosopher of the 6th-5th century BCE, and presumably to Michel de l’Hôpital, 16th century French jurist. Neither were legislators in the same sense as Lycurgus and Solon, but the great influence of the first in Chinese history and the efforts of the second to simplify French law and in favor of religious tolerance, may serve to explain this parallel.

before it. Thus, the journalist seems to wish that the allusion could put a break on the Assembly's potential arrogance:

Rome sent forth to Athens and all Greece to consult the code of the Solons and the Lycurguses. The National Assembly of France will invite all the political writers [*publicistes*] of the universe to communicate to it the results of their learned reflections. We want, we tell ourselves, that our constitution should one day serve as a model for all peoples; this idea is lovely, but we will never realize it if France, if the senate especially, relies on its own lights: it would perhaps be necessary, for the progress of universal happiness, and particularly for the happiness of France, for the next National Assembly to pass a solemn decree inviting scholars of all nations to each send it a draft of a civil and criminal code, in addition to their views on the constitution.³³

The idea is not without precedent in the Enlightenment; Rousseau and Mably had both presented drafts of constitutions for Corsica and Poland. In fact, this idea of an appeal to the “lights” of the “universe” is at least as much a part of an 18th century as an ancient mentality. The Roman legislator Numa was said to have visited Greece before drafting the primitive Roman constitution, as the journal alludes to here, and Lycurgus was said to have voyaged to Crete and Egypt, but all these legislators are quasi-mythical figures.

It is curious that the journal would prefer their support to that of more recent “legislators” like Rousseau or Mably, who were often also used as legitimizing figures, in the pages of the *Révolutions de Paris* and elsewhere. Yet the ancient legislators win out here. This was likely due to the *mythos* of the “golden age” of Greece and Rome that their laws supposedly established. Even if this narrative does not fit with history in detail, it had become axiomatic and this perception is more important than the reality.³⁴ Rousseau or Mably's constitutions, on the other hand, were less suitable models, having never been adopted. Even so, it is significant that the model that Antiquity provides here is that of the action of profiting from the wisdom of other civilizations. The *Révolutions de Paris* does not call for the Assembly to look to Solon or

³³ *RP*, t. 9, n°115, p. 528.

³⁴ Claude Mossé, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-86.

Lycurgus's constitutions alongside Numa, but to do the modern equivalent, by seeking the advice of contemporary political theorists. Antiquity may well give more weight to an idea than Mably or Rousseau, but in fact, the model the journal is proposing is closer to theirs.

Other figures, such as Epictetus, Aristides, Cincinnatus or Horace, were recognized as examples of republican virtue, or at least, in Horace's case, of the republican nostalgia of an imperial poet. None of these figures commanded the same attention as Cato or either Brutus, however, and the *Révolutions de Paris* cites each of them only once or twice during the summer of 1791. This preference for allusions to a few key figures can be attributed to the journal's need to find the most significant references for its audience. Prudhomme and his collaborators liked, it would seem, to show off their erudition, but they aimed first and foremost to convince their readers. Thus they prioritized the most widely known references. Figures like Brutus or Cato, who had been popularized over the course of the 18th century in paintings and plays, served the journalists' aims better than more obscure references, even if they do not entirely reject these.

This kind of use of allusions (to Antiquity or otherwise), contrasts starkly with that of Camille Desmoulins. Desmoulins makes many more references and explains each one less. Despite his republican and democratic opinions, readers of his journal who had not received a classical education would likely be unable to follow his arguments, which often depend upon an understanding of the numerous references. The *Révolutions de Paris*, on the other hand, uses references to reinforce and legitimize arguments, but it is rare for the meaning of an article to depend on them. Moreover, when the *Révolutions de Paris* makes a reference it is often explained and, as previously noted, the journal almost always translates Latin citations into the vernacular, which suggests a desire to democratize its readership. Rousseau and Mably themselves, among the most democratically inclined Enlightenment authors, did not go so far.

Thus, when the *Révolutions de Paris* invoked virtuous figures from Antiquity, the journal was seeking universally recognizable symbols of republican virtue, in order to legitimize its ideas. This kind of allusion has its limits, however. It cannot easily support republicanism as a kingless form of government in particular, because it does not refer to republican, or antimonarchical, institutions. Certain referents, like Lycurgus, even contradict the antimonarchical conception of republicanism, since the government he was said to have established included two kings. The association between the republic and virtue as a characteristic to be admired and emulated remained intact, therefore, but within the framework of a kind of natural rights infused classical republicanism. As discussed above, this kind of republicanism embraced all patriots, those who called themselves republicans, but also those who still hesitated before the abolition of the monarchy.

III. Tyrannicide

Allusions to tyrannicide constitute an important subset of the reference to Antiquity as model of virtue. One cannot speak of references to Antiquity in the *Révolutions de Paris* without discussing the campaign in favor of tyrannicide that Sylvain Maréchal led using the journal as a mouthpiece starting in December 1790.³⁵ As Monique Cottret's study *Tuer le tyran ?* demonstrates, the notion of tyrannicide underwent many permutations between the Renaissance and the French Revolution, to say nothing of Antiquity or the Middle Ages. The concepts of tyrant and tyrannicide evolved to a much greater extent than that of virtue. It is impossible therefore to find a direct filiation between ancient and revolutionary ideas of tyrannicide.

³⁵ Françoise Aubert, *Sylvain Maréchal, op. cit.*, pp. 175-80.

Revolutionary appreciations of tyrannicide are necessarily influenced by more recent tyrannicides and the discourse which surrounds them.

However, the changes in meaning and adaptations of the ideas of tyranny and tyrannicide did not prevent patriots from using Antique models to legitimize their own particular brand of tyrannicide. Cottret observes that there were two major models for tyrannicide during the Early Modern Period: Judith, biblical assassin of the Babylonian general Holofernes, and Brutus, assassin of Julius Caesar. Despite the evolution of the theory of tyrannicide, the Revolution embraced the latter, so thoroughly in fact that Cottret calls the chapter of her book discussing the Revolution “La generation des Brutus” or “The generation of the Bruti.”³⁶ In this way, the reference to Antiquity remained fundamental to tyrannicide and its justification during the Revolution, even though, much like with the republic or the notion of virtue, revolutionaries no longer conceived of it in the same way as the Greeks or Romans.

The definition of tyrant expanded considerably over the course of the Early Modern Period. At its origins in Ancient Greece, tyranny was simply the illegitimate acquisition of power, whether used for good or ill. Though it did not take long for the Greeks and Romans to attribute negative connotations to the term, it continued to be identified with usurpation until the Renaissance. In the 16th and 17th centuries, “legitimate” monarchs who persecuted subjects of the “true” religion, (according to the “Monarchomachs” of the Reformation), or who did not follow the “fundamental laws of the kingdom,” secular and religious (to summarize the perspective of the English regicides), could also be considered tyrants.³⁷

This evolution would culminate with the French Revolution by a return to the original theme of usurpation, this time that of the people’s sovereignty. After the fall of the monarchy on

³⁶ Monique Cottret, *Tuer le tyran ? Le tyrannicide dans l’Europe moderne*, (Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2009).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

10 August 1792, most republicans considered that there could be no such thing as a “legitimate” monarch. “Every king is a rebel and a usurper,” as Saint-Just would conclude in his speech of 13 November 1792 advocating the former king’s execution.³⁸ The idea of the king as usurper of the people’s sovereignty adopts the classical definition of tyranny as usurpation, yet also marks the culmination of Early Modern theories of tyranny. These constrained a monarch’s power within bounds more fundamental than positive law. In this case, those bounds are those of a people’s natural and inalienable right to their sovereignty.

That point had not yet been reached when Sylvain Maréchal first appealed in December 1790 for the creation of a “sacred legion of tyrannicides.” At this moment in the Revolution, tyrannicide is a pure export threatening “all the disturbers [*perturbateurs*] of the human race ready to swoop down on us” but not Louis XVI. Maréchal vigorously denies the possibility that his theory of tyrannicide could apply to the king: “This monarch [Louis XVI] is of the very small number of those who would reconcile a Brutus with royalty. A king who lets the nation’s liberty sit beside him on the throne deserves all of the nation’s attachment. The people’s tranquility depends on the existence of such a king.”³⁹ The king remains unassailable.

After Varennes, the idea of a legion of tyrannicides whose blows would theoretically not be directed at Louis XVI, remained current. The *Révolutions de Paris* gave an account of a tyrannicidal oath taken by the Cordeliers, in the same article that recounts the king’s flight. While the Assembly was giving itself over to the fiction of the king’s kidnapping,

the Cordeliers Club, against which all the traitors roar, was truly occupying itself with the public good [*chose publique*]: they also took a terrible oath, the same that saved Rome from Porsena’s armies: ‘The Free Frenchmen (as this club’s decree has it) composing the Society of the Rights of Man and Citizen declare to their fellow citizens that this society contains within it as many tyrannicides as

³⁸ Ibid., p. 346.

³⁹ *Les Révolutions de Paris* cited in Monique Cottret, *Tuer le tyran ? Le tyrannicide dans l’Europe moderne, op. cit.* pp. 330-31

members, who have all sworn individually to go and stab to death the tyrants who would dare to attack our borders or make an attempt on our liberty in any manner.⁴⁰

The text of the Cordelier oath is ambiguous, but the emphasis remains on foreign enemies. The *Révolutions de Paris* presented this oath favorably, but the journal specified in its comments on it that “The tyrants who have it in for our liberty are not all outside our borders; the most dangerous are among us.” This remark is even more ambiguous: do these tyrants “among us” include the king? At this juncture, the journal does not specify.

The allusion to Porsena, the only classical figure other than Marcus Brutus and Caesar’s other assassins that the *Révolutions de Paris* references during the summer of 1791, embodies this ambiguity.⁴¹ This allusion refers to an incident reported by the early imperial historian Livy from the beginnings of the Roman Republic. Allied with Tarquin the Proud, last king of Rome, who had been expelled to make way for the Republic, Etruscan king Lars Porsena was besieging the city of Rome. Caius Mucius attempted to assassinate him. Apprehended, he held his hand in an open flame in order to show his courage, earning him the nickname Scaevola, or “left-handed.” He further claimed that he was one of three hundred young Romans who had all sworn

⁴⁰ *RP*, t. 8, n°102, pp. 551-552.

⁴¹ The Athenian tyrannicides Harmodios and Aristogiton went unmentioned by the *Révolutions de Paris* during this period. According to J. Bouineau, Aristogiton was cited in the *Moniteur universel* seven times, and Harmodios five; not an elevated figure, but a respectable one, since while among the Greek referents eight figures were cited more than twenty times, 38% of the 72 referents were cited only once. Next to the *Moniteur*’s 127 citations of Brutus, however, it was not probable, statistically, that a sample like this one, containing only 11 references to Brutus (14 including references not made by regular contributors) would include references to Harmodios or Aristogiton even if one were to suppose the same distribution of references in both sources. As previously remarked, one explanation that may account for this disparity is simply that the *Révolutions de Paris*, like the orators whose speeches are recorded in the *Moniteur*, preferred to use the most well-known allusions in order to make their meaning clear to the greatest possible number. And since Roman history, and that of Brutus in particular, was better known than Greek, Brutus was a more logical choice to illustrate tyrannicide than Harmodios or Aristogiton. See Bouineau, *op. cit.*, p. 100 and appendices 13 and 14, pp. 493-96.

Porsena's death. According to Livy, this incident convinced Porsena to make peace with the Romans.⁴²

The choice to associate Porsena with the Cordelier oath shows that despite the journalist (likely Maréchal)'s insistence that "the most dangerous enemies are among us," tyrannicide remained oriented outward, since Porsena, while perhaps a tyrant, was first and foremost an enemy. However, as observed in the previous chapter, the journal compared Louis to Tarquin, Porsena's ally, in the very same issue. The approbation of an attempt on Porsena's life can only return against Tarquin-Louis. It should be noted as well that Livy presents the oath of the three hundred young Romans as a simple boast of Scaevola's, suggesting that it probably never took place. The journalist does not concern himself with this probability, for it was the fear of the oath and not its reality that was at the origin of the peace concluded between Rome and Porsena. Likewise, though the Cordelier oath did take place, the article suggests that it is less important for them to be ready to literally assassinate a tyrant than to make tyrants fear them. Consequently, the journalist ends by noting that "following the Cordelier oath," tyrants "must sleep no longer." It is less a question, in this circumstance, of killing the tyrant than of making him fear tyrannicide, and why, the article seems to ask, would a bluff that worked for the Romans not work for us?

The other allusions to tyrannicide, which all refer to the assassination of Julius Caesar, while always approving, encouraged imitation of this action to an even lesser extent. Indeed, the demand for a popular referendum and criminal judgment to decide the fate of Louis XVI, reveal a desire to remain within legal channels. The *Révolutions de Paris* invoked Caesar's assassins as models of a salutary hatred of tyrants, but not to push readers to imitate their specific actions. Thus, they appeared in a discussion regarding the guard that the Assembly was proposing to

⁴² Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 2.12-13. *Narrations choisies de Tite-Live, avec des réflexions à l'usage des collèges*, (Lyon: Chez les frères Périsse, 1776), t. 1, pp. 61-67.

assign to the king. The author of the article feared to see the king “surrounded by eighteen hundred lictors,” which would leave him “sovereign master and despot” like figures from Roman history associated with despotism who would have been similarly attended. However, he could not help but rejoice to think that the National Guard would no longer be forced to guard the king. The article exclaims: “Brutus, Cassius and Cimber were just as good as three Frenchmen; could the entire republic have convinced them to guard Caesar?” The tyrannicides are identified with French citizens in their hatred of tyrants, but the journal keeps silent on the act of tyrannicide itself.

In the end, tyrannicide as an extra-legal act, individual or conspiratorial, never enjoyed great success among republicans or patriots in general. Many patriots disapproved of Sylvain Maréchal’s campaign in favor of tyrannicide. Just as significantly, the campaign itself was characterized by its public and regularly organized nature, as opposed to the elements of conspiracy and individual initiative present in the ancient examples. It is not abusive to say that Maréchal’s version of tyrannicide is symptomatic of a more general preference among French revolutionaries for acting in the open. This preference was likely rooted both in a concern for what would be called transparency today, and also in the hopes that, after having turned toward Antiquity to find models of virtue, the revolutionaries might themselves serve as models for the “universe” and posterity.

IV. Does the French Revolution Need Antiquity?

As the end of this inquiry approaches, it becomes necessary to leave off the analysis of the function of classical references to consider why the revolutionaries, or at least the republican patriots who contributed to the *Révolutions de Paris*, believed them necessary, or, to go further,

whether they could have done without them. It happens that two articles in particular from the *Révolutions de Paris*, one from before the king's flight, the other from after the Champ de Mars massacre, allow, in different ways, a potential insight into the response that the contributors to this journal themselves gave to those questions. The first of these articles is entitled simply "VOLTAIRE." and covers the projected entry of the titular *philosophe* into the newly consecrated Panthéon. This article offers some of the only examples from the corpus examined in this thesis, of a desire to imitate ancient institutions. In this case, the journalist proposes to follow the Athenian and Roman example of lining the "great roads" around the capital, as well as the Champs-Élysées, with tombs. Even here, however, the principal motive for this recommendation is the Rousseauist sentiment that by erecting tombs outdoors, society would more closely approximate nature.⁴³

At the same time, the journalist's proposition also implied a clear preference for the antique, which he felt obliged to justify. This justification is one of the more interesting pieces of evidence for this thesis. The journalist, taking the idea of the Panthéon for an imitation of English Westminster Abbey, proposes to substitute the antique model for the English model, but in a particular fashion: "If the French, having become the premier people of the world by the eternal Declaration of the Rights of Man, which they proclaimed first in almost all its purity, consent to being copyists, let them rather copy the Greeks."⁴⁴ The language is emphatic: thanks to the Declaration of Rights, the French have surpassed all other peoples, including the Greeks. The Greeks remain superior to the English and it remains possible for the French to profit from the example of their virtue or their institutions, but it is no less true that without the concept of natural rights, ancient peoples cannot rival Revolutionary France.

⁴³ Indeed, the journalist emphatically denounces any plans of placing Rousseau's own remains in the Panthéon. *RP*, t. 8, n°100, p. 446-48.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 447.

Further on, the article becomes even more explicit: “But why would we not, we who have almost perfected the theory of national liberty, of which the Greeks and Romans, happier than us, had, so to speak, only the sentiment, why would we not also have our own ideas regarding the respects to be paid to those of our fellow citizens worthy of honorable memory?”⁴⁵ Here the journalist goes behind his original idea. If ancient institutions deserve consideration, Revolutionary France, with its recognition of the rights of man and citizen can assuredly do better. This assertion of France’s superiority cannot exactly be called chauvinism, for France is only superior as long as it continues to preserve natural rights. Other peoples can join the French people on this summit of “perfection” – such is indeed the dearest wish of French patriots – and France can fall from it.

This contingency becomes clear in the other above-mentioned article, published following the Champ de Mars Massacre and bearing the ironic title of “French liberty.” The “French liberty” in question is that of the repression and denial of natural rights ordered by the Constituent Assembly. It is, of course, the opposite of true liberty, that of 1789. In consequence of the loss of true liberty, that which guarantees the Declaration of Rights, France exchanged its genuine and deserved superiority for a false preeminence, which went hand in hand with, and based itself on, its new simulacrum of liberty. In reality, France had, for the *Révolutions de Paris*, become inferior once more to the peoples of Antiquity (and to the English at the time of their Revolution as well).⁴⁶

In such a situation, where there is no longer any legitimacy to be found in a France where the popular movement had been stifled and the Declaration of Rights flouted, the journalist turns

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 447-48.

⁴⁶ *RP*, t. 9, n°108, pp. 177-185. The allusions to Antiquity are on pp. 177-182.

to Antiquity. The universally recognized virtue of Antiquity allows the journalist to comment ironically on the Assembly and its decrees. The article begins by invoking this example:

It used to be, that when it was a question of liberty, people cited the Greeks and Romans with deference; sometimes they named the Franks, our forefathers, and recently they spoke only of the English. If our old historians and college regents are to be believed, these four peoples carried out great things only because they had a great idea of their independence. People did not fail to recall their political principles, they spoke the names of their great men, and they believed they had said all that needed to be said; they imagined nothing beyond them.⁴⁷

The journal invokes the authority of the “old historians” and “college regents” of the Ancien Régime in order to show how the liberty of the Greeks and Romans, even of the Franks and the English, were accepted by all, even by those who did not necessary have any interest in or hope of seeing liberty take root in France. Denouncing the Assembly for violating the Declaration of Rights remained fundamental to the journal’s discourse. However, the Declaration of Rights was no longer an object of consensus for the deputies of the Assembly who wanted to “moderate” it. In order to critique them against a rubric that still mattered to them, the journal has to bring in the model of Antiquity. The “moderates” of the Assembly may have felt able to deny the validity of the Declaration, but they were incapable of denying the legitimizing power of the example of Antiquity.

After invoking the consensus that had reigned even under the Ancien Régime regarding the liberty of the English, the Franks, and especially the Greeks and Romans, the journal ironically refuses these examples. In so doing, the article highlights the disparity between the Assembly’s policies and true liberty: “It was fine to say all that in times past and even up until 25 June 1791 [when the Assembly refused a popular referendum on the king’s fate]; but since that time, and especially since 17 July [date of the Champ de Mars Massacre], we have left both the Greeks and Romans and Gaul and England quite far behind us. French liberty is another thing

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

entirely from all that.”⁴⁸ The irony lies, of course, in that the French had been better than those peoples for a time, thanks to the Declaration of Rights, trampled by recent events. France was now relegated to the class of peoples who reject liberty after having experienced it, which is to say to the lowest rung on the patriot hierarchy of nations.⁴⁹

The rest of the article is full of these contrasts between the institutions of free peoples and the Assembly’s decrees, such as martial law, suffrage restricted to those of property, or assaults against freedom of the press or of assembly. One example will suffice to understand their tenor:

Really, it used to be quite agreeable to be able to have discussions in nice weather in public squares and walkways. The people of Paris found it good, the Athenians too, and the citizens of Rome had gotten a taste for such pastimes, and they called that being free. But in the final analysis, to what end were all those motions made? Sometimes people would clip the wings of the eagles of the Manège [the hall where the Assembly met], who get lost in the clouds so as to make a golden rain descend from them. The multitude was initiating itself in the mysteries of legislation. It was a rather good school for the people, it cannot be dissimulated; but a nation that sees too clearly is too much of a nuisance to its legislators. The Assembly would have had a fine job if it had lent its ears for too long to what was being said about it in those groups.⁵⁰

In short, we, the French, we the patriots of Paris, had discovered what the Athenians and Romans knew: that the virtue of the people, nourished and instructed in the democratic public sphere, serves as a guarantee against the corruption of the Assembly. In the end, the peoples of Antiquity are but avatars of a free people, which always share certain essential features, among them the power to openly discuss acts of government. In this instance the *Révolutions de Paris* avoids speaking of the contradictions of the classical example, not because they are unknown to its contributors, but in order to better underline the eternal character of liberty and take advantage of the effectiveness of Antiquity as a legitimizing example for patriots and their adversaries alike.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ See Marc Belissa, *Fraternité universelle et intérêt national (1713-1795), Les cosmopolitiques du droit des gens* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1998), especially pp. 398-402.

⁵⁰ *RP*, t. 9, n°108, p. 182.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that these characteristics of liberty that France shares with Rome or Athens in patriot thought do not amount to a Constantian “liberty of the Ancients.” While the right to make oneself heard in a public forum is valuable in and of itself, its principal importance lies in its function as a guarantee of all rights. The people must keep an eye on the Assembly precisely so that corrupt deputies do not betray them by flouting their rights.

This principle, which emerges from the afore-cited passage, is also inscribed in the Declaration of Rights. One declares rights because: “the ignorance, forgetting or contempt for the rights of man are the only causes of public misfortunes and the corruption of governments.”⁵¹ The Declaration is designed to recall these rights in order to prevent these ills. And who is in a position to survey the government, Declaration of Rights in hand, if not the people?⁵² The Ancients displayed conduct characteristic of liberty, but they lacked the foundations of the philosophy of natural rights that would universalize that liberty. For patriots like the contributors to the *Révolutions de Paris*, the French had a choice: they could surpass the Ancients by conserving their rights and those of all humanity, or they could sink into a degradation which would place them beneath the Ancients, by turning away even from the ancient conception of the republic which protects its citizens from arbitrary power. Or, to paraphrase Bernard Groethuysen, a people is worth what their rights are worth.⁵³

⁵¹ Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789, cited in Fl. Gauthier, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵² The Declaration of Rights of 1793 would be more explicit on this point, but the principle is already present in the Declaration of 1789.

⁵³ Bernard Groethuysen, *Philosophie de la Révolution française*, (Éditions Gallimard, 1956). The original phrase refers to men and not peoples: “Les hommes valent ce que valent leurs droits.”

Conclusion

The Varennes Crisis was without a doubt one of the most important turning points of the French Revolution, but above all it was a crisis of legitimacy for the monarchy. At that moment, when the legitimacy of the government was widely questioned and alternatives began to be suggested, any rhetorical or ideological tools that could legitimize those new alternatives became a central focus of revolutionary discourse. The reference to Antiquity is one of the most important of these tools, along with allusions to the English and American Revolutions and the invocation of Enlightenment *philosophes*. In some ways it was perhaps even the most powerful among them, for to invoke Antiquity is to draw on a culture shared by all levels of society.

This classical culture was familiar not only to élites educated in Latin rhetoric in the *collèges* or by tutors, but also to the much more numerous class of people who would have been able to read the translations of classical works which were published in ever increasing numbers in the course of the 18th century. Even those who could not read would have had occasion to know Antiquity through artistic or theatrical representations, the imagery of which would be further popularized by Revolutionary festivals. Moreover this common culture was based on a broadly consensual reading of classical referents. Because there was little disagreement about the meaning of ancient history and mythology, references could be used as shorthand for certain ideas. More importantly, references rarely backfired. Comparing a contemporary to Cato was universally recognized as equivalent to calling him virtuous and Cato's own virtue went uncontested. Thus, widely recognized and an object of consensus, the reference to Antiquity was doubly effective as a legitimizing tool.

The *Révolutions de Paris* provided numerous examples of legitimizing references to Antiquity in the summer of 1791, appealing to this common culture. These references become all

the more significant in light of the journal's wide influence in patriot circles. Its contributors reserved their rhetoric mainly for its patriot readership, and especially those among them who remained suspicious of the republic as an alternative to monarchy. However, they also addressed their adversaries, partisans of the restoration of the constitutional monarchy, for they recognized the importance of combatting the influence of monarchist arguments in the wider national debate. One should note that the *Révolutions de Paris* never bothered to address open adherents of the counterrevolution in this way. As irreconcilable enemies of the Revolution and its principles, they were beyond the reach of the journal's arguments, which were predicated on the justice and necessity of both. However, convincing the different currents of opinion among revolutionary actors was already a challenging proposition. This is why the *Révolutions de Paris* sought to legitimize its point of view through the use of consensual references such as those that invoke Antiquity.

Within the framework of this legitimizing function, classical allusions had two principal tasks to accomplish in the *Révolutions de Paris* during the Varennes Crisis: that of contesting the monarchical regime established by the constitution of 1791 and its partisans, and the complementary task of reinforcing patriot and republican ideals. In order to delegitimize the monarchy, the journal used mostly negative allusions, drawing on Roman history to find archetypes of tyranny and on Greco-Roman mythology, which allowed the journal to ridicule and condemn the monarchy at the same time. In the course of its demonstration of the way in which the constitutional monarchy trampled the people's rights, the *Révolutions de Paris* directed most of their critiques against the National Assembly. This demonstrates not only its contributors' own conviction that the king had abdicated by his flight and that the real locus of power was to be found in the Assembly during the Varennes Crisis, but the underlying truth of that conviction.

While the journal's principal target was indeed the Assembly, references themselves could continue to apply to either Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette or the Assembly, as when the journal blames the Assembly for supporting a king resembling Tarquin or Caligula. Louis is always the tyrant in these representations, even when ridiculed through mythological references, as when the journal compares him to the god of feasts ready to devour his people. On the other hand, references adhering to Antoinette or the Assembly are often gendered. The journal often applies sexualized mythological references to Antoinette in particular. These gendered and sexualized references drew on misogynistic *topoi*, even though the reasons for their use were generally political. Any rhetorical tool was acceptable as long as it increased the probability of being able to seize the opportunity provided by the Varennes Crisis to rid France of a traitorous and corrupting monarchy.

The reference to Antiquity was, however, not only negative, but also came to the support of republicanism in both of its definitions, that of a "free state" where natural rights are respected, in which all patriots believed by definition, and, more controversially, that of a government without a king. The defense of the second definition was most often implicit, presented as the only means of defending a republic of the first description given the constitutional monarchy's failure to meet this expectation. The republic that the *Révolutions de Paris* advocated was never the Roman Republic or what were referred to in the 18th century as the "republics" of Athens or Sparta, because those republics knew neither natural rights philosophy nor representation. If Antiquity provided a republican model, it was rather an abstracted model of virtue than one of concrete institutions.

Consequently, the journal's contributors invoke classical figures widely known for their republican virtue rather than Greco-Roman institutions. On the few occasions when the journal departed from this pattern, it was not using the reference in question to legitimize republicanism,

but rather to promote a measure of a more esthetic or cultural nature, such as that regarding funeral practices. The usefulness of the classical model remained therefore above all in its legitimization of the revolutionary ideal through the analogy between patriots and virtuous figures from Antiquity, or through appeals to the people to imitate that virtue. Even then, the *Révolutions de Paris* modified the ancient model of virtue by putting it in service of natural rights. This use does not imply a desire to return to Antiquity, therefore, but to adopt its best attributes, in particular republican virtue, and to surpass it, Declaration of Rights in hand.

This idea is the same which would emerge with the Republic a year later in the journal's pages in its most developed and explicit form:

Therefore then, while we respect the mores of the golden age of Antiquity [*la belle antiquité*], while we admire the masterpieces it left us in the fine arts, Athens, Sparta, and Rome, as to their legislation, have nothing to offer us capable of serving as a rule or safeguard for us [...] We are the first and only ones to found a fraternal government; may we have rivals! But we certainly have no model, we imitate no one. [...] We consult nature alone; we return to the imprescriptible rights of man, from which we deduce those of the citizen.¹

It is not a coincidence that this emphatic rejection of any model, including that of Antiquity with all its legitimizing power, had to await the arrival of the Republic to appear in all its force, even though the *Révolutions de Paris* had already revealed tendencies in this direction at the time of the Varennes Crisis. In the battle for legitimacy raging at the time, mouthpieces of the republican movement such as this journal still needed to draw on every legitimizing source available to them. Among these, the *Révolutions de Paris* could not ignore Antiquity, with its consensual symbols and its well-known role as the origin of the idea of the republic. However, as this thesis has attempted to demonstrate, it was never the journal's goal to encourage the imitation of Antiquity, unless in esthetics, or when it came to republican virtue, although even then it was a

¹ *RP*, t. 14, n°168, p. 6.

question of a republican virtue adapted to serve a philosophy of natural rights unknown to the Ancients.

This implicit rejection of Antiquity as a model to imitate, like the more explicit rejection that the journal would elaborate a year later, force us to rethink the interpretation of Volney, Constant or Marx and of those who followed them, of a French Revolution which cast itself without a thought into a classical mold, and the assumption of the revolutionaries' inconsequence that accompanies it. The example of the *Révolutions de Paris* during the Varennes Crisis demonstrates that at least some patriots and republicans knew how to make use of Antiquity without being abused by it. It would be surprising if they were the only ones. Perhaps given this observation, it would behoove us to no longer seek to understand revolutionary discourse as the servile imitation of any model, but rather to begin, as some researchers are already doing, to take revolutionary thought seriously in all its originality.

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