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Civic Continuities in an Age of Revolutionary Change, c.1750–1850

Europe and the Americas

Edited by
Judith Pollmann · Henk te Velde

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CHAPTER 1

Civic Continuities in an Age of Revolutionary Change: Europe and the Americas, c.1750–1850

Judith Pollmann and Henk te Velde

INTRODUCTION¹

On 5 March 1795, only weeks after the Batavian Revolution had ended the Ancien Régime in the United Provinces of the Netherlands, the citizens of the small Frisian town of Franeker organised a festive ceremony

¹ Our research for this collection, and the international workshop that we organised in preparation in June 2019, were funded by an NWO grant for the project *The persistence of civic identities in the Netherlands, 1748–1848* that we directed at Leiden University from 2014 to 2020. We should like to thank not only all the contributors to this volume but also Gary Gerstle, Niek van Sas, Carolien Boender, Lauren Lauret and Dirk Alkemade for their valuable input. With sadness we also remember the role of the late Katherine Aaslestad, whose encouragement in the early years of the project was extremely valuable.

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to celebrate the reclosing of the city gates. Seven years earlier, in 1787, the Dutch stadholder had punished the town for its role in the so-called Patriot movement by ordering the removal of the gates, symbolically robbing the town of its traditional urban privileges. But now the stadholder had fled, and in the Republic a new regime was taking steps to implement a local version of the revolutionary agenda that had emerged in the French Revolution. At first sight, and judging by events in the political centre of The Hague, this involved a radical break with tradition. The new regime organised general elections, separated church and state, ended the exclusion of religious minorities from political life and aimed to restructure the Dutch state radically. Local privileges lost their meaning. Yet as the Franeker example shows, at local level, the Revolution simultaneously enabled a political agenda that was local and traditional, in which the right to have one's own gates signified the right to have one's own, local, jurisdiction.² Such appeals to the past were not just atavistic. Instead historical actors were mobilising continuities with the past because they thought that this was what change was or should be for them.

This book explores and compares the role of continuity in political processes and practices during the period of major political change that we know of as the Age of Revolutions, c. 1750–1850. It argues that the Age of Revolutions was enabled by different types of continuities, in Europe as well as the US and Latin America. We do so by shifting the perspective from political modernisation, with its exclusive attention for what was new and national, to the continued relevance of older, often local, practices in (post) revolutionary politics. Our aim in doing so is to highlight the role of local political traditions and practices in forging and enabling political change. The ten essays in this collection show that older practices were crucial both for political activism and the implementation of radical change, and thus played a significant role in political practice after 1800.

In the history of Europe and the Americas, the period around 1800 is seen as a period of massive transition and rupture. The 'Age of Revolutions' not only brought about decades of political crisis and international war but also signalled the emergence of the 'modern' nation-state and nationalism as well as the rise of mass media, new temporal regimes and, generally, the elusive phenomenon that we call 'modernity'. As Eric Hobsbawm put it in 1962, 'the "Age of Revolution" ... forms the

² E.g. Wiebe Bergsma ed., *For uwz lân, wyv en bern: De patriottentijd in Friesland* (Leeuwarden: Fryske Akademy, 1987).

greatest transformation in human history since the remote times when men invented agriculture and metallurgy, writing, the city and the state. This revolution has transformed, and continues to transform, the entire world'.³ By emphasising rupture and transformation as the hallmark of this period, Hobsbawm was able to bring economic developments in Britain and political developments on the European continent into analytical alignment. At about the same time, Robert Palmer published his influential two volumes on *The Age of the Democratic Revolution. A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800* (1959–1964). Such alternatives to the narrowly national approaches that had characterised most political history so far proved hugely influential and attractive not only because they allowed for comparisons but also because they had potential for alignment with the social sciences and discussions about modernity and with the internationalisation of the historical discipline. As such, they helped political historians to respond to critics who thought of political history as overly focussed on the contingent, the événementiel and the narrative.

Although the intense interest in ‘revolutions’ per se began to wane at the end of the 1970s, the notion of rupture was retained in the sudden turn around 1980 to the study of nationalism, another theme that could now be studied comparatively.⁴ The nation-state was now presented as the main carrier of modernisation, and, although the new nationalism studies underlined the constructed nature of the nation, they paradoxically contributed to shift the focus of attention even more to the level of the nation-state. Such ideas chimed with arguments about the emergence of new attitudes to the past around 1800, such as those made by Reinhart Koselleck since the 1960s. Koselleck had argued that, at the end of the eighteenth century, Europeans had developed both a new awareness of the differences between past and present, which made it seem less likely

³ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1962), 1.

⁴ We discussed this development earlier, and specifically for the Dutch context in Judith Pollmann and Henk te Velde, ‘New State, New Citizens? Political Change and Civic Continuities in the Low Countries, 1780–1830’, *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 133: 3 (2018), 4–23; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

that the past would simply repeat itself and an expectation that the future would bring continual change. As early as 1972 Hobsbawm had argued that the experience of unprecedented change, such as it had unfolded in the Age of Revolutions, had had its effect on the ‘sense of the past’. The self-evident status and authority that the past had enjoyed, and that was associated with ‘custom’, was lost. In 1983, Hobsbawm argued that the new appeals to ‘tradition’ were suggesting coherence to mask the extent of discontinuity. This line of argument became extremely popular, not only among students of nationalism. It reappeared in the scholarship that began to chart ‘transitions’ from memory to history, or from ‘milieux de mémoire’ to ‘lieux de mémoire’. Combined with the focus on the period around 1800 as a breaking point, this resulted in a persistent assumption that as the world of invented tradition and the nation emerged, the world of ‘custom’ and local politics withered and died.⁵

However, the scholars of Europe and North America who emphasised fissure were usually better equipped to highlight the new than analyse what had gone before. Social scientists and historians of modernity have assumed rather than proven that the rise of the new meant that existing modes of action, thought and practice simply became extinct, irrelevant or at least subordinate to these new modes. They have done little to test this assumption because they were interested in the new instead of the old and because institutional arrangements in the historical discipline have tended to discourage it. Precisely because it is believed that the West was made anew in the Age of Revolutions, most courses, handbooks and appointments focus either on the ‘modern’ or the ‘premodern’; very few historians these days work equally far on both sides of the 1800 boundary.

This volume, by contrast, explores continuities between early modern and modern political cultures in Europe and the Americas. One reason to believe that it might be useful to do so is suggested by the scholarship on Latin America, which, as Jamie Sanders explains in this volume, has long been arguing that the Age of Revolutions left many existing power structures intact and that new bags often contained very old wine. Yet unlike some of that scholarship, our aim here is not to argue that, around

⁵ Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (1979; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989); Eric Hobsbawm, ‘The Social Function of the Past. Some Questions’, *Past and Present* 55: 1 (1972), 3–17; and Judith Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Oxford: UK Oxford University Press, 2017).

1800, people only innovated to remain the same, as the hero of Lampedusa's *Leopard* famously put it.⁶ Neither is it to suggest, like Alexis de Tocqueville, that what revolutionary regimes offered was simply a variation on older political trends.⁷ Rather, we want to highlight that major political change at the centre of the old and new polities that emerged in the Age of Revolutions, coexisted with, and was indeed enabled by, continuities at other levels, especially so in the localities. Political historians have often suggested that once the nation had made its modern appearance as the chief locus of politics, local governance became less important and so less interesting. This has obscured two basic but important factors in the forging of change: the force of habit, and the politics of place. When doing something out of habit, it requires less energy and effort, thereby freeing up room for experiments: 'because a lot of activity thus moves to the background of human consciousness through the process of habitualisation, a foreground opens up for deliberation and innovation'.⁸ By the same mechanism, the continued existence of a traditional set of practices, frames and assumptions, allows for innovations to succeed, and deliberations to gain force, without a collapse of the social order. Even in a revolutionary situation, it is common to continue many practices (e.g. some of the rituals and practices of representative meetings) in order to retain some 'predictability' and to save energy for the real work of the revolution. While revolutionary regimes obviously made a big point of delivering change, and disturbing and replacing existing patterns, their political legitimacy was ultimately also dependent on the creation or maintenance of 'self-evident' habits, the self-evident role of local leadership, the ability to associate with public places, rituals and practices of existing significance and the ability to deliver a minimum of 'good governance' necessary to sustain a sense that life goes on. Without this ability to maintain 'business as usual', revolutionary regimes could not implement new agendas.

⁶ Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, transl. Archibald Colquhoun, *The Leopard* (London: Vintage, 2005), from the original *Il Gattopardo* (Milan: Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 1958).

⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*. Jon Elster ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁸ Ton Otto and Poul Pedersen, 'Disentangling Traditions', in Ton Otto and Poul Pedersen eds., *Tradition and Agency: Tracing Cultural Continuity and Invention* (Santa Barbara: Aarhus University Press, 2005), 26.

Secondly, the implementation of changes desired by the centre depended on the interaction with local and regional communities. Historians of Germany have shown that however aggressive and violent regime change often was, and however radical the institutional overhaul and centralisation that followed, the new nation-states could only produce lasting reform by co-opting local support.⁹ In order to overthrow the existing state of affairs and change society, new regimes had to rely on at least part of the citizenry and its local knowledge: not only its habits and customs of protesting and making themselves heard in their communities but also its ability to process, and engage with, the expectations of the new regime. Moreover, revolutionary regimes had to leave it up to local communities to run those things for which they simply did not have the manpower or the money, or which they chose not to politicise. It was local communities that needed to secure and maintain public space, feed the poor and clean the streets, regardless of the colour of the ruling regime. This created opportunities for newcomers on the political scene, but at the same time also allowed people to frame new developments in familiar ways, and rely on older, local practices and solutions when trying to imagine new ways forward. In other words, it helped them to ‘domesticate’ the new.

We believe that in order to really understand processes of revolutionary change, scholars should also take into account the continued importance of existing, often local, political practices for the way ordinary people understood, negotiated, produced and accommodated ideological and political change. To historians of early modern Europe, such insights may not seem very surprising; very similar points were made in the contexts of scholarly discussions that took place in the 1980s and 1990s about the spread of the Reformations and the workings of ‘absolutism’.¹⁰ In both cases, scholars who were debating the ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of initiatives to implement major change ultimately found that they needed to consider local power relations, traditions and stakeholders, as well as their relationships with the centre, to understand why some initiatives worked so much

⁹ See e.g. Michael Rowe, *From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780–1830*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Mack Holt, ‘The Social History of the Reformation: Recent Trends and Future Agendas’, *Journal of Social History* 37: 1 (2003), 133–144; C. Scott Dixon, *Contesting the Reformation* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 152–196; and John Miller ed., *Absolutism in Seventeenth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1990).

better than others and why. They found that one good way to understand this was to look at practices and their functions. Who was prepared to spend money? Who controlled public space and public resources? Who was prepared to mobilise local energy and for what purpose? In the process, they also uncovered a great deal of new and useful knowledge about cities and villages as political communities, about the way representation worked in an age without elections and about the widespread use of tools like petitioning.¹¹

Political historians of the modern world have been more reluctant to consider local politics. Some of them were only interested in supra-local modernisation, others want to stay clear of the romantic view of premodern ‘communities’ as places of perennial harmony, and others did not consider trivial local conflict truly ‘political’. Yet, in recent years, there have been a number of studies that show how very fruitful it is to consider the premodern notions of commonwealth, civic republicanism and politics of place when thinking about the outcomes of the revolutionary processes. In North America, Gary Gerstle pointed to the continued importance of local political traditions and the ‘residual powers’ of the states of the USA.¹² In England, a recent article argues that petitions not only linked local and national concerns but were deeply grounded in the politics of place.¹³ In a German context, Michael Rowe showed that Rhinelanders picked and chose which elements of the old they preferred to retain, and which of the new they wanted to adopt.¹⁴ Katherine Aaslestad demonstrated that the response of Hamburg’s citizens to the period of French rule was not, as used to be believed, to turn towards the German nation. Rather, they responded to the challenges

¹¹ Maarten Prak, ‘Urban Governments and Their Citizens in Early Modern Europe’, in Matthew Davies and James A. Galloway ed., *London and Beyond: Essays in Honour of Derek Keene* (London: University of London Press, 2012), 269–286.

¹² Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

¹³ Richard Huzzey and Henry Miller, ‘Petitions, Parliament and Political Culture. Petitioning the House of Commons, 1780–1918’, *Past & Present* vol. 248 (2020) 123–164.

¹⁴ Rowe, *From Reich to State*.

of war with cultural tools and the political expectations of the inhabitants of a premodern city-state.¹⁵ Writing about the city of Würzburg, Clemens Tangerding has argued that, while government resources and regulations increasingly shaped lives, not everyone experienced ‘rupture’ simultaneously, even at a local level. We should think more in terms of plural turning points or ‘Zäsurenpluralismus’.¹⁶ Such studies question, but also remain closely tied, to national historiographies, and can easily be regarded as mere nuances to a bigger picture of dramatic rupture. Yet they also point the way to a more structural feature of change in the Age of Revolutions. Our ambition is to show that we can only truly understand the nature of this change if we take the local level and the continuity of local practices at least as seriously as the national level. Of course, we do not deny the very real change that took place, but concentrate on the interplay between the new and the old, and the local and the national, that characterised most processes of change. As Joanna Innes argues in her contribution to this book on the British case of ‘Reform’, even revolutionary change is not a sudden break; it is always a process. Even in the most hectic revolutionary times, ‘it took some time before outcomes crystallised, ensuring that people had to exercise agency in highly confusing contexts’. People ‘do not experience first an old, then a new order’, but go through a process of adaptation and appropriation. Eventually, changes ‘tend to be naturalised’, as ‘expectations adjust to what becomes the [new] everyday normal’.

Accordingly, the aim of this volume is to explore in a comparative context how and why existing political practices, local civic habits and ‘residual’ powers remained productive throughout and after the Age of Revolutions, not as atavisms, but (1) as tools to implement change, (2) as a means for local people to participate in politics and acquire agency and (3) as a way to cope with change. This type of research depends to a large extent on local or national case studies. However, the aim of these case studies is to research the mechanisms of change rather than highlight local or national peculiarities. It has been particularly revealing to

¹⁵ Katherine Aaslestad, *Place and Politics. Local Identity, Civic Culture, and German Nationalism in North Germany During the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Katherine Aaslestad, ‘Republican Traditions: Patriotism, Gender, and War in Hamburg, 1770–1815’, *European History Quarterly* 37: 4 (2007), 582–602.

¹⁶ Clemens Maria Tangerding, *Der Drang zum Staat: Lebenswelten in Würzburg Zwischen 1795 und 1815* (Göttingen: Böhlau Verlag, 2011).

see how many parallels there were between European and (Latin) American experiences, despite the obvious differences. If we concentrate on local manifestations of residual power and repertoires of collective action or experiences of domesticating the new, many analogies stand out. They can be explained by a transnational (and imperial) process of borrowing and learning but also by the same needs that produced the same results or called for the same instruments. Meanwhile, the peculiarities of one particular case may help to understand or even explain the peculiarities of another. That is why we have organised the volume along thematic, rather than geographic, lines. We take the categories introduced above as our guideline.

‘RESIDUAL POWERS’

The first chapters focus on different manifestations of ‘residual power’: the power that, in the process of creating or rethinking new political systems, was retained by players other than the new centralised nation-states. These powers, often less overtly (high) political and perhaps more mundane than those of the nation-state, were often the ones that seemed most crucial to citizens, since they defined society and the social order in their concrete or natural habitat.

The combination of power, continuity and revolution inevitably points in the direction of Tocqueville’s famous *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*. Tocqueville did not see any continuity of local power but argued that there was a continuity of state power from the time of absolutism to the nineteenth century, right through the revolutionary period. The King was beheaded, but the centralising administration and bureaucracy continued to exist and were reinforced on a massive scale, albeit now under revolutionary guidance. Once Tocqueville had published his book, the continuity of the growth of state power seemed to be so obvious that reviewers asked how it was possible that they had not seen it before.¹⁷ Tocqueville concentrates on the role of the executive and the administration, but one of the driving forces behind continuity of all sorts was the wish to maintain the social order. This was not only because of the elite’s struggle for self-preservation but also because of the moral value attached to order, as we can see in the chapters by Ana

¹⁷ De Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime*; Françoise Mélonio, *Tocqueville et les Français* (Paris: Aubier, 1993) 152 (and footnote 91).

Maria Stuvén in this section, and those of Anne Sophie Overkamp and Joris Oddens in part 2. This could lead to continuity at the state level, as is quite clearly shown by the example of Chile in Stuvén's contribution, where the social elite tried to steer the revolutionary regime change in the right direction by working closely with the Catholic church and the existing social and political apparatus, and thus contributed to a form of continuity. It is noteworthy, though, that even there, the local government of the Cabildos was essential for managing the revolutionary crisis and filling the void left by the absence of the legitimate Spanish king. Apparently, local powers still mattered.

Local government in the Age of Revolutions has attracted only limited attention from historians. In France, this is partly due to a long-standing belief in the destruction of all 'corps intermédiaires' after the Revolution. This tradition inspired Tocqueville, according to whom the state had destroyed all intermediary powers and left nothing but an immense void. 'La société en poussière' was the expression used: society had turned into a heap of disconnected dust and all traditional self-governing local bodies had disappeared.¹⁸ But had they really? Diederik Smit shows that, in the case of the Netherlands, things were different from what they appeared to be. The new unitary Dutch state abolished the old independent provinces and only kept them as part of hierarchical political order. However, they retained a large part of their old prestige, socio-cultural meaning and political influence. They have been neglected by historians, but they were still important players. Their political role has often been overlooked because it did not fit accepted modern ideas about proper political behaviour and it looked like an atavism.

Because the Netherlands had been a federation of sovereign provinces for centuries, perhaps the persistence of a form of local power does not come as a surprise. But what about Tocqueville's France, the archetypal example of centralisation? Tocqueville's continuity thesis argued that much of the spirit and mental habits of the absolute monarchy had been carried over from the Ancient Regime to the new nineteenth-century national state. Yet the power of the Bourbon state, and indeed of other European monarchs, was less absolute than Tocqueville thought. Over the last decades, historians have shown that absolute monarchs depended

¹⁸ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français: La société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 114, 158–164, and passim.

on the goodwill of local elites. In his contribution on France in the nineteenth century, Bernard Rulof turns Tocqueville's argument upside down. Yes, there certainly was continuity, but rather continuity of local agency and local politics. In the nineteenth century, French administrators often dismissed disputes at the village level as insignificant. At the same time, Rulof shows that the interplay between national and local matters could turn local conflicts into more serious conflicts. Citizenship, political sociability and repertoires of contention often originated or took shape at the local level, also in the nineteenth century.

Modernisation has often been described as a project of social differentiation. Every domain of life, including politics, culture and economy, was turning into a more or less autonomous system. Sociologist Niklas Luhmann is one of the most prominent theorists of this view. Moreover, liberalism, the dominant political current of the nineteenth century, has been characterised as 'the art of separation', the attempt to separate the state and Church, politics and the economy, civil society and the political community, and public and private spheres. These pairs had been 'inseparable' before modernity.¹⁹ It is doubtful whether the project of differentiation really worked as consistently as has been assumed, but there can be no doubt as to the ambitions of the liberal project. These ambitions presupposed a certain type of state that would maintain all these separations. It would be objective and 'just', because it was 'cold' and 'distanced' from people and localities.²⁰ This new state should not lean on the residual powers that belonged to the old regime, since the old type of local government had mixed everything that the modern liberal state was supposed to separate. Moreover, local government might be close and within reach of the citizens, but that risked corruption and parochial near-sightedness.

It was hard to imagine that local communities had anything substantial to offer to modern politics, let alone foster liberal political ambitions. However, representative government needs an 'objective' distance as well

¹⁹ Michael Walzer, 'Liberalism and the Art of Separation', *Political Theory* 12: 3 (1984), 315–330, 315–330, 319: 'Liberal theory reflects and reinforces a long-term process of social differentiation' (Walzer, by the way, exaggerates liberal individualism). Cf. Henk te Velde, 'The Organization of Liberty. Dutch Liberalism as a Case of the History of European Constitutional Liberalism', *European Journal of Political Theory* 7: 1 (2008), 65–79, esp. 68–69.

²⁰ Edouard Dupont-White, *La centralisation. Suite de l'individu et l'État* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1860), 7; Mélonio, *Tocqueville et les Français*, 210.

as the proximity that enables engagement and appropriation. Tocqueville already highlighted the risks of distance in a social context. The rich and powerful ‘are very ready to do good to the people, but they still choose to keep them at arm’s length [in the French version: ‘distance’]; they think that is sufficient, but they are mistaken. They might spend fortunes thus without warming the hearts of the population around them;—that population does not ask them for the sacrifice of their money, but of their pride’.²¹ It is only once we realise the importance of proximity that we see the important local contributions to the development of a modern and liberal national representative government. Henk te Velde shows that, in the nineteenth century, the persistent local foundation of representative politics was often simply taken for granted. Everybody knew that it existed in practice, but it was seldom acknowledged in theory.

THE POWER OF PRACTICE

The four chapters in part 2 focus on continuities in (local) practice and on ways of doing things and getting things done in times of change. While some people and parties hastened to exploit and maximise the chances that change brought, older local strategies and practices could also retain surprising effectiveness and power. Moreover, change was not exclusively happening at the national level and local continuities did not necessarily have a conservative effect. Scholars as diverse as Jürgen Habermas, Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton have demonstrated the importance of editors, the printing press and bookshops, which were centres of discussion in the public sphere, for the history of the Enlightenment and the emergence of middle-class liberalism. As Jim Brophy shows in his comparative study of German bookshops and publishers, the new development could perhaps be interpreted as a part of a process of ‘modernisation’, but it was firmly grounded in a long history of dodging censorship and commercial civil disobedience by publishers-booksellers. ‘It is fascinating to observe’, Brophy rightfully contends, ‘how otherwise lawful-minded burghers so consistently flouted the law’. They had learned to do so during the long history of printing and publishing.

²¹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Waiheke Island: The Floating Press, 2009), 975.

Anne Sophie Overkamp's story about the wealthy burghers of the Wupper valley could also have been part of a history of liberal modernisation and the 'rise of the bourgeoisie' or modern history of the German 'Bürgertum'.²² However, Overkamp shows that the burghers used strategies that they had learned during the long history of negotiating social and political rule. They wanted to protect the social order out of self-interest but also because they believed that they had a duty to serve the community. This community was primarily local, and even when they implored Napoleon to become part of his Empire, they did this because they thought it was the best way to protect the interests of their local communities. In this way, continuity enabled change.

The use of repertoires of collective action also offers many examples of this combination of continuity and change. The historical study of these repertoires has often focussed on the change from a traditional to a modern repertoire, and from direct action to means such as demonstrations and modern social movements.²³ However, the development of politics in around 1800 has been characterised as the 'invention of modern politics' (in the confrontation of the decline of classical republicanism and the rise of liberal democracy) or simply 'the discovery of politics'.²⁴ Without denying that many new things happened in politics at that time, it is worth pointing out that old repertoires were also used to get new, revolutionary results, as James Sanders and Joris Oddens demonstrate for Colombia, Mexico and the Netherlands, respectively.

Their chapters evoke E.P Thompson's older work on the agency of the common people in 'a rebellious traditional culture' and a 'paternalism-deference equilibrium'.²⁵ Thompson's work about customs showed how

²² E.g. Jürgen Kocka and Ute Frevert, *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich*, 3 vols (Munich, 1988).

²³ E.g. historical sociologist Tilly: Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758–1834* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); and Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768–2004* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2004).

²⁴ E.g. Niek van Sas, 'Tweedragt overal. Het patriotisme en de uitvinding van de moderne politiek', in Niek van Sas ed., *De metamorfose van Nederland: Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 175–194; and Michel Vovelle, *La découverte de la politique: Géopolitique de la révolution française* (Paris: La Découverte, 1993).

²⁵ Edward Palmer Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: the New Press, 1991), 9, 71 (this is a collection of essays which mostly had appeared in the 1970s).

the continuity of some practices could help to produce or implement change in another field. This works at the level of justifications, especially in early modern campaigns to forge change by ‘restoring’ an older, better order. The present book demonstrates how these early modern patterns of action, local habits and priorities, not only survived the Age of Revolutions but also helped to shape and imagine the break with the past across societies. Thompson did not believe in a gap between the early modern and the modern age, nor in ‘flat modernisation dogmas’,²⁶ and found many examples of the role custom played in the nineteenth century, such as the continued use of ‘rough music’. He did not concentrate on the nation-state at all. The way he analysed customs is flexible and acknowledges popular struggle instead of acquiescence. He showed that customs could also be used to maintain a balance between the common people and the elite.

One of the most popular of those instruments deserves separate attention because it returns in Sanders’ and Oddens’ chapters: the traditional means of petitioning that continued to be used in the nineteenth century. Even if Latin American middle classes were sometimes more reluctant revolutionaries than the French, Germans or Dutch during the same period, they often used the same means. Throughout the entire revolutionary period and beyond, petitioning in many different forms proved to be a traditional and successful means of protest, regardless of the country (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands or Colombia). There are striking similarities in even the formulas petitioners used. Of course, the Spanish took many European tools to Latin America, but apparently indigenous subalterns had soon discovered how they could use them to their own advantage. Moreover, the deferential language of many petitions does not hide the agency the petitioners were claiming nor their self-confidence. This is a revealing example of the mixture of old and new that characterised the Age of Revolutions. Sanders argues that the different choices that Afro-Colombians and Afro-Mexicans made proves that petitioners did not simply use traditional deferential forms because they were the only ones that they knew or were available. Afro-Colombians and Afro-Mexicans were unable to petition for the ‘restoration’ of old liberties, as other American and European petitioners customarily did, even when these petitioners were in fact petitioning for change. Instead, they proudly

²⁶ Norbert Schindler, *Rebellion, Community and Custom in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 297.

embraced the new age and new vocabulary that held the promise of freedom and emancipation.

EXPERIENCING AND DOMESTICATING CHANGE

The last part of the book focusses on the ways in which the impact of change could be cast and recast, so as to retain continuity with the present. This could take the shape of support for restoring the old regime. However, it was also possible to come to terms with a new situation by emphasising links with the past, and accept changes by incorporating them into a familiar framework. The extent of the changes could be denied, or toned down into a simple improvement. Some even embraced change by arguing that it was in line with the true national character.

Joanna Innes analyses two cases in England, the classic testing ground for adapting strategies. In the long term, Reform became part of the Whig story of gradual change in Britain, but Innes argues that the difference between Reform and revolutionary change was not so obvious for contemporaries, as they did not know what the outcome of the changes or the calls for change would be. There was, at least, one crucial difference, though: the lapse of time. The French Revolution could be presented as one moment in time, and the sudden regime changes certainly conveyed the message of complete rupture. With hindsight, the British Reform Act appeared to be the legal and legitimate outcome of a long process. It was also the starting point for implementing several acts with great local effect which, on the one hand, underlined the central role of Parliament and national administration and, on the other, led to local contestation and division. During the process, the rather new term ‘local government’ gained more currency, which may seem paradoxical: local self-government became a staple of stories about English national identity at a time when local autonomy was diminishing.

Dana Nelson’s chapter on the experience of the American democracy takes us back to the beginning of this volume by concentrating on the residual power that lay buried in the local practices of the common people. According to Nelson, Americans normally understand the development of democratic political practices among ordinary citizens as a product of the new Constitution and its representative system, but we should look much closer to what happened before the Constitution was written. There appears to be an older tradition of what Nelson calls ‘vernacular democracy’, rooted in the ‘customs of the commons’, that

consisted of often informal, participatory practices which originated in the local collective work of mutual support in the commons. This tradition was still very much alive in the nineteenth century, as Tocqueville testifies in his *Democracy in America*, a book that is almost as much about continuity as his *Ancien Régime*. This time it was the continuity of local participatory practices which he studied and admired as the basis of democracy in America: ‘A nation may establish a system of free government, but without the spirit of municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty’.²⁷ Vernacular democracy was not national, representative or urban. Nelson contends that old traditions of participation in the commons were at least as important as the famous Constitution.

This leads us to question what the chapters of this book tell us about the development of citizenship and democracy from the early modern to the modern world. The argument of most contributions is that local continuities have been much more relevant to the way political change occurred and was accepted or implemented during the Age of Revolutions than has often been assumed. The introduction of a new representative system at national level did not mean the end of local participation and agency. Judith Pollmann’s contribution explores the local meanings of change in the Low Countries at the level of individual chroniclers, who recorded the impact of change on their immediate surroundings. While their framing of it was firmly rooted in the traditions of civic republicanism and civic practice, it was precisely this very local and low-level reading of political change, she argues, that ultimately allowed contemporaries to come to terms with it, bridge the gap between past and present, and domesticate the new.

Modern democracy has been institutionalised at the supra-local level. Of course democracy not only needs engaged citizens but also rules and rights. As was already argued in the nineteenth century,²⁸ state politics not only remedies the potentially oppressive parochialism of small communities but can also protect minorities and guarantee individual rights. The purpose of this book is not to idealise the politics of local communities. Yet we believe that if we want to understand how citizens understand politics and gauge the extent to which political change occurred, we need to look further than the state.

²⁷ De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 127.

²⁸ E.g. Dupont-White, *Centralisation*, 232–233.

This book concentrates on the persistence of local citizenship in all its diverse informal expressions and manifestations. Although few political historians would actually deny that local political agency continued to exist after the revolutions, the current division of labour between historians has meant that they have felt little incentive to pursue its importance. As an author of a book about the connections between local and more overarching citizenship in Spain and the Spanish territories in Latin America puts it, ‘most [historical] research has centred either on local communities or on national structures, either on law and doctrine or on social practices’.²⁹ Early modern towns and local rural communities had developed many forms of citizenship, ranging from formal rights to informal roles based on what people actually did and how actively they identified with the local community.³⁰ Maarten Prak, whose fine study *Citizens without Nations* concentrates on early modern urban citizenship as a set of practices, believes that most of the institutions and practices of this citizenship disappeared after the French Revolution, and that ‘nineteenth-century Europe was perhaps less democratic than it had been in previous centuries’.³¹ Admittedly, this chimes with the views of most political historians of the nineteenth century, mainly because they have ignored local politics. Democracy was already associated with nationalisation and centralisation in the nineteenth century. Yet we contend that the development of modern democracy can only be properly understood if local citizenship is taken into account. Tocqueville noted that popular sovereignty worked best if it was ‘scattered’ (éparpillé) in small local communities.³² A recent study about political participation in Europe until 1800 concludes that this participation only worked if there was a certain balance between different political actors (often at different geographical levels), which forced them to negotiate.³³ We should not underestimate the extent to which political rule after 1800

²⁹ Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations. Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2003), 4.

³⁰ Herzog, *Defining Nations*; Maarten Prak, *Citizens without Nations Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World, c.1000–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

³¹ Prak, *Citizens without Nations*, 23.

³² Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville: Les sources aristocratiques de la liberté: Biographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Fayard, 2008) 42.

³³ Wim Blockmans, *Medezeggenschap: Politieke participatie in Europa vóór 1800* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2020) 386.

was still a negotiated process. Also, the persistence of local citizenship was a precondition for the development of democracy in the nineteenth century.

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PART I

Residual Powers



CHAPTER 2

Distance and Proximity. Parliamentary Representation and the Persistence of Local Ties in Britain, France and the Netherlands, C. 1780s–1850

Henk te Velde

If it were possible to pinpoint the date of the advent of modern politics in the West, the French Revolution would be the moment most scholars would choose. Since the 1980s, the Revolution has often been described as the ‘invention’, ‘discovery’ or ‘birth’ of modern politics. Even though the latter part of the nineteenth century has also been characterised in these terms, the Revolution is the earliest date most historians and others would mention. In 1789, the National Assembly or parliament was one of the most important signs that a new age had dawned for France. For the first time, representatives from all corners of the country came together for public deliberations on national political issues and in an assembly

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based on popular sovereignty. The National Assembly did not last long. Even if the subsequent revolutionary assemblies, such as the Convention, are included, it was over in a few years. However, a parliamentary system was re-introduced in the wake of the Bourbon Restoration, and it would never be completely abolished again.

Parliaments belong to the legacy of the Age of Revolutions. The British Parliament was much older, but as a general European (and American) system, parliaments started to emerge at the end of the eighteenth century, and even the British Parliament changed significantly, when it was opened to newspaper reporting in the 1770s.¹ Curiously, the attention for the ‘principles’ of this ‘representative system’ has always been rather one-sided.² Although in practice close ties existed between local electors and their national representatives, theorists of representative government almost invariably underlined the independence of parliamentarians. In fact, independent parliamentarians were often presented as morally superior to, as well as more politically sophisticated than MPs with (excessively) close local ties.

In this contribution, I will argue that local ties not only mattered in practice but that they are crucial to understanding the nature of representative government, and that the persistence of local ties belonged to the principles of nineteenth-century representative government. In fact, the development of the parliamentary system depended on the continuity of local ties, but because these ties seemed to threaten the precarious independence of representatives, they were not theorised. Mainstream formulations of the principles of representative government were rather lopsided, as if representation was one-way traffic directed by representatives. By discussing the continuing importance of local connections and interests, this contribution will argue that the new conceptions of parliamentary representation needed a practical substratum of ‘proximity’ to make them legitimate. The idea of proximity as a component of

¹ Publicity was seen as one of the defining elements of a modern parliament, as I have argued in Henk te Velde, *Sprekende politiek. Redenaars en hun publiek in de parlementaire gouden eeuw* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2015).

² Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and the title is an echo of nineteenth-century titles such as Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne, *Des principes du gouvernement représentatif et de leur application* (Paris: Tessier, 1838).

democratic legitimacy has only recently been theorised by Pierre Rosanvallon³ but it could be argued that it has always formed part and parcel of the practice *and* the idea of representative politics. I will discuss British, French and Dutch examples. Each national case has its own peculiarities, but together they show the virtual absence of local continuities in theory *and* their very real significance in practice. Starting with the classic formulations of member independence by Edmund Burke and then French parliamentarians, I will show that they were hiding mutual or reciprocal connections with the constituencies. I will then move on to the importance of local politics, mainly in Britain, and finally focus on the issue of ‘public’ versus ‘private’ in the juxtaposition of the national and the local, primarily in the case of the Netherlands. In doing so, I will try to explain why local politics often seemed to be obsolete and corrupt private matters.

EDMUND BURKE: (IN)DEPENDENCE OF THE MP

Edmund Burke’s views about the independence of representatives are almost too well-known to be recapitulated here, but in light of this contribution, they should be reconsidered. This has been done already, but mainly in the context of his biography; the implications for the history of representation have not really been assessed.⁴ Burke’s ‘Speech to the Electors of Bristol’ (1774) provided, of course, the classic formulation of parliamentary representation:

Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices, ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member

³ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy. Impartiality, Reflexivity, Proximity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁴ For the following paragraphs, see Richard Bourke, *Empire & Revolution. The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), 378–390. An older thorough study of the election of 1774: Lucy Sutherland, ‘Edmund Burke and the Relations Between Members of Parliament and Their Constituents’, *Studies in Burke and His Time* 10 (1968), 1005–1021.

indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not member of Bristol, but he is a member of parliament.⁵

MPs should discuss and defend the general good, and not be guided by local prejudice. It is true that this statement is more famous now than it used to be in the late eighteenth century. Burke prided himself on being the first to use it as an argument during election time in a speech for his constituency. Nevertheless, even if some MPs defended the idea of ‘instructions’ by ‘constituents’, Burke’s conception was consistent with mainstream British views of representation at the time. That he felt the need to explain his position was not a sign of his self-evident independence, but part of a struggle to determine how he should behave now that he would be dependent on the voters (of Bristol) instead of the patron of a rotten borough. It is important to know, that his famous dictum was a reaction to an alternative delegate view of representation, put forward at the time, also by another Member of Bristol. At the next elections in 1780, Burke lost his seat because he disagreed with his Bristol constituency on crucial political issues, such as the consequences of the American struggle for independence. He felt that that was fair and he accepted the verdict of his constituency.⁶

In the election campaign of 1774, Burke had also expressed his views about his responsibility to the constituency. He was proud to be chosen to represent the second city of the country. In his acceptance speech, in addition to stating his conviction that it was his duty as an MP to deliberate on the common good with his fellow-parliamentarians, he said:

it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own.

⁵ Many editions, e.g. <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s7.html> (last accessed on 28 April 2020).

⁶ Also see <http://historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/constituencies/bristol> (John Brooke), last accessed on 27 April 2020.

These were no empty words. It was his conviction that the power of Parliament was ‘directly dependent on its proximity to the people’, as the author of a classic article on Burke’s idea of representation states.⁷ As an MP and a lobbyist, he also worked hard to promote the interests of his constituency. As he explained in his unsuccessful 1780 election campaign, in response to criticism of his absence from the constituency:

I could hardly serve you as I have done, and court you too [by visiting you]. My canvass of you was (...) in the House of Commons; it was at the custom-house; it was at the council; it was at the treasury; it was at the admiralty. I canvassed you through your affairs, and not your persons. I was not only your representative as a body; I was the agent, the solicitor of individuals; I ran about wherever your affairs could call me; and in acting for you, I often appeared rather as a ship-broker, than as a member of parliament. There was nothing too laborious or too low for me to undertake.⁸

Burke did not shy away from lobbying and dirtying his hands in the direct service of his constituents. This was a way of demonstrating how seriously he took the community of constituents. Local attachments really mattered. As one historian of politics in the eighteenth century opined, the language of MPs about independence was partly a question of semantics. Constituents would send their representatives modest ‘entreaties’ and ‘requests’, but when the stakes were high, they might suddenly write ‘instructions’.⁹ The fact that local ties were not part of Burke’s *theory* of representation shows how difficult it was to maintain independence in practice, even though opposition representatives sometimes asked for instructions from their constituents in order to put pressure on the government.¹⁰ Burke and other parliamentarians implicitly distinguished between lobbying for their constituents, which was fine in practice, and ideological instructions, which were rejected, both in practice and in theory.

⁷ James Conniff, ‘Burke, Bristol, and the Concept of Representation’, *Western Political Quarterly* 30: 3 (1977), 329–341; esp. 335.

⁸ P. T. Underdown, ‘Edmund Burke, the Commissary of his Bristol Constituents, 1774–1780’, *The English Historical Review* 73: 287 (1958), 252–269; esp. 253.

⁹ Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689–1798* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 189–190.

¹⁰ This last element: Sutherland, ‘Burke’.

A couple of years later, Burke would nevertheless praise local ties, but in a completely different context, where he could more freely discuss British conceptions of representation. In a well-known section of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, he contrasts the artificial revolutionary French ‘départements’ with the ‘divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by a sudden jerk of authority’. ‘We begin our public affections in our families’, then ‘we pass on to our neighbourhoods, and our habitual provincial connections’ and ‘the love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality’ based on ‘unreasoned habits’.¹¹ This section has normally been read as an expression of his conservatism, but it could also be interpreted as an illustration of his ideas about representation. His ideas seem to be somewhat paradoxical. ‘It were better’, he wrote, ‘that no influence at all could affect the mind of a member of Parliament’.¹² Yet, he accepted patronage, as a concession to the practices of representation at the time. He also defended close practical ties with his constituents on principle, but he liked to decide for himself what to do with them, without being subject to ‘influence’. Yet again, he praised the embedded British form of representation as opposed to the abstract, revolutionary French representation. To understand what was at stake, it is useful to consider the notion of representation. For someone like Burke, representation meant representing people’s views or representing common or important interests, but he was also looking after the particular interests of his constituents in non-legislative contexts, which he perhaps would not call representation at all. So, let us see what the French had to say about their constituents during Burke’s time and later.

¹¹ Many editions, e.g. Edmund Burke, ‘Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event. In a Letter Intended to have been sent to a Gentleman in Paris. By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke’, in: Iain Hampsher-Monk ed., *Revolutionary Writings. Reflections on the Revolution in France and the First Letter on a Regicide Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹² Burke’s *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770), quoted by William Selinger, *Parliamentarism. From Burke to Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 69.

FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES: AUSTERE INDEPENDENCE (IN THEORY) AND MUTUAL DEFERENCE (IN PRACTICE)

The centralisation and destruction of local ties were part of the story that Burke and most French authors started to tell about the French Revolution. This story culminated with Tocqueville's *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*. Although Tocqueville concentrated on continuities, he mainly concentrated on the continuity of centralisation as a feature of French politics from the eighteenth century onwards. The national level dominated in most accounts of political developments, and this level was certainly central to mainstream French conceptions of representation from the Revolution onwards. During the Revolution, legitimations of the French parliament or National Assembly underlined the importance of the national level. Popular sovereignty was not taken to mean that local constituencies should determine national politics but demanded that parliamentarians decide what 'the general will' was. Among others, Siéyès, Talleyrand and Mirabeau defended the independence of the representative.

However, this 'idealized position of deputy detachment from the opinions of their constituencies was seldom maintained in practice', as historian of the National Assembly Timothy Tackett put it. Not only did the deputies meet many local lobbyists, they received a massive number of letters and local requests, and as local notables they maintained close contacts with their constituencies and used deferential language in their correspondence with their constituents: 'I will devote my life to demonstrating my worthiness of your confidence and respect', 'I will submit myself, gentlemen, to your instructions. You will find me a docile pupil', 'I beg you to support me with your counsel and suggestions'. As if that were not enough: 'Wherever the interests of my constituency are concerned, I will always set aside my personal opinions'.¹³ These views did not differ much from those of Burke quoted above, which showed that he knew he was dealing with a pre-existing local community and professed his adherence to his constituents. Of course, political tactics played a role in

¹³ Timothy Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary. The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789–1790)* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 235; also see 234–239; quotations from 237, respectively from Alquier (La Rochelle), La Roque (Périgueux), Delaville le Roulx (Lorient), Schwendt (Strasbourg).

this deferential language, but the deference is still striking. This deference ‘from above’ was ambiguous, just like the well-known deference ‘from below’, because representatives were always somewhat dependent on their constituencies, even if they were powerful local notables. It shows that representation was a two-way system from the start of the National Assembly in 1789 and that it needed careful maintenance on both sides. In Britain, this two-way communication has been called ‘mutual’ deference.¹⁴ The same thing has been described for early nineteenth-century France as well.¹⁵

Still, early nineteenth-century French parliamentarians enjoyed Burkean independence from their constituencies. After the end of the French Revolution and the fall of Napoleon, there was no return to older ideas of binding mandates or instructions from local constituencies. On the contrary, authoritative explanations of parliamentary ‘representation’ underlined the freedom of the representatives. French Prime Minister François Guizot, a theorist of representation and a doctrinaire liberal, wrote that publicity ought to provide the main connection between parliament and country. Parliamentarians should deliberate in freedom, elections were necessary but not all-important, and the press should inform the country about parliamentary proceedings as well as enlighten parliamentarians. Meanwhile, a certain distance between constituencies and their representatives was needed to allow for free debates in parliament. The ‘wrong apprehension of the word representation’ (in the sense of popular sovereignty or imperative mandates) was the source of much confusion, Guizot wrote in a section discussing Rousseau’s ideas.¹⁶

Pierre Paul Royer-Collard, parliamentary leader of the doctrinaires during the Restoration, was even more outspoken. In the French Chamber, he famously said that representation should be conceived of as a ‘metaphor’ because, taken literally, it would have to include (pernicious)

¹⁴ Frank O’Gorman, ‘Electoral Deference in “Unreformed” England, 1760–1832’, *The Journal of Modern History* 56: 3 (1984), 391–429; esp. 427.

¹⁵ Christine Guionnet, *L’apprentissage de la politique moderne. Les élections municipales sous la monarchie de Juillet* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997); esp. 89 ff.

¹⁶ François Guizot, *The History of the Origins of Representative Government in Europe* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund Inc., 2002), 278; and Aurelian Craiutu, *Liberalism under Siege. The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires* (Lanham: Lexington, 2003), 190.

imperative mandates and the result would be a radical republic.¹⁷ Also Prosper Duvergier de Hauranne, a younger and more progressive liberal, thought that it would be unwise to equate representation and elections. He, too, thought that representation should not be taken too literally. Besides, instead of people, ‘interests’ (as Burke and his likes would also have said) and ‘social needs’ should be represented.¹⁸

The discussion about representation was not simply a matter of semantics. The doctrinaire interpretation of representation was directed against alternative, radical conceptions. Moreover, if representation did not imply representation of (views of) the people, it was also easier to reinforce executive government. Long before he became Prime Minister, Guizot had already argued that it was perfectly normal for the government to protect its stability by influencing the elections.¹⁹ In practice, this meant that the Chamber contained many high-ranking civil servants, prefects and judges, who would normally support the government majority.²⁰ The electorate might also be in favour of such candidates because they thought these officials might be able to get their constituency a canal or a railway connection by using their connections inside the government and the administration.²¹ In practice, Guizot’s top priority was executive government, and if he did not actively support the system of the ‘*députés fonctionnaires*’ (civil servants who were deputies, i.e. parliamentarians), he did at least condone the system and turn a blind eye to it. It reinforced the idea that his regime was dominated by electoral and other corruption. According to Victor Hugo, Guizot was personally incorruptible, but he ruled by corruption: he looked like a respectable woman who was running a brothel.²²

This was, of course, not what the high-minded advocates of proper parliamentary representation were looking for in a representative. Local canals and railways belonged to the private or local interests which

¹⁷ Prosper Brugière de Barante, *La vie politique de Royer-Collard. Ses discours et ses écrits*. 2 vols. (Paris: Didie, 1863), I, 227.

¹⁸ Alain Laquière, *Les origines du régime parlementaire en France (1814–1848)* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2002), 135–151.

¹⁹ Guizot in 1816, quoted *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁰ François Julien-Laferrrière, *Les députés fonctionnaires sous la Monarchie de Juillet* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970).

²¹ As Adolphe Thiers was arguing in the Chamber (17 March 1846) quoted *Ibid.*, 71.

²² E.g. Guy Antonetti, *Louis-Philippe* (Paris: Fayard, 2014), 885–887.

should not occupy proper politicians at the expense of national matters. The ‘most miserable local interests’ allegedly determined the vote of local constituents, who tried to get representatives sharing their own parochialism (clocher), but who did not know anything about the important affairs of state.²³ How could it possibly be otherwise, other people asked. In their own locality, nobody could see anything but that locality. You had to be ‘enlightened’ to be able to rule, and who had ever heard that the light came from below and not from above?²⁴ Representatives should not reproduce the local situation at the national level but rise above local limitations and prejudices. That was certainly what Guizot (and Burke) had in mind when he wrote about representation.

However, there was another side to this coin, even in France where the Revolution had made everybody think that, for better or for worse, the country had been centralised. In fact, many authors called for a revival of local ‘autogouvernement’.²⁵ Guizot admired the British tradition of local self-government, active citizenship and connections between the electoral system and local power.²⁶ On the face of it, this does not seem to have led to the protection of local traditions or a local orientation in politics, and he asserted that ‘the preponderance of local institutions belongs to the infancy of societies’.²⁷ However, already in the early 1820s, his friend and political ally Prosper de Barante had published a widely read book with suggestions to redress the nefarious consequences of centralisation. According to Barante, freedom implied the ability to ‘conserve one’s right’. Originally, the communes were the basis of a society of local customs, but centralisation had put an end to that world. In order to rekindle these traditions, the administration should be decentralised and local and departmental elections should be introduced. Decentralisation

²³ Henri Fonfrède, *Du gouvernement du roi et des limites constitutionnelles de la prérogative parlementaire* (Paris: Delloye, 1839), 77–79, 169–170.

²⁴ Comte de Zeller, *Réponse à l’écrit de l’honorable M. de Hauranne, ayant pour titre “De la chambre des députés dans le gouvernement”* (Paris: Delaunay, 1838), 44.

²⁵ Guionnet, *L’apprentissage*, 287; and Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le moment Guizot* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 58, footnote 3, with a list of publications of that time on ‘decentralization’.

²⁶ François Guizot, *Discours académiques suivis des discours prononcés pour la distribution des prix au concours général de l’université et devant diverses sociétés religieuses et de trois essais de philosophie littéraire et politique* (Paris: Didier, 1862), 381–383; and Craiutu, *Liberalism*, 255.

²⁷ Guizot, *Representative Government*, 34; Rosanvallon, *Moment Guizot*, 60.

and local elections could build on the spirit of ‘association’, which was prevalent in local communities and would stimulate public spirit among those without access to the world of the national parliament. Guizot concurred, and wrote that the ‘reason’ should indeed come from ‘above’ (presumably the national elite), but that ‘life’ was coming from below, as a natural government that was already made and could be found everywhere.²⁸

When the July Monarchy was founded in 1830, it liked to show that it differed from its more conservative Bourbon predecessor. One of the first important acts by which its political nature could be determined, was the Local Government Act of 21 March 1831. The regime has always been characterised as oligarchic and bourgeois, and this democratic law has not received the attention it deserves.²⁹ It introduced mass male suffrage for local councils. In some cases, small rural communities virtually acquired universal male suffrage. The introduction of this local suffrage has been characterised as the ‘descent’ of modern politics into the countryside, and the ‘learning’ of modern political practices. If you look at it closely, though, it appears that this is a case of the close interconnection and mixture of ‘the old’ and ‘the new’. The new political facilities were used to express the historically inspired, communitarian and ‘unanimous’ spirit of local communities.³⁰

In his *Recollections*, Alexis de Tocqueville famously used the procession of the men of his village on election day as an illustration of the naive deference of ‘these worthy people’ (ces braves gens) who voted for him in 1848. Despite his patronising attitude—if not because of it—his Normandy constituency supported his vision of politics. It liked to be represented by a local notable with independent views, and Tocqueville’s refusal to discuss his views with republican committees was applauded

²⁸ Letter from Guizot to Barante, 7 July 1821, quoted by Craiutu, *Liberalism*, 181, note 23; also see 164–165 (customs); Prosper Brugière de Barante, *Des communes et de l’aristocratie*. (Paris: Avocat, 1821), 17, 20, 22, 153, 190, and passim; and Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville. Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 107.

²⁹ Guionnet, *L’apprentissage*, is the first monograph devoted to the issue.

³⁰ Pierre Rosanvallon, in his introduction to Guionnet, *L’apprentissage*, II.

as a rejection of radicalism.³¹ The attitude of the local people may have reflected a conservative viewpoint but it demonstrated more than just passivity and naive deference. Despite his condescending attitude (he wrote that the elections were ‘in the hands of wood dealers and butchers’), Tocqueville knew full well that some form of reciprocity was expected from him. Just like Edmund Burke, he lobbied profusely for his local people, even before he was elected, and he also considered it his ‘duty’ (devoir) to help his constituents.³²

Given that he was a notable and an aristocrat, his fellow local citizens considered Tocqueville an obvious mediator between the local and the nation level as well as a cultural custodian of the customs.³³ However, Tocqueville’s constituency belonged to a conservative region, and other communities could be far less deferential. The popularity of petitioning demonstrates that communities could be quite assertive, and at the local elections, there were banners that read ‘no more bourgeois, long live the peasants!’ (‘Plus de bourgeois, vive les paysans!’). Seen in this light, Tocqueville’s election could be interpreted as a protest against the attempt of the 1848 revolution to ‘destroy local influences and parochial interests’. In defence of local politics, commentators maintained that ‘the local government is in immediate contact with all citizens’.³⁴

The ruling elite liked to see local elections as a school for national politics. This was an idea that British commentators still shared many years later. John Stuart Mill famously praised local politics in his *Considerations of Representative Government*. In his top-down view ‘these local functions, not being in general sought by the higher ranks, carry down

³¹ The section in Alexis De Tocqueville, *Recollections* (New York: Macmillan, 1896), 127–128; Hugh Brogan, *Alexis de Tocqueville* (London: Profile Books, 2006), 435; and Guionnet, *L’apprentissage*, passim.

³² Examples in Tocqueville, *Oeuvres complètes*, 87–88; and Delphine Dulong, *La construction du champ politique* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 67–68 (letters by Tocqueville), cf. 50–51 (Tocqueville’s ‘vote communautaire’).

³³ Tudesq, ‘Préface’, 10.

³⁴ Quotations from Guionnet, *L’apprentissage*, 108, 185, 210. See also Malcolm Crook, ‘Citizenship without Democracy. The Culture of Elections in France under the Constitutional Monarchy, 1814–1848’, in: Silke Hensel et al., eds., *Constitutional Cultures. On the Concept and Representation of Constitutions in the Atlantic World* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 403–425.

the important political education which they are the means of conferring, to a much lower grade in society'.³⁵ However, the local participants had their own, independent agenda. This was not the descent of modern politics into the archaic countryside, but a debate or even a confrontation between the two concepts of representation: should representatives focus on national issues and the general interest or common good, or should they cater to the needs of their constituents as men of their village or town? The contenders often experienced this confrontation as a zero-sum game, but they could have argued that vibrant politics needed both elements and that the new 'modern' national politics needed a substratum of local attachments.³⁶ To a certain extent, Guizot, Barante and others seemed to argue this, but they were not consistent, and their elitist and patronising convictions contradicted their theoretical praise for local self-government.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT, CORRUPTION AND REPRESENTATION IN BRITAIN

The lack of real connections between the national and the local level may have been one of the reasons why the July Monarchy disappeared so suddenly in 1848, despite its success in consolidating a constitutional and parliamentary system at the national level. But these questions were not particular to France. Notwithstanding French praise for British local self-government and the subsequent British self-image of local self-government as the basis for their liberty, connections between the two levels were not easy in Britain either. Long ago, W.T.M. Mackenzie argued that a theory of British local government did not really exist and had not existed until then either. Furthermore, even though local government belonged to the articles of faith of the English constitution, 'nothing was heard of this ancient doctrine of the constitution until

³⁵ John Stuart Mill, 'Considerations of Representative Government', in: John Stuart Mill, ed., *On Liberty and other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 413.

³⁶ Cf. Peter McPhee, *The Politics of Rural Life. Political Mobilization in the French Countryside 1846–1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); and Benoit Agnès, *L'appel au pouvoir. Les pétitions aux Parlements en France et au Royaume-Uni (1814–1848)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires, 2018).

after [the Reform Bill of] 1832'.³⁷ If we look at classic constitutional commentaries, not only the absence of local government is striking but also the condescending descriptions. Take, for instance, the widely read essay by Henry Grey about parliamentary government (1858). He refers to Burke in order to defend the conception of Parliament as a 'deliberative assembly' instead of 'an assembly of delegates'. The greatest threat to the independence of the MPs—the basis of such a system—was corruption, and the most conspicuous examples of corruption were provided by 'pernicious local influence': the 'chain of influence, from the elector to the Minister' and, in the case of MPs, 'the clamorous demands of those who have influence in the county or borough he represents'. For a minister of the Cabinet, it was better to represent 'a close Borough' with no real constituency and just one patron, rather than a borough subject to the pressure of 'local interests and feelings' that was at the mercy of 'the mere caprice of some local constituency'.³⁸

Until 1832, corruption was what critics of parochialism and local oligarchy feared the most, but definitions of corruption could be rather general and might include work for local interests. Many commentators were critical about local attachments, also later. According to Henry Brougham's account of the constitution (1861), 'representation' was related to the whole, and representatives were much more than mere 'delegates' or 'commissioned agents' in service of the 'particular will' of their small communities.³⁹ In *The English Constitution* from the late 1860s, Walter Bagehot disagreed with Brougham, whom he probably despised, but they agreed that serious representation was related to the common good. Bagehot says that owing to its admiration for local government, Britain had to put up with 'difficulties of which abroad they [had] long got rid'. In local government 'petty interests' and 'inferior abilities' were still cherished; 'local feeling' was 'older than complicated politics', which

³⁷ William James Millar Mackenzie, 'Theories of Local Government', in: William James Millar Mackenzie, ed., *Explorations in Government. Collected Papers, 1951–1968* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 68. Also see Petrus Benedictus Maria Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism. Parliamentary and Constitutional Development in Whig Historiography and in the Anti-Whig Reaction between 1890 and 1930* (The Hague/Boston/London: Nijhoff, 1978), 175.

³⁸ Henry George Grey, *Representative Government Considered with Reference to a Reform of Parliament* (London: Bentley, 1858), 43, 71, 107–108.

³⁹ Henry Brougham, *The British Constitution* (London/Glasgow: Griffin, 1861); esp. 31–32.

implied that it was not a political sentiment at all.⁴⁰ Guizot had already shared this association of the local with the non-political. He was relating the local with the social roots of politics rather than with politics in general.

However, the British case shows that the local mattered, not only because MPs represented a local constituency but also because legislation was often prompted by local initiatives. In addition to the so-called public bills for the whole of Britain, ‘local and private bills’ were passed upon petition by local bodies or even individual persons. In the nineteenth century, these petitions were a British peculiarity reminiscent of the way early modern towns in many countries had acted upon requests of the local citizenry. Local and private bills linked Parliament with the localities. They underlined parliamentary sovereignty because local action required bills passed by Parliament, but they also gave localities room for manoeuvre. People thought that ‘parliament had a duty to protect local interests’ and, according to one historian, Parliament even turned into ‘a gigantic rubber stamp, confirming local and private enterprise, but rarely taking initiatives of its own’.⁴¹ The bills were needed in main fields of local administration, such as Poor Law, public health and infrastructure. Roads, canals and especially the new railways needed private bills. In the nineteenth century, local and private bills outnumbered public bills by far. They were complicated and expensive, though, which gave rise to at least suspicions of corruption and bribery.⁴²

Moreover, local and private bills continued the old, apparently patchwork legislation. The Whigs who passed the Reform Bill preferred more rational and unifying legislation. They were not so much interested in facilitating the wishes of the localities, but rather in rolling out uniform national legislation. In 1836 one of the most prominent Whigs, Lord John Russell, wrote that they were ‘busy introducing system, method, science, economy, regularity, discipline’. The only problem was that they

⁴⁰ Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1997), 62, 114, 121.

⁴¹ Resp. Rosemary Sweet, ‘Local Identities and a National Parliament, c. 1688–1835’, in: Julian Hoppit ed., *Parliaments, Nations and Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 60; Langford, *Public Life*, 166.

⁴² Grey, *Representative Government*, 38, footnote.

must ‘beware not to lose the co-operation of the country’.⁴³ He was writing to Edwin Chadwick who was a follower of Jeremy Bentham, a radical social reformer, the most important national manager of public health and poor laws in the 1830s and 1840s, and a critic of local oligarchies and local corruption favouring national arrangements at the expense of local autonomy. He trusted the government by experts and a centralised professional administration. More recent research suggests that he and his older biographers overlooked the serious problems these national arrangements encountered as well as the good done by the traditional private acts and the new Local Government Act.⁴⁴

Chadwick’s work met with much opposition and was used to glorify the national tradition of local self-government. In fact, the expression ‘local government’ only originated in the early nineteenth century because before politics had perhaps been local but officially only the King’s government existed. Critics of Chadwick regarded centralisation as the opposite of freedom because freedom rested on local self-government. Historians such as William Stubbs were arguing that the House of Commons had originated as ‘the concentration of local representation’, the Prussian historical jurist Rudolf von Gneist helped to spread the admiration for British local self-government as part of the Whig interpretation of history,⁴⁵ and self-made historian Toulmin Smith thought that local government was a necessary antidote against the development of an ‘atomised’ citizenry and society. Toulmin Smith also believed that the local community or ‘the Parish is with us the institution through which the inner life of the people is developed, and in which it should be habitually exercised’.⁴⁶ He did not really like representation, because elections once in a while could never replace the practical involvement which was only possible at the local level.⁴⁷

⁴³ Quoted by John Prest, *Liberty and Locality. Parliament, Permissive Legislation, and Ratepayers’ Democracies in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 37.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 166–167.

⁴⁵ Blaas, *Continuity and Anachronism*, 161–162, 165, 171–179, 183.

⁴⁶ Ben Weinstein, ‘“Local Self-Government Is True Socialism”. Joshua Toulmin Smith, the State and Character Formation’, *The English Historical Review* 123: 504 (2008), 1193–1228; esp. 1196, 1203, 1221.

⁴⁷ William Howard Greenleaf, ‘Toulmin Smith and the British Political Tradition’, *Public Administration* 53: 1 (1975), 25–44; esp. 37 and 39.

These ideological protests did not inhibit the actual process of centralisation. In fact, scholars now argue that Britain is today one of the most centralised countries in the world.⁴⁸ Moreover, lingering conservative nostalgia has made it difficult to see the ambiguity of local representation. A rhetoric of local customs could be an expression of local self-reliance but might also be used to maintain vested interests.⁴⁹ As I have mentioned before, however, historians have also pointed to the mutual or reciprocal nature of deference and the agency of the local people involved, mainly in Britain but also in France. This agency involves the allegedly subordinate voter demonstrating a ‘determination to maintain his self-respect’ and a ‘willingness to know his place but to maintain it on the most advantageous terms possible, even to the point of resisting political direction’.⁵⁰ (Local) politics entailed ‘negotiation rather than clientage’.⁵¹

This perspective could also question the connection between the nationalisation and democratisation of politics. Chadwick, along with those who shared his views, was convinced that you needed national initiatives to defeat local corruption and oligarchy, and to a certain extent, he was probably right. However, democracy in the sense of participatory politics, engagement and agency of the common people, may have depended much more than he realised on the local situation and the wish to preserve ancient rights. In their petition against the Municipal Reform Act (1835) the freemen of Oxford argued that they should keep their electoral privileges, ‘which the Petitioners submit are as much their undeniable Right as any kind of private Property’. Even petitions in favour of the act supported the restoration of rights and they requested that the House should ‘enact such laws as will give the Petitioners the power to elect their own magisterial and local authorities’.⁵² It has been argued

⁴⁸ James A. Chandler, *Explaining Local Government. Local government in Britain since 1800*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); and James A. Chandler, ‘Liberal Justifications for Local Government in Britain. The Triumph of Expediency over Ethics’, *Political Studies* 56: 2 (2008), 355–373.

⁴⁹ Langford, *Public Life*, 177.

⁵⁰ Frank O’Gorman, ‘Electoral Deference’, in: Frank O’Gorman, ed., *Voters, Patrons, and Parties. The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734–1832* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 226: ‘Reciprocal’ (also with reference to J.C.A. Pocock); Guionnet, quoted above.

⁵¹ Angus Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture. “Habits of Heart and Mind”* (Oxford: University Press, 2015), 160, in a chapter about constituency politics.

⁵² Quoted by Sweet, ‘Local Identities’, 59.

that the broadening of electoral representative politics came at the price of ending an older vernacular, demotic culture of popular politics.⁵³ This latter form of politics was local and continued to exist for much of the nineteenth century, even if representative institutions and the elective principle became the rule.⁵⁴

The continuity of local electoral behaviour was striking.⁵⁵ The ‘party’ was becoming more important, but the parties depended to a large extent on local organisation. Many things now happened at the national level, but the local remained important, even for MPs who seemed to convey the message that their work was based in London. If it is true that British Parliament was more popular than other parliaments in the nineteenth century, this had a lot to do with the remaining connections with the local level. The passing of private legislation had continued the tradition that ‘Parliament was the petitioner on behalf of the people’.⁵⁶ In their constituencies, ordinary local citizens felt entitled to participate in election meetings and electoral battles over seats in parliament, regardless of suffrage rights. Perhaps they had also learned to play by the rules of national politics but they did so, at least partly, on their own terms. The local ‘community’ was central to these electoral battles, even if the community was hardly unanimous. As Frank O’Gorman puts it: ‘the conflict between oligarchy and independence was the ideological core of electoral activity’.⁵⁷

⁵³ James Vernon, *Politics and the People. A Study in English Political Culture c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 7: ‘at the founding moment of English liberty and democracy, it was the closure of democratic political forms, the stifling of a radical libertarian tradition, that was most evident.’

⁵⁴ Cf. Prest, *Liberty and Locality*, 208.

⁵⁵ O’Gorman, ‘Voters’, 393 (conclusion).

⁵⁶ Langford, *Public Life*, 166.

⁵⁷ O’Gorman, ‘Voters’, 260. The struggle against oligarchy also inspired Brougham in his Whig fight against the local Tory establishment: William Anthony Hay, ‘Henry Brougham and the 1818 Westmorland Election. A Study in Provincial Opinion and the Opening of Constituency Politics’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 36: 1 (2004), 28–51.

THE LOCAL DIMENSION OF POLITICS: PAROCHIALISM, OLIGARCHY, PRIVATE INTEREST AND DEMOCRACY

If local politics were so important and if they were a means for ordinary people to express their needs, why was there not more theoretical support for the local dimension of representative politics? The answer to this question can perhaps be captured in two words: parochialism and oligarchy. Nineteenth-century modernisers promoted liberty and agency, and they thought that local politics was parochial and a matter of local (i.e. petty) interest. Even those who applauded the principle of local self-government, as Burke and Guizot did, favoured national politics in practice. Their more theoretical ideas about representation also neglected the local dimension. Local government was almost by definition associated with (old) corruption—see, for instance, Henry Grey. Until the Reform Bill of 1832, local government seemed to be in the realm of oligarchy. National politicians often did not seriously oppose oligarchy at the local level or they thought that it was too radical and therefore dangerous. Radicals, such as Chadwick in England, considered local government an obstacle on the road to (national) democracy and rational executive government.⁵⁸ The radical John Roebuck believed that it was best to keep himself ‘as much aloof as possible from all merely local politics’ (the word merely is significant here).⁵⁹ Given that defending local autonomy was often inspired by conservatism and the desire to maintain the traditional power of the landed aristocracy, the progressive currents of liberalism and radicalism attacked the prestige and power of local government.

In a (western) European context, it might be hard to imagine that local government could not only provide elementary political schooling for plain and ordinary local citizens but that it could also be the basis for a bottom-up democracy, or even that a bottom-up democracy could be a good thing at all. In Europe, locality, aristocracy and conservatism seemed to be too closely intertwined, but in America, things looked different: there was no aristocracy and less deference. It is unsurprising that Tocqueville discovered the importance of local government to democracy there. He did not quite romanticise or idealise local government, but he thought that it provided a useful tool to unite ‘a particular

⁵⁸ E.g. Mackenzie, ‘Theories of Local Government’, 71–72.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, 172.

interest to the general interest'. It was an *advantage* that local politics started in your own backyard. That was what made it so concrete, practical and straightforward. Of course, you needed the central government to protect individual rights and freedoms and moderate 'the despotism of the majority', but local communities were the substratum you needed for healthy politics. You needed the engagement and participation that only local politics could provide for everyone.⁶⁰ In Britain, the idea that a form of 'nimbyism' might have fuelled awareness of Parliament in the nineteenth century has only recently been put forward, but Tocqueville already advocated a 'démocratie de proximité'.⁶¹

Tocqueville's interest in local politics was inspired by Guizot's ideas about self-government, but their perspectives differed quite dramatically. Guizot abhorred democracy and thought that representative politics needed distance; Tocqueville realised that (democratic) politics needed distance and proximity. The combination of both local and central/national politics could, in his eyes, provide both. Tocqueville himself offers a fine example of how difficult it was to practice these ideas, as is shown by the aforementioned story in his *Recollections* about his electoral experience as a local notable and aristocrat.

Most nineteenth-century reformers wanted to escape the limitations and parochialism of local communities. They were trying to separate private and public interest, and parliamentary politics revolved around the representation of the common good or the general interest. They thought that local politics was about local interest i.e. *private* interest. What you needed was 'public spirit' and patriotic virtue.⁶² The idea of private interest triggered the association of local affairs with 'corruption'. Therefore, the proximity of local politics was a problem, not a solution. Representing interests was not in itself a problem: the 'general' interest was fine, and Burke and others argued that the representation of the

⁶⁰ Robert T. Gannett, Jr, 'Tocqueville and Local Government. Distinguishing Democracy's Second Track', *The Review of Politics* 67: 4 (2005), 721–736, quotations from Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* on pp. 725 and 731.

⁶¹ Philip Salmon, 'Parliament', in: David Brown, Robert Crowcroft and Gordon Pentland, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern British Political History, 1800–2000* (Oxford, 2018); esp. 90; and Lucien Jaume, *Tocqueville. Les sources aristocratiques de la liberté. Biographie intellectuelle* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 42–52 (Jaume uses the modern word *proximité*).

⁶² Sweet, 'Local Identities', 51 (about the eighteenth century).

various nationwide interests (landed, commercial etc.) was the purpose of Parliament. The representation of local interests, however, could be tolerated in practice (e.g. lobbying was condoned) but it should not be the overarching intention or the purpose of parliamentary politics.

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE LAW AND INTEREST IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands offers a striking case of the juxtaposition of private local interest and the public interest of national representative politics, as demonstrated by the dominant politician of his age, Johan Rudolf Thorbecke (1798–1872). Thorbecke was educated as a classicist and philosopher and became a professor of constitutional law at Leiden University. In the 1840s, he turned to politics and became the main architect of the constitution of 1848, introducing a liberal system of ministerial responsibility and direct parliamentary elections. As constitutional doctrinaire liberals, he and Guizot were kindred spirits, but there was a crucial difference: the revolution of 1848 unseated Guizot and ended his political career, whereas the upheaval of that year brought Thorbecke to the fore and was the real beginning of his political career.⁶³

Although Thorbecke was a constitutionalist and an executive politician, the Dutch conservative establishment deemed him at first a dangerous radical. As a self-made man and son of a father who went bankrupt, he intensely disliked the old oligarchy. His aim was systematic and rational administration, based on indiscriminate and objective criteria. No privileges anymore for the old elite. The main tool of his politics was the law (the calling of the state was to be a community of law or ‘regtsvereeniging’) and the great project of his life was to discriminate between public and private law.⁶⁴ This was in line with liberal projects elsewhere and hardly anybody anywhere questioned the public nature of the nation, as

⁶³ Henk te Velde, ‘Onderwijzers in parlementaire politiek. Thorbecke, Guizot en het Europese doctrinaire liberalisme’, *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 113: 3 (1998), 322–343.

⁶⁴ Remieg Aerts, *Thorbecke wil het. Biografie van een staatsman* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2018), 333–337; for the next paragraphs 132, 383, 449, 455–457, 465–468, 760; Eke Poortinga, *De scheiding tussen publiek- en privaatrecht bij Johan Rudolph Thorbecke (1798–1872). Theorie en toepassing* (Nijmegen: Ars Aequi Libri, 1987); and Regtsvereeniging: in his famous ‘Narede’ (‘Epilogue’ to his political life, 1869). <http://home.planet.nl/~dmjanssen1960/Narede.html> (last accessed 3 April 2020).

opposed to the private nature of local affairs. This was a feature of liberal and Whig politics in general, but Thorbecke was an extreme case. He despised everything that resembled privileges, private acts or common law. Politics and the state were matters of public law, and he used the uncommon word ‘staatsburgerschap’ (citizenship of the state) to underline that he was interested in the state as the focus of the general interest. No matter what he said, he did care much less for local citizenship. It is true that he cherished the old republican ideal of active citizenship in your own environment, but his famous Local Government Act (1851), which would last until the 1990s, included local government in a top-down structure and was mainly intended to execute national laws. The act erased differences between cities, towns and rural communities: they were all municipalities (‘gemeentes’) now.

Thorbecke also proposed a new Poor Law. He did not succeed in converting his Bill into the Poor Law that he wanted, but his ambitions were clear: he wanted to organise care for the poor through a national scheme and put an end to the dominant role of religious corporations and local peculiarities. His new Election Act was also meant to promote engagement with national and general interests, as opposed to the private and local interests. The new constituencies or electoral districts were deliberately large and not designed to fit historical communities. His conservative opponents accused him of deliberately destroying local bonds and obstructing bottom-up self-government. They argued that historical communities had agency because they knew how to work together. Artificially created electoral districts would be mere tools in the hands of national politicians. According to these conservatives, the state rested on a combination of pre-existing local communities. Conservative parliamentarians quoted Tocqueville’s argument that involvement in local politics was a great introduction to politics, but they said that Thorbecke was only interested in centralisation and an all-powerful state.⁶⁵ Thorbecke did not agree. He wanted to remove custom from the localities because it *inhibited* the development of local self-government. His

⁶⁵ A good discussion of the arguments against Thorbecke in Corné Smit, ‘Er is in het volk een hooger logica. De plaats en de positie van het volk in de staatsleer van de Nederlandse conservatieven (1850–1869)’, (unpublished thesis Research Master History, Leiden University, 2019) Chapters 1 and 2.

ambition was to free the potential of active citizenship buried within traditional communities ruled by old oligarchies, whether this be small towns, villages or the capital Amsterdam.

Thorbecke has always been regarded as one of the most important statesmen in Dutch history because he led the Netherlands to modernity and parliamentary democracy. His new constitution and the ensuing new laws remained the framework for societal developments for a long time, and the idea that citizenship should primarily be citizenship of the state went largely unopposed. The liberal dominance met with opposition but liberals successfully—and with good reason—framed conservative criticism as protection of petty local interests. The Thorbeckean idea of representation was a clear example of the doctrinaire liberal predilection for distance, independence and separation between public and private law and interests. Representatives should take public opinion into account but should make up their mind independently through parliamentary discussion.

Connections with the constituency seemed to be unimportant. Nevertheless, Thorbecke remained in close contact with many of his adherents and did what it took to be re-elected. Since he was quite well-known nationally, he was not dependent on just one constituency. Over the years, he was elected in different parts of the country. Many of his followers were local worthies, who depended on their good relationship with their particular constituencies, and their constituents definitely expected something in return for their support. A famous example is the way the railway system was set up. A government led by one of Thorbecke's opponents decided that construction work would be carried out through the state instead of through a private initiative, as proposed by Thorbecke. Individual liberal representatives were offered railway lines or stations that benefited their constituencies. In practice, local interests still mattered a great deal, but contemporaries and later historians alike saw these interests as self-centred obstructions to the general interest. It became almost impossible to defend them in theory. It was argued that the public domain should be separated from local and private interest.

From the 1870s onwards, the aloof liberal concept of representative politics was increasingly subject to criticism in the Netherlands from many sides, but not from the local level. Proximity was considered in ideological rather than local terms. Religious parties argued that church and religion were what really mattered to common people, and orthodox Protestants in particular promoted political agency and engagement on

this basis. A few years later, socialists were claiming that liberalism ignored the practical day-to-day worries of the common people. They wanted to be closer to their adherents than the bourgeois liberals had been. These views were signs of the approaching advent of ‘party democracy’, which would be based, in the Netherlands as elsewhere, on ‘social identity’ and a likeminded ‘community’.⁶⁶ Until the middle of the nineteenth century, political controversies revolved around *local* communities and identities, but now political discussions revolved around ideological or religious communities. In the twentieth century, local communities still existed but their representational function had diminished. Whereas nineteenth-century essays about representative government routinely included the local level in their discussion of private as opposed to public interests, late twentieth-century overviews of the public/private divide completely ignored the local dimension. The local level simply did not seem to matter anymore.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the idea of representation was moving from the ‘trustee’ conception of virtual representation, as advocated by Burke, towards the ‘delegate’ conception of someone who represents a group s/he is part of. The most spectacular change was the increasing role of political parties, but the delegate conception also affected the way independent parliamentarians conceived of their work. Until recently, historians had hardly noticed the rise of a new type of constituency politician. They did not see a new practice or conception of representation that was worth studying in its own right, except perhaps in Britain, where it was less new. In Britain, analysts have paid some attention to the ‘two dimensions of representation: their national dimension which focusses on policy opinions, and their constituency dimension which focusses on redress of grievances’.⁶⁸ Redressing grievances, which had in a way always been part of what MPs

⁶⁶ Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government*, 209–210.

⁶⁷ See e.g. Jeff Alan Weintraub, ‘The Theory and Politics of the Public/Private Dimension’, in: Krishan Kumar and Jeff Alan Weintraub, eds., *Public and Private in Thought and Practice. Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 1997), 1–42. In a historical essay about the divide between public and private law, however, the close connection between the development of public law and development of the nation state was noted: Morton J. Horwitz, ‘The History of the Public/Private Distinction’, *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 130: 6 (1982), 1423–1428; esp. 1423.

⁶⁸ Donald D. Searing, ‘The Role of the Good Constituency Member and the Practice of Representation in Great Britain’, *The Journal of Politics* 47: 2 (1985), 348–381; esp. 378.

did, did not necessarily have general policy implications. According to one MP, it was ‘not so much that they particularly want you to put their views over, but rather that when something goes wrong there is somebody who will shout for them’.⁶⁹ It turns out that quite a number of continental late nineteenth-century parliamentarians thought it was their duty to serve the direct and personal needs of their local constituents and to redress grievances. To a certain extent, Burke had already been a constituency politician, but the redress of grievances was now part of a somewhat new concept of what it meant to be a representative. Parliamentarians started to keep track of the services they had rendered and they built an archive of letters received from their constituents. Clearly, they consciously cherished a new sense of proximity with their local voters. This happened in different countries, even in the Netherlands, which would abolish the local constituencies and introduce a national proportional system.⁷⁰ After the Second World War, and in particular since the 1960s, British MPs have spent an increasing amount of time on constituency work.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

Why was it so difficult to take into account the local dimension of national politics for those who did not want to voice conservative views? Before 1800 and throughout the nineteenth century, hardly anybody would have denied the practical importance of this local dimension. Still, this

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 370.

⁷⁰ Marnix Beyen, ‘Clientelism and Politicization. Direct Interactions Between Deputies and ‘Ordinary Citizens’ in France, ca. 1880–ca. 1940’, *TEMP. Tijdschrift for historie* 4: 8 (2014), 17–32; Karen Lauwers, ‘Negotiating the Republic. Direct Interactions between Unorganized Citizens and MPs in France, ca.1900–1930s’ (Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Antwerpen, 2019); Éric Phélippeau, ‘La fin des notables revisitée’, in: Michel Offerlé ed., *Profession politique* (Paris, 2017: Belin, 1999); Éric Phélippeau, *L’invention de l’homme politique moderne. Mackau, l’Orne et la République* (Paris: Belin, 2002); Felix Bosch, ‘Oeze Harm. De nabijheidspolitiek van Harm Smeenge, 1886–1935’ (Unpublished Research Master Thesis, Leiden, 2020); and Id, ‘De nabijheidspolitiek van Harm Smeenge, 1886–1935. Liberale ideeën en praktijken van politieke vertegenwoordiging’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 134 (2021) 603–625; I also thank Felix Bosch for fruitful discussions about the concept of ‘proximity’.

⁷¹ E.g. David Judge, *Representation. Theory and Practice in Britain*. (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), 154. Also a topic in need of more research, for orientation see Paul Seaward’s blog about so-called ‘surgeries’, 10 January 2019: <https://historyofparliamentblog.wordpress.com/2019/01/10/surgeries/>.

dimension was mainly theorised as belonging to the past. According to mainstream conceptions of parliamentary representation, such as those of Burke, Guizot and Thorbecke, the nation was the realm of ‘public’ matters. In comparison, the local seemed to be home to parochialism, private interest and a conservative landed aristocracy. Historically, the local seemed to be dominated by private interest, followed by the national, public and general interests, which would incorporate the local into a broader community. According to Guizot, the role of local communities was particularly connected to the ‘infancy’ of societies, and he used this word eighteen times in his history of representative government.⁷² Local ties were a necessity, but theoretically speaking they seemed to be atavistic.

Seen in the light of this linear historical succession, a parliamentary focus on the public interest seemed to be an unmistakable sign of progress. Politics appeared to be a zero-sum game: either you concentrated on the public interest or you were a prisoner of retrograde and petty local, private interest. It was acknowledged that a vibrant representative system needed independent representatives as well as active, engaged local citizens, but this acknowledgement did not lead to new ideas about representing the local level. It is significant that most of the theorising about the role of parliamentarians was done by (former, actual or aspiring) members of parliaments who, of course, valued their independence.⁷³ For instance, in 1838, the Speaker of the House of Commons still saw it as his duty ‘to shut out as far as might be all extrinsic pressure, and then to do freely what was right within doors’.⁷⁴

In practice, ‘territorial representation was taken to be self-evident’⁷⁵ and the representative system also continued to be, or became, the focus for political mobilisation and engagement of local citizens. In the short

⁷² Guizot, *Representative Government*.

⁷³ Interestingly, Thomas Gisborne, ‘On the Duties of the Members of the House of Commons’, In: Id., ed., *An Enquiry into the Duties of Men in the Higher and Middle Classes of Society in Great Britain* (London: White, 1794), 117–149; esp. 121–126, was more explicit on local ties: he was *not* an MP. I thank Joanna Innes for providing this reference.

⁷⁴ John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* I (London: MacMillan 1903) 150.

⁷⁵ Judge, *Representation*, 48 (about Burke and his time). Cf. One of the few more general discussions about the topic: Andrew Rehfeld, *The Concept of Constituency. Political Representation, Democratic Legitimacy and Institutional Design* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

term, the local dimension of representation was crucial to maintaining the two-way nature of parliamentary representation, also as a system of ‘direct personal relations of mutual regard’⁷⁶, and in the long term, this dimension became the starting point for many forms of ‘modern’ political engagement in parties and elsewhere. Since theories of representation initially focussed on the independence of parliamentarians, and subsequently concentrated on the role of political parties, the proximity between representatives and people in the local context did not often receive the attention it deserves. Today, new ideas about the role of proximity in representation⁷⁷ allow us to look back to the beginning of the nineteenth century and underline once more the continuity of local ties, and the relevance of this continuity to theoretical ideas of parliamentary representation. Without these ties, the representative system would have been left hanging in the air. Besides independence, the public interest and distance, the system also needed proximity. At that time, local communities provided that proximity.

⁷⁶ Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture*, 157.

⁷⁷ Rosanvallon, *Democratic Legitimacy*, part 4; for parliamentary representation, also see Harm Kaal, ‘Politics of Place. Political Representation and the Culture of Electioneering in the Netherlands, c. 1848–1980s’, *European Review of History* 23: 3 (2016), 486–507.

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Post-revolutionary France: The Ultimate Test Case?

Bernard Rulof

The history of France since the mid-eighteenth century has often been described in terms of repetitive discontinuities. The Revolution of 1789 obviously played, and still plays, a crucial role in the making of this myth of rupture. Not only did the revolutionaries destroy old-regime society and politics but they also created the foundation of our contemporary, capitalist and democratic world. Furthermore, numerous regime changes left their imprint on society and politics, and reshaped the daily lives of the French again and again. Historians of France find it difficult to think in terms of continuity across the Age of Revolutions. Most likely, the organisation of academic teaching and research plays a crucial role in this respect. It has customarily divided the past into clearly demarcated blocks: the Old Regime versus contemporary France, or *l'histoire moderne* versus *l'histoire contemporaine*.

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Only a few researchers use a periodisation that departs from the orthodox assumption that “1789” created a radically new world. Sometimes, they suggest that the Revolution was “over” by the 1880s and therefore cannot account for our own contemporary world. In his study about French citizenship and naturalisation, Peter Sahlins, for example, concludes that the 1750s and the 1880s, rather than 1789, constituted moments of rupture. The mid-eighteenth-century ‘citizenship revolution’, which, as he notes, was ‘a dual revolution of both “citizenship” and “nationality”’, ended the period of absolute citizenship of Louis XIV. Thus, it was in the early-modern era that the French, who had hitherto been legal subjects, increasingly came to be seen as rights-bearing political beings. More importantly, this development introduced an era of experimentation with political citizenship during which politicians, lawyers and citizens fought with one another about how to implement (and, for that matter, how to limit) what they believed to be the inalienable political rights of the inhabitants of the realm. The subsequent period of about 130–140 years, which ended with the introduction of the republican nationality law of 26 June 1889, was characterised by ‘experimentation’ as well as ‘constant ruptures and reconfigurations’.¹

In the 1780s, the vast majority of the French lived in the countryside; their villages constituted a milieu quite unlike the faubourgs of Paris. Every rural historian is aware of Pierre Goubert’s remark that there were no less than twenty (sic!) “peasantries” in eighteenth-century France; consequently, it is problematic to generalise rural France.² Nevertheless, the British historian Peter Jones has attempted to examine what the Revolution meant to anonymous, rural dwellers. Inspired by Alexis de Tocqueville, his work claims that change arose from the interaction of state policy and local practices. Yet, the political condition of the rural community by the 1780s was not as bad as Tocqueville suggested. Some village assemblies could make important decisions about taxation, debt, communal property, etc. Yet, villages were no bastions of democracy. They were oligarchies run by wealthy farmers, men of the law or master craftsmen. Between 1787 and 1799, the villagers were able to

¹ Peter Sahlins, *Unnaturally French. Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca, 2004), 314.

² Pierre Goubert, ‘Sociétés rurales françaises au XVIIIe siècle: vingt paysanneries contrastées, quelques problèmes’, in Fernand Braudel ed., *Conjoncture économique, structures sociales: hommage à Ernest Labrousse* (Paris, 1974), 375–387.

break free of feudal dues and communal rights in particular. Few of them ignored how national politics had changed their lives. Regular elections from 1789 to 1804 created a democratic political culture at the village level. However, the elites usually succeeded in manoeuvring decisions to their advantage. They, for example, were the main beneficiaries of the national land sales. Jones concludes that the Revolution was at the origins of peasant politicisation, undermining claims that this process began when the Third Republic was well established. Nevertheless, two trends highlighted the limits of revolutionary change. The first is the rise and fall of village autonomy. Though villagers participated in the construction of a new local order from 1787 to 1793, a decline in village sovereignty occurred since the Directory. Besides, local elites continued to dominate village politics down to 1820, and even thereafter.³

The historiography about long-term political preferences for *la Droite* or *la Gauche*, finally, provides another well-known continuity thesis, which emphasises the relationship between religion and politics.⁴ According to its proponents, older conflicts between Catholics and Protestants had a lasting impact on local and regional politics, from the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in 1685 until well into the twentieth century. Persistent denominational tensions would thus account for the long-lasting *clivage* between the Right and the Left in regions such as the Cévennes and the Gard, where more than one-third of all Protestants in nineteenth-century France lived. In these areas, the vast majority of Catholics showed a lasting preference for the (far) Right.⁵

³ Peter Jones, *Liberty and Locality in Revolutionary France. Six Villages Compared, 1760–1820* (Cambridge, 2003); and Jean-Pierre Jessenne, *Pouvoir au village et révolution: Artois, 1760–1848* (Lille, 1987) offers a similar portrayal of rural France.

⁴ In many ways, this tradition originates in the classic *Tableau politique de la France de l'Ouest sous la Troisième République* (1913), written by André Siegfried, who examined correlations between the preference for different political forces in western France (the Vendée in particular), on the one hand, and social and geographical determinants, like settlement patterns, degrees of rurality or urbanity, large landowners versus small property owners and artisans, and Catholic fervour versus some degree of de-Christianisation, on the other.

⁵ For example, Valérie Sottocasa, *Mémoires affrontées. Protestants et catholiques face à la Révolution dans les montagnes du Languedoc* (Rennes, 2004). For a critique of the assumptions underlying this argument, see Bernard Rulof, *Popular Legitimism and the Monarchy in France. Mass Democracy without Parties, 1830–1880* (Basingstoke, 2020), 20–27.

Nevertheless, such claims in favour of continuities across the Age of Revolutions tend to be rather rare, in the light of what is still the dominant narrative about the French past. In contrast, the contributors to this volume argue that ordinary people in Europe and the Americas experienced change and continuity at the same time.⁶ In many ways, their arguments in favour of continuity call to mind the work of Alexis de Tocqueville, most particularly his *Democracy in America* (1835–1840) and *The Old Regime and The French Revolution* (1856). Dana Nelson, for example, argues that a vibrant social life, itself grounded in European traditions of commoning and neighbouring, had prepared settlers in the English colonies to engage with one another. Hence, ordinary people had become involved in politics on a local level, thereby creating a strong civil society. This vernacular tradition of democratic engagement survived into the 1830s, when the French aristocrat visited the new Republic. The other contributions discuss the impact of local traditions and older ways of doing things or getting things done. What is more, they show that real change was made acceptable, or domesticated, by presenting it as something that meant no break with the past. Ordinary people in the Americas and Europe thus could adapt the strategies that they had learned and used before to pursue their interests or defend their status in what was a new context. Put differently, they possessed enough residual power to use their traditional repertoire of collective action to defend what they valued most.⁷

According to Tocqueville, none of this was possible in his home country, where the 1789 Revolution would have wrested the power of central authority from the monarchy to transfer it to an even more powerful autocracy. The revolutionaries abolished the institutions, which had served as intermediaries between subjects and state. As a result, individual citizens could no longer be politically and socially active in an orderly manner. Thus, the class hostility, which expressed itself in the years 1848–1851, inevitably led to disorder, only to be stopped by despotism (i.e. the regime of Napoleon III). Tocqueville demonstrated what he

⁶ Judith Pollmann and Henk te Velde, ‘Civic Continuities in an Age of Revolutionary Change. Political Practices in Europe and the Americas, c. 1750–1850’, this volume, 5 (‘[P]olitical change at the center of the old and new polities coexisted with, and was indeed enabled by, continuities at other levels, especially so in the localities’).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 8–17.

believed to be the Revolution's true meaning: the continuity of centralisation at state level as well as the destruction of the *corps intermédiaires*, which had organised social life on the local level in the past. Whereas local institutions in the United States would make it possible for ordinary males to develop a 'spirit of liberty', the all-powerful French state stifled civil society and controlled the "naked" citizens. The voluntary societies that did exist, therefore, were 'weapons of war' to suit their leaders' interests. Their members were 'soldiers', subject to 'a tyranny more unbearable still than the tyranny exerted over society by the government'. Under such circumstances, there could be neither a robust democracy nor a vibrant civil society in France.⁸

Tocqueville's supposition of a strong state, in combination with a weak civil society, implicitly seems to produce a view of the political domain limited to government and parliament. In this perspective, to study popular sovereignty means to turn one's attention to the national level. Accordingly, there was no place for the local level in politics, which may explain why historians could ignore local politics, suggesting that the local level constituted an unpolitical or pre-political realm.⁹ However, we should not accept what was a critique of the Second Empire as an accurate description of nineteenth-century France. An examination that looks at the state level from the local level (rather than the other way around) reveals that some assumptions underlying Tocqueville's analysis are doubtful at least. In fact, research has shown that his portrayal hardly does justice to a complex reality. New interpretations of the early-modern state have challenged the orthodox model of boundless royal power. They suggest that the state had no grandiose plan to centralise or to subjugate *les provinces*. The exercise of its power was defined (and limited) by clientelism and patronage, as well as persuasion, cooperation and mutually beneficial deals, rather than arbitrary authority. In this context, local and provincial elites could defend and promote their interests rather well. Moreover, the nineteenth-century state apparatus was neither omnipresent nor omnipotent either. As a result, the local level

⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, 2004, c1835–1840), 593–594 and 220–222, respectively.

⁹ Pollmann and Te Velde, 'Civic Continuities', 9–12.

continued to play a fundamental role in politics throughout the nineteenth century. However, it increasingly did so in close interaction with developments at the national level.

LOCAL POLITICS

As representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, prefects have traditionally been portrayed as cogwheels in a well-oiled system of governance, who enjoyed near full control over their departments. In times of crises, such as the months following the coup of December 1851, they could impose decisions taken in Paris by force, if necessary. Yet, they negotiated with the local level far more often than what Tocqueville and others want us to think. Although the number of public functionaries, from policemen to prefects, rose from 477,000 to more than 700,000 during the Second Empire, they nevertheless relied on the cooperation of local and regional actors. Besides, lower-level officials, as well as deputies who had been elected with the often massive support of the prefecture, did their best to defend local and regional interests and concerns before “Paris”. Mayor-deputy of Montpellier, David Pagézy, for example, lobbied for the interests of his constituency’s winegrowing and affiliated industries. This practice continued well into the Third Republic, as the case of deputy Armand de Mackau from the Orne shows.¹⁰

One of the first measures of the Napoleonic regime was to re-introduce universal manhood suffrage, which conservatives had limited in May 1850. The regime sought legitimacy through controlled elections of officially designated candidates. Prefects, sub-prefects, mayors and civil servants (schoolmaster, postman, tax collector, etc.), as well as shopkeepers, innkeepers or tobacconists, should ensure that the electorate voted “well”. Therefore, the elections held between 1852 and 1870 were believed to be less interesting or revealing. Nevertheless, recent research emphasises ‘the general role of the Second Empire in the electoral apprenticeship of French adult males’, because the local, departmental and even national contests allowed for more activities by the political opposition

¹⁰ Sudhir Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen. The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton, 1998), 38–49; Éric Phélippeau, *L’Invention de l’homme politique moderne. Mackau, l’Orne et la République* (Paris, 2002) and Rulof, *Popular Legitimism*.

from the early 1860s onwards.¹¹ Besides, officials soon discovered that they had to seek a compromise between their favourite, on the one hand, and the realities of local and regional politics, on the other. In 1852, for example, the prefect of the Hérault understood that the ‘legitimist element [in Montpellier and its surroundings, BR] is too numerous and too important (...); it is essential (...) to give way to it to some degree’. His designated candidate, therefore, should be acceptable to “Paris”, as well as to legitimists and a considerable part of the district’s electorate.¹²

The regime did its best to control public life in what its agents (and, for that matter, some historians) commonly depicted as a realm devoid of *true* politics: the village. In these smaller communities where the vast majority of French people lived, the mayor was a pivotal figure. He should ideally not only administer the commune efficiently but also represent and defend the interests of the state rather than those of his fellow citizens. Nevertheless, the management of elections turned out to be increasingly problematic. The pool of loyal, competent and influential men who could be appointed to the mayoralty or another office was small. Thus, prefect and sub-prefect often had no choice but to select a candidate among landowning notables whose support for the Empire was conditional, particularly in departments like the Hérault, where legitimists had predominated political life before. Besides, rivalries between local networks of notables could complicate their job even more. The regime’s preference for a candidate from one faction could alienate the supporters of the opposing camp, and thus turn an appointment or election into an adversarial struggle, which involved the expression of different opinions

¹¹ Malcolm Crook, ‘Protest Voting: The Revolutionary Origins of Annotated Ballot Papers Cast in French Plebiscites, 1851–70’, *French History* 29: 3 (2015), 353. See also Hazareesingh, *From Subject*, 38–50 and ‘Bonapartism as the progenitor of democracy. The paradoxical case of the French Second Empire’, in P. Baehr and M. Richter, eds., *Dictatorship in History and Theory: Bonapartism, Caesarism and Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, 2004), 129–152; Roger Price, *The French Second Empire: An Anatomy of Political Power* (Cambridge, 2001), 97–109 and 260–262; and Christophe Voilliot, *La candidature officielle. Une pratique d’État de la Restauration à la Troisième République* (Rennes, 2005), 123–154.

¹² Archives Nationales (hereafter: AN), F1b II Hérault 25, 13 April 1852, prefect.

and preferences. In this respect, a conflict at the local level inadvertently went to the heart of the ideology and policy of the Second Empire.¹³

This is exactly what happened in Florensac, a winegrowing village in the Hérault, in June 1861, when the departmental councillor had to be elected. In the 1850s, the intervention of state officials had secured the election of Louis de Ricard, a great landowner, as departmental councillor. Although his candidacy was again endorsed in 1861, Ariste Fraisse, Florensac's ambitious mayor, ran for councillor, too. He even embarked upon a veritable campaign. Consequently, his opponents claimed that Fraisse disregarded the conditions under which the prefect had allowed him to run. The mayor consented to the opening of a café for women, and threatened shopkeepers and winegrowers with an increase in municipal taxes, if he were defeated. More importantly, they criticised him for reviving the republican and legitimist movements, which had dominated the village during the Second Republic. Realising his candidacy was at stake, the mayor denied that political considerations had inspired him to run. Rather, he was only concerned with the material interests of his fellow villagers. Although Ricard gained the majority of votes cast in the whole district, the turnout revealed Fraisse's popularity in Florensac itself. In this context, Ariste twice encouraged youth groups to mock his opponents and to show their loyalty to him. In a commune riven by factional struggles, being a mayor was 'a difficult balancing act'. Whereas village residents looked upon him as someone who could (or, should) secure access to subsidies, officials saw the mayor as an administrator who should defend state interests. When Fraisse contested the prefect's decisions and called on the Council of State to annul the election results, he failed in his adherence to the state. The prefect dismissed the municipality, and appointed a commission dominated by Louis de Ricard and his supporters.¹⁴ Whereas the sub-prefect spoke of a struggle between a party of order, on the one hand, and the Socialists and Fraisse, on the other, the prefect looked upon local politics as a realm characterised by personal conflicts without political substance. He only took a firm stand once Fraisse acted in contradiction to his obligations as mayor. Yet,

¹³ Malcolm Crook, 'Introduction: *La voix du peuple?* Voting from the *Ancien Régime* to the Present Day', *French History* 29: 3 (2015), 282-283; Hazareesingh, *From Subject*, 42-52; and Price, *The French Second Empire*, 89-123 and 258-262.

¹⁴ Price, *The French Second Empire*, 92.

the new municipal commission failed to gain trust among the population, whereupon the prefect appointed Ariste's brother mayor in 1862. The election of the municipal council held shortly afterwards even led to Ariste's victory. When his brother resigned in 1865, the authorities, therefore, arranged the realities of village society and politics and reappointed Ariste as mayor. They convinced themselves that politics had played no role in the conflict. This framing of the events made it possible to disregard their failure to control local politics. Yet, the return of Ariste Fraisse and his faction shows that *la politique de clocher* mattered. Personal rivalries and local (intra-elite) disputes were no surprise in an era when popular political participation was limited. They offered ordinary people an opportunity to express their opinion, too.¹⁵

SOCIABILITY

The local level mattered in other ways, too. Some French may have looked upon voluntary societies with suspicion, as they would threaten the sovereign nation and the pursuit of the common good.¹⁶ On the other hand, this did not prevent many others from engaging themselves wholeheartedly in all forms of sociability. As a result, France, like other countries, saw a rich associational life in the nineteenth century. It is estimated that about 45,000 associations existed in 1901 before a new law made it legal to organise oneself in voluntary societies. The patrons of some meeting places, in particular, looked for opportunities to enjoy each other's company and to foster friendships.¹⁷ However, it is important to understand that the image of apolitical societies is problematic, since numerous associations helped their patrons cooperate with others,

¹⁵ For a discussion of the events in Florensac, see Bernard Rulof, 'Popular Culture, Politics and the State in Florensac (Hérault) during the Second Empire', *French History* 5: 3 (1991), 299–324.

¹⁶ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français. La société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 2004); and Lucien Jaume, *Le discours jacobin et la démocratie* (Paris, 1989).

¹⁷ Carol Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation* (Oxford, 1999); S.-L. Hoffmann, *Geselligkeit und Demokratie: Vereine und zivile Gesellschaft im transnationalen Vergleich 1750–1914* (Göttingen, 2003); and C. Andrieu, G. Le Béguec and D. Tartakowsky, eds, *Associations et champ politique: la loi de 1901 à l'épreuve du siècle* (Paris, 2001).

while pursuing private or group interests, often against competing interests. In this respect, they were part of a political domain, which, as I have argued elsewhere, can best be studied in the context of local rather than national politics and society. This certainly holds for republican and socialist sociability in Mediterranean France, which has inspired much of the research so far. However, others, such as legitimists, had their vibrant meeting places, too. This is where popular partisans of the eldest branch learnt to exchange ideas and to position themselves in debates. The clubs prepared them to participate in political life and, in particular, they combined politics with pleasure.¹⁸

Actually, Montpellier and the department of the Hérault saw an increase in the number of voluntary societies in the early 1830s and the Second Republic, as well as during the Third Republic. The authorities lamented this ‘incessant need to get together’, which they described as ‘the evil of the region’. To them, societies not only emanated from but also intensified the antagonism between political forces, particularly after the 1830 and 1848 revolutions. Yet, they were unable to destroy republican and legitimist sociability. Sometimes, patrons recreated clubs under another name after the police had closed them down. Moreover, societies became more political in times of electoral contests, while they adopted the role of leisure gatherings in between elections. Divisive politics, therefore, went hand in hand with sociability.¹⁹

There is another, more fundamental reason why the local was important for political life during the long nineteenth century. In 1831, the July Monarchy lowered the *cens* required for the right to vote for municipal elections. By 1841, about 2.9 million male voters (approximately 8 per cent of the total population of France) could elect their local councillors.²⁰ By the stroke of a pen, the provisional government of the Republic introduced universal manhood suffrage for all local, departmental and national representative bodies on 6 March 1848. Tocqueville noted that,

¹⁸ Raymond Huard, ‘Political Association’, in N. Bermeo and P. Nord, eds, *Civil Society Before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Lanham, 2000), 136–145; and Bernard Rulof, ‘Wine, Friends, and Royalist Popular Politics: Legitimist Associations in Mid-Nineteenth-Century France’, *French History* 23: 3 (2009), 360–382.

¹⁹ AN, BB30 391, 10 March 1851, prosecutor.

²⁰ William Fortescue, *France and 1848: The End of Monarchy* (London, 2005), 31–32; and Christine Guionnet, *L'apprentissage de la politique moderne. Les élections municipales sous la monarchie de Juillet* (Paris, 1997).

in some small communities, communitarian voting occurred. However, in larger communities like Florensac or Montpellier the widening of voting rights intensified the tensions between (partisans of) competing political movements.²¹

Be it as it may, it is important to emphasise that these reforms, which drew the adult males into politics, preceded the formation of national parties that were characterised by loyalty to a coherent set of ideas and a permanent form of organisation for several decades. Consequently, the accommodation of popular participation in politics took another form. It was above all grounded in local society and loose networks, which political scientists and historians with an interest in politicisation and party development in France have described as *familles politiques*. The parliamentarians of the Second Empire, for example, identified with five political families: legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists, independents and, finally, republicans. They were not subject to ‘a well-structured organisation, (...) spokesperson [or] voting discipline’. Yet, they shared ‘convergent opinions’ and a basic adherence to a political culture. What went for parliamentarians was also true for their political families, which vied for influence and power. They consisted of informal, ever-changing constellations of people. In such movements, participation in social networks, adherence to a political culture and a sentimental loyalty to a regime and its symbols counted for more than hierarchy and organisation. At the same time, their partisans could be ‘divided by memories, personal hostilities, and genuine differences of principle’.²²

Therefore, a *famille politique*, such as Montpellier’s legitimist movement could exist for as long as a substantial group of individuals preserved the local settings that allowed them to sustain their interpersonal relationships. Besides, they shared loyalty to a political culture and its symbols and rituals, as well as a cult of devotion to the claimant, Comte de Chambord. Familial ties as well as neighbourhood or professional bonds brought monarchists together. Sites of popular sociability also forged contact and solidarity. Besides, those who participated in brawls and festivities or

²¹ For example, Alain Garrigou, *Histoire sociale du suffrage universel en France 1848–2000* (Paris, 2002); and Raymond Huard, *Le suffrage universel en France 1848–1946* (Paris, 1991), 19–68.

²² Éric Anceau, *Les députés du Second Empire. Prosopographie d’une élite du 19^e siècle* (Paris, 2000), 62–64; and Roger Price, *People and Politics in France, 1848–1870* (Cambridge, 2006), 67–68, respectively.

engaged in election campaigns developed the awareness of belonging to the same group. Moreover, their worldview was reconfirmed whenever they read (or listened to someone reading) legitimist newspapers. However, they also disagreed wholeheartedly about some serious matters. In this respect, it is important to understand that the movement consisted of individuals from different social backgrounds. Influential legitimists tried to reconfirm their ascendancy over those they considered their followers. However, their activities put the chances for survival of legitimism as a viable force at risk, even more so as popular partisans were not as docile as royalist notables wanted them to be. The monarchist *famille*, in the end, was as much marked by solidarity and loyalty as differences of opinion and contestation. Competing ways of reading society and politics, as well as claims about the preferred order of things, co-existed.²³

It was at the local rather than national level that (popular) politics and citizenship, at first, obtained meaning and form. Thus, there is much that contradicts traditional assumptions about state primacy in shaping politics before the advent of party-based politics and a national public sphere. This, in turn, raises serious questions about the development of citizenship and democracy. The contributions to this volume show that the framing of the national level as *the* source of politics, by definition, depoliticized local society and politics. Sudhir Hazareesingh writes that officials often likened ‘the local polity’ ‘to a family, whose destiny was not troubled by any destructive passions and where the sentiments of respect and loyalty predominated’. To them, ‘local public life’ ideally involved ‘a distinct type of citizenship, which was concerned with technical means rather than ideological ends and thus administration rather than politics’.²⁴

²³ Rulof, *Popular Legitimism*. For a discussion of similar movements elsewhere, see James Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800–1850* (Cambridge, 2007).

²⁴ Hazareesingh, *From Subject*, 39 and 42, respectively. See also Nicolas Roussellier, ‘Brilliant Failure: Political Parties Under the Republican Era in France (1870–1914)’, in Henk te Velde and Maartje Janse, eds., *Organizing Democracy. Reflections on the Rise of Political Organizations in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2017), 145–163.

PAYS. The Politics of Place

Despite the emphasis on what is called the Jacobin discourse, which suspected anything that could threaten the common good of the Nation, we should not ignore another discourse, whose proponents accepted diversity and difference. From the 1830s onwards, liberal, republican and legitimist political theorists called for decentralisation. Their work inspired public debates, which reached their zenith in parliamentary debates during the mid-1840s and the proclamation of the Nancy manifesto in 1865, which argued in favour of a lessening of administrative (i.e., prefectural) control of individual communes. Some authors limited themselves to calls for political changes. Yet others, many of whom were partisans of the eldest branch of the Bourbon family, proposed plans which involved a radical transformation of society, economy and government. They recreated France from bottom up; the *communes* should become core elements of a different country, where local notables, the “natural” leaders of society, would exercise a stern but benevolent rule over the *menu peuple*.²⁵

True, the cooperation between these groupings came to an end after their common enemy, the Bonapartist regime, fell. Republicans seemed to forget their calls for decentralisation when they controlled the government by the late 1870s themselves. Besides, legitimist proposals could hardly be reconciled with the popular desire for participation in political life. Despite their disagreements, these authors nevertheless shared the idea that one’s local and regional *pays* defined one’s identity. From the early 1830s onwards, debates about decentralisation ran parallel to, or were even closely intertwined with, the emergence of a cult of localism. By 1880, the local had become a place for political engagement and citizenship; some even felt that it might have a benign impact on national politics. They felt that France was characterised by “diversity in unity”, which is similar to Diederik Smit’s views of the Low Countries.²⁶ Affection for *le pays* survived from the old-regime era into the nineteenth century, as a result of which the nation ultimately came to be seen as a composite whole of diverse components. One aspect of this development has been regionalism, a phenomenon that found support among

²⁵ Steven Kale, *Legitimism and the Reconstruction of French Society, 1852–1883* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1992), 89–153.

²⁶ See Smit’s contribution to this volume.

both conservatives and progressives and which historians have often underestimated.²⁷

Frenchmen on both sides of the political spectrum were fascinated with the local past, as well as their *pays* and its sense of place. By 1880, they claimed that the local was compatible with modernity and the nation alike. Therefore, rather than to suppress it, state officials supported the cult of the local while trying to co-opt it for their own purposes. This cult drew on early-modern notions, such as those developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who had argued that it is in the *pays* where one learnt to love fellow citizens of the *grande patrie*. Undeniably, men like Abbé Sieyès and Camille Desmoulins looked upon local and regional differences with suspicion. However, not all revolutionaries found local or regional specificity that problematic, as the 1790 Fête de la Fédération and the objectives of the *fédérés* in the Midi show. Moreover, regional diversity proved to be quite resilient. As a consequence, the early July Monarchy saw timid toleration of difference. Following the social and political turmoil of the years 1848–1851 and 1870–1871, the local even became a school of civic virtue. Indeed, many came to look upon the *commune* as ‘the optimal conduit toward community [and] civic participation’. The rural village in particular was believed to provide an excellent setting to help improve the morals of the French, create social harmony, and thus regenerate France. This change in appreciation convinced republicans that political conquest passed via local politics. Whereas their municipalism may have been inspired by what they wanted to be a top-down ‘vertical relationship between France and its *pays*’, it nevertheless made it possible for citizens to engage in democratic self-government and political debate.²⁸

Whereas the distrust of diversity had implied that there was but one locus of politics (i.e. the national state), the local level thus became a ‘reference in discussions of citizenship and identity’, too. In fact, the *commune* remained the main locus of civic mobilisation and participation

²⁷ Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890–1914. Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (Oxford, 2003).

²⁸ Stéphane Gerson, *The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Modern France* (Ithaca, 2003), 141 and 230, respectively. See also Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity* (Princeton, 1993); Hazareensingh, *From Subject*, 233–305; and Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Ils apprenaient la France: L'exaltation des régions dans le discours patriotique* (Paris, 2014).

throughout much of the nineteenth century.²⁹ As the other contributions to this volume, French developments hint at the fact that distance (i.e. the national) needed proximity (i.e. the local), and vice versa, for democratic politics to exist. It is true that nineteenth-century France was a centralising country. The state *did* intensify its influence upon society; the repetitive regime changes *did* matter. But, as I have tried to show, this is only half of the story. Politics was not made in Paris alone; rather, it was made at the juncture of state and civil society. Those who tried to re-imagine France understood this very well. Besides, their efforts benefited from the fact that the practice of politics was fundamentally local in kind, if only because national organisations, which could channel the political activities of citizens, did not exist until the end of the nineteenth century. Rather, citizens identified with, and engaged in, the activities of *familles politiques*, loose political constellations that were grounded in local networks in particular.

By the 1870s, republicans believed that the *commune* provided the perfect place for ordinary males to learn how to engage in politics. Good citizens should not be inspired by considerations of class and religion, rejections of violence, and the defence private property. Driven by feelings of patriotism, they should also be devoted to hard work. The republican citizenship, therefore, combined popular participation with orderly forms of political behaviour, under the leadership of secular elites, who were ‘politically liberal but socially conservative’.³⁰ As such, the republicans drew the frontiers between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour anew. This development draws our attention to the politicisation of the French and the history of their ‘repertoires of collective action’ (to borrow a term coined by Charles Tilly)). Historians and political scientists have spent much time and effort examining these topics. In the context of this paper, it is not possible to do justice to the subtleties of their analyses.³¹ Suffice it to say that their research suggests that ordinary people were drawn into, or burst onto, the political scene in either 1789, 1848, or after 1871. Under these circumstances, they gradually adapted an informal repertoire

²⁹ Gerson, *The Pride of Place*, 2. See also *ibid.*, 6–7.

³⁰ Hazareesingh, *From Subject*, 318.

³¹ Yves Déloye, *Sociologie historique du politique* (Paris, 2017), 76–103; Michel Offerlé, ‘Retour critique sur les répertoires de l’action collective (XVIIIe–XXIe siècles)’, *Politix* 1 (2008), 181–202; and Charles Tilly, ‘Charivaris, Repertoires and Urban Politics’, in John Merriman, ed., *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1982), 73–91.

of contestation inherited from the Old Regime to the new context of formal, electoral politics.

REPERTOIRES OF CONTENTION

Yet, the ways in which lower-class males (and women) participated in political life also accentuate another change in politics, which took place in the years 1789–1914. This was a period of transition from an era in which only the propertied possessed a mandate to discuss public issues, to mass politics, in the context of which parties and individuals, such as Georges Boulanger, appealed to popular sentiments and loyalty. Until 1848, the voting system was based on the poll tax. Ordinary people were passive citizens, subject to law which they played no formal role in making. Although more males were allowed to cast a vote for municipal councils from 1831 onwards, they nevertheless continued to resort to more informal, ritualised and symbolic forms of contestation. Such activities, which involved the occasional use of violence, offered lower-class partisans of competing movements, from legitimism to socialism, the possibility to express their concerns and pursue their interests.³²

In March 1848, the provisional government introduced universal male suffrage. Expected to engender communitarian politics and social harmony, suffrage was to make the older forms of public engagement obsolete. However, the lower classes' unruly behaviour did not disappear. Rather, ordinary people vested their repertoire of small-scale actions borrowed from popular culture with a political dimension. They combined the ballot box with defiant activities in the public sphere. Like ordinary people elsewhere in Europe, this mixture of *l'urne et le fusil* helped them to join the political nation.³³ The coup of 1851 made it

³² Emmanuel Fureix, 'La protestation rituelle: modernisation d'un répertoire politique (1815–1848)', in Laurent Bourquin and Philippe Hamon, eds., *La politisation. Conflits et construction du politique depuis le Moyen Âge* (Rennes, 2010), 171–189 and Michel Offerlé and Laurent Le Gall, 'Introduction. La politique informelle entre incertitudes et inconstances', in Laurent Le Gall, Michel Offerlé and François Ploux, eds., *La politique sans en avoir l'air. Aspects de la politique informelle, XIXe-XXIe siècle* (Rennes, 2012), 7–33.

³³ Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 11–12; Olivier Ihl, 'L'Urne et le fusil. Sur les violences électorales lors du scrutin du 23 avril 1848', *Revue française de science politique* 60: 1 (2010), 9–35; and Peter McPhee, *Les semailles de la République dans les Pyrénées-Orientales, 1846–1852. Classes sociales, culture et politique* (Perpignan, 1995).

nearly impossible for them to pursue their political objectives but they gradually acquired more freedoms from the mid-1860s onwards. In the following decades, an ambivalent balance between informal and formal ways of participating in politics continued to exist. Contrary to those who suggested that national, formal ways of participating in political life (electioneering in particular) replaced the more local ones, there actually was no linear process in the course of which the *modern* replaced the *traditional*. Rather, ‘continuity, rupture and re-inventions’ continued to coexist. By 1900, national elections passed by rather peacefully but municipal elections in villages such as Florensac sometimes produced heated contests and even violence (including the use of shotguns). Between August 1903 and June 1904, five elections had to be organised before a new municipal council could finally be installed. On 1 May 1904, supporters of one of two local political factions suspected that their opponents had committed fraud and they attacked the scrutineer and threw the ballot box out of the window from the *mairie*’s first floor.³⁴

Elements of an older repertoire of collective contestation could also be found in popular protests during the revolutionary era. Ritual punishments, for example, remained rather common, as protesters mocked and criticised those who would have transgressed the unwritten rules of their community.³⁵ Moreover, residents of the Parisian faubourg Saint-Marcel, a district known for its revolutionary sympathies, saw their protests, such as the Sugar Revolt of January–February 1792, as older, familiar forms of contestation rather than as instances of a new repertoire.³⁶ In the years 1814–1815 and 1830–1833, which saw popular unrest across France, ordinary people also turned to familiar modes of contestation, such as charivaris, to sanction and denigrate the political Other. In Montpellier, for example, lower-class republicans and legitimists defied one another in public space. On some occasions, the violent acts targeted the homes of opponents. During the nineteenth century, violence also erupted over symbols—such as monuments and statues in commemoration of Henri IV and Louis XIV, objects like liberty trees, clothes or the display of colours,—all of which were identified with specific political

³⁴ Offerlé, ‘Retour critique’, 195. For elections in Florensac, see Archives Départementales de l’Hérault, 3M 2316/3 and 2357–2358.

³⁵ Tilly, ‘Charivaris’, 76.

³⁶ Haim Burstin, *Une révolution à l’oeuvre: Le Faubourg Saint-Marcel, 1789–1794* (Paris, 2005).

movements.³⁷ Yet, ordinary people also resorted to the mode of contestation that several contributors to this volume have discussed: the writing of petitions. Informed about the imminent visit of Marie, Duchesse d'Angoulême, daughter of Louis XVI, to Montpellier in 1823, approximately one hundred men and women sent her a letter, asking for support. One Benjamin Durand, who reminded the duchess that he had had 'the honour to be part of the *Volontaires Royaux* (...) under the command of Your August husband' in 1815, formulated his letter in such a way that it became difficult for the princess to reject the petition³⁸:

If Your Highness is as good as to take a maternal look at my petition, I am morally convinced that she will not hesitate to ease my deplorable fate by awarding me some pension or other (...). Everything therefore makes me expect a propitious success for my complaint.

True, the Second Republic changed the repertoire of collective action, as Charles Tilly has argued. Universal manhood suffrage brought with it electoral meetings in which all adult males could participate, among other things. Besides, the economic crisis produced strikes. In Florensac, one of the first rural strikes ever to be held in the Hérault took place in the summer of 1848. Landless workers and small peasants successfully protested against the employment of labourers from elsewhere and the landowners' desire to lower wages for pruning and harvesting. Concocted by mayor Hippolyte Fraisse (Ariste's brother), an arrangement made it impossible, at least for a while, for large landowners, such as Louis de Ricard, to hire outsiders, who were willing to work for less money. Nevertheless, familiar forms of contestation did not disappear. Those that helped ordinary people, who believed that they had no or little access to political institutions, pursue their objectives and act upon their grievances,

³⁷ For example, Emmanuel Fureix, 'L'iconoclisme: une pratique politique? (1814–1848)', Le Gall et al., eds., *La politique sans en avoir l'air*, 117–131; James Leith, *Space and Revolution. Projects for Monuments, Squares, and Public Buildings in France, 1789–1799* (Montréal, 1991); Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater. The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815–1830* (Berkeley, 2000); Victoria Thompson, 'The Creation, Destruction and Recreation of Henri IV: Seeing Popular Sovereignty in the Statue of a King', *History & Memory* 24: 2 (2012), 5–40; and Pierre Triomphe, 'La symbolique à fleur de peau. Dessus de la politique et dessous de la politisation dans le Midi de la France, 1814–1851', *Annales du Midi* 124 (2012), 473–488.

³⁸ Rulof, *Popular Legitimism*, 231–233.

survived for a long time. As late as 22 November 2018, for example, a group of eighteen *gilets jaunes* held a charivari before the private home of Christophe Castaner, situated at Forcalquier (Alpes-de-Haute-Provence), in order to mock and protest against the Minister of the Interior and his government's policies. The reaction of the politician was at least as traditional as the form of contestation. The next day, Castaner claimed that the protesters had attacked his home, where his wife and children would have been at the time. This accusation sounds like a replica of what had happened 187 years earlier in Montpellier, when the legitimist pharmacist Pierre Bories accused the republicans of having attacked his home and his family.³⁹ Ordinary early nineteenth-century people resorted to the charivari, whose origins go back to the Old Regime, to express their political grievances and to exact retributive justice. While their target had usually been a local foe, the *gilets jaunes*, on the other hand, gathered to criticise a politician who, although a *local boy*, represented the state. A traditional repertoire allowed them to take sides in a national political dispute. In this sense, this incident throws light on how continuity and change interacted (once again).

³⁹ *Le Midi Libre*, 23 November 2018. On Bories, see Rulof, *Popular Legitimism*, 89.

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Regional Resilience in the Age of Revolutions: The Persistence of the Dutch Provinces, 1748–1848

Diederik Smit

Although in recent years the study of regionalism has received increasing scholarly attention, continuities in regional identity between the modern period and previous centuries have so far seldom been considered.¹ One of the reasons for this lack of a *longue durée* approach to regionalism seems to be the division of labour in the historical disciplines. Whereas ‘modernists’ tend to consider regions and regional identity primarily as ‘modern’ phenomena, coinciding with the rise of nationalism in the

¹ Joost Augusteijn and Eric Storm, eds., *Region and State in Nineteenth-Century Europe. Nation-Building, Regional Identities and Separatism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); and Eric Storm, ‘Regionalism in History, 1890–1945. The Cultural Approach’, *European History Quarterly* 33: 2 (2003), 251–265.

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late nineteenth century,² historians of the early modern period often focus exclusively on regionalism in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³ Moreover, the division between ‘modernists’ and ‘early modernists’ is reinforced by the notion that the ‘age of revolutions’ provided a decisive rupture with the past. On both sides of the Atlantic, the political and societal upheaval of the late eighteenth century redefined the relation between nation and region, and central and regional authorities.

The Dutch Republic is a good case in point in this regard. Between 1798 and 1813 successive regimes attempted to enforce a fundamental geographical and administrative redivision of the Netherlands. The provinces that had been sovereign states within the Republic of the United Netherlands for over two centuries were dissolved and, as in France, replaced by ‘departments’, subordinate to the new national government. These executive bodies were supposed to be no longer reminiscent of their powerful predecessors. Both their shapes and their names differed; they were fewer in number, larger in size, and bore neutral, non-historical names. After years of ineffective deliberations on the role of the Dutch province, this radical reform was the ultimate attempt to break with the republican past and emphasise the transition from the old confederation to a modern centralised state.

The experiment with these new departments, however, was short-lived. Following their independence from France in 1813, the former provinces were more or less restored. The new Kingdom of the Netherlands remained a unitary state and was given a King as its sole sovereign, but the old provincial names, borders and even specific regional offices were reintroduced, apparently without major problems.

² E.g. Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials. The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Thomas Kühne, ‘Die Region als Konstrukt. Regionalgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte’, in James Retallack ed., *Sachsen in Deutschland. Politik, Kultur und Gesellschaft 1830–1918* (Bielefeld: Verl. für Regionalgeschichte, 2000); and Jean-Clément Martin, ‘La construction culturelle d’une région. La Vendée’, in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Michael G. Müller and S. J. Woolf, eds., *Regional and National Identities in Europe in the XIXth and XXth centuries. Les identités régionales et nationales en Europe aux XIXe et XXe Siècles* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1998).

³ E.g. Raingard Esser, ‘North and South. Regional and Urban Identities in the 17th-Century Netherlands’, in Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Esser, eds., *Frontiers and the Writing of History, 1500–1850* (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2006); and Judith Pollmann and Robert Stein, eds., *Networks, Regions and Nations. Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300–1650* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

The ease with which this restoration was carried out suggests that, despite all the reforms, the old provinces had retained more of their significance than historians have acknowledged so far. It raises the question of to what extent the political and societal role of the province had actually changed. Surprisingly, until now there has been an almost complete lack of interest in Dutch historiography in what happened to the provinces in the period around 1800. Except for a few (local) historical studies,⁴ the case of the Dutch province has been studied only by legal experts and scholars in public administration, whose focus is mainly on the constitutional position of the province.⁵ As is the case with the study of regionalism in general, continuities between the nineteenth century and earlier centuries are hardly taken into account in these publications.

In this chapter, I would like to focus on the persistence of the Dutch provinces during the Revolutionary Era, from the days of the Dutch Republic until the early years of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. I will argue that, appearances notwithstanding, the idea of the Netherlands as ‘a nation of provinces’ was never abandoned and remained at the heart of Dutch society. Although the confederate Republic was dissolved in 1798, the old provinces remained an important focus of identification, both culturally and politically. Feelings of provincial belonging continued to exist and even grew stronger as the nineteenth century dawned, resulting in a renewed interest in regional history and culture. Also, the deprivation of the provinces’ sovereignty did not result in complete demolition

⁴ Jos Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaren en de dienaar als heer. Het stadhouderlijk stelsel in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw* (The Hague: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1990); Thimo de Nijs, ‘In een groter geheel. Politiek en openbaar bestuur’, in Thimo de Nijs and Eelco Beukers, eds., *Geschiedenis van Holland* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003); Yme Kuiper, ‘Politiek en bestuur, 1795–1848’, in Johan Frieswijk, e.a. eds., *Geschiedenis van Friesland 1750–1995* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1998); Renger de Bruin, *Wij en onze opvolgers zullen iedereen recht doen. Het Utrechtse Provincie Bestuur in historisch perspectief* (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 2003); and Ida Nijenhuis, Johanna Roelevink and Ronald George Herman Sluijter, *De leeuw met de zeven pijlen. Het gewest in het landelijk bestuur* (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse geschiedenis, 2010).

⁵ Combertus Willem van der Pot, *Bestuurs- en rechtsinstellingen der Nederlandse provincien* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1949); Marcel van Dam, e.a. eds., *Het onzichtbare bestuur. Over provincies, stadsprovincies en regionale vraagstukken* (Delft: Eburon, 1996); Herman Sietsma, ‘Korte schets van de geschiedenis van de provincies’, in Arno Seinstra and Herman Sietsma, eds., *Provincies van binnen en van buiten* (Nieuwegein: Reunion, 2012), 30–33; and Harmen Binnema and Hans Vollaard, eds., *Provinciale politiek. De provincies democratisch getoetst* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2019).

of the old republican framework. At the provincial level, some old region-specific offices, privileges, and institutions survived the iconoclastic fury of the Revolutionary Era and were incorporated into the new state.

To illustrate the lasting importance of provinces in the new unitary state, two types of evidence will be analysed. First, I will concentrate on the debates of the successive constitutional commissions, installed by the Dutch government between 1795 and 1815. How did they deal with the confederate legacy of the former Republic and to what extent did old provincial loyalties play a role in the creation of the new state? In addition, I will look at literary sources, ranging from history books to provincial almanacs. What ideas of provincial identity and regional diversity were expressed in these texts? By taking both constitutional and literary sources into account, I hope not only to demonstrate the persistence of the Dutch provinces and the enduring impact of the republican legacy on the Kingdom of the Netherlands but also to shed some light on the ways in which regional continuities coincided with change at the national level.

CONCORDIA RES PARVAE CRESCUNT

The creation of the Dutch Republic at the end of the sixteenth century was by no means the result of a well-thought-out or preconceived plan. From the very outset, the new confederate state had been little more than a loose affiliation of rebellious provinces, a haphazard alliance of local and regional forces united in battle against their Habsburg overlord. Although clustered together in the northern part of the Netherlands, they had little in common. Economically and geographically, the landscape of the confederate Republic was fragmented and diverse. The coastal provinces of Holland, Zeeland and Friesland were densely populated and urbanised, and their economies were built on international trade, manufacturing industries and intensive agriculture. The inland provinces, on the other hand, were quite the opposite. Apart from a few urban areas along the rivers Rhine, Meuse and IJssel, they were predominantly rural, scarcely populated and characterised by woods and uncultivated lands.

Politically, too, the confederal Republic was like a patchwork: the newly created state consisted of seven sovereign provinces, including one former duchy (Guelderland), two former counties (Holland and Zeeland) and four former lordships (Utrecht, Friesland, Overijssel and Groningen). Each of these had its own government, the Provincial Estates, its own

laws and institutions and enjoyed a high degree of political independence. About one-fifth of the Republic's territories was made up of the so-called Generality Lands, which were provinces that had been conquered from the Habsburgs and that did not enjoy full membership of the confederacy. Unlike the seven provinces mentioned above, they did not have their own sovereign government, nor any representation at the national level. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these Generality Lands functioned as de facto colonies, directly governed by the confederate government, the Estates-General, in The Hague.⁶

This diverse and decentralised character of the Republic secured, on the one hand, many of the economic and political liberties the provinces had fought for during their revolt against the Habsburg Empire. In matters of taxation, religious organisation and jurisdiction, local and provincial authorities remained largely in control. This in turn stimulated economic specialisation and social mobility between the different parts of the country. In this respect, the pluralist nature of the Netherlands was certainly applauded by some. When Ludovico Guicciardini published his *Description of the Low Countries* a few years before the Dutch Revolt, he explicitly praised the rich variety of the Netherlands, an opinion that was echoed by later generations of writers.⁷ Even today scholars link the birth of the Dutch Golden Age in the seventeenth century to the unique political system and economic diversity of the Republic.⁸

On the other hand, when it came down to decision-making, this diversity and decentralised structure were less beneficial. In comparison with neighbouring countries such as France, England and later also Prussia, the central government of the Dutch Republic was relatively weak. Its main central institution, the Estates-General, was made up of representatives of the different provinces, each of whom had the right to veto. In order to reach an agreement on issues concerning foreign policy or military affairs, it was necessary to get unanimity among the various provinces. This was

⁶ One of the leading studies in English on the history of the Dutch Republic is Jonathan Israel's *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁷ Lodovico Guicciardini, *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania Inferiore* (Antwerpen: Apresso Guglielmo Siluio, 1567).

⁸ E.g. Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century. The Golden Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

a difficult task that required a lot of patience and persuasion and could take weeks, months and sometimes even years to accomplish.

As early as the late sixteenth century, people acknowledged the possible dangers this system of endless negotiation could entail. Especially in times of war, unity among the provinces and efficient governance were crucial to the survival of the Republic. Initiatives to strengthen the position of the central government, however, all proved unsuccessful. Although various plans for constitutional reform were put on the national agenda, most notably during the Great Assemblies of 1651 and 1716–1717, none of these led to real change. In the end, respect for the ‘ancient rights and liberties’ of the provinces outweighed the wish for constitutional reform.⁹

The result was a continuation of the status quo: throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Republic remained a unity in diversity. At the international level, the Dutch Republic had proven its ability to act like a proper state early on. In the seventeenth century, the Republic was able to operate as an aggressive superpower, but in the eighteenth century, its geopolitical clout had dwindled. Domestically, the provinces competed with one another, as their economic and military interests often differed, and a balance of power between them was rarely achieved. Holland in particular was a force to be reckoned with. As the richest and most populous of the seven sovereign provinces, and the source of over half of the annual tax revenues, it would usually set the tone in the meetings of the Estates-General. To bring the others into line, though, was not an easy task: provinces like Friesland, Guelderland or Zeeland would frequently challenge Holland’s leading position or work together to obstruct its plans. In these cases, the official Latin slogan of the Dutch Republic *Concordia res parvae crescunt*, which was decoratively written on the ceiling of the Estates-General’s meeting hall, was little more than an empty phrase.

THE ONE AND INDIVISIBLE REPUBLIC

It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that things began to change. The relative decline of the Dutch economy, in combination with a growing unease with the political elite, prompted a big wave of political reform plans, in particular during the 1780s. Following the American

⁹ Israel, *The Dutch Republic*, 774–784, 1089–1090.

Revolutionary War and the subsequent Fourth Anglo-Dutch War, the so-called Patriots demanded not only regime change but also a structural reform of the Republic's decentralised constitution. Inspired by Enlightenment ideas they called for 'democratic' elections, freedom of the press and the removal from power of the Prince of Orange-Nassau who, as 'Stadtholder', had been the Republic's main military commander since the mid-eighteenth century. In 1787, after the Patriots had taken control of the city councils and provincial governments, it even looked as if they would succeed in reforming the Republic. However, intervention by the Prussian army prevented a proper revolution: the supporters of the Patriot movement were purged from power and many of the reformists' key figures fled to France.¹⁰

Although the Patriot movement's plans for constitutional reform had been nipped in the bud, their legacy would have a lasting impact. After the French revolutionary armies invaded the Republic in the winter of 1795, many of the exiled Patriots were able to return to the Netherlands and regain their former positions in the local and provincial governments. This time the reformists or 'Batavians', as they called themselves, were firmly in power: backed by the French army, they now exercised complete control over the Republic's institutions. Moreover, during their exile in Paris, their political ideas had developed further. Many of the men who were now in charge of the Republic had experienced the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror at first-hand, and their political views were more radical than those of the original Patriot movement.

Maybe the most important difference between the ideas of the Patriots and their Batavian successors was the stance on the sovereignty of the provinces. Whereas the former proposed a bottom-up reform within the existing political framework of the confederacy, the latter advocated a more top-down approach whereby the provinces were to some extent subordinate to the central government. Some Batavians, like Johan Valckenaer or Bernard Bosch, even went so far as to propose a complete dissolution of the confederate state. In their view, only a strong unitary state could voice 'the will of the people', and cure the Republic of its 'provincial disease'. Not only did they want to break the political power

¹⁰ C.f. Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators. Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780–1813* (London/New York: Harper Perennial, 1977).

of the provinces but their ultimate wish was to get rid of the historical provinces altogether.¹¹

In this respect, the views of these more radical Batavians echoed Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès' famous pamphlet *Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?* According to Sieyès, one of the fathers of the French Revolution, the sovereignty of the state always lay with its people and could therefore not be divided.¹² This principle of the 'one and indivisible Republic' also formed the basis for the 1793 Jacobin Constitution, which many Batavians considered a blueprint for a new Dutch constitution. Following the French invasion of 1795, Sieyès himself had even been sent to the Netherlands to discuss the future of the Dutch Republic with the Batavian government, and during this stay, the conditions for constitutional reform were already being created. First, many of the politicians and administrators who had served under the old regime were forced to resign and were exiled to England or Prussia. Next, most of the old institutions were dismantled, including many of the confederacy's political bodies. The Estates-General, for example, which had been the central government of the Republic for two centuries, were disbanded and replaced by a new national parliament, whose main task would be the creation of a new Constitution.

This National Assembly, which first convened in The Hague on 1 March 1796, differed in many ways from the old Estates-General. One of the most striking differences was the fact that the National Assembly no longer represented the interests of the separate provinces. Instead, its members represented the people of the Dutch Republic as a whole, including those who had formerly been politically side-lined, like religious minorities and the inhabitants of the former Generality Lands. In this sense, the National Assembly was indeed national: whereas the old Estates-General had been a mere platform for interprovincial cooperation and coordination, the new parliament symbolised the unity of the state and its people.¹³

¹¹ Joost Rosendaal, *Bataven! Nederlandse vluchtelingen in Frankrijk 1787–1795* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2003), 529; and Vrijhart [pseudonym Bernardus Bosch], *Aan het volk van Nederland over de ware Constitutie in Holland* (n.p., 1793).

¹² Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, *Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès. The Essential Political Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

¹³ Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012).

The symbolic unity, however, did not automatically imply unanimity among the members of the National Assembly: although most members of the National Assembly agreed that the discord among its ‘nine peoples’¹⁴ had been one of the main problems of the old Republic, few thought the existence of the different provinces and their historical sovereignties could simply be ignored. During the two years, the National Assembly was in session many arguments on this point would be exchanged. On one side, radical Unitarists pleaded for a top-down dissolution of the provincial system. In their view, the new Constitution could simply deny the existence of the historical provinces and enforce a unitary state: as long as it stated that the Republic was indivisible, its people would be one, and vice versa. On the other side, Federalists advocated a more gradual bottom-up approach, urging their fellow Members of Parliament to respect the cultural and historical differences between the various parts of the Netherlands. They argued that ‘small republics’ (i.e. the provinces) were needed to stay in close contact with the people, and looked for guidance not to France, but to other federal states like the United States and Switzerland.¹⁵ The result was a deadlock that lasted for two years: several plans for provincial redivision were presented, but none of them were put into practice.

UNITY OR DIVERSITY?

Why was the Federalist resistance in the National Assembly so fierce? In recent decades, most of the literature on the Dutch Republic in the revolutionary era, and on the process of unification in particular, has focussed on the rise of nationalism and the creation of new national institutions, all leading up to the new unitary state.¹⁶ The concurrent rise of regional awareness, the omnipresence of federalist feelings among many of the

¹⁴ The National Assembly was made up of representatives of the peoples of Holland, Zeeland, Guelderland, Utrecht, Friesland, Groningen, Overijssel, Drenthe and Brabant.

¹⁵ Mart Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 46–49.

¹⁶ E.g. Niek van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008); and Frans Grijzenhout, Niek van Sas and Wyger Velema, eds., *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013).

revolutionaries, and the importance of the existing provincial institutions have hardly been taken into account.¹⁷

This is remarkable, not only because of the confederate background of the Republic but also in light of the growing amount of literature dealing with regional or provincial subjects, published from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. These works ranged from books on provincial history and antiquities, regional cuisine and dress, to works in provincial dialects and languages. The most striking example of this new wave of cultural regionalism could be found in the Northern Province of Friesland, where a strong regionalist movement had already been flourishing since the 1740s. Here, in cities like Leeuwarden, Franeker and Harlingen, both local intellectuals and newly founded societies devoted themselves to the study of Frisian culture, in particular the province's language and ancient history. Driven by the idea that the Frisian people were descendants of an ancient Germanic tribe and that their language took up a separate position from other Germanic languages, their publications emphasised the uniqueness of the province within the Dutch Republic and even within Europe.¹⁸

Although Friesland was most successful in cultivating its own provincial identity, this kind of cultural particularism was not unique; it was also promoted in other parts of the Republic. In the eastern province of Guelderland, for example, a similar interest in the province's early origins resulted in a series of publications about the province's illustrious past and historical monuments, which was aimed at setting the province apart from the other parts of the Republic, and presented the Guelders people both as the oldest and as the most 'freedom-loving' people of the entire Netherlands. Even Holland, a province where urban rivalries had long stood in the way of a shared provincial identity, now witnessed a sudden interest in its regional culture: during the second half of the eighteenth century several studies about Holland's customs, morals and types of dress were published, putting this part of the Netherlands on the map as the cultural heartland of the Dutch Republic.¹⁹

¹⁷ A rare exception is Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*, 47–57.

¹⁸ C.f. Philippus Breuker, *Opkomst en bloei van het Friese nationalisme, 1740–1875* (Leeuwarden: Wijdemeer, 2014).

¹⁹ Cf. Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld, *De ontdekking van de Nederlander. In boeken en prenten rond 1800* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2010); and Ad de Jong, *De dirigenten van de*

As these examples show, regional awareness was still very much alive and kicking in the late eighteenth century, even though at the same time national sentiments were on the rise as well. In this light, it is also no surprise that by the time the National Assembly first convened in 1796, many of its members found themselves struggling with the implications of a ‘one and indivisible Republic’. In the eyes of many representatives, the Republic was still a nation of different historical peoples. Endorsing the idea of popular sovereignty would therefore mean endorsing the sovereignties of the peoples of Friesland, Guelderland, Holland, et cetera. Although the vast majority of the Batavians supported the notion of a strong central government, only a few wished to go so far as to dissolve the old union completely and redraw the map from scratch. Most representatives did want to strengthen the union and cure the Republic of its ‘provincial disease’, but under the condition that the regional differences between the various parts of the country would be respected.

During the debates on the new constitution, this position was clearly expressed: when the role of the provinces was discussed, several representatives pointed out that the cultural and ethnic differences between the peoples of the Republic could not be ignored. The Frisian representative Simon Stijl, for example, argued that ‘due to the lack of immigration’ the people of Friesland were quite different from those who were living in Holland. According to Stijl, the Frisians were ‘more complacent and consistent, and also more adherent to their own laws and customs than somebody from Amsterdam’.²⁰ His colleague from the province of Brabant, Joannis Krieger, also urged his fellow Members of Parliament to take the subject of provincial diversity seriously. From his viewpoint, too, it would be a difficult task to create unity among the Dutch people, as ‘the peoples of Friesland, Guelderland, Holland, and Zeeland all had their different characters, prejudices, and interests’.²¹

Both Stijl and Krieger, like many others in the Federalist camp, were quite critical towards the possible introduction of a French-style departmental system, which deliberately ignored historical boundaries and provided little room for regional diversity. They would rather look

herinnering. Musealisering en nationalisering van de volkscultuur in Nederland, 1815–1940 (Nijmegen: SUN, 2001).

²⁰ Leonard de Gou ed., *Plan van constitutie van het volk van Nederland. Ontworpen door de daar toe aangestelde commissie in het jaar 1796* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 80.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

beyond revolutionary France to the United States of America, where the Founding Fathers had created a state that embraced ‘unity, not uniformity’. However, for radical reformers, a federal state like the one in North America was not an option. ‘As long as the United States were still in their infancy, and their great leader George Washington was alive’, thus remarked the outspoken Unitarist MP Pieter van Kastelee, ‘nobody knew how this political experiment would end’.²² The case of France, on the other hand, had proven ‘that it was possible to successfully unite a country with even bigger regional differences than the Dutch Republic’.²³

As the debates on the possible introduction of French-style departments continued into 1797, the divide between those who favoured a radical break with the past and those who opposed it deepened. After the parliamentary ‘committee for the division of the Batavian Republic into departments’ had presented a compromise, which involved only a partition of the provinces of Holland, Guelderland and Brabant, representatives from the Unitarist camp accused its members of ‘federalist’ and ‘provincialist’ sympathies. According to the radical MP Joachim Nuhout van der Veen, the committee had even acted ‘in contradiction to the principle of the one and indivisible Republic’ and shown their real face by committing itself to the ‘old system’.²⁴

A similar kind of criticism was heard after the committee had presented its second plan. This time the allegations came from both sides: in the debate on the possible partition of the province of Groningen, for example, both radicals and moderates accused each other of acting in their own provincial interest. After some of the representatives of this northern province had complained about the proposed new borders, their adversaries rebuked them for not thinking ‘nationally’. After all, were they not all ‘Dutch citizens’ now? The Groninger MPs, however, struck back by accusing the committee members of stealing land for their own good. The representatives from neighbouring provinces had used their privileged positions on the committee to enlarge their own territories at the cost of the people of Groningen.²⁵

²² See the chapter by Dana Nelson in this volume.

²³ De Gou, ed., *Constitutie*, 72.

²⁴ Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 212–216.

²⁵ De Gou, ed., *Constitutie*, 480–481.

Disputes like these turned out to be typical. During the two years the National Assembly was in session, no consensus on the future of the Dutch provinces was reached, leaving the situation largely as it was. Radicals like Bosch, Valckenaer, Van Kastele and Nuhout van Veen had not been able to break ‘the provincial spirit’ and were left frustrated by the Federalist opposition. In August 1796, when a nationwide referendum on the new Constitution resulted in yet another defeat for the reformers, the Unitarist camp lost their patience: if their goal of a ‘one and divisible Republic’ could not be achieved democratically, the option that remained was to impose constitutional change by force.²⁶

On 22 January 1798, a small group of Unitarists staged a coup d’état, in which parliament was purged of its Federalist members, and all provincial sovereignties were repealed. Backed by the French army and with the opposition locked away, the remaining members were now able to carry out the institutional changes they wished for. In the months following the purge, a new Constitution was adopted, a second coup took place, and on 30 March 1799 the old provinces of the Republic were finally dissolved. From now on, the new unitary state would be made up of eight new administrative departments, similar in size and named after local rivers and other waterways. It was the definite end of the old provincial system and the beginning of a period of successive administrative and geographical reforms that would shake up the Dutch political landscape for the next fifteen years.²⁷

THE MANY-FACED NATION

The 1798 Unitarist coup was a truly revolutionary moment. Even more than the Batavian Revolution of 1795 or the founding of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815, it would define the future of Dutch politics and the course of Dutch history. The subsequent ratification of the Constitution meant a radical break with the past and a definitive end of the confederacy: from now on the Dutch Republic was a unitary state in which the central government was ultimately supreme and the departments only exercised powers that the central government chose

²⁶ C.f. Joost Rosendaal, *De Nederlandse revolutie. Vrijheid, volk en vaderland, 1783–1799* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2005), 103–104.

²⁷ Herman Theodoor Colenbrander, *De Bataafsche Republiek* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1908), 183.

to delegate. Moreover, the departments were not even remotely reminiscent of the old provinces of the Dutch Republic: they were fewer in number, more or less uniformly shaped, and bore neutral, geographical names like ‘Department of the Old IJssel’, ‘Department of the Rhine’ and ‘Department of Texel’.²⁸

Constitutionally, one could say that the Republic was now finally ‘one and indivisible’. For the first time in its history, it possessed a centralised government that was fully in control. Modelled on that of the Directory in France, it was given the power not just to look after the new state’s finances and defence, but also after its educational system, tax system and judicial institutions, all matters that were previously dealt with by the Provincial Estates. From now on the departments were subordinate to the national government and no longer able to act independently from each other or from the central powers in The Hague.

In reality, however, the situation was more ambiguous. First of all, the new central administration was hardly in the position to implement national policies. Although its task was now far more extensive than before, it was still very small in size. Its executive branch consisted only of a handful of people, and therefore their activities were largely dependent on the old institutions of the confederacy. If the new Ministry of Justice, for example, wanted to pursue its policies of unification and standardisation, it required the cooperation of the various old provincial courts, magistrates or tribunals. Moreover, many of the men who were now in power lacked the specific expertise and local networks to implement the new national legislation. In order to complete their revolutionary goals, the help and support of their former political adversaries at the regional level was much needed.²⁹

Secondly, with the introduction of the departmental system, the old provincial identities did not fade away. On the contrary, the political emasculation of the provinces and the redrawing of the map of the Netherlands only seemed to energise the provincial spirit. In almost all the

²⁸ *De Bosatlas van de geschiedenis van Nederland* (Groningen: Noordhoff Atlasproducties, 2011), 199.

²⁹ C.f. Hofman J., ‘Het bestuur in de jaren 1795–1813, de Bataafs-Franse tijd’, in Willem Koppers and Felix Villanueva, eds., *Van Gelre tot Gelderland. 650 jaar besturen van Gelderland* (Nijmegen: Nijmeegs Museum ‘Commanderie van Sint-Jan’, 1989), 48–49; and Hendrik Albert Kamphuis, *Stad en Lande tijdens de Bataafse Republiek. Bestuurlijke en gerechtelijke verhoudingen in Groningen, 1795–1807* (Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum, 2005).

former provinces scholars continued to show a great interest in regional culture, language and history. In the former province of Friesland, the literary movement that had started in the mid-eighteenth century thrived throughout the 1790s and early 1800s, and even though the province had officially ceased to exist, the production of books concerning Friesland's cultural exceptionalism flourished during this period.³⁰ The same story applied to other parts of the former confederacy. In the former province of Guelderland, for example, local historians like Van Hasselt and Van Spaen kept the memory of the illustrious duchy alive by salvaging the old provincial archives and publishing a series of books on medieval Guelders, while in Zeeland church ministers and novelists idealised the character and landscape of the former province in their sermons and writings.³¹

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, both this persistence of the old provincial identities and the need for a good institutional relationship between central government and the regions caused the authorities to rethink their strategy. Following pressure from France to reform the political system again, a third coup took place, and in September 1801, a new Constitution was adopted. This Constitution not only enabled federalists and Old Regime administrators to take office again but also reversed some of the more radical changes of the previous years, most notably the introduction of the departmental system. By 1802 the original medieval provinces of the Netherlands were restored to their former borders and most of the old provincial dignitaries were back in power.

The 1801 coup d'état has long been interpreted as a half-hearted counter-revolution and an attempt to limit the democratic reforms of 1798.³² However, this does not do full justice to the political importance of the event and the intentions of the perpetrators of the coup. Both the coup and the subsequent restoration of the provinces and their old elites can best be understood as an effort to 'nationalise' the revolution

³⁰ Breuker, *Friese nationalisme*, 90–125.

³¹ Willem Anne van Spaen, *Oordeelkundige inleiding tot de historie van Gelderland*. IV delen (Utrecht: Wild & Altheer, 1801–1805); Gerard van Hasselt, *Bijdragen voor d'oude Geldersche maaltijden* (Arnhem: J.H. Moeleman Jr., 1805); Gerard van Hasselt, *Geldersche oudheden* (Arnhem: J.H. Moeleman Jr., 1806); and Arno Neele, *De ontdekking van het Zeeuwse platteland. Culturele verhoudingen tussen stad en platteland in Zeeland 1750–1850* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011).

³² Cf. Ernst Kossmann, *De Lage Landen. Twee eeuwen Nederland en België, 1780–1980*. I, 6th ed. (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), 87.

by regionalising it, and to bring the unitary state into line with the reality of the Dutch cultural and political landscape. By embracing its historical plurality, the new regime made a deliberate attempt to unite the various factions within the Republic and bridge the gap between national unity and regional diversity. This different approach was also highlighted by the Republic's new name: instead of 'the one and indivisible Batavian Republic', politicians and government officials now talked about the 'Batavian Commonwealth', a name that implied a far less monolithic view of the nation.

Although the Batavian Commonwealth would turn out to be the overture for the installation of Napoleon's brother, Louis Napoleon, as 'King of Holland', and eventually even the incorporation of the Netherlands into the French Empire, this shift from uniformity towards a more pluralist perspective would have a critical impact. During the first decade of the nineteenth century, the national government persisted in its policy of centralisation. This time, however, it respected the different regional circumstances and provincial peculiarities. The provincial capitals, for example, retained their functions as important political centres, while existing, often region-specific, offices and institutions were incorporated into the new national framework.³³

Culturally, the notion of unity in diversity was predominantly expressed in literary works, like novels, books on national history and so-called geographical descriptions. One famous example is Evert Maaskamp's *Afbeeldingen van kleeding, zeden en gewoonten in de Bataafse tijd*.³⁴ This extensive study of the different Dutch 'characters, customs and clothing styles', published in 1803, explicitly stressed the multicultural character of the Commonwealth and painted a picture of the Dutch nation in all its regional varieties. Just as some of his early modern predecessors had done, Maaskamp even went so far as to say that 'nowhere in the world was the ethnic-cultural diversity as great as in the Netherlands', a feature that made the country both unique and vulnerable: if the new state wanted to survive, it was necessary that all Dutchmen be aware of the provincial differences and the customs of their fellow countrymen.³⁵

³³ Hofman, 'Het bestuur in de jaren 1795–1813', 49–53.

³⁴ Evert Maaskamp, *Afbeeldingen van de kleeding, zeden en gewoonten in de Bataafsche Republiek* (Amsterdam: E. Maaskamp, 1803).

³⁵ Koolhaas-Grosfeld, *De ontdekking van de Nederlander*.

THE OLD TIMES WILL REVIVE

The mere existence and popularity of works such as Maaskamp's illustrated that nationalism and cultural diversity were not considered to be incompatible. On the contrary, for the majority of the Dutch people, the creation of the Commonwealth was a reasonable compromise: it reconciled the will to unite the nation politically with the cultural and institutional heritage of the former confederacy. The French, however, were less content with the arrangement. Napoleon in particular was unhappy with the progress made so far; the lack of power to tax in the Netherlands, the country's ambivalent attitude towards the Continental System, and the failure to raise Dutch troops for the imperial army were just too much for the Emperor. Disillusioned by his brother's unsuccessful attempt to promote French interests in the Netherlands, Napoleon made a drastic decision: in July 1810, he dethroned his brother as King of Holland and, almost overnight, incorporated the Netherlands into the French Empire.

With the incorporation into the French Empire, the Netherlands entered yet another phase of seemingly radical change. Not only did the Dutch state lose its political sovereignty but it also had to conform to the French administrative system: along with the *Code Napoleon*, the *maires* and *préfets*, this meant the reintroduction of the departmental system that had been abolished a decade earlier. For the second time in twelve years, the provinces' historical borders were redrawn and their old, familiar names replaced by neutral, geographical indications.³⁶

In the three years that followed, the Emperor sped up the process of centralisation, disbanding almost all the remaining provincial institutions. Even in the countryside, which had so far been affected little by the consecutive regime changes, a separation of power was introduced. Napoleon's efforts to integrate the former provinces into his Empire would probably have continued, had it not been for the miserable failure of his military campaigns. Following the Emperor's disastrous campaign in Russia and his defeat at the Battle of Leipzig, Russian and Prussian

³⁶ Matthijs Lok and Martijn van der Burg, 'The Dutch Case. The Kingdom of Holland and the Imperial departments', in Michael Broers, Agustín Guimerá Ravina and Peter Hicks, eds., *The Napoleonic Empire and the New European Political Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 100–111.

troops invaded the eastern part of the Netherlands in November 1813, thus liberating the former Dutch provinces from French occupation.³⁷

In the meantime, a provisional government, led by Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, had installed itself in Holland. From the very beginning, his government had made it clear that its primary objective was to ‘revive the old times’ by restoring Dutch independence and the political power of the House of Orange-Nassau, and maybe even by restoring the former union. Van Hogendorp, in particular, propagated the revival of ‘the Burgundian Netherlands’. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the former statesman, who had been an admirer of the American Constitution and a close friend to both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, had already written several political treatises that offered alternatives to the centralist French-style constitutions.³⁸ His famous *Schets eener constitutie*, for example, was a sophisticated mix of ancient, constitutional laws and privileges and modern presidential and monarchic elements.³⁹

None of these plans, however, were immediately implemented. As soon as Prince Willem Frederik, the son of the last Stadtholder, had returned from exile in England, it transpired that the new state would differ from the old Republic in many ways. Not only would the Prince of Orange be inaugurated as the new Sovereign but he would also preserve much of the French administrative system. The country would remain a unitary state, led by a single head of state, and with a national government in The Hague.⁴⁰

This situation raised the question of what to do with the old provinces: would they remain mere administrative units, or should they be restored

³⁷ Wilfried Uitterhoeve, 1813. *Haagse bluf. De korte chaos van de vrijwording* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013).

³⁸ Edwin van Meerkerk, *De gebroeders Van Hogendorp. Botsende idealen in de kraamkamer van het Koninkrijk* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas Contact, 2013); and Fredericus van Hogendorp, ed., *Brieven en gedenkschriften van Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp*. III (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1876), 172.

³⁹ Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, ‘Schets eener Constitutie’, in Fredericus van Hogendorp, ed., *Brieven en gedenkschriften van Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp*. III (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1876); and Niek van Sas, ‘Onder waarborging eener wijze constitutie’, in Niek van Sas and Henk te Velde, eds., *De eeuw van de Grondwet. Grondwet en politiek in Nederland, 1798–1917* (Deventer: Kluwer, 1998), 117–120.

⁴⁰ C.f. Matthijs Lok, *Windvanen. Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en Franse Restauratie (1830–1820)* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2009).

to their former glory? On this point, opinions within the new government differed. Some, like Willem Frederik Röell, who had made his career in the Napoleonic era, regarded the province as nothing more than a *manus ministra*, meant to serve the new Sovereign.⁴¹ Others, like Van Hogendorp, had a different opinion. In their eyes, the old provinces had been more than just administrative units: they had represented the different peoples of the Netherlands with their own historical backgrounds, customs and institutions. Moreover, these provincial communities had been the backbone of the country for centuries, and therefore could not be ignored. In his function as chair of the constitutional commission of 1814, Van Hogendorp stressed the importance of this aspect. According to him, each province had ‘its own spirit, which made the people feel a Hollander, a Gueldersman, a Frisian, etc.’, and to ignore these essential feelings, was ‘to act against nature’.⁴²

In the end, the constitutional commission largely agreed with Van Hogendorp’s view. The provinces were restored to their original pre-1799 borders, and again the familiar names of Holland, Groningen, Frisia, Zeeland, Brabant, Drenthe, Overijssel, Utrecht and Guelderland were back on the map.⁴³ Furthermore, the formal name of the new country, Princedom (after 1815 Kingdom) of the Netherlands, would emphasise the plurality of the nation. This was a Princedom that was explicitly made up of different (Nether)lands, a fact that that was also highlighted by the reintroduction of the Provincial Estates, which would again function as electoral colleges for the Estates-General. This was a function common in most federal or confederal states, but quite rare in the context of a unitary state.

One of the results was that many of the families that had once dominated the Estates-General prior to 1795 also got a seat in the new Estates-General and, despite the centralist Constitution, provincial elites still had a huge influence on national politics. This compromise, which in many ways recalled the situation in the Batavian Commonwealth, would

⁴¹ Herman Theodoor Colenbrander, *Ontstaan der Grondwet. Bronnenverzameling*. I (The Hague: Nijhoff 1908), 160–161.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴³ Olav Moorman van Kappen, ‘Het provinciaal bestuur van Gelderland in de negentiende eeuw. Inrichting en werkzaamheid’, in Willem Koppers and Felix Villanueva, eds., *Van Gelre tot Gelderland. 650 jaar besturen van Gelderland* (Nijmegen: Nijmeegs Museum ‘Commanderie van Sint-Jan’, 1989), there 53.

lay the foundation for the process of nation-building in years to come. On the one hand, the Prince of Orange, the future King William I, would be at the centre of Dutch politics. Supported by his modern, French-style bureaucracy, he had the power to almost single-handedly force through national legislation and appoint governors and administrators at nearly every administrative level. On the other hand, the reintroduction of the Provincial Estates reopened the door to power for the old federalist elites: having reclaimed their seats, they were able to restore many of the regional rights, privileges and offices that had existed before the unification of the Netherlands.

In Frisia, for example, the Provincial Estates decided to continue in the same old way as much as possible. As a result, many of the traditional ruling families regained control over their local communities. Not only were they again entitled to administer justice; they also reclaimed the right to appoint rural administrators or *grietmannen*: a privilege that dated from the Middle Ages and had been one of pillars of the renowned 'Frisian Freedom' in early modern times.⁴⁴ Similarly, in nearby Groningen, the oligarchical families exploited the old provincial rights and privileges to strengthen their positions. In 1816, for example, the Provincial Estates reintroduced the right of collation. This privilege, which had been assumed by the representatives of Groningen after the Reformation, enabled local noblemen or dignitaries to appoint clergymen in their own parishes. They held the right to put forward a nominee, who subsequently would be installed by the provincial government. The decision to continue this practice reinforced the ties between the noble families and the church and provided Groningen's old elites with a powerful instrument in both political and religious matters.⁴⁵

Also in other provinces, the restoration of the Provincial Estates went hand in hand with the revival of semi-feudal practices and offices. In Overijssel, for example, the Estates tightened their grip on the countryside

⁴⁴ Anton Falck, *Reglement omtrent de zamenstelling van de Staten der provincie Vriesland* (The Hague: s.n., 1814); N.A., *Reglement omtrent de zamenstelling der staten, op het bestuur ten platten lande en voor het bestuur der steden in de provincie Vriesland* (Leeuwarden: Menno van den Bosch, 1826).

⁴⁵ N.A., *Reglement voor de Ridderschap der Provincie Groningen, geapprobeerd bij Koninklijk Besluit van den 3 julij 1816* (Groningen: s.n., 1816); and Jonn van Zuthem, 'Een nieuwe provincie 1814–1848', in Maarten Duijvendak, Doeko Bosscher and Hanneke de Vries, eds., *Geschiedenis van Groningen. III. Nieuwste tijd-heden* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2009), 55–121.

by reinstating the former office of *drost*, while in neighbouring Guelderland, they granted the restored nobility several ceremonial prerogatives, thus restoring the traditional hierarchy among their members.⁴⁶ Moreover, almost everywhere in the Northern Netherlands, the reconstruction of provincial administrations was coupled with a restoration of former seigneuries (*heerlijkheden*). These private dominions, which had lost their special legal status during the Batavian-French period, would once again enjoy a wide spectrum of privileges, ranging from hunting and fishing rights to the right to nominate local officials.⁴⁷

From a cultural perspective, too, the provinces were able to retain their own specific character. In the provincial capitals, societies, universities and journals remained important bearers of provincial identity, providing a platform for regional literature, history and news stories.⁴⁸ During the 1820s and 1830s, each of the Dutch provinces, for example, would print its own ‘provincial people’s almanac’ which, in addition to the usual astronomical data, provided the reader with historical anecdotes, local legends and poetic descriptions of the province in question.⁴⁹ Nationally, many of these expressions of provincial culture, in their turn, were incorporated into a national narrative. Provincial histories and stories of local heroes would end up in books on Dutch history, and when the King visited the various parts of the Netherlands his welcome ceremonies would often have a specific regional character.⁵⁰ On some occasions, the royal family would even dress up in local, provincial costumes.⁵¹

In the end, regional continuities like these served as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the restoration of provincial institutions and the

⁴⁶ N.A., Reglement van bestuur ten platten lande van de provincie Overijssel (Zwolle, 1818), 20–29; N.A., Reglement voor het platteland van de Gemeente Gelderland, Aldus goedgekeurd en geaprobeerd door’s Konings Besluit, van den 22 juny 1817 (Arnhem, 1817); and Moorman van Kappen, ‘Het bestuur in de jaren 1795–1813’, 55–57.

⁴⁷ Christoph van Houte de Lange and Vincent van der Burg, *Heerlijkheden in Nederland* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2008), 21.

⁴⁸ De Jong, *De dirigenten van de herinnering*, 41–62.

⁴⁹ E.g. *Zeeuwsche Volks-almanak* (1835–1846), *Friesche Volks-Almanak* (1836–1866), *Groninger Volks-Almanak* (1837–1851), *Utrechtse Volks-almanak* (1837–1869), *Geldersche Volks-Almanak* (1835–1927).

⁵⁰ Christianus Robidé van der Aa, *Gelderlands hulde aan Koning Willem II bij Hoogstdezelvs eerste komst in dit gewest in Bloeiimaand 1841* (Arnhem: Is. An. Nijhoff, 1841).

⁵¹ *Leeuwarder Courant*, 23 juli 1841, Breuker, *Friese nationalisme*, 123.

cultivation of provincial identities responded to the needs at the provincial level. They accommodated feelings of regional belonging and provided the traditional elites in the provinces with a platform to regain access to power. On the other hand, the same continuities also benefitted the new central government. Not only did the restoration and appropriation of provincial names and customs legitimise the new regime but the institutional structures of the provinces also proved to be instrumental in the process of nation-building. Instead of being disbanded, provincial administrations and distinctive regional institutions, such as courts of law and universities, were incorporated into the new national framework. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, they would continue to function largely as they had done in the past.⁵² This time, however, they followed national policies, rather than provincial ones.

Thus, by ‘regionalising’ the nation and using provincial institutions as instruments of national legislation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands found a balance between continuity and change, and in following decades, regionalism and nationalism would continue to go hand in hand. In this light, it may not be surprising that even sixty years after the creation of the unitary state in 1858, an author noted that in his age ‘the provincial spirit was as alive as it had been in the days of the National Assembly and the old Republic’. To him it seemed that ‘this spirit would probably never fade’, and in case it might, he concluded that ‘it would not be in the interest of the Fatherland’.⁵³

CONCLUSION

Historiographically, the Revolutionary Era has predominantly been studied as a period of radical change, a *Sattelzeit* in which modernity took root and new nation states rose from the ashes of the Ancien Régime. Also in the case of the Netherlands, the great rupture in this period is undeniable: between 1795 and 1815, the country was turned upside down and transformed from a confederate republic into a kingdom with a single head of state. One could almost argue that the difference between the two periods could not have been greater.

⁵² Cf. Wim van Schaik, *In de maat en uit de pas. Utrechtse dorpsbesturen 1780–1813* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren BV, 2019).

⁵³ Campegius Lambertus Vitringa, *Staatkundige geschiedenis der Bataafsche Republiek*. Deel II (Arnhem: Is. An. Nijhoff, 1858).

However, as this chapter has pointed out, not everything had changed. Although the old confederacy had been replaced by a unitary state, this new state was still considered to be a unity in diversity. The medieval Burgundian provinces that had made up the Dutch Republic in the early modern period would not lose their appeal. Despite the successive constitutional and administrative reforms around 1800, they remained important objects of identification. The adherence to these old provincial identities became apparent not only in regionalist literature or other forms of region-specific culture and folklore but also during the constitutional debates of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Both in the 1795–1798 and the 1813–1815 debates on the Dutch Constitution the issue of regional diversity was brought up in the discussions. In both cases, those in favour of the continuation of the existing provincial division in the Netherlands pointed to the fact that Dutch society consisted of different provincial peoples and that the new state should not completely ignore these historical differences. Eventually, their argument was successful and a compromise was reached: the old provinces were incorporated in the new kingdom, linking the different peoples of the Netherlands to their new central government.

This persistence of the provinces of the Netherlands during the Revolutionary Era shows us that certain identities, practices and institutions were able to survive in times of radical change and social disruption. What is more, it gives us insight into how continuity at one level could enable change at another level and what had to stay the same in order to make change possible. As the case of the Netherlands has demonstrated, the cultivation of provincial identity and the persistence of provincial institutions was, in the end, not considered to be incompatible with the idea of national unification. On the contrary, once the constitutional relationship between the old provinces and new nation state was settled, the two were even believed to be in harmony with each other: ‘the provincial disease’ had become a blessing, and the very same institutions that had once stood in the way of reform were now indispensable links in the process of nation-building. Whether it involved the Provincial Estates, the provincial courts or provincial synods, from 1814 onwards the new unitary state would be built on an institutional structure that was still very much regionally organised. Constitutionally, the emphasis may well have shifted, but in the nineteenth century the Netherlands was still very much a unity in diversity, and it has been ever since.

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Order, War and Religion: The Chilean Republic Between Tradition and Change

Ana María Stuvén

THE POSSIBILITY OF THE REPUBLIC

Chile, like many other Latin American countries, is an excellent laboratory for studying the role of traditional practices and ideas in forging and enabling the creation of a republican state and nation based on the principles of modernity. If we understand the advent of modernity as a paradigm shift from the past to the future, then the era of Atlantic revolutions is responsible for a new experience and consciousness of time. This

José María Bazaguchiascúa, ‘Discurso político-moral sobre que peca mortalmente todo el que no sigue el sistema de la Patria, y respeta igualmente a las autoridades constituidas, deducidas del texto y contexto de todo el capítulo 13 de la epístola a los Romanos del apóstol San Pablo’, *La Aurora de Chile* (November 26, 1812).

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new temporality is in part due to the European intellectual controversies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and to the ideology of progress, sparked in the Industrial Revolution, which held that humanity would ascend gradually and continuously, guided by reason and will, towards a higher stage of development. Figures like Voltaire, Turgot, Condorcet, Saint Simon and Reynal in France were frequently read by Chilean and Hispanic American elites, giving their political construction a purpose which enabled them to justify the gradual adoption of republican principles by defining their times as transitional.

We understand that the concept of modernity is polemic, but for our purpose, we must admit that it introduced a series of unprecedented concepts into the political lexicon, which inspired and also put pressure on the actors of the era of Atlantic revolutions to design and construct new referents starting from concepts as broad as freedom and equality.¹ The process was accelerated in Hispanic America with the 1808 Monarchical crisis in Spain when, on the peninsula as well as in its overseas possessions, its elites were driven to question where political power should lie. Scholastic thinkers had debated the origins of political power. However, the events of Bayona and the autonomy assumed by the elites in America in the representation of the captive king forced political decisions and unleashed debates on topics such as alternative political regimes, which were already circulating in enlightened discourse.

The founders of the Chilean Republic worked towards the future implementation of the ideals that emerged from that debate, such as independence, self-government, sovereignty, progress, and rationalisation. However, they were fully aware that the transition towards the realisation of these new concepts required avoiding a sudden rupture with the past. The concept of sovereignty exemplifies the difficulty that these new ideas posed in a period of transition. Popular sovereignty, as understood by republicanism, was completely alien to Spanish monarchical codes under which, if the king was removed, sovereignty reverted to the ‘pueblos’, a concept that is not equivalent to the modern concept of ‘the people’. The idea of ‘the people’, taken as a depository of power, created feelings of uncertainty among those who had to lead the transition process towards

¹ C.f. Javier Fernández Sebastián and Cristóbal Aljovín de Losada, eds., *Diccionario político y social del mundo Iberoamericano* (Madrid: Fundación Carolina, 2009), Introducción.

republicanism—namely the same ruling class holding power in the peninsular administration—about the outcome and the risks of the times. In Chile, this feeling was responsible for the predominance of the concept of order—namely social order to support institutional order—as a hinge between tradition and change. The Chilean ruling class maintained its internal cohesion based on the rejection of any reform that might jeopardise its social and political hegemony, regulating, in accordance with its perception of order, the implementation of republican institutions.

War and religion became functional elements for the consolidation of the modern Chilean nation and its State. Republican ideas mixed with traditional institutions and rituals, with war fostering adherence to the nation, and religion offering transcendental arguments for political change.

Fighting wars had become familiar to the authorities of the General Captaincy of Chile, a relatively marginal space of the Viceroyalty of Peru during the Spanish administration, due to the difficulties of defining its borders with the indigenous population. On the other hand, religion was the strongest bond between institutions, corporations and authorities. It was a common faith and cohesive force of Chile's culture. In the move towards the republican period, these two elements became favourable to change, insofar as they evoked and preserved traditions that were useful for creating a nation state through a ruling class deployed to a frontier territory ever since the Spanish Conquerors attempted to instal order on what they considered chaos. This insularity became an advantage to which one can in part attribute the relative lack of conflict between Spaniards and 'criollos' during colonial times and later during the transition to republicanism. Some Spaniards even pledged allegiance to the new flag. Eduard Poeppig, a German botanist and explorer, visited Chile between 1826 and 1829 and recalled that, after the revolution, around 3000 peninsulars remained in the country and were respected and included in society, while in Peru they were being persecuted.²

Bearing in mind the particular conformation of its territory (a narrow strip of land between the Andes and the sea), Chile was successful (compared to neighbouring countries) in institutionalising order, consolidating the early state and building the nation due to the elite consensus around social order. Without it, they saw no possibility of awarding the

² In Patricio Silva, *La república virtuosa. Probidad pública y corrupción en Chile* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2018).

people republican rights. This order was bolstered by the wars waged by the State with the support of religion, administered politically by the Church, which accompanied the armies and gave legitimacy to their mission. War and religion were also factors of social stratification as well as of selective inclusion. War was important in creating a sense of territorial belonging, loyalty to one's homeland and cultural identity, even before a modern concept of a nation was consolidated. To the extent that the Church and the State remained united after independence, maintaining Catholic rituals and practices from tradition strengthened republican authority.

ORDER

The rejection of the Hispanic monarchy and the need to build a state and shape a nation identified until then with the great unity of the Crown were not the result of conscious deliberation, although the ideas circulating at the time and those coming from Europe gave rise to conjecture about the future. The builders of the Chilean state and nation (i.e. members of the same ruling class that administered the territory under the monarchy) had to face this 'threshold' period saddled with the fears and uncertainties of those who have much to lose, but also much to gain, if they could transition towards the new regime without destabilising their social power. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento expressed it masterfully almost 30 years after independence: 'Social questions, after being ventilated by thought ... become ventilated by passions, by bayonets, until they fall rolling at the feet of the masses ... who decide by crushing under their feet the question and the litigants This is the abbreviated history of all social changes.'³ Andrés Bello, the great jurist and constitutionalist, witnessed the desire to control possible ruptures and preserve attachment to traditional forms. 'Democracy, which is freedom, is not legitimated,

³ Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, 'Escuela Normal', *El Mercurio de Valparaíso* (June 18, 1842). Sarmiento was one of the Argentine intellectuals who took refuge in Chile when persecuted by Juan Manuel de Rosas. They made great contributions to the cultural progress of the nation. He served as President of Argentina from 1868 to 1874.

useful nor does any good until the people have reached their maturity, and we are not yet adults.’⁴

The ethos that prevailed within the Chilean ruling class oscillated between its awareness of necessary change and its fear of losing its political and social hegemony. The dichotomy between chaos and order can be used to explain the process that shaped the Chilean nation state at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Chaos was the world of the ‘other’, the barbarian indigenous and the ‘people’, feared as future depositories of sovereignty.⁵ On the other side was the Christian Western ‘we’, justified by being rooted in history and tradition. The idea of order was not problematic, since the ruling class’ organic vision of society coincided with that of the Catholic Church, where the ‘other’ (the indigenous people and in general those who did not share its faith) had a place in the intellectual and political universe only for their conversion and civilisation. Consequently, the concept of order was defined within the polarity between ‘supernatural order’/‘natural order’. The idea of social and moral order, the latter derived from the supernatural, was also linked to a fear of the eruption of popular demands, a fear that leading groups also shared.

Members of the ruling class had become familiar with republicanism before 1808. The circulation of republican ideas, and especially political manifestos in the form of Catechisms written sometimes by priests, is an indication that independence was a process triggered by the Napoleonic invasion but not completely alien to the imagination of the elites. Around 1810, before Independence, the text *El Catecismo Político Cristiano* (The Christian Political Catechism) published by the pseudonymous José Amor de la Patria, declared that the republican government recognised the right of the people to elect its representatives, because ‘... when the peoples (pueblos, in its traditional sense equivalent to ‘villages’) were established with freedom and formed without coercion, they almost always preferred a republican government.’⁶ In 1812, the *Catecismo de los Patriotas* (Patriots’ Catechismo) by Fray Camilo Henríquez, a Dominican friar and

⁴ In José Victorino Lastarria, *Recuerdos literarios* (Santiago: Zigzag, 1967), 96. Andrés Bello (1781–1865) born in Venezuela, and educated in Britain became Chile’s most important intellectual figure.

⁵ At the time of Independence, approximately half of the Chilean population, around 800 thousand in total, were ‘mestizos’.

⁶ Rafael Sagredo Baeza, ‘Actores políticos en los catechismos patriotas y republicanos americanos, 1810–1821’, *Historia* 28 (1994), 273–298.

defender of the patriotic cause, stated: ‘... Heaven has declared itself in favour of the republican system. So we see it was the government it gave the Israelites.’⁷ Their loyalty prevailed until Ferdinand’s attempt to re-establish absolutism after his liberation. The king was blind enough not to realise that the world was facing a progressive dynamic of revolutions that made it impossible to turn back the clock.

The preservation of social order was the backdrop to the deployment of political order, both in its fidelist and republican stages. Part of the tension comes from the interpretation of the concept of order. Social order referred to the elite’s hegemony in power. After the fall of Ferdinand, political power implied creating a new order without upsetting traditional hierarchies, which obviously created uncertainties. Antonio José de Irisarri, a Guatemalan politician living in Chile, stressed the need to be particularly careful in fostering civic virtues in the new order. If not carefully controlled, he thought, ‘a Republic can show the most horrible picture of disorder and weakness.’⁸ When President Joaquín Prieto inaugurated the 1833 Constitution, a result of the victory of conservatives over liberals in the Battle of Lircay, he stated that its main purpose was to establish ‘the means to secure order and public tranquillity forever against the risks of the ups and downs of parties to which the country had been exposed. Reforms’, he said, ‘are the way to end the revolutions ... which disturbed the political system in which the triumph of independence put us.’⁹ Likewise, religion was valued widely as a mechanism to confront the uncertainty generated by the monarchical crisis. According to the jurist Juan Egaña, author of an experiment with a utopian constitution in 1823 ‘religious ideas are the strongest barrier against threats to good order.’¹⁰ A year later, Camilo Henríquez argued that ‘in the dangerous crises of the states (religion) has always been the last resort of public order amid the impotence of the laws.’¹¹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ ‘Sobre los gobiernos republicanos’, *El Semanario Republicano* (September 25, 1813).

⁹ ‘El presidente de la república a los pueblos’, in *Constitución de la República de Chile* (Santiago: Imprenta de la Opinión, 1833), I–II.

¹⁰ Juan Egaña, ‘Plan de Gobierno’, *Colección de Historiadores y Documentos Relativos a la Independencia de Chile* 19 (Santiago: Imprenta Cervantes, 1911), 97–109, there 107.

¹¹ Camilo Henríquez, 1811, ‘Sermón en la instalación del primer Congreso Nacional’, in *Escritos políticos de Camilo Henríquez* (Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1960), 50.

The struggle between order and chaos can be seen in the way the ruling class implemented the rights that the republic had to guarantee. After independence, the concept of order transcends its supernatural meaning, as well as its disciplinary significance, and inserts itself into the world of political definitions. For Camilo Henríquez, the American revolution initiated a ‘new order of things’, as opposed to the ‘old domination’.¹² In the new polarity between ‘order’/‘anarchy’, political change will be admitted only under the rule of order and when social order is guaranteed.

For authors such as Antonio José de Irisarri, the political change brought about by the revolution followed a progressive logic with no point of return: ‘Things will not return to the old state or order and the waters will take another course.’¹³ Only a few months earlier, Irisarri had expressed his fear of revolutionary change, showing how contradictory the perceptions of the era of revolutions were for its contemporaries: ‘There is not a sweeter voice in the civil order, nor a more sonorous one, than that of Republic. This voice sends us an idea of justice, equity and convenience that makes its meanings sound kind. We imagine a State wisely governed by the general will, where the most just laws protect the rights of man... to say republic is to say happiness.’ However, immediately after he warns: ‘The astuteness of some individuals about the lack of illustration of the popular mass, has always been the stumbling block in which republics perish. The people, enthusiastic about freedom, perhaps work to destroy it...’.¹⁴ Irisarri expresses clearly the ambivalence afflicting the elite when facing the challenge to create this new order, whose characteristics were defined elsewhere, in countries with social conditions not comparable to those of Europe or the United States. Failed experiments, like the federalist attempt by José Miguel Infante in Chile in 1826, demonstrated that former Spanish possessions could not be assimilated to European intellectual and political models.

The era of revolutions in Chile was lived as a transition between tradition and modernity. Tradition prevented all excesses, like those committed during the French Revolution, which were fresh in the elite’s minds, and made the idea of a republic simultaneously desired and feared.

¹² *La Aurora de Chile* (July 23, 1812).

¹³ *El Semanario Republicano* (December 18, 1813).

¹⁴ *El Semanario Republicano* (September 25, 1813).

This paradox appears early in the political debate.¹⁵ It was natural that it should do so, considering that the majority of the ruling class perceived society more as a traditional association or community, rather than an aggregation of individuals. The two dimensions, political and social, cannot be separated in order to avoid the paradox between principles and practices or the impasse where one must choose between one or the other to explain historical development. As Francois Xavier Guerra points out, the nation assumes an essentially political character and the state a social one. From a political point of view, it was a question of conceiving a human collectivity that would reconcile the predicaments of modern politics, with the intimate structure, social links, relationship with history, values and beliefs of the ruling group.¹⁶

Recovering the feeling of confidence that had already been threatened during the last colonial governments was a key factor for the Chilean ruling class. It was the guarantee, as Bernardo O'Higgins, the first republican ruler, would say, against the 'impotence of authority' and against 'despotism'.¹⁷ The concept of order as opposed to anarchy replaced that of confidence (originally the opposite of uncertainty). When speaking of anarchy, what came to the minds of the elites was the situation that plagued other Latin American nations: their difficulties in forming nation states and avoiding fragmentation and civil war. During practically the entire nineteenth century, the perception by the ruling class of the ascendancy of their conception of social order exercised a decisive power over their openness to change. Maintaining the dominance of their ethics, religion and cultural expressions was important to avoid any rupture. As Mario Góngora observed, the notion of order is a moral quality belonging to a class that in turn defines that moral quality.¹⁸

¹⁵ A similar paradox will appear with democracy: desired and feared at the same time.

¹⁶ Francois Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias. Ensayo sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992), Chapter 9.

¹⁷ Bernardo O'Higgins was the illegitimate son of the Viceroy of Peru, Ambrosio O'Higgins and the Chilean Rosa Riquelme. A hero in the wars of Independence, he became the first republican ruler, but was instrumentally used and never fully admitted into the ruling class because of his origins.

¹⁸ Mario Góngora, *Ensayo histórico sobre la noción de estado en Chile en los siglos XIX y XX* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1986), 46.

RELIGION

With a more modern but not totally effective war apparatus, the Spaniards supported their conquest by the imposition of Catholicism. The sword and the cross were planted simultaneously in American territory when Columbus stepped onto the Caribbean island of Guanahani. Both proved to be valid resources in generating institutional identity and loyalty, which the peninsular authority knew how to use to preserve its power.

During the Ancien Regime, by virtue of the concordats between the Hispanic monarchy and the papacy, as Roberto Di Stefano observes, it is not possible to conceive of them as two separate entities, at least when it comes to their agency.¹⁹ What we understand today as the Church (i.e. a juridical-political entity that we can identify as conceptually different from society as a whole, relatively autonomous from the State, with a common hierarchical structure recognised as legitimate, and subordinated to the authority of the Holy See) did not exist in this period. Temporal and spiritual power were oriented towards the same goal: ‘The cohesion of the community through government and justice—civil and ecclesiastical—in a worldly sphere ..., and the salvation of souls in the supernatural/sacramental sphere (in the perspective of eternity).’²⁰ Thus, the fact that they were different implies that they could be distinguished but not separated. Of the two swords, the ecclesiastical power wields one and delegates the other. This mesh of powers had not been totally peaceful before Independence. In fact, Jesuits had been expelled from Spanish territories in 1767 and the Crown was fearful of their influence over local indigenous communities, their fidelity to the Catholic pope and their economic power.

While Chile was under Spanish administration, both the political and religious powers provided each other with legitimacy and authority following the pattern of Catholic monarchies. The legitimacy of royal power derived from, and was intimately linked to, its adherence to the Catholic faith and to its authority in ecclesiastical matters, which it defended earnestly. Only since the nineteenth century, with the creation of the republican state, can we identify two institutions that were

¹⁹ Roberto Di Stefano, ‘¿De qué hablamos cuando decimos “Iglesia”? Reflexiones sobre el uso historiográfico de un término polisémico’, *Ariadna histórica. Lenguajes, conceptos, metáforas* 1 (2012), 197–222.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

constructing themselves independently, defining their individual boundaries, and creating their own codes of legitimacy. In this context, it was necessary to define the rights and duties of the members of the nation, as well as the attributes of the institutions that coexisted within it. Concepts such as popular sovereignty, citizenship and political representation, although limited in their application, challenged the power structures that had prevailed during the Spanish administration. The new statute demanded that a process of differentiation be initiated for religion, politics, economics, science and other areas, creating a potential conflict by turning the Church into an institution with sovereign attributes, different from the State, and in potential competition with it. In other words, it put pressure on the Church to define its own contours. At the same time, and despite the tensions between Church and State, sanctions justified by the symbolic power of religion maintained a political and cultural significance, thus contributing to the social order. The Church retained an enormous capacity to mobilise through the capital of authority at its disposal and because it was territorially dispersed, reaching areas where the State initially could not penetrate.²¹ In this sense, the Church fulfilled political functions for the social and political body by virtue of its spatial extent and symbolic efficacy.

In this process of differentiation, it was natural that friction between the two powers would appear in the first decades after Independence, particularly when it became evident that Church and faith had to separate to preserve the latter while reducing the political power of the former. The State needed not only to avoid serious conflict with the Church but to keep its subjects close to the faith as well. In order to foster a harmonious relationship between the two powers, clergy members were included in the main representative institutions of the new system. Good Catholics, according to elite opinion, would never support the revolution and would always prefer consensus rather than conflict. What is relevant is that both the State and the Church resorted to forms of legitimation that came from tradition to support their respective demands and prerogatives: the Church resorted to its divine authority, the doctrine of perfect 'societas' and papal authority as superior to all other political forms; the State resorted to 'regalism', an enlightened version of 'patronato', which

²¹ Cfr. Pierre Bourdieu, *La eficacia simbólica. Religión y Política* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2009).

aimed to return the nobility's and the clergy's faculties and prerogatives back to the monarchy because of the divine origin of the power of kings.

A kind of 'cultural war' developed among them for predominance over the identity of the nation, although the faith itself was not questioned until the mid-nineteenth century. Unlike what happened in pluri-confessional European countries, where nation states had to face interreligious conflict, Chile, as well as other mono-confessional countries, witnessed polemics within the same Catholic confessionality over political, non-theological issues.²² For the State, it was a matter of defending its autonomy from some religious symbols (i.e. creating its own republican pantheon while preserving Te Deums, which were celebrated on each independence anniversary) and also exercising power in traditionally ecclesiastical aspects, like the designation of bishops. The Church, in turn, wanted to defend the Catholic character of the nation through its control of aspects of the public sphere, such as education and culture in general, including aspects of symbolic representation within the secular-clerical conflict.²³

The 'patronato', for whose control State and Church struggled, had originated in the power of dominion Pope Alexander VI granted to the Catholic Monarchs over the lands discovered by Columbus, and from other Bulls that gave the Crown some authority on the appointment of ecclesiastical authorities, the collection of tithes, and the public distribution of pontifical documents. The republic understood the 'Patronato Regio' in its Bourbon interpretation as a form of 'regalism' that the State inherited. Rome, of course, did not recognise it, inaugurating some and anticipating many of the intellectual and political wars that ultramontanism fought in its defence of pontifical sovereignty. Although there was conflict over its exercise throughout the nineteenth century, in general, the common interest of the two powers prevailed, allowing an institution of medieval origin to transition towards political modernity, reinforcing republican authority and preventing a rupture that would have weakened state legitimacy in the absence of ecclesiastical support.

²² Only in mid-nineteenth century with the arrival of positivism did religion have to defend itself from secularisation.

²³ Wolfram Kaiser and Christopher Clark, *Culture Wars. Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Introduction.

WAR

The wars that Chile fought during the nineteenth century were crucial to the creation of the nation as well as to the successful institutionalisation of its State. As Mario Góngora observed, the emergence of the State in Chile antedated the presence of national sentiment. This was not the case in Mexico and Peru, where pre-Columbian cultures provided an identity that preceded the viceroalties and republics. In Chile, it was possible to identify only some sort of natural sense of regional belonging rather than national sentiment. This regional sense, associated with loyalty to the Crown, persisted during the centuries of Hispanic domination. As has been mentioned, the consolidation of a national sentiment was linked to the strength of the state. Military victories, patriotic symbols, education, and institutions contributed to this strength. War was a mobilising concept which territorialised political consciousness. Religion occupied a fundamental place, including in war, because its representatives were present throughout the country and could sacralise State mobilisation for war.

Each nineteenth-century generation in Chile experienced war in the country. The wars of independence started with the offensive of the Viceroy of Peru in 1813 to re-establish peninsular control after the ruling authorities had shifted from being loyalists in 1810 to separatists in 1813. After that, Chile waged three wars in bordering territories. The first, the 'Expedición Libertadora' of Peru, undertaken under the command of General José de San Martín in 1820, served the purpose of strengthening the nation's political body. The War against the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation of 1837 contributed to the country's national consolidation and internal pacification. The victory over Peru and Bolivia was publicised as the victory of civilisation vs. tyranny. The War of the Pacific, started in 1879, completed this 'patriotic trilogy', giving Chile a relevant position along the Pacific coast and an international prestige it had not previously enjoyed. Two new provinces, containing rich nitrate mines, were incorporated into its territory. In all of these conflicts, religion played a decisive role with priests preaching in favour of the war and claiming God for their side. In 1865 Chile waged a short war with Spain defending Peruvian independence and control of the 'guaneras'.

A series of works have reflected on war in the process of creating Latin American nations and states. Based on sources that have analysed the relationship between war, violence and nationalism, especially those that have

studied both World Wars,²⁴ Fernando López Alves²⁵ and Miguel Angel Centeno²⁶ have maintained, on the basis of comparative analysis, that the wars of the nineteenth century in Latin America were a great stimulus to centralising power and building institutional capacity. Following the model of Charles Tilly, also known as the ‘warmongering approach’,²⁷ Centeno complements the argument by stating that this strengthening of the State requires that its ruling classes possess a sufficient degree of social cohesion to be able to perceive war as an instrument to ratify their position of power and neutralise centrifugal forces. This was not the case in most Hispanic American states, which explains their lack of external wars. Chile, on the contrary, managed to maintain its oligarchic consensus with few interruptions, preventing the emergence of more autonomous instances of popular activism or other more charismatic, divisive figures. This can in part be attributed to Catholicism as a common religion. Religious rites and symbols permeated the rest of the country more effectively than republican speeches or harangues. If we follow Sinisa Malisevic, there would have been an ideological construction of adhesion to the nation, which required appealing to traditional rituals and symbolisms.²⁸

The cult of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, considered the ‘patron saint’ of Chile, illustrates how Chilean political modernity required religious support to justify its republican wars. Since the seventeenth century, together with the Virgin of Mercy and the Rosary, the Carmelite devotion had penetrated deeply into both the elite and popular sectors and was particularly sponsored by the order of Saint John, who erected the first brotherhood to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in 1678. Also, the Augustinians were promoters of its cult and of brotherhoods in its name in different parts of the country.

²⁴ For an overview of the sociological and theoretical views on the subject, see Sinisa Malesevic, *The Sociology of War and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

²⁵ Fernando López Alves, *La Formación del Estado y la Democracia en América Latina* (Bogotá: Norma, 2002).

²⁶ Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt. War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

²⁷ Charles Tilly and Gabriel Ardant, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

²⁸ Malesevic, *The Sociology of War and Violence*, 193.

The first episode that relates the patriot army to Our Lady occurred on 5 January 1817, when José de San Martín, leading the Ejército Libertador de los Andes in the main square of Mendoza, requested the Virgin's protection and saluted the flag in her name. Immediately the troops and the people shouted 'Viva la patria' (Long live the fatherland). With this gesture, San Martín symbolised his surrender of power to Our Lady. After crossing the Andes, General Bernardo O'Higgins, prior to the battle of Chacabuco, proclaimed her 'patron saint and generalísima de las Armas de Chile'. The Chilean triumph was attributed to divine intercession. However, there were still battles to fight against the Spanish enemy. On 14 March 1818, Santiago's citizens gathered in the cathedral to pray for the intercession of the Virgin during the next confrontation. On 5 April, the battle of Maipú ensured Chile's independence. Bernardo O'Higgins, appointed Supreme Director, immediately ordered the erection of the temple he had promised her for saving the country 'from the greatest danger in which it had ever been'.²⁹ Although one cannot say that O'Higgins manipulated the cult of Our Lady, it is important to set his allegiance in the perspective of his political actions after Independence when he tried on several occasions to reduce Church influence and strengthen that of the State through the Patronato, for example by establishing a lay cemetery for dissidents.

It is interesting to mention that Carmelite devotion declined in times of peace and had to wait for other international wars to be reincorporated into the collective devotions. The war against the Peru-Bolivian Confederation of 1837 was such an occasion. On the eve of Yungay, the last battle, which gave Chile the final victory, tradition has it that Manuel Bulnes, commander in chief of the army, invoked Our Lady, and the obstacles that prevented the cavalry from advancing disappeared instantly.

During the War of the Pacific of 1879, Chilean soldiers marched with the Carmelite scapular on their chests. Clerics claimed that it would act as a 'protective shield' and give the soldiers free passage to heaven if they died in combat. A milestone in the use of this devotion with patriotic intentions occurred during the battle of Dolores in 1879, when chaplain José María Madariaga, together with General Erasmo Escala, raised the

²⁹ *Gazeta Ministerial de Chile* (November 20, 1819); Sebastián Rico Díaz, 'La virgen del Carmen en Chile. Dos momentos de un vínculo identitario (1910–1968)' (Unpublished Masters' Thesis, Institute of History, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 2018), 26.

banner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The exhausted troops reacted with great enthusiasm and continued fighting until victory. It is also important to mention that Arturo Prat, the hero of the war of the Pacific, carried with him the Carmelite scapular at the time of boarding and was killed on the Huáscar, the Peruvian ship.

RITUALS

In addition to wars and religion, the republic also needed to adapt traditional festivities and symbols to new times, especially if they had a transcendent origin and meaning. Feasts helped to strengthen national sentiment and grant credibility to institutions. An important example illustrating the logic of continuity and change in religious practices is that of Te Deums. Considered one of the Catholic Church's oldest celebrations of thanksgiving, taking place 'on the occasion of some solemn event',³⁰ Te Deums were part of everyday life in colonial America. During this period, they were confined to important monarchical commemorations, such as the king's birthday or feast day, as determined by the different royal warrants. For example, for the celebrations of King Charles III, a royal decree was issued in 1750 ordering the suspension of all the activities of the Cabildo to facilitate the attendance of religious communities, military corps and important members of society at the mass of Te Deum.

During the period of Independence, this celebration underwent a transformation, serving both patriots and monarchists as a means of intercession to God or of commemorations of their respective endeavours during the revolution. One of the first moments in which patriots requested the celebration of a Te Deum occurred in 1812 when José Miguel Carrera stated that 'the government of Chile is in critical circumstances, and the Junta, conscious that its efforts will be fruitless without the protection of Christ, has determined that public prayers be made to Him, so as to obtain His adhesion as has always been His disposition towards the prayers of the children of His most holy mother (Prayers

³⁰ Marciano Barios, *Chile y su Iglesia. Una sola historia* (Santiago: Ed. Salesiana, 1992), 207.

should) begin as soon as possible in this Holy Cathedral with the greatest solemnity possible'.³¹

In the case of monarchists, after recovering control of the country in 1814, they organised several ceremonies in the main square as well as a Te Deum in the Cathedral of Santiago to give thanks 'for the regeneration of Chile and the restitution to the throne of the beloved, ... innocent ... persecuted and slandered Ferdinand'.³² In both cases, the solemn character of the feast and the attendance of all the respective authorities and city dwellers were highlighted to give a signal of unity.

However, it was once final Independence was achieved that the Te Deum became established as a patriotic commemorative feast and, again, the Cathedral of Santiago was the place designated for the sacralisation of new authorities with formulas coming from the colonial tradition. The victory in the battle of Chacabuco in 1817 was commemorated with 'an act of thanksgiving to the Almighty, remembering these august events ... a solemn mass must be celebrated in the Holy Cathedral Church with its patriotic prayer'.³³ A similar celebration took place to commemorate the Battle of Maipú. The Senate issued a statement saying that the celebration of this date with a Te Deum 'will be a sweet memory for the defenders of freedom, and will serve as a reason to repeat our gratitude to the divine author for the unique benefits with which the country has been favoured and prevented from suffering a degrading and destructive subjugation of humanity'.³⁴ On that day, the various troops lined the street from the government palace to the temple.³⁵

Te Deums were institutionalised as a patriotic festivity, aimed at nourishing feelings of nationhood. This religious practice underwent visible changes in its meaning. From serving the Bourbon kings, it came to celebrate the founding milestones of the homeland. The attendance of colonial officials was replaced by that of the new authorities of the

³¹ Arzobispado de Santiago, letter by José Miguel Carrera to the ecclesiastical authority (January 2, 1812).

³² ¡Viva el Rey! *Gazeta del gobierno de Chile* 29 (June 1815), 286.

³³ 'Oficio del Director Supremo al Senado Conservador', in *SCL*. Vol. 3 (February 11, 1820), 577.

³⁴ 'Contestación del Senado al Director Supremo', in *SCL*. Vol. 4 (March 28, 1820), 69.

³⁵ Jaime Valenzuela, *Fiesta, rito y política. Del Chile borbónico al republicano* (Santiago: DIBAM, Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, 2014), 225.

republic. War was the element that marked the rupture with tradition because it replaced monarchical feasts with the main dates of Chilean national liberation. War was the element that gave cohesion, identity and meaning to the *Te Deum* within the festive practices of this new republic, which continue to this day.

Although the republic imposed the need for differentiation from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the new authorities considered it necessary to maintain other traditional religious festive practices to which they added patriotic commemorations. The new institutions regulated the participation of their authorities in religious festivities, thus replacing the colonial structure by the republican corpus. By government decree of 1832 it was established 'that the order of precedence of the magistrates and employees of the republic and of the province and city of Santiago be established, and that the ceremonial dress be determined in which they have to attend the religious and civil festivities of solemn attendance and the official and public acts of their respective ministry'.³⁶ This decree preserved the hierarchical structure in the attendance of republican authorities at certain ceremonies, in the same manner as had been carried out in colonial festivities.

What is interesting is that, along with establishing the order of republican precedence, it regulated and imposed attendance at religious ceremonies and new national holidays. It included the feast of Corpus Christi, the feast of the principal patron saint of the State, the masses of Good Thursday and Good Friday, the civil feasts of 12 February and 18 September in the Cathedral Church (both patriotic feasts) and the prayer of 13 May in St. Augustine and the opening and closing of Congress.³⁷ The incorporation of national festivities with the corpus of religious festivities indicates how the patriotic nature of the republic was assimilating the practices and rituals of celebration from colonial times.

In addition to the festivities and symbols necessary to support the new political statute, the republic allowed institutions of the Old Regime, such as the 'cabildo', to move towards the new regime with all its ritual apparatus. The cabildos were one of the oldest institutions in colonial America. Their origin went back to the Castilian tradition and they were closely linked to the foundation of new cities. When the conquerors drew the

³⁶ *Boletín de leyes y decretos del gobierno* 5: 10 (August 2, 1832), 208.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

plots of a new colonial city, it was necessary ‘that their settlers be qualified citizens and have all the rights and franchises of Castile’.³⁸ The *cabildo* occupied a central role among the institutions of the city. In the case of Santiago, it was established on 7 March 1541, with the appointment of its first members by Pedro de Valdivia,³⁹ as part of an ‘agreement between the conquerors’. Later on, its members were elected by the citizens.⁴⁰

Prominent *vecinos* (literally ‘neighbours’) met at the *Cabildo* to discuss matters related to the operations of the city. Its authorities were chosen from among them: mayors, the city procurator, the butler, the sheriff, the royal bishop and the alarife.⁴¹ Appointments to the *Cabildo* were restrictive and they excluded ‘the infamous, illegitimate children, the religious, the recently converted to Christianity, those who exercised offices or jobs held by vile people and the debtors of the royal estate’.⁴²

The *cabildos* adopted a dominant political position in the cities in which they sat during the period of Independence. They assumed power in the absence of the king. After the imprisonment of Ferdinand VII, a *Junta* was convened on 18 September 1810 which included ‘prelates of the religious communities’.⁴³ This is relevant because, in the case of ordinary meetings, members of religious orders were not admitted. Once they were included, the church became part of the independence process. It participated in an act of rupture. Even though this form of exercise of sovereignty was assumed in the name of the captive king, it denied recognition to the Council of Regency constituted in Spain. Once the *Junta* was established and having ‘bridged the revolution’ between 1808 and 1810, the *Cabildo* hosted the political debates with members of the ruling class, who were to lead the country to its full independence, until the so-called Spanish Reconquest in 1814. As an institution created during Spanish rule, it underwent a ‘chameleonic’ transformation with the triumph of

³⁸ Julio Alemparte, *El Cabildo en Chile Colonial* (Santiago: Ed. Andrés Bello, 1966), 44.

³⁹ Pedro de Valdivia was a Spanish ‘hidalgo’, conqueror of Chile and founder of Santiago. He was killed by the Indians while trying to conquer the south of the country. See Miguel Luis Amunátegui, *El Cabildo de Santiago desde 1573 hasta 1581* Vol. 1 (Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1890), 6.

⁴⁰ Alemparte, *El Cabildo en Chile Colonial*, 64.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 70.

⁴³ Acta de la instalación de la excelentísima *Junta Gubernativa del Reino*.

the revolution and kept many of its prerogatives until the establishment of municipalities or modern town halls. Shortly after having celebrated the glories of the monarchy, Cabildo members joined the ‘restorers’, hitherto insurgents, and asked the Supreme Director for funds to finance a religious liturgy ‘with as much pomp as possible’.⁴⁴

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Bearing in mind that the first Chilean identity was formed within the Hispanic Monarchy, the era of the Atlantic revolutions found its ruling class in contact with European Enlightenment, especially in its Spanish Catholic version. At the time of the collapse of the Bourbon monarchy the elites resorted to republicanism as an alternative to replace the legitimacy of the Crown with a statute that would provide guarantees of governability in the face of the uncertainty produced by political orphanhood. Institutions such as the Cabildo that prefigured future municipalities sheltered patriots with their legitimacy.

From the first autonomist moments, members of the clergy, such as Fray Camilo Henríquez, supported Creole patriotism and made great efforts to harmonise religion and politics in a republican key. Biblical exegesis served the purpose of providing arguments to defend the religious dimension of the political order. An article in the form of a Catechism by Camilo Henríquez is a good example: ‘Question: Did God Our Lord express His preference for a particular form of government? Response: It may be stated that heaven declared itself in favour of the republican system’.⁴⁵

Theological metaphors, moral allegories and other religious sources were widely used to capitalise on the respectability of Christian cultural heritage.⁴⁶ Religious rituals, intertwined in time with republican ones, were an important element in the consolidation of the nation state. In spite of the conflicts, the Church was able to deal with political modernity and make use of its social and cultural capital as well as its historical

⁴⁴ Carta del Cabildo al Director Supremo (Santiago February 20, 1818).

⁴⁵ *El Monitor Araucano* (December 10, 1813).

⁴⁶ François-Xavier Guerra, “Políticas sacadas de las Sagradas Escrituras”. La referencia a la Biblia en el debate político (siglos XVII a XIX), in Mónica Quijada and Jesús Bustamante, eds., *Élites intelectuales y modelos colectivos. Mundo ibérico (siglos XVI–XIX)* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2002), 155–198.

authority to prevent or even delay secularisation. The Catholic faith was never called into question by the ruling elite, and the clergy enjoyed enormous credibility. Towards the middle of the century, radical liberals criticised the influence of the Church in education and public affairs, but their voices were largely ignored. Only towards the end of the nineteenth century did the contradictions of a republican state and a democratising society show the cracks that ended in the constitutional separation of Church and State in 1925.

The Church was also a fundamental element in providing legitimacy and popularity to the wars that Chile fought during the nineteenth century. Using the pulpit or contributing devotions that linked the population with its patriotic history, the clergy accompanied the troops and society while the State sought to achieve a place of relevance in the Hispanic American context. The Church's rituals and symbols, incorporated into the patriotic heritage, have been part of Chile's history up to the present day, despite the constitutional separation achieved in 1925. Although it may seem anachronistic, even today the presidents of the republic celebrate the anniversaries of the feasts of independence together with religious, civil and military authorities in the Cathedral of Santiago.

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PART II

The Power of Practice



The ‘Sanction of Precedent’: Publishers and Political Dissent in Central Europe During the Age of Revolution

James M. Brophy

Scholars have long fashioned the printing press as an ‘agent of change’ to disseminate new ideas, new knowledges, and new habits of mind.¹ Whether addressing the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, or the rise of rights-bearing citizenship ideals, the printing press figures prominently in the master narratives of modernization.² For such historians as Roger

¹ My thanks to Judith Pollmann, Henk te Velde, and Till van Rahden for their help in revising this essay.

² The literature for this topic is too large to cite. Cf Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark U. Edwards, *Printing, Propaganda, and Luther* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); and Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine’s America. The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011). For the public sphere’s role in sustaining the ancien régime: Timothy Blanning, *The Culture of Power, the Power of Culture. Old Regime Europe, 1689–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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Chartier and Robert Darnton, the book trade set the ancien régime in ferment; the high and low roads of the Enlightenment shook the stability of absolutist governance.³ Jürgen Habermas similarly deployed the public sphere as an ideal type to explain the printed word's transformative impact on modern selfhood. The reading of imaginative and periodical literature enabled propertied burghers to reflect on affairs as a 'reasoning public'. For Habermas, the new mental interiority gained through fiction and literary debate developed in turn political deliberation; journals, gazettes, newsheets, and fliers called into life an *Öffentlichkeit* that redefined political order and the rules for sustaining it. Equally crucial, the dynamic interaction between oral and print culture during the Age of Revolution widened the remit of participatory politics, introducing alternative political viewpoints into the print matter of non-elite classes.⁴ Without recourse to print culture and its circuits of communication, the Age of Revolution and its emergent forms of citizenship are virtually impossible to interpret.⁵

But the self-evident centrality of print for modern political behaviour often obscures the social history of reading and, in particular, the book trade, an economy stamped from earlier centuries. Whereas histories of publishing generally feature innovation and change, this essay takes a

³ Roger Chartier, Lydia Cochrane (trans.), *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment. A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); and Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Bestsellers of Revolutionary France* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996).

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchung einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft.*, rev. ed. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990); for the cognitive transformation from orality to textuality: Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002). For a correction of the stark binary of print/oral and the persistence of oral cultures to reside within print culture: Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993), 93–114.

⁵ This discussion omits the important medium of rumour and oral communication of city, village, and countryside. See, for example, Arlette Farge, Grete Osterwald (translator), *Lauffeur in Paris. Die Stimme des Volkes im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1993); Regina Schulte, *Das Dorf im Verhör. Brandstifter, Kindsmörderinnen und Wilderer vor den Schranken des bürgerlichen Gerichts* (Hamburg: Rowolt, 1989); and Tobias Kies, 'Hörensagen. Gerüchtekommunikation und lokale Öffentlichkeit im frühen 19. Jahrhundert', in Moritz Follmer ed. *Sehnsucht nach Nähe. Interpersonale Kommunikation im Deutschland seit dem 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004).

reverse tack to examine how the continuities and customs of a pre-modern industry abetted modern participatory politics.⁶ For a volume of essays that examines how existing political practices, local civic habits, and other 'residual powers' shaped and promoted sociopolitical change during the Age of Revolution,⁷ publishers constitute an intriguing case study of a merchant class. Overcoming distance, political borders, and a host of commercial obstacles, they promoted a 'second print revolution' that featured the reform impulses of the eighteenth century.⁸ 'Without the book dealer', writes one historian of publishing, 'the Enlightenment is inconceivable'.⁹ But book merchants and their credo of open knowledge became increasingly implicated in matters of social stability during the late Enlightenment. Various fields of knowledge bled into state affairs. The control of political commentary reached its apex in 1806 when Napoleon ordered the execution of Johann Philipp Palm, a Nuremberg book dealer, for selling a denunciatory pamphlet against French rule. Yet booksellers pushed back against heightened forms of censorship, and their success largely derived from the practices of their trade. To illuminate this collective behaviour, this essay focuses on three political dimensions of their profession: the strategies of previous generations to mitigate censorship; the role of decentralized print markets for circulating forbidden print; and, finally, the instrumentality of bookstores for shaping civic practices. The actors and practices that fostered a print culture of dissent tell us much about how the era's new citizenship ideals penetrated Central Europe and beyond. Indeed, the Age of Revolution's relationship to Central Europe remains under-researched. Although the transoceanic transfer of goods and ideas in the Atlantic basin remains a hallmark of the age, the epoch's print circuits also extended eastward, recasting political

⁶ For a recent critique of Germany's antiquated book trade, see Ronald A. Fullerton, *The Foundations of Marketing Practice. A History of Book Marketing in Germany* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁷ The thematics of this volume are obviously indebted to E. P. Thompson and his social history of politics; see, among others, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966); *Customs in Common* (New York: New Press, 1991).

⁸ Frédéric Barbier, *Histoire du livre* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2006), 132–164; and Paul Raabe, 'Buchproduktion und Leseublikum in Deutschland 1770–1780', *Philobiblon* 21 (1977), 2–16.

⁹ Paul Raabe, 'Der Buchhändler im achtzehnten Jahrhundert in Deutschland', in Giles Barber and Bernhard Fabian eds., *Buch und Buchhandel in Europa im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1977), 272.

culture in Central and Eastern Europe.¹⁰ How print markets in Germany and the Habsburg territories both promoted and impeded the circulation of political knowledge tells us much about the dissemination of the age's intellectual impulses and its infrastructure of opinion formation.

CENSORSHIP AND THE REPERTOIRE OF CIRCUMVENTION

The incursions of the Karlsbad Decrees (1819) against the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly mark well the Restoration Era's reactionary strains. But book merchants confronted modern censorship regimes with a determined pragmatism, for censorship had long been a fact of life.¹¹ In fact, their resolute opposition to modern censorship constitutes a key form of cultural patrimony from the ancien régime. In the early modern period, generations of printers regularly sold forbidden books in semi-legal ways. As Christine Haug has noted, 'in the German-speaking territories – in comparison to France – the trade with forbidden reading material was not concealed and hidden but, rather, took place in semi-public spaces, a peculiarity that derived from numerous individual states and their political frontiers whose porosity should not be underestimated'.¹² German federalism invited publishers to develop a formidable repertoire of tricks, which included counterfeit imprints, phony invoices, commissioned printings, prepublication subscriptions, shrewd middlemen at book fairs, reliable smuggling routes, clever packing techniques, and flat-out bribery. This repertoire enabled publishers and book dealers to publish, commission, and distribute forbidden material with a calculability that promised profit. Because publishing enjoyed a semi-autonomous economic status, the manufacture and transport of printed sheets in oversized barrels and crates permitted publishers to move contraband with relative ease. Over the course of the eighteenth century, such

¹⁰ For the cross-cultural exchange in Western and Eastern Europe, see the extraordinary study of Richard Stites, *The Four Horsemen. Riding to Liberty in Post-Napoleonic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹¹ Cf. Botho Plachta, *Dammatur – Toleratur – Admittitur. Studien und Dokumente zur literarischen Zensur im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994).

¹² Christine Haug, 'Einleitung. Topographie des literarischen Untergrunds im Europa des 18. Jahrhunderts. Produktion, Distribution und Konsumtion von "verbotenen Lesestoffen"', in Christine Haug, Franziska Mayer and Winfried Schröder eds., *Geheimliteratur und Geheimhandel in Europa im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 10.

circumventions of censorship eroded cultural insulation and reconfigured print circuits for the new century.¹³ The transnational flow of information quickened after 1760, producing new incentives for translating forbidden foreign texts. With even more demand for Western European texts in the early nineteenth century, printers drew on generations of experience to contest supervision. They accommodated their inherited repertoire of circumvention under new political circumstances and continued to smuggle and print illegal tracts with surprising boldness.¹⁴ This transnational legacy of the eighteenth-century book trade, especially when viewed at the local level, proved invaluable for oppositional political cultures of post-Napoleonic Europe.

The strategies and practices of publishers in Central Europe reflect a broader European experience. If the political fragmentation of Italy offers parallels to Germany's publishing landscape, especially with its range of censorship regimes, larger patterns of censorship in the eighteenth century also emerge. Research on France, Spain, Germany, and Austria reveals a European trend of censors pursuing a *modus operandi* of negotiation, more than outright proscription, with authors and publishers.¹⁵

¹³ Jeffrey Freedman, *Books without Borders in Enlightenment Europe. French Cosmopolitanism and German Literary Markets* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Karin Angelike, *Louis-Françoise Mettra. Ein französischer Zeitungsverleger in Köln* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002); Christine Haug, Franziska Mayer and Winfried Schröder eds., *Geheimliteratur und Geheimhandel in Europa im 18. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011); Wilhelm Haefs and York-Gothart Mix eds., *Zensur im Jahrhundert der Aufklärung. Geschichte—Theorie—Praxis* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007); Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt eds., *Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch. Frankreich-Deutschland 1770 bis 1815* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag); and James M. Brophy, 'The Second Wave. Franco-German Translation and the Transfer of Political Knowledge, 1815–1850', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 71 (2016), 83–116.

¹⁴ August Prinz, *Der Buchhandel vom Jahre 1815 bis zum Jahre 1843. Bausteine zu einer späteren Geschichte des Buchhandel* (Altona: Verlags-Bureau, 1855).

¹⁵ Norbert Bachleitner, *Die literarische Zensur in Österreich von 1751 bis 1848* (Wien: Böhlau, 2017); Carla Di Carlo, *Il libro in Benedetto XIV. Dall 'domestica libraria' alla biblioteca universale* (Bologna: Patron, 2000); Lucienne Domergue, *Censure et lumière dans l'Espagne de Charles III* (Paris: Éditions du C.N.R.S., 1982); Lucienne Domergue, *La censure des livres en Espagne à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1996); Haefs and Mix eds., *Zensur im Jahrhundert*; Raymond Birn, *Royal Censorship of Books in Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); and Daniel Roche, 'La police du livre', in Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier eds., *Histoire de l'édition française*, 4 vols., vol. 2, *Le livre triomphant, 1660–1830* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 99–109.

Domenico Bruni's study of Tuscan censors illuminates the common dilemma of regulatory principles clashing with free-market policies. On the one hand, censors guarded state laws and church morals in a collaborative manner that swung between coercion and consent; on the other, the Tuscan government promoted the expansion of print markets, whose wider range of publications necessitated additional policing.¹⁶ In 1840, a contemporary noted that Italian censorship 'presses heavily on all sorts of publications, much more so than in Germany'.¹⁷ Unauthorized reprinting was also rampant throughout Western and Central Europe, but publishers in Dublin and Philadelphia similarly flouted copyright laws to reprint the Scottish Enlightenment in the anglophone Atlantic basin.¹⁸ As the 'bookshop of the world', early modern Dutch publishers were the consummate experts in trading books and newsprint across borders, banned or otherwise, which particularly aroused criticism in France and England.¹⁹ Presses in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Leiden, and The Hague rolled out books that French authorities had banned; 'livres de Hollande' included Jansenist literature, court chronicles, and erotic political satires, and these books also provoked worry in Central Europe.²⁰ In fact, the cultural transfer between the Netherlands and the middling regions of Germany during the Dutch golden age helped launch the Jena-Weimar area as

¹⁶ Domenico Maria Bruni, *'Con regolata indifferenza, con attenzione costante'. Potere politico e parola stampata nel Granducato di Toscana (1814–1847)* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2015). For the role of leading Tuscan political newspapers and their publishers in the Revolution of 1848, see Jan-Pieter Forßmann, *Presse und Revolution in der Toskana 1847–49. Entstehung, Inhalte und Wandel einer politischen Öffentlichkeit* (Wien: Böhlau, 2017).

¹⁷ M. Henry Meidinger, 'An Historical and Statistical Account of the Book Trade, Part II', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 3: 4 (1841), 376–386; quote: 378.

¹⁸ Richard Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book. Scottish Authors and Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), 443–502.

¹⁹ Joop W. Koopmans, *Early Modern Media and the News in Europe. Perspectives from the Dutch Angle* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 301; Lotte Hellinga e.a. eds., *The Bookshop of the World. The Role of the Low Countries in the Book-Trade 1473–1941* ('t Goy-Houten: Hes & De Graaf, 2001); and Arianne Baggerman, *Publishing Policies and Family Strategies. The Fortunes of a Dutch Publishing House in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

²⁰ Jonathan Israel, 'The Publishing of Forbidden Philosophical Works in the Dutch Republic (1666–1710) and their European Distribution', in Lotte Hellinga e.a. eds., *The Bookshop of the World. The Role of the Low Countries in the Book-Trade 1473–1941* ('t Goy-Houten: Hes & De Graaf, 2001), 233–243.

a print centre.²¹ The fictitious publishing house of 'Pierre Marteau, Cologne' also typifies the genius of Dutch publishers for using a counterfeit imprint to circulate hundreds of French-language polemics and seditious treatises throughout Western and Central Europe.²² During the last half of the eighteenth century, Habsburg censorship lists ranked Marteau as the leading imprint of banned literature.²³ Although known mostly for French-language materials, the false imprint also served German-language publishers and readers, producing hundreds of titles between 1680 and 1860. During the nineteenth century, 'Peter Hammer, Köln' continued the tradition as an impressum for drama, travelogues, and grammars but also for critical commentaries on post-revolutionary politics.²⁴ Counterfeit imprints pervaded the early modern era and provided modern publishers with an essential prototype.²⁵ After 1814, the legal confusion about copyright, reprinting, and the degrees of press freedom prevented effective policing in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, thereby pushing the tradition into the new era. King Willem's use of premiums to promote the export of unauthorized reprints only exacerbated the international tension.²⁶

That hundreds of booksellers participated in an extensive network of forbidden commerce also speaks to an attitude of liberality inherited from

²¹ Holger Zaunstöck and Erdmut Jost eds., *Goldenes Zeitalter und Jahrhundert der Aufklärung. Kulturtransfer zwischen den Niederlanden und den mitteldeutschen Raum im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2012); and Christine Haug, 'Das hallesche Verlagsunternehmen Johann Justinus und Johann Jacob Gebauer. Ein Baustein zur transnationalen Buchhandels- und Verlagsgeschichte im 18. Jahrhundert', in Daniel Fulda and Christine Haug eds., *Merkur und Minerva. Der Hallesche Verlag Gebauer in Europa der Aufklärung* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 24.

²² Margaret Jacob, 'The Clandestine Universe of the Early Eighteenth Century' <http://www.pierre-marteau.com/c/jacob/ clandestine.html> [consulted on June 22, 2020].

²³ Bachleitner, *Literarische Zensur*, 87; the list of most forbidden books covers the years 1754–1791. Marteau had 70 banned titles. Two other Dutch firms (La Compagnie and Rey) stood in the top six, with 60 and 29 titles respectively.

²⁴ Karl Klaus Walther, 'Die deutschsprachige Verlagsproduktion von Pierre Marteau/Peter Hammer, Köln. Zur Geschichte eines fingierten Impressums', <http://www.pierre-marteau.com/c/walther/marteau/set-1.html> [consulted on June 22, 2020].

²⁵ For central European markets, see Emil Weller, *Die falschen und fingierten Druckorten. Repertorium seit Erfindung der Buchdruckerkunst unter falscher Firma erschienenen deutschen Schriften* (Leipzig: Falcke und Roessler, 1858).

²⁶ Janneke Weijermars, *Stepbrothers. Southern Dutch Literature and Nation-Building under Willem I, 1814–1834* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 50–67.

the early modern period. In this context, the term does not denote a fixed ideological doctrine, which would emerge after 1812 or so, but rather an eighteenth-century disposition of tolerance, open-mindedness, and a pervasive belief in reason and knowledge.²⁷ Just as eighteenth-century Britons deployed ‘liberal’ as an adjective for high-minded gentry inclined to moral reform and community service, leading German publishers increasingly fashioned themselves as cultural agents effecting moral good. After all, they undertook the necessary financial risks to create a national literature that served as the bedrock of Germany’s *Kulturturnung*.²⁸ The shift in identity from commercial merchant to cultural broker took place sometime after the 1760s.²⁹ The memoirs and manifestos of publishers stressed their education, probity, and business acumen to champion knowledge and reason.³⁰ Pervading this self-identity, too, was the noble sentiment that the printed word enlightened and liberated. ‘Never has a statesman’, wrote a Frankfurt book merchant in 1792, ‘had such direct influence on the welfare and misery of humanity as do book dealers’.³¹ In fashioning themselves as brokers of information and promoters of progress, publishers espoused the unfettered circulation of letters. Whether or not they endorsed the viewpoints of Locke, Volney, Rousseau,

²⁷ Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism. From Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). See, too, Annelien de Dijn’s *Freedom: An Unruly History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020). There were, of course, dishonest book dealers—so much so that authors in the late eighteenth century attempted a cooperative Selbstverlag to forego publishers as middlemen: Reinhard Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 2nd ed. (München: Beck), 161–173.

²⁸ Cf. Friedrich Christoph Perthes, *Der deutsche Buchhandel als Bedingung des Daseyns einer deutschen Literatur* (Gotha: n.p., 1816).

²⁹ See Pamela Selwyn’s astute discussion on the generational differences between Philipp Erasmus Reich and Friedrich Nicolai, *Everyday Life in the German Book Trade. Friedrich Nicolai as Bookseller and Publisher in the Age of Enlightenment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 25.

³⁰ Friedrich Nicolai, *Über meine gelehrte Bildung* (Berlin / Stettin: Nicolai, 1799); Wilhelm Fleischer, *Die Wichtigkeit des Buchhandels. Bei Eröffnung [sic] eines Kunstbuchhandels* (Frankfurt am Main: Gutenberg, 1791); Perthes, *Der deutsche Buchhandel*; Johann Adam Bergk, *Der Buchhändler, oder, Anweisung, wie man durch den Buchhandel zu Ansehen und Vermögen kommen kann* (Leipzig: Die Expedition des europäischen Aufsehers 1825; reprint, Heidelberg: Winter, 1983); and Karl Buchner, *Die Bildung des Buchhändlers* (Berlin: Duncker, 1830).

³¹ Wilhelm Fleischer, *Über bildende Kunst. Kunsthandel und Buchhandel im Hinsicht auf Menschenwohl. Glaubensbekenntnis eines Kunst- und Buchhändlers* (Frankfurt am Main: Fleischer, 1792), 3.

or Thomas Paine, they defended their right to be read. Subsequent generations reflexively replicated the argument. And because the cachet of 'forbidden' lured readers, the argument came easy.

The Enlightenment's mindset of liberality stamped many publishers. For Julius and August Campe, the German *Aufklärung* ran directly through their uncle, Joachim Heinrich Campe, the renowned pedagogue, publicist, and dictionary maker; and his legacy extended to the Vieweg and Brockhaus firms through marriage. Friedrich Nicolai, a lion of North German publishing, was a central figure of the Berlin Enlightenment, but many other eighteenth-century firms (e.g., Weidmann, Unger, Cotta, Voss, Vieweg) promoted the translation of English and French belles lettres and philosophy that enriched Germany's late Enlightenment. The aspirations of a constitutional nation state during the Napoleonic Wars furthermore stamped the engagement of Georg Andreas Reimer in Berlin, F. A. Brockhaus in Leipzig, Heinrich Campe in Nürnberg, Carl Gerold in Austria, and Heinrich August Pierer in Altenburg. A subsequent generation advanced the constitutional revival of the 1830s in Western Europe, Germany, Poland, and Hungary. At economic and personal risk, the firms of Otto Wigand, Philipp Reclam, Gustav Heckenast, C. F. Leske, and Heinrich Hoff promoted liberal and democratic constitutional arguments. It is fascinating to observe how otherwise lawful-minded burghers so consistently flouted the law. Here the 'sanction of precedent' held sway.³² Booksellers had traded illegal books for generations and continued to do so.

The political fragmentation of the Holy Roman Empire aided the circulation of forbidden literature. The empire's complex of territories produced porous borders along with a bewildering array of censorship laws that ranged from lax to severe. In 1814, Friedrich Perthes, with a good dose of hyperbole, underscored the tradition of a free press because of the empire's legacy of limited power, which devolved far-ranging juridical independence on its principalities, duchies, counties, bishoprics, and free imperial cities. 'Germany always had the most complete freedom of the press', he wrote, 'in fact and in deed, because anything that was banned in Prussia could be printed in Württemberg, anything that was banned in Hamburg could be printed ten steps away in Altona. No

³² I borrow the term 'sanction of precedent' from Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction. Inventing Traditions', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.

book remains unprinted and undistributed'.³³ Perthes ignores much harm rendered by censorship, but it remains true that the German Confederation (1815–1866) never imposed a coherent uniform system. Twenty-one years later, a commentator ratified Perthes's observation: 'What can't be printed in Saxony, passes the grade in Prussia; what doesn't get an imprimatur in north Germany receives it with ease in southern Germany'.³⁴ It is this enduring fact that made post-publication bans (usually imposed by Prussia or Austria through the Diet of the German Confederation) highly ineffective. As Franz Hugo Hesse, a Prussian jurist and state councillor, remarked in 1843, 'every book dealer's daily experience confirms the fact that bans on sales of individual books are illusory and serve more to increase circulation than to prevent it'.³⁵ Many small-scale publishers similarly found ways to foil governmental claims on control. Prussia, for example, coerced the Baden government to try Heinrich Hoff, a Mannheim publisher, for treason in 1847 because of explicit anti-monarchical lyrics in a songbook. Not only did a jury acquit Hoff, but the notoriety also helped bookshops in Magdeburg, Breslau, Coblenz, Posen, and Münster sell the song collection.³⁶ The lack of coordination among states, compounded by sympathetic courts and juries, raised the confidence of publishers to smuggle.

Such success might have diminished censorship's impact, but it certainly did not nullify it. Joseph Graf von Sedlnitzky, Vienna's police president and chief censor, expressed one vein of conservatism when stating that 'a people educating themselves' marked 'the first stage of revolution'.³⁷ In this spirit, officials in Central Europe surveilled book

³³ Quoted in Eckharth Hellmuth and Wolfgang Piereth, 'Germany, 1760–1815', in Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows eds., *Press, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69–92, here 79.

³⁴ Johann Goldfriedrich quoting Wohlfahrt's 'Über Censur': Friedrich Kapp and Johann Goldfriedrich, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 4 vols. (Leipzig: Börsenverein, 1909–1923), IV, 255.

³⁵ Franz Hugo Hesse, *Die preussische Pressgesetzgebung, ihre Vergangenheit und Zukunft* (Berlin: Schroeder, 1843), 47; Kapp and Goldfriedrich, *Geschichte*, IV, 254.

³⁶ Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (hereafter GStAPK), I. HA Rep. 101 E Lit L, Nr. 23; James M. Brophy, 'Heinrich Hoff and the Print Culture of German Radicalism', *Leipziger Jahrbuch zur Buchgeschichte* 19 (2010), 71–116, here 93–94.

³⁷ Inge Kiesshauer, 'Otto Friedrich Wigand', *Leipziger Jahrbuch zur Buchgeschichte* 1 (1991), 155–188, here 157.

dealers, imprisoned publishers, banned authors, and, in some cases, brutally mistreated them. Friedrich Ludwig Weidig, co-author of the *Der Hessische Landbote*, underwent months of mental and physical abuse by Hessian officials following his arrest. When Weidig was found dead in his cell in February 1837, contemporaries regarded the tragedy alternately as suicide or murder. His mistreatment endured as a *cause célèbre* for liberal-democratic critiques of the Restoration's injustice.³⁸ Less fatal, but no less dramatic, were the fines, confiscations, and prison sentences that hounded authors and publishers. The eleven-year confinement (1836–1847) of Gottfried Eisenmann, the liberal Würzburg editor, for advocating constitutional liberalism and press freedom was severe by any measure. Julius Campe, the Hamburg publisher, surveyed more typical fates of his colleagues in a letter to Heinrich Heine in 1833:

... in Württemberg, Seybold got six months in the clink and his publisher got three; in Frankfurt the book dealer *Carl* Körner also got six weeks, because he merely sold a couple of brochures on the side. The printer Volkhart in Augsburg received a nine-year jail sentence, because he published two pieces from Grosse, even though he pleaded under oath that he neither read nor intuited their contents. And so many other examples that are at hand that I dare not recount.³⁹

Such prison sentences remind us of censorship's oppression. Between 1750 and 1850, the Habsburg state censored over 50,000 books, a

³⁸ Wilhelm Schulz, *Der Tod des Pfarrers Dr. Friedrich Ludwig Weidig. Ein aktenmäßiger und urkundlich belegter Beitrag zur Beurteilung des geheimen Strafprozesses und der politischen Zustände Deutschlands* (Zürich / Winterthur: Literarisches Comptoir, 1843); Friedrich Nöllner, *Aktenmäßige Darlegung des wegen Hochverrats eingeleiteten gerichtlichen Verfahrens gegen Pfarrer Dr. Friedrich Ludwig Weidig* (Darmstadt: C. W. Leske, 1844); Martin Schäfer, *Nachträgliche aktenmäßige Mittheilungen über die politischen Untersuchungen im Großherzogthum Hessen, insbesondere diejenigen gegen Pfarrer Dr. Weidig* (Giessen: Georg Friedrich Heyer, 1844); Wilhelm Schulz and Carl Welcker, 'Geheime Inquisition', in *Censur und Kabinettsjustiz im verderblichen Bunde. Schlussverhandlung mit vielen neuen Aktenstücken über den Prozess Weidigs* (Karlsruhe: G. Braun, 1845); Walter Jens, 'Geleitwort', in Hans Adler ed., *Literarische Geheimberichte. Protokolle der Metternich-Agenten. Band 1, 1840–1843* ed. Hans Adler (Cologne: Leske, 1977) xiv; and *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 41 (1896), 450–453.

³⁹ Quoted in Christian Liedtke, 'Solche Bücher lässt du drucken?' Literaturbetrieb und Verlagswesen im Vormärz. Vorwort', in Christian Liedtke ed., *Literaturbetrieb und Verlagswesen im Vormärz* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2011), 17 (emphasis in original).

number that conceals stories of privation, imprisonment, exile, isolation, and cultural stagnancy.⁴⁰

Against this forbidding background, the confidence of book merchants to move contraband is all the more remarkable. Their fortitude is partially explained by another long-standing practice: the custom to negotiate with officials. Publishers and censors knew one another, often frequented the same social circles and clubs, and therefore mostly conducted the business of redaction with civility. Leipzig's leading publishers, for example, participated in the city's Censorship Collegium, the principal body that superintended censorship procedures, which advocated a light supervisory hand to sustain the city's status as a printing metropole.⁴¹ Censors were also authors. Jakob Grimm (Hessen), Aloys Blumauer (Austria), and Friedrich Bülow (Saxony) doubled as civil servants who handled manuscripts with care and respect. With such men, printers negotiated revisions to mitigate damage. State files are replete with instances of ministers rebuking censors because of their laxity, enabling a surprising degree of political criticism to pass through government filters.⁴² Saxon files reveal instances when censors worked more with publishers than against them to convey the author's intended political message.⁴³

⁴⁰ For the Austrian experience, see Bachleitner, *Literarische Zensur*, 93–191.

⁴¹ Sächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Dresden (hereafter SHSA), MdI, 10736, Nr. 278e, Bl. 171–177; Nr. 278g, Bl. 25.

⁴² Prussia, argues Bärbel Holtz, was too parsimonious to execute the job properly. Overworked *Landräte* and other officials also reviewed literature, just as the members of the Ober-Censur-Collegium, the highest organ of regulation, were ministers with demanding portfolios. At both levels, the exponential rise in print matter pushed the workload to impossible limits. The demand for quick decisions undercut careful assessment, producing shoddy work: Bärbel Holtz, 'Preußens Zensurpraxis als politisches Kulturphänomen', in Bärbel Holtz ed., *Der preußische Kulturstaat in der politischen und sozialen Wirklichkeit*, Vol. 6, *Preußens Zensurpraxis von 1819 bis 1848 in Quellen*, 2 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 1–105.

⁴³ The cooperative spirit of Friedrich Bülow, a censor and professor of state sciences, landed him in trouble. See, for example, the trouble surrounding Gustav Bacherers' *Süddeutsche Rufe aus Nord-Deutschland* (Leipzig: Festi, 1839); Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig (hereafter SStAL), 20024, Kreishauptmannschaft Leipzig, Nr. 4120, Bl. 23, 31–35; SStAL, 20024, Kreishauptmannschaft Leipzig, Nr. 4120, Bl. 9–11v. For rebukes regarding the authorization of *Der Salon* in August 1839 and the *Constitutionelle Staatsbürgerzeitung* in November 1830: Bl. 40, 45; for Gustav Bacherer and Ferdinand Philippi's *Landtagsblätter für constitutionelles Sachsen*: Sächsisches Staatsarchiv Leipzig, 20024, Kreishauptmannschaft Leipzig, Nr. 4120, Bl. 47, 62. Heinrich Brockhaus subsequently hired Bülow in the 1840s to edit his *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.

The social status of publishers also brought benefits when entering urban courts. Municipal judges and juries were often sympathetic with publishers when state officials impounded books, especially when confiscation amounted to financial loss.⁴⁴ In this juridical space, one notes the persistence of local power to negotiate its interests over regional and national concerns. But state judges, too, reversed the orders of ministers, including the Prussian judiciary, which checked arbitrary police action well into the 1860s.⁴⁵ Where juries existed, as was the case in Western Germany and in many municipal courts, publishers had excellent chances of either winning their case outright or reducing the sentence to a tolerable fine.⁴⁶ Because Rhenish states still used the Napoleonic Code, numerous editors and publishers resettled in the Palatinate or in Baden to take advantage of juried trials. Of course, harsh censors also made the lives of editors and publishers miserable—think of Marx's tirades against his Cologne censors⁴⁷—but the cliché of draconian gatekeepers obscures the more frequent pattern of open-ended exchanges between state officials and publishers who brought varying degrees of dissent to market.⁴⁸ Austria reveals a similar trend. In spite of increasing numbers of censored works over the first half of the nineteenth century, the percentage of books in the fully banned category (*damnatur*) declined over time, from 85 per cent in the 1790s to 33 per cent in 1841–1845. Applying milder

⁴⁴ See SHSA-Dresden, 10736, Nr. 278e, for numerous court cases in which Leipzig printers sought restitution and received it.

⁴⁵ Michael Behnen, *Das Preussische Wochenblatt (1851–1861)* (Göttingen: Muster Schmidt, 1971), 24–25; and Eberhard Naujoks, *Die Parlamentarische Entstehung des Reichspressgesetzes in der Bismarckzeit (1848/74)* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1975), 23–26.

⁴⁶ Palatinate juries routinely defended the Hambach publishers and authors in the early 1830s; for Heinrich Hoff's success in Mannheim, see Brophy, 'Heinrich Hoff and the Print Culture of German Radicalism', 93–94.

⁴⁷ Cf. Karl Marx, 'Bemerkungen über die neuste preussische Censurinstruction', in *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* I/1 (Berlin: Dietz, 1975), 97–118; Ferdinand Bernays, *Schandgeschichten zur Charakteristik des deutschen Censoren- und Redaktorenpacks. Censor Fuchs und die Führer der servilen Presse* (Strassburg: Schuler, 1843).

⁴⁸ Matthew Bunn, 'Censorship is Official Critique. Contesting the Limits of Scholarship in the Censorship of the Hallische Jahrbücher', *Central European History* 47: 2 (2014), 375–401; for the ability of publishers to push back, Holtz, 'Preußens Zensurpraxis als politisches Kulturphänomen'; James M. Brophy, 'Grautöne. Verleger und Zensurregime im Vormärz', *Historische Zeitschrift* 301 (2015), 297–346. For a broader view of German governments' censorship policies and their limits, see Peter Jelavich, 'Metamorphoses of Censorship in Modern Germany', *German Politics and Society* 27 (1992), 25–35.

forms of censorship to increasing numbers of texts was ‘a desperate attempt to rescue what could still be rescued’.⁴⁹

When publishers didn’t get their way in their home city, they sought the censor’s stamp in other towns. Georg Andreas Reimer, the Berlin publisher who was denied the right to publish the second edition of Fichte’s *Reden an die deutsche Nation*, went so far as to buy the Weidmann firm in Leipzig to escape Prussia’s full control over his publishing list. Altenburg, a small duchy not far from Leipzig, was the favourite option for publishers (e.g., Brockhaus, Wigand, Reclam, Campe) who didn’t get their way with local censors. Other postage-stamp duchies like Sachsen-Meiningen and Sachsen-Thüringen cultivated mild censorship practices to draw business and thereby secure bread-winning occupations. Such mid-size states as Braunschweig, Württemberg, and Bavaria’s Palatinate also promoted printing industries, condoning copyright piracy and permitting liberal periodicals and lexica to draw entrepreneurs. The cameralism of small German states offered benefits to publishers looking for loopholes. Carl Joseph Meyer struck a deal with his duke in Sachsen-Meiningen to convert a monastery into a printing factory. With the promise of employing local workers throughout the year, the Saxon duchy permitted Meyer to print a vast list of literature and non-fiction.⁵⁰ Prussia and Austria banned his newspapers and other books, but a post-publication ban rarely stopped a book from crossing borders into bookshops. Julius Campe quipped that books in Austria cost approximately 25 per cent more because of bribery, but neither customs officials nor the police ever prevented Austrian readers from gaining access to forbidden literature.⁵¹ Franz Grillparzer, the noted Austrian author, confirmed the point. The circulation of forbidden literature, he noted in his autobiography, ‘was never so common as in Austria’, remarking that cabbies openly read banned pamphlets atop their hackneys.⁵²

⁴⁹ Bachleitner, *Literarische Zensur*, 132.

⁵⁰ Heinz Sarkowski, *Das Bibliographische Institut. Verlagsgeschichte und Bibliographie 1826–1976* (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut, 1976), 42.

⁵¹ Christian Liedtke, ‘Julius Campe und das ‘österreichische System’. Unbekannte Buchhändlerbriefe zum Verlagsverbot von 1847’, *Literaturbetrieb und Verlagswesen im Vormärz*, 133.

⁵² Quoted in Bachleitner, *Literarische Zensur*, 136.

Regardless of how scholars may gauge and interpret censorship's degrees of repression, the subversive power of markets merits notice.⁵³ Preventive censorship could not keep in step with print markets. In the 1840s, the censorship regimes of Prussia, Austria, and the Confederation buckled under the unrelenting consumer demand for political information and through the *savoir faire* of printers to meet it.⁵⁴ The information order of the Restoration, designed to serve authoritarian government and constrain participatory politics, proved untenable. The reasons for this failure are numerous, but among them loom certain customary practices of the book trade: an attitude of liberality that viewed banned texts as an essential part of its profession; an inherited repertoire of circumvention that enabled publishers to exploit loopholes; the bonds of trust among book merchants to make, swap, and sell illegal print wares; and, not least, the widespread network of publishing that rendered political frontiers ineffective. The latter point merits our attention.

A DECENTRALIZED PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE

The success of book dealers to circumvent state regulation derived greatly from the Holy Roman Empire's federalist political character, which lent the industry its polycentric character. Unlike the centralizing and consolidating trends in French and British publishing, where Paris, London, and Edinburgh dominated all rivals, German publishers settled in most regions of Central Europe and doubled in number over the first decades of the century, from 339 in 1805 to 519 in 1820 to 1340 by 1840.⁵⁵

⁵³ Renewed theoretical interest in censorship has stressed discursive unruliness, thus confounding any straightforward gloss on cultural regulation. Cf. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997); Robert Post, 'Censorship and Silencing', in Robert Post ed., *Censorship and Silencing. Practices of Cultural Regulation* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998); Beate Müller ed., *Zensur im modernen deutschen Kulturraum* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003); Gabriele B. Clemens ed., *Zensur im Vormärz. Pressefreiheit und Informationskontrolle in Europa* (Tübingen: Jan Thorbecke, 2013); and Matthew Bunn, 'Reimagining Repression. New Censorship Theory and After', *History and Theory* 54: 1 (2015), 25–44.

⁵⁴ Following the Revolution of 1848/49, post-publication review and litigation launched a new regulatory era: Anna Ross, *Beyond the Barricades. Government and State-Building in Prussia, 1848–1858* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 167–193.

⁵⁵ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 220; for similar figures, Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 1990), 152; and Kapp and Goldfriedrich, *Geschichte*, IV, 457.

Table 6.1 Leading Print Centres, 1765–1805 and 1837–1846 (number of printed works)

<i>City</i>	<i>1765–1805</i>	<i>1837–1846</i>	<i>City</i>	<i>1765–1805</i>	<i>1837–1846</i>
Leipzig	5556	16,634	Basel	266	662
Berlin	2423	11,515	Altona	259	473
Vienna	1235	4894	Stuttgart	259	4814
Halle	1154	1082	Gotha	257	860
Frankfurt/M	1137	2892	Munich	240	2105
Nürnberg	972	1953	Mannheim	239	571
Hamburg	890	2411	Ulm	237	497
Göttingen	787	860	Giessen	228	515
Breslau	569	2205	Königsberg	227	639
Augsburg	466	1234	Dessau	224	218
Dresden	459	1243	Magdeburg	214	1186
Jena	445	933	Weimar	214	997
Prague	389	1088	Erfurt	208	678
Brunswick	338	1377	Salzburg	207	209
Erlangen	332	734	Altenburg	199	463
Hanover	319	523	Lemgo	191	*
Strasbourg	317	648	Riga	182	280
Zürich	295	913	Bremen	178	557
Tübingen	274	645	Bern	177	656

As Friedrich Schiller noted in 1797, ‘No capital and no one court exercises tyrannical influence over German taste’.⁵⁶ To take the Thuringian region around Weimar and Jena as one example of a decentralized media centre, over 230 publishers established themselves in 30 towns between 1800 and 1830.⁵⁷ A list of publishing sites confirms the vast expanse of Central European printing (Table 6.1).⁵⁸

Because the book trade exchanged print matter in kind until the 1760s, every bookstore was also a print shop, which necessitated that a book

⁵⁶ Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, 2nd ed. (München: Hanser, 1960), 475.

⁵⁷ Haug, ‘Das hallese Verlagsunternehmen’, 24; Christine Haug, ‘Der Weimarer Verleger Friedrich Justin Bertuch (1747–1822) – ein ‘merkantilistischer Napoleon’ aus der Provinz. Bericht über die Forschungsergebnisse des DFG-SFB ‘Ereignis Weimar-Jena. Kulturraum um 1800’, *Leipziger Jahrbuch zur Buchgeschichte* 15 (2006), 359–393.

⁵⁸ Kapp and Goldfriedrich, *Geschichte*, III, 471–472; IV, 455.

dealer swap books with other dealers. (The first exclusive retail bookshop arrived in 1796 with Friedrich Perthes's store in Hamburg.⁵⁹) The typical *Verlagsbuchhandlung* combined retail with modest print operations and humble publishing lists. They cooperated with hundreds of other book merchants who accepted each other's books on both credit and commission to stock their stores with more titles to attract sales. Transshipment centres in Leipzig, Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, Stuttgart, and Vienna facilitated this process, providing hubs to distribute print material throughout the German Confederation, the Habsburg Empire, and beyond. The spread of printing operations signalled a robust industry, but such vigour should not disguise the modest scale of most printers, who achieved middle-class sustenance by combining their own print wares with other imported goods to attract customers. Calendars, almanacs, popular science, how-to literature, devotional tracts, maps, and fiction were typical stock in trade—but flyers, broadsides, local gazettes, and political pamphlets also joined lists.

With Germany's polycentric publishing trade, the dual function of production and sale had political import. In dozens of small towns, hand presses disseminated viewpoints on local political matters. Because mass newsprint emerged in Germany later than in England and France, Germany's fragmented news industry generally receives poor marks from historians.⁶⁰ But one should not necessarily infer political complacency or immaturity from the persistence of gazettes and *Intelligenzblätter*. Not only did they connect regions with a national public, as Holger Böning has argued; they also framed local affairs as sites of significant political activity.⁶¹ Responding to demand, hundreds of local newssheets spawned political awareness that, in turn, whetted appetites for dissenting pamphlets and newssheets. In Württemberg, for example, 'a flood of

⁵⁹ Raabe, 'Der Buchhändler', 289–290.

⁶⁰ Cf. Jörg Requate, *Journalismus als Beruf. Entstehung und Entwicklung des Journalistenberufs im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse im 19. Jahrhundert. Geschichte der deutschen Presse Teil II* (Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1966). The emergence of such national dailies as the *Hamburgische Correspondent*, Augsburg's *Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Kölnische Zeitung*, the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung* animates historians, whose anticipation of a mass press typically generates invidious comparisons with France and England.

⁶¹ Holger Böning, 'Aufklärung und Presse im 18. Jahrhundert', in Hans-Wolf Jaeger ed., *Öffentlichkeit im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 151–163; Hellmuth and Piereth, 'Germany', 69–92.

publications inundated the public sphere' between 1815 and 1819 to debate the king's attempt to promulgate a constitution.⁶² By 1830, Württemberg listed 148 papers, 90 of which stood under censorship because of their right to convey political news.⁶³ These papers were often no more than four-page octavo weeklies, but they provided outlets for critical voices and nurtured a market for additional pamphlets about local elections and transregional affairs.⁶⁴ Such brochures as *Voices of the Württemberg People, Spoken by their Newly Elected Deputies* (1832), *Constitutional Catechism: Conversation of a State Official and an Elector about Württemberg's Parliament*, (1833), and *A Historical Sketch of the Sixty-Four-Day-Dissolved Parliament in Württemberg* (1833) show the willingness of local printer-booksellers to issue small runs of political pamphlets to turn a profit.⁶⁵ Invaluable for the eighteenth century, the pamphlet further retained its communicative role in the Napoleonic Era and during the Restoration, when the stringent censorship of periodical literature necessitated one-time commentaries, chronicles, and polemics, which often escaped rigorous preventive review. Entwining local and national reportage enabled printers to mediate dissent in various scales. By vernacularizing broader impulses of political rupture (revolutions, constitutions, popular sovereignty), tracts about local politics domesticated and familiarized the language and literacy of citizenship. Connecting one

⁶² Georg Eckert, 'Royal Opposition against the Ancien Régime. The Case of Württemberg', in Michael Broers and Ambrogio Caiani eds., *A History of the European Restorations. Vol. 1: Governments, States and Monarchy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 135.

⁶³ Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (hereafter HStAS), E 63/3, Bd. 1, 1 January 1833. Hans-Ulrich Wehler cites lower figures for German-language newspapers: 371 in 1826, which doubled to 688 at the start of 1848. The principal centres of newspaper production were Berlin (117), Leipzig (77), Vienna (22), and Stuttgart (18): *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vol. 2, Von der Reformära bis zur industriellen und politischen 'Deutschen Doppelrevolution' 1815-1845/49* (Munich: Beck, 1989), 528–529.

⁶⁴ Critical voices included Friedrich Seybold, Gottlob Franckh, Heinrich Elsner, Wilhlem Hauf, Gottlob Fink, Franz Kottenkamp, Rudolph Lohbauer, and Carl Spindler—among others.

⁶⁵ For *Stimme des württembergischen Volkes, ausgesprochen durch seine neugewählten Abgeordnete*: HStAS E 146 Bü 4746, 30 January 1833; for copies of *Gespräch eines Oberamtmanns* in Esslingen, Reutlingen, and Ravensburg: HStAS E 146, Bü 4753, 25 and 27 April 1833; for Heinrich Elsner's *Abriss der Geschichte des 64 tägigen aufgelösten Landtags in Württemberg* from printer and binder in Cannstatt: HStAS E 146, Bü 4755, 29 April 1833; for *Verfassungscatechismus*, printed by an assistant typesetter in Lorch, HStAS E 146 Bü 4747, n.d. 1833.

public realm with another, readers synchronized local experiences with broader political movements.

Hessen's print culture of dissent in the Vomärz period follows this pattern. On the one hand, printers from Marburg, Hanau, Frankfurt, Mainz, and Offenbach published books, papers, and pamphlets that responded to the dramatic events of the early 1830s: the July Revolution, Belgian independence, the Polish insurgency of 1831, and the Hambach Festival of 1832, Germany's first modern mass political demonstration.⁶⁶ Through the clever appropriation of such genres as juvenilia, lexica, and almanacs, publications critiqued Germany's insipid constitutionalism.⁶⁷ Along with other forbidden flysheets, book dealers also circulated censored manifestos from J.G.A. Wirth, Franz Stromeier, and Jakob Siebenpfeiffer, which heralded the Hambach Festival's demands for constitutional unity and press freedom.⁶⁸ Two additional festivals in Wilhelmsbad and Bergen following the Hambach demonstration affirmed the region's bond to the liberal-democratic cause, and the Hanau publisher Friedrich König published song booklets for the events.⁶⁹ Yet flysheets and pamphlets also focused on local Hessian conditions. Friedrich Ludwig Weidig, a pastor with deep democratic sensibilities, penned *Lamps and Lamplighters for Hessen, or the Hessian Emergency Militia*, five serialized flysheets that agitated for local reform through parliamentary activism.⁷⁰ Heinrich Christian Flick's *To the Hessian Electors*

⁶⁶ The transfer of defeated Polish rebels from Poland through Germany to France was a sensation, which Hessian publishers exploited: Carl Neyfeld, *Polens Revolution und Kampf im Jahre 1831* (Hanau: König, 1833); Friedrich Funck, *Bem oder Empfang der Polen zu Frankfurt am Main* (Hanau: König, 1832); and Julian Szortarski, *Skizzen aus Polen. Aus der Brieftasche eines polnischen Offiziers* (Frankfurt am Main: Streng & Schneider, 1832).

⁶⁷ Wilhelm Sauerwein, *ABC-Buch der Freiheit für Landeskinder* (Hanau: König, 1832); anon. [Friedrich Funck et al.] *Bauern-Conversation-Lexikon* (n.p., n.d.); Karl Buchner, *Der deutsche Volksbote* (Offenbach: Brede, 1833).

⁶⁸ Cf. Elisabeth Hüls, *Johann Georg August Wirth (1798–1848). Ein politisches Leben im Vormärz* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2004). The banned flyers were *An meine Deutschen. Aufruf eines Deutschen an seine Bruder; Aufrufe an die Volksfreunde in Deutschlande*; and *Was wir wollen und wie wir's wollen*.

⁶⁹ *Festlieder. Wilhelmsbad am 22sten Juni 1832* (1832); *Vier Volkslieder gesungen bei der Feier des Maifests zu Bergen* (1832).

⁷⁰ Friedrich Ludwig Weidig, *Leuchter und Beleuchter für Hessen oder der Hessen Nothwebr*. Freimund Hessen ed. Erstes Blatt (Darmstadt: Den Patriotischen Buchhandlungen, January 1834); Weidig, *Leuchter und Beleuchter* Zweites Blatt (February 1834); Weidig, *Leuchter und Beleuchter* Drittes Blatt (March 1834); Weidig, *Leuchter und Beleuchter*

and *To the Hessian Estates* also exhorted local reform, just as the satirical songsheet, *Mr. Thil with the Iron Brow*, mocked the Hessian minister for the unlawful assault that accompanied his house searches.⁷¹

Carl Preller, the co-owner of the Brede'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung in Offenbach, joined this circuit, printing local flysheets, a banned newspaper, and, in particular, *The Hessian Country Messenger* (*Der Hessische Landbote*). This eight-page political pamphlet by Friedrich Ludwig Weidig, mentioned above, and Georg Büchner, the polymath medical student, playwright, and Jacobin, radicalized local grievances in trenchant rhetoric. Two editions in July and November 1834 redirected plebeian anger towards revolt and democratic government. The brochure manifests influences of Thomas Paine, August Blanqui, St. Simon, Gracchus Babeuf, Hugues-Félicité Lamennais, and other Western radicals, thereby marking a watershed transfer of Western democratic thought, but the pamphlet also tapped the region's own residual radicalism to mobilize farmers, artisans, and labourers.⁷² Weidig's biblical language and Reformational allusions invoked traditions of righteous revolt and ratified the logic of popular sovereignty.⁷³ Hence when Weidig convened liberals and democrats in July 1834 and called for a 'society of the underground press' to distribute political flysheets, he not only tapped the liberal-democratic impulses of the Hambach Festival but also sharpened its radical implications. Equally important was the readiness of artisans (a printer in Offenbach and a typesetter in Marburg) to print two editions. Alongside its intended local audience, the pamphlet achieved a wider

Viertes Blatt (March/May 1834); and Friedrich Ludwig Weidig and Sylvester Jordan, *Leuchter und Beleuchter*. Freimund Hessen ed. Fünftes Blatt (October 1834).

⁷¹ Heinrich Christian Flick, 'An die Hessischen Wahlmänner [Februar 1834]' (Frankfurt, 1834); Heinrich Christian Flick, 'An die hessischen Stände [April 1834]' (Offenbach am Main, 1834); and Carl Flach, Friedrich Ludwig Weidig and Georg Büchner, *Herr Du-Thil mit der Eisenstirn und Schreinermeister Kraus in Butzbach* (Offenbach, 1834).

⁷² For an overview of the print culture that contributed to the *Landbote*, see Burghard Dedner ed., *Georg Büchner. Der Hessische Landbote*. Marburger Ausgabe, Band 2.1: Text Editionsbericht, Erläuterung; Band 2.2.: Dokument und Quellen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013); see also James M. Brophy, 'Der Hessische Landbote and the Landscape of Radical Print, 1830–1834', in Markus May, Udo Roth and Gideon Stiening eds., *Friede den Hütten, Krieg den Palästen*. *Der Hessische Landbote in interdisziplinärer Perspektive* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2016), 67–94.

⁷³ A republican catechism from 1819 also circulated in the region: Friedrich Wilhelm Schultz, *Frag- und Antwortbüchlein allerlei was im deutschen Vaterland besonders noth tut. Für den deutschen Bürgers- und Bauersmann* (Frankfurt: Bayrhofer, 1819).

readership through underhanded circulation via bookstores throughout western and southwestern Germany.⁷⁴ Here and elsewhere, small-scale printers nurtured a culture of local protest that might or might not connect to broader political issues. Put in business terms, a saleable pamphlet aimed at local consumption attracted printers still using hand presses, whose small print-runs yielded profits. Although mechanized printing arrived in 1814, most printers adopted the technology only in the 1840s and 1850s. Resembling an ancien-régime workshop more than a modern manufactory, the *Verlagsbuchhandlung* in the Age of Revolution made possible local oppositional tracts. The irony of local liberties and markets serving broader needs should not go unnoticed. Booksellers typically embraced the aspiration of a national market and were quick to point out the economic defects of Germany's federalist legacy. Indeed, the term 'particularism' gained currency among certain liberals in the early nineteenth century as a pejorative term, while others recognized the democratic potential that inhered in cultural and political forms of federalism.⁷⁵ Be that as it may, the Confederation's decentralized cultural landscape provided them with an undeniably positive feature: a multi-layered public sphere that accommodated small print-runs and voices in many registers. Provincial printers and their local reading communities played a critical role in shaping an oppositional political culture in the modern era. 'Provincial modernity' may appear to many as a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron, but not for Central European booksellers in the Age of Revolution.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ For smuggling links to Neustadt and Frankenthal, Landesarchiv Speyer, HI, Nr. 809; for networks of book dealers in Frankfurt, Württemberg, Brüssels, Nassau, and Baden, see Reinhard Görisch and Thomas Michael Mayer eds., *Untersuchungsberichte zur republikanischen Bewegung in Hessen 1831–1834* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1982), 51–60.

⁷⁵ Irmeline Veit-Brause, 'Partikularismus', in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 735–766, here 738–740. For the 'democratic potential embedded in federalist trends which has not before received due recognition', see Veit Brause, 'Particularism: A Paradox of Cultural Nationalism?' in J. C. Eade ed., *Romantic Nationalism in Europe* (Canberra: Humanities Research Centre, 1983), 33–46; quote, 44.

⁷⁶ For the role of the province in the formation of modern aesthetics and intellectual circles, see Meike G. Werner, *Moderne in der Provinz. Kulturelle Experimente im Fin de Siècle Jena* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003); for the oxymoron of provincial modernity, 15.

BOOKSHOPS AND LOCAL CIVIC PRACTICE

The practice of circulating political dissent should not figure as an abstraction. In thinking about the various steps of authorship, production, transport, distribution, sale, and consumption, the physical locale of the bookstore looms as the ground zero of oppositional politics. Although there were other outlets in town and countryside, the bookstore stands out as the primary site where readers found access to forbidden literature. Indeed, certain forms of illicit material could be found only in bookstores.⁷⁷ Whether printed in house or conveyed into bookstores by carters of trusted publishing houses, banned literature found its way into bookstores. While town squares, cafés, taverns, casinos, and associational life nurtured political deliberation, access to oppositional print often began in bookstores.

Unfortunately, we know too little about the culture of bookshops and their underhand sales. Such book dealers as Kanter in Königsberg, Campe in Hamburg, Reclam in Leipzig, Hartknoch in Riga, Reimer in Berlin, or Heckenast in Pest were well known for having shops that served as cultural centres. Kanter's store and lending library in Königsberg became an open salon for Baltic luminaries (e.g., J.G. Hammann, I. Kant, J. G. Herder) to discuss the newest literature amidst university students and customers. Kanter encouraged distinguished patrons to use his premises as a 'museum', or a reading society, where they could write their letters and inspect the papers. Towards this end, he decorated his comptoir room with busts of Pindar, Tacitus, Caesar, and Plutarch, interspersed with portraits of King Frederick II and such contemporary Prussian luminaries as Kant, Mendelssohn, and Hippel. Kanter's open embrace of freemasonry coloured discussions on philosophy, literature, and art, but politics were avoided.⁷⁸ Georg Reimer's residence in central Berlin, which also served as shop and press, attracted a liberal clientele. He counted Schleiermacher and Fichte as frequent guests, and Friedrich Dahlmann spent a month at Reimer's residence after his dismissal from the University of Göttingen in

⁷⁷ This is not to say that other forms of market print lacked political charge. Rather, explicit critiques of political authority were typically obtained through the hand-to-hand transfer between a book merchant and trusted client. For the broader field of popular political culture, see James M. Brophy, *Popular Culture and the Public Sphere in the Rhineland, 1800–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁷⁸ A. Hagen, 'Die Buchhändler Kanter und Nicoluvius in Königsberg', *Neue Preußische Provinzial-Blätter* 9 (1850), 232–252, here 242–243.

1837.⁷⁹ Reclam's 'Literary Museum' in Leipzig, founded in 1828, served as a meeting place to read and discuss politics. The library's reading room nurtured political debate, as confirmed by a travel guide in 1835: 'The most varied political views and opinions are announced there, and one gathers that the *juste milieu* has taken firm root in the Museum'.⁸⁰

But less prominent bookstores also doubled as meeting places and centres of political activity. Johann Heinrich Meidinger in Frankfurt, for example, took donations for Sylvester Jordan's trial in 1830, set out petitions to sign, acted as liaison for such émigré authors as Jacob Venedey and, not least, published illegal flysheets for particular customers.⁸¹ Ferdinand Hirt, a bookseller in Breslau, served as a liaison between Polish exiles and oppositional figures in Warsaw, and he further procured for them the works of Proudhon, the French socialist. Hirt came into close contact with Polish intellectuals as an apprentice at the Korn bookshop in Breslau, which also served as a meeting point for the Polish cause.⁸² Bookshops as make-shift salons were not uncommon. Carl Friedrich Kunz's store in Bamberg served as a meeting place for E. T. A. Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Karl Friedrich Wetzell, and other Romantic authors, and he himself published parodies under the penname of Zacharias Funck.⁸³ August Stülpnagel's bookstore in Berlin similarly became the meeting place of such intellectuals as Friedrich Karl von Savigny, Adolf Stahr, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm, Bettina von Arnim, Wilhelm Raabe, and other university professors.⁸⁴ For centuries, argues Siegfried Taubert, bookshops were

⁷⁹ Rudolf Schmidt ed., *Deutsche Buchhändler, deutsche Buchdrucker. Beiträge zu einer Firmengeschichte des deutschen Buchgewerbes* 6 vols. (Berlin: Weber 1902–1908; reprint, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1979), 1034.

⁸⁰ Ferdinand Stolle *Sachsens Hauptstädte. Ein humoristisches Doppelpanorama* (Leipzig: Wigand 1834–1835) quoted in Dietrich Bode, *150 Jahre Reclam. Daten, Bilder u. Dokumente zur Verlagsgeschichte, 1828–1978* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1978), 8.

⁸¹ Karl Glossy ed., *Literarische Geheimerichte aus dem Vormärz*, reprint ed. (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1975), II, 6, 66–67.

⁸² Lukasz Bieniasz, 'Verleger, Kulturmissionär und Schmuggler. Ferdinand Hirt und sein Verlag 1832 bis 1879', in Urszula Bonter e.a. eds., *Verlagsmetropole Breslau 1800–1945* (Munich: de Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 213–216.

⁸³ Wulf Segebrecht, 'Carl Friedrich Kunz', *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 13 (1982), 307.

⁸⁴ Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek*, 179.

a site of conversation about printed ideas, and these bookshops were no exception.⁸⁵

Philipp Christmann in Neustadt, Georg Ritter in Zweibrücken, and Johann Georg August Wirth in Homburg printed the literature of the Hambach Festival and its Press Association, but their premises also became meeting places for distribution and discussion of oppositional political thought. In 1831, after the government forbade the editors of the *Deutsche Tribune* to mail issues to subscribers, the newspaper instructed readers to buy copies at their local bookstores. Georg Ritter's Zweibrücken bookshop acted as the distribution centre, but readers in Munich were directed to Schäffer's store in the Perusagasse.⁸⁶ When residents of Homburg demonstrated outside Wirth's press to protest the state's closure of his *Verlagsbuchhandlung* in 1831, their protests also signalled a broader allegiance to constitutional politics.⁸⁷ The Frankfurt bookshop of Bernhard Körner and his son Karl also nurtured a community of liberal patrons. The bookstore vended such banned material as *Vorrede zu Heinrich Heines Französische Zustände* (1833) and J.G.A.Wirth's *Volkshalle* (1840), which, according to police reports, attracted 'republican-minded men of the lower classes'.⁸⁸ In 1836, Karl Körner flagrantly displayed banned texts of Heine in his windows, and when the court sentenced him to four weeks in jail, he refused to go. Remarkably, the government altered the sentence to a monetary fine for fear of public demonstration.⁸⁹ The anxiety over public outcry not only suggests the political character of local support but also illuminates how state officials tolerated and accommodated local political will. The tacit recognition of potential unruliness in urban publics reflects how officials anticipated and muted local demonstrations of protest. The decision to cede ground to local interests calls attention to the residual power of

⁸⁵ For the role of bookshops facilitating 'exchange of thoughts', Siegfried Taubert, *Bibliopolia. Bilder und Texte aus der Welt des Buchhandels*. 2 vols. (Hamburg/New York: Hauswedell, 1966), I, 49.

⁸⁶ Elisabeth Hüls e.a. eds., *Deutsche Tribune (1831–1832)*. Bd. 2 (Munich: K.G. Saur, 2007), 19, 47.

⁸⁷ Landesarchiv Speyer, Best. H1, Nr. 782.

⁸⁸ Glossy ed., *Literarische Geheimberichte*, I, 179; III, 16.

⁸⁹ Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Central Informations Protocolle 1836 I-III, 13 Jan 1836; Glossy ed., *Literarische Geheimberichte*, I, 202.

urban institutions and commercial enterprises to make claims for civic liberties.

Police reports from Stuttgart in 1837 also complained of unruly readers who believed that 'bookstores are free' and stood outside of government control. Stuttgart was 'paved with bookstores', which formed 'an interconnected society'. Police spies emphasized the presence of 'shoemakers and tailors' under the sway of 'Württemberg's opposition', patrons who encouraged the sale of 'irresponsible reportage'. In regard to the rash of new bookstores and their atmosphere, 'one thinks that they are more of an association than a bookshop'.⁹⁰ The ringleader was a typesetter 'who is going for broke, for he has nothing to lose' and his 'not-fully-informed clientele want to win'. Working-class readers and their 'malicious spirit' found sanctuary in the region's small 'corner establishments'.⁹¹ Print shops as redoubts of oppositional talk were hardly unique to Stuttgart. Although we associate Robert Blum, Karl Biedermann, Friedrich Bassermann, Karl Mathy, and Edgar and Bruno Bauer as authors, politicians, and intellectuals, they also ran bookstores in Leipzig, Mannheim, and Berlin. Such commercial spaces clearly served other functions.

These examples point to the importance of urban communities to explain how a reconstituted civil society unfolded in Central Europe. Such forms of local agency nullify the persistent cliché of Restoration readers as too somnolent to absorb the age's impulses or too timid to contest the passive political roles imposed upon them by the Congress of Vienna and the German Confederation. The examples from Hamburg, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Leipzig and numerous other locations of bookstores explain how the tradition of *Stadtluft macht frei* ('city life sets us free') served the creative energies of a newer brand of oppositional politics. To be sure, the process was gradual and uneven. The slow erosion of the early modern ideals of 'classless civil society' and the 'hometown *Bürger*' over the course of the early nineteenth century still provided ground for bourgeois enclaves to defend corporatist customs and its accompanying forms of political and cultural exclusion. But state initiatives (freedoms of movement, occupation, and residency) and economic transformation (attrition of guilds and hometown restrictions) since the Napoleonic

⁹⁰ Ibid., I, 104–105.

⁹¹ Ibid., I, 105.

era inexorably recast urban culture, which reconfigured the traditional civic rights of earlier urban communities.⁹² Their spheres of commerce, justice, and municipal governance now strengthened the demands of readers for a free press and the right to form opinions at variance with higher authorities. The era's widening public sphere drew on an existing cultural infrastructure whose print ecology enabled ideological dissent to challenge and undermine Restoration authority. Civic virtue (*Bürger-tugend*), which traditionally stressed communal harmony (*Eintracht*) and the commonweal (*Gemeinwohl*), now nurtured newer forms of civic engagement, which included the freedom to disagree. Local agency, whether in small provincial towns or major urban centres, is critical to this story. What is more, the constitutional setbacks at the national level belie the vibrant activity in towns and cities. Echoing Oliver Zimmer's insight about local communities in the late nineteenth century, town life ran on tracks different from those at the national level. The former was not a microcosm of the latter.⁹³ The official information order of Germany and Austria fails to capture the cultural pulses of town life, whose inherited practices of communal liberties accommodated political opposition in a new key. Here one observes a noteworthy cultural continuity in the Age of Revolutions. The wayward behaviour of booksellers and readers infused German-language print circuits with a pervasive discourse about rights-bearing citizenship ideals, but grafting those revolutionary claims of universal freedom onto the inherited practices of early modern mercantile and communal liberties remained a decades-long cultural process.

⁹² The literature on nineteenth-century Bürgertum is too large to cite comprehensively but for an overview see: Jürgen Kocka ed., *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich* (München: Beck, 1988); Lothar Gall, *Vom alten zum neuen Bürgertum: die mitteleuropäische Stadt im Umbruch 1780–1820* (München: Oldenbourg, 1991); Jonathan Sperber, 'Bürger, Bürgertum, Bürgerliche Gesellschaft: Studies of the German (Upper) Middle Class and its Sociocultural World', *Journal of Modern History* 69: 2 (1997), 271–297; Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann eds, *Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel: Innenansichten des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000); and Till van Rahden, 'Jews and the Ambivalences of Civil Society in Germany, 1800–1933: Assessment and Reassessment', *Journal of Modern History* 77: 4 (2005), 1024–1047. For the classic argument on German hometowns, see Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648–1871* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971).

⁹³ Oliver Zimmer, *Remaking the Rhythms of Life. German Communities in the Age of the Nation-State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

CONCLUSION

Dispersed widely in hundreds of towns throughout Central Europe, booksellers constituted critical nodal points of a network of political communication that promoted the freedom of the press. Exploiting the legal freedoms of a commercial enterprise, book dealers tested the boundaries of censorship, vended forbidden literature *sous main*, and cultivated clientele for oppositional politics. A tacit 'sanction of precedent' justified such transgressions. Long-established conventions condoned illegal manoeuvres, as did the Enlightenment's credo of transparency and tolerance: let readers judge for themselves. In plying their trade in a new era, publishers deployed older strategies and mindsets to great effect.

During the Restoration Era, codes of communication evolved. Discourses on rights-bearing citizenship ideals tinted print markets with ideological hues, altering the consequences of time-honoured practices. Although banned literature in the early eighteenth century carried a penalty, the punishment for illegal political print became more severe after Napoleon. Despite fines and prison sentences, many book dealers combined principle with profit to pursue subversive publishing programmes that nettled governments well into the nineteenth century. When the Kaiserreich's antisocialist laws once again banned newspapers between 1878 and 1890, *Der Sozialdemokrat*, printed in Höttingen-Zürich, reached tens of thousands of readers through tactics and smuggling routes inherited from an earlier era.⁹⁴ When complaining to Friedrich Engels in April 1884 about police raids on the newspaper, August Bebel nonetheless noted that 'the smuggling paths are so certain, that they don't catch us when crossing the border'.⁹⁵ The clandestine reading culture of socialists owes its success in part to an older infrastructure of print markets addressed in this essay.

The persistence of ancien-régime publishing networks had, then, certain advantages. To be sure, most printers advocated a unified national state that would obviate unnecessary tariffs, literary piracy, and myriad currencies. Their good business sense embraced an ideological opposition

⁹⁴ Vernon Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party. Social Democracy in Germany, 1878–1890* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 93–97.

⁹⁵ August Bebel and Friedrich Engels, 18 April 1884, in Horst Bartel et al. eds., *August Bebel. Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*. Vol. 2, Part 2 (Berlin: Dietz, 1978), 133–134.

to state interference, just as their aspiration of constitutional nationhood accorded with the tenet of free expression. In this light, the ideal of an unfettered national market of ideas is logical and framed the programmes of liberals and radicals alike. Yet, ideals aside, they also recognized the equally important reality that print shops dispersed throughout the German-speaking lands ensured that no one state controlled the public sphere. The vast archipelago of printers in dozens of states prevented any regional print monopoly, especially when publishers drew on their venerable repertoire of circumvention to circulate contraband print. This sanctioned precedent buttresses an overarching argument of this volume: inherited customs are not necessarily conservative, nor are they inimical to innovation. Older business practices proved adaptive and flexible to contest newer claims of governmental regulation. Of particular importance is the broader cultural infrastructure that sustained this repertoire. Buttressing the civic courage and profit motive of booksellers was a dense complex web of affiliations that made possible clandestine networks: book commissioners, print-shop workers, warehouse employees, book-fair staff, carters, teamsters, customs officials, border guards, censors, judges, jury members, and, not least, customers. In one form or another, all were complicit in undermining state authority. More than a physical site, bookshops constituted a cultural institution that not only provided access to forbidden texts but also allowed readers to practice the democratic tenet of independent judgement.⁹⁶ Emboldened by cultural precedent, individuals sought access to the critical margins of the public sphere that recast citizenship ideals. In sum, the hybrid book- and print shop (*Verlagsbuchhandlung*) stands among the cultural traditions that promoted modern political participation, and its achievements are grounded in the mentalities and practices of the early modern book trade. ‘Societies are held together and partially constituted by fragile networks of accumulated practices and institutions’, write Mark Salber Phillips and Gordon Schochet.⁹⁷ The observation captures the essence of Germany’s print culture.

⁹⁶ As Till van Rahden has argued for the Federal Republic of Germany, democracy is not merely a form of government but also a *Lebensform*: complex of practices and attitudes for which specific places, spaces, and institutions provide a cultural foundation for democratic life. But the civic practices and the cultural sense of democracy have, of course, a longer history. See *Demokratie. Eine gefährdete Lebensform* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2019).

⁹⁷ Mark Phillips and Gordon Schochet, *Questions of Tradition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), x.

The power of inherited practices, the force of markets, and the civic patronage of publishers helped launch constitutional citizenship, a hallmark feature of the Age of Revolution.

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Maintaining Order in Revolutionary Times—The Political Practices of a Mercantile Elite in the Rhineland, 1770–1830

Anne Sophie Overkamp

Carts loaded with heavy bales and barrels moving along steep tracks, linen weavers and ribbon makers carrying their heavy panniers, the raucous bustle of street life, and busy men throwing water on thousands of yards of linen thread whitening under the sun along the wide banks of the Wupper River—such a hive of industry must indeed have been an ‘enchanted El Dorado for everyone interested in the sight of a busy, blessed, and contented people’.¹ Yet when the traveller and state functionary Justus Gruner wrote these lines in the year 1802, the industrious

¹ Justus Gruner, *Auf kritischer Wallfahrt zwischen Rhein und Weser. Justus Gruners Schriften in den Umbruchsjahren 1801–1803*. Gerd Dethlefs and Jürgen Kloosterhuis eds. (Köln: Böhlau, 2009), 354.

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people of the Wupper valley had for the last decade endured major political and economic challenges caused by the French Revolution. Indeed, more transformations and tribulations were to follow. Situated in the Duchy of Berg, the Wupper valley belonged to one of the smaller territories in the west of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1806, the principality became part of the newly created Grand Duchy of Berg, a territory formed by the grace of Napoleon that lasted until 1813, whereupon its inhabitants became Prussian subjects as part of the newly established Prussian Rhine Province. How did the denizens of the Wupper valley face these many changes? How did they negotiate their interests at the local level and how did they engage with politics on a supra-local plane?

This chapter argues that the mercantile elite of the Wupper valley, essentially the main force behind the valley's economic success, aimed first and foremost to maintain social order during these turbulent times. Inextricably linked to this aim was the preservation of stable economic conditions, which prompted many of the merchants' interventions with their respective sovereign and the state bureaucracy. Continuing local civic customs and employing existing political practices not only allowed them to negotiate the many challenges of revolutionary times but also to implement change in such a way that maintained their dominance for the remainder of the nineteenth century. The case study of the Wupper valley highlights elite responses to deep-seated changes and furthermore illuminates how this social caste employed established political practices to sustain their leadership role.

RULING AND SQUABBLING IN STABLE TIMES

The Duchy of Berg was a principality of compromise.² After the last ruling duke of Jülich-Berg and Kleve-Mark had died in 1609 without a direct heir, a war broke out between the two pretenders, the count palatines of Brandenburg and Neuburg. After some military skirmishes, the peace treaty that was eventually signed allocated Kleve-Mark to Brandenburg and Jülich-Berg to Neuburg. To defuse the controversial question of religion (both Protestants and Catholics lived in the territories) by mutual accord, the Protestant count palatines of Brandenburg,

² For the most recent and comprehensive history of the territory see Stefan Gorißen, Horst Sassin and Kurt Wesoly eds., *Geschichte des Bergischen Landes. Bd. 1.: Bis zum Ende des Alten Herzogtums* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2014).

who were later promoted to kings of Prussia, were named protectors of the Protestant subjects in Jülich-Berg. The Catholic count palatines of Neuburg, which was later ceded to Bavaria, were named protectors of the Catholic subjects in Kleve-Mark. The architecture of power within the Duchy of Berg remained mostly the same. The dukes of Berg continued to reign according to the corporate principles of the territory. The Estates consisted of the nobility, the clergy, and deputies of four cities. By the eighteenth century, the deputies had lost their former pre-eminence, however, and their political importance far surpassed their economic weight. Over the course of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the dukes of Berg ceased to call the meetings of the Estates regularly because they did not make extraordinary fiscal demands. The exchequer taxed landowners but exempted clergy and nobility.³ For the merchants of the Wupper valley, this created an awkward situation: by the second half of the eighteenth century, they generated profits amounting to almost a third of the duchy's total tax yield—yet they paid hardly any tax on it. This financial advantage came at the cost of no political representation.⁴ They had to rely on other means to defend their interests.

One way to take care of their concerns was to superintend local rule. In 1610, the duke of Berg had granted Elberfeld city rights; a hundred years later, a municipal court of law strengthened local dominion. The burghers of the city elected the city council and the mayor, the latter continuing as the city judge for another year on completion of his office. The city council ran general communal affairs.⁵ Beyond that, the issues of schooling, poor relief, and moral concerns were taken in hand by the parish councils, a body elected by the parishioners. These posts were

³ Helmuth Croon, *Stände und Steuern in Jülich-Berg im 17. und vornehmlich 18. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1929); and Rainer Walz, *Stände und frühmoderner Staat. Die Landstände von Jülich-Berg im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Schmidt, 1982).

⁴ Their annual profit was about 250,000 *Reichstaler*, the duchy's tax yield 600,000–700,000 *Reichstaler*. The former are calculated on the basis of the statistical material gathered in W. Gebhard, 'Bericht des Hof-Kammerrats Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi über die Industrie der Herzogtümer Jülich und Berg aus den Jahren 1773 und 1774', *ZGBV* 18 (1882), 1–148. For the latter see Croon, *Stände und Steuern*, 130.

⁵ Johannes Rütger Brüning, *Elberfeld und seine Bürgerliche Verfassung. Von dem fünfzehnten Jahrhundert bis auf die neueste Zeit* (Elberfeld: Büschler, 1830); and Edmund Strutz, *Die Stadt- und Gerichtsverfassung Elberfelds von 1610–1807* (Elberfeld: Martini & Grüttefien, 1921).

honorary, which assumed both affluence and good standing in the local community. Elberfeld and Barmen were strong enclaves of Calvinism but, during the eighteenth century, Lutherans settled in the two localities. Each denomination set up its own system of oversight which operated on the same principles of self-government in the aforementioned tasks. Hence it did not matter in practical terms that Barmen had not been accorded city rights, for its church administrations handled many of the community's concerns. Both the Elberfeld city council as well as the parish councils were staffed predominantly with merchants and—needless to say—exclusively with men.⁶

Another way to advance the merchants' interests was to organise collectively. In 1527, the duke of Berg had granted Elberfeld and Barmen the so-called *Garnnahrungsprivileg* (yarn privilege) which gave them a monopoly on the commercial bleaching of linen yarn in the duchy. This privilege formed the cornerstone of the valley's subsequent economic achievements.⁷ The monopoly also included the power to organise the industry, which the wealthier members of the *Garnnahrung* (yarn association) deployed to serve their particular interests. In this way, the association acted as a lobby. This evolving dynamic process is best illuminated by the incessant squabbling between the Barmen and Elberfeld members of the *Garnnahrung* during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Given that these struggles highlight not only the *Garnnahrung's* organisational characteristics but also the means by which the Wupper valley sought to influence the Duchy's government, they deserve some attention.

In 1776, Barmen merchants submitted a *pro memoria* to their sovereign, the duke of Berg, that recounted various grievances they had

⁶ Adolf Werth and Adolf Lauffs, *Geschichte der Evangelisch-Reformierten Gemeinde Barmen-Gemarke 1702–1927* (Barmen-Gemarke: Selbstverlag, 1927); Otto Schell, 'Das Alte Elberfeld', in Heinrich Born ed., *Die Stadt Elberfeld. Festschrift zur Dreihundertjahrfeier 1910* (Elberfeld: Born, 1910), 3–239; Carl Pöls, *Die Lutherische Gemeinde in Elberfeld. Ein Beitrag zur Elberfelder Stadtgeschichte. Nach archivalischen Aktenstücken, etc.* (Elberfeld: Langewiesche, 1868); and Hermann-Peter Eberlein ed., *444 Jahre Evangelische Kirche in Elberfeld. Vorträge anlässlich der Eröffnung der Historischen Bibliothek im Kirchenkreis Elberfeld im Sommer 1996* (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1998).

⁷ Walter Dietz, *Die Wuppertaler Garnnahrung* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Schmidt, 1957); and Herbert Kisch, *Die hausindustriellen Textilgewerbe am Niederrhein vor der industriellen Revolution. Von der ursprünglichen zur kapitalistischen Akkumulation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981).

suffered at the hands of their counterparts from the neighbouring town of Elberfeld during meetings of the *Garnnabrung*. They accused their fellow merchants of abusing the common institution for their own interests. A long and contentious struggle ensued, producing thick volumes of records that reveal several characteristics of the merchants as political actors on a supra-local level.⁸

First, the merchants involved were well versed in the art of petitioning, a central medium of political communication in early modern Europe. People of all social standing used petitions to address their social betters, often their rulers.⁹ When produced as a collective text, supplications often sought to resolve social conflict, as was the case here.¹⁰ As becomes clear from the records, both sides in the *Garnnabrung* struggle knew how to make their points, use historical examples, invoke abstract ideas such as progress or tradition, and choose arguments that would sway government officials. Both sides sought the advice of legal practitioners and couched their requests and grievances in a language of legal expertise, deploying custom and legal precedent. Such articulateness points to the fact that, unlike petitioners of more humble origin, these merchants wielded legal know-how that they could turn to political advantage.

Second, they also buttressed their petitions with delegations to the ducal court in Mannheim, demonstrating not only organisational savoir faire but also economic clout. Such political interventions came at a considerable economic cost and the merchants spared no expense to pursue their goals. Furthermore, they possessed enough status to gain proximity to the duke's close advisors. After all, unlike more humble

⁸ Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen (hereafter LA NRW) Jülich-Berg (hereafter JB) II 1804, JB II 1807. On the struggle see also Dietz, *Die Wuppertaler Garnnabrung*, 126–133.

⁹ In English, petition is a generic term. In German, it can be differentiated further into supplications, petitions and *gravamina*. Andreas Würigler, 'Voices From Among the 'Silent Masses'. Humble Petitions and Social Conflicts in Early Modern Central Europe', *International Review of Social History* 46, Supplement 9: Petitions in Social History (2001), 11–34, here 14–19; and Derek Beales, 'Joseph II, Petitions and the Public Sphere', in Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms eds., *Cultures of Power in Europe During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 249–268, here 253.

¹⁰ Rosi Fuhrmann, Andreas Würigler and Beat Kümin, 'Supplizierende Gemeinden. Aspekte einer Vergleichenden Quellenbetrachtung', in Peter Blickle ed., *Gemeinde und Staat im Alten Europa*, Historische Zeitschrift: Beiheft 25 (München: Oldenbourg, 1998), 267–323. See also the chapters by Sanders and Oddens in this volume.

subjects who presented petitions to monarchs when visiting their town, these remonstrations involved travelling to a distant capital.¹¹

Third, a large share of the *Garnnahrung* members, mostly local farmers who supplemented their income by commercially bleaching yarn on the banks of the Wupper, played no role in the struggle. There were approximately 150 people subscribing to the *Garnnahrung* in Barmen, but 65 at most signed the petitions, and the lead was taken by the elected Barmen council consisting of fourteen men. It was their interests as the most financially engaged members of the *Garnnahrung* that was at stake rather than that of the Barmen section as a whole.

Fourth, the local government officials, most notably the bailiwicks' two bailiffs, had little standing in this inter-elite struggle, which can be attributed to the strong tradition of self-government outlined above. Both Barmen and Elberfeld merchants seem to have taken glee in deriding the bailiffs' authority. For example, both towns invited them to attend their inauguration ceremonies but set them for the same date. The bailiffs' helpless response was to write repeatedly to the government in Düsseldorf for instructions about this dilemma. Despite their state-sanctioned authority, these local officials were sorely out of their depth and not able to settle the matter, pointing to the merchants' sense of political self-esteem to pursue an independent course of action.

Fifth, the economic expertise of the Wupper valley merchants far outweighed that of the duke's representatives in Düsseldorf. In the past, the latter had more or less relied on the Wupper valley merchants to provide them with local information—a common practice and one of the reasons why sovereigns actually encouraged their subjects to hand in petitions. After all, petitions provided rulers and their administrative staff not only with first-hand information on the local state of affairs but also allowed them to adapt their policies where necessary.¹² For example, the Berg government's interventions concerning tariff policies

¹¹ Beales, 'Joseph II, Petitions and the Public Sphere', 256.

¹² Beales, 'Joseph II, Petitions and the Public Sphere'; André Holenstein, 'Bittgesuche, Gesetze und Verwaltung. Zur Praxis 'guter Policy'', in *Gemeinde und Staat des Ancien Régime am Beispiel der Markgrafschaft Baden (-Durlach)*, in Peter Blickle ed., *Gemeinde und Staat im Alten Europa*. Historische Zeitschrift: Beiheft 25 (München: Oldenbourg, 1998), 267–323; and Jakob Maliks, 'To Rule is to Communicate. The Absolutist System of Political Communication in Denmark–Norway 1660–1750', in Ellen Krefling, Aina Nøding and Mona Ringvej eds., *Eighteenth-Century Periodicals as Agents of Change. Perspectives on Northern Enlightenment* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 134–152.

drew on insights gained from mercantile initiatives.¹³ To be faced with tensions among the Wupper valley merchants was a new experience for the government and called for an independent decision. However, government officials, especially Vice Chancellor von Knapp, were unable to decide which side to favour: the Elberfeld side, which argued for traditional values, or the Barmen side, which based its argument on promoting economic development. This indecisive helplessness resulted in a struggle that lasted for fifteen years.

In 1791, the conflict finally came to an end. The concluding rescript admonished the members of the *Garnnahrung* to return to their affairs, a document that reads like the sigh of a deeply exhausted parent trying to solve a never-ending quarrel between siblings beyond parental control. Accordingly, it contained a carefully devised compromise that took into account not only practical matters but also symbolic issues, allowing both sides to save face.

The *Garnnahrung* struggle highlights the modes of intervention available to the merchants and their deft usage of them. It demonstrates furthermore their elite status within the valley. However, it also provides us with an idea of the complicated relations between local and state power. It underscores the undefined political status of economically potent subjects who no longer fit the categories and procedures of estate-based society.¹⁴ In the following section, I scrutinise all three of these issues in a series of incidents that took place in the years following the French Revolution, analysing how these relations evolved in periods of extreme political stress.

¹³ This is documented for instance in LA NRW JB II 1807.

¹⁴ Seminal on this Winfried Schulze ed., *Ständische Gesellschaft und Soziale Mobilität* (München: Oldenbourg, 1988).

LOOKING FOR STABILITY: THE WUPPER VALLEY DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WARS

In April 1795, Prussia had signed a peace treaty with revolutionary France to organise the third partition of Poland in the east. Part of the treaty was Prussia's declaration of neutrality in northern Germany, demarcated by a line that ran from the North Sea coast to Hoechst-on-Main in present-day Hessen.¹⁵ Even though the Duchy of Berg was not involved in this negotiation, the inhabitants of Barmen nevertheless participated in the process and made good use of personal, historical, and geographic links to protect their interests, even if their government did not.

As outlined in the introduction, for the past 180 years Prussia had served as the protecting power for Protestants in the Duchy of Berg. Barmen bordered on Prussian territory and until the beginning of the eighteenth century, Barmen inhabitants had been members of the Prussian Lutheran parish in Schwelm, just across the border. Many Barmen merchants employed weavers in Schwelm. Some of the Wupper valley families also owned landed estates there. Accordingly, Prussia was very much present to the duke of Berg's subjects on the border.¹⁶ In addition, Carl Theodor's policy of neutrality and the half-hearted attempts of the Palatine and Imperial troops to defend the territories on both sides of the Rhine had led to the impression that the duchy's inhabitants could not hope for sufficient protection against the arrival of French troops.¹⁷

These historical developments formed the backdrop for some transnational plots that in fact questioned state authority. Even before the French troops crossed the Rhine for good in September 1795, some Barmen merchants had approached the commanding officer in Schwelm, requesting him to transfer some troops to Barmen for their town's protection. Others used their personal acquaintance with officers to support that request. The Prussian military complied, and when the French entered

¹⁵ Jörg Engelbrecht, 'Außenpolitische Bestrebungen rheinischer Unternehmer im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution', *Francia* 17: 2 (1990), 119–141.

¹⁶ Burkhard Dietz and Stefan Ehrenpreis eds., *Drei Konfessionen in einer Region. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Konfessionalisierung im Herzogtum Berg vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1999).

¹⁷ Jörg Engelbrecht, *Das Herzogtum Berg im Zeitalter der Französischen Revolution. Modernisierungsprozesse zwischen bayerischem und französischem Modell* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997).

the Wupper valley in October 1795, they found Prussian troops in place. To guarantee Prussia's protection and Barmen's status within the neutral zone, the merchants seconded their action by sending a delegation of several prominent Barmen merchants to Berlin. They managed to persuade the Prussian king to confirm the status quo and to declare Barmen part of the neutral territory. The demarche also benefitted the Berg government, which relocated from Düsseldorf to Barmen until 1801, when the demarcation line dissolved. The Barmen merchants therefore not only bypassed their own government but even presented them with unexpected solutions in a tricky situation, thus inverting the power structure.¹⁸ As for the larger Barmen population, the merchants simply must have assumed their acquiescence without ever asking them outright, which points to their unquestioned self-conception as providers and protectors of the public good. Apparently, they felt fully legitimised by their social standing as well as their engagement in public affairs, such as the management of the parishes.

The Elberfeld population, however, remained excluded from the neutral territory. Instead of seeking protection from Prussian troops, they had to house Bavarian troops intended to defend the duchy of Berg. In November 1795, after France's crossing of the Rhine but before the peace negotiations between the Holy Roman Empire and France, the Bavarian general von Zedtwitz made Elberfeld his headquarters. By night, he and his troops were met by a recently established militia patrolling the streets. The militia was formed by men from all ranks of society.¹⁹ When members of the militia arrested Bavarian soldiers and a Prussian officer from the demarcation battalion, von Zedtwitz was furious and demanded the immediate dissolution of the militia whose establishment had not been sanctioned by the Berg government. General uproar ensued and several citizens called for the demolition of von Zedtwitz's quarters. Faced with such vehement and unexpected protest, von Zedtwitz and the

¹⁸ Adolf Werth, 'Über die Höfe im Werth zu Barmen und den allmählichen Ausbau derselben zu einem Orte', *ZGBV* 16 (1881), 133–162; Adolf Werth, 'Über die Höfe im Werth zu Barmen und den allmählichen Ausbau derselben zu einem Ort (Schluß)', *ZGBV* 17 (1882), 83–120.

¹⁹ Schell, 'Das Alte Elberfeld', 34–37.

government gave in, speculating internally about possible revolutionary sympathies among the citizens.²⁰

Elberfeld's independent spirit became just as apparent when its municipal authorities insisted on taking part in the negotiations over a forced loan that the French demanded from the Duchy of Berg. Consisting almost exclusively of merchants, the municipal authorities informed the government that they would contribute to the loan only if they could meet with the French and negotiate on their own behalf, thus using their economic leverage to demand political participation. Indeed, while Elberfeld was initially required to contribute 100,000 livres, the two deputies, the former mayors Karl Friedrich Brügelmann and Jakob Lüttringhaus, reduced the sum by 40,000 livres. Furthermore, in 1798 several prominent merchants travelled to Rastatt to attend the peace negotiations between the Holy Roman Empire and France, principally to negotiate the matter of tariffs and economic policies, which the official delegations had neglected. In this instance, they kept rather quiet about their achievements. They not only realised their economic goals but also signalled to the French that the mercantile elite of the Wupper valley was a force to be reckoned with.²¹

These actions are striking for their independent course of action as well as their lack of faith in the official government—and even their disregard for it. To the authorities, this smacked dangerously of revolutionary tendencies. As the local judge Vetter remarked in 1802: ‘Even among the educated classes this sort of spirit prevails, which good subjects should not embrace. [...] Discontent with any or all forms of authority had crept into all ranks of society and threatened to disrupt the civic order sooner or later’.²² However, it was not a question of revolutionary sympathies

²⁰ Marcus Puschnerat, ‘Der Geist der Unzufriedenheit mit allen Staatsgewalten. Dynamisierung und Polarisierung der gesellschaftlichen Kräfte in Elberfeld unter dem Eindruck von Französischer Revolution und Revolutionskriegen’, in Hermann de Buhr, Heinrich Küppers and Volkmar Wittmütz eds., *Die Bergischen 'ein Volk von zugespitzter Reflexion'. Region - Schule - Mentalität* (Wuppertal: Born, 1992), 13–39.

²¹ Engelbrecht, ‘Außenpolitische Bestrebungen’.

²² „Auch unter den gebildeten Ständen herrscht eine Stimmung, wie sie bey guten Unterthanen nicht herrschen darf. [...] Der Geist der Unzufriedenheit mit allen Staatsgewalten scheint sich in ganze Gesellschaften eingeschlichen zu haben, und kann frühe oder spät die Grundlage der bürgerlichen Ordnung erschüttern.“ Pro Memoria des Amtsrichters Vetter, 8.7.1807, reprinted in Puschnerat, ‘Geist der Unzufriedenheit’, 27.

among the mercantile classes but, rather, their insecurity about a guarantee of order. To use the terms of Max Weber, it was no longer certain whose authority guaranteed obedience of rules, the indispensable requirement for the maintenance of social order.²³ Rather, the citizens attempted to establish and protect order in revolutionary times. The instruments they employed were those they knew from more stable times: personal contacts, petitions, and delegations. What had changed was that they now addressed them to a variety of authorities: both their immediate government and foreign powers. The interventions of local government remained crucial for order. These included institutional interventions, as in the Elberfeld municipal government's interventions, and informal interventions, as with the concerted steps undertaken by outstanding members of the Barmen community. This raises the question of how far state authority penetrated the lives of the Wupper valley inhabitants in the first place—a question that has also been widely applied to absolutism's social historical reach.²⁴ More to the point for our concern: how did state and society reconstitute local governance following the Duchy of Berg's transformation into a French model state after 1806, which dissolved *ancien régime* institutions?

RUPTURE ABOVE, STABILITY ON THE GROUND—THE WUPPER VALLEY AS FRENCH TERRITORY 1806–1813

In 1806, the inhabitants of the Wupper valley found themselves with a new sovereign. During the course of complicated transactions between Prussia, Bavaria, and France to consolidate their territories and spheres of interest, Bavaria ceded its territories in the Rhineland and Westphalia. The Duchy of Berg, the formerly Prussian Duchy of Kleve, and several other

²³ Stefan Breuer, *'Herrschaft' in der Soziologie Max Webers* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2014); and Andrea Maurer, *Herrschaft und soziale Ordnung. Kritische Rekonstruktion und Weiterführung der individualistischen Theorettradition* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999).

²⁴ Ronald G. Asch and Heinz Duchhardt, *Der Absolutismus - ein Mythos? Strukturwandel monarchischer Herrschaft in West- und Mitteleuropa (ca. 1550–1700)* (Köln: Böhlau, 1996); and Lothar Schilling ed., *Absolutismus, ein unersetzliches Forschungskonzept? L'absolutisme, un concept irremplaçable? Eine deutsch-französische Bilanz. Une mise au point franco-allemande* (München: De Gruyter, 2008).

smaller territories joined to form a new state, the Grand Duchy of Berg.²⁵ Until 1808, the latter was ruled by Joachim Murat, Napoleon's brother-in-law, who consequently moved on to become King of Sicily. The Grand Duchy of Berg became directly subordinate to Napoleon, who ordered the Grand Duchy to become a model state in the Rhenish Confederacy.²⁶ The Grand Duchy, however, never became part of the French Empire, meaning that it was governed according to French rules and by a French ruler but without formal integration into the Empire. Over the course of time, this posed severe problems in terms of economic policies and tariff management for the Wupper valley.

In 1808, the French administrative system was introduced into the Grand Duchy at all levels. Berg was subdivided into four departments, twelve arrondissements, and 79 cantons, and accordingly the local government was to be re-organised. Regarding the localities of interest here, Elberfeld and Barmen were named municipalities (or *mairie*) and assigned to the arrondissement of Elberfeld. All municipal offices required new staffs. A *mairie* like Elberfeld or Barmen now needed one mayor (*maire*), two to three deputies, one police officer, and a municipal council of twenty members. Because the government assigned these posts, the centuries-old tradition of local self-government came to an abrupt end. In most instances, however, the new rulers relied on the old elites, as they usually fulfilled the criteria laid down by the French government. The French administration sought 'notables' who had to fulfil certain characteristics: at least modest wealth (all the posts except for the police chief were honorary ones), social status, and experience in municipal affairs. Furthermore, members of the municipal councils were not supposed to be related to each other. In the end, most of those assigned in Elberfeld had previously served their town in one or various offices. In Barmen, where no municipal government had hitherto existed, at least half the

²⁵ Charles Schmidt, *Das Grossherzogtum Berg, 1806–1813. Eine Studie zur französischen Vorherrschaft in Deutschland unter Napoleon I.* Lothar Kellermann and Burkhard Dietz eds. (Neustadt an der Aisch: Schmidt, 1999); and Bettina Severin-Barboutie, *Französische Herrschaftspolitik und Modernisierung. Verwaltungs- und Verfassungsreformen im Grossherzogtum Berg (1806–1813)* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008).

²⁶ Rainer Wohlfeil, 'Napoleonische Modellstaaten', in Wolfgang von Groote ed., *Napoleon I. und die Staatenwelt seiner Zeit* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1969); Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Traditionale Gesellschaft und revolutionäres Recht. Die Einführung des Code Napoléon in den Rheinbundstaaten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974); and Klaus Rob ed., *Regierungsakten des Großherzogtums Berg 1806–1813* (München: Oldenbourg, 1992).

men chosen by the French in 1808 were members of the parish councils elected bi-annually by the parishioners. Moreover, the letter of appointment labelled the mayor, his deputies, and 19 out of 20 council members as ‘*negociant*’, thus pointing to a tight-knit group of merchants, even if they were not related.²⁷ Just as on the left bank of the Rhine, the significant ruptures at the state level hardly reached the local level at all, at least in terms of the personnel. The ‘break with century-old customs’—namely, that functionaries were assigned and not elected—was of little consequence: locally, the same men stayed in their seats of power.²⁸

With their reliance on the old elites, the French administration inherited some of the problems antedating its establishment of rule but exacerbated by its policy of assignment. Generally, the willingness to assume public office had waned during the latter half of the eighteenth century. In Elberfeld, it is striking how many newcomers to the merchants’ circle had been chosen as mayor fairly soon after their establishment in town.²⁹ The heightened workload of the office—due in great part to the rapid population increase—was presumably the chief reason. Under the French system, the workload grew even heavier; the mayor’s office now supervised taxes and passports. Accordingly, the *maire* of Elberfeld, Karl Brügelmann, who had already served as mayor in 1792, complained to his superior that no kind of honour could compensate for the loss of time, the concern about his poorly paid subordinates, and the personal demands brought about by the office.³⁰ The director of Barmen, Carl Brecht, was not happy about his assignment either and repeatedly asked to be discharged from his duties. Accordingly, he consistently signed all papers as ‘temporary director’. This attitude, however, was not a token of hostility towards the French government. Rather, the French administration faced the same kind of problems in France after

²⁷ Werth and Lauffs, *Barmen*.

²⁸ Severin-Barboutie, *Herrschaftspolitik*, 163–182; Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, *Businessmen and Politics in the Rhineland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Michael Rowe, ‘Between Empire and Home Town. Napoleonic Rule on the Rhine, 1799–1814’, *The Historical Journal* 42: 3 (1999), 643–674.

²⁹ Warren R. Isom, ‘Elberfelder Bürgermeisterfamilien am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts’, *Romerike Berge* 26 (1976), 8–15; and Edmund Strutz, *Die Abmentafeln der Elberfelder Bürgermeister und Stadtrichter von 1708–1808* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Degener und Co., 1963).

³⁰ Severin-Barboutie, *Herrschaftspolitik*, 172.

the introduction of the new administrative system, which, despite all the changes attached to it, continued to rely on the unquestioned duty of the elites to commit themselves to the public good and to perform administrative functions.³¹ Accordingly, the French administration relied on the proven administrative skill of these men to instal their system of rule that, in the end, very much benefitted the notables.³² The French system also allowed the mercantile elite of the Wupper valley to continue their practice of local governance to which, despite their grumbling, they dedicated a good share of their time. Their commitment to the public good was not just idle talk. Consequently, French rule had remarkably little effect on the valley's population.³³

At the supra-local level, however, French rule became noticeable, and those effects trickled down in the end and affected people at the local level greatly. I am talking, of course, about the Continental System and the Continental Blockade established by Napoleon with the aim of bringing the British to their knees.³⁴ As the Grand Duchy of Berg was not part of the French Empire, its inhabitants bore the dire side-effects of Napoleon's economic warfare—high tariffs walled off the hitherto important French market as well as those of tributary states in Italy or in the Netherlands. Important raw materials—dyestuffs, cotton, soap, etc.—became hard to get as the British retaliated with a sea blockade. Exporting goods on neutral ships became increasingly difficult as both the British and the French came to regard them as fair prizes. Quite often, German entrepreneurs had to write off goods transported on seized ships and face the losses.³⁵

³¹ Ibid., 171.

³² Diefendorf, *Businessmen*, 195–203; Rowe, 'Between Empire and Home Town'.

³³ This was a general tendency in the Rheinbund states. Andreas Fahrmeier, 'Centralisation versus Particularisation in the "Third Germany"', in Michael Rowe ed., *Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe. State-formation in an Age of Upheaval, c. 1800–1815* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 107–120, here 116.

³⁴ On the continental system and its effects see François Crouzet, 'Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792–1815', *The Journal of Economic History* 24: 4 (1964), 567–588; and Katherine Aaslestad and Johan Joor eds., *Revisiting Napoleon's Continental System. Local, Regional and European Experiences* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

³⁵ On the disastrous effects see Ralf Banken, 'Bergische Waren und englische Kaperer. Der Einfluss der Kontinentalperre auf die Wirtschaftsentwicklung Westdeutschlands', in

The mercantile elite of the Wupper valley did not twiddle their thumbs in the face of these difficulties but tried their best to influence Napoleon's policies to their advantage. However, it would be an over-simplification to presume only material interests motivated the merchants' actions. Rather, their motivation grew out of a patriarchal concern for their workers' livelihoods as well as the desire to forestall the social unrest caused by an economic downturn. Social unrest was, by the way, feared not only by the elites but also by the silent majority of shop- and innkeepers, master tradesmen, established workers, and their dependents. It was this silent majority who had for the past centuries accepted and thus enabled the rule exercised by the mercantile elite. This acceptance was mostly due to traditional thinking, which advocated the social betters as natural rulers of the community. This proclivity was also very much furthered by the rather conservative teachings of the parish priests in the Wupper valley.³⁶ However, those who had suffered most greatly the dire economic consequences of the Napoleonic policies and who were not yet fully established in life, such as journeymen and hired labourers, vented their frustration with the established order forcefully. It was they as well as military deserters who became the principal agents of revolt in Napoleonic Germany—which points to the fact that these revolts need to be studied in the context of a premodern moral economy rather than as expressions of a politically mature contention with foreign rule.³⁷

In 1807, Napoleon threatened to close the Italian market for the Berg textile products, classifying them as 'English goods'. Consequently, the mercantile elite set several wheels of political intervention in motion to prevent the closure of this important market. Backed by the merchant community of Elberfeld, Barmen, and several surrounding towns, the commercial traveller Johann Wilhelm Fischer from Barmen drafted a petition and circulated it during his tour on the Italian peninsula among

Jan-Otmar Hesse e.a. eds., *Moderner Kapitalismus. Wirtschafts- und unternehmenshistorische Beiträge*. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 325–342.

³⁶ Satoshi Murayama, *Konfession und Gesellschaft in einem Gewerbezentrum des frühneuzeitlichen Deutschlands. Das Wuppertal (Elberfeld-Barmen) von 1650 bis 1820* (Tokyo: Keio Tsushin, 1990).

³⁷ Edward P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present* 50: 1 (1971), 76–136; and Helmut Berding ed., *Soziale Unruhen in Deutschland während der Französischen Revolution* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988).

his Italian contacts to collect signatures. The petition contained detailed information on the Berg products, their prices, and on the volume of trade. Furthermore, when the petition was finally presented to the Viceroy of Italy, Fischer stressed that comparable French products were more expensive and that a prohibition of the Berg textiles would entail negative consequences for the Italian balance of trade. The Viceroy was sufficiently persuaded to entrust his minister of finance with the petition to take it to the latter's meeting with Napoleon in Warsaw.³⁸ In this instance, features that we have already observed during the *Garnnabrung* struggle surface again: the merchants organised collectively, drafted a very detailed petition and thus provided their ruler with a hands-on collection of material allowing him to take an informed decision. As in pre-revolutionary times, the merchants emerged as policy makers without official positions.³⁹

Further interventions, however, achieved no such satisfactory conclusions. Not even a year after the exemption had been granted, the Napoleonic administration repealed the act, probably due to the lobbying of merchant manufacturers located on the left bank of the Rhine, which by the grace of geography, was part of the French Empire.⁴⁰ Another Berg delegation to Paris brought no results, even though the two delegates managed to speak to high-ranking persons such as Joaquim Murat, their former ruler. Shortly after, in 1810, against the backdrop of the fully established Continental System and its dire economic consequences for the export-oriented Berg economy, the mercantile elites of the Grand Duchy initiated a new wave of petitions. The many petitions sent by administrative units—such as Solingen, Remscheid, Barmen, and

³⁸ Johann W. Fischer, 'Nachrichten aus meinem Leben', *ZBGV* 58 (1929), 33–182. On Fischer see Joachim Studberg, 'Johann Wilhelm Fischer (1779–1845). Ein Unternehmer im Aufbruch zur Moderne', in Karl-Hermann Beeck ed., *Bergische Unternehmerngestalten im Umbruch zur Moderne* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Schmidt, 1996), 121.

³⁹ The sequence of events is unclear, but Napoleon was certainly the recipient of yet another petition from the Grand Duchy's merchants, presented to him by Gerhard Siebel, also a merchant from Elberfeld. Siebel had been selected thanks to his linguistic abilities to accompany the Grand Duchy's official delegation put together by the estates of Berg and consisting of several high-ranking and noble officials. According to tradition, upon his lone arrival in Warsaw, Siebel entered into negotiations lasting for weeks and achieved a continued exemption from tariffs for the ribbons and fabrics produced in the Grand Duchy. See Marie-Luise Baum, 'Gerhard Siebel', *Wuppertaler Biographien* 2 (1960), 115–124.

⁴⁰ Diefendorf, *Businessmen*, 165–184; Schmidt, *Großherzogtum*, 248–252.

Elberfeld—underscored the desire for the Grand Duchy to join France permanently. Thousands of carefully collected signatures seconded the request, reflecting the high level of organisational skill. Again, careful statistical material flanked the petition, stressing the strengths of the Berg industries, their current hard-pressed situation, and the mutual economic benefits of incorporating the Berg territory into the French state. In Elberfeld, 1150 heads of household signed the petition and in Barmen, 584.⁴¹ It remains arguable whether all these *patres familias* welcomed the full consequences of such a unification or whether they were either coaxed or bullied by members of the mercantile elite to affix their signature to these documents. The merchants certainly had their arguments ready and also, as employers of an ample part of the population, the economic clout to advance their case. All these efforts, however, came to no avail, even though several of the Grand Duchy's French administrators sympathised with the popular movement.

The economic situation worsened at the end of the year 1810, when France annexed Holland and the Grand Duchy's merchants consequently lost their access to the sea. They applied the *ultima ratio* of political intervention and decided independently from their government to send a delegation to Paris to appeal for unification with France. The delegation consisted of two merchants from Elberfeld and Barmen as well as two representatives from the *departments* Ruhr and Sieg. They even managed to secure—in the form of a letter—the support of the French commissioner, Jacques Claude Beugnot, for their intervention, even if other members of the administration denied the merchants the right to act as legitimate representatives of the territory's interests.⁴² The administrators' contradictory stance highlights that the establishment perceived the time-honoured modes of intervention discriminatively, which was particularly true for attempts to speak for a larger body of the population. It seems unlikely, however, that such qualms were at the core of Napoleon's decision to ignore the merchant's delegation. Rather, the concerns of the Berg economy did not command the attention of the French

⁴¹ Municipal Archive Wuppertal I 91. All in all, 4178 heads of household signed the petition. See also Arnim Owzar, 'Eine Nation auf Widerruf. Zum politischen Bewusstseinswandel im Königreich Westphalen', in Andreas Gestrich and Helga Schnabel-Schüle eds., *Fremde Herrscher - fremdes Volk. Inklusions- und Exklusionsfiguren bei Herrschaftswechseln in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2006), 43–72, here 65.

⁴² Severin-Barboutie, *Herrschaftspolitik*, 284.

emperor, who was absorbed with preparations for the Russian campaign of 1812. Napoleon did not receive them and they returned home without success. Notwithstanding the merchants' endeavours, Napoleon and his administration regarded all the latter Berg interventions as an infringement on French economic interests and therefore rejected them. The Berg merchants had reached the end of the road of legitimate political intervention.

Despite these disappointments, French rule continued to serve important functions and, because of these, local elites accepted French governance. Above all, French rule upheld order. Just how much the mercantile elite and townspeople appreciated this stabilising function becomes apparent during the so-called *Knüppelrussenaufstand* (Russian uprising) in 1813.⁴³ Since 1810, unemployment in the Grand Duchy had been running high. Newly increased tariffs for salt and tobacco had led to several bouts of unrest. The population protested also against general conscription, which had been introduced in the Grand Duchy to feed the imperial army. While elite merchant families quickly devised a system of paying for replacements, thus saving their sons from military service, the lower orders usually had no such choice.⁴⁴ The protests culminated in 1813 after news of Napoleon's defeat in Russia circulated during conscription drives. In several towns, among them Elberfeld and Barmen, a mob formed and threatened tumult. Chief among the protestors were apprentices and journeymen whose chances to earn their livelihood had suffered most during the years past. They plundered shops and extorted money and arms from the wealthier inhabitants.⁴⁵ The local elites were quick to repress the insurgency, calling to the administration in Düsseldorf for military assistance, which put a bloody end to the affair. In Elberfeld, the cavalry cruelly opened fire on the protesting masses. Many of the insurgents were executed, while the rest were pressed into military service and

⁴³ Sergueï N. Iskjul, 'Der Aufstand im Großherzogtum Berg gegen Napoleon im Jahre 1813', *ZGBV* 92 (1986), 57–68; Mahmoud Kandil, *Sozialer Protest gegen das napoleonische Herrschaftssystem. Äußerungen der Bevölkerung des Großherzogtums Berg 1808–1813 aus dem Blickwinkel der Obrigkeit* (Aachen: Mainz, 1995); Schmidt, *Großherzogtum*, 328–334; and Severin-Barboutie, *Herrschaftspolitik*, 288–296.

⁴⁴ Rowe, 'Between Empire and Home Town', 670–672.

⁴⁵ Severin-Barboutie, *Herrschaftspolitik*, 290.

sent to the French Atlantic coast to protect France against a British invasion. The French administration and local elites united on the primacy of order.

The French period in the Wupper valley demonstrates that, despite fundamental administrative changes, many factors of political life remained stable. Unlike towns where the old elites had based their power on formal structures such as guilds or on seniority, Elberfeld and Barmen had always been dominated by a dynamic elite quickly adapting to economic and social changes. Here, the French system of ‘notable rule’ confirmed an already existing social reality and in fact strengthened the mercantile elites, despite the abolition of old chartered rights. On a higher plane of political intervention, the many different undertakings of the merchants demonstrated how older forms of political intervention were still in use and accepted by both the governed as well as the government. Both sides acknowledged that the Napoleonic policy was dictated by the terms of its imperial policies. Relegated to the second-class status of subjects outside imperial privilege, the merchants of the Grand Duchy of Berg lost much of their former political clout though, which had stemmed from their economic pre-eminence and expertise.⁴⁶

THE CONTINUOUS EFFECTS OF POLITICAL TRADITION: THE WUPPER VALLEY AS PART OF PRUSSIA

After Napoleon’s defeat at Leipzig in 1813, his empire began to crumble. The Grand Duchy of Berg became part of a *Generalgouvernement* (general government) under Prussian leadership, a political status that was formalised at the Congress of Vienna. Thenceforth, the Wupper valley was folded into the *Rheinprovinz* (Rhine Province). Much has been written about this province’s particular standing within the Prussian state; it was a far more industrialised, urbanised, and ‘modern’ part of the country than its East Elbian counterparts, not to mention that the larger part of the population was Catholic.⁴⁷ Much attention has also been paid to

⁴⁶ See on the difference between French ‘inner Empire’ and ‘outer Empire’ politics John Breuilly, ‘Napoleonic Germany and State-Formation’, in Michael Rowe ed., *Collaboration and Resistance in Napoleonic Europe. State Formation in an Age of Upheaval, c.1800–1815* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 121–152, esp. 123–127.

⁴⁷ To mention just two of the more influential works, see Karl-Georg Faber, *Die Rheinlande zwischen Restauration und Revolution. Probleme der rheinischen Geschichte*

the emergence of a particular kind of Rhenish liberalism which favoured economic over political and social liberalism.⁴⁸ Although these developments form the backdrop for the changes in the Wupper valley in the coming decades, our concern here remains the rapport between local and supra-local power and the role political practice played in this process. A close-up view will provide a better understanding of the developments unfolding on a larger scale.⁴⁹

In 1816, North-western and Central Europe experienced one of the worst periods of bad weather in history. Unbeknownst to the contemporaries, the incessant rain and cold was caused by the ashes and dust in the Earth's atmosphere following the eruption of the Tambora volcano in the South Pacific.⁵⁰ The population was threatened by an extremely poor harvest and consequently famine. In this situation, the mercantile elites of Barmen and Elberfeld each formed a committee to buy grain on a grand scale. The aim of the so-called *Kornverein* (grain association) was to provide the population with sufficient bread at affordable prices. The required capital was raised by issuing interest-paying shares as well as by debt guarantees (much of the buying and selling was done with long periods of payment). The voluntary directors furthermore contributed their mercantile know-how as well as professional contacts, demonstrating

von 1814 bis 1848 im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen Publizistik (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1966); and Reinhart Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848*. 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett, 1975).

⁴⁸ Hans-Joachim Hamann, 'Nationalökonomie und Öffentlichkeit im Rheinland und in Westfalen vom Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts bis 1830. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Frühliberalismus und seiner Gegenströmungen' (PhD dissertation, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, 1978); Elisabeth Fehrenbach, 'Bürgertum und Liberalismus. Die Umbruchsperiode 1770–1815', in Lothar Gall ed., *Bürgertum und bürgerlich-liberale Bewegung in Mitteleuropa seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 1997), 1–62; and Joachim Stephan, *Der Rheinische Provinziallandtag 1826–1840. Eine Studie zur Repräsentation im frühen Vormärz* (Köln: Rheinland-Verlag, 1991).

⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion on the Rhenish bourgeoisie and its stance in socio-economic matters see Rudolf Boch, *Grenzenloses Wachstum? Das rheinische Wirtschaftsbürgertum und seine Industrialisierungsdebatte 1814–1857* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991). Several merchants from Elberfeld and Barmen featured prominently in these debates.

⁵⁰ Wolfgang Behringer, *Tambora und das Jahr ohne Sommer. Wie ein Vulkan die Welt in die Krise stürzte* (München: C. H. Beck, 2015).

both their civic spirit as well as their elite status. To Barmen alone the associations imported up to forty carts of grain per week.⁵¹

The grain associations' endeavours were accompanied by several publications, which provide revealing insights into the towns' civic structure.⁵² Jakob Aders, the driving force behind the Elberfeld association, recounts how the very rich members of the community initially hesitated to buy the associations' shares, fearing the loss of their money and belittling the danger posed by hunger. Rather, it was the middle classes who readily signed up for the allotted shares, each costing 500 *Taler*. In the following year, the names of all of those who had contributed were made public in a printed brochure, as their names 'merited to be bequeathed to their descendants'.⁵³ To prevent the re-selling of the subsidised grain to the surrounding countryside at a higher price, a system of 'bread coins' was introduced which relied on volunteers distributing weekly thousands of these coins among the population. In his brochure, Aders praised 'the good sense of the Elberfeld people throughout all ranks' as townspeople from all the parts of the town participated. The names of these volunteers were listed as well. Civic spirit therefore relied on being publicly visible and on being publicised. This idea lay also behind Johann Wilhelm Fischer's account of the Barmen grain association's history in which he detailed his endeavours for the public good as the association's director. He also used his commitment to further his social standing within the town's elite.⁵⁴ Both Aders and Fischer felt fully legitimised in their actions by having been elected by the associations' members, despite the informality of the organisations at the start. The idea of 'doing good' overrode any such concerns. This points to the fact that the mercantile elite in these instances had their political actions legitimised *ex post* by a beneficial outcome, which they then used, in turn, to legitimise further interventions.

⁵¹ On the corn associations see Eberhard Illner, *Bürgerliche Organisierung in Elberfeld, 1775–1850* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Schmidt, 1982), 116–120.

⁵² Jakob Aders, *Wie schützte sich Elberfeld in den Jahren der Not 1816–1817 durch seinen Bürgersinn vor dem Brotmangel?* (Elberfeld, 1817); and Johann W. Fischer, 'Geschichte des Kornvereins (1816/17) zu Barmen', hg. von Richard Poppelreuter, *ZBGV* 50 (1917), 252–312.

⁵³ Aders, *Wie schützte sich Elberfeld*, 4.

⁵⁴ Studberg, 'Johann Wilhelm Fischer', 144–146.

The grain associations' success story—both towns were spared a famine and the Elberfeld association even concluded its affairs with a profit of 10,000 *Taler* that was invested into the building of a municipal hospital—attests once more to the high level of organisational skill achieved by the civic government and its mercantile members. It also shows their independence from their government, taking action where the administration remained inert. The Prussian officials opened public grain storages only when the harvest's negative impact was already palpable, and they also failed to import grain as quickly and inexpensively as the Wupper valley merchants. They could not prevent the bread price from rising to extreme heights in other parts of the *Rheinprovinz*. Accordingly, the important liberal publicist Johann Friedrich Benzenberg hailed the Wupper valley merchants as a shining example of civic spirit and skill, advising the government to take their cue from them.⁵⁵

As elsewhere in the Rhineland, the mercantile elite continued to run municipal politics in their own fashion, even though the important post of mayor was turned into a salaried one and left to professionals.⁵⁶ Until 1845 when the Prussian municipal code was finally introduced in the *Rheinprovinz*, the city council was appointed by the government after consultation with the mayor, who usually directed the government's attention towards the more eminent and available local citizens. The power differences between the municipal council and mayor in the Wupper valley are illustrated by an incident in 1828 when the Prussian government in Düsseldorf, by no means a revolutionary force, asked for greater social diversity in Elberfeld's municipal council. To the district administrator, the Elberfeld city council seemed to consist of no one but the 'moneyed classes', and he directed the mayor to replace half its members so as to have all ranks as well as city districts represented (the mercantile elite lived only in certain parts of the town). The mayor, Rütger Brüning, a former merchant himself, replied that he would not be able to single out any member of the municipal council whose services

⁵⁵ Johann Friedrich Benzenberg, 'Der Kornverein in Elberfeld', in Johann Friedrich Benzenberg ed., *Ueber Handel und Gewerbe, Steuern und Zölle* (Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der Dt. Demokrat. Republik, 1977), 229–253.

⁵⁶ For comparison with towns such as Crefeld, Aachen or Cologne see Diefendorf, *Businessmen*, 268–279.

were no longer required.⁵⁷ Even though in the following years some of the members left their post, the group's socio-economic background remained the same and demonstrates how the old elite continued to hang on to its power despite changed circumstances.⁵⁸

On the broader plane of politics, one can see similar conservative tendencies, which provided stability despite the change of ruler. This applied to the government as well as to the governed. Part of the Prussian reform programme mentioned above had been the promise of a written constitution. However, as other problems seemed more urgent, the Crown postponed the promulgation of a constitution. In 1815, King Friedrich Wilhelm III renewed his promise. Beginning in 1817, several towns in the *Rheinprovinz* had started to send addresses to the king, saluting him as their new sovereign and reminding him ever so politely of his constitutional promise.⁵⁹ When the Prussian chancellor visited Elberfeld in 1818, the town's representatives also presented him with an address, stressing their trust in him to establish quickly an estate-based assembly and their representation therein. It was a cautiously phrased document, stressing municipal worries more than explosive topics, such as tax equity. Hardenberg, the king's chief state minister, also received a second petition that was much longer and contained far more detail. In this document, the Elberfeld merchants followed the old tradition of providing the administration with information from a hands-on perspective. They listed all their economic desires: direct access to the East Elbian territories, renegotiation with the Netherlands regarding transit duties on the Rhine, an allowance for military service because the conscripts were needed for the factories and, finally, the reimbursement of a government loan.⁶⁰ As is shown by Hardenberg's reaction, the Elberfeld merchants

⁵⁷ Hermann Herberts, *Alles ist Kirche und Handel... Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft des Wuppertals im Vormärz und in der Revolution 1848/49* (Neustadt an der Aisch: Schmidt, 1980), 81.

⁵⁸ Friedrich Lenger, 'Bürgertum und Stadtverwaltung in rheinischen Großstädten des 19. Jahrhunderts. Zu einem vernachlässigten Aspekt bürgerlicher Herrschaft', in Lothar Gall ed., *Stadt und Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Oldenbourg, 1990), 97–169.

⁵⁹ Faber, *Rheinlande*, 273–294; Peter Ludger Kann, *Adressen rheinischer Städte in der preussischen Verfassungsfrage (1817/18)* (Köln: Bachem, 1920).

⁶⁰ The texts are reprinted in Johannes R. Brüning, *Annalen der Stadt Elberfeld. Enthält die denkwürdigsten Ereignisse der Jahres 1814/15* (Elberfeld: Sam. Lucas, 1816).

gauged the situation well. The constitutional address received no immediate reply yet the economic one did and a very positive one at that: Hardenberg promised to deal with the merchants' concerns promptly. The older forms of intervention remained intact—they not only outlived the many ruptures in the wake of the French Revolution but even shaped the constitutional movement.⁶¹

THE MAINTENANCE OF ORDER IN EVER-CHANGING TIMES

Political rule in early modern times was a negotiated process. Scholars specialising in this time period have scrutinised the many different forms of possible political intervention and adjusted older notions of the absolutist state and the absolute monarch's power. Scholars concentrating on the centuries after 1800, however, have often overlooked the pertinence of these findings for their time period because they are focused on changes brought about by modern times. By highlighting political practices exercised by a fairly tightly circumscribed social group under a changing political regime, this paper has tried to overcome this dichotomy between early modern and modern times by emphasising persistent modes of political practice between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The chapter has shown that urban elites used petitions as a channel of communication continuously throughout the period and that all the rulers accepted them as legitimate means of intervention. They helped the mercantile elites under scrutiny to manoeuvre adroitly through challenging times, often to protect their interests. The predominantly positive reception of the petitions' contents up to Prussian times also shows how the administration continued to rely on the subjects' expertise for their policies, defeating to some extent the purpose of installing a more professional administration. With the exception of Napoleon's imperial politics, the close interests between business and government were strong enough to ally them as elites on a supra-local plane. Furthermore, all the supra-local governments scrutinised here relied heavily on the established elites to exercise power and to maintain local order. The latter point was of particular interest to the Wupper valley elites as well; it might even be

⁶¹ This point is also made by Beat Kümin and Andreas Würgler, 'Petitions, Gravamina and the Early Modern State. Local Influence on Central Legislation in England and Germany (Hesse)', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 17: 1 (1997), 39–60, here 59.

said that this was their prime concern. Owing to this shared aim, the newly installed governments found the local elites willing collaborators.

The elites' willingness to serve in public functions, however, did not stem solely from their wish to exercise power but also from an unquestioned sense of duty towards the public good, or rather civic society. The economic benefits were a welcome side effect, which further redounded to the advantage of their dependents. As was palpable during the uprising under French rule, a large part of the population also relied on the elite to preserve order, gladly accepting their pre-eminence as guarantors of stability.⁶² The commitment of the wider population within the grain associations during the famine 1816/17 demonstrates pointedly that the idea of civic spirit was not exclusive to the elites.

Two general observations can be drawn from this case study. First, it is not surprising that the Wupper valley mercantile elite managed to stay in power. As studies of elites and regime changes have made clear, a change of political elites is possible only if there is a reservoir of counter-elites.⁶³ That was lacking in the Wupper valley and in much of the Rhineland. However, by focusing on the elites themselves and their benefits, it is very often forgotten that an elite's continuance might also be favoured by those not belonging to the elite. By concentrating on the elite's stabilising function for both economic as well as (local) political concerns, this chapter has tried to illuminate why local elites continued to be widely accepted as important intermediaries between the new rulers and the existing population. They helped their fellow citizens as well their dependents to successfully navigate the many changes brought about by political upheaval.

Second, by focusing on political practices on the local as well as the supra-local level, the intermediating acts of the elites have become apparent. Their practice and its reception show that not only the governed needed to domesticate the new but also the administrators. All of them relied on tried-and-tested modes of political intervention. It is striking that, despite the merchants' economic importance, their political standing

⁶² On the ambivalent reply of the lower classes to revolutionary change and their preference of order over new rights see also Joris Oddens, 'The Experience of State Formation. Chronicling and Petitioning on the Dutch Island of Ameland (C. 1780–1815)', *National Identities* 21: 1 (2019), 1–22.

⁶³ Mattei Dogan and John Higley, 'Elites, Crises, and Regimes in Comparative Analysis', *Historical Social Research* 37: 1 (1998), 269–291.

was never formally legitimised on a supra-local level and was always dependent on ad hoc negotiation. They nevertheless managed to pursue their ends successfully and to consolidate their power.

Eventually, the Wupper valley elites, just like bourgeois elites elsewhere, were very well placed for the ensuing class struggles of the nineteenth century, a placement they owed very much to their expert handling of local and supra-local politics. By then, it was not carts full of textiles, busy weavers, and yarn along the banks of a river which backed their economic might and political power but rather full-scale industrialisation with steam engines, tens of thousands of factory workers, and a heavily polluted river. Under the conditions of full-scale industrial-capitalist class society, they would have to negotiate the question of order anew, a question that would then be posed not so much by changing government but rather, by the masses who no longer accepted the elites' ideals of government and order. How they reacted to this and what kind of political practices they resorted to in this instance requires another investigation altogether.

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Indigenous Citizens and Black Republicans: Continuities and Evolutions of Subalterns' Political Visions and Repertoires in Post-independence Colombia and Mexico

James E. Sanders

Reading the 1869 words of the pequeño cabildo de Indígenas (indigenous village council) of Riosucio, Colombia, one could easily surmise that nothing in indigenous people's politics had changed since independence (1810–1819), even almost half a century after the fall of the colonial system and the inauguration of new independent nation states in Latin America. The indigenous petitioners begged the governor to shield their *resguardos* (communal landholdings that were self-governed) from farmers who coveted their property, lands 'granted by the king...which

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since the time of our ancestors have been cultivated freely'.¹ Instead of a new republican politics of citizens participating in a democratic polity after independence, indigenous communities—in this and many other petitions from both Colombia and Mexico—seemed not to have abandoned their colonial (or more problematically and inaccurately 'pre-modern') identities and politics at all. Instead, they often relied on petitions (part of the 'traditional set of practices' that Pollmann and te Velde discuss in the Introduction) and a colonially established identity of 'Indígena' (a racial and cultural, but primarily legal category), using a language of misery inherited from the colonial period and pleas for protection from a powerful patron, and employing justifications based on colonial precedents, all used to protect the colonial institution of the *resguardo*. Indigenous politics seemed to exhibit remarkable continuity during the long Age of Revolution.

Until recently, assertions of political continuity between the colonial and national periods in Latin America would hardly be surprising. While, as Pollmann and te Velde note, the European historiography has overprivileged change during the age of Atlantic Revolutions and underestimated continuity, among Latin Americanists the opposite historiographic trends have defined the field. The traditional Latin Americanist historiography emphasized how little things changed from colony to independence (even if these works rarely focused on popular politics and repertoires).² The most important work arguing this point, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America* by Barbara and Stanley Stein, was a field-defining book emphasizing the immense historical weight of the colonial period in shaping national period Latin America. Another influential book, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* by Tulio Halperín Donghi, argued that the whole first 60 years after independence was essentially 'a long pause',

¹ Vocales of the pequeño cabildo of Riosucio District (over 300 names) to Governor of the State, Villa de Riosucio, 1 August 1869, Archivo Central del Cauca, Popayán, Colombia (hereafter ACC), Archivo Muerto, package 105, file 74. All translations are mine. I have chosen to not translate the Spanish 'indígena' as 'Indian', in an effort to recognize the complexity of that identity.

² Stanley Stein and Barbara Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America: Essays on Economic Dependence* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970); Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1971); Edward Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

continuing the colonial period, until the 1880s.³ More problematically, writers of world history who do not study Latin America have interpreted this vision of colonial continuity as meaning Latin America never really joined ‘modern’ revolutionary societies, seeing new nineteenth-century Latin American states as merely façades of republicanism, failed nations whose subjects cared not a whit about identities beyond the local, and certainly having no role in the story of the development of republicanism and democracy.⁴

However, a new generation of scholars has convincingly challenged these notions of nineteenth-century stagnation and failure. Instead, scholars have begun to uncover a vibrant epoch of political experimentation, driven by both elites and popular actors, and massive changes in both discourses and practices of politics. Latin Americans had created vibrant republics, in which debates over the meanings and values of citizenship, rights, democracy, and popular sovereignty raged; popular groups vociferously claimed citizenship in the new nations and employed a vast repertoire of political practices to enter the public, political sphere.⁵ Instead of continuity, in this new historiography, it seems as if Latin

³ Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* (Madrid: Alianza, 2005), 135. For this school of thought, only in the 1880s (if you followed economic modernization arguments), the 1930s (political modernization), or the 1960s (revolution), did Latin America finally have a rupture with the colonial past.

⁴ David Saul Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999); Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011); Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

⁵ This literature has grown too large to cite comprehensively, but some key works include François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias. ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Madrid: Mapfre, 1992); Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Post-colonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); James Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Hilda Sabato, *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in 19th-Century Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018); Guy Thompson, ‘Mid-Nineteenth-Century Modernities in the Hispanic World’, in Nicola Miller and Stephen Hart, eds., *When Was Latin America Modern?* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 69–90; Fernando López-Alves, ‘Modernization Theory Revisited: Latin America, Europe, and the U.S. in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century’, *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 38: 1 (2011), 243–279. For a review of some of these changes, see William Acree, ‘The Promise of a New Nineteenth Century’, *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 53: 2 (2019), 435–447.

Americans had revolutionized their societies' political cultures; new nation states, such as Mexico and Colombia, had not just joined the great Age of Revolution, but would exceed the accomplishments of Europe and the United States, at least in regard to extending citizenship and suffrage rights to racial minorities and working-class men.⁶ Of course, this debate is ongoing, and some scholars are pushing back against the nation- and state-formation historiographic revolution. The premiere journal of Latin American History in the United States, the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, recently changed the organization of its book review section to focus on continuity, from the traditional colonial/modern divide to a tripartite (1) early colonial, (2) eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and (3) twentieth century to the present. Some scholars have begun to argue that perhaps the claims of republican political innovation and liberty were just a discourse created by post-independence liberal creole elites to justify their own rule, often by inventing a supposedly mythical colonial past of repression and subjugation.⁷ So, as opposed to the European historiography, in Latin American Studies the traditional works focused on continuity, while a new generation has stressed change (with even more recent works questioning the extent of this change). Thus, Latin America should provide an interesting counterpoint to the North Atlantic-centred essays in this volume. This essay will attempt to engage these ongoing debates, exploring how different social groups in Latin America understood their own actions in terms of embracing the past or forging a new politics for the future.

Indeed, a closer look at indigenous politics in Colombia and Mexico reveals a much more complex picture than the simple maintenance of a colonial, traditional politics. Instead, indigenous communities were exploiting old practices to control change, deal with new institutions, and find belonging in new nations. They reimagined republican citizenship as a strategic identity in order to protect those colonial rights and privileges in the context of new nation states. They vociferously claimed national citizenship, engaged in heretofore unseen levels of political organizing in pan-resguardo meetings, and exhibited a powerful

⁶ Clément Thibaud, 'Race et citoyenneté dans les Amériques (1770–1910)', *Le Mouvement Social* 252: 3 (2015), 5–19.

⁷ Lina Del Castillo, *Crafting a Republic for the World: Scientific, Geographic, and Historiographic Inventions of Colombia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 1–25.

knowledge of and engagement with republican party politics. Yet *Indígenas* were presented with a problem: the new category of citizenship, as imagined by Liberal elites, did not recognize ‘*Indígenas*’ as potential citizens, but, rather, desired a universalized subject whose primary identity was in relation to the nation-state—one could be a citizen only by abandoning indigenous identity and lifeways (such as giving up the communal property of *resguardos* for individual private property). Indigenous peoples responded by crafting a new vision of indigenous citizenship—one petition claimed to represent ‘thousands of citizens of the indigenous class’—that claimed the rights of citizenship while also protecting indigenous privileges to local self-government and communal landholding and a particular, rather than universal, identity.⁸ Colombia’s indigenous communities thus reformulated republican notions of equality, away from a juridical and individual definition, towards a definition centred on the creation and maintenance of community and of equal rights to defend that community.

This essay will first explore indigenous politics, and its creative mixture of colonial and republican tropes. I will then briefly turn to a group—Afro-Latin Americans—whose discourse explicitly discounted this volume’s theme of continuities. Afro-Colombians and Afro-Mexicans tended to insist that their politics and identities were new. While it is certainly true that Afro-Latin American communities built upon and maintained customs used to resist slavery, a relative lack of traditional prerogatives or a colonial identity that granted some degree of status helps explain why Afro-Americans, across the hemisphere, played such leading roles, far beyond their numerical weight in society, in fomenting and implementing revolutions and new republican politics. They had little to lose and were thus very eager to imagine a new politics and identity against a despotic old regime. A comparison of indigenous and Afro-Latin American politics in Latin America reveals striking similarities with events around the Atlantic World and helps to develop this volume’s themes, revealing how popular groups played a critical role in the ‘development of citizenship and democracy’; how ‘old repertoires were also used to get

⁸ The *cabildo de Indígenas* of Guachucal and Colimba to Legislators, Guachucal, August 12, 1873, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 124, file 60.

new, revolutionary results'; and how popular actors engaged in collective strategies for 'domesticating the new'.⁹

Indigenous and Afro-American actors negotiated with the new Colombian and Mexican states, that emerged in the 1820s from Spanish colonial rule after long, violent wars for independence. While some petitioners immediately adopted republican and democratic language, others hewed more closely to colonial norms, in the years immediately after independence, as they struggled to adapt to the new regimes.¹⁰ However, by the 1850s, in both Mexico and Colombia, both elite and popular liberals' ascension to power accelerated new discourses of citizenship and rights.¹¹ The ferocious mid-century electoral and military contests in both states between Liberal and Conservative Parties meant that those parties had to negotiate with popular supporters for votes and soldiers. This was not the case everywhere in Latin America, as suggested in Chapter Three by Anna María Stiven for Chile, where a more united elite had less need to bargain with those below.

In Mexico and Colombia, elites and popular groups had to bargain over the meanings of republicanism, thereby transforming politics from the colonial era. I will close by suggesting that while we must recognize the deep continuities with the colonial era—and the at times self-serving discourse of innovation that Liberal elites promulgated to justify their own rule—we must also acknowledge that many people—both wealthy and plebeian—sincerely believed they were living in a new moment, with an innovative politics and novel identities. While recognizing the deep continuities of the past, we must also take seriously that Colombians and Mexicans believed their societies had created a new vision and practice

⁹ See Judith Pollmann and Henk te Velde's "Introduction."

¹⁰ See, for examples, To Emperor Agustín de Iturbide, from 'the female slaves' of Don Isidro González, San Juan November 14, 1822, Archivo General de la Nación, México (hereafter AGNM), Instituciones Gubernamentales: Epoca Moderna y Contemporánea, Administración Pública Federal Siglo XIX (hereafter IG), Fondo Gobernación Siglo XIX, Gobernación, box 54, file 15, sheet 4; 'All the individuals that belong to the parcialidad of Santiago Tlatelolco', to Don Luis Velasquez de la Cadena, México February 4, 1843, AGNM, IG, Fondo Gobernación Siglo XIX, Gobernación, box 259, file 6, sheet 1.

¹¹ James Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*; José Antonio Aguilar Rivera, 'La redención democrática: México 1821–1861', *Historia Mexicana* 69: 1 (2019), 7–41; and Elisa Cárdenas Ayala, 'La escurridiza democracia mexicana', *Alcores. Revista de Historia Contemporánea* 9 (2010), 73–91.

of modernity, and subalterns, both indigenous communities and Afro-Latin Americans, appropriated and refashioned this sense of innovation and modernity to strengthen their positions and make claims on the state and nation.

* * *

Indigenous politics—both its repertoires of action and its discourse—exhibited strong continuities with the colonial regime.¹² Indeed, one of the most common tools in indigenous peoples' repertoire was the petition, a colonial practice now taken into the republican era, during which it was often a constitutionally guaranteed right.¹³ Petitions were both legal requests, but also a form of 'symbolic collective action' that Joris Oddens explores for the Netherlands in Chapter Seven; as in the Netherlands, petitions had remarkable continuity with the old regime, yet popular actors clearly adapted them to the new political reality. Scholars have had some suspicion about using petitions to recover the voice of popular groups, the assumption being that petitions were written by someone other than the signatories (a parish priest or country lawyer, for example) and were just designed to echo what the powerful would have wanted to hear.¹⁴ Certainly, such petitions do exist in the archive.

¹² Marcela Echeverri, *Indian and Slave Royalists in the Age of Revolution: Reform, Revolution, and Royalism in the Northern Andes, 1780–1825* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Eric van Young, *The Other Rebellion: Popular Violence, Ideology, and the Struggle for Independence, 1810–1821* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); and Bianca Premo and Yanna Yannakakis, 'A Court of Sticks and Branches. Indian Jurisdiction in Colonial Mexico and Beyond', *The American Historical Review* 124: 1 (2019) 28–55.

¹³ For repertoires, see Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Charles Tilly, 'Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834', *Social Science History* 17: 2 (1993), 253–280; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Edward Palmer Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York: The New Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Guerrero asserts that indigenous petitioners are basically ventriloquists' dummies, mouthing words written by intermediaries. Andrés Guerrero, 'The Construction of a Ventriloquist's Image. Liberal Discourse and the 'Miserable Indian Race' in Late 19th-Century Ecuador', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 29: 3 (1997), 555–590. For a theoretical version of this position, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313. For a more nuanced and

However, the majority of petitions in Colombia and Mexico are considerably more nuanced. First, while petitioners often had outside help, petitions were as often the product of local intellectuals; usually someone in a village or community knew how to read and write.¹⁵ While, sometimes requiring stamped paper, many Colombian petitions were written on regular paper; petitions could be mailed, delivered by an intermediary, or by a delegation of the petitioners. Second, in Colombia, petitions were not just a reflection of what the powerful wanted to hear, but instead reveal the petitioners' social, cultural, and popular intellectual world. While all petitions were written to the same President or Congress, indigenous petitioners, Afro-Colombian petitioners, and white or mestizo small farmers used radically different discourses and strategies in their petitions. Afro-Colombians stressed equality and service to the Liberal Party as justification to claim citizenship; Indigenous villagers focused on fraternity and their historic rights and traditions to assert citizenship; while the small farmers focused on liberty and their self-declared moral and cultural superiority to demand citizenship.¹⁶ Third, popular petitions asserted discourses that often contradicted or undermined official rhetoric. In Mexico, even after the Porfiriato (the decades-long rule of Porfirio Díaz from 1876–1911) had abandoned a discourse of democratic republicanism for one of order and development, many popular petitions (unlike those of elites) did not attempt to curry favour with the new political tropes, but held fast to the older language of citizenship and rights.¹⁷ As in Anne Sophie Overkamp's Chapter Five on elite petitioning in the Wupper Valley, elite petitioners in Mexico were more likely

careful consideration of these issues, see Romana Falcón, 'El arte de la petición. Rituales de obediencia y negociación, México, segunda mitad del siglo XIX', *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86: 3 (2006), 467–500; and Marc Becker, 'In Search of Tinterillos', *Latin American Research Review* 47: 1 (2012), 95–114.

¹⁵ See *Gaceta Oficial del Cauca* (Popayán July 10, 1866) for the surprisingly high literacy rates in rural Colombia.

¹⁶ See Sanders, *Contentious Republicans*, 18–57.

¹⁷ See, for example, The Undersigned Residents of Guanajuato State to President, México, March 19, 1877, AGNM, IG, Fondo Justicia, Secretaría de Justicia, vol. 69C, exp. 1431; The Undersigned Residents of San Miguel Tesechoacán to President, México, December 18, 1877, Universidad Iberoamericana, Acervos Históricas, México (hereafter UI), Colección Porfirio Díaz (hereafter CPD), file 2, box 3, no. 1280.

to toe the government's line.¹⁸ These popular actors' political values and discourse mattered more than a simple desire to flatter the powerful or echo a meaningless language in hope of securing a favour. The discourse in these Colombian and Mexican petitions is clearly driven from below, not overly determined from above.

Of course, petitions were still strategic instruments of political practice, designed to accomplish some goal (often related to securing or protecting land, but also involving citizenship and voting rights, village political recognition and authority, taxes, monopolies, or abuse of power, among other issues) and to promote the petitioners' own political standing. Petitions from Indígenas usually began by identifying the petitioners as indigenous authorities (*gobernadores* and *regidores* [officers] of the *cabildo pequeño*, the locally chosen councils that governed Indígenas' *resguardos*), such as in an 1852 document, in which petitioners opened by describing themselves as 'the members of the *cabildo pequeño* de Indígenas of Guachucal parish and Muellamuez vice-parish'.¹⁹ The *cabildos pequeños*, indigenous governors, and the *resguardos* they sought to protect were all colonial institutions.

Indigenous petitioners regularly employed a language of misery and debasement common in the colonial era. The *parcialidad* of Pitayó declared itself 'the most wretched and helpless class of society, we are the mine that everyone exploits'.²⁰ Indígenas from three villages in Colombia described themselves as 'wretched Indios' who 'remain in a state of misery'.²¹ They coupled such self-proclaimed weakness with pleas for protection from patriarchal authority figures—once the king, now an independent emperor (under Iturbide in Mexico) or republican governors or presidents. The *cabildo* from Túquerres noted 'that our wretched

¹⁸ Manuel María Alegre to Minister of Development, no place, 1885, UI, CPD, file 10, box 10, no. 4671.

¹⁹ The Members of the *cabildo pequeño* de Indígenas of Guachucal Parish and the vice-parish of Muellamuez to the Provincial Governor, Guachucal, October 4, 1852, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 53, file 56.

²⁰ Governor and Alcaldes of the *parcialidad* of Pitayó to State Governor, Popayán, November 24, 1858, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 67, file 19.

²¹ Indígenas of Toribio, San Francisco, and Tacueyó to Governor of the State, Toribio, May 25, 1868, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 101, file 60.

and unhappy class has not had any help except that which the truly philanthropic government can offer'.²² The Riosucio petitioners also asked that the state governor listen to their 'weak voice' and act 'as our protector'.²³ A village near Barbacoas begged the national president for 'your powerful protection' against the 'corruption of the municipal officials', echoing the common colonial refrain of the good king versus nefarious local deputies.²⁴

Most powerfully, as with the petition that opened this essay, indigenous actors expressly looked back to the past to justify their political position in the new republican political system.²⁵ The pequeño cabildo of Cumbal, Colombia, protested a neighbouring landholder's appropriation of 'our land that for the space of three centuries and with just titles we have possessed'.²⁶ Decades earlier, an indigenous village in Oaxaca, Mexico appealed to the long tradition of support they had under Spanish law and their 'ancient privileges'.²⁷ Another village noted that they possessed 'our lands following the statutes, customs and uses that we have inherited from our ancestors'.²⁸ A petition from a coalition of indigenous councils in Colombia encapsulates many of these themes. By maintaining their

²² Cabildo de Indígenas of Túquerres to President of the Legislature, Túquerres, July 26, 1871, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 112, file 15.

²³ Vocales of the pequeño cabildo of Riosucio District to Governor of the State. Riosucio, August 1, 1869, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 105, file 74.

²⁴ Indígenas from the Felpí River to President, Barbacoas, June 20, 1866, Archivo del Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria, Bogotá, Colombia (hereafter INCORA), Bienes Nacionales, vol. 21, p. 482.

²⁵ See also Mark Thurner, *From Two Republics to One Divided: Contradictions of Postcolonial Nationmaking in Andean Peru* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 146–152; Karen Caplan, *Indigenous Citizens: Local Liberalism in Early National Oaxaca and Yucatan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Sergio Paolo Solano and Roicer Alberto Flórez Bolívar, 'Resguardos indígenas, ganadería y conflictos sociales en Bolívar Grande, 1850–1875', *Historia Crítica* 34 (2007), 92–117; and Isidro Vanegas ed., *El siglo diecinueve colombiano* (Bogotá: Ediciones Plural, 2017).

²⁶ Members of the pequeño cabildo of Cumbal to President of the Sovereign State of Cauca, Cumbal, July 29, 1871, Archivo General de la Nación, Bogotá, Colombia, Sección República, Fondo Ministerio de lo Interior y Relaciones Exteriores, vol. 82, p. 986.

²⁷ José de los Santos Contreras for the común de Santa Gertrudis, Oaxaca to Señor, no place or date [1822] AGNM, IG, Fondo Gobernación Siglo XIX, Gobernación, box 18, file 1, 24.

²⁸ Members of the pequeño cabildo of Túquerres to President of the State Legislature, Túquerres, June 1869 (no day on letter), ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 103, file 3.

resguardos, the councils argued, ‘they conserve and respect their ancient moral and religious traditions handed down by their elders; they conserve their habits of obedience and submission to the political authorities, whose service they are at every day; and they also conserve amongst themselves harmony, good customs, good relations, and true fraternity...’.²⁹ Indigenous politics, using the colonial repertoire, referred directly to the colonial past, was enacted by and relied on colonial institutions, cited colonial law, reified tradition, and maintained many aspects of colonial discourse: misery, mercy, protection, and order. It would seem little had changed in the republic.

However, assuming little had changed since the colonial period would be erroneous. Indigenous peoples in Colombia and Mexico quickly adapted to the new republican system, while also not abandoning strategies and discourses from the colonial past in which they believed and which might still serve their interests. They quickly seized upon the identity of the citizen and an insistence on belonging to the nation, to make claims and protect their lifeways. Indígenas from Yascual, Colombia opened their missive ‘using the right to petition that the constitution conceded to every Granadan’.³⁰ Petitioning was part of the colonial repertoire, but was now also a legal, constitutional right, not just a custom.

Caldono’s pequeño cabildo wrote to the provincial governor to ‘implore the protection’ they deserved due to ‘the fact of belonging to the great Granadan family’ and due to their rights guaranteed by ‘our constitution’.³¹ Indígenas from Santiago, Sibundoy, and Putumayo criticized local bureaucrats who treated them as ‘semi-savages... instead of giving us the rights that the laws and constitution of the Cauca [a state

²⁹ Indigenous Alcalde Mayor of Obando Municipality (with signers from the parcialidades of Potosí, Mayasquer, Yaramal, Cumbal, Guachucal, Muellamuez, Colimba, Carlosama, Caserio de Pastas, Pupiales, Anfelima, Girón, Iles, Ospina, and Puerres) to Secretary of State Government, Ipiales, March 4, 1866, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 94, file 54.

³⁰ Colombia was known as Nueva Granada from 1830–1858. Cabildo pequeño de Indígenas of Yascual to President of the Provincial Legislature, Túquerres, October 8, 1852, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 48, file 4.

³¹ Cabildo de Indígenas of the village of Caldono to Provincial Governor, Caldono, November 19, 1853, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 55, file 85.

in southwestern Colombia] grant to all citizens'.³² An indigenous officer from Sibundoy continued, 'We are free citizens, like any other civilized Caucaño, and, therefore, we are confident that you will not ignore our just and well-founded claim'.³³ Contrary to assertions that they were mostly concerned with local affairs, indigenous peoples eagerly claimed citizenship and membership in the nation.

While *Indígenas* were sure they were citizens and demanded to be treated as such, elite Colombians, especially Liberals, were not so willing to concede that identity to the *Indígenas*. Liberals imagined citizenship as a universal identity, that would supplant older, colonial identities based on religion, corporate membership, locality, or race. A petition from the village of Silvia in 1852 demanded the nearby *resguardos* be divided into individual property. The townspeople claimed the new Liberal government had declared 'equality of rights for all New Granadans'. Equality of law required 'that the *Indígenas* become citizens and property holders;... but to the embarrassment of N.G.[Nueva Granada] within its own territory there today exist, forty-two years after Independence, groups of men with the name communities of *Indígenas*'.³⁴ For elite Liberals, republican equality meant all adult men were equal before the law—there was no place for an identity of *Indígena*, be it either legal and corporate or racial. Liberals warned that until *Indígenas* ceased to be governed by special legislation 'they will never become free citizens and active members of the democratic republic'.³⁵

While Liberals sought to create a Manichean divide between the colonial and republican eras and between universal citizenship and a particular corporate identity, Mexico and Colombia's *Indígenas* refused this choice. Instead they formulated their own vision of indigenous citizenship, that combined belonging to the republican nation, with all the constitutional

³² The three *pequeños cabildos* of Santiago, Sibundoy, and Putumayo to State Legislators, Santiago, January 20, 1870, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 112, file 8.

³³ Members of the *cabildo pequeño de Indígenas* and adults of the village of Sibundoy to State President, Sibundoy, November 8, 1874, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 129, file 45.

³⁴ Ellipses in text. Citizens and Residents of Silvia parish (over 45 names) to Senators and Representatives (national), Silvia, March 19, 1852, Archivo del Congreso, Bogotá, Colombia (hereafter ADC), 1852, Senado, Informes de Comisión IV, 137.

³⁵ Anselmo Soto Arana and E. León to Deputies, Popayán, September 9, 1871, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 112, file 2.

rights that guaranteed, with an identity of being ‘Indígena’ and all the particular rights and privileges that identity carried.

Immediately after independence, the village of Santa Marta Chichihualtepec, Oaxaca, in a land dispute with a nearby hacienda, celebrated the new political situation: ‘We enjoy our complete liberty, shed of the yoke that had so much oppressed us everywhere’. They combined this new talk of independence with an older flattery of the new Emperor, ‘V.M.I’ or Your Majesty Iturbide, who only wanted the ‘complete happiness of his children’. The campesinos had travelled to Mexico City to protest against a local landowner who had abused ‘our rights’. They begged Iturbide to relieve them of the ‘miseries and indignities’ they had suffered, and to act quickly as they were ‘dying of hunger at this court due to the lack of resources we have, as we only are eating some hard tortillas that we have brought’.³⁶ Only a few years into a new nation, indigenous people combined an older discourse of misery and protection, and appeals to the king, with a new talk of liberty and rights—all to protect their colonial landholdings that they enjoyed as ‘Indígenas’.

Thirty years later, Indígenas from San Andrés (Guanajuato, Mexico) petitioned to secure lands, citing their ancient, colonial titles, but mixing this with claims to have rights in ‘our Republic’. They closed by noting their treatment was a ‘fate of miserable slavery, unworthy of any country truly Catholic and civilized’.³⁷ This indigenous village thus combined Catholicism, ancient inheritances, modern rights to petition and justice, and calls to a civilization that did not allow the treatment of citizens as slaves.

Indigenous communities easily combined their older discourse with claims on citizenship. Indígenas from Paniquitá, Colombia did not just ask the governor for protection, but for the ‘protection that you dispense to all the citizens’.³⁸ Indígenas from Jambaló, Pitayó, and Quichayá combined the discourse of citizenship, misery, and patriarchy, when they wrote ‘you are the father of us unfortunate citizens’ to the new governor,

³⁶ Pablo Ramires, Alcalde del Ayuntamiento del Pueblo de Santa Marta Chichihualtepec [signed by another] to Señor [Emperor Iturbide], no date or place [1822 or 1823], AGNM, IG, Fondo Justicia, Justicia, vol. 14, file 29, 275.

³⁷ Santiago Avila and eleven others to President, San Andrés Aparco, June 7, 1856, AGNM, IG, Fondo Justicia, Justicia, vol. 546, file 42, 417.

³⁸ Juan Ipia, Alcalde Indígena of Paniquitá to Governor, Popayán, March 15, 1850, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 48, file 57.

hoping for a more sympathetic treatment of their case.³⁹ Indígenas from Colimba and Guachucal opened their request: ‘We implore the conscripted Fathers of the Patria to extend their hand to the thousands of citizens of the indigenous class who, here in the South, are the defenseless victims of the whites’ abuses and attacks’.⁴⁰

The indigenous village of Túquerres encapsulated this vision of indigenous citizenship most succinctly: The indigenous alcalde demanded the state respect ‘our traditions of living communally’ since they were ‘Granadan citizens’.⁴¹ Thus, these villagers deftly combined the rights of universal republican citizenship with their particular traditions, rights, and needs as Indígenas. A small indigenous village near Pasto, Colombia, further explored how they imagined a possible negotiation between universal rights and particular identities:

Since patriarchal times we have possessed our lands communally and we have enjoyed them with the most complete peace and harmony; we do not desire private property, because we make use of communal property with equality and order. We do not desire that the equality of our rights consist of the equal portion of land that we would have, but, rather, in the equal rights in the community that we all possess; in that way there is justice and from justice flows equality.⁴²

Equality for Liberals meant equality before the law. For Indígenas, equality was not just a juridical question, but was tightly linked with the creation and maintenance of community and the insistence on equal rights to defend that community. Equality was not an individual right, but emanated from community. In their struggles, Indígenas resembled local communities in the United States; as Dana Nelson explores in Chapter Nine, for many North Americans, ‘democratic power was grounded in obligation and mutual commitment’. These communities appreciated

³⁹ Governors of Pitayó, Jambaló, and Quichayá to Governor, Jambaló, August 1, 1859, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 74, file 51.

⁴⁰ The cabildo de Indígenas of Guachucal and Colimba to Legislators, Guachucal, August 12, 1873, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 124, file 60.

⁴¹ Alcalde mayor Indígena y los cabildos pequeños de la provincia de Túquerres to presidente de la Cámara de Representantes, Túquerres, December 30, 1848, ADC, 1849, Cámara, Informes de Comisiones IX, 184.

⁴² Pequeño cabildo de Indígenas of Genoy to President of the Legislature, Pasto, August 15, 1877, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 137, file 18.

republican equality, but sought to incorporate it into their own particular needs and histories.

Colombia's and Mexico's Indígenas were wrestling, with some success I must add, with some of the problems that most bedevil modern democracies: How does a democracy, in which the majority should rule, guarantee rights to a minority? How can societies push for universal equality and citizenship but also respect and protect particular identities (be they religious, cultural, or in this case corporative and racial)? I am not arguing that the region's Indígenas solved these problems, but I am arguing they made impressive and creative efforts to address them, combining indigenous colonial identities and institutions with republican citizenship, in a way that secured a place for themselves as citizens of a nation, but that also sought to protect their historical traditions and cultures. They combined universalism with particular experience, culture, and needs. They created a vision of indigenous citizenship that appropriated the very real benefits of republican citizenship while not obligating them to abandon their communities, lands, or identities. The Indígenas had found a balance between a universal citizenship that sought inclusion, while denying that inclusion had to entail homogenization and erasure of their identities and rights. The success of negotiating citizenship has strongly echoed in indigenous communities' organizing until the present day, culminating in their winning guaranteed protections of their communal landholdings, local self-government, and national political representation in the 1991 Colombian constitution.⁴³

If indigenous peoples sought a balancing act between the old and new regimes, embracing republican politics while maintaining many continuities with the colonial era, Afro-Latin Americans usually took a far

⁴³ See Joanne Rappaport and Robert Dover, 'The Construction of Difference by Native Legislators: Assessing the Impact of the Colombian Constitution of 1991', *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 1: 2 (1996), 22–45; Peter Wade, 'Negros, indígenas e identidad nacional en Colombia', François-Xavier Guerra and Monica Quijada eds., *Imaginar la nación* (Munster: Lit, 1994), 257–288; and Brett Troyan, *Cauca's Indigenous Movement in Southwestern Colombia: Land, Violence and Ethnic Identity* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

different tack.⁴⁴ Colombians and Mexicans of African descent almost always tended to insist the republican era marked a sharp, decisive break with the past—and they framed their political identities more exclusively around republican citizenship and republican equality and liberty, in contrast with their imagining of the old regime as characterized by slavery, oppression, and the caste system.

Immediately upon Mexican independence (1821), José Trinidad Martínez, ‘native of Africa, born in la Habana’, wrote to Emperor Iturbide in 1823 to claim his freedom. Martínez argued that freedom was his right, now that ‘the sweet echo of liberty’ rang in Mexico. He excoriated Spanish rule, that had made people ‘slaves only by the domination of their government’. With an independent Mexico, slavery should end. ‘With what delight, with what universal jubilee, have we celebrated the liberty that the Emperor declared in the Mexican Empire’. This declared liberty must signify abolition. Echoing Iturbide’s Plan de Iguala, Martínez asked how could it be ‘that all the inhabitants of this vast continent were free and only I a slave, without any crime other than being a descendent of Africans’. Martínez requested that Iturbide order his liberty, ‘restoring to me the rights that God, nature, and the nation have granted me’.⁴⁵ Martínez did not seek to establish continuities with a Spanish past, but to cast that past as despotic, the antithesis of the present liberty he would enjoy as a citizen.

Not just Afro-Mexican men tried to claim this citizenship and freedom. A year before Martínez, a group of female slaves wrote the Emperor, eagerly demanding their freedom from enslavement as their ‘natural right’ which they could claim as the Plan of Iguala had declared ‘that all

⁴⁴ For Afro-Colombians and Mexicans, see Marixa Lasso, *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia, 1795–1831* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007); Ben Vinson III and Matthew Restall eds., *Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009); and Laura Lewis, *Chocolate and Corn Flour: History, Race, and Place in the Making of “Black” Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Alfonso Múnera, *El fracaso de la nación: Región, clase y raza en el Caribe colombiano (1717–1810)* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1998).

⁴⁵ José Trinidad Martínez to Señor, no date or place, received in México, January 16, 1823, AGNM, IG, Fondo Justicia, Justicia, vol. 22, file 3, 8.

the inhabitants of this America are Citizens'.⁴⁶ What appealed to these women was precisely the newness of the current political moment, when nothing was settled, when it seemed possible that even enslaved women might take a seat at the table of the nation. Years later, in Popayán, Colombia, Sebastiana Silva petitioned the local government for help in the return of her son, who was forced to work for a family as a domestic servant. The family refused to return her son, 'as if we still were in the barbarous times in which the government allowed the slavery of men. Today, thankfully, we have a republican and democratic government that will not allow such monstrosities'.⁴⁷ Silva, a poor, most probably Afro-Colombian woman, contrasted the 'barbarous times' of the colonial era, so associated with slavery in Afro-Colombian minds, with republican liberty. Women, both slave and free, were usually disappointed by their gendered exclusion from republican citizenship, but enslaved and freedmen held fast to the idea that new nations, soon to be republican across the Americas after Iturbide fell (in 1823), would be a much more welcoming political space for them than the colonial regime.

As with Martínez and Silva, Afro-Colombians regularly contrasted their past position as slaves with their new position as republican citizens. Petitioners from the San Julián hacienda opened their request by noting their changed status, 'The undersigned residents of the parochial district of Caloto, and inhabitants of the San Julián hacienda to which once we belonged as slaves, before you in the use of our rights as citizens...'.⁴⁸ The petitioners contrasted their former enslaved condition with their new identity as citizens with rights. From the coastal village of San Juan, ex-slaves wrote to the Liberal-dominated national Congress after abolition (1851), to thank them for 'the precious possession of liberty, so long usurped, and with it all the other rights and prerogatives of citizens'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ To Emperor Agustín de Iturbide, from 'the female slaves' of Don Isidro González, San Juan, November 14, 1822, AGNM, IG, Fondo Gobernación Siglo XIX, Gobernación, box 54, file 15, 4.

⁴⁷ Sebastiana Silva to Jefe Municipal, Popayán, October 13, 1874, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 129, file 39.

⁴⁸ Inhabitants of the San Julián hacienda to Governor, San Julián, October 15, 1853, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 55, file 92.

⁴⁹ Residents of San Juan (24 names, all signed with an X) to Citizen Senators and Representatives (national), no place or date on letter, but 1852, ADC, 1852, Senado, Proyectos Negados II, 19.

The Afro-Colombian boatmen (bogas) of the river Dagua, who ferried passengers and goods from the Pacific Coast to the central Cauca River valley, asserted their place as citizens in a labour dispute: 'We should be treated like citizens of a republic and not like the slaves of a sultan'.⁵⁰

In Afro-Colombians' imagination, the colonial period offered nothing but slavery and despotism, while the republican era offered the hope of inclusion. Afro-Colombian gatherers of forest products near Tumaco wrote to the President to protest how investors now claimed the forest as private property, complaining these capitalists wanted to impose the 'tyranny of feudalism'.⁵¹ They contrasted the past—associated with backwardness—with a present in which their voices should be heard. Cali's Democratic Society, whose membership included many Afro-Colombians, wrote in 1877 to demand land for the landless veterans of the past civil war against Conservatives. The veterans claimed they had fought for 'liberty' against the Conservatives who saw them as the 'slaves of these so-called feudal lords'. This war had pitted those who enjoyed 'great wealth and immense landholdings' against 'the poor masses'. Now soldiers demanded payment from a Liberal state that claimed to rule in the name of liberty and republican democracy. They demanded land so that they could fully be 'citizens of a free people'.⁵² These petitioners created their own history, moving from colonialism, slavery, inequality, and feudal lords to republican citizenship and the equality that equitable landholding would bring.

Afro-Colombian demands for land, in sharp contrast to doctrinaire liberalism, reveal how older pre-liberal ideas of governance, that, as Gary Gertle describes, 'held the public good in higher esteem than private right', had a very different result when wielded by popular groups. While in the United States, Gerstle argues this power often worked to perpetuate hierarchy and inequality, both Afro-Colombians and Indígenas used conceptions of the public welfare to argue against inequality

⁵⁰ The bogas of the Dagua River to State President, Cali, May 15, 1878, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 144, file 64.

⁵¹ José del Carmen Castillo and others to President, Tumaco, December 12, 1875, INCORA, Bienes Nacionales, vol. 10, 49.

⁵² The undersigned members of the Democratic Society to Citizen President of the State, Cali, June 1, 1877, ACC, Archivo Muerto, package 137, file 7.

and classical liberalism.⁵³ Both groups used notions of public welfare—emerging out of popular conceptions of republicanism (or to use Dana Nelson’s terminology from Chapter Nine, ‘vernacular democracy’) and older conceptions of community in Latin America, to argue the state could move against individual property rights: Indígenas to maintain corporate landholding, Afro-Colombians to demand the right to claim untilled private property (held by large haciendas) as their own smallholdings. Across the Atlantic World, contests to define state power, order, and public welfare would rage until the 1870s, when conservative visions of power and order emerged triumphant.

Saddled with a colonial identity marked by slavery, Afro-Latin Americans were not eager to remember continuities with the colonial past.⁵⁴ Republicanism and universalism held great appeal to Afro-Latin Americans, with an inherited colonial identity based on slavery and caste discrimination. This is not to say Afro-Latin Americans did not have or value a particular cultural identity, but that they did not see this as incompatible with pursuing equality as citizens within the nation-state. Unlike Indígenas, their particular identity did not carry with it valuable landholdings (recognized by the state) or political traditions in the form of local councils they controlled for self-government. Universalism, so threatening to Indígenas’ cultural, political, and material survival, seemed in the nineteenth century to only be advantageous to Afro-Latin Americans fighting against slavery and racial discrimination.⁵⁵ They advocated for and fought for popular liberal and republican principles not just in Colombia and Mexico, but across the Americas. In (at least) Cuba, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Peru, Afro-Latin Americans supported popular

⁵³ Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 56.

⁵⁴ Colonial petitions from the same Colombian region focused on religiosity, labour, poverty, loyalty, requests for protection from and good relations with the king (although the continued desire to secure lands is a continuity along with notions of the public good and nefarious powerful landlords). Hugues R. Sánchez Mejía and Jorge Conde Calderón, ‘Entre la asignación de privilegios, el Estado y la causa pública. Tierras y oratorio para el asiento de libres de Quilichao, Popayán, 1750–1810’, *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 46: 1 (2019), 59–83.

⁵⁵ As Diederik Smit’s Chapter Four on the Dutch provinces shows, the contest between universalism and particularism was common across the Atlantic World.

liberal or republican movements (as, of course, did African-Americans in the United States).⁵⁶

I am not arguing that Afro-Colombians and Afro-Mexicans did not experience continuities with the colonial period—indeed their tradition of military service was central to their colonial repertoire of politics and to their identity as citizen-soldiers in a republic—but, rather, that they imagined and asserted a sharp break with the past.⁵⁷ Afro-Latin Americans invested republicanism with far greater emancipatory potential than elite politicians ever imagined, and in order to do this, they also imagined a history of colonialism defined by slavery and racism versus republican liberty and equality. In this intellectual creation of republican modernity, they were not alone.

In general, across the Americas by mid-century, the public sphere rang with a discourse of American republican modernity.⁵⁸ In this countermentality to visions of modernity emanating from Europe or the United States, Latin Americans defined a modernity not bound to cultured Europe and its civilization, but celebrated an imagined modernity located in America, a modernity whose definition was inherently political. Latin America represented the future because it had adopted republicanism and democracy while Europe, under the boot of monarchs and the aristocracy, dwelled in the past. American republican modernity emphasized republican politics, citizenship, rights, and a nation defined by popular sovereignty as the most important markers of modernity (as opposed to European high culture, industrial growth, or technological and military innovations). The 1857 Mexican Constitutional Congress's justification to the nation stressed how the proposed constitution emanated from 'the dogma of the pueblo's sovereignty', noting all 'modern societies' use the representative system.⁵⁹ This constitution, 'the most democratic the

⁵⁶ George Reid Andrews, *Afro-Latin America, 1800–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Alejandro de la Fuente and George Reid Andrews eds., *Afro-Latin American Studies: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁵⁷ David Sartorius, *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Echeverri, *Indian and Slave Royalists*; and Ben Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje: The Frontiers of Race and Caste in Colonial Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁵⁸ Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World*.

⁵⁹ León Guzmán, Isidoro Olvera and José Antonio Gamboa, "El Congreso Constituyente á la Nación," February 5, 1857, *Constitución Federal de los Estados-Unidos*

Republic has had', would propel the nation 'along the path of progress and reform, civilization, and liberty'.⁶⁰ The Congress also stressed how quickly modernity moved in the nineteenth century: 'humanity advances day by day, necessitating incessant innovation in its political and social mode of being'.⁶¹ Only through 'political and social revolution' could Mexico maintain its position in a nineteenth century whose 'spirit's movement does not rest'.⁶² The Mexican Constitutional convention thus stressed both how modernity was defined by republican politics and how this politics marked an innovative, decisive break with the past.

The modern republican nation was constantly contrasted with both contemporary monarchies and aristocracies in Europe and with American societies' own colonial pasts. In this vision, as one Mexican orator noted, modernity began with independence, when the Americas broke from a barbarous Spain, and 'exchanged liberty for slavery, justice for arbitrary despotism, enlightenment for ignorance and fanaticism, civilization for heinous customs of barbarism, and finally, our new institutions for those stale ones of subjecthood'.⁶³ The Chilean Francisco Bilbao castigated Spain for the legion of difficulties the Americas faced: 'With Spain came Catholicism, monarchy, feudalism, the Inquisition, isolation, silence, depravity, the genius of exterminating intolerance, and the culture of blind obedience'.⁶⁴ In short, 'Spain is the Middle Ages. We are the future'.⁶⁵ Europe had yet to make this transition to modernity. A Chilean paper argued that the Americas enjoyed a 'decisive superiority' over Europe, due to republicanism. The New World had already progressed further down the road of modernity and civilization than had Europe: 'America, throwing off the iron collar of colonialism, already has completed the great revolution, the great transformation, the grand execution of the past' while Europe still suffered monarchs

Mexicanos, sancionada y jurada por el Congreso General Constituyente (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857), 16.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 21, 22.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 19, 22.

⁶³ Speech of Mariano Murillo, Chihuahua, September 15, 1862, *La Alianza de la Frontera - Suplemento* (Chihuahua September 23, 1862).

⁶⁴ Francisco Bilbao, 'El evangelio americano', Manuel Bilbao ed., *Las obras completas de Francisco Bilbao*, 2 (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de Buenos Aires, 1865), 338.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 377.

and caudillos.⁶⁶ The past was the ‘iron collar of colonialism’—it was slavery, despotism, and fanaticism—hardly an epoch in which to look for appropriate and useful political rhetoric and practice.

While Latin Americans imagined that the process of breaking with the past began with independence, the struggle would continue through the nineteenth century. Post-independence civil wars were due to those who had not given up on the past, those who ‘have conspired by every excessive means to implant in our young nation the anguished and invalid institutions of Old Europe’.⁶⁷ The Colombian Ramón Mercado argued that Independence had not really changed the colonial system, as ‘the war against Spain was not a revolution’; it had not ended slavery, the power of the Church, or the aristocracy, and most were still excluded from a role in governance.⁶⁸ It would take the ‘social revolution’ of liberal reforms to truly remake society, a revolution carried out by the poor and dispossessed who ‘contributed to the triumph of Democracy’.⁶⁹ By 1852, Colombian President José Hilario López declared in a speech that ‘a social revolution’ had occurred as ‘the reign of democracy and liberty had arrived’ to destroy the ‘feudalism of the Middle Ages’ which still oppressed society, specifically referring to slavery.⁷⁰ In this vision, only after social revolutions had abolished slavery and instituted universal adult, male citizenship had modernity and truly new societies been obtained in the Americas.⁷¹

In general, Latin American writers, orators, and politicians created a sharp contrast between the past and the present. The rioplatense-born Héctor Varela, writing from Paris, argued that the New World marked the end of the ‘Middle Ages’ in which Europe and Christianity were

⁶⁶ *El Ferrocarril* (Santiago June 29, 2020) reprinted in *La Nación* (Montevideo December 19, 1860).

⁶⁷ *La República* (Chihuahua September 18, 1868).

⁶⁸ Ramón Mercado, *Memorias sobre los acontecimientos del Sur, especialmente en la Provincia de Buenaventura, durante la administración del 7 de marzo de 1849* (Cali: Centro de Estudios Históricos y Sociales ‘Santiago de Cali’, 1996 [originally published 1853]), vii.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, xviii, xcv.

⁷⁰ José Hilario López, *Mensaje del Presidente de la Nueva Granada al Congreso Constitucional de 1852* (Bogotá: Imprenta del Neo-Granadino, 1852), 1.

⁷¹ This discourse also helps to explain why the mid-century is so important for exploring the long Age of Revolution; for many Colombians and Mexicans, the true revolutionary moment was not independence, but the reforms instigated by Liberals in the 1850s and 1860s.

champions of civilization. Now, however, the Americas had progressed beyond Europe in their adoption of ‘the democratic doctrine’, liberty, rights, and state institutions, but most especially, ‘the Republic’, which was ‘the definitive form of our spirit’. Varela asserted, ‘Taking this point of view, one can say that the New World is the most potent incarnation of the modern spirit’. The New World was modern, and if Europe would listen, it could learn valuable lessons to help bring about ‘universal democracy’.⁷² The nineteenth century—in the words of Benito Juárez, ‘the first century of the pueblos’—belonged to the Americas.⁷³

However, the fight was ongoing. The nineteenth century marked a decisive break with the past, but that past was not defeated. Monarchies, aristocracies, empires, filibusters, and slaveholders threatened to undo the century’s progress. Juan de Dios Restrepo, writing from Buga, evoked the clash of civilizations—European monarchy versus American republics: ‘The situation of America is dire; the fight is between the colonial system and the modern liberal spirit, between the paganism of the Roman priests and the evangelical Christian idea, between those that dream of re-establishing slavery, privilege, monarchy, theocracy and those that believe that all of those abominations should remain in Europe’.⁷⁴ This powerful rhetoric suggests why so many nineteenth-century Latin Americans—elite and popular alike—were so eager to jettison the past and were not likely to look for continuities in their politics.

And this discourse was not just for elites. A protest from a small northern Mexico mining town signed by fifty-four ‘citizens’, many illiterate, promised that the signatories would fight against the French soldiers who had invaded Mexico. The undersigned, most probably miners, claimed they were ‘true republicans’ that hated monarchy since it was fit only for ‘vile slaves’: ‘We do not want to be the lackeys or lapdogs of any monarch’. They attacked their enemies as the ‘notables’

⁷² Héctor F. Varela, ‘El Americano. Sus prospectos y su misión’, *El Americano* (Paris March 7, 1872).

⁷³ Speech of Benito Juárez, México, January 10, 1861 in *La Alianza de la Frontera - Suplemento* (Chihuahua March 9, 1861).

⁷⁴ Emiro Kastos [Juan de Dios Restrepo], ‘La Guerra’, Buga, January 13, 1864, *El Caucaño* (Cali January 21, 1864).

and moneylenders who were in league with the French.⁷⁵ American republican modernity provided a potent language with which to promote popular visions against the interest of the ‘notables’ and the rich—as we saw with the petitions from Afro-Colombians above. While certainly the colonial system had similar tools, American republican modernity’s emphasis on a sharp break with the past made such openly colonial rhetoric and practices suspect.

This discourse of American republican modernity—which dominated the public sphere in much of Spanish America from the 1840s through the 1870s—offered popular groups powerful discursive tools with which to promote their inclusion in the nation and society. An orator rallying the pueblo against the French declared that while citizenship in the past may have held little value, ‘today all Mexicans know that the title of Citizen is not a word with no meaning’, but guarantees ‘the rights of man in society’.⁷⁶ Mexico’s *El Monitor Republicano* asserted that ‘public power’ came from the ‘true, spontaneous, general, and simultaneous emission of the pueblo’s suffrage’, and power should not be in the hands of one man (monarchy) or ‘a reduced circle, under the pompous title of notables’.⁷⁷ The state must respond to popular demands, as petitions constantly insisted throughout the nineteenth century. American republican modernity helps to explain why Afro-Latin Americans, and many other actors, both popular and elite, were not eager to find continuities with the past. If their nations’ political systems were built upon a justification of republican politics with a colonial past imagined as defined by slavery, subjecthood, and degradation, then it became much harder for powerful elites to promote slavery, to restrict citizenship, and to ignore their pueblo. Popular groups could cast attacks on their rights as essentially anti-republican and anti-modern. Yes, this vision of the barbaric Spanish past was often a self-serving invention of republican elites,⁷⁸ but

⁷⁵ The undersigned, residents of Guadalupe y Calvo, “Protesta en contra de la intervención francesa,” Guadalupe y Calvo, August 28, 1863 in *La Alianza de la Frontera* (Chihuahua September 12, 1863).

⁷⁶ Speech of Joaquín H. Domínguez, Villa de Allende, September 16, 1862 in *La Alianza de la Frontera - Suplemento* (Chihuahua November 20, 1862).

⁷⁷ *El Monitor Republicano* (México July 1, 1867).

⁷⁸ Del Castillo, *Crafting a Republic for the World*.

one that popular groups could utilize to promote their own emancipatory visions. Promoting tradition simply was not useful for many popular groups.

As historians, it is certainly our prerogative to look beyond our historical actors' understanding of their present. And if we want to construct a more accurate and meaningful political history, we should strive to understand these deep continuities that these actors might have been unaware of or intentionally ignored or misremembered. Colombia's indigenous communities themselves certainly understood the importance of continuity and valuing the past. However, we must also never lose sight of the lived experience of our historical actors and what their politics meant to them. When Afro-Latin Americans made claims about a feudal past and a democratic present, we can certainly critique this. However, we must not neglect how meaningful, powerful, and emancipatory these claims were for them. Afro-Colombians won the abolition of slavery and full citizenship rights with these claims of republican innovation. A discourse of American republican modernity that coursed through Spanish American societies around mid-century gave powerful tools to popular actors, that they eagerly embraced. Others, such as indigenous communities, maintained more of a connection with the past, but they nevertheless created innovative solutions to adapt to the republican present. Both Afro-Colombians and Indígenas adapted traditional political practices, in intellectually creative ways, to advance their interests and political visions after the Age of Revolution. Even if we can assert that popular claims of a new discourse and politics were not as 'real' as they imagined, the rights popular actors won and lifeways they protected were very real indeed.

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Restoring the Moral Order of the Community: The Symbolic Repertoire of Collective Action in the Dutch Age of Revolutions

Joris Oddens

This chapter deals with the persistence of premodern forms of local collective action during the age of revolutions. What I am particularly interested in are those elements of non-elite collective action that have been called ritualistic, ‘charivaresque’, carnivalesque, or (pertaining to) popular culture. All of these terms can be defined in different ways, but they have in common that they describe collective action that is symbolic, in the sense that it is not accidental or random, but follows

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certain ‘rules’.¹ These forms of action symbolise a greater order and invoke shared mores and often also earlier moments of collective action; they are, in other words, appeals to tradition. Historians and anthropologists have found again and again that collective action in the premodern period had a deeper symbolic meaning, which legitimised actors’ actions. As Natalie Zemon Davis famously wrote about religious violence—but this holds true for collective action in general—‘the crowds do not act in a mindless way. They will to some degree have a sense that what they are doing is legitimate, the occasions will relate somehow to the defense of their cause and their [...] behavior will have some structure to it’.²

Manifestations of symbolic collective action with a local scope are mostly associated with the premodern era, though it is clear that they have continued to exist into modern times.³ Yet, in much of the literature, there is also a sense that something is changing in the transition to the modern period. Peter Burke has argued that by 1800, popular culture in Europe was rapidly politicising, causing ordinary people to become less concerned with strictly local issues—the stuff of popular culture—and more with ‘affairs of state’.⁴ Writing about the Low Countries, Marc Boone and Maarten Prak have identified a ‘Great’ and a ‘Little Tradition’ of urban revolt. From the twelfth to the eighteenth century, according to

¹ Compare, for example, the definition of ‘ritual’ by Barbara Stollberg-Rillinger, ‘Much Ado about Nothing. Ritual of Politics in Early Modern Europe and Today’, 24th Annual Lecture of the German Historical Institute (11 November 2010) < https://www.ghidc.org/fileadmin/user_upload/GHI_Washington/Publications/Bulletin48/bu_48_009.pdf > 10–13; the definition of charivari by Marc Jacobs, ‘Charivari en volksgerichten. Sleutelfenomenen van sociale geschiedenis’, *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 12: 4 (1986), 365–392; and the definitions of ‘popular culture’ and ‘the carnivalesque’ by Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

² Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘The Rites of Violence. Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France’, *Past & Present* 59 (1973), 51–91, here 91.

³ See for examples Jean-Claude Schmitt and Jacques Le Goff eds., *Le charivari: Actes de la table ronde organisée à Paris (25–27 avril 1977) par l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales et le Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (Paris: Mouton, 1981); and Gerard Rooijakkers and Tiny Romme eds., *Charivari in de Nederlanden: Rituele sancties op deviant gedrag*. Volkskundig Bulletin 15:3 (Amsterdam: P.J. Meertens-Instituut van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1989).

⁴ Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 259; and Peter Burke, ‘The Repudiation of Ritual in Early Modern Europe’, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy. Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 223–238.

Boone and Prak, the cities of the Low Countries were the scene of revolts by burghers against urban elites (the ‘Little Tradition’) and revolutionary movements by urban elites against central (or centralising) state institutions (the ‘Great Tradition’). They suggest that premodern forms of collective action disappear from the Netherlands as a result of the French intervention in the Netherlands: ‘French republicanism, originating from a long tradition of monarchical centralization, overwhelmed the urban republican tradition of the Low Countries. By the time Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, the Great and the Little Traditions of urban rebellion were dead’.⁵ It is not entirely clear whether Boone and Prak are implying that this meant an end to the symbolic behaviour typical for non-elite, local collective action in early modern Europe, as they do not discuss the nature of the revolts in much detail.

Dealing with France, Charles Tilly has suggested a different periodisation. In a somewhat lesser-known publication, he provides five characteristics of what he considers a typically eighteenth-century repertoire of local collective action. In my view, four of these five characteristics can be considered symbolic behaviour:

1. ‘a tendency for aggrieved people to converge on the residences of wrongdoers and on the site of wrongdoing’;
2. ‘the extensive use of authorized public ceremonies and celebrations for the acting out of complaints and demands’;
3. ‘the recurrent use of street theatre, visual imagery, effigies, symbolic objects and other dramatic devices’;
4. ‘the frequent borrowing—in parody or in earnest—of the authorities’ normal forms of action; the borrowing often amounted to the crowd’s almost literally taking the law into its own hands’.⁶

According to Tilly, the popular action of the French revolution of the late eighteenth century still largely followed the repertoire of the rest of the

⁵ Marc Boone and Maarten Prak, ‘Rulers, Patricians and Burghers: The Great and the Little Traditions of Urban Revolt in the Low Countries’, in Karel Davids and Jan Lucassen eds., *A Miracle Mirrored: The Dutch Republic in European Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 127–128.

⁶ Charles Tilly, ‘Charivaris, Repertoires and Urban Politics’, in John Merriman ed., *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1982), 76.

century. Despite the degree of innovation and the fact that local collective action became connected to national politics, elements such as ritual punishments remained common, and collective action still often occurred during official celebrations. In Tilly's view, a real transformation in France took place only around the French Revolution of 1848, when a new repertoire of action, including electoral meetings, demonstrations, strikes, and rallies started to emerge. These new forms of action seldom happened during festivals or rituals that were authorised by the authorities.⁷

This chapter revisits the case of the Netherlands. Rudolf Dekker has demonstrated that, until the end of the eighteenth century, the Dutch case was still in line with the broader European pattern. In a study about revolts in the province of Holland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Dekker found many symbolic elements in the behaviour of Dutch early modern crowds, such as plundering, mock trials, *taxation populaire*, and other charivaresque forms of social justice.⁸ Like Boone and Prak, Dekker does not look beyond 1795, the end of the Dutch Republic and the beginning of the Batavian-French period in the Netherlands, which he considers a 'logical endpoint'.⁹ However, with Tilly's interpretation in mind, one might wonder whether the French intervention in the Netherlands in 1795 was really so crucial in bringing about a new repertoire of collective action.

Based on an analysis of collective action in the 1780s and 1790s, I will argue in this chapter that in the Netherlands as well, symbolic forms of action still loomed large during this period, and that the year 1795 did not produce a major rupture in this respect. By demonstrating that premodern forms of collective action were not marginal aberrations in this period, I intend to inscribe them into the mainstream narrative of the Dutch revolution. In order to be able to do so, it is important that we first take a look at this narrative and the contentious repertoire that is commonly associated with it.

⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁸ Rudolf Dekker, *Holland in beroering: Oproeren in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Baarn: Ambo, 1982), 12, 78–79, 93.

⁹ Ibid., 9.

THE NARRATIVE OF THE DUTCH REVOLUTION

When in 1780 war broke out between the Dutch Republic and Great Britain, this was to many Dutch citizens the last straw that added to existing discontent about economic decline and political degeneration. The prime targets of their indignation were William V, Prince of Orange-Nassau and stadtholder of the United Provinces, and his chief advisor, the Duke of Brunswick. These citizens, who started calling themselves ‘Patriots’, considered William a puppet of his cousin George III. They were also dissatisfied with the political system that had been created when his predecessor William IV had assumed office in 1747. At that time, the office of stadtholder had been made hereditary. The stadtholder had obtained a crucial say in the appointment of political office holders at the local government level. This enabled him to exert great influence on the decision-making process.¹⁰ Traditionally, the stadtholders were also military commanders of the various provincial armies. The combination of these prerogatives had transformed the stadtholderate into an almost monarchical office, and William V behaved like a monarch as well. The stadtholderian system favoured a political class, the regents (*regenten*), who strived to maintain the status quo. The ‘Patriot Movement’ attacked both the stadtholder, his courtiers and the regent class. In various cities where it got the upper hand, it introduced new local constitutions based on the principle of representative democracy.¹¹

Much of the action of the Dutch Revolution was connected to voluntary associations. In the second half of the eighteenth century, cultural societies flourished in the Dutch Republic as they did elsewhere. In the 1770s, future Patriots and the supporters of the stadtholder, the ‘Orangists’, still frequented the same literary societies, Masonic lodges, and other associations.¹² After 1780 latent tensions within these associations surfaced and escalated. As a result, many associations became

¹⁰ Jos Gabriëls, *De heren als dienaren en de dienaar als heer: Het stadhouderlijke stelsel in de tweede helft van de achttiende eeuw* (The Hague: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1990).

¹¹ Stephan Klein, *Patriots republikenisme: Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766–1787)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995).

¹² Wijnandus Wilhelmus Mijnhardt, *Tot beil van't menschedom: Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987); C.B.F. Singeling, *Gezellige schrijvers. aspecten van letterkundige genootschappelijkheid in Nederland, 1750–1800* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991); Marleen de Vries, *Beschaven! Letterkundige genootschappen in*

Patriot- or Orangist-only organisations. The topics that were discussed also became more political. Existing supra-local networks that had developed because citizens were (honorary) members of societies in multiple cities could now be put to political use. A new type of association emerged around 1783: throughout the Dutch Republic, voluntary civic militias (*vrijcorpsen* or *exercitiegenootschappen*) were founded both in cities and in the countryside. The organisation of these societies was partly modelled on the old civic guards (*schutterijen*), but the Patriots were also inspired by enlightened military ideas.¹³ They experimented with supra-local governance by organising several provincial and even a national assembly of civic militias.¹⁴

When the stadtholder, at the request of the Orangist States of Gelderland, intervened with military force in the rebellious Patriot towns of Hattem and Elburg, the Patriot States of Holland responded by suspending him as military commander of the troops on their payroll. This conflict escalated into open civil war between the troops still under the command of the stadtholder and a Patriot army mostly composed of volunteers dispatched by the local civic militias. The stadtholder won the armed conflict in the Autumn of 1787 due to the intervention of King Frederick William II of Prussia, his brother-in-law, against whose forces the Patriots did not stand a chance.¹⁵ After this suppression, most of the cultural societies continued to exist but outwardly returned to their core business. In reality they continued to be Patriot meeting places. In Amsterdam members of the cultural society *Doctrina et Amicitia* created a secret revolutionary committee that became the nerve centre of the underground Patriot movement. The committee took the initiative to

Nederland, 1750–1800 (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2002); and Joost Rosendaal, ‘Vrijmetselarij en Revolutie’, Anton van de Sande and Joost Rosendaal eds., *Een stille leerschool van deugd en goede zeden. Vrijmetselarij in Nederland in de 18e en 19e eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 63–84.

¹³ Frans Grijzenhout, *Feesten voor het Vaderland. Patriotse en Bataafse feesten 1780–1806* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1989); and Olaf van Nimwegen, *De Nederlandse burgeroorlog, 1748–1815* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017).

¹⁴ Joost Rosendaal and Stephan Klein, ‘Democratie in context: Nieuwe perspectieven op het Leids Ontwerp (1785)’, *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* 26: 1 (1994), 77–100.

¹⁵ Van Nimwegen, *De Nederlandse burgeroorlog*.

found a network of reading societies, where citizens read and discussed Thomas Paine and other revolutionary authors.¹⁶

In early 1795, an army of French revolutionary and Dutch Patriot troops won the war against the stadtholder. The Patriots assumed power and renamed the Dutch Republic the ‘Batavian Republic’, a name inspired by the legendary Germanic tribe of the Batavians.¹⁷ The Prince of Orange-Nassau fled to England. The Patriots turned the existing infrastructure of societies and revolutionary committees into a dense network of political associations that was to characterise the new state. The political sociability of the Batavian era was a multilevel phenomenon. At the urban level, the reading societies were transformed into political clubs. The larger cities witnessed the creation of neighbourhood assemblies that built on older structures of neighbourhood autonomy.¹⁸ Delegates of local political clubs met in supra-local Central Assemblies.¹⁹ The Batavian authorities were suspicious of such initiatives, which they considered a challenge to their authority. At the same time, leading revolutionaries considered political sociability a prerequisite of a free republican state and used it to mobilise support.²⁰ In 1797, when the moderate and radical camps in the National Assembly campaigned for and against a constitutional draft in the months leading up to a national referendum about this

¹⁶ Henk Reitsma, ‘Lesegezellschaften und bürgerliche Revolution in Amsterdam’, in Otto Dann ed., *Lesegezellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation: Ein europäischer Vergleich* (München: C.H. Beck, 1981), 159–180.

¹⁷ Eco Haitsma Mulier, ‘De Bataafse mythe opnieuw bekeken’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 111: 3 (1996), 344–367.

¹⁸ Renger de Bruin, *Burgers op het kussen: Volkssoevereiniteit en bestuursamenstelling in de stad Utrecht, 1795–1813* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1986); R. van der Woude, ‘Gelijkheid op krukken: De Bataafse revolutie in de stad Groningen, 1795–1803’, *Gronings Historisch Jaarboek* (1995), 39–63; Barbara Resink and Jort Verhoeven, ‘De stem van het volk: De Amsterdamse wijkvergaderingen in de eerste jaren der Bataafse revolutie’, *Amstelodamum* 82: 2 (1995), 33–43; Annie Jourdan, ‘Amsterdam klem tussen staat en volk. Een bedreigde municipaliteit (1795–1798)’, in Ida Nijenhuis, Johanna Roelevink and Ronald Sluiter eds., *De leeuw met de zeven pijlen: Het gewest in het landelijk bestuur* (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse geschiedenis, 2010), 95–108.

¹⁹ Peter Altena, *Gerrit Paape (1752–1803). Levens en werken* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012).

²⁰ René Koekkoek, *The Citizenship Experiment: Contesting the Limits of Civic Equality and Participation in the Age of Revolutions* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

draft, they relied on rival networks of political clubs to disseminate their views.²¹

From the moment it emerged in the early 1780s, political sociability went hand in hand with political petitioning. In the Dutch Republic petitioning had always been a popular form of action, but during the revolutionary era it transformed in crucial ways. As long as the Patriots' demand for representative democracy had not been met, they believed that petitioning was as close as one could get to exercising popular sovereignty. The Patriots thus had a more inclusive attitude towards petitioning than the old-regime elites, who had concurred that the political instrument of petitioning should be used with moderation. Patriots employed the instrument with greater frequency and their language was less deferential. They also started collecting more signatures than had been deemed appropriate under the old regime.²² Their efforts were facilitated through the circulation of petitions in political clubs.

While local petitions remained the bread and butter of petitionary practices during the Patriot era, political petitions to provincial and national authorities were on the rise. This trend culminated in the Batavian era, when the national parliament became the most important recipient of petitions.²³ Petitions concerned with provincial or national issues were often drawn up in the ranks of radical political clubs. Quite often, the initiators of such petitions collected signatures in multiple places, causing petition drives to become truly supra-local affairs.

To sum up, the Dutch Revolution had a more 'formal' repertoire of contention that was overwhelmingly initiated and regulated by a revolutionary elite. While the members of this elite founded political clubs, drew up petitions, and canvassed for signatures, a much larger part of the population frequented clubs and signed petitions. Associations and petitions had also thrived in the early modern period, but there was a

²¹ Thomas Poell, *The Democratic Paradox: Dutch Revolutionary Struggles over Democratization and Centralisation (1780–1813)* (Ph.D. dissertation, Utrecht University, 2007); and Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld: Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012).

²² Joris Oddens, 'The Greatest Right of Them All: The Debate on the Right to Petition in the Netherlands from the Dutch Republic to the Kingdom (c. 1750–1830)', *European History Quarterly* 47: 4 (2017), 634–656.

²³ Joris Oddens, 'Verzoekschriften aan het Bataafse parlement: Een terreinverkenning', *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis* 19 (2017), 19–30.

good deal of innovation in the revolutionary era. The ways in which the existing repertoire developed can be summarised under the headings of politicisation, professionalisation, and scaling-up.

THE PATRIOT ERA

Historians of the Dutch revolution have rarely treated symbolic behaviour as an object of study in its own right.²⁴ This is not to say that they have not come across such behaviour. For this contribution, I was therefore able to look at occurrences of symbolic collective action as they have been discussed in secondary literature.²⁵ In the following two sections, I will present an ‘event catalogue’²⁶ that zooms in on a limited number of incidents, but complements this analysis with evidence from other cases.

In 1783, the birthday of the stadtholder (8 March) triggered several disturbances in Rotterdam. Already in the first week of March, groups of people went from door to door, mostly at dawn, and demanded (drink) money, wood, or peat in honour of the Prince of Orange. On the stadtholder’s birthday, various other incidents were reported around the town. In the city docks, a procession of shipwrights sporting orange ribbons went from shipyard to shipyard, and at the head of the procession there was a boy dressed as a Harlequin with an orange hat and a staff. They ordered any shipwrights still at work to join them and threatened to throw the workers in the water if they refused. The rioters then went on to plunder an alehouse. Finally, they rang the bells of the shipwright, before dispersing into the city.²⁷

²⁴ Exceptions are the studies of Eric Palmen and Tiny Romme, both cited below, as well Jouke Nijman, ‘Politieke cultuur en volkscultuur in de Patriottentijd’, *Groniek* 30: 137 (1996–1997), 417–431. All of these authors present singular case studies.

²⁵ See for an overview of the literature: Joris Oddens, ‘De Nederlandse revolutie in dorp en stad. Lokale geschiedschrijving over de patriots-Bataafse tijd, 1875 tot heden’, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 130: 4 (2018), 565–591, here 580. This contribution constitutes an attempt to bring into practice the method that I propose there.

²⁶ This term, as well as some other terminology used in this chapter, such as ‘contentious repertoire’, and ‘contentious regime’, is indebted to the work of Charles Tilly. See for instance Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious politics* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

²⁷ Eric Palmen, ‘De smalle gemeente van Rotterdam in de partijstrijd tussen de patriotten en de orangisten’, *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje* 10: 2 (1994), 244–249; and Eric

In the same year, another site of collective action was the town of Arnhem. For reasons of public hygiene, the local government, which was dominated by Orangists, had decided to create a new cemetery outside the city walls. The clearing of the old cemetery happened without paying due respect to the remains. This had caused unrest in the local community, which was reinforced by the rumour that a member of the city government, a staunch supporter of the stadtholder, had accepted a large sum of money from a Jewish merchant who had received permission to build on part of the municipal cemetery. In August, the situation escalated when an outbreak of dysentery caused the government to force inhabitants who received municipal poor relief and died of the disease to be buried in the new cemetery. The wife of a sergeant of the local garrison was buried there to set an example. The next evening, a crowd gathered at the site of the new cemetery. They took down the fences that demarcated the symbolic space of the cemetery. A group of women unearthed the corpse of the sergeant's wife. Her coffin was carried around in triumph through the streets of Arnhem. The procession halted in front of the *Prinzenhof*, where the garrison's commanding officer resided. It went on to one of the town's churches, where the bells were rung and the corpse was reburied. Next, the crowd returned to the site of the new cemetery, took the fences, carried them around in procession, and dumped them on the land of the merchant. Subsequently the crowd broke up, but smaller groups of people continued to go around the town, calling at the houses of the wealthy citizens and demanding drink money.²⁸

In February 1784, unrest broke out around Vierlingsbeek, in *Staten-Brabant*. Not long before, an official living in this village had tried to ban a local tradition which involved unmarried young men forcing couples to treat them to drinks before their wedding. Late at night on 1 February, men from Vierlingsbeek and surrounding villages responded by going in procession to the house of the official while making a lot of noise with various instruments. This charivari with rough music marked the beginning of a whole series of actions against the official and his family. People

Palmen, *Kaat Mossel, belleveeg van Rotterdam. Volk en Verlichting in de achttiende eeuw*. (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2009), 19–30, 43–44.

²⁸ Martien Franken, 'De uitbarsting van de Patriottenbeweging in Arnhem door de bril van Willem Anne Schimmelpenninck van der Oije (december 1782-augustus 1783)', Burchard Elias e.a. eds., *Veluwe en andere geschiedenissen: Liber amicorum drs. R.M. Kemperink* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2010), 150–156.

sang offensive songs about them in public, and they were mocked in street theatre. A few days after the first incident, on Ash Wednesday, a crowd showed up at the official's house again after the day's festivities. They damaged his house and threatened to take down the walls, and they chopped down his trees and sealed his well. The locals were so persistent in their actions, that eventually the official and his family were forced to leave the village for good.²⁹

In the Spring of 1784, the windows of a house on the Oranjegracht in Leiden were smashed. The owner of the house was a member of the Leiden civic militia. The city of Leiden had an overwhelmingly Patriot population, but it also had an assertive Orangist minority, which felt threatened by this new voluntary association and by the challenges to the political status quo in general. The incident set in motion a week of further unrest directed against the local Patriots. On 8 and 9 June Orangists collectively took to the streets wearing orange cockades and other signs of their political allegiance. Passers-by were forced to do the same. On 10 June, a crowd smashed the windows of the houses and shops of two militia members, a pastry chef, and a *jenever* distiller. The rioters could barely be stopped from plundering the sites.³⁰

These four episodes of collective action constitute a rich repository of symbolic behaviour. In Rotterdam, Arnhem, and Leiden, we are clearly dealing at least at some level with a political conflict between the two rival factions that operated nationwide. In Vierlingsbeek this is less immediately obvious, although Tiny Romme, who has studied this case, suggests that the conflict between the Patriots and the Orangists may have played a role here as well.³¹ Together the four incidents show that in any event, action that was concerned with the political order of the state cannot be sharply distinguished from action concerned with the moral order of the local community, because it made use of a similar repertoire. The smashing of windows and the plundering of private residences and businesses were, in early modern Europe, the alpha and omega of rites of

²⁹ Tiny Romme, 'Charivari en patriottisme. Een nieuw perspectief', in Gerard Rooijackers, Annemiek van der Veen and Coen Free eds., *Voor 'Brabants Vrybeyd'. Patriotten in Staats-Brabant* (Den Bosch: Stichting Brabantse Regionale Geschiedbeoefening, 1988), 109–110.

³⁰ Erik Halbe de Jong, *Weldenkende burgers en Oranjeliefhebbers. Patriotten en prinsgezinden in Leiden 1775–1795* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 173–178.

³¹ Romme, 'Charivari en patriottisme', 111.

purification. They were not careless acts of outrage and vandalism, but careful actions against individuals who were deemed to have violated the moral order. The more severe the violation had been in the eyes of the community, the more destructive the plundering. When the house and land of a victim were made uninhabitable, as in the case of Vierlingsbeek, this was to be interpreted as a ritual of banishment, a punishment that was normally enforced by the authorities: the message was that the victim should leave the community.³²

The fact that the crowd in Leiden, out of all the militia members, specifically targeted a pastry chef and a distiller, should probably not be interpreted as opportunistic, but rather as a sign that the people involved were convinced of the righteousness of their actions. The demanding or taking of food and drink actually strengthened the legitimatisation that they were doing the ‘work’ that the authorities had left undone, for which they deserved to be paid.³³ We see something similar happening in Arnhem where, after having committed their acts, the perpetrators demanded drink money. In Rotterdam, the ending of a performance of collective action by plundering an alehouse and ringing the guild bells, which was usually done to signal the end of a working day, points in the same direction. In Vierlingsbeek, the prohibition of the ritual of extorting drink money to which the local men believed themselves to be entitled formed the very cause of the action.

As Eric Palmen has observed, the way in which the inhabitants of Rotterdam went from door to door to demand money or fuel around the time of public celebration became part of a common European tradition during Carnival or around the time of the feasts of Saint Martin and Saint Nicholas. It seems unlikely that the actions were without local precedents, but in 1783, they seem to have become tied up with the conflict between Patriots and Orangists.³⁴ It remains unclear whether the houses they called at were deliberately selected because their inhabitants were Patriots, or whether they just happened to be on the route. Several of the victims of the actions were involved in the corn trade, and a corn-broker believed that the actions against him had something to do

³² Ibid., 114.

³³ Peter van Rooden, ‘De plunderingen op Schouwen en te Zierikzee, 1786–1788’, *Archief van het Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen* (1983), 173–199, here 189.

³⁴ Palmen, *Kaat Mossel*, 48.

with the high grain prices. The demanding of money would in that case be a form of popular taxation, a strategy that was common within the symbolic language of the ‘moral economy’.³⁵ As for the procession of the shipwrights, it is difficult to say whether this was a unique incident where the Harlequin figure represented a topsy-turvy world in which the people took it upon themselves to (force others to) celebrate the house of Orange because the authorities would not, or whether this was just a grimmer version of festive rituals that took place every year.

THE ORANGIST RESTORATION AND THE BATAVIAN REVOLUTION

As the conflict between the Patriots and the Orangists escalated in the mid-1780s, collective action became more violent. Especially around the stadtholderian restoration of 1787, there were many instances of plundering on both sides. In May before the restoration, a Patriot crowd in Amsterdam plundered various pubs where Orangist shipwrights gathered on the island of Kattenburg.³⁶ Four months later, windows belonging to several Orangist citizens were smashed in the garrison town of Heusden in States-Brabant.³⁷ In both of these cases, these actions provoked reactions when the Orangists got the upper hand. In Amsterdam, the Orangist shipwrights responded with the large-scale plundering of houses of well-to-do Patriots.³⁸ They also organised festivities, including large processions to celebrate the stadtholderian restoration. A plunderer who had been killed by the civic guard received a stately funeral after the Prussians had entered the city.³⁹ In Brabant, the systematic plundering of

³⁵ Palmen, ‘De smalle gemeente’, 244–246; Edward P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *Past and Present* 50: 1 (1971), 76–136.

³⁶ Idzard van Manen and K. Vermeulen, ‘Het lagere volk van Amsterdam in de strijd tussen patriotten en oranjegezinden 1780–1800 II’, *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 31 (1981), 3–42, here 25–27.

³⁷ Joost Rosendaal, *Tot nut van Nederland. Polarisatie en revolutie in een grensgebied, 1783–1787* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 195.

³⁸ A. Haga, ‘Herinneringen van den patriot H.T. Ament’, *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 48 (1927), 1–26, here 9–11.

³⁹ Johannes Breen, ‘De feestelijke stemming na de Restauratie van 1787’, *Amsterdamum* 5 (1918), 89–91, here 90.

Heusden formed the climax of Orangist raids of the surrounding countryside. Thousands of farmers from nearby villages entered the town, singing, dancing, screaming, and shooting in the air. They demanded money and liquor and forced the citizens to toast the house of Orange. The crowd proceeded to the town hall and released two Orangist prisoners, who were paraded through the town in triumph. Subsequently over fifty houses of Patriot citizens were plundered. Patriot leaders were imprisoned and harassed. The plundering of Heusden was organised, and the plunderers seem to have maintained a strict hierarchy. One of the leaders of the operation was referred to by the crowd as ‘commander of the plunderers’.⁴⁰

The actions in the province of Zeeland on the island of Schouwen were particularly violent. In November 1786, three inhabitants of the countryside were arrested for having violated a ban on wearing Orange dress and imprisoned in the town of Zierikzee. In response, a group of farmers went from village to village in procession behind a large orange banner, smashed the windows of Patriots’ houses, and did not pay for the drinks they consumed at various village inns. The procession ended up at the Zierikzee prison, where they attempted in vain to liberate the prisoners. During the summer of the following year, after the invasion of Prussian troops, an armed clash between the Patriot free corps and an Orangist crowd resulted in the defeat of the free corps. The crowd resorted to plundering. More than a hundred houses were plundered, seventy-five of which were entirely destroyed. The countryside of the island was plundered a few months later.⁴¹

Peter van Rooden has analysed the nature of these instances of collective action. As was usual in early modern ritual plundering, the plunderers on Schouwen, with few exceptions, destroyed but did not steal because they believed that they were executing justice.⁴² As in Heusden, the plundering crowd imitated the structure of the army, with bands of plunderers headed by a captain, another sign that they believed their actions were just. As Van Rooden rightly observes, for Orangist crowds there was also an element of naive monarchism in their legitimisation. To Orangists on Schouwen, stadtholder William V was nothing short of a monarch and,

⁴⁰ Rosendaal, *Tot nut van Nederland*, 195, here 199–201.

⁴¹ Van Rooden, ‘Plunderingen’, 176–177.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 188. Cf. Dekker, *Holland in beroering*, 87.

in their eyes, going against the monarch, as the Patriots did, was a violation of the God-given social order and therefore an attack on the Dutch Reformed religion itself.⁴³

For Patriots, politics and religion were tightly linked as well. Between 1793 and 1795, the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic States-Brabant, which was ruled by the Dutch Reformed States-General in The Hague, was the stage of the war between a French revolutionary army and the troops of the stadtholder. During these years, the region witnessed a wave of religiously inspired symbolic violence by Catholic Patriots. In many villages, these Patriots plundered the local churches, which were used by a tiny Protestant minority. Bibles and psalters were torn apart, pews were used as firewood, and the plunderers defecated in the pulpits. With such desacralisation rites, Catholics demonstrated their resentment against the Calvinist ruling elite.⁴⁴

Unlike the stadtholderian restoration, the Batavian Revolution happened without mass plundering. Probably the best-known symbolic action in the early months of the Batavian Republic was directed against the symbols of the House of Orange-Nassau and other high nobility. In Leeuwarden, the graves of the Frisian stadtholders from which William V descended were destroyed. In Utrecht, the Dom church was plundered: the escutcheons of noble families were taken down and the tomb of the Countess of Solms, a relative of the stadtholder, was badly damaged.⁴⁵ In Drenthe, there is an extant painting of stadtholder William V from which the face has been scratched out.⁴⁶

Collective action directed against persons, however, did not disappear, and when it took place, its repertoire looked similar to before. The new authorities tried to prevent popular action against Orangists, but they were not always successful. When the people believed the authorities did not do a good enough job in repressing supporters of the stadtholder, they took the law into their own hands. Their behaviour has usually been interpreted as revolutionary radicalism, but the nature of the actions

⁴³ Van Rooden, 'Plunderingen', 191–192.

⁴⁴ Romme, 'Charivari en patriottisme', 116–118; Joost Rosendaal, *Bataven! Nederlandse vluchtelingen in Frankrijk 1787–1795* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2003), 551–552.

⁴⁵ Rosendaal, *Bataven!*, 547.

⁴⁶ Unknown artist (unknown date) *Damaged portrait of William V* (possible copy after Guillaume de Spinny, *Portrait of William V*, 1775). Collection Drents Museum, obj. no. H1903-0027.

suggests that here, too, we are ultimately dealing with attempts to restore the local order. On Saturday 14 November 1795, during the evening, a group of Patriots plundered a house on the Heerenstraat in Rotterdam, which was apparently a gathering place for Orangists who pretended to frequent a singing club. The next evening, an armed group showed up at inns that were frequented by Orangists and the houses of innkeepers who worked at these places. They left a trail of destruction and carried Orangist symbols they found along with them as trophies.⁴⁷ In Amsterdam, many inhabitants were dissatisfied with the local government, which in their eyes was far too lenient towards civil servants with Orangist sympathies who had been allowed to keep their jobs. The resentment about this was greatest among the gunners of the voluntary city artillery (*kanonniërs*). In early May 1796, gunners started to disobey their superior officers as well as intimidate and molest civil servants. Two of the gunners were arrested, and on 9 May the city council decided to disband and disarm the city artillery. The next day, a crowd of gunners, acting on their own authority and helped by other inhabitants, stormed the city hall, entered the assembly room, and smashed the furniture. They demanded the annulment of their disbandment, the release of the arrested gunners, and the removal from office of the Orangist civil servants.⁴⁸

The Batavian period also witnessed outbursts of Orangist collective action. In Wageningen, Orangist inhabitants responded with violence when they were invited to take part in a provincial referendum. They damaged the houses of Patriot citizens, demanded drinks, and smashed windows, as one contemporary chronicler with Patriot sympathies put it, ‘the usual doings of the supporters of the House of Orange, which characterises them through the ages’.⁴⁹ Another example is presented by the events in the countryside of northeast Friesland, which had a tradition of popular unrest. In the village of Burum, for instance, the birthday of the stadtholder had given rise to riots in 1789: in the local church the Bible

⁴⁷ R.A.D. Renting, ‘Orangisten en Orangisme te Rotterdam na de Bataafse Republiek II’, *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje* 7: 3 (1965), 195–221, here 199–200.

⁴⁸ Hartog Italic, ‘De oproerige bewegingen der kanonniërs te Amsterdam in 1796’, *Oud Holland* 20: 1 (1902), 16–58, here 38–39.

⁴⁹ *Nieuwe Nederlandsche Jaarboeken, of Vervolg der merkwaardigste geschiedenissen, die voorgevallen zijn in de Vereenigde Provinciën, de Generaliteits landen en de volksplantingen van den state* (1795), 5408–5409; and Laurien Hansma, *Oranje drijven: Orangisme in de Nederlandse politieke cultuur 1780–1813* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2019), 106.

on the pulpit had been torn and the pulpit had been smeared with faeces. We have seen similar actions being performed by Catholics in Brabant, but this time the perpetrators were Protestants acting against their coreligionists. In 1797, Burum was again a centre of contention in what has become known as the ‘revolt of Kollum’ (*Kollumer oproer*). An inhabitant of this village who hindered the registration of able men for conscription in a civic guard was arrested and locked up in nearby Kollum as he awaited his transfer to the capital, Leeuwarden.⁵⁰

As is often the case, the arrest of a member of the local community triggered collective action. In the neighbouring village of Zwaagwesteinde, several hundred people armed themselves with all they could find and headed to Kollum, where they succeeded in liberating the prisoners. That night, thousands of armed Frisians attacked Kollum and other villages in the region. In Kollum, the anger of the crowd was directed at specific members of the community. Their main target was a local Patriot leader. A few dozen people entered his house and physically abused him and his family. His house and most of his possessions were plundered. As it turned out, the rage of the crowd was partly inspired by the moral conduct of this local Patriot. He apparently mistreated his domestics, including a maid who was the daughter of the leader of the attackers. As well as being politically motivated, the attack also had the characteristics of a traditional charivari against immoral behaviour.⁵¹

BLURRED BOUNDARIES

What emerges from the previous sections is a local repertoire of action undertaken against violations of the moral and the political order. Plundering, which could go from smashing windows to total destruction, was in many cases the preferred form of action. Plundering crowds often appropriated food and (alcoholic) drinks or demanded money to buy these. Violence against persons was relatively rare, but it did occur. The sites of plundering varied according to the circumstances—in some cases there was only one site, in other cases there were many—but plundering never happened at random. Individual members of the local society were

⁵⁰ Jacques Kuiper, *Een revolutie ontrafeld: Politiek in Friesland 1795–1798* (Franeker: Van Wijnen, 2002), 263–265.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 268–269, 273.

singled out for a specific reason. Occasionally, the sites of plundering were not the houses or establishments of individuals, but other sites of wrongdoing, such as the seats of political, judicial, or religious authorities. Crowds did not always plunder, but also resorted to less violent forms of action such as charivaresque processions. Such processions could be playful, but often carried an imminent threat of violence, for instance for those refusing to join in, or escalated into plundering.

In the minds of many inhabitants of the revolutionary Netherlands, there seems to have existed no sharp distinction between moral and political order. Ultimately, they resorted to action when one or more members of a local community were believed to have committed moral offences. A moral offender, to the local population, could be a community member harming (the reputation of) other members, or an authority figure trying to break with tradition or arresting locals. In either case, the unity and harmony of the local community was believed to be under threat, and the local authorities were deemed to not be restoring order. This is why collective action virtually always contained elements that symbolically amounted to imitating or taking the place of the authorities. This could be very literal, like individuals sitting down in the seats of their leaders or the reburial of a body, or more coded, like ritual plunder symbolising an official banishment.

What the cases discussed above also exemplify, is that in the revolutionary era there seems to have been no specifically *urban* tradition of revolt. The manifestations of collective action discussed in this chapter show that the repertoires of action in cities and countryside do not differ from one another. It would be surprising if they did, as many urban dwellers had their roots in the countryside, and inhabitants of the countryside often took part in urban revolts, while their action might also be directed against village authorities. One and the same symbolic repertoire survived in the end of the age of revolutions both in rural and urban communities. This observation is relevant because it is in the cities that we tend to situate the emergence of newer manifestations of collective action, such as participating in political clubs and public petitioning.

Another distinction that is not tenable is between Patriots and Orangists. It is tempting to think of the Patriots as progressive, composed, middle-class citizens, engaged in orderly, highly controlled forms of collective action such as petitioning or parading in militias, while imagining the Orangists as an enraged rabble, desperately clinging to an old order and popular traditions. The events in Arnhem, where actions were

directed against Orangist authorities and a member of the Jewish community by people who identified as Patriots, demonstrate that this distinction is too black and white. In the behaviour of the people of Arnhem, we recognise many well-known symbolic patterns. They performed their actions at the sites of wrongdoing, in this case the old and new cemeteries, they imitated the authorities by organising a funeral procession and a reburial, and they also asked for drink money as a sign that their actions were legitimate.

An important question that remains to be addressed is whether the newer contentious repertoire that amounted to politicised forms of sociability and petitioning (which were, of course, also institutions predating the revolution) should be seen as distinct from the more traditional symbolic repertoire. Are we dealing with different groups of people involved in different types of action? Do they represent incompatible ways of thinking? In my view the answer to all of these questions is no. In fact, I would rather argue, much in line with the general thrust of this volume, that what we tend to think of as a more modern revolutionary repertoire was often understood, at the grassroots level, in symbolic terms as well.

It is true that there was a group of revolutionaries in the Batavian era known as *Moderaten* who, much like the urban elites of the early modern Dutch Republic, dismissed symbolic forms of action as popular derailment. They had their own associations such as the Gemeenebestgezinde Burgersocieteiten (Societies of Commonwealth-Minded Citizens), elite organisations that resembled pre-revolutionary cultural societies and admitted new members by ballot. The Gemeenebestgezinde Burgersocieteit of The Hague, which counted many national politicians among its members, declared it an ‘unalterable principle’ that it could never pretend to represent the voice of the people.⁵²

Such self-imposed limitations could not be found in the regulations of the more common radical political clubs and other associations of the same period. These associations were much less elitist in terms of membership and thrived precisely because they functioned as alternative representative institutions. In petitions to local governments or the national parliament, their leaders supported the new system of representative democracy and denied that they intended to make any power

⁵² Herman de Lange, ‘De Gemeenebestgezinde burgersocieteit te Den Haag, 1797–1798’, *Jaarboek geschiedkundige vereniging Die Haghe* 1 (1970), 42–81; and Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld*, 219.

claims. To the ordinary members, however, the new concept of popular sovereignty often seems to have been understood in terms of their established right to put themselves in the place of the authorities and restore the moral order.

The radical political club, with its internal hierarchy, can also be viewed as a less violent manifestation of the plundering band. Sometimes the boundaries between the two became blurred when members of clubs resorted to violent action. This was the case in the abovementioned incident in Rotterdam in 1795, where the attack on the illegal Orangist club was committed by members of the radical Batavian *Societeit voor Volksvrienden* (Society for Friends of the People).⁵³ In the revolt of the gunners (*kanonniersoproer*) that took place in Amsterdam in 1796, we see that the officers of the voluntary city artillery lost control over their subordinates because the latter pursued a moral agenda of their own, a mechanism that is also common in plundering crowds.

Similarly, petitioning can be considered a modern political right, as Dutch revolutionary ideologues did, but this did not stop people from seeing it, as they had in the early modern period, as a form of action not incompatible with, but complementary to, symbolic action. Petitioning presupposed at least a minimal degree of acceptance of the power relationship between rulers and ruled, because it implied an acknowledgement of the authority of the rulers. At the same time, it was understood both by rulers and ruled that petitioning was only one step away from violent action: if petitioners felt that they were not heard, they were more likely to take the law into their own hands. Signing petitions or presenting them to the authorities often involved the gathering of crowds. These actions can be seen as ritual steps that had to be carried out before more rigorous action was deemed justified, but they posed an imminent threat of violence. Many instances of symbolic collective action were in fact preceded by petitions; this was, for instance, the case with the Patriot revolt Arnhem in 1783 and with the Orangist riots in Leiden in 1784.⁵⁴

The events in Leiden are particularly revealing. There, the unrest over the creation of a new Patriot voluntary civic militia was greatest among the Orangist members of the old institution of the civic guard. These

⁵³ Renting, 'Orangisten en Orangisme', 199–200.

⁵⁴ Franken, 'De uitbarsting van de Patriottenbeweging', 152; and De Jong, *Weldenkende burgers en Oranjeliefhebbers*, 159.

members intended to petition the Leiden government and request that this new rival be outlawed, but they were initially kept from doing so by their board of officers (*Krijgsraad*), who promised that they would handle the situation. When this did not happen to the satisfaction of the guardsmen, they responded by drawing up a petition all the same and submitting it to the authorities directly, passing over their officers.⁵⁵ The high number of subscribers to this petition (860) was typical of the revolutionary era. The function the petition served, however, was typical of the ‘contentious regime’ of the early modern Dutch Republic. The Orangist guardsmen were well aware that there was no chance of their request being granted by the city government, which was dominated by Patriots. What they needed to show was that they had tried all options to get the government to do the right thing. When this had proven to be to no avail, they could legitimately proceed to take matters into their own hands.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the Dutch Revolution from a distance, we cannot but conclude that it had a deep impact on the political life of the Dutch Republic. This was certainly the case for non-Dutch Reformed inhabitants, and rural dwellers, among other groups, because they were accepted, for the first time since Dutch independence, as full citizens. More generally, the higher degree of political participation and the introduction of public access to government entirely changed the dynamics of citizen-ruler interactions. A large proportion of the population took part in primary assemblies to vote for referendums and elections, and engaged with the decision-making process in other ways. These novelties were not to last. After 1800, they would be viewed with suspicion for decades to come. Yet, their memory could not be banned from people’s minds.

That said, the fact that new avenues of popular political behaviour opened did not mean that older roads became dead ends. Symbolic, local collective action, that is the type of action which derived its legitimacy not from contemporary political theory but from moral custom, remained a productive repertoire throughout the revolutionary era, in cities and in the countryside, both among revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 156–159.

Episodes of symbolic action could be ‘spontaneous’ grassroots events, but this was not necessarily the case. In their attempts to achieve revolutionary *change*, political elites often capitalised on the indignation and energy generated by the desire to *restore* the moral order of the local community. In the Batavian era, populist politicians *avant la lettre* deliberately appealed to these local sentiments in their political speeches, which due to the freedom of the press reached a national audience. Rather than becoming less concerned with local issues prompted by popular culture, people discovered a new national podium where they could pursue these issues with collective petitions. In that sense, the age of revolutions did create a new political reality.

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PART III

Experiencing and Domesticating Change



The Experience of ‘Reform’ in English Local Governance in the Era of the ‘Reform Ministry’ (1830–1841)

Joanna Innes 

In the age of revolutions, Britain did not undergo a revolution. But it did undergo a ‘reform’.

If reform implies change within the framework of the constitution, and revolution, change by extra-constitutional means, then there is a difference in principle, and Britain underwent non-revolutionary change. Still, the antithesis between reform and revolution should not be overdrawn.

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‘Reform’ at the time had epic resonance, which has since been eroded. Within the space of a few years, a succession of acts of Parliament prescribed the remodelling of an extraordinary number and variety of institutions: from Parliament to the parish, from Scottish burgh police to Irish elementary schools, from the East India Company’s trading monopoly to Caribbean slavery.¹ All of these changes were contested, and a series of bitter struggles took place around them, both inside and outside Parliament. The government made deliberate efforts to involve a wider public in debating some of these changes. The fact that the elective principle was established in many of the new institutions of local government meant that significant numbers of people were also given a voice in their implementation. Some people used these opportunities to contest or obstruct change; they also devised other, variably effective ways of doing that. The changes ordered were inherently disruptive, and processes of change provided opportunities for further contention and disruption.

Still, over varying lengths of time, within a few years or a few decades, all these changes bedded down, if not always precisely as originally envisaged. They came to constitute the institutional landscape, and as such became the subject of a new generation’s reforming attention.

Britain’s ‘age of reform’ has been the subject of a very substantial historiography, though the accent has usually been on the questions what changed and why? Experiences of change have received attention primarily inasmuch as they helped to shape change. Here I shift focus towards experience, especially in relation to reform in English local government.² I explore forms of contention around these reforms, and public engagement with the process of change. Experience was in the first

¹ For an account that I helped to coordinate, Joanna Innes and Arthur Burns, eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform, Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

² For an introductory survey, Michael Turner, *The Age of Unease: Government and Reform in Britain, 1782–1832* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000). Other accounts focussing on the reformers include Peter Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830–1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Ian Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform, 1830–41: The Politics of Government* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); and Joseph Coohill, *Ideas of the Liberal Party: Perceptions, Agendas and Liberal Politics in the House of Commons 1832–52* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

instance experience of a *process*: it took some time before outcomes crystallized, ensuring that people had to exercise agency in highly confusing contexts. I then shift forwards in time, to consider how reforms were viewed in a longer perspective.

If we ask, how did institutions and practices change, it is possible in principle to provide reasonably clear answers. If instead we ask how people experienced change—how it presented itself to them, how they responded to it, and how and over what period their perceptions changed—then answers become more elusive. Still, it seems worth opening up these topics.

THE 'AGE OF REFORM'

Several things came together to give Britain's 'age of reform' a particularly momentous character. First, for almost a century and a half after the dynastic and constitutional revolution of 1688, British governments operated, in relation to England especially, under a form of self-denying ordinance which entailed not attempting systematically to remodel any institutions of government, or to do anything more than tinker with the relationship between Church and State. This was initially because political stability was argued to hinge on respecting the 'Revolution settlement': the set of decisions about what to change and what to leave in place that had concluded the 1688 revolution. As time passed, and the British political scene remained relatively stable, and national wealth and power grew, a different argument came to the fore, namely that, ramshackle though they might be in some respects, national institutions had established their worth in practice; it would be foolish to mend something that was not broken. No one denied the merits of 'improvement', but this connoted adjustment at the margins, or local change springing from local initiative.³

'Reform' emerged as a political slogan in the 1780s, then being employed especially by opposition Whigs in Parliament and by radicals

³ Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689–1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) for a good account of prevailing values. For my reader's guide to this, 'Polite and Commercial's Twin. Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689–1798', in Elaine Chalus and Perry Gauci eds., *Revisiting the Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

in the public sphere.⁴ The word had powerful resonances, more powerful than it usually has now. It connoted the rooting out of corruption and abuse, and willingness to tear things down in order to make a fresh start. The favourite object of reform was Parliament: that is the electoral system. It was argued that if constituency sizes were enlarged and more people were given the vote, such that more MPs had to answer to large electorates, then the House of Commons would do a better job of holding ministers to account—and would be able to avoid precipitating further such catastrophes as the (then still escalating) American war of independence. Other objects targeted for ‘reform’ in that decade included public finance, the Church, the East India Company and criminal justice. When the French Revolution erupted, that was argued to demonstrate the dangers of reform: after all, it had been touched off by well-meaning attempts to remodel national and local institutions. Although the Whig Edmund Burke, a vigorous critic of the Revolution, tried to salvage the case for ‘reform’, which he argued denoted pragmatic and targeted change, his arguments were not widely accepted at this juncture; instead, ‘reform’ came to connote headstrong blundering, and only those whose appetite for controversy was undimmed by revolution and war persisted in championing it. Although the term began to creep back into self-consciously ‘moderate’ use in the 1810s, many remained wary, both of the word itself and of what they thought it stood for.

The uneven recovery of ‘reform’ as a political slogan overlapped with wider changes in British political culture, entailing the broadening and intensification of public involvement with politics; the development of new forms of political engagement (such as public petitioning campaigns) and the emergence of more-and-less formally structured supra-local political organizations.⁵ The term ‘movement’ began to take on its modern

⁴ Joanna Innes, ‘Reform in English Public Life: The Fortunes of a Word’, in Joanna Innes and Arthur Burns eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71–97; and Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, and Manuela Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century: When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

⁵ The introduction to Innes and Burns, eds., *Rethinking*, 22–25, 33–34, 38, makes some attempt to characterize these changes. Mary O’Connor’s Oxford D.Phil., in progress should shed more light; thanks to her in relation to ‘orators’ especially. For ‘non-electors’, Jon Lawrence, *Electing our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15, 16, 21, 30.

meaning. In the early nineteenth century, elections to Parliament, notoriously often rowdy affairs, were more frequently called, and those who did not qualify to vote, so-called non-electors, increasingly attracted notice. A set of radical leaders achieved national prominence. Because one way in which they championed their cause was by travelling around the country speaking at public meetings, they were sometimes termed 'orators'. A series of sites that had long intermittently staged contention became more routinely politicized, including urban parish vestries, meetings of members of municipal corporations (chartered bodies responsible for town government) and county meetings, which were occasionally called to debate and make resolutions on public issues. Other kinds of public meetings proliferated, including meetings of subscribers to philanthropic bodies, and ad hoc meetings convened to discuss—and perhaps endorse petitions addressing—one or another local or national issue. The governing classes talked about the growing power of public opinion, and while they may have exaggerated its novelty, its manifestations were growing and changing, as more people lower down the social scale gained confidence in their right to speak and be heard on the public stage. In this context, it was easy for the fearful to worry that any call for 'reform' would be echoed and multiplied across many settings, and that it would be taken up by ignorant and impulsive people.

Around 1830, the genie was loosed from the bottle.⁶ Testifying to a widespread sense that pressure for change was becoming irresistible on some fronts, Tory ministers took the first steps towards remodelling the revolution settlement. These ministers identified with a political grouping that had been so long in power that they thought of themselves not as a party but rather as 'the administration'. Now they agreed to support a cross-party initiative to remove restrictions on the political rights of the growing number of Protestant Dissenters. Much more controversially and divisively, though again with cross-party support, in the following year they removed restrictions on Catholic political rights, with a view especially to quieting agitation around this issue in Ireland. Some clergy and laity who identified strongly with the established Church of England felt betrayed by this move, which they saw as fundamentally changing the constitution. The *quid pro quo* for 'Catholic Emancipation' was a

⁶ Unless otherwise specified, works cited nn. 1–2 can be assumed to be good places to turn for more information about the developments very briefly sketched below.

narrowing of voting rights in Ireland: a raising of the minimum qualifying threshold. But the same ministers refused to consider any change to the English electoral system: not least because in that case, all the pressure was towards broadening participation. At that point the death of the king made it necessary to hold a new general election. In the new Parliament, the old ministers proved unable to put together a governing majority, so the new king appointed a ministry made up of long-term opposition Whigs, afforced by a few reform-minded members of the previous regime.

Thus a long-term outsider party came to power, a party whose members had for many decades constructed their identity around criticism of the status quo, and who relished the chance now afforded to prove their worth by righting wrongs. Parliamentary reform was at the top of their agenda: they were keen to eliminate tiny urban constituencies under the thumb of local landed gentry, or any monied man who could buy electoral support. As they saw it, these ‘closed boroughs’ were bastions of bad government. They also saw merit in calls to rationalize the franchise, to increase numbers of voters of moderate means. In fact, reforming Parliament proved even more contentious and radicalizing than might have been expected.⁷ This was first because the plan that the ministry decided to bring forward called for more sweeping changes than had been anticipated, and secondly because opponents of this plan did all they could to block it, forcing a ministry that was only prepared to back-track up to a certain point into ever more confrontational mode. Two general elections in quick succession revealed impressive levels of support for reform in the more populous constituencies, including many of traditionally Tory bent; nonetheless, MPs for smaller constituencies and the House of Lords fought back doggedly. In a context in which the place of the Church in the constitution was already in debate, opposition by the bishops in the House of Lords provoked fury, expressed most dramatically in Bristol where the bishop’s palace was burnt down. Ultimately, in the face of pressure from the king, the House of Lords stopped trying to block the bill, and ‘Reform’ was agreed.

Recent analyses suggest that the effect of the act was to reinforce trends stemming from demographic and social change inasmuch as it increased

⁷ Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London: Hutchinson, 1973) remains the best scholarly study of the whole episode, though his account has been superseded in some respects, for example in relation to political unions, and the character of the electorate before and after reform (for which see the note following).

numbers of voters, and trends of change in political culture inasmuch as it promoted public engagement and brought more active and opinionated MPs into Parliament.⁸ Not all change was in the same direction: some classes of voters, deemed susceptible to influence, lost the right to vote, and as a result some constituencies ended up with smaller electorates than before. But overall the act furthered existing trends of change, while the circumstances in which it passed heightened tensions, by, on the one hand, increasing the fears of would-be defenders of the existing order, and, on the other hand, confirming critics in their view that reforms were not only necessary but achievable.

Emboldened by what they had achieved so far, and by the solid base of support that they obtained in the first House of Commons elected under new rules, ministers pioneered a new governing style by bringing forward an ambitious series of bills. Their reading of the demands of the moment was that what was needed was not administration but legislation. Much of what they attempted was on the 'reform' model: they sought to abolish misconceived or corrupt institutions and to replace them with better arrangements.⁹ Their programme was global, imperial and also spanned the whole of the United Kingdom, though past history as well as legislative convention dictated that rarely did they legislate for the whole UK at once: rather they promoted sometimes parallel, sometimes distinct measures for the different kingdoms, reflecting their reading of their different circumstances and needs. Whereas previous ministries had sometimes felt able to be a little bolder in legislating for Scotland and Ireland (intermittently troubled places), the Reform ministry promoted a bold programme of change in relation to previously sacrosanct English

⁸ Philip Salmon, 'The English Reform Legislation', in David R. Fisher ed., *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1820–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 374–412; also on the History of Parliament website at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/survey/ix-english-reform-legislation>; Philip Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work: Local Politics and National Parties, 1832–41* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002); and Angus Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: Habits of Heart and Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 99–153.

⁹ Sir John Seeley, 'The English Revolution of the Nineteenth Century', *Macmillan's Magazine* 22: 130 (1870), xxii, 241–251. For an interesting attempt to characterize what was distinctive about visions of political change in this era. To similar effect, Innes and Burns eds., *Rethinking*.

institutions too; nor were ministers—who had the exclusive right to introduce only financial legislation—the only ones to bring forward further reforming measures.

With hindsight, it became clear, as it is now clear to us, what would simply be mooted, what would pass more-or-less unamended, what would have to be rethought, and what would never get off the ground. But, of course, this was not clear in advance. Some expected more aggressive action against the Church than was ever attempted. That was why, when the in-some-ways reform-minded Tory Robert Peel enjoyed a brief spell of power (when the king thought it right to try an alternative to the Reform ministry), he established a Royal Commission on the Church, aiming to keep initiative in safe hands. Radicals flew a variety of kites. John Roebuck proposed a national network of parish schools, at which attendance would be compulsory. Though the Reform ministry was interested in expanding educational provision, they were not persuaded by this approach, and asked him to desist.¹⁰ Joseph Hume floated a multitude of schemes and motions, including a proposal to replace centrally appointed county magistrates with elective boards.¹¹ Most such initiatives failed, but they helped to create a disquieting sense that everything was up for grabs.

Meanwhile, other things were changing, not immediately connected with reform, but adding to the sense that the world was being remade—such as the first railway boom, reflected in the appearance in Parliament of a slew of private railway bills, whose promoters and opponents had to testify before committees. (When the Grand Junction line opened in 1837, just after the death of the king who had seen through reform, the engine of the train that ceremonially opened the route bore a flag celebrating him as ‘A True Reformer’.)¹²

By no means everything that the Reform ministry attempted pleased even those who had brought it into power. Insofar as the ministry’s own

¹⁰ Denis Paz, *The Politics of Working-Class Education in Britain 1830–50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 1–16. For the ministry’s tentative efforts in the late 1830s, Mandler, *Aristocratic Government*, 182–193.

¹¹ Ronald Huch and Paul Ziegler, *Joseph Hume: The People’s MP* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1985).

¹² Contemporary histories (for those consulted see n. 60 below) often highlighted the railway as a new feature of this era, esp. prominently in children’s and more popular histories. Norman Webster, *Britain’s First Trunk Line: The Grand Junction Railway* (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1972), 92–95.

efforts had made an open and contentious political culture still more open, there were lots of opportunities for the discontented to fight back. Both Tories and radicals seized these. These years brought into the lime-light a new kind of Tory, termed by the Whig Macaulay a 'disloyal Tory', someone so incensed by some of the ministry's reforms—seen as undermining an older and in some ways more inclusive and humane way of life—as to be prepared to make common cause even with radicals.¹³

By 1841, opinion had swung far enough to bring the Tories back to power in the longer term—though under one of their number, the aforementioned Robert Peel, who was more inclined than many of his fellows to see some case for reform.¹⁴ Rebranding his party 'Conservative', Peel tried to go with the flow while tempering it, so as to preserve those things that were good about the old order. Both through his longer-term record of temperate conduct, and by his manner of leadership as prime minister, Peel helped to give reform the aura of something more than a partisan crusade. According to the contemporary Tory historian Archibald Alison, Peel's short ministry of 1835 had already turned the tide of revolution, by bringing the legislature into alignment with a great shift that had taken place in public opinion. In Alison's words, the effect of Peel's lead was to bring to speedier fruition the 'natural result of reflection and experience upon an intelligent though overheated generation'.¹⁵

A few years into his second ministry, Peel nonetheless pushed his luck too far by eliminating tariff protection for agriculture, and split his party. That split opened the way to twenty years of Whig, or—as it was now increasingly termed—'Liberal' hegemony, in turn shaping retrospective

¹³ Macaulay had in mind those who combined 'the worst parts of the Cavalier and the worst parts of the Roundhead': speech delivered in the House of Commons 29 Jan 1840. [Harriet Martineau], *Knight's Popular History of England AD 1816–67*, vol. VIII (London: Bradbury, Evans & Co., 1862), 421–423, citing Macaulay, blames such men for stirring up 'physical-force' Chartism. Jörg Neuheiser, *Crown, Church and Constitution: Popular Conservatism in England, 1815–67* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2016), focusses essentially on conservative discourse. Whether Tory populism entailed a junction with radicalism is questioned in Felix Driver, 'Tory Radicalism? Ideology, Strategy and Locality in Popular Politics During the Eighteen-Thirties', *Northern History* 27: 1 (1991), 120–138.

¹⁴ A recent assessment is Richard Gaunt, *Sir Robert Peel: The Life and Legacy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

¹⁵ Archibald Alison, *History of Europe from the Fall of Napoleon...to the Rise of Louis Napoleon...*, 8 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1852–1859), vi, 153, and see also 243–245.

constructions of the reform push. Still, even those who endorsed the view which, in this context, became orthodoxy—that Reformers had acted essentially as midwives for inevitable change—never forgot the *sturm and drang* which had raged around its birth. Chapter subheadings in Alison’s *History* of the era communicate this: ‘Astonishment in the House’; ‘Agitation in the country’; ‘Violent scene in the House of Commons’; ‘Violence at the election’; ‘Dreadful riots in Scotland’; ‘Preparations for insurrection’; ‘Universal delusions’; ‘Disorders...’; ‘Riots...’; ‘Frightful disorders...’¹⁶ It became common to see in these tumults a modern echo of the mid-seventeenth-century Cavalier vs. Roundhead civil wars (themselves romanticized in retrospect by the comparison).¹⁷

REFORMING ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Reforms to English local government arrangements were several. The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, commonly termed ‘the New Poor Law’, opened the way for a radical overhaul of what was at this point retrospectively christened the ‘Old Poor Law’ of 1601. That had placed responsibility for relieving the poor in the hands of parish officers, local people serving by rotation, who were empowered to tax their neighbours for this purpose. The new law appointed royal commissioners who were authorized, if they saw fit, to amalgamate parishes into larger units, governed by elected boards (a model voluntarily adopted in some places during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries); the commissioners were also empowered to determine how local administrators should deal with the able-bodied poor (who were believed to loom excessively large among relief claimants). This measure thus established a new central authority, and seemed set on reducing the powers of parishes (if to an initially indeterminate extent).¹⁸ The powers of small units of government—parishes and manors—were further challenged by a measure of 1839, which I will not discuss in detail here: that allowed counties to take over policing responsibilities hitherto discharged by local people taking

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, iv, table of contents.

¹⁷ Timothy Lang, *Victorians and the Stuart Heritage: Interpretations of a Discordant Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹⁸ For a broad-brush account of the act and its administrative implications, Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834–84* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Works cited in nn. 32, 36, 42, below give more detail.

their turn as 'constable'. It transferred these to salaried county forces, under the direction of a county 'Chief Constable'. The 1839 County Police Act was permissive (it was made compulsory only two decades later) but it grew out of discussions in which many counties had participated, in which alternative schemes, sticking more closely to traditional practice, had also been canvassed, so its passage in this form was a victory for innovation.¹⁹

The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 changed governance arrangements in larger corporate towns.²⁰ It applied to all chartered boroughs of significant size (except the city of London): some 178, scattered across England. Their diverse existing arrangements were superseded by new ones on a uniform template. New bodies comprised an elective chamber, whose members chose a longer-serving upper chamber and, annually, a mayor. These bodies were required to publish both their minutes and their accounts. Charity monies administered by old corporations were to be put into the hands of new trustees, but other forms of corporate property were transferred to the new bodies, who also gained power to tax. They had to assume the burden of existing debts, but were constrained in running up new ones. The new bodies were given only limited responsibilities (chiefly for keeping order). They could assume certain powers from existing 'improvement commissions' (or gain more if they applied for new local acts), but not all rushed to do this.²¹ Distinct

¹⁹ David Philips and Robert Storch, *Policing Provincial England, 1829–56: The Politics of Reform* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Much less has been written about this act than about the New Poor Law, perhaps partly because its positive provisions were so minimal and were left to be fleshed out locally. It is set against the pre-history in Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680–1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow: Longman, 1999); Joanna Innes and Nicholas Rogers, 'Politics and Government 1700–1840', in Peter Clark ed., *Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 2, part III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), chapter 16, 529–574; Geoffrey B.A.M. Finlayson's studies building on his dissertation: 'The Municipal Corporations Act, 1835' (Unpublished Master Literature dissertation, University of Oxford, 1959) have now largely been superseded by Frédéric Moret, *End of the Urban Ancient Regime in England* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2015) which follows a richer account of the operations of the commission with systematic exposition of its findings, and reception in and out of Parliament. I cite some local studies in nn. 47, 49, 54 below.

²¹ Sweet, *English Town*, 159; John Prest, *Liberty and Locality: Parliament, Permissive Legislation and Ratepayers' Democracies in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 17–19.

poor-law authorities provided one among several alternative focuses for local power.²² The new template promised enough for numerous large, previously unincorporated towns, including Manchester and Birmingham, to apply for incorporation on the new model following the act's passage.²³

One common feature of the New Poor Law and new municipal arrangements was the principle that local authorities should be elected by those who contributed to local taxes (with votes weighted according to their contributions, in the first case; equally, in the second).²⁴

Under older models, though local government had been conducted by local people, there had been no such consistent principle of giving choice to voters, and quite often authority had lain in the hands of a self-appointing oligarchy. However, from the 1810s a new trend developed, as, on the one hand, acts offering opt-in templates for the establishment of new local authorities and, on the other hand, new ad hoc local acts started to mandate election. In effect, there emerged a new philosophy as to how 'local government' should be conducted. (That very name came into use only at this time, as people started to talk generically about institutions they had previously considered in more discrete ways.)²⁵ In the context of municipal corporation reform, the principle of giving equal votes to ratepaying residents occasioned debate in Parliament, proponents maintaining both that governing bodies needed to be made accountable, and that the diffusion of political powers and duties was good in itself, providing an education in self-government, while conversely opponents

²² Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976), 55–90.

²³ Derek Fraser ed., *Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982).

²⁴ E. T. Stokes, 'Bureaucracy and Ideology: Britain and India in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30 (1980), 131–156 is more alert to this issue than most. I have made it a key theme in my 'Government Without Prefects: Did the UK Offer an Alternative Model?' in Pierre Karila-Cohen ed., *Prefects and Governors in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (forthcoming, 2022) Thanks to Andy Eggers for making me think again about this. For reform themes in London, Benjamin Weinstein, *Liberalism and Local Government in Early Victorian London* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2010), 116–144.

²⁵ For the novelty of the category of 'local government', 'Central Government Interference. Changing Conceptions, Practices and Concerns 1688–1840', in José Harris ed., *Civil Society in British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 50.

claimed that what was being endorsed were republican principles.²⁶ The strong case for accountability was that it was needed to check abuse. Abuses included, in the case of the poor laws, (supposedly) profligate spending on the poor, with the additional bad effect of undermining their self-respect, and, in the case of municipal bodies, squandering of resources on feasting, ceremonial and vanity projects, alongside the fostering of divisive political partisanship (bolstered by selective distribution of charity money to political supporters).

The New Poor Law and Municipal Corporations Act (on which—because they were the most far-reaching measures—I shall focus for the remainder of this section) took shape through different processes, and for this reason, as well as because they had different kinds of impact, they occasioned different kinds of contention.

The New Poor Law was enacted against a background of concern, especially but not only in the south of England, about the high cost of poor relief, and its supposed demoralizing effects—concern sharpened by the 'Swing Riots' of 1830: that is, by protests on the part of agricultural labourers against underemployment and low wages, featuring machine-breaking and coercive negotiation.²⁷ Efforts to prepare the ground for legislation included the appointment of a royal commission of enquiry (a relative novelty, though an increasingly favoured tool of Reform ministers) which canvassed opinion from localities via urban and rural 'queries' (questionnaires). In the view of the secretary to the commission, this exercise in consultation had the implicit function of educating the public about the need for change.²⁸ This exercise revealed widespread concern about ways in which existing laws were supposedly failing, as well as showing that there had already been much local experimentation with remedies. As already noted in passing, though the act identified a problem and some possible ways forward, it delegated to a further body of

²⁶ Sweet, *English Town*, 152; and Anthony Brundage, *The Making of the New Poor Law: The Politics of Inquiry, Enactment, and Implementation, 1832–1839* (London: Hutchinson, 1978), 91–92, 159.

²⁷ The latest account is Carl Griffin, *Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012). For context see also Robert Lee, *Rural Society and the Anglican Clergy 1815–1914: Encountering and Managing the Poor* (Woodbridge: Suffolk Boydell & Brewer, 2006); and Roger Wells, 'Poor-Law Reform in the Rural South-East: The Impact of the 'Sturges Bourne Acts' During the Agricultural Depression, 1815–1835', *Southern History* 23 (2001), 52–115.

²⁸ Chadwick cited by Philips and Storch, *Policing*, 113.

commissioners responsibility for translating options into practice. In this context it was not immediately clear to anyone how far existing structures and practices would in fact change, nor to what extent localities would have a role in shaping local outcomes.²⁹

The new overseeing commissioners were quickly appointed, beginning work in the summer of 1834 by, among other things, appointing assistant commissioners to represent them in the field; nine of these were in post by the end of the year, and during the autumn, the first appointees set to work.³⁰ The first task they addressed was to explore circumstances in supposedly highly affected regions—often regions where local elites begged them to engage. On the basis of their reports, the commissioners concluded that some of the options that they had been empowered to recommend were impractical, notably options that involved incorporating some but not all parishes into unions, and allowing the employment of unemployed poor on public works. They concluded that there was only one promising way forward.³¹ All parishes should be incorporated into unions, run by boards bringing elected representatives of parishes together with magistrates and clergy. These boards should make final decisions about the relief to be accorded to every applicant, subject to the rule that all able-bodied paupers must be consigned to a union workhouse, where they should be set to laborious but unproductive tasks (if they could work productively, it was argued, they should be out on the labour market). The impotent poor could be relieved at home, to which end, board-appointed relieving officers were tasked with routinely visiting parishes to hand out money. If unable to manage on that basis (because too young, sick or otherwise afflicted), the impotent too might be maintained in the union workhouse.

The commissioners arrived at these conclusions relatively quickly, in the first half of 1835. Their prescription in turn provided the basic agenda

²⁹ 4 & 5 Will. 4 c. 76. In Hampshire, for example, two pamphlets chart different stages in learning what the act would entail: Thomas Garnier, *Plain Remarks Upon the New Poor Law Amendment Act* (Winchester: Jacob and Johnson, 1835); and [William Lutley Sclater], *A Letter to the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales on the Working of the New System, by a Chairman of the Board of Guardians* (Basingstoke: R. Cottle [1836]).

³⁰ Brundage, *Making New Poor Law*, 75–86.

³¹ *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners for England and Wales* (London, 1835) PP XXXV (1835), 107–375.

for assistant commissioners' field tours, which now unfolded county by county.³² Such tours lasted weeks or months, and were succeeded by follow-up visits, after commissioners had in principle moved on to neighbouring counties. Even given that those charged with implementing the law proceeded in a much more directive way than many contemporaries had anticipated, still there was much that had to be sorted out on the ground, and details of implementation were always decided in consultation with local communities, even if the intention was, whenever possible, to persuade or bully them into line with the commissioners' preferences. Still, it was necessary to obtain some measure of agreement on which parishes should be allocated to which union; whether an existing workhouse could be adapted or a new one must be built, how costs should be allocated; how representation apportioned, and who should qualify to vote or serve. These issues were aired and resolved in part through more-or-less open meetings, which, even insofar as they remained focussed on such practical matters, were usually to some extent contentious. In urban settings, where there commonly already existed an open, contentious political culture, discussions tended to be especially wide-ranging and challenging. They were often reported in local newspapers, encouraging participants, who might already have or might form in this context political ambitions, to strike attitudes with a larger public in view; in these settings, assistant commissioners sometimes moderated and sometimes tried to conceal some of their plans.³³ Elections of guardians likewise were especially likely in towns to take on a party-political colouring.³⁴ Commissioners' prescriptiveness was itself contested. Opposition in the metropolis was especially robust, generating among other things litigation which concluded early in 1837 with a ruling to the effect that districts

³² Brundage, *Making New Poor Law*, 87–99 for a general overview of the work of the assistant commissioners, followed by case studies. See also now Karen Rothery, 'Establishing the Poor Law Unions Under the New Poor Law', in James Gregory and Daniel Grey eds., *Union and Disunion in the Nineteenth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), chapter 13.

³³ I'm grateful to Myungsu Kang, whose work on the implementation of the law in Hampshire has helped to bring this process to life for me; see also Roger Wells, 'Andover Antecedents? Hampshire New Poor-Law Scandals, 1834–1842', *Southern History* 24 (2002), 91–189 and for a press report of a meeting in the Portsea Island Union, *Hampshire Telegraph* (August 13, 1838). Brundage tends to emphasize the gentry over other interlocutors, but see *Making New Poor Law*, 95, 151.

³⁴ Fraser, *Urban Politics*, 55–90.

which had obtained local acts to regulate their proceedings (as many urban districts had) might continue on that basis if they chose (though this did not stop central agents from trying to persuade such districts to adopt at least parts of their new approach).³⁵

Challenges multiplied as the assistant commissioners, who had started work in the predominantly rural South, moved towards the more industrial Midlands and North.³⁶ Industrial areas usually comprehended a mix of urban and quasi-urban communities, in which features characteristic of urban political cultures co-existed with more distinctly industrial patterns of activism, such as trade-unionism or support for an on-going campaign to set a ten-hour limit to the working day. In this region, opportunities to participate were seized upon to obstruct. In some unions, elections of Guardians were blocked; in others, anti-new-poor-law Guardians were returned; the town of Huddersfield refused to elect a clerk—a notably awkward form of non-compliance because clerks had been given the further duty of registering births, marriages and deaths under the new Civil Registration Act. In the face of this determined resistance, government and the commissioners engaged in some strategic back-peddling, following which they managed at least to get the basic machinery in place, though arguments about how it was to operate continued.³⁷ Especially in the North and Midlands, but also elsewhere, conflicts around the implementation of this law helped to catalyse, at the end of the decade, the broader popular protest-movement that came to be known as Chartism. This challenged many features of the Reform project, on the grounds that some parts of it (notably Parliamentary reform) did not go far enough, while other parts (New Poor Law, new police, Irish policies) were misconceived and oppressive.³⁸ The multiplication of opportunities to stand for

³⁵ Brundage, *Making New Poor Law*, 155–156. Also David Green, *Pauper Capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790–1870* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 115–157. For maps showing affected districts, Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, 43–46.

³⁶ Nicholas Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement, 1834–44* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971). A recent local study is John Beckett, ‘Politics and the Implementation of the New Poor Law: The Nottingham Workhouse Controversy, 1834–43’, *Midland History* 41: 2 (2016), 201–223. A ‘history’ from the time, compiling comment, is George Robert Wythen Baxter, *The Book of the Bastilles: A History of the New Poor Law* (London: John Stephens, 1841).

³⁷ Edsall, *Anti-Poor Law*, 79–115.

³⁸ Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) is the best modern account. Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics*

election gave Chartists access to a variety of official platforms on which to air their views.³⁹

Critics of what the New Poor Law became as it took on flesh were also vocal in Parliament, where they publicized what they saw as its most malign effects through select committees of enquiry. Though the government did its best to pack these committees with supporters of the law, they could not prevent witnesses from using them as a stage on which to rehearse criticisms. Newspaper accounts and ultimately the publication of reports from these committees boosted critics in and out of Parliament, and led some to hope and others to fear that the law might be revoked or at a minimum substantially reworked. In fact, though the combination of parliamentary and local opposition did persuade government and the commissioners slightly to temper their ambitions, they stuck by them wherever local circumstances allowed.⁴⁰ In 1847, after the completion of the implementation phase (insofar as that had proved achievable), in a sop to critics (who had mobilized over a particular local scandal), the commission was abolished, and replaced by a Poor Law Board, whose style was to preside over locally directed operations.⁴¹ The new order of things had in any case become familiar by this point, and its practice had become routine. Though occasional scandals continued to blow up, the larger storm had subsided. The official position was that the occasional scandal was a good sign: it showed that the public was sufficiently informed and alert to detect abuse if and when it happened.⁴²

in the Industrial Revolution (London: Temple Smith, 1984) remains helpful on reactions against Whig reform. The New Poor Law and new police were often linked as specimens of a new tyranny.

³⁹ Fraser, *Urban Politics*, 35–36, 93–94, 101, 257–261 on Chartists in Leeds and Salford; for Manchester, Paul Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 73–85.

⁴⁰ Brundage, *Making New Poor Law*, 160–163, 168–175.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴² Ian Anstruther, *The Scandal of the Andover Workhouse* (London: Bles, 1973), 109; for scandals as healthy. Steve King is now doing interesting work on the transition from old to new poor laws: e.g. Steven King, 'Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition Between Old and New Poor Laws', in Peter Jones and Steven King eds., *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute Under the English Poor Laws* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2015), 263–291; and Steven King, 'Thinking and Rethinking the New Poor Law', *Local Population Studies* 99: 1 (2017), 5–19. For continuity in out-relief Keith Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 207–365.

In the case of the Municipal Corporation Act, vigorous conflict raged at an earlier point in the process. During the early nineteenth century, endemic strife between supporters of corporations and ‘independents’ in some towns had ramified into something like a general corporation-reform movement.⁴³ One source of concern was mounting corporate debt, as corporations borrowed to finance ambitious ‘improvement’ projects. Changing values exposed corporations to the charge that they were oligarchic, un-transparent and insufficiently accountable. Moreover, the case *for* Parliamentary reform was in part a case *against* corporations, because many corporations claimed an exclusive right to elect their town’s MPs: sometimes this right lay in the freemen, sometimes only in the handful of men who sat on self-electing governing bodies. Even when governing bodies did not monopolize the vote, corporations often strove to exercise political influence, mainly on the Tory side. Some journalists emerged as energetic, even sometimes as mobile anti-corporation campaigners.⁴⁴ Lawyers and antiquarians of reformist bent worked together to construct a narrative about the usurpation of the people’s historic rights, and to imagine forms of legal remedy. There was a rising tide of anti-corporation litigation, and a few charters were overturned and remodelled.

Parliamentary reform in 1832 stripped corporations of their exclusive voting rights and left such local-governmental functions as they performed starkly exposed to critical scrutiny. Royal commissioners appointed to enquire into their history and current state laid the ground-work on paper, then visited all the larger corporate towns: all those they deemed appropriate objects of a first reforming probe (a larger total than the number ultimately remodelled by the act). The public meetings they convened gave critics a wonderful opportunity to rehearse their

⁴³ Innes and Rogers, ‘Politics and Government 1700–1840’, 565–568; Sweet, *English Town*, 150–161; and Philip Salmon, ‘“Reform Should Begin at Home”: English Municipal and Parliamentary Reform, 1818–32’, in Clyve Jones, Philip Salmon, and Richard Whitelock Davis eds., *Partisan Politics, Principle and Reform in Parliament and the Constituencies, 1689–1880: Essays in Memory of John A. Phillips* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005; supplement to *Parliamentary History*, 24), 93–113.

⁴⁴ For James Acland, the most notable of these, Janette Martin, ‘Oratory, Itinerant Lecturing and Victorian Popular Politics (1779–1876)’, *Historical Research* 86: 231 (2013), 30–52.

grievances, not only to commissioners and local audiences but also to the press.⁴⁵

The reform legislation drafted on the back of these enquiries prescribed a new model: it did not leave that to be determined by an intermediate body. This helped to ensure that Parliament itself was the scene of heated debate—sited above all in the House of Lords. Peers took fright because they thought that the old order as embodied in municipal corporations was unnervingly analogous to that incarnate in the peerage itself. Resistance from peers helped to spark some hundreds of petitions: mostly for, but in many cases against the bill; sometimes from corporate bodies but sometimes from public meetings convened in towns. Worries about freemen's rights, municipal charities and transfer of power over Anglican religious institutions into the hands of Dissenters loomed large in critical petitions. Representatives of some thirty boroughs were invited to testify at hearings in the chamber: mostly they testified to their own good conduct and denounced the commissioners as biased.⁴⁶ Controversy in Parliament was mirrored within boroughs. In Leicester, which sent petitions both for and against the bill, a larger clash of values overshadowed local specificities: the bill's backers were attacked as revolutionaries; they for their part argued that proceedings in the upper chamber demonstrated the urgency of reforming the House of Lords.⁴⁷ But Peel did not back the wreckers, and the Lords ultimately contented themselves with requiring some amendments, notably the addition of an indirectly elected aldermanic body, and reservation to government of the right to appoint magistrates.⁴⁸

Once the parliamentary battle had in substance been won, again there was an implementation phase. Crown-appointed barristers visited the affected towns and mapped out electoral wards, apportioned councillors among wards and publicly revised the list of burgesses (that is, of municipal electors), to ensure its conformity to the specifications of the Act. Proposals resulting were announced at a public meeting. Outcomes were

⁴⁵ Moret, *Urban Regime*, 34–78 on the operation of the commission; 57–64 specifically on public hearings.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 268–287. Proceedings were not reported in Hansard, but can be followed in esp. the Tory press, e.g., *The Morning Post*.

⁴⁷ Alfred Temple Patterson, *Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester 1780–1850* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975), 208–211.

⁴⁸ Moret, *Urban Ancient Regime*, 296–301.

sometimes objected to at the time, sometimes later, once their political implications became clear.⁴⁹

Once the basic set-up was completed, the next stage was to people the new governing bodies. Elections of councilmen proceeded through public nomination meetings to approve candidates, campaigns and polling. Some towns had experience of such elections (if involving different electorates); in others, they were a new phenomenon. Councillors once elected chose inaugural aldermen and mayors.⁵⁰ Reform candidates often did well in early elections, and even groups displaced by the process of change sometimes thought it wise to put forward new men to court favour in a new era, so big changes in governing personnel sometimes ensued (though those new to corporate governance might already have been helping to run improvement trusts and the like).⁵¹ Law and choice combined to determine that new governing bodies projected a new image, notably discontinuing traditional pageantry and ceremonial (though later in the century, some of this would be revived).⁵²

Experience revealed various ambiguities in the original act, spurring the passage of multiple amending acts and more substantial tidying-up legislation in 1837.⁵³ Significant disputes were often generated as the process of identifying and re-allocating the many and various forms of corporate property got underway.⁵⁴ Against that background, though new urban police forces were sometimes promptly set up (responding to encouragement in the Act), several years might pass before a Council

⁴⁹ Graham Bush, *Bristol and Its Municipal Government 1820–51* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, xxix, 1976), 116–118.

⁵⁰ E.g. *Ibid.*, 116–123.

⁵¹ Fraser, *Urban Politics*, 124–153; John Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour 1818–41* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 227–234.

⁵² For discontinuance, with contumely, Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, 216–217. Roey Sweet has pointed me towards their historicization in e.g. [W. C. Ewing], *Notices and Illustrations of the Costume, Processions, Pageantry, &c Formerly Displayed by the Corporation of Norwich* (Norwich: Charles Muskett, 1850) esp. Preface, and William Kelly, *Notices Illustrative of the Drama and other Popular Amusements, Chiefly in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Incidentally Illustrating Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (London: Smith, 1865), 139–140.

⁵³ 7 Will. 4 & 1 Vict. c., 78.

⁵⁴ Bush, *Bristol*, 29, 155–156; Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, 217–220, 222; and Peter Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth Century Urban Government* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 1973), 188.

felt ready to turn its mind to other new projects. In Bristol, thus, further 'improvement' to the City was not considered until 1839—when a local improvement plan was put together, and in the following year submitted to and approved by Parliament.

Political heat generated by changes in the structure and functioning of municipal government sometimes waned in subsequent years, only to flare up again when local or national issues inflamed local feeling. Changes both in the institutional framework and in the substance of politics made alignments in the new era fluid and unpredictable. The existence of various aggrieved parties within remodelled towns—including sometimes large numbers of freemen—gave Tories a starting point when it came to fighting back.⁵⁵

REFORM REMEMBERED

As reform plans crystallized—when the commissioners got to work, in the case of the New Poor Law; on the floor of Parliament itself, in the case of the Municipal Corporations Act—debate changed shape, as some options dropped away. Subsequent implementation phases foregrounded new issues, as matters of detail were presented for settlement, and local battles were won or lost. In the case of the New Poor Law, as we have noted, the development of an anti-poor-law movement, especially in the Midlands and North, with vigorous supporters in Parliament, raised the temperature of the issue during the late 1830s and early 1840s, helping to galvanize the formation of new across-the-board political identities, radical and Tory-radical. But this furore subsided in the later 1840s, as local compromises were forged, Chartism fragmented, and Tories discontented with Robert Peel's moderate-reforming leadership played their part in undermining him—thereby undermining their own party's parliamentary power. In the case of the Municipal Corporations Act, opposition was less root and branch. Though discontent among alienated freemen combined with anxiety about threats to the Church and other causes (such as opposition to the New Poor Law and demands for more effective factory legislation) spurred the formation of 'Operative Conservative'

⁵⁵ See below nn. 56, 58.

associations, which multiplied after 1835, the aim was not to roll back corporation reform but rather to mobilize support for Toryism in the new framework.⁵⁶ Both locally and nationally, Tories learned in the early 1840s that they could make headway under new rules. Though some of their gains were squandered when the parliamentary party split, even the malcontents increasingly focussed on identifying achievable goals within the new landscape.

In that context, debate increasingly centred on whether new systems were working well or badly: were workhouses properly maintained, and if rigorously yet humanely run? And if not, what kind of pressure could be brought to bear to make them better? Were town governments striking the right balance between frugality and maintenance of an orderly urban environment? Or what more needed doing and by whom and how was that best done? How to institutionalize and conduct ‘local government’ remained a contentious matter, but there came to be general agreement that in principle ‘local self-government’ was both an age-old and a continuingly important English constitutional tradition, and that its spirit was embodied, if not perfectly embodied, in an evolving array of institutions. In his best-selling *Constitutional History of England*, Thomas Erskine May gave confident expression to this relatively recent view: ‘England alone among the nations of the earth has maintained for centuries a constitutional polity; and her liberties may be ascribed, above all things, to her free local institutions’. The effect of reform, as he portrayed it, had been to reverse abuses that had accreted over the centuries to compromise the exercise of that liberty.⁵⁷

In the 1840s an idealized past—often a medieval past—was sometimes set against a supposedly soulless, overly rational and mechanically minded present: thus in dramatic imagery by the Catholic-convert Augustus Pugin in his *Contrasts*, also by Anglo-Catholic ‘Tractarians’, and aficionados of the romantic-conservative movement ‘Young England’. These evocations did not initially provide the basis for much in the way

⁵⁶ Salmon, *Electoral*, 66–69; Matthew Cragoe, ‘The Great Reform Act and the Modernization of British Politics: The Impact of Conservative Associations, 1835–1841’, *Journal of British Studies* 47: 3 (2008), 581–603; and Neuheiser, *Crown, Church, Constitution*, 69–78.

⁵⁷ Thomas Erskine May, *The Constitutional History of England Since the Accession of George III, 1760–1860* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1861), ii, chapter 15, ‘Local Government’, 492–493.

of a practical response.⁵⁸ However, some decades later, aspects of this idealized past were imaginatively incorporated into the present, finding expression in, for example, 'Gothic' alms houses and civic buildings, the melding of charity into public administration (with the growth of, for example, women's 'workhouse visiting'), and the revival of urban pageantry, self-consciously celebrating historical continuities.⁵⁹

Histories of the recent past issuing from the 1840s through the 1880s—some of them narrating only the recent past, others presenting it as an epilogue to longer narratives—were nonetheless strikingly consistent in emphasizing rupture, while recounting it approvingly.⁶⁰ Of course, disapproval was also sometimes voiced—but not much in this genre.

⁵⁸ Augustus Pugin, *Contrasts or a Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages, and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste* (London: Charles Dolman, 1841); and John Morrow ed., *Young England: The New Generation: A Selection of Primary Texts* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999). Some parish-level responses are described in Simon Skinner, 'Liberalism and Mammon: Tractarian Reaction in the Age of Reform', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 4: 2 (1999), 197–227.

⁵⁹ Francis Dollman, *Examples of English Domestic Architecture: Illustrating the Hospitals, Bede Houses, Schools, Almshouses Etc. of the Middle Ages in England*, 2 vols. (London: Atchley & Co., 1858); and Brian Bailey, *Almshouses* (London: Robert Hale, 1988), 166–170—his discussion suggests that Tudor/Elizabethan was another favoured style. Mark Girouard, *The English Town: History of Urban Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 202–216 suggests that Gothic town halls only slowly rose to rival the classical, peaking in the 1860s and 70s. For workhouse visiting, Laura Foster, *The Representation of the Workhouse in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Cardiff, 2014), 133–185. I am indebted to Roey Sweet for interesting information about the decline and revival of urban ritual.

⁶⁰ Helen Kingstone, *Victorian Narratives of the Recent Past: Memory, History, Fiction* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) provides a thoughtful introduction to the genre. Among the histories that I have consulted, the ones with material relevant to my current purpose were: [Martineau], *Knight's Popular History VIII*; Alison, *History of Europe from the Fall of Napoleon... to the Rise of Louis Napoleon...*, 8 vols.; John Russell, *An Essay on the History of the English Government and Constitution*, new ed. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1865); Harriet Martineau, *A History of the Thirty Years Peace*, 4 vols., rev. ed. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1877); May, *Constitutional History*; Spencer Walpole, *A History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1879). I have also looked at children's histories: Richmal Mangnall, *Historical and Miscellaneous Questions*, new ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1859); Charlotte Yonge, *Kings of England: A History for Young Children* (London: John and Charles Mozley, 1848); and Lady Maria Calcott, *Little Arthur's History of England*, new ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans and Roberts, 1859).

The Tory historian Archibald Alison, as noted above, was critical of the reform process, but nonetheless endorsed much that flowed from it, while arguing in effect that it could have been done better: in his view, the New Poor Law had had less impact than had been hoped (and had driven a wave of emigration); moreover, the Municipal Corporations Act had erred in founding its new regime on ‘numbers’ and not ‘classes’.⁶¹ Historians who considered the matter varied in terms of when they thought the tide had turned towards ‘reform’, though often they looked back to the years before the Reform ministry came to power: Alison saw currency reform in 1819 as a turning point; others highlighted free trade and foreign-policy shifts in the early 1820s, or Catholic Emancipation in 1829.⁶²

Though sited within longer-term developments, ‘reform’ was never presented as a smooth process. Every history noted the drama—and even children’s histories sometimes noted the violence—that had accompanied the struggle over the Reform Bill in 1831–1832.⁶³ The backwash of anger over the New Poor Law was commonly acknowledged, though (in this genre) denigrated, as the work of those who wanted to be left in idleness, or had been stirred up by noisy demagogues. Parliamentary battles over the Municipal Corporations Act, especially in the House of Lords, were recounted, though Tories were said to have learned from the Reform Bill debacle not to press their opposition too far (though still far enough to provoke calls for the abolition of the upper house). Harriet Martineau was unusual in noting preceding hubbub outside Parliament, in the context of commissioners’ meetings. Did she reflect her own, or family and friends’ experience when she wrote ‘No one can forget what he saw [in that context] of the action of opposition?’ Still, she said, this passion had quickly passed.⁶⁴

Yet overall the tone was upbeat. Though the fractiousness of the process was acknowledged, from the 1860s, ‘reform’ was generally represented as having set England squarely on the track of progress.

⁶¹ Alison, *History*, v: 472–482; vi: 165–176.

⁶² Thus Alison, *History*; [Martineau], *Knight’s Popular History*; Russell, *Essay on History*.

⁶³ Yonge, *Kings of England*, 248. The 1879 *Young Folks’ History of England* has more detail on parliamentary and other reforms, but it seems to exist only in American editions, and though it’s credited to Yonge, it is not clear to me if all this prose was hers.

⁶⁴ Martineau, *History*, iii: 225.

AN EXPERIENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

What has this chapter said about the experience of significant institutional change? It has sought to make several points, some generic, some specific to this time and place.

Its main generic point has been that significant institutional change characteristically involves a *process*. People do not experience first an old, then a new order. Rather there is first one order—perhaps a highly contested one. Then (at least when change is endogenous, developed within a political order, rather than, say, imposed by a conqueror) there may follow a phase of exploring what are now firmly conceptualized as ‘problems’; then a phase of generating ‘solutions’, new ways of doing things; then a phase of debate about proposed alternatives; then a phase of debate around implementation tangled up with a process of implementation—all of this perhaps wrapped up and shaped by higher-profile and more wide-ranging debates about the larger changes which had set the scene for more targeted, perhaps locally particular change. Options and issues present themselves in different ways at different moments along such timelines, and as that happens, people’s perceptions shift. By the time they are living in the new order, they therefore experience it not just as contrasting with the old order, but also as the resolution of a period of uncertainty, and as something to be assessed in relation to other alternatives canvassed along the way; moreover, they view the outcome in the light of new perspectives developed in the course of intervening events. The process of developing new perspectives on changes that have taken place continues; indeed, it continues indefinitely, above all but not only in the hands of historians. It is repeatedly reshaped by the narratives that people continue to construct and reconstruct about the past and about the shape and meaning of change.

British historiography has familiarized its readers with the *process* of reforming Parliament: that episode is commonly told in terms of change being formulated, and contested, and (though to a lesser extent) in terms of perceptions changing along the way. Accounts of ‘reforms’ to the poor law and municipal corporations less often linger on process. The chief recipient of this genre of attention has been the ‘anti-poor-law’ movement. A few historians have attended in more general terms to processes of change in these contexts, and I am especially indebted to their accounts, but even they have not always sufficed to make it possible to piece together the accounts of processes supplied here. I have instead

had to dig around in local histories, and to draw on discussion with specialist researchers.⁶⁵

Two points specific to this time and place deserve to be underlined. In calling these points ‘specific’, I do not mean to imply that they are unique; merely, that they are not necessarily generalizable. Firstly, the changes that I have been chronicling were endogenous, they were generated within the political culture. That culture was one in which debate was encouraged; moreover, public participation was institutionalized in new ways as part and parcel of the ‘reforms’. Meanwhile, in the background, intense party warfare amplified as well as helped to structure debate. All of these circumstances must have shaped the experience of change, making it (especially in urban and industrial regions) one of contestation, involving the making of choices between alternatives. Party warfare probably also encouraged the reiterative rewriting of narratives: the reworking of accounts of what was happening, had happened and might still happen, according to calculations as to what best served the interests of parties, or fractions of parties, or concurrently mobilizing popular political movements.

Ultimately, the ‘reforms’ explored here were enacted and implemented—largely, if not always exactly, along lines that their most powerful proponents had projected. Furthermore, reform narratives largely triumphed. Within twenty years, although it remained possible to critique reforms, especially in terms of their having given too much power to the ‘propertied’ or ‘middle classes’, they had essentially become and would continue to consolidate their character as the new normal; indeed, as more than that, as an advance, even if one that might in due course be reshaped by further advance. British historians have inherited this narrative, and, having done so, have not done a great deal to explore how it came to triumph. Was that something contingent: an effect of Sir Robert Peel’s centrist leadership at the peak of uncertainty? Or instead something to do with the way in which these ‘reforms’ aligned with deeper shifts in values, not only in Britain but in Europe? Or was it the effect of some deeper process still: is it a general pattern that changes tend to be naturalized with the passage of time, as people’s expectations adjust to what becomes the everyday normal? That process can be, and ultimately usually

⁶⁵ Among accounts cited above, Brundage, *Making New Poor Law* and Moret, *Urban Ancient Regime* have been especially helpful. I am furthermore especially indebted to the knowledge and perspectives of Myungsu Kang and Roey Sweet.

is, disrupted by the rise of new narratives, but not necessarily until after the elapse of much time.

In this chapter I have tried to open up these questions, though I do not claim to have done more than to put them on the table, in the hope that others will probe further, and shed more light.

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‘The Free Action of the Collective Power of Individuals’: Vernacular Democracy and the Sovereign People

Dana D. Nelson

In her study of revolution, philosopher Hannah Arendt suggests—almost in passing—that the true boon of the American founding was not a gift from the fabled Founders. Rather, the real treasure came in the fact of a political society founded in and actively practising the arts of political self-governing.¹ She elaborates on this widely overlooked phenomenon:

The astounding fact that the Declaration of Independence was preceded, accompanied, and followed by constitution-making in all thirteen colonies revealed all of the sudden to what extent an entirely new concept of power and authority, an entirely novel idea of what was of prime importance in the political realm had already developed in the New World ... Those who

¹ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1973), 165.

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received the power to constitute, to frame constitutions ... received their authority from below, and when they held fast to the Roman principle that the seat of power lay in the people, they did not think in terms of a fiction and an absolute, the nation above all authority and absolved from all laws, but in terms of a working reality, the organized multitude whose power was exerted in accordance with laws and limited by them... These bodies, moreover, were not conceived as governments, strictly speaking; they did not imply rule and the division of the people into rulers and ruled... These new bodies politic really were 'political societies' and their great importance for the future lay in the formation of a political realm that enjoyed power and was entitled to claim rights without possessing or claiming sovereignty.²

Her observation (buried in the middle of a paragraph) runs counter to customary understandings of the United States' founding. Popular sovereignty is certainly remembered as the most radical democratic boon of the American revolution. But it is remembered as the *Framer's gift* to politically inexperienced colonists, something that rolls out from their classically educated, well-deliberated, and temperate political vision, and the Constitution they resultingly built. As historian Edmund Morgan explains in his magisterial account of the rise of popular sovereignty, *Inventing the People*, the so-called power of the people is an effect of formal government. If it sounds bottom-up, that's simply a generous trick of words. He reminds us that British political representatives—lords—invented the fiction to bolster their own power against the king. Political power for ordinary people does not, in Morgan's account, exist in any degree until it is named, codified, and framed by a constitution: the US Federal Constitution of 1789. In this familiar understanding of America's democratic founding, the Framers envisioned and built a constitutional structure for popular sovereignty, and thus fostered the emergence of the power of ordinary citizens in the developing politics of citizenship in the early United States. Schooled along these lines, Americans understand the development of democratic political practice among ordinary citizens as something organized *by* the Constitution, developing in the wake of its passage.³

² Ibid., 166, 168.

³ Edmund Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York: Norton, 1999).

Arendt's observation cues us towards something fundamentally different. Her aside suggests that political society in the late British colonies was already a working democratic reality during the Revolution. Ordinary citizens already were participants and creators in public affairs, freely, as she puts it, enjoying power and claiming rights. The questions she raises about the practice of democratic society and power prior to the 1789 Constitution's description of popular sovereignty are at once historical and theoretical. Taking into account new historical understandings of the Patriot movement, this essay asks whether those early democratic practices were in fact accurately represented, codified, or protected by the Constitution's institutionalization of and its official understanding of the people's sovereignty. The Framers' scepticism about and even hostility towards democracy has long been acknowledged. Little attention has been paid, until recently, to the ground-level democratic practices of ordinary folk in the late colonies and early nation, let alone their ideas about the powers of the people. But recent scholarship has begun to flesh out those practices, principles, and commitments, enabling us to raise some worthwhile questions about what they might mean for understanding historically, and theorizing, democratic power, as well as for historians' ability to perceive and appreciate vernacular or extra-institutional practices.

In this essay, I first explore more fully the historical entailments of Arendt's observations about a working political society in the British American colonies and early United States, arguing that this society did not arise *sui generis*, but in fact emerged from well-established vernacular practices—practices that had been conditioned by the politics of enclosure in England and also by traditions of the commons transported by ordinary European settlers to the British colonies. I argue that what we might loosely think of as vernacular democracy—practices of local self-governing—preceded and, though they were partially compatible with, existed in fact apart from the forms of republican or liberal representative democracy we familiarly refer to in our discussions of early US democratic political practice (for good and for ill: the Patriot movement and the social order it supported could be notably illiberal in ways intolerable today). I suggest, drawing on recent historical work (including my own), that over the course of Revolution the Framers developed reservations about these widespread practices of the people's political powers and aimed to 'tame' them in their framing of 'popular sovereignty'. This essay shows why we

should take vernacular democracy seriously: both for our historical understanding of how democracy emerges and develops in the United States, as well as for what it can tell us about the formation and maintenance of collective experiences of political society.

FROM NOTHING TO START, INTO BEING

Vernacular democracy in the British American colonies had roots in several cultural strands—in the forces of Reformation and the waves of Calvinists, Anabaptists, Quakers, Methodists, and Baptists who came to the colonies, with modern social-contract theory, in the extra-legal traditions of the British Common Law, especially as they developed in British North America, and also with the customs of the commons. The last influence has received little attention in British colonial and early US history, not least because of the tradition of American exceptionalism that Arendt herself forwards: the notion that the British colonies did not suffer from the stark wealth disparities between commoners and aristocrats that characterized class relations in Europe during the colonial era. America is, in this familiar account, the ‘land of the common man’. But it is also true that, as historian Allan Kulikoff details, many of the early British settlers in the colonies—commoners who voyaged on their own dime as well as the many who came under indenture—came steeped in commoning traditions. These traditions concerned the sharing and management not just of natural resources like firewood and pastures but also domestic, cultural, and civic resources. Moreover, they came with a political sensibility tempered by enclosure and efforts to resist it in England.⁴

The history and traditions of commoning in Europe are complex and remain poorly understood. In her study of commoners and common right in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, historian J. M. Neeson describes commoning as ‘possession without ownership’.⁵ Legal historian Stuart Banner alternately describes it as a ‘third form’ of ownership, existing as a category somewhere between public and private. Neeson notes that ‘we know relatively little about common right and less

⁴ Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmer* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁵ J. M. Neeson, *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700–1820* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3.

about commoners', and points, like Banner, to the imaginative constraints that come from 'an age such as ours when land is owned exclusively and when enterprise is understood to be essentially individual, not cooperative'.⁶ Another block to historical study comes in the fact that commoners didn't amass libraries, nor did they leave extensive personal writings to libraries. Thus historians interested in commoners depend crucially on contemporary accounts of their *adversaries*, people trying to enclose them out of newly private lands, who saw them as impediments to 'progress', the antithesis to individual enterprise: as poor, dirty, lazy, and primitive. These opponents—members of elite property-holding classes benefitting from enclosure—came to hate commoners with what Neeson describes as an 'almost xenophobic intensity', frequently characterizing former commoners as something like a race apart, beyond the pale of modern politics and economic progress.⁷

In her sympathetic account, Neeson argues that for eighteenth-century commoners, the traditions and practice of commoning fostered alternative economic, social, and political outlooks among its practitioners, based not on individual accumulation and surplus, but on familial and community sufficiency. Common rights of pasturage and forage offered employment to some and subsistence for many. It was a 'vital part of the economy of women and children' and could significantly increase a family's resources and income.⁸ The sharing of common natural and cultural resources encouraged frugality, collaboration, and mutuality: 'Time spent searching for wild strawberries, mushrooms, whortle berries and cranberries for the vicar, or catching wheatears for the gentry, was time well spent not only in the senses of earning money but also in the sense of establishing connection' both with landscapes and within social orders.⁹ Commoning cultivated intimacy with natural resources and networks satisfied mutual needs in the larger community. An economy grounded in gifts and exchange, it could serve in crucial ways as insurance for poorer folk, a back-up resource when other avenues failed. Neeson asks us to consider how the collectivism of commoning created what she describes

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁷ Stuart Banner, 'The Political Function of the Commons: Changing Conceptions of Property and Sovereignty in Missouri, 1750–1850', *American Journal of Legal History* 41:1 (1997), 61–93.

⁸ Neeson, *Commoners*, 177.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

as a ‘social efficiency’—a realm of value too easily overlooked by historians trained by modern capitalism’s emphasis on economic efficiency and growth.¹⁰ Alongside Neeson’s emphasis on how commoning creates social value, Banner emphasizes the political value it creates among its practitioners, who gain meaningful experiences of self-governing as they participate in negotiating community resource allocation. Thus enclosure changed the physical landscape of the countryside with fences and hedges even as it transformed the social and political order of communities that had coexisted in common, erecting barriers between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, fragmenting commoners into smallholders, cottagers, dependents, beggars, vagrants, and criminals.

Many early settlers came to the British colonies seeking access to a livelihood and way of life no longer accessible to them in England. They brought with them the informal practices and traditions of commoning they had been raised in and some had fought to save. British commoners were not alone in this endeavour: Banner emphasizes that ‘the earliest European colonizers in many parts of the present-day United States held much of their productive land in common. They farmed in common fields, grazed their animals in common pastures, and gathered wood and other natural resources from common wasteland’.¹¹ Indeed, to this day holders of private land must post ‘do not trespass’ signs if they don’t want people hunting on their property—so deep and nevertheless hidden is the assumption of commoning in US law.¹²

In the British colonies, Plymouth Plantation famously demonstrated its commitment to equalitarian self-governing by instituting rules for both common labour and store, drawing on elements of the open-field system of England before enclosure, where the area of settlement was administrated as a communal good, shared by all. Just as famously, the colony formally abandoned its ‘Common Course and Condition’ three years later, redressing its chronic lack of food stores by assigning private plots and letting each family provision itself. As William Bradford summarizes, this decision ‘had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been by any means the Government or any other could use... The

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹² Banner, ‘The Political Function of the Commons’.

women now went willingly into the field, and took their little ones with them to set corn; which before would alleage weakness and inability; whom to have compelled would have been thought great tyranny and oppression'. For Bradford, Plymouth's experiment repudiated Plato's advocacy for communistic society in *The Republic*. Plymouth's early rejection of common fields has long served as evidence in a nutshell that British colonists set off early down the modern liberal path towards private property and accumulation.¹³

Perhaps conditioned by Plymouth's early abandonment of open-field cropping, New England historians who have considered commoning practices have tied their investigations largely to agricultural and grazing practices (see, e.g., Innes and Lockridge).¹⁴ One could reframe the question, though, by noting that the Plymouth colonists didn't reject commoning per se, they rejected a single practice—common-field cropping. It's roughly unimaginable that Plymouth and other early British colonists didn't continue to exercise loose forms of common right in wetlands, coastal areas, and forests, rivers and oceans. The continuing conservative economic framing of Plymouth's rejection of common-field cropping as an early rejection of socialism asks modern liberal readers to take for granted something that is factually untrue: that commoning couldn't exist *alongside* practices of private property, as though these two notions of ownership are somehow mutually exclusive. It also asks readers to understand commoning as *primitive*, as though logics of commoning could not evolve as times moved forward. If we consider a broader swath of commoning practices, it's impossible to ignore the historical sway of commoning in early America. Indeed, readers get a vivid register of ongoing commoning practices in the British Colonies a century and a half later from Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, whose *Letters from An American Farmer* and *Eighteenth-Century Sketches* document the broad *ongoing* practices and sensibilities of commoning, practices he frames as contributing to a unique American sensibility and commonwealth. We could thumbnail those practices as a combination of self-provisioning and mutual support. Crèvecoeur shows how colonists routinely shared

¹³ William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, Samuel Eliot Morison ed. (New York: Modern Library, 1967).

¹⁴ Stephen Innes, *Creating the Commonwealth: The Economic Culture of Puritan New England* (New York: Norton, 1995); and Kenneth Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636–1736* (New York: Norton, 1985).

natural resources (like seeds, firewood, herbal remedies) as well as labour and creative resources (like traditional folk ballads, or sharing beds and fires with strangers, barn- and house-raising, local traditions for peace-keeping and fairness, or serving in militia). His description of the customs of commoning in the British American colonies also usefully documents a dimension that historian Barbara Smith has highlighted as central to the advance of Patriot goals during the Revolution, in her terms a practice of ‘neighboring’.¹⁵

DECLARING INTERDEPENDENCE

Smith’s important book, *Freedoms We Lost: Consent and Resistance in Revolutionary America*, details the practices and mobilizing theories of the democratic participation that Arendt highlights as so radically important. Smith’s account tackles an historical commonplace that long has structured accounts of the revolution—the long-supposed political powerlessness of ordinary colonists. Carefully acknowledging the forms of deference that structured colonial politics, she grants that actual commoners had very little opportunity to participate in formal British government. But, she argues, they had distinctive and important *informal* practices of local participation (shaped by such institutions as ‘household, neighborhood and congregation’)¹⁶ that served as a powerful common ground of practice and common knowledge. This common sense was informed by ‘the Bible; the history of Oliver Cromwell; the liberties secured by the Magna Carta, and the more recent Glorious Revolution against James; the dangers of Jacobin plots; the tyranny of popes’.¹⁷ Ordinary colonists shared memories and politics shaped by the encroachments of and resistance to enclosure.¹⁸ Especially in the more remote colonies, non-elite actors regularly spent time at court days and also at taverns, ‘an important source of knowledge from the inside of a given neighborhood, a

¹⁵ Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* (New York: Penguin, 1963); and Barbara Smith, *The Freedoms We Lost: Consent and Resistance in Revolutionary America* (New York: New Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Smith, *Freedoms We Lost*, xii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 50–55.

site for local conversation, local news and gossip, and local opinion'.¹⁹ In addition to their participation in voting, ordinary people importantly made their political consent and dissent felt through their participation 'out of doors'—enforcing, executing, or protesting laws. These practices combined powerfully in the colonial context.

Smith highlights two key ethical practices that blossomed in the British colonies, combining to motor the Patriot movement. First, 'migration to North America often put a premium on social connections that could help people weather the challenges of a new environment'.²⁰ Puritans arrived in New England aspiring to be 'knit together' in a covenantal community. Quakers came to the eastern seaboard, Pennsylvania and New Jersey in particular, as a Society of Friends. And high mortality rates caused colonists to innovate new practices of interconnection that effectively replaced kin lost to death. Intriguingly, too (something Smith does not note), settlers from rural northern Holland may well have brought to America a set of beliefs, and a word, 'naoberschap', that described the mutual responsibility of neighbours for organizing life events like weddings and funerals. These practices of 'neighboring' made local social interconnections, as Smith argues, a fabric of life, an active practice that spanned the colonies regardless of geographic and cultural differences.²¹

The other key principle, in Smith's view, comes in middling colonists' aspiration towards an economic competence. This economic principle crucially shaped 'colonial ideas of right and fairness, wrong and oppression'.²² Competence has long conjured the drive towards the fabled independence of American revolution—colonists breaking free from the shackles of dependency. But Smith points out we've lost from our collective memory a key component of competency's aim: 'while possession of a competency suggested an experience of nondependence, it was not truly an experience of independence, if by that we mean self-sufficiency or a construction of one's identity as somehow "self-made". The goal of a competency did not suggest or even allow independence from one's neighbors or the commercial market'.²³ Colonists certainly, even

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

²¹ Smith, *Freedoms We Lost*.

²² *Ibid.*, 58.

²³ *Ibid.*, 59.

eagerly, participated in the growing market economy alongside their more informal local economies. But as Smith points out, their aim at financial security—competency—was precisely to enable them to participate in the market while being able to avoid its coercive conditions and effects.²⁴

Neighbouring and competency guided British colonists towards their Declaration of Independence from England in ways that also made it, Smith underscores, a declaration of American interdependence. For these middling and ordinary colonists:

the ideal of competence helped mitigate conflicts between the practices of neighboring and the pursuit of a household's own particular interests ... maintaining one's status as a neighbor in good standing was a valuable resource for personal and household well-being. Neighbors might lay claim on others' assistance in times of difficulty, appeal for debts to be forgiven or at least payment to be postponed, and count on one another to be witnesses of character, supporters of reputation, and 'evidence' of property boundaries and the history of dealings. Equally, the practice of neighboring provided ground for unity over and against powerful men. This is to argue that concrete social institutions underlay the sense of location that allowed colonists to transform an abstraction ('the people') into something concrete (the presence of the people of this place in this moment).²⁵

As Smith notes, 'Patriots created networks by drawing on people's capacities for cooperating, judging exchanges, tolerating negotiation, settling disputes, coming to a broad consensus about fairness and coming to terms with one another'.²⁶ These informal practices and guiding beliefs about neighbouring, economic competency, and people's local rights to adjudicate and enforce fairness combined powerfully during the Revolutionary era, both in the run-up to Revolution and in the immediate formation of state Constitutions and early political practices.

Smith's account dismisses the supposed political powerlessness of ordinary colonists in relation to the elite classes either in Britain or the Colonies. Their locally based collective powers propelled the political elite into supporting, and their energies drove, the Revolution, as Holton

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

details in his *Forced Founders*. This power authorized and was recognized by the Articles of Confederation and by early state constitutions as we'll see below. We have long and justly celebrated the ideals of political equality and popular sovereignty—of democracy—that fund the American Revolution, even if we've largely assumed those ideals were invented by the political elite. At the same time we've roughly ignored the Patriots' strong insistence that political equality could be maintained only through equalitarian economic and banking policies. The political elite, as Bouton details in *Taming Democracy*, supported the interdependence of economic and political equality in the run-up to Revolution. Importantly, though, they began pulling back from policies supporting economic equalitarianism in the 1780s. Once it seemed the newly created United States would prevail in its war for Independence, many (like Hamilton) aspired to create an economy that would vault the new nation into international prominence. Bouton and Holton (in *Unruly Americans*) have detailed how the Framers thus began enacting the very kinds of taxes and economic policies that the Patriots had revolted against England for imposing in the 1760s and 70s. In response, ordinary Patriots protested these new policies across the nation, most famously in Massachusetts's so-called Shays rebellion. In the face of popular push-back, the political elite sought to reassure foreign creditors that popular government would not be a threat to their investments, searching for ways to erect what they described as 'barriers against democracy'. The new Federal Constitution, creating structures of representation in place of direct political participation, was one important manoeuvre in this developing strategy.²⁷

WE THE PEOPLE

The Philadelphia Convention was summoned by the Continental Congress in February of 1787 'to devise such further provisions as shall appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union'—that is, to remedy the Articles of Confederation. The fact that the Framers jettisoned the

²⁷ Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: 'The People', The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Woody Holton, *Forced Founders. Indians, Debtors, Slaves and the Making of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1999); and Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008).

Articles and engineered an entirely new government suggests just how thoroughly conscious they were of the political realities being generated by collective democratic practices across the early nation, many of which concerned fiscal policy and tax collection. Holton's history of the Constitution's creation and design, *Unruly Americans*, outlines what he ultimately castigates as the Framers' deceitfulness in the Convention, which by its very secrecy prohibited its delegates from receiving input from 'the people'. Delegates understood they needed to appease demands for the maintenance and enhancement of democratic institutions and practices even as they worked to corral them. Their implicit aim was to make American finance more stable and attractive for international investors (widespread revolts against tax collection don't advertise for fiscal solvency). In drafting their Constitution, the Framers, in Holton's assessment, worked hard to disguise their developing hostility to democracy: they 'never approved an inflammatory proposal if they could accomplish the same objective using a mechanism their fellows would find easier to swallow'.²⁸ Though they created a governing structure that was, in Holton's words, 'considerably less democratic than even the most conservative state constitution', the Framers took rhetorical care to assuage concerns about the Constitution's apparent respect for the people's actual political power.²⁹ Thus they engineered a new federal government which advertised democratic access to participatory and collectively generated civic power that it actually aimed to curtail.

One key strategy used by the Framers was rhetorically to harness the legitimacy of popular sovereignty to what had long been understood as the aristocratic practice of representative government. Here, it's worth reviewing terms. US students of American founding learn, as I have mentioned, that popular sovereignty was the Framers' invention, an ideal originating with and enshrined in the Federal Constitution. They also learn that the Framers did not build a 'democracy' but instead a *constitutional republic*: a form of representative democratic government authorized by popular sovereignty. In this story, America's sturdy democracy is also the Framers' bequest: a healthy development presciently seat-belted by and fostered within the Constitution's structures of political representation. Both these stories, about popular sovereignty and

²⁸ Holton, *Unruly Americans*, 184.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

democracy as the Framers' gifts, are, significantly, victors' tales. And as such, they appreciably misrepresent debates about good government in the early United States. As I suggested at the outset, even Arendt—hardly an historian—understood that ordinary American colonists *cum* citizens were practising the arts of self-governance robustly and regularly before the 1789 constitution. And as political theorist Danielle Allen pointedly notes, 'the question of whether the United States is best understood as a republic or a democracy... can seem a real question only if the compromises that secured the early American polity are obscured'.³⁰ In the run-up to and early days of Revolution, as Allen highlights, 'plenty of Founders invoked the ideal of democracy as the goal of their pursuit'.³¹ In the 1780s, what was being debated was not whether good government should be democratic but rather *how* popular the new American government should actually be. While Madison, in *Federalist* 10 and 14, was famously at pains to distinguish between a republic, with its aristocratic structures of representation, and a democracy, which he argued was unstable (opposing ancient Athenian democracy to the more aristocratically tempered, or mixed, Roman form), elsewhere he as well as Hamilton actually worked to *blur* the distinction, as for instance in *Federalist* 63, where the author points out that even Athens practised forms of political representation. Allen details how elsewhere, Hamilton laboured to dissociate 'republic' from its aristocratic associations and link it instead to democracy, describing the Constitutional design for the New York ratifying convention as 'a representative democracy'. In this way, she argues, the Federalists worked to associate the legitimacy of direct democracy and its full-throated investment in the wide distribution of political power with the more aristocratic approach modeled in the Federal Constitution. The Federalists worked to create strategic confusion about categories and terms. As Allen summarizes, the effect was that, '[p]lenty of people probably voted for the Constitution because it created a "republic", but plenty of others probably did because they thought it forged a "representative democracy"'.³²

³⁰ Danielle Allen, 'A Democracy, If You Can Keep It', *J-19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 5: 2 (2017), 368–374, there 368–369.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 369.

³² *Ibid.*, 373.

Some, however, protested the Framers' *leger-de-main* manoeuvres. To take one example, in 1788, at Virginia's ratification convention, Patrick Henry famously complained: 'Who authorized them to speak the language of "We the People", instead of "We the States?"'.³³ His complaint has received little notice (not least since the states in fact were the signatories to Ratification, making his outrage look misplaced!). But his comment, understood more carefully in the context in which he presented it, gives us a glimpse into the value even elite political actors in the early nation placed on local practices of popular democratic power. In his June 4th speech and subsequent ones, Henry warns fellow citizens in Virginia against the 'perilous innovation' of the draft Constitution, begging them to think hard about how it reconfigures not just government but also *political society*. 'If States be not the agents of this compact, it must be one great consolidated National Government of the people of all the States', he warns.³⁴ The 'new system' of the federal constitution, Henry warned, structures political power as something other than the revolutionary and freedom-generating power crafted and experienced through participation in local self-forming collectives, a power loaned on careful terms to representative government by the state constitutions of the early nation. 'Rulers are the servants and agents of the people—The people are their masters—Does the new Constitution acknowledge this principle?' he queries.³⁵ Insisting its opening bid—'We the People, in Order to form a more perfect Union'—was a rhetorical feint along the very lines Danielle Allen argues, Henry outlines how the federal Constitution *opposes* the democratic power it seemingly invokes and installs. Sovereignty, as he notes, is not a power *superior* to government in the federal Constitution. In fact, Henry documents how the Constitution in fact casualizes (to use a contemporary term) the power of 'the people'. 'The People gave them no power to use their name', he warns, later elaborating³⁶:

³³ Henry Patrick, *The Debate on the Constitution*, Bernard Bailyn ed., Part Two (New York: Library of America, 1993), 596.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 597.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 684.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 597.

The stile of the Government (we the people) was introduced perhaps to recommend it to the people at large, to those citizens who are to be levelled [sic] and degraded to the lowest degree; who are likened to a *herd*; and who by the operation of this *blessed* system are to be transformed from respectable independent citizens, to abject dependent subjects.³⁷

Henry draws a straight line from the Constitution's remaking of citizenship to its aim for that individualization, the power of direct taxation: 'If money be the vitals of Congress, is it not precious for those individuals from whom it is to be taken? Must I give my soul—my lungs, to Congress?' In Henry's metaphor, the individualizing political 'power' granted by the Constitution actually serves to disempower ordinary citizens by gutting the *collective* powers of citizenship.

Henry insists on a political community's independent powers and cautions: 'This political solecism will never tend to the benefit of community... We are *giving* power, they are *getting* power'.³⁸ In essence, Henry insists, the nationalizing aims of the Constitution's popular sovereignty run counter to real democratic power. Political theorist Joshua Miller elaborates on the *leger-de-main* that so incensed Henry:

The pseudodemocratic rhetoric of the Federalists is best understood when seen in the historical context of the genuinely democratic or political culture of eighteenth-century America. Essential elements of this early democratic culture included small, participatory communities; simple local and state governments, the latter dominated by one-house legislatures; democratic state constitutions that replaced undemocratic ones or arbitrary political rule; a political economy based on land banks, paper money, and debtor relief laws that tried to preserve a localist agrarian society; and forms of direct popular participation, which included constitutional conventions, committees of correspondence, town meetings, actions by crowds, and a people's army. This was the political order that the Antifederalists sought to protect.³⁹

The Constitution's resonant 'We the People' conceals fundamental differences between the agency offered by its version of representative popular

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 634.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 635.

³⁹ Joshua Miller, 'The Ghostly Body Politic: The Federalist Papers and Popular Sovereignty', *Political Theory* 16: 1 (1988), 99–119, there 100.

sovereignty and collective practices of vernacular democracy. As Miller summarizes, the Constitution's popular sovereignty, 'unlike direct democracy, does not require the ongoing and active political participation of the people'. Indeed, they represent two distinct notions of political power: 'democracy tries to limit governmental power so that ordinary people can understand and wield it, whereas popular sovereignty creates enormous power for the central government'.⁴⁰

Others (political theorists like Suzette Hemberger and historians like Holton, Bouton, and Smith) have detailed how the Federal Constitution of 1789 defies the governing structures and authority marked out by the revolutionary era state constitutions, whose references to 'the people' attach the ideal insistently to such terms as neighbourhood, community, commonwealth, public, society, the body politic or, in Hemberger's summary, 'other collective nouns that attribute to the people a corporate existence independent of government'.⁴¹ In these documents, the practices from which they emerged, and the institutions they authorized, 'the people' denominated a civic agency that was understood as collective, not individual, and constituted outside government, not by it. Here, democratic power was grounded in obligation and mutual commitment. It was understood and practised as local, collaborative, co-creative, and, crucially, not dependent on or beholden to government for its practice or authority. Citizen power came through socio-political and affective attachment to fellow citizens: it could not be experienced individually.⁴²

The Constitution promised, as Henry indicated, to restructure citizens' relation to each other and thus political subjectivity itself. The federal political subject would be oriented away from neighbouring co-citizens, and turned instead towards national belonging. In the years leading up to and the decade after the Declaration of Independence, citizens practised and developed institutions for citizen power. Henry's argument against the Constitution's 'We, the People' echoes and underscores Arendt's passing observation about democratic collectives operating without seeking or claiming sovereignty. Henry seemingly doesn't want anything to do with the sovereignty on offer in the Constitution.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 99.

⁴¹ Suzette Hemberger, 'A Government Based on Representations', *Studies in American Political Development* 10: 2 (1996), 289–332, there 298.

⁴² Bouton, *Taming Democracy*; Holton, *Forced Founders*; Holton, *Unruly Americans*; Hemberger, 'Government Based on Representations'; Smith, *Freedoms We Lost*.

His concern is how people experience political power: as agents or as spectators. As Hemberger neatly summarizes the point: “‘We the People’ marks not the people’s domestication (through law) of the government, but the government’s domestication of the people’.⁴³ It does so with an appealing bribe: the agentic autonomy and freedom of sovereignty that seemingly super-sizes citizenship by nationalizing and ‘unifying’ it (‘a more perfect union’), while dust-binning the rights and practices of locally cooperative self-determination.⁴⁴

Arendt ultimately faults the Framers for failing to provide for institutions that would ensure the maintenance of the democratic society that drove the Revolution, founded the democratic nation, and mobilized Henry. She calls this set of practices—these citizen habits and the democratic vitality they produced—the ‘lost treasure’ of revolution. The Framers undeniably aimed to contain democratic power: many routinely expressed their impatience and even contempt for the ‘rage for democracy’. But it’s fair to consider, though, that while Framers did aim to brake, they arguably did not actually intend to *break* the democratic energies of citizens. It’s possible that they didn’t imagine this could even be possible, any more than they imagined what they denominated alternately the ‘first’ and the ‘Democratic’ branch of government (that is, Congress) would be displaced over the course of the twentieth century by the executive branch (such that—as political scientists note—we now have Presidential government, rather than the Congressional government the Framers themselves intended). In other words (and all our hagiographic/demonizing habits to the contrary notwithstanding), the Framers’ checking-and-balancing machine has some design flaws. Most fundamentally, they couldn’t see the future.

MOBS IN MYRIAD

The *leger-de-main* that Henry complained of—that ‘We the People’ hat tip towards existing practices of democratic power—succeeded, and so much so that we barely remember political power for the people as anything other than the Constitution’s representative claiming of popular sovereignty. A companion manoeuvre for ‘taming’ democracy would also

⁴³ Hemberger, ‘Government Based on Representations’, 291.

⁴⁴ Patrick, *Debate on the Constitution*.

be rhetorical: an escalating effort to portray vernacular democratic practices—the very practices for protesting draconian economic policies and ones that had mobilized the Revolution itself—as pre-political, primitive, even savage: a danger to, and not the boon of, the new self-governing nation. For example, in the months before the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a group of Yale-educated New Englanders known as the ‘Hartford’ or ‘Connecticut Wits’—David Humphreys, Joel Barlow, John Trumbull, and Lemuel Hopkins—published a mock-epic poem skewering the protests of post-Revolutionary Patriots. *The Anarchiad*, which appeared in the *New Haven Gazette* in twelve installments from October 1786 to September 1787, warns of a ‘darkness’ that threatens to overwhelm the ‘new-born state’ and describes the dangers posed by badly dressed ‘mobs in myriad’ who ‘blacken all the way’, ‘shade with rags the plain’, and ‘*discord* spread’.⁴⁵ The poem vilifies two key actors in the Shays protest, Daniel Shays and Job Shattuck, as demonic and evil: criminally lawless. The Wits don’t bother with the protestors’ specific complaints about aggressive foreclosure and regressive taxation policies that they believed were benefitting wealthy speculators to the disadvantage of ordinary people (many of them veterans of the Revolution whose livelihoods had suffered specifically because of their military service). Instead, they characterize the protest as a battle between savagery and civilization. The poem’s happy ending comes when Hesper (who manifests Venus, the ‘bringer of light’) confronts the filthy and badly dressed mob, summoning sages to assemble in Philadelphia and rescue the nation from the lawless rabble (and their poor taste in clothes).⁴⁶

Insofar as historians note the battles between vernacular democratic practices and the Framers’ attempts to contain them, they have tended to assume that the Ratification of the Federal Constitution closes the chapter on vernacular democracy in the United States. It doesn’t. Ordinary citizens continued relying on their local practices of democratic commoning well into the early years of nationhood, operating under the notion that they were completely capable of self-governing, seemingly assuming that vernacular democratic practices were fully compatible with Federal Constitutional order. One of the earliest clear expressions of ongoing

⁴⁵ David Humphries et al., *The Anarchiad: A New England Poem, 1786–87*, Luther G. Riggs ed. (edited in 1861, Gainesville, FL: Scholars’ Facsimilies and Reprints, 1967), 6.

⁴⁶ Henry, *Debate on the Constitution*.

local vernacular democratic association came in the immediate aftermath of Ratification, when Alexander Hamilton ushered through Congress the first federal tax, on whiskey, which he promised would provide revenue to offset the Revolution's war-bond debt and help with foreign creditors. Western Pennsylvania—where President Washington first aimed to begin collecting the tax—fought it because of the particular hardship it imposed on the region's poorest inhabitants. There, whiskey was not just a drink; it was a fundamental means of self-finance. Wheat was expensive to transport across the mountains, but even poor tenant farmers could convert grain to profit by distilling and transporting whiskey. As historian William Hogeland summarizes, 'a liquid commodity both literally and figuratively, the drink democratized local economies'. He observes that whiskey 'connected popular finance theories with small-scale commercial development that, though marginal, had the potential to free rural people of debt and dependency'.⁴⁷ Large producers could pay the tax upfront and still make money, but tenuously solvent smallholders couldn't. Without that income, they feared having to sell their lands to large landholders. And so, they resisted the excise. When legal means failed, they organized extra-legally, as a 'regulation', a protest of the people against unfair government.

To put down what Hamilton enduringly characterized as a 'rebellion', Washington called up more militia troops than he had commanded during the Revolution, a force of almost thirteen thousand men. The rebellion was over before the troops arrived, with key agitators heading even further west to avoid arrest. The spectacle of a federal militia squashing a local tax protest, with US citizens formally designated as *enemies* of the United States, was yet another part of the political elite's manoeuvring to 'tame' vernacular democracy. If regional inhabitants had imagined that vernacular and representative democratic practices could be mutually constitutive in the newly federalized nation, the message of Washington's militia offered a forceful negative. The spectacle Hamilton engineered via the Whiskey 'Rebellion' fundamentally reset the terms for understanding vernacular democracy in the new nation. Henceforth these practices were officially described as primitive, illegal behaviours located largely in the

⁴⁷ William Hogeland, *The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 67.

nation's backcountries and frontiers, uncivilized activities that demanded federal policing for the good of the nation.⁴⁸

Rhetoric didn't vanquish practice, at least not immediately. Indeed, the ongoing prominence of vernacular democratic practice was something Tocqueville emphasized two generations later in his study of US political society, *Democracy in America*. As he puts it, 'though townships are coeval with humanity, local freedom is a rare and fragile thing... the strength of free people resides in the local community. Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they put it within the people's reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and accustom them to make use of it. Without local institutions a nation may give itself a free government but it has not got the spirit of liberty'.⁴⁹ The spirit of liberty, Tocqueville repeatedly emphasizes, is what most distinguishes the character of US democratic practice. He describes it as being nurtured by practices of civic commoning and problem-solving that have, quite literally, nothing to do with formal institutions of government:

The inhabitant of the United States learns from birth that he must rely on himself to combat the ills and trials of life; he is restless and defiant in his outlook toward the authority of society and appeals to its power only when he cannot do without it. The beginnings of this attitude first appear in school, where the children even in their games, submit to rules settled by themselves and punish offenses which they have defined themselves. The same attitude turns up again in all the affairs of social life. If some obstacle blocks the public road halting the circulation of traffic, the neighbors at once form a deliberative body; this improvised assembly produces an executive authority which remedies the trouble before anyone has thought of the possibility of some previously constituted authority beyond that of those concerned. Where enjoyment is concerned, people associate to make the festivities grander and more orderly. Finally, associations are formed to combat exclusively moral troubles: intemperance is fought in common. Public security, trade and industry, and morals and religion all provide the aims for associations in the United States. There

⁴⁸ Hogeland, *Whiskey Rebellion*.

⁴⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, George Lawrence (translator), *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, Part 1, Jacob-Peter Mayor ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), chapter 5, 62–63.

is no end which the human will despairs of attaining by the free action of the collective power of individuals.⁵⁰

Tocqueville described the United States in the 1830s not as a democratic political system, but, as a democratic *society*, where the social experience of every person was shaped and moulded by collective practices of democratic power, public happiness, in Arendt's terms, all the way down.

Without pretending to overlook the unfairness of early US political and social culture towards women, African Americans and Native Americans, we can still retrieve some worthwhile insights from the limited—and forgotten—accomplishments of US democratic society. As Tocqueville understood, these vernacular practices of democracy still rooted in US practices of community in the 1830s offered ordinary citizens pathways for experiencing and becoming agents of democratic power. Crucially, this agency depended not on citizen independence, but on communally generated experiences of *interdependence*. The *naoberschap*, the collective work or craft of mutual support fostered within the vernacular democratic commons, is neither described nor preserved by the Constitution's popular sovereignty, nor has it been usefully supported by the nation's nominally democratic institutions. Over time, in the wake of social, political, economic, and technological developments reaching far beyond the Framers' vision, these communally crafted democratic arts, treasured by Henry and Tocqueville, have withered. To think of democratic practice in the terms of the craft of neighbouring is a real challenge for us today—as practitioners, as theorists, and as historians of democracy. Working to recover the robust contentious and nevertheless neighbourly dimensions of the vernacular democratic practices of the late British colonies and early United States—practices, as I have argued, that find their roots in European forms of localist commoning—offers a more dimensional history of how democracy developed in America as well as a more robust toolkit for theorizing (and perhaps revitalizing) democratic practice today.

⁵⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, George Lawrence (translator), *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, Part 2, Jacob-Peter Mayor ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), chapter 4, 189–190.

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The Spirit of the Belltower: Chronicling Urban Time in an Age of Revolution

Judith Pollmann

In 1831, Sebastiaan van Beringen, supervisor of the mills in the town of Roermond, summed up the political developments of his lifetime.

In forty years, this is the fourth sovereign house that I have experienced [to rule] over Roermond. First we were imperial, then we were French, then we were Dutch and now we are Belgian. Note that if it's troublesome for a master to frequently have new subjects, it's no less inconvenient for subjects to have a change of master. Experience has taught us this: governments get into trouble and into debt and the ordinary citizens have to bear with it.¹

¹ The research for this chapter was supported by a grant from NWO, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific research. [Sebastiaan van Beringen], 'Kronijkje der stad Roermond, beginnende met de komst van keizer Joseph II en eindigende met de troonsbeklimming van Leopold I, koning der Belgen (1781–1831)', in Jos Habets ed., *Publications de la société d'archéologie dans le Duché de Limbourg* 2 (Maastricht, 1865), 370–412.

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By the time he wrote these words Sebastiaan van Beringen had been recording local events of his lifetime for many decades. He was by no means the only contemporary to do so. Throughout much of Europe, the age of revolutions prompted local authors, most often men from the middling ranks of society, to keep records on what they believed were the most important events of their time. Sometimes they did so by keeping diaries or personal memoirs, genres that were to become ever more popular as the nineteenth century progressed. Yet many others, like Van Beringen, also kept records of an older and more traditional type that we know of as a ‘chronicle’, a chronological account of public events in which authors recorded the events of their lifetime in their local communities.

Like diaries, chronicles offer good evidence for the sense of rupture and acceleration of time that pervaded revolutionary Europe. Yet this paper will suggest that this genre also offers us a window onto very different and much more traditional cultural strategies to deal with crisis and change that could be used to accommodate the shock. As they had been in many earlier crises, chronicles in the Age of Revolution were used to harness and domesticate the new. First, they did so by framing events morally, or mnemonically, into familiar, local categories. Secondly, by writing in this familiar genre, that focused on the local public realm, local spaces and local faces, the chroniclers could not only record shock, amazement and outrage, but with time also recreate a sense of public, local and personal continuity. This matters, first, because it helps us to reconsider the impact of revolutionary political change on people’s sense of time and, second, because it highlights that even in a period where political change increasingly came from the centre, the local public realm remained of enormous importance for its acceptance.

ACCELERATED TIME AND THE BENEFITS OF HINDSIGHT

In recent decades, many pages have been devoted to the sense of change and rupture that characterised the Age of Revolution because this is widely believed to have given birth to a modern sense of time, and therefore to modernity itself.² A modern sense of time, in this context, means

² On rupture in the Age of Revolutions, see e.g.: Eric Hobsbawm, ‘The Sense of the Past’, in Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Weidfeld and Nicholson, 1997), 10–24, there 12–15. This essay was first published as ‘The Social Function of the Past: Some

that people are aware of differences between past and present, and a sense that time is ‘going faster’. Of course, to some extent, a sense of accelerated time is simply a side-effect of getting older.³ In his study of ‘social acceleration’ and the coming of modernity, Hartmut Rosa argues that there are three levels at which we can study what he calls ‘temporal mediation’ at actor level: the first is that of the everyday routines that structure our life, the second is that of our lifetime as a whole and the third is that of the epoch or generation in which we live.⁴ When people are in their 30s and 40s, it is often easy to feel that the three levels fit together. Yet as we get older, the levels can get out of joint. On the first level, we need to change older everyday routines, not only because new ways of doing things have emerged but also because our bodies or minds can no longer support them. Our lives, at the second level, have changed. At the third level, when we are confronted with changes because our own generation is no longer ‘in the lead’ so to speak, perhaps partly due to second-level changes, it is easy to feel alienated. This is when older people begin to talk of ‘these days’ as if those are no longer their own, because things ‘in my time’ used to be different. They also start to worry about the future as a time in which certain things that used to be self-evident to them are now lost. This phenomenon is by no means unique to the modern age, and is in evidence in the eighteenth century as much as it is in our own.⁵

Questions’, *Past and Present* 55 (1972), 3–17; Jacques le Goff, *Histoire et memoire*, 1st ed. (1977; Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 74–75, 155–160, 252–253; Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1987), 17; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6–7; Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3–32; John Gillis, ‘Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship’, in John Gillis ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3–24, there 7; Anthony Smith, *Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 49–53; Frank Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); and François Hartog, Saskia Brown (translator), *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017).

³ Douwe Draaisma, *Nostalgia Factory: Memory, Time and Ageing* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 2008).

⁴ On acceleration, see Hartmut Rosa, Jonathan Trejo-Mathys (translator), *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 6–13.

⁵ Judith Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 47–48, 190–197.

It is widely believed, however, that a different sense of acceleration of time emerged around 1800. Scholars who make such arguments explicitly or implicitly build on the line of reasoning laid out by Reinhart Koselleck in his famous *Vergangene Zukunft* essay of 1964.⁶ But whereas Koselleck emphasised the role of intellectuals in the forging of new approaches to the past, many of his readers see the pace of change itself as the catalyst for much broader cultural changes. Indeed, personal records of the period testify to a heightened awareness of change, a feeling of being cut off from one's past manifested itself along with the feeling that time had accelerated. In this way, the past rapidly grew into a 'foreign country'.⁷ As Richard Terdiman put it:

In Europe in the period of the 1789-1815 Revolution, and particularly in France, the uncertainty of relation with the past became especially intense. In this period people experienced the insecurity of their culture's involvement with its past, the perturbation of the link to their own inheritance, as what I want to term a 'memory crisis': a sense that their past had somehow evaded memory, that recollection had ceased to integrate with consciousness.⁸

Terdiman is one among many scholars who argue for the long-term impact of this rupture. In his *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (2004), for instance, Peter Fritzsche showed how both autobiographical and literary texts in the nineteenth century were pervaded by a sense of a rift and ever faster change and he argued that nostalgia was one of the main results.⁹ Philosopher Frank Ankersmit

⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

⁷ Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 17; Peter Fritzsche, 'Specters of History: On Nostalgia, Exile, and Modernity', *The American Historical Review* 106: 5 (2001), 1587–1618; and Terdiman, *Present Past*, 3–32.

⁸ Terdiman, *Present Past*, 3–4.

⁹ Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Arianne Baggerman, 'Lost Time: Temporal Discipline and Historical Awareness in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Egodocuments', in Arianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker, and Michael Mascuch eds., *Controlling Time and Shaping the Self: Developments in Autobiographical Writing Since the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 455–535; and Arianne Baggerman, "'Zo een vrijheid

also maintained that the experience of the Age of Revolutions changed life ‘in every conceivable aspect’:

Undoubtedly these dramatic transformations belong to the most decisive and profound changes that Western man has undergone in the course of history. In all these cases he entered a wholly new world and, above all, he could only do so on condition of forgetting a previous world and of shedding a former identity.... In all these cases having had to abandon a traditional and familiar previous world has been extremely painful and it was always experienced as such.¹⁰

In previous work, I have identified two problems with this line of argument. Firstly, in privileging the Age of Revolutions, it ignores the widespread evidence of very similar sensations of rupture and accelerated time in periods of crisis both before and afterwards. The sense of living in accelerated time can be found in European sources during other periods of evident and major crisis in the Middle Ages and onwards, but also, for instance, in China during the Qing-Ming transition of the seventeenth century.¹¹ Secondly, individuals who reported a sense of crisis and rupture in their youth may, at later stages in their life, look back on those very same days as a period of stability.¹² Together, these observations suggest that feelings of acute change and accelerated time do not necessarily produce a *lasting* effect, neither personally nor collectively. While changes may be irreversible, the feelings they elicit can be overcome. I will argue in this paper that during the Age of Revolutions, as before, people demonstrated considerable resilience and proved capable of adjusting to change not by forgetting the past, but by recreating a sense of continuity

begeer ik nimmer meer te beleven”: het witwassen van het verleden in Nederlandse ego-documenten (1800–1850)’, *De negentiende eeuw. Documentatieblad werkgroep 19e eeuw* 33 (2009), 74–95.

¹⁰ Ankersmit, *Sublime Historical Experience*, 321–324.

¹¹ Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe*, 192–197; Keith Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England*. The Creighton Trust Lecture 1983, Delivered Before the University of London on Monday 21 November 1983 (London: University of London, 1984); Hanna Skoda, ‘Nostalgia in the Long Fourteenth Century’ unpublished paper for the workshop Nostalgia in the Early Modern World (Christ’s College, Cambridge 10–11 January 2020).

¹² Brecht Deseure and Judith Pollmann, ‘The Experience of Rupture and the History of Memory’, in Erika Kuijpers e.a. eds., *Memory Before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 315–329.

between past and present. I call this the ‘domestication of the new’. I hope to demonstrate here that one of the key factors that played a role in this process of domestication was that the change that people experienced at a local level was the most immediate. Unsurprisingly, it was at this level that change was most evident and palpable. I will show that for chroniclers it manifested itself especially in the changing use of familiar public buildings, public spaces and temporal regimes. Yet conversely this also implied that a sense of restoration at a limited, local level allowed people to rebuild a sense of continuity, and so accommodate change.

DOMESTICATING THE NEW

It is well known that processes of domestication can occur with the benefit of hindsight, through memory practices that allow for the realignment of past and present. Arianne Baggerman studied a large number of autobiographical texts in which people in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century looked back on revolutionary upheaval, political experiments, and French rule between the 1780s and 1815, and she found three important responses. First, she demonstrated that while some of these authors emphasised that they had lived through momentous changes, very few of them actually admitted to having changed themselves. In hindsight, they had all always been ‘subdued’ or ‘moderate’ [*bedaard*], sceptical of French rule, and averse to revolution. Secondly, she found that many actively destroyed and re-edited older diaries and memoirs, so as to spare their descendants (and themselves) a confrontation with earlier political ideas. Finally, in their autobiographies they depoliticised many of their recollections, recording the consequences, damage, and changes of revolution, upheaval and war, without explaining any of the political background.¹³

Among Baggerman’s authors we thus see all the benefits of hindsight hard at work to recreate moral continuity between their personal past and present (Hartmut Rosa’s second level), thereby also creating and affirming a new narrative about what ‘our time’ (the third level) had been about i.e. a time of turmoil which had now ended. While Baggerman ascribes this trend to individual decisions, it was, of course, precisely what was intended by the various policies of *oubli*, a longstanding tradition for

¹³ Baggerman, ‘Zo een vrijheid’.

managing memories of civil conflict in which memories of conflict were not so much ‘forgotten’ as disabled and reframed so as to make them harmless for the present. An informal variant of such policies was in place in the Netherlands from 1813 onwards.¹⁴

Yet, whereas memoirists and autobiographers offer us a retrospective view of events, in local chronicles we can follow personal experiences of change and the process of rupture and realignment from much closer up, more or less as it is happening. There are many such chronicles for the late eighteenth century, when the keeping of chronological urban records was a long-established cultural practice. Chronicling had begun as an institutional practice of urban governments and monastic houses in the Middle Ages, but the genre had gradually democratised. In the late Middle Ages rich patricians had begun to order copies of official chronicles that they had customised with references to themselves and their families. By the sixteenth century these practices had been adopted by non-political actors. Since then, chronicles had been kept by an ever-wider range of literate men (and the very occasional woman) of middling and higher ranks. The authors did so in manuscript rather than print, for an audience of relatives but often also for a wider local public. Chronicles were accepted as evidence in local courts of law, they were sometimes read with friends, and also copied and expanded.

While initially authors tended to write ‘continuations’ of older texts, chronicles increasingly came to be written as a form of *Zeitgeschichte* that privileged the lifetime of the authors themselves. The genre was practised across Europe; early modern chronicles from Barcelona, Ghent, Arles and Augsburg all had a similar format and focus. They were local, chronological, with a strong focus on ‘usable knowledge’. They could be very practical and could focus on prices, the weather, government decisions and technical novelties. The purpose of such records was partly to serve as an aide-memoire and thus to establish patterns hence, for instance, the keen interest in the weather and prices (which were closely related) as well as in epidemics. However, they also extended to the moral and exemplary: crime, providential warnings and freak phenomena, as well as political events. Although the perspective was predominantly local, texts would frequently also include information about the world at large, both

¹⁴ Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe*, 140–158; Matthijs M. Lok, “‘Un oubli total du passé’? The Political and Social Construction of Silence in Restoration Europe (1813–1830)”, *History and Memory* 26: 2 (2014), 40–75.

nationally and internationally. New media and information technologies found their way into chronicle texts, sometimes literally, in the shape of clippings that were pasted into the texts. During the eighteenth century, a growing number of chroniclers also included tables and statistics. In times of crisis the number of chroniclers picking up their pens tended to explode. Just as we saw that the Covid-19 outbreak of 2020 led to a vogue for daily recordkeeping, this was also the case in the late eighteenth century.¹⁵

To be sure, scholars have often dismissed the relevance of post-medieval chronicles, deeming them subjective, dull and unanalytical. As an 1884 commentator said of a Lokeren chronicle ‘except for the historical facts in which the “esprit de clocher” is too evident, it has no literary merit’.¹⁶ Yet, if we approach chronicles not as poor attempts at historiography, but as collections of memorable information about the local community, they are extremely useful evidence that can be employed to gauge the reception of new trends and developments. As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, it is precisely because chronicles were written in this parochial ‘spirit of the belltower’ that they enable us to study how people adjusted to political change at the level of local communities, how this helped them to recover a sense of continuity, and therefore come to terms with change. To do so we can take advantage of three features of these texts. First, while the chronicle genre allowed for a great deal of variety in content, chroniclers were highly selective in what they considered significant and ‘notable’ enough to record. This allows us to see what they did and did not find important, and allows us to chart changes over time. Second, the chronological focus in chronicles encouraged a strong focus on events that are repeated every week, month or year. Authors tend to report changes as a disruption of normal patterns. When they stop noticing the disruptions, we may read that as a sign they have adjusted to them. Third they display a strong focus on local public space, where many of the political transitions were communicated.

¹⁵ Judith Pollmann, ‘Archiving the Present and Chronicling for the Future in Early Modern Europe’, in Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters, and Alexandra Walsham eds., *The Social History of the Archive: Recordkeeping in Early Modern Europe, Past & Present* 230 (suppl. 11) (2016), 231–252.

¹⁶ Frans de Potter and Jan Broeckaert, *Geschiedenis der stad Lokeren* (Gent: Drukkerij C. Annoot-Bræckman, 1884), 3.

Most surviving Netherlandish chronicles for this period were written by people who rejected revolutionary change, but there are good reasons to believe that this is not a function of the genre. We do possess chronicles by those who were keen on change, but these tend to break off sooner or have big gaps. This is likely to reflect the self-censorship of those who later regretted their enthusiasm.¹⁷ In any case, for the purpose of this article the conservative slant of the surviving manuscripts is not a problem, since it is precisely those people whom we expect to have been most affected by a sense of rupture.

PUBLIC SPACE AND LOCAL CHANGE

If ‘all politics is local’, this was certainly true in the late eighteenth century Low Countries. There, the localities had been and remained an important locus of politics throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Dutch Republic was a union of seven sovereign provinces and the towns played a major role in the representative assemblies that ruled the provinces. In the provinces of the Austrian Habsburg Netherlands, the Emperors and their representatives in Brussels left everyday government very much in the hands of local, often also urban, elites. The region was highly urbanised, and cities and even village communities all enjoyed different rights and privileges. They were also the locus of political culture. The towns all had public rituals and *lieux de mémoire* associated with the secular or religious past. Although not everyone enjoyed the formal status of local citizenship, people had a strongly developed sense of local belonging, also in a civic sense. Through the corporate

¹⁷ Jochum and Minne Hoekstra ed., *Korte schets of Levensgeschiedenis van Doeke Wijgers Hellema 1766–1856*. <https://voorouders.jimdo.com/downloads/autobiografie-doeke-wijgers-hellema/> [consulted on 30 April 2020], was undoubtedly based on notes that were subsequently destroyed. He started anew in H. Algra ed., *De dagboeken van Doeke Wijgers Hellema, 1766–1856*. <https://historischcentrumleeuwarden.nl/stad/personen/11-import/1058-de-dagboeken-van-doeke-wijgers-hellema-1766-1856> [consulted on 30 April 2020]. The gap in the middle of W. Dolk ed., *Dagboeken van Roelof Storm (1774–1814)*. <https://historischcentrumleeuwarden.nl/component/content/article/11-import/340-dagboeken-roelof-storm> [consulted on 30 April 2020] suggests he deleted all the information he later considered compromising. For an example of a proponent of Revolution who stopped taking notes in 1800, see Luc Reynierse, *Dagboek van politieke gebeurtenissen te Zierikzee door Luc Reynierse*. Gemeentearchief Schouwen-Duiveland 5489 Handschriften Schouwen Duiveland, Inv. 165. I am grateful to archivist Huib Uil for sharing the transcription made by an anonymous editor.

governance of low-level institutions in their neighbourhoods, most residents had considerable experience of civic sociability.¹⁸ Even among those committed to revolutionary change, there was simultaneously considerable vested interest in local rights, privileges and liberties.¹⁹

The male population of town-dwellers in the Low Countries was exceptionally literate, and there was a wide array of printed material and news media around. Yet local news did not automatically reach printing presses. Although surveys of news from different localities such as the periodical *Nederlandse Jaarboeken* had become very popular, newspapers tended to be circumspect about local reporting. This may be one reason why so many authors continued to think that the keeping of local records was both a useful and interesting exercise. This was especially so, of course, in times of crisis, when there tended to be more censorship of printed material, and when it might be risky to express one's anger, anxiety or partisanship publicly.²⁰

Until recently, local chronicles were used mainly to write local history, but more recently, historians of the revolutionary era have also begun to use them to explore broader issues. Brecht Deseure, for instance, has shown how the Antwerp chronicler Johan Baptist van der Straelen used the memory of earlier historical experiences to categorise the impact of the French occupation of his home town in the 1790s. By comparing the French onslaught on the cultural and religious heritage of the city with that of Calvinists who had purged the city's churches in the late sixteenth century, Van der Straelen fitted them into a familiar category that also allowed for the expectation of an eventual restoration of the old order.²¹ In a recent article, Joris Oddens used the chronicle that was kept on the small island of Ameland by chronicler Cornelis Pieter Sorgdrager to explore how much people at village level actually understood of wider

¹⁸ On this sense of citizenship, see e.g. Maarten Prak, *Citizens Without Nations Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World, c. 1000–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). On the low-level institutions see Carolien Boender [dissertation title to be added].

¹⁹ Ernst Kossmann, 'Nabeschouwing', in Hans Bots and Wijnandus Mijnhardt eds., *De droom van de revolutie. Nieuwe benaderingen van het patriottisme* (Amsterdam: Bataafsche Leeuw, 1988).

²⁰ Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 346–361.

²¹ Brecht Deseure, *Onhoudbaar verleden. Geschiedenis als politiek instrument tijdens de Franse periode in België* (Louvain: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2015).

processes of political change between 1780 and 1815. He noted that well into the nineteenth century, the Amelanders continued to petition authorities as if the formation of a central state had never happened.²²

The work of Oddens and Deseure already suggests that for many ordinary people, the impact of political change became manifest above all when it began to impact local life, public spaces and temporal rhythms. This was partly, of course, because it was through interventions in public spaces that political change was communicated. Obviously, revolutionary regimes dedicated a great deal of thought and energy to political communication. Apart from the liberty trees that emerged everywhere, speeches, music, flags, uniforms, hairstyles and many commemorative and celebratory festivals were used to drive the changing messages of the new regimes home.²³ To judge by the chronicles, such messages were well understood, even if they were disliked. The Louvain wig-maker Jan-Baptist Hous, who kept a chronicle between 1780 and 1829, for example, understood very well that the removal of the red cap from the local liberty tree in April 1795 signified the end of Jacobin power.²⁴ Keeping a careful watch on public space was one way of reading the news, and chroniclers were finely attuned to such changes, which were also subject to local speculation. In 1799 Hous noted that because there had been no bell-ringing for Bastille day, 'it is said that the Republic is floundering and is about to collapse'. In Bruges in 1800, the chronicling grocer Jozef van Wallegem decoded the political significance of the messages that the regime sent by bells, flags and greenery:

On 30 April at 1 p.m. a tricolour banner was raised on the tower of the Halls. It was decorated with a May branch. It's a novelty the like of which we have not seen for some time, since most of the foolish French festivals are in abeyance. People expected this apparent sign of joy to be followed by the ringing of the carillon, but all were disabused of this view, and without the ringing of the carillon the same banner was taken down in the evening.

²² Joris Oddens, 'The Experience of State Formation: Chronicling and Petitioning on the Dutch Island of Ameland (c. 1780–1815)', *National Identities* 22:1 (2020), 1–22.

²³ Mona Ozouf, *La Fête révolutionnaire, 1789–1799* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1984).

²⁴ Jan-Baptist Hous, *Leuvense kroniek, 1780–1829*, J. de Kempeneer ed. (Heverlee: Abdij van Park, 1964), 23–24, April 1795.

Such interpretations were also the subject of public discussion:

From which people are concluding that the victory that the French armies were supposed to have won over the Imperial armies can't have been as great as has been alleged in some newspapers. Indeed, others claimed that there had been great victories for the allied armies over the French.... Whichever of these contradictory messages may be true will come to light shortly, and perhaps the days are close that we are to be released from our misery. Because of the May branch on the banner, the common people said it was because of the Eve of Mayday, even though there have been no entertainments, such as the ringing of the carillon on Mayday and so on.²⁵

City-dwellers such as Hous and Walleghem proved highly attuned to the meaning of the new regime's symbolic communication and adept at reading its messages, precisely because such forms of communication had for centuries been used as instruments of local power, propping up civic identity and urban memory. Long before they were presented with *fêtes révolutionnaires*, Europeans knew how to interpret the raising of flags, ringing of bells, covering and uncovering of balconies and windows, not to mention processions, fireworks, Te Deums and special days of prayer and penance. State authorities had long used flags and bells to declare war and peace, and to mark royal marriages, births and deaths to subjects. Most frequently and importantly they had been used to mobilise residents to pray for local causes, better weather or an end to epidemics, as well as to commemorate local victories, miracles and other *lieux de mémoire*. This practice was, however, not just about the representation of power, or a one-way street. There were many stakeholders, because the corporate culture of the cities, guilds, shooting companies, confraternities and parishes revolved around such civic-religious festivities, and without their collaboration they tended to fall painfully flat.

No wonder then that chroniclers were also very much attuned to the civic calendar. Every August in Louvain for instance, local people who were blind awarded a 'civic crown' to the inn whose patrons had collected most for charity (one of the few traditions that was not abolished by the

²⁵ Jozef van Walleghem, *Merckenweerdigste voorvallen en daegelijcsche gevallen. Brugge 1800*, Ronald Engelrelst and Noël Geirnaart eds. (The Hague: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 2016), fol. 168 (April 30, 1800). https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/wall076merc14_01/colofon.php [consulted on 30 April 2020].

revolutionary *municipalité*). Every year, the event was faithfully recorded by Hous, a wig-maker. Hous used changes in such civic rituals as a type of barometer for the state of his city. Every year he also recorded details of the annual Feast of Our Lady of the Siege, which celebrated the anniversary of the lifting of a siege during the Dutch Revolt. In 1793, during the war, he noted that the image of the Virgin had been carried around ‘without a throne, without a crown, without a golden sceptre, in a poor dress, with the greatest poverty in the world’. Once the revolutionary regime had banned the procession, he recorded that local people nevertheless, and in protest, continued to walk its traditional route.²⁶ Other local festivals were also abolished but not forgotten: ‘it is now the 11th year that we have been doing without a mascarade’, he noted in the carnival season.²⁷

The revolutionaries were thus not the first to ‘politicise everyday life’.²⁸ The urban calendar, urban space and urban values, were already closely connected, and they were all full of political and religious significance. City gates and walls marked the territory and ‘liberty’ of the city, while town halls, churches and towers, weighing houses and charities were sources of local pride. Neighbourhoods and streets were organised around parish churches that had their own feasts and patrons. Public inscriptions, fountains and imagery reminded the residents of their duties as Christians and as locals. Bells were not only used to call people to church, mark deaths and raise the alarm when necessary, but were also consecrated and widely believed to ward off evil.²⁹ In the Low Countries, moreover, urbanites also cherished their carillons, which were and are used to play songs appropriate to the season or public events. Quite how important these traditions were is evident from chroniclers’ responses to the revolutionary regimes’ attempts to change them. Chroniclers devoted many entries to the changing soundscape of the cities. Jan-Baptist Hous, for instance, kept an exact record of the use the new authorities made of the bells and the carillons. He carefully noted the removal of most local bells from the conventual churches, making sure to record the name of the

²⁶ Hous, *Leuvense kroniek*, 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁸ Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class*.

²⁹ Jan Willem Buisman, *Omweer. Een kleine cultuurgeschiedenis 1752–1830* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2019).

men who had been prepared to undertake this hateful task, and noting details of the sale of the bells with a desultory exclamation: ‘oh the things we see happen’.³⁰ He also resented the use of the remaining bells by the new regime. On 30 September 1796, he noted for instance that ‘the bell was made to ring because it was the anniversary that we were united with the French Republic, what luck!’. By emphasising that the bell was ‘made to ring’ for this victory, or that anniversary, he suggested that the bells, like Louvain’s citizenry, were operating under duress.³¹

Hous was not alone in his interest in bells. On New Year’s Day of 1799, Bruges grocer Jozef van Walleghem noted:

Instead of the joyful sound of the carillon, which we used to hear for several times on this day of the year, to the sorrow of all we heard the sombre sounding of the working bell, which is being rung thrice every day, with no exception for the feast days of the Holy Church, and which is silent only on the decadi-days’.³²

The changes in bell-ringing were closely related also to the temporal regimes that the French imposed, and which became a focus of resentment and much resistance. The abolition of the Sundays and introduction of decadi-days as a day of rest met with much passive resistance. Thus an anonymous chronicler in Brussels noted with indignation how the new regime tried to force street-traders to observe decadi-days by threatening to revoke the licence to trade for the rest of the week. In Louvain, Hous was delighted when the decadi-days were at last abolished. He noted that ‘the Sunday won the case and was awarded costs’, a pun he repeated a few months later.³³

CHRONICLING CHANGE

Although chroniclers in the Low Countries tended to have a fairly large geographical horizon, for many contemporaries *national* political change in the Age of Revolutions registered primarily in its *local* manifestations. This is what brought it home and made it real. None of the four

³⁰ Hous, *Leuvense kroniek*, 39, 44.

³¹ For some examples see *ibid.*, 32.

³² Van Walleghem, *Merckenwaardigste voorvallen*, 1 January 1799.

³³ Hous, *Leuvense kroniek*, 86, 101.

local chroniclers who kept notes during the French rule of the Southern Netherlandish city of Roermond, for instance, recorded the date of the French takeover, or referred to new official roles or institutions. Instead they all structured their comments around the impact of Austrian, French and Dutch rule on local religious life and on local space.³⁴ Attitudes were not so different in other cities. In 1787, the Bruges chronicler Michiel Allaert recorded the authoritarian reforms of the overlord of Flanders, Emperor Joseph II, exclusively by charting their impact on the public realm of the city of Bruges. Without ever mentioning the origin of the reforms, he meticulously recorded changes in traditional procession routines, the emergence of a new graveyard, sales of goods, the removal of images and the demolition of local buildings. He did so without comment, and at first sight his notes look innocent enough, but he knew full well that they were interrelated. On 5 June 1787, he noted with satisfaction that ‘the authorities’ had at last announced a change of heart; things were to be as they had been ‘before the introduction of the novelties’.³⁵ In Louvain, Jan-Baptist Hous was well aware that much of what happened in his city depended on decisions made in Vienna, Paris and Brussels and the outcomes of military operations across Europe. Nevertheless, such changes became relevant and noteworthy only when they had an impact on the streets of Louvain.

Further north, in the successor state to the Dutch Republic, French rule was less invasive to start with. The new Batavian Republic that had been founded with French support to replace the older republic of the United Provinces and its stadholderly regime was formally independent. In 1795 the French invasion had been accompanied by Dutch ‘Patriots’ who had been exiled in 1787, at the end of a civil war that the Prince of Orange had been able to win only with support from the King of Prussia. Yet not everyone was happy with the outcome of the Batavian Revolution. In Leeuwarden, political upheaval in 1796 prompted the female chronicler Elisabeth Buma to end her chronicle with the words ‘finis Frisiae,

³⁴ Gerard van de Garde, ‘Uit de eerste hand. Tien Roermondse egodocumenten uit de revolutietijd (1787–1799)’, in *Spiegel van Roermond 2004* (Roermond: Stichting Rura, 2004); [Van Beringen], ‘Kronijkje’.

³⁵ Michiel Frans Allaert, *Ghedinckboeck van M.F. Allaert. Brugse kroniek over 1713–1787*. ed. A. Schouteet, Albert L. G. Schouteet ed. (Bruges: Graphica, 1953), 59.

yes, *finis patriae*'.³⁶ Her compatriot Roelof Storm lost his position as burgomaster as result of the Batavian Revolution and kept a record of the changes as they reverberated locally: massive unrest over control of the local government, worrying troop movements and quartering, but importantly to Storm also, no more bell-ringing on Sundays or clerical dress on the streets. The city gates were now opened on Sunday mornings, local churches were stripped of coats of arms, government benches and Bibles. There was the public burning of the portraits and furniture from the local Orange palace, and the desecration of the graves of the Orange family. There were petty bans on placing orange flowers behind local windows and the wearing of liveries. Even the stones, poles and chains on the *Heerenpaadje* [Gentlemen's alley] had to be destroyed, 'because it was found that it had been made as a memorial by [stadholder] William IV'.³⁷ At no point did Storm feel moved to reflect on the bigger picture, the nature of the Revolution or the discussions about the Constitution.

A similar focus on the local public realm is evident in a chronicle from the town of Enkhuizen, a small town that nevertheless had a vote in the representative assembly of the States of Holland, the body that dominated the Dutch Republic. The impact of the Batavian Revolution of 1795 that was forged by French-supported Dutch Patriots, many of whom had been in exile in Paris since 1787, was recorded there as follows by chronicler Luijt Hoogland.

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| October 1794 | the queen of France has been beheaded |
| March 18, 1795 | the gallows on the beach was removed |
| | In the year 1795 Liberty trees have been placed, but the one before the College was the last and that one was good. |
| March 27 | Brought money to the militia house for the maintenance of the French [soldiers], and signed for 6 weeks, a guilder every Friday, because the citizenry complained that they were expensive in the |

³⁶ Elisabeth Buma, *Kroniek van belangrijke buitenlandse, landelijke, regionale en plaatselijke gebeurtenissen, 1766–1796*. Historisch Centrum Leeuwarden, 1795 Beuker Andreae, Inv. No. 376.

³⁷ *Dagboeken van Roelof Storm (1774–1814)*, 4 April, 27 April, 3 May, 2 August, 12 August, 14 September 1796.

- upkeep. Then the French were sent to board at the pensioners' home—that was what the money was for...
- July All the Orange banners [associated with the previous regime] before the Prinsenhof were burned, for all too see
In April of that year 1795 the cartwright in the Nieuwsteeg was whipped indoors [i.e. not in public] and banished, because he had housed [French] émigrés and had sold their goods.
- August the benches [for the elites] around the columns in the church have been removed
- September after the 1st of September there was no more bell-ringing and the Ministers had to go to Church without their gown and bands, and they put them on in Church.³⁸

Apart from his terse entry on the execution of Queen Marie Antoinette in France, Hoogland does not explain the background or wider national context for any of these developments. Neither the flight of the stadholder to Britain nor the French invasion was relevant for him to record. Similarly, he never noted the calling of a National Assembly, the elections that were held in 1796, the quarrels about the new constitution, the coups and countercoups in The Hague or the wider war efforts.

For Hoogland the main political change was local and personal because as a centre for the navy, shipbuilding and fishery, Enkhuizen was suffering terribly from the war and the loss of the Dutch colonies to the British. In 1800, one of the Patriot exiles who had returned with the French bought the ropery where Hoogland was employed and proceeded to fire him; the same man was buying up and demolishing property throughout town. In a rare outburst, Hoogland noted in 1802 that this Bart Blok had been nicknamed 'the wrecker' and asked rhetorically 'so does this fellow have no other idea than to bring Enkhuizen down altogether, what do you

³⁸ Klaas Koeman, ed., *Chronologische aantekeningen betreffende de stad Enkhuizen van 1732–1807 uit het Dagboek van Luijt Hoogland, gewoonde hebbende en overleden te Enkhuizen* (Enkhuizen: Stolpoeve-pres, 1980), 8–9.

say? Is that not a master-wrecker? He would have done better to stay in France, then he wouldn't have brought so many here to ruin'.³⁹

THE RETURN OF THE GOLDEN AGE

Yet precisely because the pain of political change was perceived through such a local lens, any positive local developments could also be read as a sign of real improvement and lead to acceptance of change at a national level. In 1802 Luijt Hoogland recorded that because a peace had been agreed, it was at last possible again for local fishermen to take to sea. In August he noted that he had served sea-fish to a 15-year-old seamstress who had come to work in his household for the day; she had never tasted a seabass before. A few months later, the night watch was discontinued. Some rebuilding now also began. The church tower was strengthened and in 1804 the appearance of a 'brand new' weathervane on the south tower of Enkhuizen's main church was a source of pride for Hoogland. Although he noted the news of the death and burial of the former Dutch stadholder in far-away Brunswick, the 1807 visit to Enkhuizen of Louis Bonaparte, the new King of Holland, was clearly seen as good news. The south tower of the church had been illuminated for the occasion. The King had visited the naval shipyard, the hospital and a new school. He had offered 75 ducats to the Catholic church and the orphanage, and he had made it known 'that anyone who has complaints about the evil times, or because of his circumstances, should put that to him in writing on the 28th of April in Alkmaar'.⁴⁰ The evil times were still there, but the King might put them right. Just as the consequences of the Batavian Revolution had been felt most through their impact on the local realm and urban fabric, Hoogland used phenomena in the town's fabric and public space (particularly phenomena related to the local tower) as markers of a return to order.

We can see similar phenomena among chroniclers in the former Austrian Netherlands. Compared to Enkhuizen, the people in the frontier town of Wervik endured more difficult times. This town on the French-Netherlandish border had to contend with constant warfare, a violent French occupation, the loss of the church and all ecclesiastical property,

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

and bans on all local festive and corporative traditions. Yet even there, after almost a decade of disaster, chroniclers seized upon signs of recovery. In August 1801, a local chronicler noted that the four guilds of the town had reassembled for the first time in seven years. They did so to celebrate the acquisition of new banners for the shooting guilds of St. Barbara and St. Sebastian. Their old banners had been destroyed by the French, but they had gone to fetch the new ones that had been made for them in Lille. When the guilds entered the town on their return, they were ceremonially welcomed by the two other guilds in Wervik, which had retained their banners by hiding them during the earlier years of the occupation. The four guilds then processed with their banners through the town ‘in full triumph’ to the sound of drums and musicians in ‘which the citizens took great pleasure’.⁴¹ A year earlier, Jozef van Wallegem in Bruges had rejoiced at the return of a local fair, which he saw as ‘sure sign that the French have been unable to destroy the old habits’.⁴² Meanwhile, a chronicler in Brussels thought that the resumption of the civic shooting competition signified the ‘revival of the golden age’.⁴³ Long before there was any sign of structural political change these chroniclers thus interpreted the return of *some* traditional local practices as a form of closure.

The eventual demise of the French regime was observed and recorded by Jan-Baptist Hous in the same way as its arrival, through careful observations of changes in public space. In October 1811, Hous observed: ‘on the night of 3–4 October, the tree of so-called liberty was removed. In the morning it looked as if it had never been there’. Anticipating the day that this knowledge would no longer be self-evident, he added: ‘It stood in front of the city hall’.⁴⁴

In the summer of 1814, while armies were still crossing through Louvain and the arrival of the new sovereign William of Orange was expected, the citizens began to reclaim public space in their city. All through July and August 1814, Hous recorded how images of the Virgin

⁴¹ Leen Breyne, ‘Het dagelijks leven in Wervik tijdens de Franse tijd’ (MA dissertation Ghent 2006–2007), unpaginated, section 2.1.1. <http://www.thesis.net> [consulted on 30 April 2020].

⁴² Van Wallegem, *Merckenwaardigste voorvallen*, fol. 199, June 16, 1800.

⁴³ Joost Welten, *Antihelden. Bijzondere levens van gewone mensen uit de tijd van Napoleon* (Zwolle: WBOOKS, 2015), 73.

⁴⁴ Hous, *Leuvense kroniek*, 184.

and the Saints were restored, chapels reopened, crucifixes raised, streets decorated, garlands hung, flags flown, houses decorated, all to the sound of trumpets and tymbals and, of course, the remaining bells and the carillon. Along the roads householders had posted *cronicae* i.e. topical verses. ‘If Diogenes returned to light up the earth, he would find many with two or three faces’, posted one local about the turncoats in his community. Or, in memory of the quartering of German troops: ‘Praise and thanks be to Heaven/For the liberation of our lands/But the cost in schnapps was high’. On 28 August, Hous noted that the tricolour and weathervane were removed from the tower of St. Peter’s. The next day, a cross was erected on the tower of St. Gertrud. The day afterwards, *cronicae* were banned, apparently because the messages were getting too inflammatory. Two months later, working on Sundays was, once again, forbidden.⁴⁵ In public space, the old order had been restored, or so Hous suggested.

Yet by chronicling the recovery of the traditional features of the urban land- and timescape, Hous was at the same time signalling his tacit acceptance of many changes that had profoundly transformed urban life and that were there to stay. As we saw, in the early years of the occupation, Hous always said of bells that they had been ‘made to ring’ by the revolutionary regime. Yet gradually the new normal set in and sometime in 1797 he reverted to saying: ‘the bell rang’. As so many others he had been fascinated with Napoleon and captivated by the endless sequence of victories. For all his criticism of the French, he had reported in great detail on the local glorification of the Emperor. He had also noted real improvements in urban life. He acknowledged that the founding of an invalid-hospital in the abandoned colleges of the university once again brought some jobs and money into the town. Conscription was hated, but also increased local identification with the Napoleonic armies. Hous noted that the *groenwijken*, the women who sold vegetables, and frequently took the lead in popular protest, took the initiative to collect money for the wounded.⁴⁶ By such signs, great and small, the local reversal of some of the political changes that had been considered most disruptive, had at the same time enabled the tacit acceptance of other features of the new order, and a return to a sense of normality. Like Hoogland in Enkhuizen, Hous had

⁴⁵ Ibid., 228–233.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 202 (1813).

not only rejected change, but also adjusted to it. It was their local lens that allowed these men to do so.

CONCLUSION

While early modernists such as Maarten Prak have recently stressed the continuous importance of the culture of civic republicanism for eighteenth-century political practice, they have also argued that the destruction of the corporate institutions in the Age of Revolutions signalled an end to the culture of local citizenship.⁴⁷ Yet as Michael Rowe and Katherine Aaslestad have suggested for the German lands, the political culture of urban communities proved more resilient than we used to think, and long outlived the institutions that were destroyed by the new regimes. The chroniclers studied in this essay were not just reactionaries who resisted change; they were assessing its impact on the local environment in which they lived.⁴⁸ Although they disapproved of much of it, they were not unwilling or unable to change as such; rather, they were committed to the civic values and notions of public order and good government with which they were familiar. Studying the Rhineland, Rowe emphasises that, after the chaos of the 1790s, many welcomed the semblance of order that the Napoleonic regime seemed to bring and indeed approved of the transparency in the new administrative and legal procedures, which is why they wanted to retain them. It would be worth investigating this further in a Low Countries context.⁴⁹

Yet what is already clear from our analysis of the chroniclers' response is that the destruction of civic corporate institutions did not put an end to the 'spirit of the belltower', or to the civic habit of observing local

⁴⁷ Prak, *Citizens Without Nations*, 296–306.

⁴⁸ Michael Rowe, *From Reich to State: The Rhineland in the Revolutionary Age, 1780–1830* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Katherine Aaslestad, *Place and Politics: Local Identity, Civic Culture, and German Nationalism in North Germany During the Revolutionary Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

⁴⁹ For the Northern Netherlands, the willingness to accept the new political order has been explained with reference to a shift in political mood away from ideology and towards domesticity and the interests of the 'fatherland'. See e.g.: Niek van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004). Also more recently Bart Verheijen, *Nederland onder Napoleon. Partijstrijd en natievorming 1801–1813* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2017).

public space as a barometer for the state of their community, and implicitly also for the bigger political framework in which that community functioned. Using their very local barometers, chroniclers in the Low Countries judged at around 1801 that the worst was over. Temporarily, at least, there was some prospect of peace. I have highlighted that in celebrating the restoration of some older routines, especially the restoration of the Catholic Church in the Southern Netherlands, the authors implicitly came to accept that other changes were there to stay. I have argued that this, in turn, helped them to deal with the disruption in their sense of time. The focus on local space allowed chroniclers to absorb and domesticate the new, as well as maintain a sense of coherence and continuity with the civic community of the past. This meant that they ultimately accommodated change much more effectively than theorists of modern time have alleged. By selectively remembering in a local context, it was possible to realign past and present and therefore face the future.

When a blasé Sebastiaan van Beringen noted in 1831, that it was ‘inconvenient’ for subjects to have a change of master, because ‘governments get into trouble and into debt and the ordinary citizens have to bear with it’, he suggested that political change had made little difference to the people of Roermond. Thirty years earlier, when describing the consequences of French rule on the religious life in his city, he had sung a very different tune. Then, he had with anger and outrage described the French attacks on the local church, the flight of many priests, the anger and fear about the loss of church space, the harassment of local Catholics, the bans on bell-ringing and damage to the local fabric. He had seen it as a form of divine punishment, and thought he saw Jesus’s words in Matthew 6:31 being realised: ‘I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered’. Yet in the course of 1800, after a few horrible years, he had come to believe the worst was over. Priests returned, some churches reopened, and although there was a terrible drought as well as floods, recovery did seem to persist. On 26 August 1802, ‘after 4 years, 5 months, and 21 days’, the ‘cross was re-erected on our parish church’. On the following day, a *Te Deum* was sung, ‘all the authorities in the service of the Republic attended, and the citizens’ joy was such that many did not work, and closed their shops’.⁵⁰ In subsequent years, political change disappeared from his records; his notes focused on the building

⁵⁰ [Van Beringen], ‘Kronijkje’, 31, 34, 36–37.

of new mills, on prices and on floods, the local realities that mattered. Sebastiaan van Beringen had experienced a limited recovery of the old order in Roermond as a return to a normal state of affairs. Of course, much of the pre-revolutionary world had gone, and change continued apace. Yet locally, some of the gap between past and present had been bridged. Any subsequent regime change, by comparison, was apparently small beer. Given that some local traditions had been salvaged, it had become easier to adjust to new political developments and therefore to domesticate change.

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