

LOUIS XVI

and the French Revolution

1789–1792

AMBROGIO A. CAIANI



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Louis XVI and the French Revolution, 1789–1792

The experience, and failure, of Louis XVI's short-lived constitutional monarchy of 1789–1792 deeply influenced the politics and course of the French Revolution. The dramatic breakdown of the political settlement of 1789 steered the French state into the decidedly stormy waters of political terror and warfare on an almost global scale. This book explores how the symbolic and political practices which underpinned traditional Bourbon kingship ultimately succumbed to the radical challenge posed by the Revolution's new 'proto-republican' culture. While most previous studies have focused on Louis XVI's real and imagined foreign counter-revolutionary plots, Ambrogio A. Caiani examines the king's hitherto neglected domestic activities in Paris. Drawing on previously unexplored archival source material, Caiani provides an alternative reading of Louis XVI in this period, arguing that the monarch's symbolic behaviour and the organisation of his daily activities and personal household were essential factors in the people's increasing alienation from the newly established constitutional monarchy.

AMBROGIO A. CAIANI is College and Departmental Lecturer at Lady Margaret Hall and the Faculty of History, University of Oxford.

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Ambrogio A. Caiani



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107026339

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First published 2012

Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Caiani, Ambrogio A.

Louis XVI and the French Revolution, 1789–1792 / Dr. Ambrogio
A. Caiani.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02633-9

1. Louis XVI, King of France, 1754–1793. 2. France – History –
Revolution, 1789–1799. 3. France – Kings and rulers – Biography.
I. Title.

DC137.C35 2012

944.04'1–dc23 2012018832

ISBN 978-1-107-02633-9 Hardback

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For my parents

‘Mais on ne se bat pas dans l’espoir du succès!

Non! non! c’est bien plus beau lorsque c’est inutile!’

Edmond Rostand, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Act V, Scene VI

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Acknowledgements

This book would never have seen the light of day without the help and support of so many friends and colleagues. It must be stressed that any errors, misinterpretations or omissions in this volume are entirely mine. My labours were greatly eased by an outstanding generation of highly original historians, who started publishing their findings on *ancien régime* and Revolutionary France in the 1970s. My greatest academic debt lies with my inspirational Ph.D. supervisor, Prof. Tim Blanning. I am not only grateful for his unwavering dedication, but also for the constructive criticisms he made to the doctoral dissertation on which this book is based. His ability to digest proofs and provide feedback within twenty-four hours, from any location on the globe, continues to be a welcome source of mystery. I am also exceedingly grateful for his continued interest and assistance in my, at times, unsteady academic career.

I wish to acknowledge and thank the AHRC for its generous three years of financial support for this project. The Cambridge European Trust also provided a bursary, for which I am grateful. The Pecorari, Arne and Epstein families, with whom I stayed in Paris, greatly facilitated my research by providing both a tranquil environment for study and stimulating dinner conversation. Michel, Véronique and Jean-Charles Arne also provided a lively forum in which to debate some of my findings. Although Michel and I differ on the supposedly harmful effects unleashed by the Orléans dynasty on French history, we are brought together by a common passion for French *savoir-vivre*.

Prof. Alan Forrest's guidance and influence continue to shape my research and thoughts on the French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire. This research started roughly nine years ago in his office at the King's Manor in York; without his generous encouragement the completion of this book would have been impossible. Prof. Stuart Carroll, who had the misfortune of being my tutor for no fewer than four courses at York, was a stirring lecturer and teacher. Important contributions and thought-provoking advice were provided by Profs Derek Beales,

Rafe Blaufarb, Malcolm Crook and William Doyle. I also had the good fortune of receiving guidance from Drs Mette Harder, John Hardman, Leonhard Horowoski, Thomas E. Stammers and innumerable others. I wish to express my gratitude to Drs John Dunne and Jessica Sharkey for helping in proofreading an earlier version of this manuscript.

It is important for me to express a sincere appreciation for the way in which my two years of teaching at the Universities of York and Greenwich provided me with a welcome opportunity to gain some practical experience and collect my thoughts. My students and colleagues at these institutions may not realise it but they provided me with an essential staging ground in which to experiment with, and communicate, ideas. My thanks also go to the Principal and Fellows of Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, where the finishing touches to this book were made. In particular thanks are due to Prof. Mike Broers for the paternal interest which he has taken in both my French and Italian academic interests.

Among my contemporaries at Cambridge I wish to thank Drs Edward and Kelcey Wilson-Lee for their friendship which was extended at a time in my life when the waters were very far from serene. I also would like to express my appreciation to Dr Antti Matikkala for providing me with a copy of his Ph.D. thesis and much information on the European Orders of Chivalry. The international dimension of my topic was inspired by some conversations with Dr Jan Hennings. I also wish to extend a word of deep gratitude to my Ph.D. examiners Prof. Munro Price and Dr Philip Mansel. Their surgical precision in dissecting my work has saved me from making many errors and has greatly improved my text. From the standpoint of archival assistance I want to express a very large thankyou to Mme Laurence Wodey for allowing me to access the manuscript collections of the Musée de la Légion d'Honneur.

Lastly I owe my parents an incommensurable debt of gratitude, not merely for twenty-nine years of (very) patient nurture, but for having generously accepted that I inflict my historical interests on them at invariably inopportune moments. Despite an innate dislike for my subject, born of his school days, my father accepted not only to proofread the entire dissertation but also, which was far from reasonable, to help with the proofs for the book. Despite protests to the contrary he seems to be developing a genuine interest, not to mention expertise, in French Revolutionary history.

Note on translations

Unless otherwise stated all translations present in this volume are my own. I have tended in general to opt in favour of a simple translation into modern English rather a literal rendition of the original, and somewhat antiquated, French expressions used by eighteenth-century writers. I hope that the resultant loss in authenticity will be compensated by comprehensibility.

Abbreviations

AN	Archives Nationales, Paris
Anselme	Père Anselme de Sainte-Marie, <i>Histoire Généalogique et Chronologique de la Maison Royale de France, des Pairs, Grands Offices de la Couronne et de la Maison du Roi</i> , 12 vols, 3 edn (1726–1733)
AP	<i>Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860</i> , 1st series, ed. M. J. Madival and M. E. Laurant, 89 vols (Paris, 1867–1896)
ASGe	Archivio di Stato di Genova
ASMo	Archivio di Stato di Modena
ASPr	Archivio di Stato di Parma
ASTo	Archivio di Stato di Torino
ASVe	Archivio di Stato di Venezia
BA	Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris
Bio Uni	<i>Biographie Universelle ancienne et moderne</i> , ed. J. Fr. Michaud, 45 vols (Paris, 1988)
BnF	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
FO	Foreign Office
MLH	Musée de Légion d'Honneur
Ms.fr.	Manuscripts Français
NAF	Nouvelles Acquisitions Français
Saint-Allais	<i>Nobiliaire universel de France, ou, Recueil général des généalogies historiques des maisons nobles de ce royaume</i> , ed. Nicolas Viton de Saint-Allais, 21 vols (Paris, 1872–1877)
SHAT	Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (Archives de la Guerre, Château de Vincennes)
TNA	The National Archives, London

- Tr.Drts. *Traité des Droits, Fonctions, Franchises, Exemptions, Prérogatives et Privilèges Annexés en France à chaque dignité, à chaque Office, à chaque État, soit Civil, soit Militaire, soit Ecclésiastique*, ed. Joseph-Nicolas Guyot and Philippe-Antoine Merlin, 4 vols (Paris, 1786)

Introduction: Louis XVI, a constitutional monarch?

‘He that you call a king, we call a tyrant’¹

Some time after the insurrection of 10 August 1792, the abbé Jean-Louis Soulavie travelled to the Comité de Surveillance of the Tuileries district to present an odd request.² He pleaded for permission to consult the papers of the deposed Louis XVI which were still stored in the royal palaces. François Chabot, the head of the committee and formerly a Capuchin monk, could not contain his amazement.³ There was nothing intrinsically wrong with the abbé’s desire to write a history of Louis XVI’s reign. However, the question which deeply troubled Chabot was on which side of the scales of historical bias Soulavie’s writings would lean.

I think that among these scribblings and scraps of paper you will find the writings of Turgot, Necker and Malesherbes, and that you will become biased in favour of Capet, like one member of [our] committee whom we surprised crying like an idiot over a letter sent by [Madame] Elisabeth to her brother Capet ... Is it among these [papers] that you can find the majesty of our revolution, the insurrection of the people, their resounding triumph over the crowned ogres who sought to devour them[?] Do you not have the means at your disposal of making history more inspiring, more imposing, more interesting than the miserable court intrigues that you wish to examine? Beware lest your work makes you forget yourself and, that will inevitably happen, if you feel pity for Capet.⁴

By toppling the House of Bourbon the Revolutionary government had sought to consign it to historical oblivion. Soulavie’s rather disingenuous

¹ Jean-Louis Soulavie, *Mémoires Historiques et Politiques du Règne de Louis XVI, depuis son mariage jusqu’à sa mort. Ouvrages composé sur des pièces authentiques fournies à l’auteur avant la révolution, par plusieurs ministres et hommes d’état et sur les pièces justificatives recueillies après le 10 août dans les cabinets de Louis XVI à Versailles et au château des Tuileries*, 6 vols (Paris, 1801), I, xcii.

² Ibid.

³ August Kuscinski, *Dictionnaire des Conventionnels* (Paris, 1973), 121–4; and Bio Uni, VII, 384–5.

⁴ Soulavie, *Mémoires Historiques*, I, xciii.

claim that he wished merely to seek out the truth cannot have been reassuring to the politicians of the future National Convention. In a somewhat Thucydidian dialogue, the abbé proved to the hot-headed Chabot that historical interpretation was relativistic in nature. After all, had not the king's public image varied considerably throughout the entire reign? In a strange turn of events, Soulavie managed to induce the Committee to approve the intellectual validity of his enterprise. He was granted permission to access the documents he required.⁵ It was an adventure which would take him to Versailles, where he was to be among the last to see the palace in a furnished state before its contents were publicly auctioned.⁶ He was also shown around Louis XVI's *petit cabinet* by the locksmith Gamin, the man who revealed the existence of the *armoire de fer* to the National Convention.⁷ The abbé worked in an environment where time had been suspended. These unique circumstances endowed his research with an originality which has been difficult for his successors to equal.⁸

It was an endeavour which was going to take Soulavie the better part of a decade to accomplish. Naturally, other events were to distract him from his academic task. In 1793 he was appointed French Résident at Geneva for two years.⁹ It was only in 1801 that he published the fruit of his labours in six volumes. In spite of asserting a complete impartiality, the finished article was suspiciously laudatory of the Napoleonic Consulate as the successful end-product of the Revolution.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., I, cv–cvi; and *Avis Aux Amateurs de Beaux Meubles à Paris le 25 octobre 1792*. ‘Through a succession of decrees issued by the National Convention one has proceeded to the sale of the goods, castles, townhouses and homes of our émigrés ... But nowhere will you find items more precious than those furnishings which will be auctioned as part of the contents of the palaces of Versailles, Saint-Cloud, Rambouillet, Compiègne, Fontainebleau and Bellevue. These items of furniture were commissioned no later than the time of Louis XV, and everything will be sold immediately to the highest bidder. Now considering that the number of items on sale is too vast to be purchased entirely by the richer inhabitants of Paris, whose homes are already richly furnished, it is safe to assume that valuable objects will be sold for very reasonable prices, as a result we have the honour of inviting Gentlemen from abroad to consider this unique circumstance ... Interested parties who wish to make purchases are asked to address their orders, at the earliest opportunity, to Citizen Eberts in Paris, no 19 rue Saint-Thomas at the Louvre, who after many years of dealing with this sort of commission and whose fine taste for the arts is accompanied by a most exacting sense of probity, assures his customers that their orders will be fulfilled with the utmost care.’ *Revue de l’Histoire de Versailles et de Seine et Oise*, 30 (1928), 83–4.

⁷ Ibid., I, cv.

⁸ John Hardman, *Louis XVI, The Silent King* (London, 2000), 23–7.

⁹ Bio Uni, XXXIX, 675–7.

¹⁰ Soulavie, *Mémoires Historiques*, VI, 527, 549; and see also the large table entitled ‘on the mechanics of the French Revolution, representing its forward march towards the

Nevertheless, Soulavie produced a history that was both sophisticated and exhaustive in its scope. It divided the reign into nine *époques*, each of which chronicled the miscalculations and policy failures of Louis XVI's monarchy.¹¹ Particularly innovative was the second half of his third volume, which analysed the impact of international affairs on the course of events in France.¹² Although not a globalist, by current standards, the abbé certainly recognised that Louis XVI's failure to keep up with the pace of international competition was to have devastating consequences. In particular, Soulavie argued that the inability to thwart the ambitions of Austrian foreign policy and the king's decision to disband the *secret du roi* did much to undermine the diplomatic efforts of the Bourbon monarchy.¹³ In relation to domestic matters, a narrative was constructed which was to become the traditional view of a monarch unable to control public spending and forced to resort to a myriad of expedients in order to put a stop to the downward spiral.¹⁴ The interpretative balance of this complex, and at times contorted, history is difficult to gauge with precision. At certain moments the author alluded to the structural defects present in the *ancien régime* system of government; at other times he argued for the primacy of human agency in unleashing the Revolution.

It is not until the sixth volume that the abbé unequivocally states that the: 'fleeting and uncertain character of Louis XVI, is the primary cause of the collapse of the ancient monarchy and also of the fall of the constitutional monarchy'.¹⁵ Although sympathetic to Louis XVI, as a scrupulous and morally unimpeachable individual, Soulavie saw him as unsuited to the role of leader of a country in crisis. The central character flaw of the monarch was an inability to pursue and sustain policy decisions when faced with determined opposition or the threat of popular unrest. This portrait of the last *ancien régime* Bourbon monarch has come to embody the revised and sympathetic interpretation of Louis XVI. The king was deemed unable to choose between the opposing poles of asserting the royal will and following the common good as expressed by public opinion.

The abbé's successors have also been thorough in their investigations into the pre-Revolutionary reign. Research into Louis XVI, as both an individual and as a label for a specific historical period, has expanded

Consulate as [the culmination in] the restoration of an efficient administration, the reorganisation of good government and the reestablishment of order and security both within and without the borders of France', in the same volume.

¹¹ Ibid., II, i–ii. ¹² Ibid., III, 205–338.

¹³ Ibid., III, 268–90 and 324–34; and IV, 335–41.

¹⁴ Ibid., IV, 15–23, 265–73; and VI, 113–19 and 265–356. ¹⁵ Ibid., VI, 379.

steadily over the past two centuries and interpretations have become more elaborate.¹⁶ The most noticeable lacuna in the subject concerns the lack of scholarship surrounding the constitutional monarchy of Louis XVI. For better or worse, this *époque* constituted not only one sixth of the entire reign but also one of the most momentous events in modern European history. John Hardman, the most insightful English biographer of Louis XVI, deliberately avoids discussing this period for some admittedly sound reasons:

I propose to move straight from Louis's forcible installation in the Tuileries on 6 October 1789 to his escape from Paris on the night of 20/21 June 1791 and his recapture at Varennes ... My reason for omitting this period of nearly two years (a long time in a revolution) is that as Louis said in the declaration he left behind in the Tuileries he regarded his actions during this periods as provisional because his 'palace was a prison' and promises made under duress were not binding.¹⁷

The hidden machinations of the court and the conspiracies of émigrés have justly held centre stage in the analysis of the court of the Tuileries.¹⁸ Some historians see the appeal to assistance from outside France as Louis XVI's only credible means of restoring the authority he had lost in 1789.¹⁹ At first sight, the constitutional monarchy of 1789–1792 does present the rather depressing tableau of an institution in a terminal state of decline. It has been assumed that the royal household during the revolutionary crisis, was neither fish nor fowl. It had an ambiguous identity, as it was not quite the organisation reinvigorated by Louis Quatorze, nor was it merely the residence of a head of state. It embodied an unworkable compromise, which satisfied neither radical nor conservative factions.²⁰

¹⁶ Among the better contemporary biographies are: Jean-Christian Petitfils, *Louis XVI* (Paris, 2005); John Hardman, *Louis XVI* (New Haven, CT, 1993); Joël Felix, *Louis XVI et Marie-Antoinette, un couple en politique* (Paris, 2006); and Évelyne Lever, *Louis XVI* (Paris, 1985). Saul K. Padover, *The Life and Death of Louis XVI* (London, 1939), is the first modern English biography of Louis XVI; unfortunately its contents have not aged very well. Padover however does have the merit of having been among first scholars to draw attention to the manuscript collection on Louis XVI's education preserved at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal (see Padover, *Life and Death*, 13).

¹⁷ Hardman, *Louis XVI, the Silent King*, 115.

¹⁸ For the latest, and a very compelling, contribution to the subject, see Munro Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy, Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the Baron de Breteuil* (London, 2002).

¹⁹ Pierre Gaxotte, *La Révolution Française* (Paris, 1947), 221–2.

²⁰ François Furet and Ran Halévi, *La Monarchie Républicaine, La Constitution de 1791* (Paris, 1996), 227–33; Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 175–84; Norman Hampson, *Prelude to Terror, the Constituent Assembly and the Failure of Consensus, 1789–1791* (Oxford, 1988),

This monograph does not fundamentally disagree with the central axis of this interpretation. As the Revolution became increasingly radicalised, it was unlikely that the court of the Tuileries could have become a stable political entity. However, it is difficult to concur with any interpretation which dismisses the constitutional monarchy during the 1790s as an inert entity, which had no influence on the issues of the day. The debate, transformation and decline of the court of France reveal much about the nature of both the *ancien régime* and the Revolution which sought to erase it. The Maison du Roi was a microcosm within which all the great controversies over authority, hierarchy and religion were articulated. It is difficult to conceive of any political struggle which did not impinge directly on the royal household.

On 17 June 1789 the Third Estate declared itself to be the National Assembly.²¹ From this moment in France there existed two rival and competing forms of political authority. The Assembly, realising that it had to protect its new powers, immediately cast doubt on the legitimacy of the organs of royal government. The army, navy, civil service and judiciary of the old order were in a state of continual crisis, as their allegiance to both king and Assembly gradually became unsustainable.²² Unsurprisingly, the king's household, the most important organisation of the crown, was the institution most affected by these developments.

The court, at least symbolically, had been the supreme site of power during the *ancien régime*. Its tentacles extended into the administrative, judicial, diplomatic, military and religious spheres.²³ Versailles was the home of the king of France, but also the headquarters of the royal administration. The Hôtels de la Guerre, de la Marine, des Affaires Étrangères and du Contrôle Général were separate buildings, physically located within the precincts of the court.²⁴ The Ministre de la Maison du Roi was responsible not only for the day-to-day running of the court, but also administered the Capital, with the cooperation

156–70; and most recently, for a positive reassessment in the realm of political theory, see Guillaume Glénard, *L'Exécutif et la Constitution de 1791* (Paris, 2010), *passim*.

²¹ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2002), 104–5.

²² Samuel F. Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution, the Role and Development of the Line Army* (Oxford, 1978), 81–123; William S. Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict in the French Navy 1789–1794* (Cambridge, 1995), 78–108; and Henri Carré, *La Fin des Parlements 1788–1790* (Paris, 1912).

²³ Jean-François Solnon, *La Cour de France* (Paris, 1987), 392–414.

²⁴ Arnaud de Maurepas and Antoine Boulant, *Les Ministres et les Ministères du Siècle des Lumières 1715–1789, Étude et Dictionnaire* (Paris, 1996), 54–7; and Basile Baudez, Elisabeth Maisonnier and Emmanuel Pénicaut, eds, *Les Hôtels de la Guerre et des Affaires Étrangères à Versailles* (Paris, 2010), esp. 9–97.

of the *Prévôt des Marchands* and military governor of Paris.²⁵ The *feuille des benefices*, the list for all the church livings and dioceses, which the crown held the right to appoint, was also located at Versailles.²⁶ Furthermore, the 10,000 troops of the royal guard made it one of the more important military sites in the kingdom.²⁷

It was only with the move to the palace of the Tuileries that the court lost the lion's share of its administrative functions and became the residence of the monarch and the place where the ministers met in council. From being the summit of government the court was relegated to the role of the most exclusive venue for elite sociability. It required one tumultuous day, 6 October 1789, for the French crown to undergo a transition which would take the other European monarchies the better part of the nineteenth century to accomplish.

While the institutional evolution from early modern princely court to constitutional monarchy was rapid, the symbolic dimension did not adapt at the same pace. It has often been noted that Louis XVI was not particularly keen on entertainments. His serious and introverted character was ill suited to such displays of vanity. However, the same cannot be said for ceremonies, whose prescriptions he observed scrupulously. As Soulavie noted:

He [Louis XVI] showed no inclination towards boisterous pleasures, dancing, gambling, the theatre, [courtly] splendour let alone licentiousness ... He was however very attached to the glory of his house: he feared constantly of engaging in any enterprise which could potentially tarnish its splendour.²⁸

The maintenance of the glory of the dynastic household was one of the primary objectives which united Louis XVI with his Bourbon predecessors. Elsewhere in Europe the character of kingship was evolving rapidly. More reformist sovereigns such as Frederick II and Joseph II were beginning to place national considerations well above dynastic ones when it came to making policy decisions. They actively portrayed themselves as the 'first servants of the state' rather than its physical incarnation.²⁹ This was a central difference with France where the symbolic

²⁵ René-Marie Rampelberg, *Le Ministre de la Maison du roi, 1783–1788, Baron de Breteuil* (Paris, 1975); and Maurepas and Boulant, *Les Ministres*, 37–8.

²⁶ John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998), I, 48–56.

²⁷ Samuel Gibiat, *Hiérarchies Sociales et Ennoblement, Les Commissaires des guerres de la Maison du roi au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2006), 35–40 and 51–54,

²⁸ Soulavie, *Mémoires Historiques*, II, 42.

²⁹ Derek Beales, *Joseph II, In the Shadow of Maria Theresa 1741–1780*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1987 and 2009), I, 41, 173, and 392; and Jean Paul Bled, *Frédéric le Grand* (Paris, 2004), 163–164; 175–177 and 310–11.

exercise of sovereignty was inextricably linked to court etiquette and ceremonies.³⁰ The function of these stage-managed rituals was to make the power of the king manifest and indisputable. On the contrary, the other European monarchies, ruled by more progressive men, sought to associate their dynastic glory with the efficiency of the bureaucratic state and in the successful pursuit of the national aggrandisement.³¹

The fate and transformation of these rituals of sovereignty during the Revolution remains unstudied. It is true that the semiotics of great events, such as the opening of the Estates General and the festival of the federation of 1790, have been unpacked in meticulous detail by Edna Hindie Lemay and Mona Ozouf.³² However, not a single monograph has been devoted to examining the persistence of royal pageantry and representation during the constitutional monarchy. Louis XVI's ceremonial routine survived right up to 10 August 1792. Admittedly, the symbolic gestures and festivities associated with the crown, gradually, became restricted, and the focus of much public controversy. After all, as the work of Lynn Hunt has shown, anything, even on the subconscious level, reminiscent of the *ancien régime* became increasingly suspect as the policies of the Assembly became more radical.³³ However, such an observation needs to be qualified. This book suggests that the symbolic conflict which was to rage over royal ceremonial only became intensely acrimonious once the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was promulgated. This piece of legislation polarised and radicalised politics in a manner which made the monarchy's attachment to its time-honoured practices and rituals not only unpopular but scandalous.³⁴ The organisation and routine of the Maison du Roi, during the first eighteen months of its stay in Paris, was virtually indistinguishable from that of Versailles. This continuance of the traditional representational culture of the Bourbon dynasty during a time of crisis highlighted both Louis XVI's commitment to the traditions of his ancestors and his distrust of revolutionary innovations.

³⁰ T C W Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture, Old Regime Europe 1660–1789* (Oxford, 2002), 36–52.

³¹ Ibid, 186–194, 354–56; Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (London, 2003), 204–36; and even Pius VI toyed with such ideas, Jeffrey Collins, *Papacy and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Rome, Pius VI and the Arts* (Cambridge, 2004), 30–86.

³² Edna Hindie Lemay, *La Vie Quotidienne des Députés aux États Généraux 1789* (Paris, 1987), 17–30, 79–89; and Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (London, 1988), 33–60.

³³ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (London, 1986), 50 and 75.

³⁴ Cf. Barry M. Shapiro, *Revolutionary Justice in Paris 1789–1790* (Cambridge, 1993), 14–34 and 223.

This monograph puts forth two fundamental contentions. Its primary concern is to highlight that the assault on the *ancien régime* monarchy and its court had its origins in the earliest days of the Revolution. However, the impossibility of accommodating the crown within the regenerated French state only became evident once the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was passed into law, and was made inevitable by the declaration of war on Austria and Prussia in 1792. Prior to this, during the *liste civile* debates of 1790, some effort had been made by *monarchiens* and other moderates to define the basis under which the constitutional monarchy was to operate. However, a sense of mistrust on both sides, and the growing radicalisation of the French press, made the feeble compromises reached in June 1790 unworkable in practice. The routine, practices and ceremonies of the royal household, which had been allowed to operate undisturbed, became potential flashpoints between the court and public opinion in 1791.

The final part of this book suggests that, regardless of whether or not Louis XVI was engaged in double dealing with émigrés and foreign agents, his persistence in court ceremony was interpreted negatively by both Assembly and public opinion. A monarch with a strong attachment to forms, symbols and procedures of the old order made an unconvincing constitutional head of a regenerated revolutionary state. The pageantry of the royal household contrasted starkly with the emergent political culture of France.³⁵ It allowed the public to suspect Louis XVI of dissimulation and intrigue even before he undertook the ill-fated flight to Varennes. The king and his court were not passive spectators before the unfolding Revolution. Their traditions and behaviour during this time contributed to the radicalisation of politics. They ultimately caused the collapse of the very institution they were trying to preserve.³⁶

This monograph also provides a supportive case study for relatively recent theories on the changing definition of the 'State' during the early modern period. Quentin Skinner's analysis regarding the mutating linguistic connotations of the 'State' finds an, admittedly late, example of this semantic shift in the experiences of the French constitutional court.³⁷ According to this theory the 'State' adapted from being a term denoting the prince's charismatic behaviour and physical power in upholding the standing of his realm, to meaning the apparatus of

³⁵ Roger Chartier, *The Origins of the French Revolution* (London, 1991), 136–168.

³⁶ It confirms the hypothesis launched in, T. C. W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (Harlow, 1986), 122–3.

³⁷ Quentin Skinner, 'The State', in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr and Russel Hanson (Cambridge, 1989), 90–131; and this

an abstract and impersonal form of government independent of both rulers and ruled. Skinner's periodisation of this semantic shift traces its roots to the Italian *Quattrocento* and finds its clearest definition in Hobbes' *Leviathan* in the seventeenth century.³⁸ Although French political theorists had participated actively in this process, it was to be Bossuet's argument which was to carry the day at the court of Versailles. The Bishop of Meaux argued that there was no distinction between the passive office of a monarch and the physical body which exercised the active powers of the crown.³⁹

This synecdochical understanding of one man, symbolically representing the totality of the state and vice versa the state being readable as the will of this single individual, was the definition which most conformed to the aspirations and claims to power of the Bourbon kings.⁴⁰ The ceremonies of Versailles clearly express this solar understanding of sovereignty. It was the central body of the king which directed the movement of the other orbiting bodies. This is highlighted by the timetable of the court which followed precisely the biological rhythms of the king, thus reaffirming the centrality of the royal body within court life.

As Skinners' own periodisation made clear, by the late eighteenth century this way of doing things was anachronistic. Other European states had moved away from this personification of public power within the king's body.⁴¹ One of the first actions of the National Assembly was to define the constitutional monarch as the agent of the sovereign nation. He was no longer to be a sovereign in his own right. This allowed radical deputies and journalists to define the king either as *premier mandataire* or *fonctionnaire de l'état* (which roughly translates as the first civil servant of the state). Louis XVI found this definition offensive, as it struck at the conviction, inculcated since his youth, that he had been divinely anointed to assume the throne of his forefathers.⁴²

He resisted his demotion to being a mere civil servant by meticulously upholding a ceremonial symbolism which clearly rejected any

article represents an expanded version of the conclusions already exposed within the same author's classic *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1978), I, ix–x, and II, 349–58.

³⁸ Skinner, 'The State', 90.

³⁹ Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Politics drawn from the Very Words of Holy Scripture* (Cambridge, 1990), 160.

⁴⁰ Ibid.; and Julian Swann, 'The State and political culture', in *Old Regime France*, ed. William Doyle (Oxford, 2001), 140, and 168.

⁴¹ 'One outcome of distinguishing the authority of the state from that of its agents was thus to sever a time honoured connection between the presence of majesty and the exercise of majestic powers.' Skinner, 'The State', 125–6.

⁴² Pierrette Girault de Coursac, *L'éducation d'un Roi*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1995), 193–6.

apparent subordination. This caused resentment in the press and forced the National Assembly gradually to create its own state rituals which emphasised the equality of the executive and legislative branches of government. After the flight to Varennes, any reference to the king as a civil servant was avoided in the renegotiated constitutional settlement. The wording of the 1791 document was adjusted so as not to offend royalist sensibilities. It stated that executive power was delegated to the king to be exercised under his authority.⁴³ This step backwards did not conform to the expectations of public opinion and the newspapers became increasingly unhappy with any form of public spectacle which celebrated the power and independence of the crown. One of the central outcomes of this modern understanding of the 'State' as an administrative trust independent of all individuals, whether they were agents or subjects, was the collapse of ceremonial pageantry, which claimed to endow its protagonist with majesty.⁴⁴ The culture of the *ancien régime* court was at an end and the age of the constitutional monarchy was beginning.

The French Revolution and the constitutional court

The study of the Revolution and the court of France have, like Giovanni Giolitti's definition of the separation of Church and State, travelled along parallel lines which, by definition, never meet.⁴⁵ The nineteenth century's sustained endeavour to throw light on the Revolution's course of events drew very near to studying the constitutional court. However the obsession, shared by amateurs and professional academics alike, to untangle the international plots of Marie Antoinette, Louis XVI and the émigrés obscured the far from exhilarating routine of the Tuileries. The second half of the nineteenth century was the great age for the publication of collections of *correspondance inédite* which sought, with each instalment, to shed new light on the 1790s. Feuillet de Conches, Bacourt, Geoffroy and Arneth all scavenged in the archives of the European court chancelleries in order to discover that mythical Eldorado of documents which would either acquit or convict Louis XVI.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1792), 88. ⁴⁴ Skinner, 'The State', 123.

⁴⁵ Giovanni Giolitti, *Discorsi Parlamentari pubblicati per deliberazione della Camera dei deputati*, 4 vols (Rome, 1953), II, 819–20.

⁴⁶ Auguste Geoffroy, *Gustave III et la cour de France, suivi d'une étude critique sur Marie-Antoinette et Louis XVI apocryphes*, 2 vols (Paris, 1867); Adolphe Fourier de Bacourt, *Correspondance entre le comte de Mirabeau et le comte de La Marck, pendant les années 1789, 1790 et 1791*, 3 vols (Paris, 1851); Alfred Ritter von Arneth and Auguste Geoffroy, eds, *Correspondance secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, avec les*

The proliferation of forged papers and counterfeit memoirs added piquancy, if not clarity, to both antiquarian and historiographical debates.⁴⁷ Amedée Renée's *Louis XVI et sa Cour*, despite its promising title, was more a narrative of court faction in the pre-Revolution rather than an in-depth analysis of aulic culture of the 1780s.⁴⁸ Alexandre Tuetay's monumental eleven-volume catalogue of manuscript sources relating to the Revolution contained many entries which referred to the ceremonies of the constitutional household.⁴⁹ Yet, no researcher has dedicated a study to tying together the numerous loose references relating to royal ritual.⁵⁰ The court of the Tuileries remained in obscurity and, due to the loss of many important documents, was considered

lettres de Marie-Thérèse et de Marie-Antoinette, 3 vols (Paris, 1874). The Case of Félix Feuillet Des Conches, *Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Madame Élisabeth, lettres et documents inédits*, 6 vols (Paris, 1864–1873), is highly controversial, see n.46.

⁴⁷ Feuillet Des Conches's *Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Madame Élisabeth*, was to cause one of the great publishing furores of the nineteenth century. Controversy was unleashed immediately with the publication in 1864 of the first volume of this famous collection. The letters reproduced by Feuillet were deemed forgeries by several scholars. For his biography see, Balteau, Rastoul and Prévost, eds, *Dictionnaire de Biographie Française*, 18 vols (Paris, 1929), XIII, 1228–9. The French historian Auguste Geoffroy argued that part of Feuillet collection was counterfeit but that most of the epistles coming from the Royal Swedish archives were genuine. The bitterest critic of the first two volumes was Prof. Heinrich von Sybel of Bonn University who launched a ferocious and, some suggest, personal attack on Feuillet in the pages of the *Historische Zeitschrift*. Feuillet was a career diplomat: he had been inducted into the Quai d'Orsay personally by Talleyrand and was to serve as one of the last Introduceurs des Ambassadeurs of the Second Empire. Consequently he was not bereft of influential friends. Henry Reeve the editor of *Edinburgh Review* published an article in the defence of Feuillet's work. See *Edinburgh Review*, CCLII (1866), 437–53. For the interesting life of Henry Reeve, see Trevor Lynn Broughton, 'Reeve, Henry 1813–1895', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, January 2008 www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23296 and John Knox Loughton, ed., *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve, C.B., D.C.L.*, 2 vols (London, 1898), II, 118–19. Contemporary historians have also disagreed on the reliability of Feuillet's collection. For instance Derek Beales agrees with Arneth's estimation that the letters in Vol. 1 were forgeries. See 'The False Joseph II', *The Historical Journal*, 18 (1975), 471, n.14. On the other hand Munro Price sees subsequent volumes as more reliable. See, 'Louis XVI and Gustavus III, Secret Diplomacy and Counter-Revolution, 1791–1792', *The Historical Journal*, 42 (1999), 439. It is equally true that Feuillet sought to defend his reputation and that over a hundred pages in the prefaces to Vols. 3 and 4 served to rebut Sybel's attack.

⁴⁸ Amedée Renée, *Louis XVI et sa cour*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1858).

⁴⁹ Alexandre Tuetay, ed., *Répertoire Général des Sources Manuscrites de l'Histoire de Paris pendant la Révolution Française*, 11 vols (Paris, 1890–1914). This catalogue represented a twenty-four-year enterprise which was impressive both in its scale and erudition. Tuetay's guide, apart from the odd exception, still refers accurately to box and document references which have remained unchanged. It is to the editor's credit that it remains unsurpassed as a research tool for the study of the French Revolution.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

impenetrable. It was hoped that, outside of France, some long-forgotten stash of papers would finally uncover the secrets of émigré agents.

There were many good reasons justifying this point of view: after all, a large number of sources were obliterated by the royal family in an attempt to cover their tracks.⁵¹ There is also direct evidence that, during his arrest at Varennes, Louis XVI burned a large number of compromising documents.⁵² The revolutionaries too showed little respect for the vestiges of the *ancien régime* and burned in a blaze of iconoclastic fury a considerable portion of the royal archives.⁵³ If these documents had survived they could have uncovered the secrets of the court and the royal family. It is equally certain that the radical revolutionaries of the 1790s did not require such exalted stuff as hard evidence in order to be convinced of Louis XVI's deceit and double-dealing. Had they not observed for three years his aristocratic and unpatriotic behaviour inside the Tuileries?

In many ways Michelet, and his passionate history of the Revolution, eloquently described the growing popular disaffection with the crown.⁵⁴ It was not the failure of court intrigue which spelled the undoing of the monarchy. On the contrary, it was the king's inability to make viable compromises with the National Assembly which most antagonised public opinion. Only if the appeal to armed intervention from abroad had succeeded in restoring the authority of the Bourbon monarchy would its historical importance equal the amount of research dedicated to uncovering this alleged conspiracy. As it stands, it is not necessary to know the full extent of the royal family's reservations regarding the political changes of 1789 in order to measure their failure in regaining the political initiative.

The historical materialist writings of the first half of the twentieth century largely rejected the importance of human agency and narrative history. This school, inspired by the writings of Marx, focused its efforts on analysing the class-conflicts within *ancien régime* society of which the Revolution was the explosive consequence. However Jean Jaurès, among the founders of this historiographical approach, did not disdain *histoire événementielle* when it came to writing his *magnum*

⁵¹ Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy*, xii–xvii. ⁵² *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵³ AP XLIII, 274–5.

⁵⁴ 'The King, this ancient religion, this mystical personage, in whose person is mixed the character of the priest with that of the magistrate, who also possesses a sort of divine reflection! [To this being] always the people have addressed their wishes, their sighs; what a sad return [they have received].' Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2 vols (Paris, 1952), I, 358.

opus. He went so far as to recompose and 'improve' Raymond de Sèze's defence of Louis XVI during his trial.⁵⁵ This pioneering socialist politician moved away from the lawyer's narrative justification of his royal client's actions to one where the monarch described himself as the victim of indomitable forces.⁵⁶ Such an interpretation was typical of an historical school which viewed the collapse of the monarchy as inevitable and consequently had little interest in deciphering the king's actions during the Revolution. Louis XVI for these scholars, as for Camille Desmoulins, had blotted his copybook in July 1789 with the supposed military attempt at counter-Revolution.⁵⁷ Once this policy backfired, and the crown was divested of its residual powers, the interest of such scholars turned to the Revolutionary Assemblies and their uneasy relationship with the *sans culottes*. It was consistent with their general point of view to regard the court, during this historical phase, as an anachronism moving towards its inevitable collapse.⁵⁸

The successive wave of historians, known as revisionists, was primarily concerned with calling into question (or at the very least redirecting) the historical materialist interpretations of the causes of the French Revolution. Many of the scholars in this movement helped to re-evaluate the Bourbon dynasty's place in *ancien régime* society.⁵⁹ The revisiting of many political and cultural topics did much to demonstrate that it was not the disintegration of traditional French society that overthrew the monarchy. On the contrary, the origins of the Revolution now seemed to be tied to a system of government beset by

⁵⁵ Jean Jaurès, *Histoire Socialiste 1789–1900*, 2 vols (Paris, 1901), II, 876–83.

⁵⁶ This chapter in Jaurès's *magnum opus* is a most peculiar piece of writing. The author rewrote Louis XVI's defence speech and made the monarch declare that he had been the unwitting instrument of a secular form of providence. The monarchy which he headed was a vital instrument in the centralisation of the state which in turn facilitated the Revolution and its administrative rationalisation. *Ibid.*, II, 883–8. When Paul and Pierrette Girault de Coursac published *Enquête sur le Procès du Roi Louis XVI* (Paris, 1982), Jacques Godechot reviewed it; see *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française*, 254 (1983), 643–5. He scathingly attacked the empirical pedantry of the authors and remarked that 'the most beautiful, moving and convincing defence [of Louis XVI], which most historians (and most certainly the authors in question) ignore is the one written by Jaurès'.

⁵⁷ Pierre Caron, 'La tentative de contre-révolution de juin–juillet 1789', *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 8 (1907), 33; and Albert Soboul, *The French Revolution 1787–1799; From the Storming of the Bastille to Napoleon* (London, 1989), 135 and 216–27.

⁵⁸ Michel Vovelle, *The Fall of the French Monarchy 1787–1792* (Cambridge, 1984), 24–6, esp. 37, 73–5 and 232.

⁵⁹ Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France*, 3 vols (London, 1962), I, 105–13; and for the European perspective see, C. B. A. Behrens, *The Ancien Régime* (London, 1967), 85–118.

internal contradictions and unable to react positively to unfavourable international circumstances.⁶⁰ Other scholars have emphasised that, while government was unable to make headway, society was set alight by an unprecedented public appetite for new ideas and political polemics.⁶¹ Keith Michael Baker postulated that the three justificatory discourses, on which the monarchy based its legitimacy, had been eroded by enlightened public opinion in the decades preceding the Revolution.⁶² This explanatory model is helpful in understanding the origin and nature of revolutionary discourse. It is less helpful in appreciating the monarchy's inability to fulfil the constitutional role fashioned by the Constituent Assembly.

Similarly, the numerous publications evaluating the ministerial politics of Louis XVI's reign have sought to revise the negative interpretation of the last *ancien régime* attempts at reform.⁶³ Here too no consensus has been achieved. The various academics in this field seek to rescue the various attempts by Turgot, Necker and Calonne to solve the liquidity problems of the French state.⁶⁴ Another, perhaps, more realistic analysis has interpreted the world of the *aile des ministres* at Versailles as a rather murky space, ruled by the internal logic of court faction, which was deeply out of touch with outside concerns.⁶⁵ Although sympathetic to the difficult context in which ministers had to operate, Munro Price recognises that the mindset of many public servants of the absolute monarchy was fossilised by the atmosphere of court intrigue. Ministers hid behind their position as executors of the royal will, while the king in council acted as the impartial arbiter of competing policies. It was a system which, by its very nature, did not encourage positive reform and change. All of these studies are helpful when it comes to understanding the persistence of royal pageantry in the 1790s. This especially is

⁶⁰ William Doyle, *The Origins of the French Revolution*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 1999), 40–1; and Bailey Stone, *The Genesis of the French Revolution, A Global-Historical Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1994), 140–7.

⁶¹ Chartier, *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, 20–37; and Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge, MA, 1968), 107–25.

⁶² Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1999), 24–6.

⁶³ John Hardman, *French Politics 1774–1789, From the Accession of Louis XVI to the Fall of the Bastille* (London, 1995), 59–88; for a judicious view of the 'Genevan Wizard' see Jean Egret, *Necker, Ministre de Louis XVI 1776–1790* (Paris, 1975), 447–53; and Peter Burley, 'Louis XVI and a new monarchy, an institutional and political study of France 1768–1778' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University College London, 1981), especially chapter 4.

⁶⁴ Hardman, *French Politics 1774–1789*, 150–62.

⁶⁵ Munro Price, *Preserving the Monarchy, The Comte de Vergennes 1774–1787* (Cambridge, 1995), 42–3 and 235–6.

the case as the entire system rested on the symbolic authority of the monarchy to compel his subjects to obedience. It is hardly surprising to note Louis XVI's unwillingness to relinquish his ceremonial *état de représentation*.

Daniel Wick's study on the Society of Thirty, and to a lesser extent Rory Browne's unpublished doctoral thesis on court faction, have perhaps come closest to linking court culture with the origins of the Revolution.⁶⁶ These studies postulate a link between patterns of patronage at Versailles and the formation of a progressive liberal nobility, responsible for opposing the crown's policies prior to the Estates General. Much of the evidence offered is compelling, although Browne's suggestion that the 'Revolution was merely the continuation of the politics of court faction' is to over-egg this particular Clausewitzian pudding.⁶⁷ It is true that the influence of the Rohan family decreased rapidly in 1780s but this was due largely to their spectacular blunders rather than an active policy on the crown's part to undermine these princes.⁶⁸ The evidence concerning the Noailles clan is certainly less clear cut. While it is true that they were not favoured by Marie Antoinette's circle, it is equally the case that the Maréchal de Mouchy remained one of the most powerful officials of the royal household. Other families of *Grands* such as the Larochehoucauld, Montmorency and Gontaut houses still await monographs which will elucidate both their position at court and their political outlook.

The liberal nobility had a strong leadership role in the early Revolution;⁶⁹ however whether their political stance was merely the reflection of their thwarted ambitions at Versailles needs to be better established. Julian Swann, in a well researched essay on the eighteenth-century nobility, argued the point somewhat differently:

By allowing Court families to establish themselves within the ministry Louis XV unwittingly signed the death warrant of French absolutism. Placing military men in the high spending service ministries was bad enough, but as courtiers partly dependent either for themselves or their families upon the pensions that flowed from the royal treasury, they had no interest in reforming abuse or trimming expenditure. Moreover, the advantage of knowing the Court, while being

⁶⁶ Daniel Wick, *A Conspiracy of Well-Intentioned Men, The Society of Thirty and the French Revolution* (London, 1987); and Rory A. W. Browne, 'Court and crown: rivalry at the court of Louis XVI and its importance in the formation of a pre-revolutionary aristocratic opposition' (unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1992).

⁶⁷ Browne, 'Rivalry at the court of Louis XVI,' xiii. ⁶⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, chapter 4.

⁶⁹ For the latest study which confirms this important role see John Hardman, *Overture to Revolution: The 1787 Assembly of Notables and the Crisis of France's Old Regime* (Oxford, 2010).

surrounded by friends and family, meant that genuine reformers from robe backgrounds, such as Turgot or Calonne, were extremely vulnerable.⁷⁰

Here the problem of the court nobility is placed in its long-term, and arguably more meaningful, context. It seems unlikely that Louis XVI's treatment of favourites was substantially different from that of his grandfather. The court nobility was a deeply conservative group, whose political stance was linked to their 'micro-dynastic' ambitions. Whether the pursuit of their self-interested goals pushed them into the waiting arms of the 'patriot party' of 1788 is unclear. Those nobles who played the game of liberal politics certainly lived to regret their choice. Wick's model established the importance of the court nobility in pre-Revolutionary politics. Its conclusions, however, at times over-stepped the boundaries of what the small sample group studied could credibly reveal about the court or liberal nobility as a whole.

It is assuredly the case that the historiography of the French Revolution has neglected to examine in detail the constitutional household of Louis XVI. Equally the more recently revived interest in aulic history has failed to undertake a thorough analysis of the constitutional monarchy after 1789. Until relatively recently the entire emphasis of the discipline was firmly rooted in the early modern princely court's structuring influence on high and international politics.⁷¹ Norbert Elias, the sociological father of this discipline, saw the court as an essential element in the crown's struggle to restrain the influence of the high aristocracy in order to pursue its quest to centralise governmental power.⁷² The king's household was seen by this scholar as a key historical instrument in the creation of the modern, bureaucratic and efficient state. Unlike most of his successors, Elias dedicated a few pages to explain why the court of France succumbed to the Revolution.⁷³ In keeping with the socio-economic theory prevalent in the 1930s, he presumed that the evolution of a modern, powerful and capitalist bourgeoisie made the court institutionally redundant. There was a dissymmetry between the organisation of social and political power.⁷⁴ According to this theory, it was only a matter of time before this latent conflict was expressed in the overthrow of the old model of government by one which conformed more to the bourgeoisie's economic interests.

⁷⁰ Julian Swann, 'The French Nobility, 1715–1789', in *The European Nobilities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Hamish Scott, 2 vols (London, 1995), 168.

⁷¹ A. G. Dickens, ed., *The Courts of Europe, Politics, Patronage and Royalty 1400–1800* (London, 1977), 7 and 325–7.

⁷² Norbert Elias, *La Société de Cour* (Paris, 1985), 175–99. ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 307–16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

Jeroen Duindam has rightly rejected most aspects of Elias's analysis which used a limited source sample to arrive at some vast conclusions.⁷⁵ Duindam, in spite of his general attack on the 'Court Society', nevertheless concluded that the section of Elias's study which interpreted the monarch as the arbiter, which kept competing aristocratic interests in equilibrium, was correct in substance.⁷⁶ However, the sociological analysis, which deemed the court to be the victim of the emerging bourgeoisie, was overly simplistic.

There has been recently a much enlivened debate concerning the nature of royal courts. While the importance of this institution in the realm of high politics rightly persists, its modernising impact on the apparatus of the state is the subject of much more controversy.⁷⁷ The princely court remained a deeply traditional institution in many regards. Its ceremonial, religious, military and cliental configuration was decidedly dynastic, and not national, in character. The ambitions of one family and its creatures, rather than the collective needs of its subjects, still remained paramount. Yet, it is difficult to discount entirely the court's role in the creation of an expanded bureaucracy.⁷⁸ During the early modern period, royal households became decidedly more complex.⁷⁹ They required better forms of record-keeping and a greater number of administrative officials. It seems less clear, however, that this development was part of a grand design aimed at centralising the powers of the state. The process of courtly expansion seems to have had more to do with the intensification of long-established dynastic rivalries.

While the scope of analysis has expanded widely, the historical focus of aulic studies still remains firmly grounded in the early modern period. Ancient courts have received greater scholarly attention than more contemporary royal households.⁸⁰ In France this is especially the

⁷⁵ Jeroen Duindam, *Myths of Power, Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam, 1995), esp. 59–62.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁷⁷ Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke, eds, *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age c.1450–1650* (Oxford, 1991), 1–38 and 488–91.

⁷⁸ Duindam, *Myths of Power*, 194.

⁷⁹ David Starkey, 'Court and Council in Tudor England', in *Princes, Patronage and Nobility*, ed. Asch and Birke, 175–203.

⁸⁰ Hamish Scott, G. C. Gibbs and Robert Oresko, eds, *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1997); David Cannadine and Simon Price, eds, *Rituals of Royalty, Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Society* (Cambridge, 1987); Clarissa Campbell-Orr, ed., *Queenship in Europe 1660–1815* (Cambridge, 2004); Robert J. Knecht, *The French Renaissance Court* (New Haven, CT, 2008). The nineteenth-century courts are becoming better represented. The recent publication of the proceedings of the conference on courts and capitals highlights a notable rebirth of interest in how royal households structured urban development. See *The Court*

case where the vast majority of court histories still punctually end their analysis in 1789.⁸¹ The Napoleonic, Restoration, Orleanist and Second Empire heirs to the legacy of Versailles were different in style to their early modern predecessor. Yet it seems unfortunate that very few historians have delved into the origins and nature of this difference. After all, the failed constitutional monarchy of Louis XVI was to be the model, which was either followed or avoided, by subsequent French monarchical regimes.⁸² Furthermore the story does not necessarily end with the capture of Napoleon III at Sedan.⁸³ It has even been suggested that the current executive authority in France could be styled a Presidential Monarchy.⁸⁴ The office of the President of the French Republic is still endowed with many traditional components, for example hunting reserves and an intricate dining etiquette, which his Bourbon predecessors would readily have recognised. Equally it is important not to exaggerate the continuities between systems of government which are extremely dissimilar. The secular and elective character of the French presidency is entirely opposed to the religious birthright which lay at the heart of *ancien régime* society.

Philip Mansel appears to be the sole scholar who has dedicated a doctoral thesis, and two monographs, to analysing the French transition from princely court to constitutional monarchy.⁸⁵ His work demonstrates that the constitutional households, which emerged after the Revolution, were equal, or rather at times surpassed, in splendour, size

Historian, 12 and 13 (2007–2008); and John C. G. Röhl, *The Kaiser and His Court, Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany* (Cambridge, 1994), 70–106.

⁸¹ Solnon, *La Cour de France*, 588–93.

⁸² Hélène Becquet and Bettina Frederking eds., *La Dignité de Roi: Regards sur la Royauté au premier XIXe siècle* (Rennes, 2009).

⁸³ John A. M. Rothney, *Bonapartism after Sedan* (Ithaca, NY, 1969).

⁸⁴ For a hypothesis relating to the weakening of the powers the French president under Giscard d'Estaing, see 'In Democracy, universal suffrage is equivalent to the coronation in Rheims for the ancient monarchy', in Maurice Duverger's comparison of seven European semi-presidential systems of government. Maurice Duverger, *Échec au Roi* (Paris, 1978), 57, 142–54. For a conservative journalistic view, see Nicolas Charbonneau and Laurent Guimier, *Le roi est mort Vive le roi!, Enquête au cœur de notre monarchie républicaine* (Paris, 2006), 99–145; and Robert Tombs, *France 1814–1914* (London, 1996), 396–9, 435–54 and 488–9.

⁸⁵ Philip Mansel, 'The Court of France 1814–1830' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, King's College London, 1978); *The Eagle in Splendour, Napoleon I and His Court* (London, 1987); and *The Court of France 1789–1830* (Cambridge, 1988). Mansel's interests have expanded, beyond the court of France, to include two biographies, studies on the Ottoman Empire and court dress. See, *Louis XVIII* (London, 1999); *The Prince of Europe, The Life of Charles Joseph de Ligne 1735–1814* (London, 2005); *Sultans in Splendour: Monarchs of the Middle East, 1869–1945*, 2nd edn (London, 2002); *Dressed to Rule: Royal and Court Costume from Louis XIV to Elizabeth II* (New Haven, CT, 2005).

and social pre-eminence the court of the Sun King.⁸⁶ His over-arching conclusion that 'service had replaced class as the principle dominating the court', is sound.⁸⁷ One is given the impression that the Revolution, far from spelling the end of French aulic culture, served as a stimulus to reform and perhaps even renewal.

Mansel's work was groundbreaking in nature when one considers that he almost singlehandedly opened up a new field of research which had previously lain virtually untouched. However it is important to note that only one chapter of his second monograph on the court of France analysed Louis XVI's constitutional household. This, arguably, did not allow him to treat extensively all the issues he brought into play.⁸⁸ Mansel for instance notes that the material and financial circumstances of the court varied little in the 1790s, but his institutional approach did not give him space to discuss the changing symbolic and social significance of the *Maison du Roi*. The court of Versailles had been the site where the theatre of sovereignty played out its dramas.⁸⁹

Those institutions which succeeded it no longer held this representational monopoly of power. Sovereignty became divided after 1789. The court was one venue where the struggle for power was unsuccessfully waged by the monarchy. While it is true that the Restoration Bourbons returned prestige to the royal household they never regained the complete sovereignty Louis XVI had symbolically wielded in the 1780s. Furthermore, by 1791 it had become clear that court and state were becoming separate entities. The former was part of the private domain of one individual and the latter was an abstract institution, which administered public resources for the benefit of all. This was the compromise which Louis XVI had resisted so bitterly and which Louis XVIII was to accept in a modified version.⁹⁰

Mansel does describe the royal chapel but, again, his methodology does not allow him the space to discuss the impact of religious change on Louis XVI's household. One of the key transformations which the Revolution heralded was the collapse of sacral monarchy.⁹¹ Some very recent conference proceedings have argued convincingly for the

⁸⁶ Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 117–28. ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1–36.

⁸⁹ John Adamson, ed., *The Princely Courts of Europe, Rituals, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Régime 1500–1750* (New York, 2000), 27–33; and see Olivier Chaline's chapter from same collection, 'The Kingdoms of France and Navarre, The Valois and Bourbon Courts c.1515–1750', 83–93.

⁹⁰ Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 90–116.

⁹¹ For the best description of what sacrality involved tangibly see Alexandre Maral, *La Chapelle Royale de Versailles sous Louis XIV: Cérémonial, Liturgie et Musique* (Paris, 2002), 253–90.

continued vitality of Christian symbolism in European court culture.⁹² This was something which the Revolution bitterly fought in its struggle to bring the Gallican church under its authority. It achieved a limited success in this objective. Napoleon's court was certainly more secular in aspects than its *ancien régime* predecessor.⁹³ While Charles X's regal piety was more in keeping with dynastic traditions, it is also true that it was regarded by many as bizarre in the context of the 1820s.⁹⁴ Louis XVI's constitutional household was to be the site of a bitter struggle over the king's religious identity and authority. The axiom which linked monarchy and Catholicism was to be called into question by the Revolution. The grace of God was no longer sufficient for a ruler to govern. The constitutional settlement became part of the contractual legitimisation which made the monarchy the guarantor of the rights of citizens.

Mansel's concluding hypothesis that the July Monarchy's 'rational character and lack of splendour meant that ... [it] was one of the weakest and least respected regimes in France in the nineteenth century', is certainly persuasive.⁹⁵ Yet more recent scholarship on Louis Philippe's monarchy suggests that its weakness is to be found more in the realm of extra-parliamentary politics rather than in the royal court and its public image.⁹⁶ The age when splendour served as both the representation and embodiment of power was at an end. Nineteenth-century reigning dynasties undoubtedly still used the symbolism of majesty to strengthen their authority but, as the revolutions of the 1848 proved, more was needed to ensure their survival.⁹⁷

It is the purpose of this book to fill the lacunae identified both in terms of the political history of the French Revolution and aulic studies. This is an area which has also been neglected by Louis XVI's most recent biographers. They have avoided, like political historians, a detailed discussion of court life during the 1790s. Only Joël Felix's combined biography of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette has in any way examined the

⁹² Michael Schaich, ed., *Monarchy and Religion the Transformation of Royal Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 2007), 1–40.

⁹³ Mansel, *The Eagle in Splendour*, 21–3, 36.

⁹⁴ Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch, Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* (London, 1973), 227–8.

⁹⁵ Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 194; and Mansel, 'The Court of France 1814–1830', 407–8.

⁹⁶ Munro Price, *The Perilous Crown, France between Revolutions 1814–1848* (London, 2007), 376; and for an excellent recent reappraisal, see Thibaut Trétout, 'Louis-Philippe et la cour', in Becquet and Frederking, *La Dignité de Roi*, 117–35.

⁹⁷ Robert Gildea, *Barricades and Borders, Europe 1800–1914*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1996), 80–100.

ceremonial routine of 1790.⁹⁸ For the most part, the new and improved biographies either focus their attention on the pre-Revolutionary reign or are part of that hagiographic tradition which depicts Louis XVI as a martyr king.⁹⁹ This book instead focuses on the representational culture of Louis XVI’s constitutional monarchy and will show that it played an active role in stoking the fires of radicalism during the Revolution. As William Doyle noted: ‘public perception of the court’s political role, and of much else too, is now seen as crucial in the collapse of the old order’.¹⁰⁰ The changed standing of the royal household anticipated several of the later developments of the nineteenth century, which was to demarcate definitively the border between ‘State’ and Monarchy.¹⁰¹

‘The Assembly decrees that all of these papers shall be burnt’¹⁰²

The antiquarian collectors of the nineteenth century demonstrated, through their copious publications, that there is no shortage of correspondence, memoirs and documents emanating from the reign of the last *ancien régime* monarch of France. Yet, the historical neglect of the constitutional court corresponds to the paucity of surviving materials which illuminate the royal routine within the Tuileries from 1789 to 1792. The rituals and activities of the king’s household during both the Valois and Bourbon dynasties are amply documented by the large quantities of material which describe royal ceremonies ranging from baptisms, coronations to funerals.¹⁰³ However, for Louis XVI’s reign, the records kept by the Grand Master of Ceremonies, apart from a few extracts, are missing.¹⁰⁴ This unfortunate loss is aggravated further by

⁹⁸ Felix, *Louis XVI et Marie-Antoinette*, 507–35.

⁹⁹ Jean de Vigner, *Louis XVI, Le Roi Bienfaisant* (Paris, 2003), 9–10, 408–13.

¹⁰⁰ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 30.

¹⁰¹ Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 185–94.

¹⁰² *Gazette Nationale ou Moniteur Universel*, 6 août 1792, no.219, 331.

¹⁰³ There are large anthologies and compilations which, like Godeffroi’s *Cérémonial de France*, Saintot’s papers and the Clairambault collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale, follow the development of royal ceremonial in France throughout the two centuries of Bourbon rule. The bulk of these collections comes from Louis XIV’s reign. See Philippe Lauer, ed., *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Collection Clairambault de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 3 vols (Paris, 1932); and AN KK 1423–1439; and Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de la Sorbonne, Ms. 326–32.

¹⁰⁴ In all probability they are held, by the descendants of the last *Grand Maître*, in the Château de Brézé, near Saumur in the Loire valley. Unfortunately my attempts to gain access to these papers have proved unsuccessful. In time, perhaps, France’s public law concerning documents which possess historical value will reveal the secrets of the last Grand Master of Ceremonies. Christine Nougaret and Pascal Éven, *Les Archives Privées: Manuel pratique et juridique* (Paris, 2008), 22–9.

the fact that the whereabouts of the registers of the Grand Aumônerie are unknown and that sixty per cent of the archives of the Cabinet des Titres were condemned, by the Legislative Assembly, to the flames in 1792.

Despite these gaps in the source material available, a large quantity of buried information can still be uncovered in the Archives Nationales de France. The files and manuscripts of the Maison du Roi though well catalogued, and amply sifted by researchers of the French court, still have hidden gems to reveal about the final constitutional phase of Louis XVI's reign.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps more surprising still, as Andrew Freeman has noted, is the manner in which the papers from the *armoire de fer* (a secret safe located in the Tuileries palace), relating to the civil list and reorganisation of the Maison du Roi, have been underexploited.¹⁰⁶ The other public manuscript materials utilised in this study have been drawn from the Centre de Documentation du Musée de la Légion d'Honneur, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre and Quai d'Orsay archives.¹⁰⁷

To supplement any lacunae within the official documentation archives further afield have been consulted and the despatches of the Ambassadors of Britain, Spain, Genoa, Parma, Piedmont and Venice have been examined carefully for additional source material. These papers describe the immediate reactions of diplomats to the evolution, or rather radicalisation, of revolutionary politics in Paris and the slow erosion of royal authority in France. Although they are responding to their masters' precise guidelines on what information to send home, they are nonetheless reasonably reliable spectators of events.

In order to understand the Revolutionary reaction to the cult of monarchy some polemical newspaper articles, from the radical press and the parliamentary proceedings of the National Assembly, were used to gauge the public response to Louis XVI's behaviour as a constitutional monarch. Some might reasonably argue that this source base provides a distorted reading of public opinion in the early 1790s.¹⁰⁸ Such a partisan

¹⁰⁵ AN O¹ 821–4 and also of note is the correspondence between the comte de Saint-Priest and Louis Chérin which discloses interesting details about the persistence of aristocratic mores during the Revolution: AN O¹ 500 and 501.

¹⁰⁶ AN C 183–9; and Andrew Freeman, *The Compromising of Louis XVI, The Armoire de Fer and the French Revolution* (Exeter, 1789). Indeed, only Philip Mansel seems to have used these manuscripts to describe changes taking place in the Tuileries. See Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 26–34.

¹⁰⁷ Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Mémoires et Documents, nos. 1974–6, Cérémonial, Journal du Secrétaire ordinaire du Roi à la Conduite des Ambassadeurs (1761–1786).

¹⁰⁸ For broader surveys of the press and censorship laws refer to Jack Richard Censer, *Prelude to Power: The Parisian Radical Press 1789–1791* (London, 1976), 1–12; and Charles Walton, *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution, The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech* (Oxford, 2009), 97–136.

selection was deliberate rather than an oversight. The moderate and royalist press’s wavering support for the constitutional monarchy seemed to offer little insight into the nature of the Revolutionary attack on regal symbolism. The king did not need to alter the court’s behaviour before the host of journalists who either praised or ignored his conduct. It seemed much more fruitful instead to focus on which royal activities most scandalised radicals and allowed them to mobilise popular outrage against the court. After all, moderates in France proved unable, in the long run, to counteract efficiently the message being spread by radical and increasingly republican factions. Prudhomme, Desmoulins and their colleagues created highly successful periodicals, which gave a substantial contribution to raising the political consciousness of the popular Parisian faubourgs.

The debates of the National Assembly provide a more nuanced view. They establish the paradoxical behaviour of this parliamentary body, which tried to preserve the institution of the crown while, simultaneously, withholding from the king the plenitude of his executive authority. Radicals were present in the Assembly from the beginning of the Revolution. However, their voice only started to carry more weight in the second half of 1790. The Feuillant repression of nascent republicanism, after the flight to Varennes, only delayed the looming confrontation between the crown and popular disaffection. By the time of the Legislative Assembly, the tactics of the radical press spilled over into the debating chamber. The deputies of the Legislative organised a concerted offensive aimed at making the rituals of the court unworkable. They ultimately succeeded in demolishing court life months before Louis XVI was ejected from the Tuileries.

Naturally, memoir literature was also used to corroborate official descriptions of events in the royal household.¹⁰⁹ It is difficult to be of the same mind as Paul and Pierrette Girault de Coursac who view all authors who wrote their reminiscences during the first half of the nineteenth century with complete scepticism and open hostility.¹¹⁰ It is true that many memoirs are at best apocryphal or at worse deliberate forgeries. Even the more authentic autobiographies of Mme Campan, the duchesse de Tourzel and Bertrand de Moleville are littered with inaccuracies and marred, at times, by flagrant self-justification. Yet their evocative value cannot be wholly dismissed. They provide useful insights into the mood prevailing at court. Through anecdotal evidence

¹⁰⁹ The nature of memoir literature is discussed at greater length in Chapter 3 of this book.

¹¹⁰ Paul and Pierrette Girault de Coursac, *Histoire, Historiens et Mémorialistes du règne de Louis XVI et de la Révolution* (Paris, 1997), 336–7.

they express the contemporary mentality toward ceremonies. One has to wield such literature with care when casting an historical argument, but any view which sees these works as pure inventions is erring in the opposite extreme of those who use such sources uncritically.

The role of Marie Antoinette in the Revolution remains an area of intense controversy. Ever since the Girault de Coursacs published their notorious study, which alleged that the queen was pursuing a separate foreign policy to that of her husband, writings on the influence of the queen on French politics have proliferated.¹¹¹ Some see her as a proto-feminist, others as the promoter of progressive vestimentary, musical and literary fashions.¹¹² The more traditional biographies and monographs continue to focus on her ubiquitous role in the realm of high ministerial politics.¹¹³ This book only deals with the queen incidentally for the simple reason that her official role as queen consort was minor and performed in the shadow of her husband's constitutional primacy. Marie Antoinette had a distinct set of female servants and male officials in her personal household. Her *lever*, Easter communion and the reception of the foreign ambassadors took place separately from her husband's official routine.

Even when the court arrived in Paris on 6 October 1789 the queen received delegations from the municipal authorities and judicial authorities separately from the king. There is some evidence that, as Louis XVI sought to economise and reduce the costs of his court, the queen's ceremonial status became more closely connected to that of her husband. Her pages and her kitchens were amalgamated with those of the king. The radical press attacked her on two fronts.¹¹⁴ The public was reminded that under salic law France could not have a queen and secondly that under the new constitution her only public title was merely that of 'épouse du roi'. The issue of Marie Antoinette's influence may not be divorced from the political history of Louis XVI's reign. However, her constitutional position and that of her personal household certainly is a separate topic of analysis. It should be considered that even without the negative public speculation surrounding his spouse

¹¹¹ Paul and Pierette Girault de Coursac, *Le secret de la Reine, la politique personnelle de Marie-Antoinette pendant la Révolution* (Paris, 1996).

¹¹² Chantal Thomas, *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie-Antoinette* (New York, 1999), 21–6; and Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (London 2007); and Antonia Fraser, *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* (London, 2001), 422–9.

¹¹³ Evelyn Lever, *Marie Antoinette, The Last Queen of France* (London, 2001), 95–103, 155–62 and 269–76.

¹¹⁴ *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, no. 3, 97–8.

the institutional and practical difficulties faced by Louis XVI, during the 1790s, were immense.

The extent of the destruction of official and private papers makes it impossible to reconstruct every aspect of royal life during the constitutional monarchy of Louis XVI. However the findings contained in this monograph do shed new light and it is hoped that they contribute something to the debate over the king’s conduct during the Revolution. Every chapter contains a brief historiographic and methodological section which introduces the reader to the questions under consideration. It seemed more helpful to discuss specific historiographical issues when they arose rather than placing all such discussion at the beginning of this book. There is also considerable overlap with *ancien régime* practices. It has proved impossible to describe the changes wrought by the Revolution without referring to the precedents on which they were modelled.

Indeed, a scholar, when confronted with Bourbon representational culture, may have feelings similar to those experienced by the youthful Robespierre, who whilst a student of the collège Louis-le-Grand, was chosen to present a Latin *éloge* to Louis XVI on his return from his coronation at Rheims in 1775.¹¹⁵ The young Maximilian knelt outside the gates of the college and delivered his oration to the king, who chose not to alight from his carriage.¹¹⁶ One is left, probably like the young Robespierre, with a sense of loss before such haughty behaviour, but hopefully frustration is not allowed to get the better of one’s judgement.

¹¹⁵ Norman Hampson, *The Life and Opinions of Maximilien Robespierre* (London, 1974), 7.

¹¹⁶ ‘The king deigned to bestow a look of benevolence on the young monster who brought up in his own house, would one day be the first strike him with a dagger.’ See Le Blond de Neuveglise (thought to be a pseudonym for the abbé Proyard), *La Vie et les Crimes de Robespierre, surnommé le Tyran depuis sa naissance jusqu’à sa mort* (Augsbourg, 1795), 47–48; and John Hardman, *Robespierre* (London, 1999), 7.

Part I

Inventing a Constitutional Monarchy

1 The Maison du Roi at the twilight of the *ancien régime*

Confrontations

The confrontation that arose between the comte de Mirabeau and the marquis de Dreux-Brézé is one of the most memorable and celebrated scenes of the French Revolution.¹ On 17 June 1789, in direct defiance of the Bourbon monarchy's claim to undivided sovereignty, the Third Estate had proclaimed itself to be a National Assembly.² In response to this challenge, Louis XVI decided to hold a plenary session of the Estates General.

On 20 June 1789 the deputies awoke to the surprise of finding themselves locked out of their meeting room at the Hôtel des Menus Plaisirs. This debating chamber was being prepared to receive the king three days hence. The members of the Third Estate decided to reconvene in a nearby tennis court and swore not to separate until a Constitution was granted to the Nation.³ It was in this highly charged atmosphere that the stage was set for the famous episode which came to be known as the *Séance royale* of 23 June 1789. The king, wearing full regalia, presented the three estates with a speech which was a finely balanced mixture of reform and reaction. The royal declaration promised that the levying of future taxes would require the consent of the nation's representatives. It also confirmed, however, that the three orders of the realm would continue to exist and deliberate as separate entities.⁴ This speech came as a rude shock for the Third Estate, as it broke the political momentum of the previous week. As the king and his courtiers exited the Salle

¹ François Furet and Denis Richet, *La Révolution française* (Paris, 1973), 78–79; Jacques Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille July 14th 1789* (London, 1970), 165; Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), 363–6; Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 106; Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution* (London, 2002), 110; and Albert Soboul, 1789: *L'An un de la Liberté* (Paris, 1973), 119–21.

² Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 244–5.

³ Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, I, 111–14.

⁴ For an in-depth and highly original treatment of the royal declaration of 23 June 1789, see Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy*, 61–71.

des Menus Plaisirs, the tension and resentment within the room was palpable.⁵

The majority of the clergy and nobility obeyed the royal command to disperse and return to their respective debating chambers.⁶ However, the Third Estate, and the more progressive curés of the First Estate, remained in the room. At this point in the proceedings, the marquis de Dreux-Brézé, Grand Maître des Cérémonies, entered the stage. He asked ‘Gentlemen, have you heard the king’s orders?’⁷ It was at this critical juncture that the Comte de Mirabeau, one of the favourite and most eloquent deputies of the Third Estate, chose to rise to his feet.⁸ What he actually said remains a matter of intense controversy among historians. Nevertheless, one thing is certain, those legendary words ‘go tell those who sent you that we are here by the will of the people, and that you will eject us only through the force of bayonets’ have remained ingrained in the collective memory of the Revolution.⁹

Michel de Dreux-Brézé in his scholarly tome, which narrates his family’s history, discusses the issue at length.¹⁰ This work, as is the case with many volumes of family piety, proposes significant historical revisionism. The central aim is to prove that his ‘infamous ancestor’ behaved impeccably, and that Mirabeau’s role on 23 June 1789 was of a lesser importance than hitherto understood.

The Grand Maître des Cérémonies in question, Henri Évrard de Dreux-Bréze, did not leave any memoirs, nor did he write an account of this event. However, his son Scipion, a legitimist peer, tried to set the record straight regarding the *Séance royale*. On 9 March 1833 in the Orleanist *Chambre des Pairs*, during a debate on whether to accord the Vainqueurs de la Bastille a pension, the marquis seized the opportunity to defend his father’s memory.¹¹ He stated that his father first addressed the then president of the Assembly, Jean-Sylvain Bailly. Initially, these two individuals had engaged in a furious squabble over whether the Grand Master of Ceremonies was permitted to address the National Assembly with his head covered. According to Scipion

⁵ Charles-Élie, marquis de Ferrières, *Mémoires du Marquis de Ferrières, avec une notice sur sa vie, des notes et des éclaircissements historiques*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Paris, 1821), I, 57–9.

⁶ AP 1er Série, VIII, 146.

⁷ Ibid., and Ferrières, *Mémoires*, I, 57–9.

⁸ Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *Mirabeau* (Paris, 1982), 147–8.

⁹ Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, I, 119.

¹⁰ Michel de Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé* (Paris, 1994), 326–34.

¹¹ AP 2 Série, LXXX, 761–5; and Paul, duc de Noailles, *Éloge de Scipion de Dreux, Marquis de Brézé, Prononcé à la Chambre des Pairs le 19 mars 1846, par M. le duc de Noailles, réflexions des divers organes de la presse dans cette circonstance. Souvenir, Hommages Manifestations de la Presse au moment même de la mort de M. de Dreux-Brézé, Miles man, consiliis dux* (Paris, 1846), 1–36.

de Dreux-Brézé, it was at this point that Mirabeau stood up and said: 'We are assembled here by the national will and we shall leave only through [the use of] force.'¹² This intervention is more moderate and the marquis de Dreux-Brézé's reply 'I can recognise in M. de Mirabeau only the deputy of the bailiwick of Aix and not the spokesman of the National Assembly'¹³ gives the impression that the Grand Master of Ceremonies acted with both tact and a certain degree of wit. The reply given here by 'Mirabeau' does seem more plausible. The Comte was a highly educated nobleman and a great frequenter of the *beau monde*.¹⁴

It seems unlikely, given the culture of deference that persisted until July 1789, that he would have referred to the king and his ministers as 'those who sent you'. However the response attributed by Scipion to his father is improbable. The suggestion that the marquis de Dreux-Brézé possessed a sophisticated understanding of democratic representation and that he recognised the National Assembly (which at this time was less than six days old) as legitimate, seems unlikely. The marquis never expressed any sympathy for the Revolution and was most certainly a supporter of hard line legitimism.¹⁵ Regardless of what was actually said, the impression which emerged, and is now indelibly etched upon the popular imagination, is that the *Séance royale* of June 1789 marked the defeat of a despotic monarchy and the triumph of liberty.

This event was further transformed into an historic triumph by the regimes that followed the Revolution. In particular, the July Monarchy arranged a competition for three grand tableaux to adorn the walls of the chamber of deputies.¹⁶

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the Orleanist regime's eclectic use of a patchwork of historical scenes to prop up its legitimacy.¹⁷ However, it is important to note that Louis-Philippe, a constitutional monarch who unlike Louis XVI did engage genuinely with parliamentary politics, saw June 1789 as a fundamental phase in the French nation's progression.¹⁸ The thirty-eight entries submitted to the jury of the Académie des Beaux-Arts attest to the popularity of the

¹² AP 2 Série, LXXX, 765. ¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cf. Wick, *A Conspiracy of Well-Intentioned Men*, 43–51.

¹⁵ For the marquis's emigration and return to France, see Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 356–71.

¹⁶ Three subjects were chosen: (1) Louis-Philippe's constitutional oath before the assembled houses; (2) The *Séance Royale* of June 1789; (3) Boissy-d'Anglas saluting the severed head of the deputy Féraud. Michael Marrinan, 'Resistance, Revolution and the July Monarchy, Images to Inspire the Chamber of Deputies', *Oxford Art Journal*, 3 (1980), 26–37.

¹⁷ For a general overview, see Michael Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis Philippe: Art and Ideology in Orleanist France 1830–1848* (London, 1988).

¹⁸ Price, *The Perilous Crown*, 192–3.

subject.¹⁹ Furthermore, those taking part were no creative lightweights. Outstanding artists such as Eugène Delacroix submitted tableaux to this competition. In February 1832, it was the less well known Nicolas Auguste Hesse who ultimately won the *concours*.²⁰ All these canvases sought to capture the violent collision between past and future. The media and techniques they employed to express this clash varied significantly.²¹ Delacroix herded the deputies together in one mass opposing the arbitrary power of the grand master of ceremonies. To emphasise this contrast, Dreux-Brézé was the only figure painted wearing his flamboyant uniform. Mirabeau was placed at the head of the deputies in a histrionic pose. His proximity to his colleagues highlighted his position as the spokesman of a collective will.

The winning entry was one of the more unusual of the pictures presented at the 1832 salon.²² It departed significantly from the others by focusing more on historical accuracy. The dress, portraiture and architectural setting were far more detailed than other entries. The viewer beholds a scene of disarray. The deputies, shocked by the announcement they have just heard, gather in groups and nervously debate whether or not to obey the king's command.²³ Here the figure of Mirabeau was again positioned in the foreground. He was portrayed as the 'providential man'. He was the hero who, amongst this confusion, would restore peace and good order. All the lighting in this scene was directed toward the Count and a breeze, probably representing destiny, swept violently against his wig and cravat. Bailly also was painted as standing firm on the left-hand side of the presidential rostrum. It is apparent that these two figures were faced with a critical situation and only their response could save the Assembly from disaster.

The figure in the background, with his back turned to the observer, is the marquis de Dreux-Brézé. His ostentatious ceremonial cloak contrasted heavily with the style of the simple and virtuous men he opposed. To add to the melodrama, there is a group of workers who are in the process of dismantling the throne in the background. It does not require great perspicacity to unravel this imagery. This earth-shattering moment marked the day when arbitrary and unrestrained monarchy was definitively at an end. The tension and decisiveness of this historic

¹⁹ Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution, 1815–1848* (London, 2004), 281. One minor error made by Boime in this tome is to state that the marquis de Dreux-Brézé was sixteen years of age in 1789. In reality he was twenty-three when he tested his wits against those of Mirabeau.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 282.

²¹ Marrinan, 'Resistance, Revolution and the July Monarchy', 30. ²² *Ibid.*, 31.

²³ For a new psychological interpretation, cf. Barry M. Shapiro, *Traumatic Politics: The Deputies and the King in the Early French Revolution* (University Park, PA, 2009).



Figure 1 *Mirabeau et Dreu-Brézé, le 23 juin 1789* (1830), by Eugène Delacroix, Musée National Eugène Delacroix, rue de Furstenberg, Paris

juncture was not in doubt. These paintings declared in the strongest possible terms that the 23 June 1789 was a *date charnière*, or turning point.

In spite of all the interest evoked by this episode, its depiction in monographs, narratives, paintings and even film,²⁴ few have analysed it from a more functional point of view. If one strips this event of all the layers of signification added subsequently, a simpler interpretation emerges. On this day the officers of the royal household, acting routinely, encountered resistance from a power that did not recognise the monarchy's ultimate authority and were unable to accomplish the tasks they had been set. The monarchical spectacle, which for almost two centuries had assisted the kings of France in their quest to govern, broke down dramatically.

Henri-Évrard de Dreux-Brézé was not simply the agent of despotism but was the living embodiment of an office which his family had owned and exercised since 1701. First and foremost this day was a moment when the Louisquatorzian mechanism of 'representation' failed to command the deference which it had come to expect.²⁵ Radicals drew valuable propaganda from the collapse in Versailles itself of the symbolic power of the Bourbon monarchy. In order to understand fully this implication it is indispensable to grasp how the institution of the Court regulated and planned its ceremonies.

Perhaps surprisingly, little has been written on the office of Grand Maître des Cérémonies. Indeed no monograph has been consecrated to unravelling how this important court office functioned during the *ancien régime*.²⁶ This chapter examines the duties and functions that were entrusted to the position of Grand Maître des Cérémonies. Despite its apparent grandeur the title gave its incumbent little overall authority on how ceremonies were performed at Versailles. The interesting discovery is that those charged with organising royal pageantry did not constitute a unified team. On the contrary they were a loose confederation of, at times, warring tribes.

The Grand Maître des Cérémonies, the Introduceur des Ambassadeurs, the Roi d'Armes de France, the four Capitaines des Gardes du Corps and others spent a substantial part of their time

²⁴ The bicentennial commemorative film: *La Révolution Française, Première Partie Les Années Lumières*, dir. James Heffron (Paris, Berlin, Rome and London 1989).

²⁵ Cf. Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (London, 1992), 87–92; and Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 5–14.

²⁶ Alain Charles Gruber, *Les grandes fêtes et leurs décors à l'époque de Louis XVI* (Geneva, 1972) 10–13; Sarah Hanley, *The Lit de Justice of the Kings of France: Constitutional Ideology in Legend, Ritual, and Discourse* (London, 1983), 213 and 279.

hindering each other. The manner in which the court of France made its power and splendour manifest was not the outcome of some great modernising mission on the part of the monarchy.²⁷ It was the product of a long process of negotiation and compromise amongst the officers and grandees of the royal household.

The Grand Master of Ceremonies

The individual

In 1789 matters were not helped by the inexperience of Henri-Évrard de Dreux-Brézé, the last Grand Maître des Cérémonies of the *ancien régime*. Born in 1766 the young marquis was only sixteen years of age when, in 1781, his father Joachim de Dreux-Brézé died. This left Henri-Évrard heir to a fortune of 1,200,000 livres and *survivancier* to his father's prestigious court office.²⁸ Too young to take up his position at Versailles, the marquis embarked on a brief military career in the prestigious cavalry regiment of the Royal-Cravates. In 1786, now promoted to Major, he became aide-de-camp to General Rochambeau, the hero of Yorktown and then commander in chief of the *Gouvernement* of the Calaisis et Boulonnais.

It was not until 1 January 1787 that he was invested as Grand Master of Ceremonies and, shortly thereafter, was admitted to the *Honneurs de la Cour*.²⁹ His five years as Louis XVI's Grand Master of Ceremonies were to be momentous. After July 1789, his role in the organisation of state festivities became circumscribed and he focused on the domestic rituals of the royal household. The National Assembly refused to recognise his role. Ceremonies that involved both king and deputies were arranged by the minister of the interior (or royal household prior to 1790) in the early part of the Revolution.

There are few documents from this period relating to his role in the court of the Tuileries. However, it is clear that he was one of the most loyal supporters of the king. He only abandoned his post during the flight to Varennes. He was arrested on 24 June 1791 in the town of Mans, near the family seat of Brézé, on suspicion of being involved in the king's escape.³⁰ He was eventually released and resumed his duties

²⁷ Cf. Elias, *La Société de Cour*, 307–16. ²⁸ Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 265–75.

²⁹ See Chapter 5. It should also be noted that this figure's biography provides a good case study which refutes the abbé Barruel's conspiracy theory that the revolution was a Masonic conspiracy; as Dreux-Brézé was a member of the Olympian Masonic lodge in Paris. Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 298.

³⁰ AN D XXIX bis, 35, dossier 362, fol.18.

at court in September.³¹ His career ended on 10 August 1792 when he was among the small number of courtiers who accompanied Louis XVI from the palace to the Salle du Manège. He emigrated in that same year and only returned to France in late 1794. The Police Minister Fouché attempted to have him arrested in 1799 but due to poor health Dreux-Brézé was spared confinement.³² Under the Restoration Dreux-Brézé was returned to his former office and continued to exercise it to his death in 1829.³³

The institution

The sale and transmission of venal offices had been a regular practice since at least the reign of François I. In 1604, through the introduction of the *Paulette* tax, it became an institutionalised practice and remained so right up to 1789, when the National Assembly abolished the sale of offices.³⁴ There were an enormous number of technicalities, exceptions and rules which applied to the system of venality which made it one of the most complex areas of *ancien régime* public law. In order to simplify matters, especially as a large number of court offices will be mentioned throughout this book, it is probably best to elucidate some technical aspects of office holding at court.³⁵

In theory no office in the king's household was venal.³⁶ In order to pass a *charge* onto a successor a special *grâce* from the king was required. Though this may sound like a rare occurrence, it was routine in many departments of the Maison du Roi. For many important positions the

³¹ AN D XXIX bis, 31 bis, dossier 325, fol.22.

³² Under the Napoleonic regime he kept a low profile and was able to regain most of his property. He acted as a consultant on ceremonial matters to Imperial Grand Master of Ceremonies, the Comte de Ségur, but refused any official role at the Imperial Court. Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 362.

³³ The grateful monarchs of the Restoration heaped honours on this loyal servant. He was made Grand Officier de la Légion d'Honneur, Chevalier du Saint-Esprit and finally, the greatest honour of all, he was appointed Pair de France. Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 391–8.

³⁴ Jonathan Dewald, 'Social Groups and Cultural Practices', in *Renaissance and Reformation France*, ed. Mack P. Holt (Oxford, 2002), 27–61, here 47–8; Jean Mireille, 'Offices', in *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime*, ed. Lucien Bély (Paris, 1996), 920–3. For more in-depth monographs refer to: Roland Mousnier, *La Venalité des Offices sous Henri IV et Louis XIII* (Rouen, 1945), 1–19; and William Doyle, *Venality: The Sale of Offices in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1996), 275–309.

³⁵ Leonhard Horowski, "'Such a great advantage for my son': Office-holding and Career mechanisms at the court of France, 1661–1789", *The Court Historian*, 8 (2003), 127–35 and 163–73.

³⁶ Tr.Drts. I, 388.

king accorded his officials the *Droit de Survivance*.³⁷ Essentially this allowed an owner of a *charge* to select his successor whilst alive. In some cases the *survivancier* (the appointed heir) exercised the functions of the incumbent whilst the latter was still alive. Some even sold the *survivance* to their office to third parties. This could have been an especially attractive prospect for young men unable to afford to buy a position at the full market price.³⁸

One may wonder why the royal household subjected itself to this complicated legal fiction, especially when one considers that many judicial and administrative offices, within the realm, were automatically transmitted to heirs without difficulty. A possible suggestion is that, as membership of the royal household put individuals in close proximity to the monarch, the crown wished to maintain a tighter degree of control over appointments. The impression that persons expert and worthy of important roles were appointed to the Maison du Roi needed to be upheld. By the late eighteenth century, due to the factional nature of court politics, it became difficult to sustain such an uncomplicated image.³⁹

Many abuses, especially in the realm of financial mismanagement, had been allowed to creep in. This had the potential of leading to great scandal when cases involved *grandeues*.⁴⁰ Office holders unable to pay their debts had to ask the king's permission to resign their offices in order to sell them. In 1783 the 33 million livres bankruptcy of the house of Rohan-Guéméné caused enormous public furore. The prince and princesse de Rohan-Guéméné were both forced to resign the offices of Grand Chambellan and Gouvernante des enfants de France.⁴¹ The

³⁷ Jean-François Féraud ed., *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (Marseille, 1787), 644.

³⁸ The majority of members of the royal household, when purchasing or transmitting their office, were accorded *brevets de retenue*. These documents specified how the monetary value of their offices was to be divided amongst the heirs of holder. Most importantly, these certificates gave the office a monetary value which was endorsed by the crown. Féraud, ed., *Dictionnaire critique*, 466; and Horowski, 'Office-holding', 167–9.

³⁹ Under Louis XVI, the highest court offices, those created by an *édit en titre d'office*, were so important, they were granted through the instrument of letters-patent. A great many court officials in the eighteenth century continued to possess *Droits Commensaux*. Originally these rights gave officers of the royal household the privilege of dining at court at the king's expense. At this stage their contents had expanded significantly. The jurist Guyot identified eighteen separate categories of privileges from which *Commensaux* benefited. Tr.Drts. I, 390, 398 and 399; and Alfred Franklin, *La vie privée d'autrefois: Arts et métiers, modes, mœurs, usages des Parisiens du XII^{ème} au XVIII^{ème} siècle. D'après des documents originaux et inédits: la vie de Paris sous Louis XVI*, 27 vols (Paris, 1902), XXVII, 250–71.

⁴⁰ From the 1690s office holders were permitted to use their *charges* as security against mortgages and other forms of borrowing. Tr.Drts. I, 393.

⁴¹ Rory A. W. Browne, 'Court and Crown: Rivalry at the Court of Louis XVI,' 121–46; and Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, 172.

recriminations which followed between the court factions seemed to undermine the image of the monarchy as an impartial arbiter in the economy of court honours.⁴²

It is against this background that one must consider the position of the Grand Master of Ceremonies which was established by Henri III in 1585.⁴³ Throughout the eighteenth century, the value of the office had fluctuated between 200,000 to a quarter of a million livres.⁴⁴ Officially the Grand Maître des Cérémonies was a subordinate of the Grand Maître de France but this hierarchical arrangement was more honoured in the breach than the observance.⁴⁵ In theory the Master of Ceremonies had overall responsibility for a great number of rituals at court. However, in practice, his ability to carry out his duties independently was greatly hindered by a lack of direct subordinates. In 1789 his department consisted only of a Maître des Cérémonies, Xavier Lallemand comte de Nantouillet, and an Aide des Cérémonies, Urbain de Watronville.⁴⁶ For an individual expected to instruct princes and dukes on which position to assume on the hierarchical spectrum, the resources at his disposal were precious few.⁴⁷ A courtier who hoped to exercise the functions of the Grand Master had to possess tact, a cool head and the ability to hammer out compromises.

The actual duties of this functionary are difficult to classify with precision.⁴⁸ The original edict of 1585 commanded him to keep a record

⁴² Price, *Preserving the Monarchy*, 372.

⁴³ The position made the proprietor a Grand Dignitaire de la Cour. He was second only to the Chancelier, Garde des Sceaux, Grand Maître de France, Grand Chambellan, Amiral de France, Maréchaux de France, Grand Maître de l'Artillerie, Grand Écuyer and Grand Aumônier who were collectively the Grands Officiers de la Couronne. Solnon, *La Cour de France*, 14–16; Jeroen Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550–1780* (Cambridge, 2003), 90–1; and AN O³ 518, fol.2.

⁴⁴ During this time the position was never sold, such estimates are purely hypothetical and based entirely on *brevets de retenue*. Marie-Lan Nguyen, 'Les Grand Maîtres et le service des Cérémonies à l'époque moderne 1585–1792,' (unpublished Mémoire de Maîtrise, Université de Paris-IV Sorbonne, 1999), 27–9; A.N. O¹ 102 fol.264; and Anon., *Maison du roi, ce qu'elle était, ce qu'elle est, ce qu'elle devrait être. Examen soumis au roi et à l'Assemblée Nationale*, (Paris, 1789).

⁴⁵ To emphasise this subsidiary role the Grand Master of Ceremonies was required to deliver his oath of allegiance into the hands of the Grand Maître de France. Paradoxically the Grand Maître de France did not have the authority to command nor direct his subordinate. Nguyen. 'Les Grands Maîtres', 18; and Mansel, 'The Court of France 1814–1830,' 56–9.

⁴⁶ The latter position had been recently created, most probably in the 1760s. Anon., *Almanach Royal*, 124.

⁴⁷ The affair of the tapestries of the 1690s proved how little an unsupported Grand Maître des Cérémonies could accomplish in the face of three angry Ducs et Pairs. Nguyen, 'Les Grands Maîtres', 125–8.

⁴⁸ Tr.Drts. I, 602–8.

of all the official ceremonies held at court.⁴⁹ It is clear that, on days of official engagements, he instructed and directed those involved in the rituals of the court.⁵⁰ It is a relatively uncomplicated matter to establish that this office gave its owner the authority to direct and instruct courtiers during ceremonial situations. However, the extent to which officials such as Dreux-Brézé were involved in the planning stages of such festivities is less certain. As keeper of the registers, it was certainly his task to investigate what precedents prescribed before a festivity took place. He was required to draw up a ceremonial itinerary and maps which were to be followed. While it is true that the Grand Maître des Cérémonies had an overall coordinating responsibility, yet it was only the king who could compel the other officials of his house to obey.

For instance, on the death of the Dauphin, on 3 June 1789, Louis wrote to the prince de Lambesc, Grand Écuyer.⁵¹ In this letter the king highlights the effective powerlessness of the Grand Maître des Cérémonies.⁵² In order for Dreux-Brézé to command functionaries outside of his own department, the monarch's direct intervention was necessary. Only in the frenetic circumstances of the opening of the Estates General did Dreux-Brézé write directly to the interested parties asking for their collaboration in enacting the rituals of this great occasion.⁵³ Obviously, in the hectic preparations for the Estates there was simply not enough time to act in the usual fashion. Delays needed to be

⁴⁹ Extracts of this register do exist, but the original artefact is missing today. AN O³ 518, fol.3.

⁵⁰ Evidence of his authority can be perceived in his uniform. He wore an open black velvet doublet embroidered with silver threaded lace and a short black cloak with a hood. His head was covered with a black velvet *toque* decorated with heron feathers. However, the most important aspect of this uniform was an ivory topped ceremonial wand. Nguyen, 'Les Grands Maîtres', 32.

⁵¹ For a brief biography, see Henri Lemoine, 'Louise-Julie-Constance de Rohan, Comtesse de Brionne, Grand Ecuyer de France et Châtelaine de Limours (1734–1815)'. *Revue de l'Histoire de Versailles et de Seine et Oise*, 34 (1932), 207–27; and Alain Petiot, ed., *Les Lorrains et l'Empire: Dictionnaire biographique des Lorrains et de leurs descendants au service des Habsbourg de la Maison d'Autriche* (Paris, 2005), 341.

⁵² 'Mon cousin, I have decided that the body of my beloved and cherished son the Dauphin will lie in state at Meudon for some days. I write this letter to inform you that I wish you to send a detachment of the Cent-Suisses, with an officer, to stand guard before my son's body while it lies in state at Meudon and to escort it for its final burial at Saint-Denis, and they [these troops] are also to accompany the heart for its inhumation at Val de Grâce. You will order these troops to follow the commands which the Grand Master, or Master, of Ceremonies will give on my behalf. I pray God, Mon Cousin, that he keep you under His holy and worthy protection. Given this day at Versailles on 4 June 1789. [Signed] Louis.' See AN O¹ 1044, no. 297.

⁵³ For example, on 27 April 1789 Dreux-Brézé wrote to Bronod de La Haie, the Roi d'Armes de France, explaining that 'it is not possible for me to send to M. le Grand Écuyer the usual letter which the king has sent in the past to the King of Arms and Heralds when they have duties to perform'. AN K 1719, dossier 43, no. 426.

avoided during this critical phase. As some ceremonial officials did not permanently reside in Versailles, they required sufficient notice in order to travel to court to carry out their duties.⁵⁴

Once the Grand Maître had prepared his plans, it was necessary to solicit the approval of other officials. For the early events of 1789 Dreux-Brézé found in Barentin, the Keeper of the Seals, a staunch ally. This conservative supported, with disastrous results, the rigid revival of the ceremonial of 1614 to conduct the Estates of 1789.⁵⁵ Barentin, in concert with the Grand Maître des Cérémonies, ordered the police to seize any publications which contained ceremonial procedures different from those of 1614. The Parlement of Paris, rather than giving voice to any modernisation scheme, positively took a lead in supporting the decision to conform to precedent.⁵⁶ So Dreux-Brézé found himself in perfect alignment with the conservative majority of the king's council.⁵⁷ Although this alliance may have facilitated the smooth operation of ceremonial, in the early months of the Estates General, these reactionary sympathies relegated the marquis to a marginal role once the Revolution erupted. The deputies refused to forget that he had been close to Barentin and the comte d'Artois's faction.⁵⁸

It is difficult to appreciate with absolute precision which areas of ceremony fell under the Grand Master's exclusive remit. There were numerous conflicts of authority, ambiguities and a rigid attachment to precedent which limited this official's influence.⁵⁹ The entire structure

⁵⁴ This extraordinary situation did not repeat itself for the *Séance royale* of 23 June 1789. Dreux-Brézé, as was usual practice, wrote to the king who corresponded in turn with those Officers directly in charge of the personnel needed to organise a plenary session of the Estates. AN K 1719, no. 43.

⁵⁵ Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 304–5; and J. Michael Hayden, *France and the Estates General of 1614* (Cambridge, 1974), 98–106.

⁵⁶ P. M. Jones, *Reform and Revolution in France: The Politics of Transition 1774–1791* (Cambridge, 1995), 158.

⁵⁷ Munro Price, 'The "Ministry of the Hundred Days": A Reappraisal', *French History*, 4 (1990), 325–7.

⁵⁸ 'At the same time there arrived a handsome, and well proportioned, young man, who wore a sparkling cloaking embroidered with gold and many precious stones, his fingers were covered with diamond rings and his hat was filled with brilliant white plumes. He carried an ebony wand, garnished with an ivory ornament, which symbolised his important office. He emitted an air of splendour amongst this [drab] mass of Third Estate deputies dressed in black. This lustrous star was none other than M. the Marquis of Brézé grand master of ceremonies.' Louis-Marie de La Révellière-Lépeaux, *Mémoires de La Révellière-Lepeaux, Membre du Directoire Exécutif de la République Française et de l'Institut National, publiés par son fils, sur le manuscrit autographe de l'auteur et suivis des pièces justificatives et de correspondances inédites*, 3 vols (Paris, 1895), I, 67; and Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 340.

⁵⁹ Cf. Marie-Lan Nguyen, 'Les officiers de la Maison du Roi et le cérémonial public de Henri III à Louis XVI' (unpublished Mémoire de DEA, Université de Paris-IV Sorbonne, 2000), 133–5.

relied on the monarchy's ability to maintain equilibrium between its functionaries.⁶⁰ Once a challenge came from an alternative source of power, outside of the monarchy, these officers simply were unable to adapt.

Heralds

A great number of European monarchies founded institutions such as colleges of arms, heralds and courts of chivalry as media through which they manifested their grandeur and splendour.⁶¹ Tradition had bequeathed to the court of Versailles a King of Arms of all France, named *Montjoie Saint-Denis* after the legendary battle cry of the Capetian knights, and twelve separate Heralds of Arms, each named after the different provinces of the realm.⁶² These officials were also aided by an impressive band of mounted musicians.⁶³

In other European kingdoms Heralds were charged with the creation and regulation of coats of arms for the nobility, private individuals and corporations. However, the *Hérauts d'Armes de France* carried out purely ornamental functions and were endowed with no complementary role. In the early seventeenth century they were transferred to the king's stables, the *Grande Écurie*, and there they remained until 1792. During these 175 years they were never granted a significant pay increase and the position was relegated to a role of anachronistic

⁶⁰ Duindam, *Myths of Power*, 143–80.

⁶¹ The antiquarians of the seventeenth century argued that heralds were as old as civilisation itself. Some interpreted, with a studied sense of anachronism, that king Agamemnon's messengers, during the siege of Troy, were the first heralds of history. Marc Vulson de La Colombière, *De l'office des rois d'armes, des hérauts et des poursuivants; de leur antiquité et des privilèges cérémonies où ils sont employés par les rois et par les princes* (Paris, 1644), 379. Printed in C. Leber, ed., *Collection des Meilleurs dissertations, notices, et traits particuliers relatifs à l'histoire de France, composé en grand partie de pièces rares ou qui n'ont jamais été publiées séparément pour servir à compléter toutes les collections de mémoires sur cette matière* (Paris, 1838).

⁶² During the Middle Ages, a French College of Arms had existed, based within the abbey de Saint-Antoine in Paris. The members of this institution seem to have been the cause of popular resentment. The Estates General of 1614 demanded that the Heralds be relieved of their right to adjudicate on armigerous matters. In consequence, Louis XIII established the office of the Juge d'Armes de France in 1615, and the Heralds were evicted from the abbaye de Saint Antoine. Christophe Parry, *Les Hérauts d'Armes à l'Époque Moderne* (Paris, 2005), 73.

⁶³ It has also been argued by some that the kingdom of Navarre provided a separate King of Arms and six further Heralds. However I have found no evidence to support this hypothesis. AN O¹ 743, fol.227, Jean Ecorcheville, 'Documents sur la Musique de la Grande Écurie du Roi', *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, 2 (1901), 608–42; and Baron Roure Du Paulin, *Les Rois, Hérauts et Poursuivants d'Armes* (Paris, 1906), 8 and 32.

impotence.⁶⁴ This is evidenced by the falling number of Heralds from a high of twenty-six to a low of twelve.⁶⁵ Essentially the heralds were victims of the monarchy's attempts to cut its household budget in the 1780s. Attempts to stem this fiscal tide were ultimately futile as can be seen in the case of the last Montjoie King of Arms of the *ancien régime*, François Gabriel Bronod de La Haie, who attempted with several doomed expedients to revive the waning prestige of his office.⁶⁶ By the end of the decade the Roi d'Armes was merely required to preside over the spectacular public occasions at court. At lesser events it was the Héraut de Bourgogne who deputised. For the public festivities of 1789 four heralds had been summoned to Versailles to help with the Estates General. As far as one is able to surmise, the Heralds had no part in organising the ceremonies they attended. Their role was to endow proceedings with apposite solemnity.⁶⁷

The list of court events in which these officials participated was limited in comparison to those supervised by the Grand Maître des Cérémonies. On the whole, the Hérauts d'Armes performed their duties mounted on horseback. They publicly announced important news such as declarations of war, peace, royal births and marriages. They did so by travelling in procession, with great fanfare, through the different squares of Versailles and Paris. For instance, they accompanied the earthly remains of deceased monarchs to their final resting place, the abbaye de Saint-Denis, and were present at the more solemn liturgies celebrated in the royal chapel. At the Estates General they contributed to the disastrous seating arrangements in the Église de Notre Dame

⁶⁴ Roure Du Paulin, *Les Rois*, 121–31.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 73 and Tr.Drts. I, 626.

⁶⁶ Very little is known about the background of this figure, apart from the fact that he was a member of a well-to-do Lyonnais family and appointed Roi d'Armes in 1760. For a large part of the 1780s this official accumulated a substantial amount of debt. It seems likely that these increased outlays coincided with Bronod de La Haie's attempts at proving that before the seventeenth century the position of King of Arms conferred automatic hereditary nobility on the holder of this *charge*. He argued that the office dated back to the Carolingian period and that the knights to whom the leadership of the Heralds was entrusted were ennobled. His petition was denied. Parry, *Les Hérauts*, 31 and 103, AN Minutier Central, Étude VI 864, 1 et 3 février 1790, AN O¹ 975, no.8, fol.2 and no.10, fols 3 and 9, AN O¹ 743, fol.227; and AN K 1719.

⁶⁷ The vibrant uniforms worn by these servants of the crown were among the most ornate in the Maison du Roi. They wore violet tabards decorated with the arms of the province they represented and the King of Arms alone bore three fleurs-de-lys surmounted by a crown. Like the Master of Ceremonies, they carried a *bâton de commandement*. They also wore a neck badge shaped as a Maltese cross which indicated the chivalric nature of their position. Parry, *Les Hérauts*, 93–7; and Roure Du Paulin, *Les Rois*, 25–6; and Jean-Pierre Collignon, *Ordres de Chevalerie, décorations et médailles de France des origines à la fin du Second Empire* (Paris, 2004), 405.

de Versailles. On 4 May 1789 the Third Estate had been leading the cortège bearing the 'Blessed Sacrament' across Versailles.⁶⁸ When the deputies reached the aforementioned church they immediately proceeded to fill the front benches which had been reserved for the privileged orders. The Master of Ceremonies with the help of the Heralds evicted the deputies from this position and moved them further back. In spite of this affront the politicians of the National Assembly seem to have been less resentful toward the Heralds than they were toward the marquis de Dreux-Brézé. These officers continued to have a role in those ceremonial moments when the king visited the Assembly's debating chamber.

It needs to be reiterated that, though these functionaries were, from time to time, under the orders of the Master of Ceremonies, their true overlord was the Grand Écuyer.⁶⁹ When they performed their duties at Versailles they were accommodated in the Grande Écurie and their uniforms were also stored by this department of the Maison du Roi. It was only with a direct order from Louis XVI that these officials could be temporarily transferred to another department.⁷⁰ Throughout the *ancien régime* they were confined to a form of administrative limbo, which was fraught with complications and inefficiency.

During the entire period from 1789 to 1792 the Heralds were to participate in many of the great revolutionary occasions.⁷¹ In the immediate aftermath of the October days, the Heralds of France were given the duty of publicising the king's arrival in Paris. They were also to read a declaration from Louis XVI calling for a restoration of public order. This text, very much in the language of the *ancien régime*, stated that:

[It is hoped] that our sojourn in our good town of Paris, far from becoming a pretext for [seditious] gatherings and troubles should on the contrary be a powerful reason for a return to tranquillity and good order for the citizens of this city as they resume their daily business and lives.⁷²

The official account of this procession was recorded by Jean Villemain d'Abancourt, Herald of Angoulême, as Bronod de La Haie was absent.⁷³ On 10 October 1789, at nine in the morning, five heralds set

⁶⁸ Lemay, *La Vie quotidienne*, 18. ⁶⁹ Nguyen, 'Les Grands Maîtres', 94.

⁷⁰ The Napoleonic and Restoration regimes removed any conflict in the chain of command when they transferred the Heralds from the stables to the direct authority of the Master of Ceremonies. See, AN O³ 525.

⁷¹ They were present at the *Séance royale*, the arrival of the king in Paris in October 1789 and the reception for new judges of the *cour de cassation* organised at the Tuileries in 1791. AN O¹ 591, no.497.

⁷² AN K 1719, no.44. ⁷³ *Ibid.*, fol.3.

out on horseback from the Tuileries accompanied by the usual escort of musicians. They proclaimed the king's communiqué in thirty public squares, both inside and outside the city precincts.⁷⁴ Thirty is a particularly high number when one considers that, in normal circumstances, the Heralds visited only up to a dozen locations.⁷⁵ Obviously the government wanted all areas of the town to be touched by the regal appeal for citizens to return to calm and their routine. Especially noteworthy was the easterly route, which took the parade through the especially volatile and rebellious Faubourg Saint-Antoine. This neighbourhood, famously, had taken a leading role in the storming of the Bastille and three years later enthusiastically supported the fall of the monarchy on 10 August 1792.⁷⁶

The ritual of the proclamation received two significant modifications in 1789. One involved the omission of the traditional greetings and homage paid to the Princes of the Blood in front of their Parisian residences. A great number of these princes had either participated actively in the reactionary politics against the Third Estate or had emigrated. Accordingly, it was considered best to avoid such an unpopular demonstration of deference. Secondly, a detachment of 100 National Guardsmen, fifty on foot and fifty on horseback, were ordered to accompany the procession.⁷⁷

In every other way the procedure involved was identical to that used throughout the eighteenth century. When the procession reached one of its destinations the musicians would play a solemn fanfare, after which the Heralds, with their heads uncovered, would cry three times: 'with the king's authority'. After the proclamation had been read proceedings were closed with three cries of 'vive le roi'.⁷⁸ The Angoulême Herald, who chronicled the events on 10 October 1789, recorded that the contents of Louis XVI's proclamation received a positive response in all the locations where it was publicised.

This was the Heralds' swansong in Paris and they were seldom used, after this date, as a means of official communication. During and after 1789, the press expanded in a remarkable way. The population came to rely ever more heavily on newspapers such as the *Moniteur* for up-to-date official information.⁷⁹ It seems safe to conclude that the Herald was now

⁷⁴ Ibid., fols 5–8. ⁷⁵ Parry, *Les Hérauts*, 91; and AN K 1719, nos 9–17.

⁷⁶ David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (London, 2002), 115–21.

⁷⁷ AN K 1719, no.44 fol.3. ⁷⁸ Ibid., fol.5.

⁷⁹ William Murray and J. Gilchrist, eds, *The Press in the French Revolution: A Selection of Documents Taken from the Press of the Revolution for the Years 1789–1794* (London, 1971), 7–42; William Murray, *The Right-Wing Press in the French Revolution: 1789–1792* (London, 1986), 17–29.

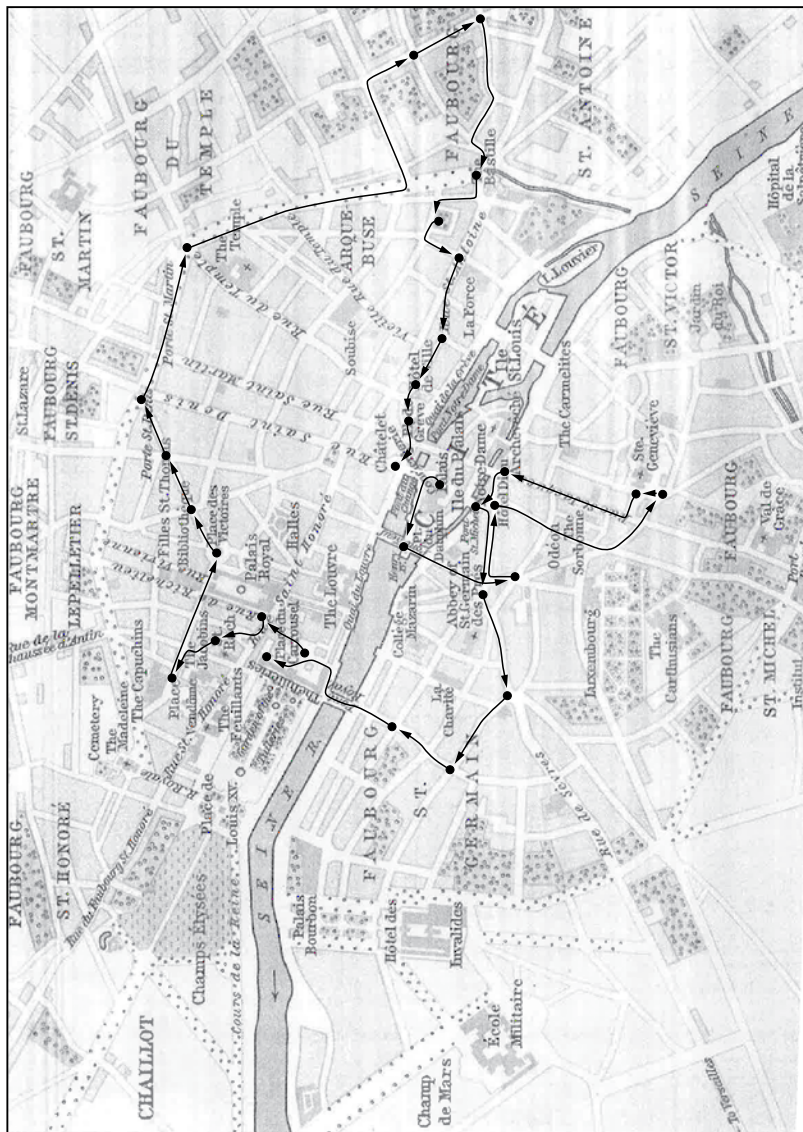


Figure 2 Map of Paris in 1789 (with route taken by Herald in October 1789)

superseded as a manifestation of royal pomp and as conduit of official government communication. As Louis XVI was to fill the lesser position of Premier Fonctionnaire de la nation the paraphernalia of the past could not be used to represent the revolutionary present.

However, they did make a final and impressively anachronistic appearance in the opening ceremony of the Legislative Assembly. In October 1791 the Heralds announced the convocation of the new legislature on horseback in all the public squares of Paris.⁸⁰ The ceremonial implemented for this occasion had a distinctly modern flavour. It was decided by the deputies of the Constituent that the king's *fauteuil* was to be positioned beside that of the President of the Assembly to symbolise the perfect equality between the legislative and executive branches of government. Furthermore, the deputies were allowed to be seated whilst the king addressed them.⁸¹ The following week the newly elected parliamentarians of the Legislative Assembly sought to abolish the titles of Sire and Majesty as they were considered to be obsequious and unworthy of the representatives of free men.⁸²

The ability of the Héraut d'Armes de France to survive longer than other forms of ceremonial apparatus was due to their purely inert ornamental character. Unlike the Master of Ceremonies, they had no authority and played a purely decorative role in monarchical celebrations. It was for this reason that the Revolutionaries barely acknowledged their existence. The Heralds had neither resisted nor supported the political changes happening in France. They merely added an extra layer of complexity and hierarchical confusion to the representational culture of the late Bourbon Monarchy.⁸³

Introducteur des Ambassadeurs

Peter Burke, paraphrasing Clausewitz, has described vast architectural building projects such as Versailles as 'the continuation of war and diplomacy by other means'.⁸⁴ It is true that the artistic and architectural magnificence of the French court complemented the glory which had been won on the field by the armies of Louis le Grand in an unbroken string of victories from 1667 to 1697. Visitors to the Sun King's palace, in the eighteenth century, varied enormously in provenance, expectations

⁸⁰ AN K 1719, no.45.

⁸¹ Antoine de Baecque, 'From Royal Dignity to Republican Austerity: The Ritual for the Reception of Louis XVI in the French National Assembly 1789–1792', *The Journal of Modern History*, 66 (1994), 671–96.

⁸² AP XXXIV, 81–7.

⁸³ Blanning, *Culture of Power*, 406–27. ⁸⁴ Burke, *Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 65.

and objectives. Some travelled great distances, like the emissaries sent by Tipu Sultan in 1788, others just crossed the channel at their leisure; like that celebrated habitué of all things sophisticated, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield.⁸⁵ The spectacle which unfolded before their eyes certainly made a deep impact. Yet the influence exerted on public opinion in their home countries was limited by the individualistic and personal nature of their journeys.

Versailles captured the international stage as a spectacular backdrop where the Corps diplomatique, assigned to the French court, were supposed to be constantly overawed by the cult of royal magnificence. By 1789 thirty-one European courts had established permanent diplomatic relations with the kingdom of France.⁸⁶ They did so by dispatching a resident minister to Paris/Versailles. Diplomacy, at this stage of its development, had progressed substantially beyond the informal arrangements of the early modern period.⁸⁷ The concept of 'extraterritoriality' was still rudimentary, but diplomatic immunities were respected right up to the Revolution.⁸⁸ To intercept the mis-sives between a diplomat and his court was certain to give rise to a major incident.⁸⁹ International relations were not limited to the world of official embassies. Minor European states, like Modena, engaged secret agents to act as spies, intermediaries and informal conduits of communication.⁹⁰

The main consequence of the European system of diplomacy was that Versailles periodically accommodated a large contingent of foreign nobles.⁹¹ Each of these envoys represented a myriad of different interests, religions and forms of etiquette. The Corps diplomatique required shrewd management. Henri III in 1585, in the same decree which created the office of Grand Master of Ceremonies, had instituted

⁸⁵ Petitfils, *Louis XVI*, 606. 'An hour at Versailles, Compiègne, or St. Cloud, is now worth more to you than three hours in your closet, with the best books that ever were written.' See Letter CL, Greenwich June 30 1751, in Oliver Leigh, ed., *Letters to His Son; Letters by the Earl of Chesterfield on the fine art of becoming a man of the world and a gentleman; with topical headings and a special introduction*, 2 vols (London, 1926).

⁸⁶ *Almanach Royal*, 154–6.

⁸⁷ Linda and Marsha Frey, *The History of Diplomatic Immunity* (Columbus, OH, 1999), 248–9.

⁸⁸ Tr.Drts. III; for privileges, refer to 61–95; and for immunities refer to 95–108.

⁸⁹ For the case of the comte de Chalons whose diplomatic bag was seized by the Venetian authorities, see ASVe, Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato, Serie Francia, Filza 263, dispaccio no.105, Parigi 5 gennaio 1789.

⁹⁰ ASMo, Serie Francia, Busta 227, Lettere Antonio Caccia.

⁹¹ Antoine Lilti, *Le Monde des Salons, Sociabilité et Mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2005), 378–92.

the position of an *Introducteur des Ambassadeurs* to take charge of diplomatic protocol.⁹²

Since the early modern era, European states had tried to solve the problem of precedence among nations by framing a mutually acceptable hierarchical order.⁹³ By Louis XVI's reign, the system, although modified by religious strife and the emergence of Russia and Prussia as great powers, was remarkably similar to that of the sixteenth century. Within Catholic Europe, the Papal Nuncio was still universally recognised as the *doyen* of the Diplomatic Corps.⁹⁴ The only real exception was the special position which was held by the envoys of other Bourbon monarchs known as *Ambassadeurs de Famille*.⁹⁵ The representatives of Spain, Naples and Parma possessed privileges which were not accorded to other diplomats. In particular, they enjoyed special access to the monarch, outside of the weekly Wednesday audience. They were frequently on the list of those dining at Marly and, at times, were guest to the *petits soupers* in Louis XVI's private apartments. These tokens of royal favour placed them in an especially pre-eminent position.

Diplomats were not only an official conduit of communication between nations, but they stood as physical proxies for the sovereign they represented. An Ambassador, when exercising his official duties, was treated virtually as the physical embodiment of the Prince he represented. Understandably, a court functionary was needed to navigate safely past the treacherous and stormy waters of international ceremonial.⁹⁶ In practice the *Introducteurs* coordinated their efforts with the *Ministère des Affaires Étrangères* which provided detailed

⁹² Auguste Boppe, *Les Introducteurs des Ambassadeurs* (Paris, 1901), 2.

⁹³ William Roosen, 'Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach', *Journal of Modern History*, 52, (1980), 452–79, here 460–1.

⁹⁴ This is a hierarchical convention that has continued to the present day. The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations prescribed that the Papal Nuncio was to be considered as the senior diplomat in all capital cities. See John Wood and Jean Serres, eds, *Diplomatic Ceremonial and Protocol: Principles, Procedures and Practices* (London, 1970), 27–9.

⁹⁵ Albert Mousset, ed., *Un Témoin ignoré de la Révolution: Le Comte de Fernan Nuñez Ambassadeur d'Espagne à Paris 1787–1791* (Paris, 1924), iii–iv; and vicomte de Grouchy and Antoine Guillois, eds, *La Révolution Française racontée par un étranger, correspondance du Bailli de Virieu Ministre Plénipotentiaire de Parme 1788–1793* (Paris, 1904), xiv–xx.

⁹⁶ It was highly lucrative, due to the large number of gifts which incumbents received from incoming and departing diplomats. The *charge* of *Introducteur* was not unified, but rather it was shared among two officials, each serving one semester, in any given year. The workforce at their disposal consisted of a single individual given the title of *Secrétaire Ordinaire du Roi pour la Conduite des Ambassadeurs*. Boppe, *Les Introducteurs*, 27 and 29–30.

information on the arrival of new diplomats and also collated expert advice on foreign codes of etiquette.⁹⁷

The primary role of the *Introducteur* was to organise each new emissary's *audience d'arrivé*, or alternatively, when the envoy took his leave they prepared the *audience de congé*.⁹⁸ The more routine duties involved positioning diplomats in appropriate locations during the royal *lever*, mass and other festivities. They were also charged with presenting foreign envoys either with invitations to court balls or complimentary tickets for opera performances. Wednesdays were particularly busy days as the king set aside a section of his morning *lever* and dedicated it to receiving petitions from the Corps diplomatique. On these days, distinguished foreigners travelling through France were officially presented at court by their country's Ambassador. A strict hierarchy in all these proceedings was maintained. The *Introducteur* was to deal directly with all envoys of Ambassadorial rank, while the *Secrétaire ordinaire du Roi pour la Conduite des Ambassadeurs* dealt with Minister Plenipotentiaries.⁹⁹ These elaborate procedures conveyed that hierarchy was not merely a domestic phenomenon, but one that spilled over directly into international politics. In terms of religion non-Catholic emissaries needed to be accommodated. For instance, as it was illegal to sell meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, the *Secrétaire* bestowed certificates on Protestant and non-European diplomats allowing them to break the Lenten fast. The duties of the *Introducteur*, during the Revolution, faded into insignificance as the monarch gradually lost the greater share of his prerogatives vis-à-vis foreign affairs. Furthermore, the behaviour of the Parisian crowds ensured that a great number of diplomats had fled by 1791.

The hidden apparatus of Bourbon splendour

The Hôtel des Menus Plaisirs, which hosted the sessions of the Estates General, had been constructed in 1739. It was the central warehouse

⁹⁷ Dufort de Cheverny, *Mémoires sur les règnes de Louis XV et Louis XVI et sur la révolution*, 2 vols (Paris, 1886), I, 61.

⁹⁸ The procedure was straightforward. Diplomats travelling in Europe did so incognito; this pretence was dropped only on the day when an Ambassador solemnly presented his letters of credence. The *Introducteur* had discretion over how many horses were to be harnessed to the Ambassadorial carriage. This, in turn, depended on the rank of the foreign ruler being represented. They also led the procession escorting the new Ambassador, through the long corridors of Versailles, to meet the monarch. After presenting his letters, the envoy was treated to a banquet hosted by the ministry of foreign affairs. Subsequently, before leaving, the Ambassador was to pay his respects to the queen, Dauphin and princes of the blood. Boppe, *Les Introducteurs*, 5.

⁹⁹ Boppe, *Les Introducteurs*, 6.

of one of the larger administrative units of the Maison du Roi.¹⁰⁰ This department, headed by the Intendant des Menus, was given the responsibility of managing the royal Argenterie, Menus Plaisirs and Affaires de la Chambre du Roi.¹⁰¹ To help in these tasks, a legion of secretaries, inspectors, musicians, administrators, carpenters, workers, actors, artists, goldsmiths and so on were directly employed by the Menus.¹⁰² Papillon de La Ferté, Louis XVI's Intendant, though generally considered an able administrator, was to preside over a bureaucratic machine that was in decline. When he had been appointed in 1756 this unit was endowed with an immense annual budget of 2 million livres. In order to meet this impressive expenditure efficiently a separate treasury had been created. This funded the department independently from other sections of the royal household. The Menus supplied all the props, candles, domestic uniforms and other paraphernalia required to enact the elaborate ceremonies of the court. From events as unique as the *Sacre* to the routine *lever* Papillon de La Ferté had to ensure that supplies were transferred expediently from warehouses to their final destination.¹⁰³

The Intendant des Menus, while awaiting execution in prison during the Terror had time to reflect on and write some of his reminiscences concerning the administration of the court of France.¹⁰⁴ In particular he dealt with his difficult relationship with the Gentilshommes de la Chambre. These powerful grandees at times regarded Papillon as a valuable collaborator; at other times, they treated him as an upstart bureaucrat. The accession of Louis XVI proved to be particularly burdensome. In 1777, aside from his regular duties, the Intendant was asked by the queen to organise no fewer than ninety-three theatrical *divertissements*, which constituted the record number of court performances in the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵ When it came to unearthing areas where savings could be made, Necker targeted the bountiful budget of the *Menus* with great energy.

In 1780 an attempt was made to centralise all the expenditure of the royal household. The Intendant was demoted to the less impressive

¹⁰⁰ William R. Newton, *La Petite Cour* (Paris, 2006), 103.

¹⁰¹ Anon., 'Extrait sur l'administration de l'argenterie, menus, plaisirs et affaires de la chambre du Roi en 1784', in *Mélanges Historiques, choix de Documents* (Paris, 1877), II, 735; and Philippe Beaussant, *Les Plaisirs de Versailles, Théâtre et Musique* (Paris, 1996), 318–23.

¹⁰² Denis-Pierre-Jean Papillon de La Ferté, *Journal de Papillon de la Ferté intendant et contrôleur de l'argenterie, menus plaisirs et affaires de la chambre du Roi 1756–1780* (Paris, 1887), 3–4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 40–5.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

designation of Commissaire des Menus.¹⁰⁶ An administrative reshuffle also took place and there was an important redistribution of duties within the royal household. The direction of the Opéra de Paris, the Comédie-Française and Comédie-Italienne was transferred from the Menus to an agency within the Ministère de la Maison du Roi which governed Paris.¹⁰⁷ The finances of the capital's state-subsidised theatres did not have time to benefit from this more streamlined administration. The Revolution was to have a striking impact on the cultural pursuits of the *beau monde*.¹⁰⁸ Half of the private boxes leased by the *haute noblesse* for the season at the Paris Opéra were left empty.

The Menus contributed an extra layer of density to the organisation of royal pageantry. Historically this department had been placed under the direct authority of the four Gentilshommes de la Chambre. Originally the dukes who held this charge rotated the office amongst themselves every quarter. However, by Louis XVI's reign, they carved their *charge* into four separate areas of responsibility.¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately for Papillon, rather than simplifying matters, this system allowed for the possibility that the Intendant could sometimes receive contradictory orders. It is difficult to know the extent to which the Intendant was in contact with the Grand Maître des Cérémonies. It has proved difficult to find direct correspondence between these two officials.¹¹⁰ As always, the system depended at all times on the king keeping the personal ambitions of courtiers from hindering the efficient administration of his household.

The Garde Meuble de la Couronne, headed by Louis XVI's former Premier Valet de Chambre Marc-Antoine Thierry de la Ville d'Avray, and the Gardes du Corps, under the command of four Capitaines, were two other vital components in the organisation of ceremony at Versailles. On numerous occasions the Garde Meuble was ordered to supply specially crafted pieces of furniture to assist in enacting rituals.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 65.

¹⁰⁷ Max Aghion, *Le Théâtre à Paris au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1926), 122–6, 182–6 and 206–12; and Pierre Larthomas, *Le Théâtre en France au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1980), 9–15, 19–20, 33–4.

¹⁰⁸ Emmet Kennedy, 'High Culture and Popular Culture: Paris Theatre Audiences, the Critics and the Police', in *Theatre, Opera and Audiences in Revolutionary Paris*, eds Emmet Kennedy, Marie-Laurence Netter, James P. McGregor and Mark V. Olsen (London, 1996), 75–86; and Aghion, *Le Théâtre à Paris au XVIIIe Siècle*, 145–7 and 212.

¹⁰⁹ Papillon, *Journal des Menus Plaisirs*, 9–10.

¹¹⁰ It seems that, from time to time, Dreux-Brézé did claim expenses from the *Menus Plaisirs*. AN O¹ 3090, *sixième état dépenses imprévues*, quartier d'octobre, no.302.

¹¹¹ Henri Gleizes, *Premier Maire de Versailles: Thierry de Ville d'Avray 1732–1792* (Paris, 1988), 107–23.

For the opening of the Estates General this department provided the daises, canopies and thrones placed inside the churches of Notre-Dame and Saint-Louis in Versailles. It also hung sixteen tapestries along the route of the procession.¹¹² Again, this department came under the remit of the Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre; therefore finely tuned collaboration was required between officials and departments for the successful performance of court rituals.

The four Capitaines des Gardes du Corps were responsible for security and order in the royal palace at all times. The captain on duty never left the king's side from morning to dusk.¹¹³ It was for this reason that these military officers were entrusted with the distribution of a substantial share of the tickets and passes which regulated admission into Versailles. It did not take long for this duty to transform itself into a privilege. These important princes and dukes used their right to control access to the court as means of rewarding and entertaining their clients and friends. During the Estates General they were awarded two-thirds of the tickets for admission to the opening session.¹¹⁴

Many rituals, like audiences and even High Mass, required that a detachment of guardsmen, in gala uniform, attend to bestow due solemnity on the event. It was unthinkable that the members of the king's domestic household could give direct orders to soldiers. Consequently, it was decided to create a temporary commission, which gave its incumbent the title of Exempt des Gardes du Corps faisant le Service des Cérémonies.¹¹⁵ This officer served as a liaison between those courtiers organising events and the soldiers present. He was instructed by the Grand Maître des Cérémonies on where his men were to stand and what, if any, tasks they were to carry out. Again this position existed not to fulfil any practical objective, but rather to protect the *amour-propre* of the powerful court nobility, who bitterly resisted any encroachment which attacked their dignity and privileges.

The confrontation between Dreux-Brézé and Mirabeau at the *Séance royale* was in many ways a continuation of this struggle between the 'State' and a court aristocracy which jealously guarded its prerogatives. However the young marquis's failure to have his authority recognised did genuinely usher in a new political epoch. The momentousness of this event was something which contemporaries, and so too posterity, keenly understood. It was a moment when two symbolic systems of power collided violently. The failure of the Grand Maître des Cérémonies

¹¹² AN O¹ 3300, no.6.

¹¹³ Gilbert Bodinier, *Les Gardes du Corps de Louis XVI* (Paris, 2005), 19–20.

¹¹⁴ Nguyen, 'Les Grands Maîtres', 91. ¹¹⁵ Ibid., 92–4.

to handle opposition was not merely a personal embarrassment, but represented visibly the failure of the *ancien régime* monarchy to command the obedience of its subjects. Even during the bitterest struggles between royal officers, court factions and even with the Parlements, nobody had overtly called into question the fundamental reality that the crown held the power to compel a subject into submission.¹¹⁶ The 23 June 1789 was the first time that direct opposition to the crown was manifested both publicly and visibly at the royal court itself.

The National Assembly, through Mirabeau, stated unequivocally that the right to compel did not reside exclusively with the monarch as the most tangible manifestation of the state. On the contrary, sovereignty had migrated very publically from the crown to the National Assembly, whose legitimacy was grounded in the *volonté de la nation* rather than obscure tradition.¹¹⁷

On this day, the servants of the king's household were transformed from public officials into domestic servants. Their service to the crown was now distinct from service to the state. The six separate units of the royal household discussed in this chapter could not, due to their very organisation and structure, possibly conceive of how to pick up the gauntlet which lay at their feet. They had become entirely self-referent and could not envisage real, or symbolic, politics existing outside of the habitat of the court. For these *grandeues* it was surprising, and incomprehensible, that the world outside Versailles had succeeded in subverting their assumptions. The dozens of court officers who organised royal spectacles jealously protected their prerogatives. They had never been instructed on how to justify either their roles or the ceremonies they performed. Ritual was an unquestioned part of the monarchical order of things. This is why a deputy of the Third Estate refusing to obey the command of the Grand Maître in full uniform proved such a powerful iconoclastic weapon against the Bourbon monarchy.

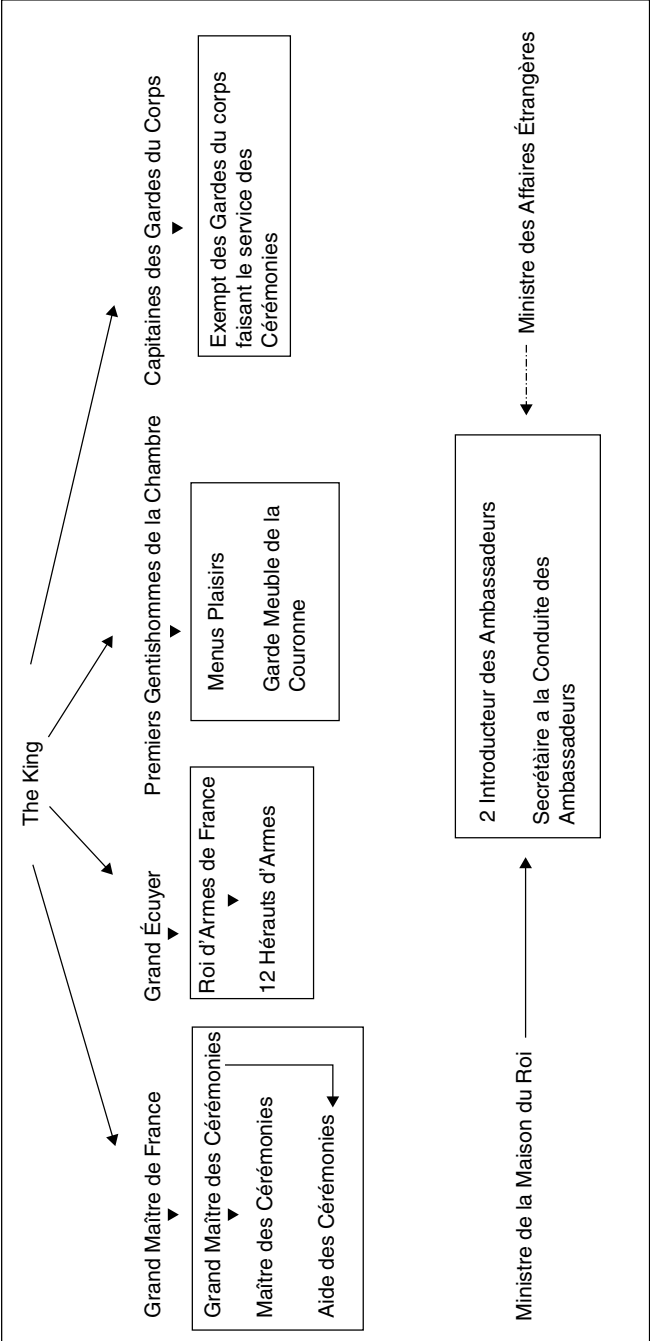
Louis XVI responded with traditional caution when he learned of the Assembly's refusal to budge from the *Menus Plaisirs*, by reputedly exclaiming: 'the devil [take them]! they can stay there'.¹¹⁸ It seems probable that at this (or even any later) time the king did not feel sufficiently confident to appeal to force to restore his authority.¹¹⁹ The failure to regain the initiative at this stage relegated the monarchy to a subaltern, rather than a central, role in the French Revolution. The organisation of

¹¹⁶ For a more three-dimensional explanation of how dissident discourses came to occupy the foreground of politics. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 24–7.

¹¹⁷ AP VIII, 147. ¹¹⁸ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 154.

¹¹⁹ Caron, 'La tentative de contre-révolution de juin–juillet 1789', 12–19 and 31; and cf. Price, 'The Ministry of the Hundred Days', 310.

Table 1. Organisational structure of the king's household during the 1780s



the royal household and its inability to adapt to changed circumstances contributed enormously to the loss of credibility in royal spectacle.¹²⁰ Soon the Assembly would consider the reorganisation of the court and its rituals as a matter of priority. A regenerated France would need a new constitutional monarchy, but the question of how this was to be achieved was still an open one.

¹²⁰ Lawrence M. Bryant, 'Royal Ceremony and the Revolutionary Strategies of the Third Estate', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 20 (1989), 413–50.

2 The *liste civile*: the new monarchy, Sieyès and the Constitution

The civil list in eighteenth-century French thought

Since 1789 a new era has begun, not just for France but for the world. These great flocks of sheep, called Nations which despotism fleeced, or butchered, to its heart's content, will finally, after having shed many tears and gnawed their chains break free of them. Already they are united in their goal of forming a holy alliance which has the preordained sanction of both nature and the gospel.¹

This passage is taken from a pamphlet composed by the abbé Grégoire in 1830. Despite the numerous setbacks he suffered throughout his eventful political career, the abbé remained committed to his ideals. The political causes he had espoused were wide-ranging; they included republicanism, the constitutional church, the fight against political iconoclasm and the abolition of slavery.² For this revolutionary cleric the Revolution of 1789 had unleashed a regenerative spirit that was ultimately unstoppable. The political issue which had resurrected Grégoire's political passion was the civil list which the Orleanist chamber of deputies was to bestow on Louis-Philippe in 1831. This awoke in him memories dating back to his political apprenticeship as a liberal curé of the First Estate. If anyone was well qualified to present the *réquisitoire*, or indictment, against Louis-Philippe's regime, then that individual was truly the abbé who, after all, had witnessed the birth and demise of two constitutional monarchies.

¹ Henri Grégoire, *Considérations sur la liste civile par M. Grégoire ancien évêque de Blois* (Paris, 1830), 17.

² Albert Soboul, ed., *Œuvres de l'Abbé Grégoire*, 14 vols (Paris, 1977), I, ix–xxvii; Henri Grégoire, *Mémoires de Grégoire ancien évêque de Blois, député à l'assemblée constituante et à la convention nationale, sénateur et membre de l'institut* (Paris, 1989), 75–112; Bernard Plongeron, *L'Abbé Grégoire ou l'Arche de la Fraternité* (Paris, 1989), 33–5; Maurice Ezran, *L'Abbé Grégoire, Défenseur des Juifs et des Noirs* (Paris, 1992), 183–8; Ruth F. Necheles, *The Abbé Grégoire 1787–1831: The Odyssey of an Egalitarian* (Westport, 1971), 273–7; for an emotive verdict on Grégoire, see William Gibson, Lord Ashbourne, *Grégoire and the French Revolution* (London, 1932), 117–22.

He proudly proclaimed that in 1790 he had been one of five deputies who had hijacked the unanimous acceptance of the *liste civile*.³ The abbé, also a formidable historian, traced the origins of this practice of providing crowned heads with state funds to Restoration Britain. He accused England of having turned its back on its own great revolution of the 1640s in order to squander the resources of the state on the libertinage of Charles II.⁴ For Grégoire, one simple axiom could be drawn from the history of England: republics were cheaper than monarchies.⁵ In this pamphlet he calculated that a single year's payment of Britain's civil list could theoretically sustain the president of the United States from the dawn of creation to the present day.⁶ For Grégoire the case was straightforward: monarchies were not just morally bankrupt, they were also a dangerous haemorrhage on the state's public finances.

The idea of distinguishing the national treasury from the private purse of the head of state was an innovation given concrete embodiment in seventeenth-century England. In 1660 a parliamentary committee investigating how Charles II's household would be financed, concluded that the king could no longer live solely from the revenues of the crown estates. The confiscations of the previous ten years made fiscal autonomy for the monarch impossible. The committee proposed that an annual subsidy to support the crown should be raised through a range of diverse revenue-enhancing mechanisms.⁷ Essentially, these provisions embodied the prototype of what came to be known as the civil list. Only with the advent of the 'Glorious Revolution' did the concept that the king was a stipendiary of parliament come into being.⁸ Eighteenth-century Britain was groundbreaking in the fiscal distinction it drew between public finance and the annual funding of the royal court. It is important to remark that, throughout the entire period, the civil list continued to directly pay the salaries and expenses of ministers in cabinet. It would take the better part of a century before the linear link between the selection of the ministry and electoral politics became established. Even in Great Britain the demarcation between the crown's private and the nation's public finance was far from absolute.

The Hanoverian dynasty attempted, at times, to use its financial endowment as a means of garnering popularity.⁹ The efficient administration

³ Grégoire, *Considérations*, 9. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 7. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 12. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷ Mark Kishlansky, *A Monarchy Transformed Britain 1603–1714* (London, 1997), 230.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 290; E. A. Reitan, 'From Revenue to Civil List, 1689–1702: The Revolution Settlement and the "Mixed and Balanced" Constitution', *The Historical Journal*, 13 (1970), 571–88; and Stephen Baxter, 'William III as Hercules: The Political Implications of Court Culture', in *The Revolution of 1688–1689, Changing Perspectives*, ed. Lois Schwoerer (Cambridge, 1992), 95–106.

⁹ Colley, *Britons*, 195–217.

of the civil list could be used as propaganda, aimed at proving that the crown was both cost-effective and efficient; not a burden on the revenue-producing classes. There were inherent dangers in such tactics. George III, loyal to Prince Frederick's promise that on his accession the civil list would fall to 800,000 pounds, surrendered the administration of the royal estates, excluding the Duchy of Lancaster, to Parliament on his accession in 1760.¹⁰ Embarrassingly, nine years later this policy backfired when the debts of the royal household were such that the king was forced to ask Parliament that his annuity should be increased to 900,000 pounds.¹¹ For better or for worse the civil list was an institution destined to provide stability and modernisation for a crown that many believed was precariously balanced.¹² Montesquieu had declared complacently in 1729 (just two years after the accession of George II): 'I believe that it is in France's interest to support the king of England, as a republic would be far more fatal'.¹³ The court of St James was little admired across the channel, and it provided a poor comparison to the glories of Versailles. In France the House of Commons and, at times, the House of Lords were the two institutions which had attracted the greatest public esteem. It is interesting to note that when it came to creating a constitution France's revolutionaries consciously rejected England's bicameral system but ironically adopted the idea of a civil list.

In the 1780s Mercier, despite reservations regarding the extravagance of Versailles, could still relate with confidence that 'a citizen of Paris said very seriously to an Englishman: "what is a man to make of your king? He is so badly housed that you feel sorry for him. Consider ours instead: he lives in Versailles. Is that not a magnificent palace? Can you think of an equivalent example [in all of England]? What grandeur, what splendour, what magnificence?'"¹⁴ The monarchy's splendour was an important component in France's self-identification as the *Grande Nation* of Europe.¹⁵ The prosperity of the prince's domestic

¹⁰ Christopher Hibbert, *George III: A Personal History* (London, 1998), 78; Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989), 343; Wilhelmine Germany also opted for a civil list after unification, See Röhl, *The Kaiser and His Court*, 72–9.

¹¹ E. A. Reitan, 'The Civil List in Eighteenth-Century British Politics: Parliamentary Supremacy versus the Independence of the Crown', *The Historical Journal*, 9 (1966), 318–37, here 319.

¹² Colley, *Britons*, 200–4; and Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 318–20; 345–7.

¹³ Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols (Paris, 1949), I, 882.

¹⁴ Louis Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 7 vols (Amsterdam, 1782), IV, 255–6; Cited in Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 25.

¹⁵ Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (London, 2002), 2–4; and cf. Jacques Godechot, *La Grande Nation: l'expansion de la France dans le monde de 1789 à 1799* (Paris, 1983), 43–57.

household was a visible manifestation of the might and glory of the state he embodied. The distinction between public and private in the French Monarchy, as with most of European counterparts, was opaque to say the least.¹⁶ As long as sovereignty lay exclusive and undivided with the regal body, every action taken by the king was a state matter.¹⁷ The commissioning of a warship, or the purchase of furniture for Versailles, though paid (and accounted for) by distinct departments and separate treasuries of the royal administration, were both creatures of the same species... that is, public expenditure.¹⁸ They both originated in the yearly revenue which the crown obliged its subjects to pay for the sovereign's administration of the state. The *trésor royal* underwrote the debts of the court with its creditors in the same way as it contracted enormous obligations on European credit markets to finance its public debt.¹⁹ Louis XVI, in his inaugural speech for the opening of the Estates General, stated unequivocally:

I have ordered already some considerable savings in [public] expenditure. You will present me again with your ideas on this matter which I shall receive with solicitousness; but despite the resources extracted by even the most severe economies, I fear, Gentlemen, of not being able to relieve my subjects of the burden imposed on them as quickly I as would have wished. I will place before you the exact state of the [public] finances and when you will have considered them, I know already that you will propose the most efficient means of establishing a permanent order which will affirm public credit.²⁰

The king here made no symbolic distinction between the expenses relating to his private person and those concerning the state. The Estates were expected to petition for a fairer system of taxation and a more rational fiscal administration. The monarchy did not suppose that they would share in the legislative process, let alone separate 'national' and 'royal' as distinct categories of expenditure.

Once the October Days forced the court to migrate from Versailles to Paris, a somewhat Anglo-Saxon vision of the organisation of the royal household started to gain momentum. Whilst the financing of the constitutional court may have drawn inspiration from across the channel,

¹⁶ Elias, *La Société de Cour*, 17–20; Asch and Birke, eds, *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility*, 4–18; and Dickens, ed., *The Courts of Europe*, 7–31.

¹⁷ Bernard Hours, *Louis XV et sa Cour* (Paris, 2002), 276; Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (University Park, PA, 2001), 226; and Ragnhild Hatton, 'Louis XIV: At the Court of the Sun King', in *The Courts of Europe*, ed. Dickens, 239–57.

¹⁸ J. F. Bosher, *French Finances 1770–1795: From Business to Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, 1970), 47–66.

¹⁹ For the roles of the *comptables* and their independent *caisses*, see *Ibid.*, 67–91.

²⁰ AP VIII, 2.

the role envisaged for the monarch was something the revolutionaries could never resolve satisfactorily.²¹ The debates over the financing of the civil list, and the way in which Louis XVI was to spend the funds at his disposal, entailed a discussion on the manner in which representational culture was to be redefined. The question of how the newly reorganised royal household was to present itself to the revolutionary public was a complex issue. In the nearly three years which the court spent in Tuileries it never could find an adequate *modus vivendi*. Political events fluctuated too fast. As soon as a model was created, it was almost immediately superseded. The 'revolutionary imaginary' and Louis XVI's lack of imagination placed king and national representation on a collision course.

The creation of the *liste civile* in the early Revolution is often cited in histories of the period.²² However, not a single publication has been devoted to investigating the creation and impact of this institution on the monarchy it purported to administer.²³ The consensus, which has generally emerged among historians, is that the endowment of 25 million livres was exceedingly generous. Others have also interpreted Louis XVI's inability to operate under such a favourable compromise as evidence of his counter-Revolutionary designs.²⁴ The image is only partially correct.

The *liste* was more generous than most realise. It included the revenues of certain royal domains and separate payments were accorded in respect of Marie-Antoinette's dowry and the running cost of both the households of Monsieur and the comte d'Artois. Only the elderly Mesdames tantes du roi and Mme Élisabeth were directly maintained at the king's personal expense. As the aristocratic emigration phenomenon became more widespread, the civil list for the king's brothers was not abolished, but transferred in part to Philippe Égalité, formerly the duc d'Orléans.²⁵ Consequently those scholars who argue that the revolutionary deputies were being magnanimous in their endowment of the crown are entirely correct.

The debate regarding whether the civil list unmasks clear counter-revolutionary intentions is far more nebulous. Little indisputable

²¹ François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1981), 49.

²² Mansel, *Court of France*, 25; Petitfils, *Louis XVI*, 739; Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 175 and 179–81; Furet and Richet, *La Révolution Française*, 103; and Lefebvre, *The French Revolution*, 147.

²³ For the Restoration, see Mansel, 'The Court of France 1814–1830', chapter IV.

²⁴ John Hardman, 'The Real and Imagined Conspiracies of Louis XVI', in *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, ed. Peter Campbell, Thomas Kaiser and Marisa Linton (Manchester, 2007), 63–4, 77–82.

²⁵ Béatrice F. Hyslop, *L'Apanage de Philippe-Égalité duc d'Orléans, 1785–1791* (Paris, 1965), 298–301, 314–16, 334 and 344.

evidence exists to link the finances of royalists and émigrés with the court of the Tuileries.²⁶ By 1791 for Louis XVI to send funds abroad would have been both dangerous and highly compromising. On the whole, he seems to have consciously avoided transferring funds across the frontier (or at least little traceable evidence of such transactions has survived) unless it was absolutely necessary.²⁷ Due to the destruction of documents, and the conscious covering-up of tracks, it seems unlikely that even a detailed analysis of all the revenues and expenses of the royal household could yield a conclusive answer.²⁸

A more promising approach, which will be used in this chapter, is to investigate the legislation relating to the civil list. The debates pertaining to the regal stipend were not one immense monolith which remained unvaried throughout the period. On the contrary, the deputies often changed their minds and renegotiated certain features of their compromise with the king. To facilitate further the understanding of why the revolutionaries made little headway in creating a working constitutional court, an examination of the private notes of the abbé Sieyès will prove useful.²⁹ These relate to a project for the reorganisation of the royal household to bring it in line with prevailing constitutional thought. The somewhat confused, though highly imaginative, designs of the abbé aimed to transform the monarchy beyond recognition. The central flaw of this reasoning was that it consciously disregarded the monarchy's history.³⁰ The king could not view the sacred heritage which he embodied as something negative, which should, or even could, be discarded with ease. This programme for reform, in the end, was not even presented before the Assembly.

The final area, which should also be taken into account, is the *liste civile* papers, contained in the famous *armoire de fer*. Historians have already noted that these documents, far from compromising the person of Louis XVI, are among the few sources of information which relate the day-to-day life of the court of the Tuileries.³¹ Among these files one finds several reports suggesting avenues of reform and trying to

²⁶ Mansel, *Court of France 1789–1830*, 34.

²⁷ Ibid.; and A. F. de Bertrand de Moleville, *Mémoires particuliers pour servir à l'histoire de la fin du règne de Louis XVI*, 2 vols (Paris 1816), II, 126.

²⁸ AN C 183, nos 102 and 103; and AN C 184, nos 136–7.

²⁹ AN 284 AP 4, Dossier 7, 'Le Roi'.

³⁰ Murray Forsyth, *Reason and Revolution: The Political Thought of the Abbé Sieyès* (Leicester, 1987), 22–5.

³¹ Freeman, *The Compromising of Louis XVI*; Girault de Coursac, *Enquête sur le procès du Roi Louis XVI*, 83–4; cf. Paul Lombard, *Le procès du Roi* (Paris, 1993), 77–86; and David Andress, *The Terror, Civil War in the French Revolution* (London, 2005), 139–40.

define how a constitutional court was to differ from its previous *ancien régime* incarnation. These documents show that in 1790 Louis XVI was at least trying to engage with the Revolution's attempts at making the public administration more efficient. Equally, they highlight that, after 1791, the king, having been forced to dismiss the chief officers of his household, became increasingly despondent. It seems probable that he simply saw the *liste civile* as the manifestation of an unworkable constitutional settlement.³²

The creation of the *liste civile*

The precise date when the Assembly decided to create a *liste civile* is difficult to ascertain with precision. Equally it is impossible to bind the proposal with one particular politician or group. It seems likely that the *monarchiens* were the most influential parliamentary faction when it came to creating a strong constitutional monarchy. Their project to adopt a bicameral legislative system, based on the Anglo-Saxon model, entailed a configuration of the Maison du Roi very close to the court of St James.³³ The marquis de Lally-Tollendal, a nobleman of Irish Jacobite extraction, and Mounier were the principal proponents of this system.³⁴ Lally, in spite of his roots, defended with enthusiasm the constitutional settlement which had emerged in Great Britain in 1688. He advised that the system be implemented with certain amendments.³⁵ Although the civil list was not specifically designated in his speech, it seems likely that it was the intended outcome of the marquis's proposals. His complete attachment to the political legacy of the 'Glorious Revolution' was apparent in his praise for the magnanimity of the Convention Parliament:

It was in the midst of a generous passion that both houses of the British Parliament were persuaded to divest themselves of the greater share of the executive power, which had been placed at their disposal, during the time of troubles, and relinquished it to the royal prerogative.³⁶

³² Bertrand de Moleville, *Mémoires*, I, 207–8.

³³ Jean Egret, *La Révolution des Notables: Mounier et Les Monarchiens 1789* (Paris, 1950), 144–59; and Robert Griffiths, *Le Centre Perdu: Malouet et les 'Monarchiens' dans la Révolution* (Paris, 1988), 17, 67–8 and 145.

³⁴ For the remarkable biography of Trophime Gérard Marquis de Lally-Tolledal, see John Cornelius O'Callaghan, *The History of the Irish Brigades in the Service of France: From the Revolution in Great Britain and Ireland under James II to the Revolution in France under Louis XVI* (Dublin, 1869), 578–9.

³⁵ François Furet and Ran Halévi, *Orateurs de la Révolution française: Les Constituants* (Paris, 1989), 389–92.

³⁶ Furet and Halévi, *La Monarchie Républicaine*, 352–3.

In this paragraph Lally maintained for the monarch a considerable role in the law-making process, which he felt was at the heart of Britain's parliamentary stability. He envisioned a strong monarchy, but certainly not an absolute one, which would claim to embody the nation. The common good could be protected through a complex system of checks and balances, with the monarchy acting as arbiter in the legislative process. The representatives of the nation were assigned the initiative for proposing new laws. The upper house would revise all schemes emerging from the chamber of deputies and the monarch was then charged with deciding on the manner of their implementation.

Once Lally had finished his speech, Mounier presented a draft proposal for the organisation of a bicameral legislature. The document comprised seventy-nine different articles and was byzantine in its complexity.³⁷ Article 63 accorded the financial management of the realm to the lower house and the sixty-fifth clause took the power to float loans away from the royal treasury.³⁸ It was article 67 that created a civil list in all but name.³⁹ It stated that, at the beginning of each new reign, the representatives of the nation, with the consent of the upper house, would establish the funds to be placed at the king's disposal. These were to be used for the running of the royal household and the distribution of recompenses and honours.

The Third Estate deputies, who until recently had been *rien* and who after a difficult struggle now claimed to be *tout*, had no desire to relinquish their hard-won political victories.⁴⁰ They were unwilling to surrender the powers they had arrogated and consequently the bicameral proposal floundered. The issue of the civil list entered a state of limbo for the subsequent two and a half months.

During this interlude, the crown continued to hold ultimate control over the royal treasury, but found itself increasingly unable to collect sufficient revenues. The peasantry claimed that they had been emancipated from the vast majority of fiscal impositions. Thus they resisted the demands made for public contributions.⁴¹ In September 1789 the Assembly tried to float a loan of 30 million livres to meet current expenditure (which was immense, due to the purchase of grain abroad to stem the growing subsistence crisis in France). It was difficult, with such political instability, for the Assembly to establish its own international credit. Financiers were not being enticed quickly enough by

³⁷ AP VIII, 522–7. ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 526. ³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers état* (Paris, 1789), 3; and Hampson, *Prelude to Terror*, 76.

⁴¹ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 130–5.

the favourable interest rates of these new bond issues.⁴² In the same month, Necker was forced to advise the National Assembly that radical measures would be needed to avoid the kingdom of France defaulting on its financial obligations.⁴³ The Assembly charged its *Comité des Finances* to draw up proposals to rationalise and reduce public spending in such a way as to solve the crisis of confidence.⁴⁴ Louis XVI even offered to melt down the crown silver as an extraordinary measure. Mirabeau responded:

I am not moved easily by the porcelain of the powerful or the crockery of kings; I think nevertheless ... that there is no reason to deliberate on this matter because as soon as one brings a silver plate to the mint than it is safe to assume that it will find its way to London[’s markets].⁴⁵

The time when the private possessions of the monarch could be used, symbolically, as a gesture towards reducing the national debt was over. Mirabeau condemned the king’s move as meaningless in economic terms. The royal offer, to melt down the royal silver, was a powerful declaration that the crown still considered the expenses and revenues of the state as indistinguishable from its own. He persisted in refusing to acknowledge the court as private and domestic.

The October Days, and the ensuing move to Paris, delayed the *Comité des Finances*’ work. Only on 16 November 1789 did the marquis de Montesquiou-Fézensac present a report on the best means of restoring the nation’s finances.⁴⁶ It was in this document that the phrase ‘*liste civile*’ first was used officially as the title heading of the opening chapter.⁴⁷ The committee proposed that an annual subsidy be agreed at the start of each reign to meet the expenses of the king, queen, immediate royal family, palaces, Menus-Plaisirs and Garde-Meuble. It hinted that Louis XVI had suggested that the reasonable sum of 20 million livres would be sufficient to meet the court’s outlays. The committee saw this not only as acceptable but also considered that all previous debts emanating from the old *Maison du Roi* be subsumed into the national debt so that the new constitutional court could start life afresh without any encumbrance.⁴⁸ The second chapter of the report also suggested that a separate stipend be created for the sustenance of the households of the king’s brothers.⁴⁹

So, from the very beginning, the members of the Constituent Assembly showed themselves amenable toward the establishment of a generous fund for the crown. Yet, the broad problem that characterised

⁴² AP VIII, 365–71. ⁴³ AP IX, 139–46.

⁴⁴ Boshier, *French Finances 1770–1795*, 231–52. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 99. ⁴⁶ AP X, 71–2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

the relationship between crown and deputies, in the early Revolution, was that both parties indulged in the politics of the 'possible' rather than those of the 'actual'. At all times, both the monarch and the nation's representatives were trying to delineate the limits of their respective spheres of competence. They found it difficult to envisage practical collaboration. The king was the despot of his own court and the deputies were the ultimate masters of law-making and the public finances. Neither party was permitted to leap over the fence and interfere.

On 2 January 1790 Adrien Duport proposed a motion asking that the king officially declare his specific requirements for the civil list.⁵⁰ Two days later Le Chapelier demanded that a deputation be sent to humbly beseech the king's instructions on this matter. It was worded thus:

That a deputation be sent to the king to enquire as to the sum His Majesty desires that the Nation puts aside for his personal expenses and those of his august family and household, and that M. le Président heading the deputation be charged with beseeching His Majesty [in coming to his decision] to consult less his desire for economies than to consider the dignity of the Nation which requires that the throne of a great monarch be surrounded with great splendour.⁵¹

In this motion the instructions to the president are remarkable. In November 1789 economy, and fiscal rigour, had been the key requirement for the new household and a mere two months later national *éclat* had become the principal concern. It seems clear that, as the politicians of the Constituent tried to consolidate their power, they wanted to solve the thorny issue of the role of the crown by neutralising it through national munificence. The crown was now the greatest gem in the dignity of the Nation. Louis XVI showed himself shrewd at this important juncture. After a long and laudatory preamble, he replied it was impossible for him to decide a sum as long as the true amounts of the nation's revenues and expenses remained unknown.⁵² Again the king seems to have considered that his household and the national finances were inseparable.

The first half of 1790 was a time when the crown attempted with vigour to regain the political initiative it had disastrously lost in the previous year. On 4 February, Louis made an impromptu visit to the Assembly and expressed his admiration for the deputies' work, and, perhaps somewhat rashly, declared himself the leader of the Revolution. There is no denying that through these gestures the crown reached the

⁵⁰ AP XI, 60. ⁵¹ Ibid., 68. ⁵² Ibid., 107.

zenith of its popularity.⁵³ Yet this was to be a fleeting phenomenon that was soon to evaporate.

On 11 April, the *livre rouge* of pensions was published. It revealed the substantial sums which the crown had lavished on detested favourites and courtiers such as the Polignac clan.⁵⁴ When it came to the royal chapel few were impressed by Cardinal Montmorency's argument 'let not thy left hand know, what thy right doeth' for keeping the royal alms secret.⁵⁵ This list of aristocrats and royal hangers-on caused great scandal and greatly damaged the royal credibility as a financially responsible institution. After all, the royal pensions for the period 1774 to 1787 amounted to over a quarter of a billion livres.⁵⁶

As the request for the creation of the civil list became more pressing, the court made several gestures to stave off public criticism. The reduction of archaic ceremonial was a key medium to achieve this objective. The unegalitarian *Honneurs de la Cour* were abolished, dining arrangements were simplified, the Capitaineries des Chasses were disbanded and support to philanthropic endeavours increased. On 5 June (a day after the abolition of court presentations) the issue of the *liste civile* was tackled with greater earnestness. Lebrun (Napoleon's future Second Consul) read another report from the Comité des Finances which, again, reiterated the arguments from January:

Do you not wish that your king be the most magnificent of kings, as you are the greatest of nations? You cannot wish to destroy the splendour which distinguishes the French court. The rich foreigner must be so impressed [by our crown] that he will decide to dwell amongst us. We do not wish to abandon this urbanity which in the bad old days made us forget our servitude. From henceforth we shall happily tolerate an innocent luxury, as it will no longer overburden the public revenues. Your wish is no doubt that this monarch ... may dispose [freely] of the revenues of his august family. The restorer of French liberty cannot be subject to any uncertainty relating to the expenses of his

⁵³ The Piedmontese Ambassador reported 'It seems that the principal goal of this decision is to demonstrate to the Nation that the king approves the new constitution, which is being written, and that through this public declaration of his support for the work of the assembly he seeks to re-establish in the mind of the populace confidence and good order by suppressing any doubts regarding the question of whether his assent to the new laws has been freely given. The affectionate and touching words used to express his sentiments and hopes for the future tranquillity and happiness of his realm caused a great sensation not only among the deputies, to whom [these words] were addressed, but later [filtered through] to the whole city and the municipal officers have ordered public illuminations to bear witness to their pleasure, their satisfaction with the sovereign's explicit adherence to the principles of the revolution'. ASTo, Francia, Lettere Ministri, Mazzo 236, dépêche no.19, 5 février 1790.

⁵⁴ 'This horrid book, each dirty page filled with the garbage of aristocracy and the criminal weakness of the monarchy'. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, I, 364.

⁵⁵ (AV Matthew 6:3) AP XIII, 296. ⁵⁶ Ibid., 189.

household. I propose therefore that you decree that His Majesty will again be supplicated to fix his expenditure in a manner that reflects the majesty of his throne and the loyalty of a great Nation.⁵⁷

This recommendation was accepted unanimously. Lebrun's further proposal that the king's brothers receive 2 million livres each and that Artois's sons be accorded 700,000 livres was postponed to a later date.⁵⁸

The king, at this stage, could not temporise further. Five days later Louis XVI put his cards on the table and wrote to the President of the Assembly. He asked that his personal *liste civile* be established at 25 million livres and the queen, as stipulated in her marriage contract, was to be accorded a separate yearly dowry payment of 4 million livres.⁵⁹ The Assembly, taken up in a moment of extreme excitement, decided to approve the contents of the king's letter without actually legislating and defining its terms. There remained some notable ambiguities within the royal letter which soon the Assembly would need to clarify. Yet one essential fact was clear: for the first time in the history of France the *Rex Christianissimus* was now a salaried officer of the state.

Monsieur, whose position was far from certain, set up a committee which was composed of his most senior domestic officials with a mandate to lobby the Assembly to double the funds needed to run of his household.⁶⁰ He argued that his marriage contract with the kingdom of Sardinia specified that the comtesse de Provence was to receive at least one and a half million livres during her sojourn in France. If he was to honour this agreement to the letter he would be left penniless.⁶¹ In spite of these pressing representations made by Monsieur the issue of how to fund the king's eldest brother was never resolved. In 1791 Monsieur successfully escaped to the Austrian Netherlands.

Louis XVI soon realised that, though he could rely on substantial revenues, the nationalisation of the royal domain signified that he was effectively left without property. In late August 1790 he publicly demanded that the Tuileries-Louvre complex and the royal palaces of Versailles, Fontainebleau, Compiègne, Saint-Cloud, Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Rambouillet with their substantial demesnes be declared the king's personal private property.⁶² The deputies welcomed the king's request but postponed their decision to a later date.⁶³ This marked the end of the Revolution and the monarchy's fiscal honeymoon. On 12 November 1790 Randon de La Tour's position as treasurer of the king's household was abolished.⁶⁴ This official had been charged with

⁵⁷ AP XVI, 110–11. ⁵⁸ Ibid., 111. ⁵⁹ AP XVI, 158–9. ⁶⁰ AN R⁵ 483 fols.4–50.

⁶¹ Ibid., fols. 4–7. ⁶² AP XVIII, 364–5. ⁶³ Ibid., 365.

⁶⁴ AP XX, 391, and Bosher, *French Finances 1770–1795*, 246–7, and 337.

transferring funds from the royal treasury to the court. Symbolically the last link which tied the state finances to that of the king's private purse was broken.

In the next year the public outcry over the extravagance of the civil list became far louder as the controversy over the Civil Constitution of the Clergy placed Louis XVI in a most difficult position. The king's pious aunts decided to leave France as the religious debate heated up. The deputy Camus asked that the civil list be reduced to take into account the emigration of close members of the king's family. After a furious debate the issue was postponed to a later date.⁶⁵ Yet dissatisfaction was far from at an end. The radical deputy Gaultier de Biauzat accused the king of accommodating refractory priests in Versailles.⁶⁶ Already in January the journalist Prudhomme had unleashed a litany of abuse on the Assembly's subservience to the monarch.

Doubtless it was the antiquated and moribund ceremonial of the *ancien régime* which did not allow the constituent assembly to remain seated in the presence of the executive power. It is not surprising that the man with a 25 million [livres] salary responded with a mere approving nod of his condescending head to the humble nation which pays his wages.⁶⁷

Those distrustful of the monarchy were able to use the antiquated practices of the court to indict a man who was no longer the sovereign but an employee of the nation. The notion that the king was the Premier Fonctionnaire de l'État was gaining ground among the radicals of the Assembly and the press.⁶⁸ The image of a salaried crown reinforced this point of view, which relegated the king to being a mere civil servant and not an independent power in his own right. As this opinion took root, the ceremonial practices of the court became more constrained. Moderate politicians set to work at this juncture to create a new court system which would satisfy both sides.

In May 1791 the Assembly finally realised that the king's letter of the previous June was too vague to have full force of law. It decided to regulate the civil list further in a decree comprising nine articles.⁶⁹ The modifications were admittedly minor. The king's private debts up to July 1790 were now subsumed into the public debt. The only other noticeable change was that the crown jewels and other treasures were placed in the Cabinets des Medailles for safe-keeping. The main

⁶⁵ AP XXIII 374. ⁶⁶ Ibid., XXV, 130–1.

⁶⁷ *Révolutions de Paris*, 1–8 janvier 1791, no.78, 670.

⁶⁸ *Orateur du Peuple*, no. 42, 323–6; *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, no.17, 145–6; *Révolutions de Paris*, 1791 no.93, 60; and *Le Patriote Français*, no.978, 422.

⁶⁹ AP XXVI, 466–7.

sticking point was the reimbursement of *charges* of the king's household. The Assembly accepted that these were to be refunded, but deferred the decision on the manner of their liquidation to a future date. The central complaint by officers of the royal household was that their *brevets de retenue* (certificates of office) undervalued the price of their position at court.⁷⁰ The discussion was deferred and eventually a settlement was reached. Yet again, the Assembly had been asked to underwrite the private affairs of the court.

It is little wonder that Barère (future member of the committee of public safety during the Terror) the *rapporteur* (spokesman) for the Comité des Domaines, showed little enthusiasm for the recommendations of the committee for which he was spokesman. He started his speech with a damning indictment of 'representational culture':

It is essential, for despotism to lock itself away in a distant palace, surrounded by oriental luxury, similarly to when in antiquity divinities were placed at the back of temples and forests to take advantage of the gullibility of men.⁷¹

For this politician, the spectacular opulence of the royal residences was evidence of the corruption and injustice of the *ancien régime*. The Bourbon monarchy had used patronage of arts, ceremonial and monumental palaces as an epideictic discourse to blind the masses to their true subservience. A new concept was put forward by this future member of the committee of public safety. He stated that the Tuileries-Louvre complex should be transformed into an even more grandiose and virtuous building programme. Pre-empting in many ways Visconti's project under the Second Empire, Barère wanted to link these two palaces with a central complex to be known as the Palais National.⁷² It was to be a public museum where the 'national genius' for the arts and sciences was to be put on display. It was also to be a place of residence where legislative and executive branches of government were to live together as one large familial unit. The royal household and the seat of parliamentary representation were to be one and the same.⁷³ Barère concluded by giving a confused sketch of how the *majesté nationale* was divided among king and deputies:

No! It is not for the king, it is not for the superstitions surrounding the throne that you will establish this magnificent representation of power which so often corrupted the hearts of kings and subjugated the minds of the people; it is on behalf of the Nation itself that you will act. The king is the head, or agent, of the power delegated by the Constitution and he is without doubt the first civil

⁷⁰ Ibid., 467. ⁷¹ Ibid., 469. ⁷² Ibid., 471. ⁷³ Ibid.

servant of the state. But seated on the throne at the heart of the capital of the Empire he represents in some way the national dignity; he is the visible sign of the majesty of the Nation: it is therefore necessary to surround him with objects that will elicit public esteem. It is certain that a free people are masters of their own destiny, they confide to their representatives the power to make laws and to the king they bestow a portion of their dignity.⁷⁴

The king could sit immobile on his throne, as a proxy for the national glory, as long as he abdicated all power and law-making ambitions. It seems redundant to specify that, once a monarch is divested of all functions and actual power, public opinion soon begins to question the utility of monarchy as an institution.

The flight to Varennes, the following month, accelerated the downward spiral in the monarchy's fortunes. As early as 8 July 1791 the marquis de Condorcet presented one of the first openly republican speeches entitled 'On the Republic, or is a king necessary for the establishment of freedom' at the Cercle Social.⁷⁵ The Constitution which emerged in September had been revised after the king's attempted escape. Chapter 2, section 1, defines the constitutional role of the monarch in twelve articles. Four of these articles deal with theoretical constitutional crises triggered by a set of specific contingencies: the royal refusal to swear the civic oath, the regal decision to escape and the monarch raising an army to wage war on his subjects.⁷⁶ At the heart of the Constitution of 1791 was a deep-seated distrust of royalty, whose roots went back to the very beginnings of the Revolution.⁷⁷ For most deputies, Louis XVI had indelibly blotted his copybook.

Naturally, in 1792, the *liste civile* suffered the same fate as the monarchy. In June the terms of the endowment were changed, so as to allow the king's cousin the duc d'Orléans, who now referred to himself as Philippe Égalité, to receive a pension.⁷⁸ The allowance of 80 thousand livres for cabinet expenses was revoked.⁷⁹ The redefinition of the conditions of this agreement highlighted the Legislative Assembly's disillusionment with the court. To force Louis XVI to accept his rebellious cousin as a prince of higher status than his own two brothers was a deliberate insult. The suspension of the civil list on the evening of 10 August 1792 must have come as somewhat of relief to its beneficiary.⁸⁰ From its creation to its termination it had raised little but dissatisfaction. It was a powerful symbol of the monarchy's loss of power. After June 1790,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 470.

⁷⁵ David Williams, *Condorcet and Modernity* (Cambridge, 2004), 31.

⁷⁶ Furet and Halévi, *La Monarchie Républicaine*, 272–3.

⁷⁷ Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 48–9.

⁷⁸ AP XLIV, 435. ⁷⁹ Ibid. ⁸⁰ AP XLVII, 647.

Louis XVI neglected the proposed reforms for the re-organisation of his royal household into a constitutional court.

Sieyès: 'Qu'est que c'est le Roi?'

Sieyès has a vigorous mind to the highest degree; his heart is cold and his soul pusillanimous: his supposed inflexibility is all in his head. He behaves inhumanly, because his pride stops him from climbing down and fear will bind him inescapably to his crimes. It is not for altruism that he espouses the cause of equality, but rather it is the violent hatred against the power of others [which drives him].⁸¹

Talleyrand's insightful character sketch of Emmanuel Sieyès reveals a common assumption held by numerous contemporaries: the abbé was a better metaphysician than a political actor.⁸² There is certainly something of the opportunist in Sieyès. Yet a naïve and non-pragmatic politician could hardly have survived the Revolutionary decade and Napoleonic Empire with equal skill. Fundamentally, Sieyès seems to have favoured some form of liberal constitutional monarchy however this sentiment was counter-balanced by an obsessive distrust of executive authority.

His own career as a courtier had been cut short by the death of Louis XVI's aunt, Mme Sophie, in 1782. His position as her chaplain was forfeited. He was not transferred to one of the other available royal chaplaincies. Despite being unable to make headway at Versailles, Sieyès did benefit from the protection of Monseigneur de Lubersac. This influential courtly cleric became Bishop of Chartres in 1780. Here he appointed his protégé vicaire général of his diocese.⁸³ The abbé's career certainly refutes an overly Darntonian reading of the social origins of the post-1789 political establishment. Sieyès, most certainly, was not one of the *ancien régime's* failures.⁸⁴ Acquainted personally with the most influential intellectuals of the age he was certainly a well integrated figure in the *beau monde*.⁸⁵ It is most likely that Sieyès was personally

⁸¹ Charles-Maurice Prince de Talleyrand-Périgord, *Mémoires du prince de Talleyrand 1754–1808*, ed. Duc de Broglie, 5 vols (Paris, 1891), I, 211. For the latest critique of these memoirs, see Robin Harris, *Talleyrand Betrayed and Saviour of France* (London, 2007), x–xi; for an in-depth discussion of these reminiscences refer to Emmanuel de Waresquiel, ed., *Mémoires et Correspondances du Prince de Talleyrand, édition intégrale* (Paris, 2007), i–xxxix.

⁸² Forsyth, *Reason and Revolution*, 29–30.

⁸³ Jean Denis Bredin, *Sieyès, la clé de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1988), 51 and 57.

⁸⁴ Robert Darnton, 'The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France', *Past and Present*, 51 (1971), 93–5; and cf. Bredin, *Sieyès*, 93–7.

⁸⁵ Wick, *A Conspiracy of Well-Intentioned Men*, 48 and 183–95.

known to Philippe d'Orléans and that he probably participated in the duke's electoral campaign for the Estates General (many suggest that he drafted the manifesto for this campaign).⁸⁶

He was among the most prominent politicians of 1789.⁸⁷ His pamphlets, writings and speeches had a programmatic quality which armed the Third Estate with a strong intellectual justification for its decision to seize the representative monopoly for the Nation.⁸⁸ Sieyès's tactic was to delegitimise the privileged orders by stating that their rights were historical usurpations and thus could easily be over-ridden.⁸⁹ On the contrary, the Third Estates' claim to representative power lay both in the natural order and in economic reality.⁹⁰ The majority's will was to be represented through a limited franchise which took due notice of the productive forces within society and the economy.⁹¹ This limited democracy, the abbé was sure, would preserve individual liberty and cherish the common good. It was a point of view which he never abandoned throughout the entire revolutionary period.⁹² By implication, the executive was not equal to the legislative power. The king was to be subordinate to the will of the national representation.

Having expended so much energy in the elimination of noble privileges and in the creation of a viable representative system, Sieyès turned his gaze to the question of the king's position in the new order. In 1787 the abbé's papers, previously feared lost, entered the National Archives in Paris.⁹³ They reveal the great care and intellectual diligence with which this thinker sought to articulate his ideas. The dossier, containing his thoughts on monarchy from 1790 to 1791, is of particular interest.⁹⁴ These notes were never published nor presented in a speech to the Assembly. It seems evident that Sieyès was working to create an alternative model with which to fill the void left by the

⁸⁶ Talleyrand, *Mémoires*, I, 208–11.

⁸⁷ Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 44; and Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 257–8.

⁸⁸ Forsyth, *Reason and Revolution*, 98–104.

⁸⁹ William H. Sewall, Jr, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyès and 'What is the Third Estate?'* (London, 1994), 121–30.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 68–9.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 88–94; this is at odds with the Rousseauist concept of the 'General Will' which Furet believed dominated the Early Revolution. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Ware, 1998), Book II, chapter 3, 'Whether the General Will can Err?'; and Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 49.

⁹² Forsyth, *Reason and Revolution*, 180–94.

⁹³ Françoise Hildesheimer, *Guide des Papiers privés d'époque révolutionnaire* (Paris, 1987), 82–3; Robert Marquant, *Les Archives Sieyès aux Archives Nationales* (Paris, 1970), 7–17; and Forsyth, *Reason and Revolution*, 13–15.

⁹⁴ AN 284 AP 4, dossier 7, 'Le roi'.

rejection of the *monarchiens*'s Anglo-Saxon model of constitutional kingship.

When examining the multitude of pages, scribblings, notes, drafts and corrections within this dossier, it is important to identify the starting point of the abbé's thoughts on monarchy. It seems to me that the outline for a pamphlet entitled 'qu'est ce que le Roi?' (what is the king?) is a good candidate for such a starting point. As was Sieyès's habit, he tackled the problem of royalty first by defining a guiding principle, and then investigated its practical implications. The first proposition put forward by this document was that the question of what constituted a king could only be answered in a free society governed by a representative system.⁹⁵ After this bold opening, Sieyès identified the division of labour, differences in wealth and conflicting factional interests as justifying the separation of society into those who are administrators and those who are administrated.

The duties of the rulers were briefly listed. These included the guarantee of the national community's liberties and property. Those who govern were also charged with 'perfecting', through the medium of education, the citizenry's moral and intellectual faculties.⁹⁶ Finally the end goal of all human association was the freedom to grow and prosper in happiness. Here the notes abruptly end.⁹⁷ Yet it seems likely from this beginning that the king was to be placed at the head of this administrative class and chiefly play the symbolic role of constitutional guarantor.

In another set of notes relating to the issue of the royal family Sieyès tried to develop these thoughts.⁹⁸ Principally he argued that, in the new order, the royal family would not be members of the nobility. They were the king's *suppléants* (substitutes). Their title of *prince français* was nominal and not a mark of honour.⁹⁹ In the New France the monarchy was essentially elective in character. Sieyès proposed, somewhat confusedly, that the king's power, like that of the deputies, derived from a delegation (not mandate) of authority from the Nation.¹⁰⁰ Although nobody voted for the king, he was a representative, and it was conceivable that the nation, if unhappy with its first citizen, could withdraw the power it had entrusted to his care. The decision to designate the king's eldest son as his replacement, the abbé argued, was to thwart the ambitions of

⁹⁵ Ibid., dossier 7, chemise 'qu'est ce que le roi', fol.2. ⁹⁶ Ibid., fol.3.

⁹⁷ Ibid., fol.4. ⁹⁸ Ibid., dossier 7, chemise 'la famille du roi'.

⁹⁹ Ibid., fol.1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., fol.8; and in France today, as during the Revolution, parliamentary deputies still have elected replacements, which are also elected. See Malcolm Crook, *Elections in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2002), 70.

professional politicians.¹⁰¹ The creation of a family outside of ordinary society, whose members were trained to act as constitutional guarantors, was an effective means of ensuring that a prudent and impartial executive authority would emerge.

It was apparent to Sieyès that his redefinition of the king's legitimacy, and the nature of his office, also entailed a restructuring of those institutions traditionally associated with royalty. Among his papers two projected reorganisations of the court and royal household are to be found.¹⁰² These two pieces are entitled: 'projet d'organisation de la maison du roi [1790–1791]' and 'sur l'organisation intérieure d'une nouvelle maison du roi [s.n.]'.¹⁰³ The documents are in parts identical. The main difference lies in an additional section, describing reformed court ceremonial, found in the *projet* but omitted from the *organisation intérieure*. It seems from the corrections, annotations and the at times illegible handwriting that the *projet* was a draft while the *organisation intérieure* was a more polished and abridged version of this document.¹⁰⁴

In these two plans it was clear that the organisation of the constitutional court should revolve around the three traits and functions that defined the king's role.

1. The monarch was to be the richest citizen in the realm. The unmatched extent of this wealth was [paradoxically perhaps] aimed at reaffirming the equality of all citizens. Nobody could be as rich as the king, this fact alone eliminated negative ambition and unhealthy competition within society.
2. The king was the head of the civil service, and charged with representing the nation's dignity.
3. The ruler was also to be made Grand Master of National Solemnities. He was to coordinate all festivities celebrated on a national scale. (Sieyès was furious that the Constituent Assembly had not specified this aspect of the king's role during the civil list debates.)¹⁰⁵

The household, in consequence, was to be divided into three separate departments to take into account this tripartite role of a constitutional king. The domestic department was to be known as Service de l'Hôtel, the section dealing with the monarch's public and representational

¹⁰¹ Ibid., fols 9–10.

¹⁰² AN 284 AP 4, dossier 7, 'projet d'organisation de la maison du Roi 1790–1791' and 'sur l'organisation intérieur d'une nouvelle maison du roi'.

¹⁰³ To distinguish these two documents the first will be referred to as the *projet* and the second as the *organisation intérieure*.

¹⁰⁴ See *organisation intérieure* fols 1–16.

¹⁰⁵ See *organisation intérieure* fols 3–6; and *projet* fols 2–4.

functions was to be named Service du Palais. Finally the Grande Maison du Roi was to deal with national festivities and was to be staffed by a diverse group of officers. Sieyès insisted that, in order for these projects to be popular and successful, all the old titles, ceremonies and internal hierarchies of the *ancien régime* were to be suppressed.

Essential to all of these plans was the notion of *Primatie* (primacy).¹⁰⁶ Sieyès sought, through this concept, to explain why the king's pre-eminence was socially beneficial:

This [*primatie*] is an attribute held exclusively by the king, because the king alone, through the constitution, is without peers, overlords or princes. It is well understood that if the law has created a [National] chief it is for the express purpose of forbidding others to aspire to this position and therefore the [king's] role does not injure natural equality. On the contrary, it is the most efficient means which the *art social* provides for guaranteeing universal equality, and let us not forget the words of Pliny to Trajan 'we need a prince in order to avoid having a master'.¹⁰⁷

A constitutional basis for an individual citizen's primacy over the collectivity was extrapolated as a means of preserving equality:

I think therefore that *primatie* is an essential attribute given by the law to the individual whom the constitution calls to wear the crown. It is under this stipulation that he is provided with a *primatiale* establishment and household, in such a way that one would regard as a criminal usurper anyone wishing to arrogate the same distinctive honours and appearances to themselves. Through such an act they would be declared enemies of equality and ridiculous apes.¹⁰⁸

Thus the notion of *primatie* was created by Sieyès to enable the king to assert his supremacy while simultaneously acting as the guarantor of equality among citizens. The obligatory separation of the king from his courtiers was at the heart of the new constitutional court settlement envisaged by Sieyès. Society was to be regenerated, thanks to an independent monarchy shackled to the principle of equality and the destruction of nobility.

Most nebulous of all the ideas expressed in these two works is the concept of the *cortège du trône*.¹⁰⁹ It is at this stage in his writing that Sieyès's thoughts take a decided turn towards the bizarre. Whereas the first two departments of the royal and constitutional household were to be charged with the care of the king's person, the third section made the monarch a mere public functionary. He was placed in

¹⁰⁶ See *organisation intérieure* fol.4; and *projet* fol.3.

¹⁰⁷ See *organisation intérieure* fol.4. ¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, fol.5.

¹⁰⁹ See *organisation intérieure* fol.7; and *projet* fol.5.

charge of maintaining the pomp and splendour of the national crown and throne. The abbé phrases this idea in the form of an order directed at Louis XVI:

Busy yourself with surrounding the crown, with all the magnificence, with all the splendour which must follow the supreme symbol of the union of all primary assemblies. Undertake, if we can describe it thus, the *enterprise* of the *cortège du trône*. On this condition we will double your civil list instead of twelve millions you shall have twenty-five.¹¹⁰

According to this scheme, the size of the civil list was contingent on the crown's ability to stage successfully a spectacle of *éclat* and magnificence, worthy of the new constitutional regime.

In the *projet* the king was defined as the 'sole true organiser of national solemnities and the sole true dignitary of the crown'.¹¹¹ The abbé felt that the king should be considered the sole public official of the court. The domestic officers of the royal household could be admitted into the *cortège du trône*, in order to help stage unspecified national festivities, yet they could never be considered public functionaries. This system allowed Sieyès to define the domestic staff of the king as private individuals who temporarily exercised public functions. It seems that the abbé wanted to make the status of royal officials incompatible with other public offices. It was strange that he went to such complicated lengths when an easier solution was clearly suggested in 'qu'est que c'est le tiers état?'.¹¹² In this earlier pamphlet, domestic servants had been disfranchised ruthlessly. They were condemned as incapable of expressing a political will independent from that of their masters. This explanation would have been an easier means of excluding members of the *Maison du Roi* from politics. It is clear that the abbé was navigating through uncharted waters with great difficulty.

When it came to the practical expression of the glory of the New France, the concrete alternatives to the *ancien régime* were somewhat surprising in their diversity. The new ceremonial service of the constitutional household was to have at its summit a simple Master of Solemnities, charged with the overall coordination of public spectacles.¹¹³ His deputies were to carry in procession the different symbols of the national regalia: crown, throne, orb, sword, sceptre and great seal. Three 'centuries' of foot guards armed only with swords, as firearms gave the intolerable impression that the king was frightened by the inhabitants of his capital, were also to participate in these festivals.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ See, *organisation intérieure* fol.8. ¹¹¹ See *projet* fol.6.

¹¹² Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers État*, 26. ¹¹³ See *projet* fols 12–13.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fol.13.

The last element in this revolutionary pastiche was a mounted cortege. Three captains, one clad in red, another in white and the last one in blue, were to lead this mounted escort. For no apparent reason, the horsemen making up this cavalry unit were to be picked from among six different nationalities.¹¹⁵ It is unclear where the abbé hoped to find the thirty-nine Turks, Poles, Russians, Spaniards, Italians and Swiss nationals making up this heterogeneous foreign unit. Despite understanding that a redefined executive authority required a new mode of ceremonial representation, the abbé did not have a sense of what this would practically entail.

The decrees, which were drafted to give these reorganisations force of law, were far from clear. These chiefly dealt with the division of the household into three departments, the salaries of officials and their exclusion from public office. They gave little idea of how the king was to represent publicly a monarchy founded on the principle of equality among all citizens. Furthermore, the final article, in both versions of these plans, expressed distrust of the monarchy. It advised the Assembly to create at each parliamentary session a commission of twelve deputies to supervise the administration of the *Maison du Roi*. The constitutional *régime* was *de nouveau* grounded in the distrust of the monarch placed at its head.

Sieyès's private papers epitomise the problems which politicians faced when it came to trying to accommodate the old monarchy within the new state. They wanted a symbolically charged and charismatic executive ready to lead the *Grande Nation* into an age of prosperity and progress. Yet, at the same time, they wanted this sacred centre to be docile and to erase its three centuries of dynastic history.¹¹⁶ Louis XVI was docile but not devoid of moral conviction. Such an abdication of authority went against his deeply held belief that the political nation was as much the consequence of the natural order of things as it was the manifestation of a providential design.

The administration of the *liste civile*

On 13 December 1790, Arnaud de Laporte wrote to Louis XVI to accept his appointment as Intendant de la Liste Civile.¹¹⁷ It has often been remarked that he was one of the most important confidants of

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ See *organisation intérieure* fols 12–14; and *projet* fols 7–8.

¹¹⁷ AN C 184, no. 301.

the king.¹¹⁸ During the Revolution he and the Duc de Cossé Brissac were to exercise an administrative monopoly over the royal household, especially after the mass emigrations of 1791. Laporte came from an important family of court functionaries. His pre-Revolutionary career was spent as a high-ranking official in the Ministry of the Marine.¹¹⁹ He had been appointed Minister of the Marine in the famous Ministry of the Hundred Hours, just before the fall of the Bastille. After this event he had fled to Spain.¹²⁰

From his initial letter, his unconditional devotion to the king is beyond question. The Intendant stated that he would only accept his master as the 'sole judge of his conduct'.¹²¹ During the period 1791 to 1792 Laporte was to play a most dynamic and vigorous role, using the funds of the *liste civile* to participate in the battle to win over public opinion to the king's cause. He probably became the most detested courtier in France after delivering, in 1791, the king's Varennes declaration to the National Assembly.¹²² It is also notable that he was the second person to be executed in the aftermath of 10 August 1792.¹²³

Among the papers of the *armoire de fer* are a great number of letters, reports and notes addressed by Arnaud de Laporte to Louis XVI.¹²⁴ Many are signed and written in his distinctive hand, others unfortunately are not. There is a project detailing how the royal household should be reorganised into six separate departments. This document is undated, unsigned and makes no reference to the civil list. It therefore seems safe to assume that it was written in early 1790, when Laporte was still away from Paris. Having said this, it is equally possible that he was in correspondence with the author of this scheme. The reorganisation proposed, though rudimentary, fits well with the subsequent administration which Laporte implemented in 1791.¹²⁵ The conjecture proposed here is that this plan was written by the duc de Villequier, one of the Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre, who was very close to the king in the early days at the Tuileries. The contents of the *mémoire*, which are analogous to Laporte's subsequent designs, strongly suggest that this absent official was the *éminence grise* behind this proposal.

The first chapter of the report, 'on the means of reconciling external splendour with economies', provided an interesting glimpse into how

¹¹⁸ Sylvie Nicolas, ed., *Les Derniers Maîtres des Requêtes de l'Ancien Régime (1771–1789)*; *Dictionnaire Prosographique* (Paris, 1998), 218–24; and Albert, vicomte Révérend, *Les Familles Titrées et Anoblies au XIXe Siècle*, 6 vols (Paris, 1974), III, 187.

¹¹⁹ *Bio Uni*, XXXIV, 144–5. ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 144. ¹²¹ AN C 184, no. 301.

¹²² Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 189. ¹²³ Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy*, 316.

¹²⁴ AN C 183–9.

¹²⁵ AN C 184, no. 143; and also cited in Mansel, 'The Court of France 1814–1830', 160–1.

courtiers themselves saw the role of monarchical representation in these constitutional times.¹²⁶ The author of this piece stated that unidentified *malintentionnées* had diminished the dignity of the crown by making it impossible for the royal spectacle to be deployed with its usual efficacy. This was a common view for the times. As the comte d'Hézecques, at the time one of the royal pages, remarked:

Ceremonies are one the most powerful ramparts of royal authority. Strip the prince of the splendour which surrounds him and he will become before the eyes of the multitude a mere mortal. This is because the people respect their sovereign less for his virtues and rank than for his gold and the pomp which surrounds him.¹²⁷

For the *homme de cour* writing this report, the issue was not one of accepting the new circumstances wholeheartedly. On the contrary, it was a question of regaining the initiative by representing royal splendour with the means currently available to the king. The essential element in the scheme was the abolition of the system of semesters and quarters which caused a nearly fourfold increase in the staff costs of the court.¹²⁸ The author clearly believed that an efficient and economic management of the royal household would recapture lost popularity. At the same time, he asserted that nothing in the magnificence, hierarchy and lavish display of ceremony need be changed. The plan here was not one of reform, but rather an expedient with which to weather the storm. It was suggested that the titles of officers should be changed, and that persons who were overtly reactionary should be replaced with more discreet and open-minded individuals.¹²⁹

In April 1791, the royal family was stopped by crowds from travelling to the palace of Saint-Cloud on the outskirts of Paris. In response to this event Laporte wrote to Louis XVI and advised him on how to deal with this crisis. The *Intendant's* proposal was quite eccentric:

If the king had an army, he could resist and follow his conscience, or will, but when he is alone, he must bide his time, the liberty unleashed [by the Revolution] is chimerical I know, but it has a language which has become that of the people, and it is necessary that the king speak not merely through his writings; but also directly to all those who surround him. I am tempted to advise the king to act as Dr Willis behaved towards the king of England during his recent illness. When he [George III] behaved extravagantly; he [Willis] reacted immediately in a similar way, the doctor would break a glass, and the noise which it made, would stun his patient.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ François-Felix Comte d'Hézecques, *Page à la cour de Louis XVI: Souvenirs du Comte d'Hézecques* (Paris, 1987), 62.

¹²⁸ AN C 184, no. 143, chapter 1. ¹²⁹ Ibid., chapter 2.

¹³⁰ AN C 184, no. 208.

The appreciation expressed in this letter for England's management of its own regal crisis was going a stage too far. The direct comparison of the Parisian *canaille* to George III and of Louis XVI playing the part of Dr Francis Willis,¹³¹ to heal the madness of the riotous crowds, was, at the very least, disingenuous. It probably started to become apparent to Louis XVI that compromise, aimed at buying time, was not an effective solution. The situation was hardly going to calm down of its own accord. It was for this reason that, very soon after the Saint-Cloud incident, the planning process for the flight to Varennes started in earnest.

The evidence from the *armoire de fer* highlights that the monarchy was willing to make economies on the manner in which it expressed its supremacy, but refused at all times to dilute the content of that message. The king would not be relegated to a position of ceremonious officialdom, nor could he accept that his legitimacy was contingent on the *volonté de la nation*, as expressed in the Constitution. The religious and historical elements, which formed the semiotic arsenal of the Bourbon monarchy, would not be discarded for the needs of the moment. Louis XVI believed himself to be the trustee of a positive historical legacy.¹³² This made it impossible for him to communicate with politicians who interpreted this legacy as the font of *ancien régime* corruption.

The majesty of the national throne

In 1791, the only equestrian portrait of Louis XVI, as a constitutional monarch, was produced by the artist and professional soldier Jean-François Carteaux.¹³³ Art historians have understandably ignored this average tableau, today stored in the vaults of the Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon. It does however capture well the crisis of representation suffered by the institution nominally at the helm of the new constitutional regime.¹³⁴

The unathletic figure of the mounted king was matched only by the stoutness of his steed. Louis XVI, as is emphasised by the play of lighting, was supposed to be portrayed leading his nation toward a brighter

¹³¹ Hibbert, *George III*, 283–4.

¹³² Girault de Coursac, *L'éducation d'un Roi: Louis XVI*, 193–94.

¹³³ Bio Uni, VII, 74–5. Carteaux became a Revolutionary general and was placed in command of the forces which subdued the Federalist revolt of Marseilles in 1793. See William Scott, *Terror and Repression in Revolutionary Marseilles* (London, 1973), 117–26, 178–82 and 274–81; and Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict in the French Navy*, 190 and 19.

¹³⁴ Claire Constans, *Musée National du Château de Versailles Catalogue: Les Peintures*, 2 vols (Paris, 1995), I, 143.



Figure 3 *Equestrian Portrait of Louis XVI as a Constitutional Monarch* (1791), by Jean-François Carteaux, Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon

future. However one cannot help but detect the barren and devastated landscape in the background of the canvas. Traditional royal insignia: a sword (with the less usual inscription: *la loi*, the law) and the orders of chivalry (the Saint-Esprit, Golden Fleece and Saint-Louis) sit uncomfortably, with the only symbol of the new era, the tricolour cockade. To make matters worse, Louis XVI was painted wearing the red *habit habillé* which he had donned for his triumphant excursion to Cherbourg in 1786 to inspect construction work for a new harbour. This piece of clothing was the very suit which he was to pack for his ill-fated flight to Varennes and with which he hoped to rally the forces under the command of the marquis de Bouillé.¹³⁵ It is, *en fait*, the picture of a

¹³⁵ Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (London, 2003), 49.

traditional Bourbon monarch either unwilling, or incapable, of playing the role of a constitutional king.

The endowment of a civil list emphasised the willingness on the part of the politicians of the National Assembly to set the regenerated monarchy of France on a firm financial footing. Nevertheless the discussion relating to the powers and role of the crown never progressed to the same extent. From the debates on the nature of the royal veto in 1789 through to the army reforms of 1791 the deputies of the Constituent showed themselves highly distrustful of executive power. The brainstorming of the abbé Sieyès during this same time highlighted the precarious intellectual effort made by politicians to accommodate the monarchy in the renewed nation. At the same time the loose ends and inconsistencies in this politician's theoretical musings emphasise that the mistrust toward Louis XVI tended to overpower the determination to rehabilitate the Bourbon dynasty.

Equally, the court expressed a marked lack of enthusiasm toward the prospect of reform. The organisation and spectacle of the royal household was so deeply embedded in the mentality of both the reigning dynasty and high nobility that any reduction in its *éclat* was interpreted as a loss of prestige. Each proposal, or decree that emanated from the new democratic institutions of France, was met with either indifference or latent resentment. At the heart of the disagreement was not the manner in which necessary reforms were to be implemented, but rather who was to lead the regeneration of the French state. The monarchy's loss of control in June 1789 was something with which Louis XVI never came to terms. Equally the National Assembly never felt secure in its acquisition of sovereign power. These two opposing trends made a conciliatory approach difficult to achieve, regardless of the copious goodwill present on both sides.

In many ways Carteaux's equestrian portrait of Louis XVI serves well as an illustration of this phenomenon. Its failure to reconcile convincingly the new and old emblems of France mirrored the vacuum that existed between Sieyès's concept of the *cortège du trône* and Laporte's advice to Louis XVI to behave like Dr Willis. The painting seeks to express the inexpressible.

3 The court of the Tuileries, 1789–1792

Routine and Revolution

On 25 June 1791 Louis XVI and his family, after their failed flight to Montmédy, were forcibly returned to the Tuileries.¹ Their route through Paris passed through large crowds of surly spectators who left the royal couple in no doubt as to the general feeling of hostility.² Haggard, dusty and defeated, these members of the Bourbon dynasty made a pathetic impression as they alighted from their *berline* at the front entrance of the palace. The National Assembly had instructed three deputies, Pétion de Villeneuve, Barnave and Latour-Maubourg, to accompany the king back to Paris. What happened next, as Louis XVI re-entered the Tuileries, astounded Pétion.

After a few minutes had elapsed, we moved, Maubourg, Barnave and me, into the king's apartments; the Queen and Mme Élisabeth followed. Already all the valets were in attendance wearing their usual court dress. It seemed as if the king had merely returned from a hunting expedition; and everyone was busy assisting him with his *toilette*. In seeing the king, in observing him closely, it was impossible guess that something momentous had just happened; he was so phlegmatic and so tranquil as if nothing was out of the ordinary. He immediately resumed his state of [monarchical] representation; it was as if those who gathered around him thought that after a few days absence he had returned home. I was perplexed by what I saw.³

Phoenix-like, the interrupted spectacle of Bourbon representational culture,⁴ resumed its routine as if nothing had occurred.⁵ Pétion, the

¹ Michel de Lombarès, *Enquête sur l'Échec de Varennes* (Paris, 1988), 163–71.

² David Andress, *Massacre at the Champ de Mars* (Woodbridge, 2000), 155–6.

³ I thank Dr Hardman for drawing my attention to this passage in C. A. Dauban ed., *Mémoires inédits de Pétion et Mémoires de Buzot et de Barbaroux accompagnés de notes inédits de Buzot et de nombreux documents inédits sur Barbaroux, Buzot, Brissot, etc.* (Paris, 1886), 204.

⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1994), 6–11; and Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 5–14 and 29–52.

⁵ Hardman, *Louis XVI, The Silent King*, 132–3.

politician, may have maintained an outer air of disdain; but deep within himself he was genuinely perplexed. It seemed out of place that the apparatus of royal etiquette should have resumed unperturbed by the king's flight. The ritual of the royal *toilette*, and an improvised *lever*, now made manifest the physical person of the king in splendour.

It was clear that the monarchical machine, which had been created at Versailles a century previously, did not distinguish between the body of a king in flight and that of a king pursuing game. The Prince had regained his court and it was an automatic impulse for the courtiers of the Tuileries to dress their master in a fit state to embody the majesty of the French crown.⁶ Fresh, clean and elegantly dressed, Louis XVI was again recognisably a king. This episode highlighted how the symbolism of regal power operated on a different time-zone compared to the new political culture unleashed by the Revolution.

It must be said that this ceremonial routine, which Pétion described so well in his account of the return from Varennes, revealed something deeper than just the mere fact that monarchs used distinctive behavioural codes and elaborate forms of clothing to strengthen their claims to authority. More importantly, it revealed that a prince who pretended to be something else, in this particular case by disguising himself as a valet, risked compromising his power.⁷ Louis XVI, during the previous year, had sought to act as a constitutional monarch.⁸ The king's inability to operate within these new parameters resulted in his precipitous escape, from his capital.⁹ The monarchical spectacle was clearly in crisis and the entrenchment in the traditions of the *ancien régime*, in the immediate aftermath of Varennes, was not evidence of confidence, but rather, demonstrated that the court was unable to meet the revolutionary challenge constructively.

⁶ Michelet argued that the king's disguise as a valet during the flight to Varennes had been a great miscalculation: "You will place, said Louis XVI, in the trunk of the carriage the red suit which I wore at Cherbourg ..." Thus he hid in his luggage the item which could have best protected him. The suit which king of France had worn in defiance of England, in the midst of his navy, was a worthier form of unction than the holy chrism of Rheims. Who would have dared arrest him, if removing his disguise he had appeared in this uniform? He should have worn it, and with it brandished his French heart, as he had in the past'. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, I, 590.

⁷ Mona Ozouf, *Varennes la mort de la Royauté* (Paris, 2005), 77–8.

⁸ Cf. Petitfils, *Louis XVI*, 730–67.

⁹ It was extremely humiliating for the grandson of Louis XV, a monarch who during the infamous *séance de la flagellation* stated 'it is in my person alone that resides the plenitude of sovereign power,' in Julian Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris under Louis XV, 1754–1774* (Cambridge, 1995) 268–74; and for details on the king's disguise, see Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 61.

The developments which took place in the routine at court, during its enforced stay at the Tuileries, were not born of a genuine attempt at compromise. On the contrary, they originated in the contradictory need to manage popular disaffection whilst at the same time expressing the crown's disapproval of the political changes which had taken place after 1789. This policy of winning popular support, while simultaneously and stealthily opposing the politics of the Assembly, was truly worthy of *ancien régime* court intrigue. The radical press accused the king of insincerity and double-dealing.¹⁰ In many cases they corroborated these allegations by referring to the practices of the court so as to inflame the populace's passion.¹¹

There has been hardly any scholarly interest in the routine dimension of life in the Tuileries during the period 1789–1792. There are essentially two reasons: first, this gap in the historical knowledge of the period reflects the poverty of the archival material relating to the day-to-day activities of the court. Many of the papers of the Intendance de la Liste Civile are missing, probably lost forever.¹² More often than not, this hole has been filled by using the ample memoir literature available. Inevitably, any conclusion emanating from these documents has proved controversial. Paul and Pierrette Girault de Coursac have used their exhaustive knowledge of this literature to launch a sustained assault on virtually every author who has had the audacity to write his or her reminiscences. In their survey of the memoir writers of the reign of Louis XVI they accuse Bertrand de Moleville of lying, they dismiss Mme Campan as delirious and they categorically state that nothing the duchesse de Tourzel wrote is worth retaining.¹³

While it is true that each individual record is compromised by the limitations and politics of their author's memory, at the same time, these do possess some value. After all, they disclose the manner in which the political actors of the Revolution sought to justify their role in these turbulent times. The emotional resonances these texts seek to convey of the turmoil of the 1790s to post-Revolutionary generations

¹⁰ Censer, *Prelude to Power*, 112–15; and Jean-Paul Bertaud, *C'était dans le journal pendant la Révolution Française* (Paris, 1988), 177–95.

¹¹ Michael P. Fitzsimmons, *The Night the Old Regime Ended, August 4, 1789, and the French Revolution* (University Park, PA, 2002), 116–35; and William Doyle, 'The French Revolution and the Abolition of Nobility', in Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms, eds, *Cultures of Powers in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2007), 289–303.

¹² The remnants of the registers of the Grand Master of Ceremonies are to be found in AN O¹ 1042–4 and for the most pertinent civil list papers see AN C 183–5.

¹³ Girault de Coursac, *Histoire, Historiens et Mémorialistes, du règne de Louis XVI*, 11–15, 41–8 and 93.

seem significant. Even a heavy tome as unemotional and unrevealing as the memoirs of the prince de Talleyrand-Périgord sought to explain politics in terms of the passions.¹⁴ These nineteenth-century publications should not be expected to yield a transparent linear narrative for the period. The anecdotes and silences contained within these pages supplement the official source material in public archives.

The second issue which confuses the analysis of the Constitutional Monarchy of the Tuileries is more conceptual in nature. The notion of routine action can only be discerned with difficulty in the early Revolution. The ‘regular’ course of events is disrupted constantly by disorder, rebellion, radical legislation and political reconfigurations. It could well be argued that, during the first three years of the Revolution, the concept of ‘ordinary’ can only be located precariously amidst such instability. It is certainly true that even the briefest chronology will reveal a period defined by an almost daily succession of great political upheavals. Such a truism must not hide how the hustle and bustle of the Revolution became subsumed within everyday life. That is to say, as instability became habitual, the court was able to restructure its schedule and activities around the exigencies of the moment. It is possible to isolate the routine conduct and practices for the period in question. Naturally, one should be sensitive towards the evolving political situation, and to the fact that no habitual action is ever perfectly replicated.

This chapter examines the day-to-day court life of the Tuileries during the last three years of Louis XVI’s reign.¹⁵ In order to do this, the Ambassadorial despatches sent to the court of London, Venice, Parma, Turin and Genoa will be employed.¹⁶ When it comes to reconstructing life under the constitutional monarchy, Ambassadors’ reports are rich and illuminating sources. These diplomats were well-informed outsiders. Their participation within the life of the court was regulated by international agreements covering diplomatic protocol rather than by

¹⁴ ‘The passion of which I speak attached individuals to the state; [this passion] animated, vivified; assumed and merited the name of patriotism, emulation and love of glory’. Talleyrand, *Mémoires du prince de Talleyrand*, I, 115.

¹⁵ For important analyses of the constitutional court, see Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, Chapter 1; and Matthieu Couty, *La vie aux Tuileries pendant la Révolution* (Paris, 1988), Chapter 1.

¹⁶ Many of these papers remain unexploited though some were edited and published in the previous century. See Grouchy and Guillois, eds, *La Révolution Française racontée par un diplomate étranger*; Massimo Kovalevsky, ed., *I dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneti alla Corte di Francia durante la Rivoluzione* (Turin, 1895); Oscar Browning, ed., *The Despatches of Earl Gower, English Ambassador at Paris from June 1790 to August 1792, To which are added the despatches of Mr Lindsay and Mr Monro and the diary of Viscount Palmerston in France during July and August 1792* (Cambridge, 1885).

reference to the domestic etiquette of Versailles. They had no need to exalt or diminish the liturgy of the rituals they witnessed. Their written accounts had to possess clarity, precision and take full account of the unfamiliarity of their correspondents with the practices of the court of France. One should also remember that they were privileged spectators. For instance, during the opening session of the Estates General the Corps diplomatique benefited from exclusively reserved tickets. These provided the Ambassadors with the best seats in which to view proceedings in the Salle des Menus Plaisirs.¹⁷

Despatches were generally written twice-weekly, if not more frequently. They present a very complete data set which can be fully exploited. Lastly, as these letters were written within hours of the events they describe, they are, unlike memoirs, less limited by a particular author's ability or failure to recollect events precisely (another advantage is that they are not compromised by the benefit of hindsight). The study of diplomacy has recently yielded impressive results in both the history of the *ancien régime* court and that of the Revolution.¹⁸ This approach can be effectively and profitably deployed in the reconstruction of the gradual decline of court ceremony in France.

The Corps diplomatique and the palace of the Tuileries

The diplomats at Versailles were, like other contemporaries, unprepared for the rapidity with which Louis XVI lost control of the situation during the Estates General of the summer of 1789. Popular agitation, subsequent to the fall of the Bastille, quickly disrupted the activities of foreign diplomats residing in Paris. The first to leave the capital was the comte de Mercy-Argenteau, the Ambassador of the Holy Roman Emperor.¹⁹ As the representative of France's greatest rival for over three

¹⁷ ASGe, Archivio Segreto Lettere Ministri, Francia, 2261, Parigi 11 maggio 1789; ASPr, Carteggio Borbonico Estero Francia 82, Parigi 3 maggio 1789 et Parigi 11 Maggio 1789; ASTo, Francia Lettere Ministri, Mazzo, 235, dépêches nos.156 et 157, Paris le 4 et 8 mai 1789; ASVe, Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato, Francia, Filza 263, dispaccio no.180, 11 maggio 1789; TNA, FO Series 27, Box 32, despatch no.24, Paris 7 May 1789.

¹⁸ Lucien Bély, *La Société des princes XVIe–XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1999); Lilti, *Le Monde des Salons*, 378–405; Frey and Frey, *The History of Diplomatic Immunity*, chapter 8; and Linda and Marsha Frey, “‘The Reign of the Charlatans Is Over’: The French Revolutionary Attack on Diplomatic Practice”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 65 (1993), 706–44.

¹⁹ A. Guérin, ‘Séquestres Révolutionnaires, la maison de campagne du Comte de Mercy-Argenteau à Chennevières’, *Revue de l’histoire de Versailles et de Seine et Oise*, 32 (1930), 207–29.

centuries, he was an obvious target for popular discontent.²⁰ Soon other diplomats too were to be inconvenienced by the Revolutionaries' belief that their profession amounted to little more than spying.²¹

On 22 August 1789 the chevalier Capello, Minister Plenipotentiary for the Republic of Venice, received a note ordering him, as a member of the Parisian National Guard, to stand guard and patrol his district of Saint-Martin-des-Champs.²² The reason why a foreigner residing in Paris should have been included in the lists citizens liable for National Guard duty is entirely mysterious.²³ All that is known with certainty is that the chevalier had no intention of being forced into an embarrassing corner. He ignored the summons and proceeded to Versailles to attend the celebrations for the feast day of Saint-Louis. Here he discreetly protested his inclusion among the National Guard and received the support of his colleagues. In this particular instance the court calendar saved the chevalier Capello from the complicated task of elucidating the concept of diplomatic immunity to the activists of his district.

As early as November 1789, Archbishop Dugnani, the Papal Nuncio doyen of the Corps diplomatique, presented a protest, signed by the majority of the foreign ministers resident in Paris, to the National Assembly.²⁴ This document objected against the Paris Commune's threat to conduct armed searches of the embassies situated in the capital. Here, the revolutionary authorities hoped to unearth compromising papers. On 12 December 1789, the President of the National Assembly received a letter from the comte de Montmorin, then Foreign Minister, defending the privileges of Minister Plenipotentiaries residing in Paris. The Assembly approved a decree which confirmed previously granted diplomatic immunities and placed the Corps diplomatique under

²⁰ Chennevières, 17 August 1789, 'The noble messenger carrying the gracious orders of Your Majesty, dated third of this month, delivered them to me on the evening of the tenth. He came directly to my country residence and thus avoided the dangers of entering Paris where the municipality, that governs this city absolutely, does not seem disposed yet to recognise the immunities established by the *law of nations* [the emphasis is mine] towards foreign powers and their emissaries'. Évelyne Lever, ed., *Marie-Antoinette Correspondance, 1770–1793* (Paris, 2005), 492.

²¹ Frey and Frey, *The French Revolutionary Attack on Diplomatic Practice*, 733.

²² ASVe, Filza 263, dispaccio no.196, 31 August 1789.

²³ One could suggest that the district authorities perhaps felt that as the representative of a Republic the chevalier Cappello might be inclined to publicly show support for the Revolution. For an analysis on the inner workings of the National Guard, see Dale Lothrop Clifford, 'The National Guard and the Parisian Community, 1789–1790', *French Historical Studies*, 16 (1990), 851–64.

²⁴ Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, *Parigi – Firenze 1789–1794: I dispacci del residente toscano nella capitale francese al governo granducale* (Florence, 1990), 86–7.

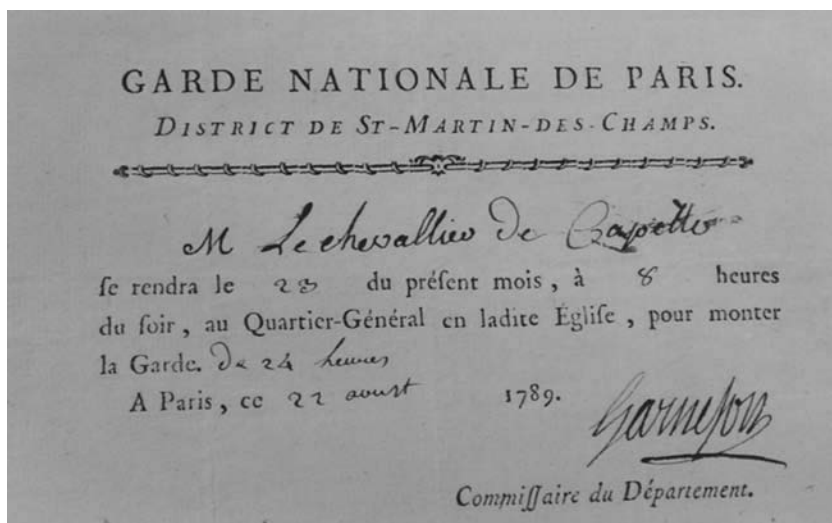


Figure 4 Note from the National Guard Commanding the Chevalier Capello to Stand Guard in his Parisian District (1789)

the protection of the *pouvoir exécutif*, that is to say the constitutional monarchy.²⁵

The majority of the diplomats, whose despatches were selected for this study, agree that the palace of the Tuileries was unprepared to receive Louis XVI in October 1789.²⁶ After all, the palace had been empty for over sixty-seven years.²⁷ In spite of the decay and dilapidation, the machinery of the court, with the help of an army of workmen, started restoring and embellishing the building. Already, from mid-October, a recognisable routine had started taking shape. It was decided that the king would receive the Corps diplomatique twice every week, on Sundays and Thursdays in the afternoon.²⁸ At Versailles Foreign

²⁵ AP X, 516.

²⁶ ASGe, Lettere Ministri Francia 2261, Parigi 10 ottobre 1789; A.S.Pr., Francia 82, Parigi 12 ottobre 1789; ASTo, Francia Lettere Ministri Mazzo 235, dépêche no.233, Paris le 12 octobre 1789; ASVe, Filza 263, dispaccio no.202, Parigi 12 Octobre 1789; TNA, FO 27, Box 33A, despatch no.13, Paris 7 October 1789.

²⁷ François Bluche, *Louis XV* (Paris, 2000), 36–8.

²⁸ ASGe, Lettere Ministri, Francia, 2261, Parigi 13 ottobre 1789; ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 26 ottobre 1789; ASTo, Francia, Lettere Ministri, Mazzo 235, dépêche no.233, Paris le 12 octobre 1789; TNA, FO 27.33A, despatch no.16, Paris 15 October 1789; Mousset, ed., *Un Témoin ignoré de la Révolution*, 93 (taken from despatch no.507, 13 October 1789).

Ministers were normally only received on Wednesdays every second week.²⁹ This quadrupling of contact with the foreign representatives of the capital was clear evidence of a significant increase in the international activity of the court. In all probability, Louis XVI intended to use diplomatic channels to keep his brother-monarchs informed of political developments in France and seek their assistance when necessary.³⁰

However, the more practical reason for the increase in diplomacy lay in the fact that diplomats no longer had to undertake the journey from Paris to Versailles, which was time-consuming. Physical proximity meant foreign ministers could easily increase their contact with courtiers, deputies and ministers. Nevertheless, this new timetable proved too much for some. The British embassy, which regularly received foreign office missives on Thursdays, was greatly upset by these changes. Lord Robert Stephen Fitzgerald, Chargé d’Affaires after the departure of the Duke of Dorset, wrote to the Duke of Leeds, then Foreign Secretary, asking that the posting of despatches be delayed by one day. This, Lord Robert argued, would allow him to attend court on Thursdays and to relate events within the Tuileries in his replies.³¹ The sources also mention that, on the evening of their audiences at court, diplomats were entertained by the queen, who organised card games in her *cabinets*. Tuesday evenings, according to the Spanish Ambassador, were set aside for other forms of entertainment.³²

Every Sunday the king held a *Grand Couvert* or public dining ceremony.³³ In a ritual similar to those performed at Versailles, the king dined alone and, with great pomp, was served by a procession of officials, from the *Bouche*, before a large audience of spectators.³⁴ It would seem, from this scheme of things, that court life continued to possess a striking vibrancy in the first year of the Revolution. There were entertainments three evenings a week and, on Sundays, the great spectacle of public dining was staged for the population of Paris.³⁵ The remaining

²⁹ Auguste Boppe, *Les Introduceurs des Ambassadeurs 1585–1900* (Paris, 1900), 6.

³⁰ Cf. Girault de Coursac, *Le secret de la Reine*, 66–87.

³¹ TNA, FO 27, Box 33A, despatch no.23, Paris 6 November 1789.

³² Mousset, *Un Témoin ignoré de la Révolution*, 93; and corroborated by the memoirs of Louise de Havre-Cröy, *Mémoires de Madame la duchesse de Tourzel, gouvernante des enfants de France de 1789 à 1795* (Paris, 1986), 48.

³³ Havre-Cröy, *Mémoires*, 48; and François-Félix, comte de Hézecques, *Page à la cour de Louis XVI, souvenirs du Comte d’Hézecques* (Paris, 1987), 155.

³⁴ Amélie Dumortier-Laparra, ‘La Maison Bouche Royale: caractères, définition, diffusion d’un modèle (XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)’, 2 vols (unpublished Thèse de doctorat nouveau régime, Université de Paris X, Nanterre, 2008), I, 188–204.

³⁵ Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 2000), 89.

time was devoted by the king to chairing the meetings of his Ministers in the royal councils. It seems safe to assume that the Conseil d'État, the most important organ of *ancien régime* government continued to meet, on Wednesdays and Sundays, as had been tradition since the reign of Louis XIV.³⁶ The greatest, and most often commented on, difference between life in Paris and Versailles was the absence of outdoor activities. The king had stopped hunting, and seldom ventured beyond the Tuileries gardens.³⁷

It was only on 12 February 1790 that Louis finally left the Tuileries to go to Notre-Dame to attend a *Te Deum* mass performed in honour of his recent speech in support of the Revolution. The marquis de Cordon, the Piedmontese Ambassador, was unmoved, stating that the cortege following the king was composed of a mere three carriages.³⁸ He had been far more impressed by the illuminations organised by the Parisian municipality the previous week.³⁹

The king also disappointed the public's expectations when he failed to appear at a second *Te Deum* organised for 14 February. This celebration was attended by the entire National Assembly, the General-Staff of the National Guard and the Paris Commune. The absence of the *pouvoir exécutif* had a somewhat negative impact on public opinion.⁴⁰ It seemed that, despite the monarch's declaration of support for the Assembly's work, his lack of enthusiasm for publicly appearing beside the nation's representatives betrayed his distaste for recent politics.

In the meantime, the repair work on Tuileries was proceeding well and substantial progress had been achieved. Already in January 1790 the Bailli de Virieu, Minister Plenipotentiary for both the Duke of Parma and the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, reported that restoration work was continuing steadily, and that the embellishments completed were beginning to produce a positive effect. The Bailli was very impressed by the *grande galerie*, which connected the Louvre to the Tuileries. He thought it to be the finest and longest in Europe, stretching over a quarter of an Italian mile in length.⁴¹ The week after, he was

³⁶ Ragnhild Hatton, 'Louis XIV: At the Court of the Sun King', in *The Courts of Europe: Politics, Patronage and Royalty 1400–1800*, ed. A. G. Dickens (London, 1977), 239; Maurepas and Boulant, *Les Ministres*, 15; and Michel Antoine, *Le Conseil du Roi sous le règne de Louis XV* (Paris, 1970), 119–24.

³⁷ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 174; and cf. Félix, *Louis XVI et Marie Antoinette*, 526.

³⁸ ASTo, Francia, Lettere Ministri, Mazzo 236, dépêche no.22, Paris le 12 février 1790.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., dépêche no.23, Paris le 15 février 1790.

⁴¹ C. 400 m; this was probably an exaggeration. ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 4 gennaio 1790.

convinced that the Tuileries would be ‘a beautiful palace’.⁴² Despite all this frantic building work, the palace was left empty for a substantial part of 1790. The royal family resided for portions of the year at the palace of Saint-Cloud, on the outskirts of the city of Paris. The Marchese Spinola, the Genoese Minister in Paris, reported, as early as 7 June 1790, the departure of the court for Saint-Cloud. Impressively, the royal family’s coaches were escorted by a detachment of 300 national guardsmen and by the Cent-Suisses.⁴³ According to Spinola, from this moment onwards the Royal family would spend the greater part of their time outside the capital, save for the king, who every Sunday would return to the Tuileries to chair the Conseil d’État. Here he also held his weekly private audience with the President of the National Assembly.⁴⁴ Naturally, for important occasions such as the *Corpus Christi* procession and the feast of the Federation, the king and royal family returned from Saint-Cloud and resumed their stay in Paris.

It is difficult to know if, and how, the rhythms of court life at Saint-Cloud differed from the Tuileries.⁴⁵ There can be little doubt that, from a purely practical point of view, the royal family benefited from greater personal freedom in this suburb of Paris. They were not under the constant and critical surveillance of the radical press. This location was also at a safe distance from the faubourgs Saint-Antoine and -Marcel which freed the court from the potential threat of physical violence, often posed by the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods. There is some evidence that the old Versailles-style extravagance started to creep back into court life. For instance, during the last week of July, the queen decided to receive the Corps diplomatique every day and organised entertainments every evening.⁴⁶ Again, some saw this as proof that the royal family’s quiet and morose existence in Paris stemmed not from a genuine change in mentality but rather from fear of Revolutionary politics.

While the Saint-Cloud excursions may have given the Bourbons some personal tranquillity during these troubled times, they also damaged their public image.⁴⁷ Invisible from the revolutionary glare, many rumours of hidden plots started to circulate. In particular, a steady stream of accusations of rudeness towards the National Guard were reported in the newspapers.⁴⁸ The public interest appears to have been

⁴² Ibid., Parigi 11 gennaio 1790.

⁴³ ASGe, Lettere Ministri Francia 2262, Parigi 7 giugno 1790. ⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Daniel Meyer, ‘Les Appartements Royaux du Château de Saint-Cloud sous Louis XVI et Marie-Antoinette 1785–1792’, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 103 (1965), 223–32.

⁴⁶ ASGe, Lettere Ministri Francia 2262, Parigi 2 agosto 1790.

⁴⁷ *Ami du Peuple*, no.124, 818–19.

⁴⁸ *Révolutions de Paris*, 3–10 juillet 1790, no.52, 536–7.

sufficient to justify the publication of a newspaper entitled *Le Courier de Saint-Cloud à Paris et de Paris à Saint-Cloud*. It was dedicated to keeping readers informed of the court's attacks against liberty. In its fourth issue the paper proudly proclaimed:

It is indeed ridiculous to observe that the ministers still bestow the title of master on the king by designating his people as subjects. Subjects in a free country! Frenchmen subjects of a single individual! Subjects in a fatherland! No! Where there are subjects there can be no fatherland; where there is no freedom there is no life, no men, no energy; everything is in a state of havoc; the rights of nature are cast under foot; the inhabitants of such a country are no longer made in the image of God but are vile automatons moved at the caprice of a machinist.⁴⁹

Obviously, within such a highly charged atmosphere, even the slightest provocation had the potential of sparking public unrest. The court's efforts to boost the king's popularity were not helped by his absence from the capital. Radical journalists treated the royal family's stay in the outskirts of Paris as very suspicious and their distrust was somewhat justified.⁵⁰ After all, recent scholarship has confirmed that negotiations between the comte de Mirabeau and the queen, aimed at strengthening the crown's power, were taking place at Saint-Cloud.⁵¹ The queen's clandestine meetings with this popular deputy were extremely risky. It was only a matter of chance that nobody penetrated the intrigue taking place.⁵²

Other events, admittedly outside the court's control, combined to make the sojourn at Saint-Cloud memorable. On the feast of St Peter and Paul, 29 June 1790, a very strange incident occurred. Two well-dressed individuals, in a state of great agitation, alighted from a coach before the main entrance to the palace of Saint-Cloud. They spent the better part of the day trying to gain access to the king. Finally, once night fell, the officer on duty, frustrated by the unusual behaviour of this odd pair, decided to confront the intruders. When asked to state

⁴⁹ *Courrier de Saint-Cloud à Paris et de Paris à Saint-Cloud*, no.4, 1–3.

⁵⁰ 'Oh Louis XVI! You depart, you leave the capital when there are so many hidden dangers! Tell me what is significance of this departure for Saint-Cloud, scheduled for next Friday? Will you turn a blind eye to the painful and convulsive agony of our liberty? Think wisely before you break free from our embrace! Do you fear death among your loyal people, or does somebody want to take you far from Paris to place you at the head of an army of scoundrels in order to give legitimacy to a civil war and all its horrors?' *L'Orateur du Peuple par Martel*, no.12.

⁵¹ Munro Price, 'Mirabeau and the Court, Some New Evidence', *French Historical Studies*, 29 (2006), 37–75, here 37–8 and 66.

⁵² To avoid detection Mirabeau visited his niece, Mme d'Aragon, living in Auteuil and from there visited the queen at night, see Bacourt, *Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck*, I, 189.

their business they claimed to have a letter to deliver to Louis XVI. On closer inspection the bewildered officer discovered that the epistle was purportedly from the Virgin Mary. The ‘mother of god’ assured the king that the crown which had so recently been lost would soon be regained at Saint-Cloud through the intercession of the divine legions.⁵³

Embarrassingly, after these two visionaries were taken into custody it was discovered that the senior member of the pair was the son of the king’s genealogist, Ambroise-Louis d’Hozier. This fuelled conspiracy theories that did little to help the court’s public standing. For the next four months the king and his family continued their journeys to and from Saint-Cloud. It was only in the first week of November 1790 that the court returned to reside permanently at the Tuileries.⁵⁴

The new year of 1791 brought with it the religious crisis surrounding the civil constitution of the clergy. This issue was to influence deeply the court’s daily routine. In late February, the women of the market of Les Halles gathered at the gates of the Tuileries demanding to speak to the king. They insisted that he recall his aunts, Mmes Victoire and Adelaïde, who had decided to leave France on a pilgrimage to Rome. It was only Lafayette’s personal intervention, and a three-hour standoff, that prevented violence from erupting.⁵⁵ However, this relatively minor incident was not to be the last. The Tuileries, on 28 February 1791, was the setting for a violent disorder, which came to be known as the Day of Daggers. On the morning of the twenty-eighth, Lafayette had been reliably informed that a large crowd of demonstrators wanted to demolish the Château de Vincennes in a similar manner to the Bastille. He set off, with the majority of the National Guard, and headed for this medieval fortress.

The absence of the National Guard from Paris gave rise to a rumour that the king was left unprotected. A large group of young nobles, allegedly armed with daggers, entered the Tuileries. These young aristocrats were convinced that Lafayette’s departure was part of a conspiracy which ultimately aimed to assassinate the royal family and the court. The sentries and guards, within the palace, became increasingly alarmed by the large number of armed individuals mustering inside

⁵³ ASGe, Lettere Ministri, Francia 2262, Parigi 5 luglio 1790; and Journal Général de la Cour et de la Ville par M. G***, 2 septembre 1790, III, no.2.

⁵⁴ During the last week of October Barnave was elected President of the National Assembly. He was the last distinguished person to travel to Saint-Cloud to pay his respects to the king. See ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 1 novembre 1790; and ASVe, Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato, Francia, Filza 264, dispaccio no.14, Parigi 8 novembre 1790.

⁵⁵ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 28 febbraio 1791.

the building. The bourgeois officers of the National Guard started to suspect that this build-up of armed nobles was part of a counter-Revolutionary insurgency.

Lafayette hurried back from Vincennes and urged the king to dismiss this group. It was only with Louis XVI's personal order that these so-called 'chevaliers du poignard' started to disperse. Apparently the National Guard took advantage of these now disarmed courtiers in order to manhandle them violently and forced them to flee the palace.⁵⁶

Louis XVI's behaviour displeased all those involved.⁵⁷ The radical press portrayed the event as a pre-empted counter-Revolution, while the nobles felt betrayed by the king's order to surrender.⁵⁸ Such weakness probably emboldened the crowds of the faubourgs Saint-Antoine and -Marcel which on 18 April 1791, using the religious issue as a pre-text, prevented the king from resuming his excursions to Saint-Cloud. The most worrying aspect of all, for the court, was the attempted lynching of the duc de Villequier. This senior officer of the king's household was identified as a counter-Revolutionary merely because he was wearing a standard black dress of courtiers.⁵⁹

In May 1791 Louis XVI, always horrified by the possibility of violence, dismissed the vast majority of the noble officers of his civil and ecclesiastical household.⁶⁰ The envoy of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany reported rumours that soon the queen would also be expelled from France.⁶¹ The release of the court nobility from the personal obligation of attending the royal household increased the steady flow of émigrés joining the disgruntled diaspora of nobles gathering on the German bank of the Rhine.⁶² There is little in the diplomatic despatches, in the period from Easter 1791 to the flight to Varennes, to indicate that court life was compensating for the absence of such important court personalities. The image given is one of dismal resignation. On 5 June 1791, the Bailli de Virieu stated simply that: 'their majesties continue to reside in Paris, for the moment, and there is no talk on an impending trip to the countryside'.⁶³

⁵⁶ Ibid., Parigi 6 mars 1791.

⁵⁷ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 148.

⁵⁸ Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 42–3; and Hézecques, *Page à la Cour de Louis XVI*, 342–8.

⁵⁹ Mansel, *Court of France 1789–1830*, 27.

⁶⁰ AN C 223, nos. 388, 388bis, 389, 390, 392, 393, 428 and 430.

⁶¹ Ciuffoletti, *Parigi–Firenze 1789–1794*, 155.

⁶² Ghislain de Diesbach, *Histoire de l'émigration 1789–1814* (Paris, 1975), 142–51; and Luc Boissonard, *La Noblesse dans la tourmente 1774–1802* (Paris, 1992), 221–4.

⁶³ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 5 giugno 1791.

The flight to Varennes transformed what, up to that point, had been the virtual imprisonment of the royal family in Paris into a concrete reality. From 25 June to 6 September 1791 the king was kept under house arrest at the Tuileries and not permitted to receive anybody, except for his immediate family and personal servants.⁶⁴ Indeed, for the entire month of August Louis XVI recorded only one entry: 'all of this month was like that of July'.⁶⁵

The completion of the modified constitution on 3 September 1791 signalled the end of the official detention of the royal family. Three days later the king received the remnants of the Corps diplomatique for the first time in three months (the Neapolitan, Papal and Spanish ambassadors had already left Paris).⁶⁶ His position as a reinstated monarch became official a week later when he sanctioned the Constitution.⁶⁷ There followed two weeks of celebrations in which the gardens of the Tuileries were reopened to the public and the palace façade was illuminated in a spectacular fashion.⁶⁸ The resumption of theatre-going emerged as a new element in court life after September 1791. The royal couple again started frequenting the capital's theatrical establishments and opera houses.⁶⁹ This is a facet of the rebirth of court life which both memoir writers and journalists confirm in their writings. Indeed as early December 1790, Louis Prudhomme, in his paper, went so far as to suggest the existence of an aristocratic conspiracy favouring the frequent performance of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* which contained the rousing aria 'Chantons, célébrons notre reine'.⁷⁰

One should not exaggerate the importance of the immediate popular enthusiasm which followed Louis XVI's acceptance of the 1791 constitution. It evaporated very soon. In his book describing the Tuileries during 1790s, Matthieu Couty relates the interesting tale in which an overzealous corporal of the National Guard imprisoned Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in their respective bed chambers for twelve hours in November 1791.⁷¹ The story must have been deemed apocryphal since it has received no mention in most biographies of Louis XVI. It seemed unlikely that a society, until recently so deeply pervaded by a sense of social deference and hierarchy, could possibly have degenerated to

⁶⁴ Ibid., 12 settembre 1791. ⁶⁵ AN C 221, no.160.

⁶⁶ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 11 settembre 1791; and TNA, FO 27, Box 37, despatch no.41, Paris 9 September 1791.

⁶⁷ Lever, *Louis XVI*, 610–13.

⁶⁸ TNA, FO 27, Box 37, despatch nos.44 and 45, Paris 23 and 30 September 1791.

⁶⁹ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 25 settembre 1791; and TNA, FO 27, Box 37, despatch no.46, Paris 7 October 1791.

⁷⁰ *Révolutions de Paris*, 11 au 18 décembre 1790, no.75, 527.

⁷¹ Couty, *La Vie aux Tuileries*, 141.

such an extreme expression of contempt and disrespect for a reigning monarch.

Among the papers sent to the Legislative Assembly's Committee investigating the enforcement of new laws, there is a note from the Ministry of Justice concerning the trial of a certain Corporal Noël Le Breton. This report confirms that the king was confined to his bedroom in the Tuileries for over twelve hours during the night of 11 November 1791. The Ministry of Justice took into consideration reports from both the Royal Prosecutor and the Corporal's defence counsel. The author of the report concluded that as the crime of imprisoning the Hereditary Representative of the Nation was tantamount to *lèse-nation* that the case should be tried by the Legislative Assembly in a special session.⁷² Attached to this note was a letter written by Captain Delsantz to the President of the Jacobin Club. It asked this powerful political lobby to intercede on behalf of the corporal. According to this officer the corporal was the victim of an error in the chain of command. The Captain also painted Le Breton as instrumental in pre-empting a possible second royal flight from Paris. It has proved impossible to discover whether the corporal's case ever went to trial. It is unlikely, in the context of the radicalisation of politics in 1792, that the Corporal would have been convicted.

From the evidence presented above, it appears that in under two months the beneficial effects of formally sanctioning the new Constitution had vanished. The court and monarchy were again under renewed pressure. This was not, as in the past, to prove their Revolutionary credentials. On the contrary, the very survival of the crown was being called into question as the Republican movement gained ground.⁷³ There is little tangible evidence to prove that Louis XVI attempted to modify the structure and organisation of the court in order to win moderate constitutionalists to his side. The social composition of the court seems to have remained unaltered throughout the period. Bertrand de Moleville's memoirs relate the following interesting conversation with the king.

He [Louis XVI] expressed no wish, or repugnance, when it came to establishing his [new] household; he merely observed that it continued to be [a matter that was] as delicate as it was difficult. 'I understand well, he said, that the queen cannot keep company with the wives of émigrés, and I have discussed the matter with her already but one cannot expect her to frequent Mmes Pétion, Condorcet or others of that ilk. As far as I am concerned I preferred

⁷² AND III 371, no.122.

⁷³ Vovelle, *The Fall of the French Monarchy, 1787–1792*, 239–53.

the services [of the officers] of my former household but most have now abandoned me; and those that remain are the torment of my existence. There is for example that little Chauvelin that stays constantly with me in order to spy and comment on all that is said, and afterwards false rumours seem to spread'.⁷⁴

There seem to be no sources which allege that the king opened the doors of the court to the new revolutionary social elite. For this reason one can suppose that Bertrand de Moleville's account, though written ten years after the events in question and despite having a somewhat theatrical flair, reflects accurately Louis XVI's distaste for new forms of court life, which would have rewarded Revolutionary politicians and excluded the more loyal court families of the *ancien régime*. The determined effort to close the doors of the court to the Revolution's elites certainly did little to help the monarchy's public image. Equally, the expectation that Louis XVI was to mingle with those very politicians responsible for diminishing his power and influence seems naïve. The inhabitants of Tuileries of 1792 could not make such an impossible compromise. It would have meant abandoning any residual traces of the *ancien régime*'s legacy from the court without any guarantee that this would satisfy the radical element of public opinion.

After the declaration of war, on 20 April 1792, the court experienced a further reduction in its material circumstances. The Corps diplomatique shrank considerably as the Ambassadors of the belligerent powers departed the capital. The Bailli de Virieu was the last Ambassadeur de Famille remaining at court. He was presumed to have been involved in the preparations for the flight to Varennes and consequently was kept under tight surveillance.⁷⁵

At the end of May, the duc de Brissac, the Colonel of the Cent-Suisses, was arrested as a suspected counter-Revolutionary. He was transferred to a prison in Orléans, where eventually he became a victim of the September Massacres. The loss of Brissac was a clear sign that events had taken a decided turn for the worse for the crown. The duke had been one of the more able collaborators of the king. His strategically placed ground-floor apartment in the Tuileries allowed him to act as a vital buffer. Individuals wishing to speak to the king in private pretended to visit the Duke, who then admitted them into the king's apartment via a secret passage. It was in this way that the Pope's secret

⁷⁴ Bertrand de Moleville, *Mémoires*, I, 155–6.

⁷⁵ Alain Blondy, *L'Ordre de Malte au XVIII^e siècle des dernières splendeurs à la ruine* (Paris, 2002), 300–3.

envoy to Paris the abbé Salamon gained access to the Tuileries in late 1791.⁷⁶

Life at court, during the last weeks of the constitutional monarchy, was particularly gloomy and tension-filled. Famously, on 20 June 1792, the crowds of the faubourgs invaded the Tuileries forcing the king to don the liberty cap and toast the nation.⁷⁷ Regardless of the monarch's gracious and dignified behaviour during this crisis, it was evident that political events were moving towards a climax. Sometime in July the queen appeared for the last time in public at the Comédie-Italienne to attend a performance of an opera ominously entitled *Les Événements imprévus*.⁷⁸ Apparently Marie Antoinette was welcomed with rapturous applause, by the remnants of the aristocratic private box holders. However this was merely the prelude to trouble. Soon Jacobin activists started to arrive at the theatre. When the *soubrette* intoned the aria 'Oh! how I love my mistress', disorders perhaps inevitably ensued. A large group of 'Jacobins' leapt on to the stage and chased away the unfortunate singer. The queen was hurried out of the theatre as the curtain was lowered prematurely.⁷⁹

Such agitation served as a harbinger of the more serious insurrection which, on 10 August 1792, put an end to the monarchy. In the space of thirty-seven months Louis XVI had presided over the gradual collapse of the most admired court in Europe. Each month brought with it new limitations and, little by little, the king was forced to dispense with ceremonies and rituals. The constitutional court of the Tuileries failed to integrate into its daily reality the Revolution's new political culture. This, in any case, most likely constituted an impossible task for such a staunchly traditionalist institution. More serious for the constitutional monarchy was Louis XVI's inability to regain the initiative in order to present himself as the chief architect of the French Nation's political destiny.

⁷⁶ Abbé Bridier ed, *A Papal Envoy during the Reign of Terror: Being the Memoirs of Mgr. de Salamon the Internuncio at Paris during the Revolution, 1790–1801* (London, 1911), 5–6.

⁷⁷ AN C 222, no.3.

⁷⁸ I suspect that this is an error on the part of the memoir writers involved and that they are in fact referring to the chevalier Glück's popular comic opera: *La Rencontre imprévue ou les Pèlerins de la Mecque*. A bizarre pastiche where *Canterbury Tales* meet the French eighteenth century's Turcomania, it has stood the test of time with some difficulty. Grace Dalrymple Elliott, *Journal of My Life During the French Revolution* (London, 1859), 65–6; and Jean-Louise-Henriette Campan, *Mémoires de Madame Campan: Première femme de chambre de Marie-Antoinette* (Paris, 1988), 365–6.

⁷⁹ Campan, *Mémoires*, 365–6.

The question of access

The notion that anybody who was well dressed and carried a sword could easily gain admittance into Versailles is still popular among scholars.⁸⁰ It should be remembered that these access criteria were supposed to be restrictive. After all, the eighteenth-century definition of ‘well dressed’ applied to clothing that was relatively elaborate and expensive.⁸¹ As guards were given discretion to interpret whom was to be admitted and whom excluded, it is probable that only those with finely tailored suits would gain admittance into the gardens.

Furthermore, access to the park or state rooms of the palace did not mean that one was likely to interact, in any meaningful way, with the king or royal family. The right to be in the king’s presence was regulated by an immensely complicated, and somewhat loosely defined, system of *droits d’entrée*.⁸² From the *lever* to the *coucher* a hierarchy of increasingly close contact with the monarch was set in motion. Hierarchical seniority meant proximity while subordination signified distance.

Once the court was transferred to the Tuileries, a far more stringent system seems to have come into being, whereby all those seeking admission, when the royal family was in residence, required special passes. It is apparent that these tickets were issued by either a member of the royal family or a very senior courtier.⁸³ In order to be valid, they had to be counter-signed by the officer in charge of security at the palace. It is interesting to note that these entry slips were valid for only one day and that those seeking re-admission, at a later date, had to reapply for new passes.

It would seem safe to assume that the question of access to the Tuileries was even more stringently regulated than at Versailles, where the security threats were of a lesser order. In Paris it was essential to control those who had access to the king. While it is true that the public was permitted to access the gardens and chapel, it was always kept at a safe distance.⁸⁴ Only in early October 1789 was there little, or no control, over admittance to the royal palace. Mme Élisabeth was forced to change the location of her apartments when, during her first night in

⁸⁰ ‘At Versailles smart clothes and a sword at one’s side were enough to guarantee access’. See Chaline, ‘The Kingdoms of France and Navarre’, in Adamon, ed., *The Princely Courts of Europe*, 87.

⁸¹ Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 30–6; and Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing, Dress and Fashion in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge, 1996), 112–13 and 184–213.

⁸² Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 10.

⁸³ AN M 664.

⁸⁴ ASVe, Filza 264, dispacci nos.60 and 62, Parigi, 5 e 19 settembre 1791.

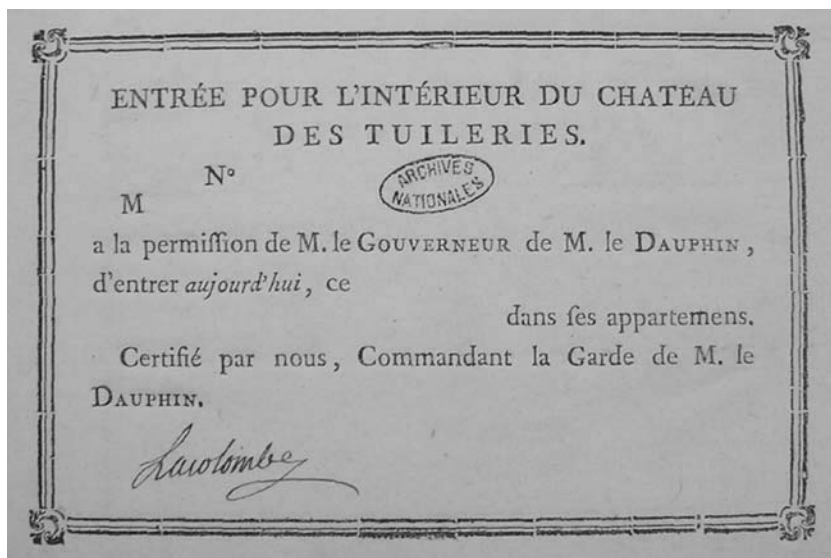


Figure 5 Entry ticket for the Tuileries (c. 1792)

the capital, she had been terrified by three *poissardes* who had jumped through her bedroom window.⁸⁵

It is a shame that the registers of those granted tickets to the Tuileries have either been destroyed or lost. It has only been possible to find one such document among the personal papers of Arnaud de La Porte. It lists one hundred and forty-six people applying for admission into the Tuileries, sometime in late 1791.⁸⁶ As one would expect, the vast majority of the names were former nobles. These extend from the ancient Cossé-Brissacs to robe *parlementaire* families, such as the Lamoignon clan (including their Châteaubriand cousins). Yet, more interesting are the names of royalist journalists on the list, which include: Barruel-Beauvert, Montjoie and Durozoi. It seems clear that the crown was keeping in close contact with those literary and journalistic hacks capable of aiding the royal cause.⁸⁷ Equally transparent, from the list of names, is that moderate or even constitutional royalists admitted to the palace represented a tiny minority.⁸⁸ It would be wrong to draw extensive conclusions from a single list. The admission criteria to the

⁸⁵ Tourzel, in Havre-Cröy, *Mémoires*, 39. ⁸⁶ AN C 192, no.22.

⁸⁷ Bertrand de Moleville, *Mémoires*, 157–9.

⁸⁸ For the list of servants allowed access to the Tuileries, see AN C 187, no.36.

Tuileries seem to confirm that the court remained exclusivist in nature. Those unattached to the old court nobility, or at the very least with hardline royalism, had fewer prospects of enjoying court society.

The constitutional *lever* and *coucher*

The morning rising and evening retiring ceremonies of the French kings have received much scholarly attention.⁸⁹ Some have argued that the structure of these daily rituals made manifest the kingdom's hierarchy. At the same time, it kept the nobility captive before a ceremonial backdrop which estranged them from actual power.⁹⁰ Others have remarked that the *lever* ceremony in France was highly distinctive, when compared to equivalent ceremonies in other courts. The king was confined to his ceremonial bed chamber while courtiers were admitted into his presence in tranches according to hierarchical order.⁹¹ It is not necessary to enter into the meaning and political role of the *lever* during the *ancien régime*. This is something which has been handled competently by many authors and court historians. More interesting is to examine how the Revolution impacted on this arcane ritual.

Before 1789 the *lever* was composed of six distinct entries which epitomised the court's internal structure.⁹² Central to the system was the image of the rising monarch who, in the process of starting his day, received ceremoniously every morning the compliments of the kingdom's elite. This constituted a hierarchy that was not distinguished by public function, but rather one that was defined by high birth or,

⁸⁹ David Michael Gallo, "The King's One Body": Chronological Development of Louis XIV's Lever and Coucher and the Theory of the King's Two Bodies, 1655–1702' (unpublished PhD Thesis, Boston College, 1992); Jacques Levron, *La vie quotidienne à la cour de Versailles aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris 1972), chapter 3; Solnon, *La Cour de France*, 356–63; and for the origins and wider context of the ritual, see Ernst Kantorowicz, 'Oriens Augusti, Lever du Roi', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 17 (1963), 117–77; For the architectural dimension, see Hugh Murray Baillie, 'Etiquette and the Planning of the State Apartments in Baroque Palaces', *Archeologia* 51(1967), 169–99, here 182–93.

⁹⁰ Elias, *La Société de Cour*, 68–76.

⁹¹ Mansel, 'The Court of France 1814–1830', 211.

⁹² These entries comprised: 1. *Entrée Familiale*. The royal family and the closest servants of the king. 2. *Grande Entrée*. The great officers of the realm, followed by the gentleman of both the king's bedchamber and wardrobe. 3. *Première Entrée*. The great dignitaries of the court, that is to say those officials who were subordinates of the great officers of the kingdom. 4. *Entrée de la Chambre*. Ministers, Councillors of State and officials of the Venerie (Royal Hunt). 5. *Cinquième Entrée*. Those given right of entry by the first gentlemen of the bedchamber. 6. *Sixième Entrée*. Those bestowed access by virtue of a special grace personally granted by the king. Listed in Bertelli, *The King's Body*, 150.

which amounted to much the same thing, one's position at court. Those participating in the ceremony of helping the king dress represented the stratified order of precedence of the realm. Each item of clothing, and the incumbent who handed it to the king, were regulated by a strictly ritualised set of rules. For instance, the Dauphin had the great privilege of handing the king his day shirt while the Grand Maître de la Garde Robe had the lesser honour of fastening the royal sword.⁹³ By the late eighteenth century, the main difference with the original ceremony at the time of Louis XIV was that the *lever* no longer represented the real moment of the king's awakening. Louis XVI generally rose at seven o'clock in the morning and the *lever* usually took place four hours later. This had the added advantage for the king of combining the *lever* with the ritual of the daily mass at noon.⁹⁴

One key political distinction that emerged from the outset of the Revolution was that the officers and servants of the royal household were no longer considered public officials. The politicians of the National Assembly deemed them to be persons in the private service of the nation's hereditary representative. This new mentality made it essential that the participants and structure of the ceremony be reconfigured to take into account the new political reality. Unfortunately, it has proved impossible to unearth any official documents explaining how the constitutional monarchy sought to reform one of the most important rituals of the old court.⁹⁵ It seems clear, from memoirs and letters, that the deputies of the National Assembly, the officers of the Paris Commune and National Guard were granted *entrées*. The extent of their involvement in the ceremony is unknown. It has not proved possible to find out at which specific *entrée* these new authorities were admitted.

The letters of the *armoire de fer* suggest that the *lever* became a favoured location for political scheming. After all, it was an event that gathered together the elite of the court and capital. Those attending could briefly meet, plot and negotiate out of earshot of their political rivals. Arnaud de Laporte wrote to Louis XVI, on 20 April 1791, to report on a secret conversation concerning the king's thwarted trip to Saint-Cloud, which had taken place two days previously. Laporte mentioned that, during

⁹³ Gallo, 'The King's One Body', 256.

⁹⁴ On special occasions, the ceremony was provided with musical accompaniment. For instance, during the *lever* before the opening of the Estates General, the Musique du Roi performed a symphony by Haydn. Comte de Hézecques, *Page à la cour de Louis XVI*, 43–8; and *Le Mercure de France*, 9 mai 1789, 119–25.

⁹⁵ AN C 189, no.12, (also marked 'C 11/156'). Petition from d'Ormesson, Grand Maître de la Bibliothèque du Roi, asking that he be allowed to continue enjoying the *entrées de la chambre*.

the morning's *lever*, Lafayette had asked him to stay behind in one of the adjoining *cabinets*. Here, witnessed by Jean-Baptiste Septeuil (treasurer of the *liste civile*)⁹⁶ and Henri d'Ormesson (a captain of the Parisian National Guard), their meeting took place.⁹⁷ It was agreed between all parties involved that the king should attend the Paschal celebrations at his parish church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.⁹⁸ It was hoped that this conciliatory action would defuse the situation and lay to rest Parisian antagonism toward nonjuring clergymen.

Less than three weeks later a note, in Laporte's handwriting, reached Louis XVI. It told the king to expect that a delegation of members from the Jacobin club would be attending the next day's *lever*. Laporte assumed that these individuals would be coming to present their compliments to the king, and express their support for the crown as an institution. The note advised the king to 'dissimulate and receive these gentlemen in a welcoming fashion till it can be proved that their good intentions are sincere'.⁹⁹ This policy of feigning indifference or calmness while waiting to discern what sentiments truly animated the Jacobins was to indulge in dangerous procrastination. After all, only a few weeks previously a delegation from the club had descended on the court demanding that all the senior and ecclesiastical officers of the royal household should be dismissed.¹⁰⁰ Free citizens were not to be trifled with, and most certainly not to be treated coldly, like courtiers out favour. The less the crown deployed its rituals to welcome the new political class of 1789, the more it alienated the groups on whom its own survival depended.

The memoirs of Bertrand de Moleville add interesting details to the development of the *lever* in 1792. The Minister claims that, early in 1792, a special fund to subsidise a press campaign favourable to the royal family had been established. In order to present the king with a secret report, he asked to be admitted to the royal bedroom during the *toilette* stage of the morning *lever*. The king consented to this unusual request. As Bertrand de Moleville was about to enter the bedchamber, the elderly maréchal de Noailles stopped him and the following (apocryphal) conversation ensued.

Maréchal de Noailles: I proffer my compliments – For what reason, M. le Maréchal? – I presume that the king has just granted you the *entrées* for his

⁹⁶ Jean-Baptiste Tourteau de Septeuil, Treasurer of the Civil List. See Révérend, ed., *Les Familles Titrées et Anoblies*, V, 376–7.

⁹⁷ Henri d'Ormesson, former Contrôleur Général des Finances and after 1789 Chef de Division of the Paris National Guard. Michel Antoine and Yvonne Lanhers, eds, *Les Archives d'Ormesson* (Paris, 1960), 19–21.

⁹⁸ AN C 184, no.209. ⁹⁹ Ibid., no.202. ¹⁰⁰ AN C 184, nos.210 and 211.

bedchamber. – I enter them nearly every day. – While the king is in process of completing his *toilette*? – No, but ... – In that case I repeat my compliments. – But why then? – Because at this time only the officers of the wardrobe and intimate friends to whom His Majesty has accorded this favour, which once granted cannot be revoked, are permitted to enter the royal bedchamber. – In that case I shall wait to speak to the king in private once he has completed his *toilette*.¹⁰¹

This passage indicates that the old court mentality was far from eclipsed even in its last months. The old *maréchal de Noailles*, one of the greatest authorities on matters ceremonious (whose wife was teased *Marie Antoinette*, who dubbed her '*Madame Étiquette*'), regarded this Minister's entry into the royal bedchamber as an intolerable promotion. The Minister, no matter how important his political business, had no right to aspire to a privilege, and mark of royal favour, which was traditionally destined only to those possessing a sufficiently high birth. Therefore, to avoid arousing suspicion, the Minister waited outside and communicated with the monarch at a different and unspecified phase of the *lever*.

The *coucher* ceremony seems to have been less well attended than its morning equivalent. There is little mention of it in correspondence or memoirs. The only distinct reference relates to how the king calmly performed the *coucher* on the evening of 19 June 1791.¹⁰² No one present at this ritual, especially *Lafayette*, had any inkling that within a few hours the royal family would be in flight.¹⁰³ This double dealing, and lack of clarity, gave the *lever* and *coucher* a distinctly *ancien régime* flavour. Its exclusivity, and the political intrigue that followed in its wake, were exploited, to some comical effect, by *Jacques-René Hébert*. An issue of the *Père Duchesne*, relating to the presentation of the constitution to the king on 3 September 1791, parodied the concept of *entrées*:

I was walking early in the morning in the gardens of the *Tuileries* smoking my pipe It was the first time since the fat bourgeois had fled. Bugger it! It

¹⁰¹ *Bertrand de Moleville, Mémoires*, I, 159–60.

¹⁰² One of the more controversial views regarding the night of 19 June 1791 was the one narrated by *Henri d'Ormesson* in his unpublished memoirs. This *Chef de Division* of the National Guard, and former *Controller General*, alleged that *Lafayette* was aware of the royal family's plan to escape but refused to hinder their preparations. Ormesson was told that the General hoped to dissuade *Louis XVI* from flight but was unaware that preparations had reached such an advanced stage. Ormesson described the *coucher* of 19 June 1791 as so tranquil that nobody suspected that the flight was imminent. *Henri d'Ormesson, Mémoires particuliers pour l'instruction de mes enfants sur les principaux événements de ma vie depuis ma naissance*, in AN 114 AP 130, fol.132.

¹⁰³ *Tackett, When the King Took Flight*, 61.

ain't that I can't go there anytime I want to. Damn it! It is well-known, that I have my *entrées* everywhere, and that 'no-entry signs' don't exist for the Père Duchesne. I don't give a fig for privileges and I have no wish to enjoy that which is forbidden to others.¹⁰⁴

While it may be true that the extreme level of Hébert's demagoguery was atypical of the French press of the period, it was nonetheless one of the most popular periodicals of the time. It also expressed a clear message, to its intended radical audience, that a good citizen did not enjoy privileges that were denied to others. This was certainly one of the key characteristics of the *lever*. Merely reforming the nature of participation within the ceremony was not going to make it politically acceptable.

The fat bourgeois

The menu above represents a supper consisting of sixty-five dishes of food which was, in all probability, served in the king's apartments at Versailles in 1788.¹⁰⁵ Dining was an important rite of the court. Each member of the royal family possessed his, or her, own independent *Bouche* (kitchen), and was served separately.¹⁰⁶ In order to emphasise his supremacy, the king received the greatest quantity and quality of foods. It has even been claimed that tradition dictated that all who met the royal *nef* during its triumphal progress from the kitchens to the king's table, had to greet it reverently.¹⁰⁷ More typical of the eighteenth century was the tradition that the king would dine publicly on Sundays and important religious feast days.¹⁰⁸ Here the king, accompanied by music, dined in silence before the assembled court. Behind him in strict hierarchical order were the officers of the *Bouche* and *Gobelet* waiting to serve the king under the supervising eye of the Grand Master of Ceremonies.¹⁰⁹ The Revolution, with its subsistence crises and supposed starvation plots, was to alter radically the extravagance of the gastronomic culture of the court.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ *Père Duchesne*, no.74, 1–2. ¹⁰⁵ AN K 1719, no.62.

¹⁰⁶ For the different locations of the *Bouches* present at Versailles, see Newton, *La Petite Cour*, 105–210, 289–93, 309, and 334–8; and for the most thorough and academic examination of the royal kitchen refer to Amélie Dumortier-Laparra, 'La Maison Bouche Royal', I, 1–181.

¹⁰⁷ Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 173–4.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine* (Cambridge, 2009), 126–35; and 237–8.

¹⁰⁹ Hézecques, *Page à la cour de Louis XVI*, 197.

¹¹⁰ David Andress, "'Horrible plots and infernal treasons:' conspiracy and the urban landscape in the early Revolution', in *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, ed. Peter Campell, Thomas Kaiser and Mansa Linton (Manchester, 2007), 86–7; Stephen L. Kaplan, 'The Famine Plot Persuasion in Eighteenth-Century France', *Transactions*

Soyeur de la Majesté Le Jeudi 5 Juin 1788.	
4 Potages	
Le Vermicel	Les petites Nouries
Les Nouilles	Les Croutons unis
Le Ros-bif de mouton	2 Grosse Pièce
	L'alloyau au Rôti
20 Entrées	
Les petites Salés ala Richamel	Les Bouillottes au four
Les langues de Boeuf panées	Les Noix de mouton aux Concombres
Les hachettes de lapreaux	Les petites pigeons ala Crapaudine
Les pigeons a la Choisi	La marinade a l'Anglaise
Les filets de veau piqués	Les Cotelettes de mouton sautées
La marinade de poulet	Les poulets a l'Allemande
Les petites Casseroles au Rôti de Bouillade	Les ailes de poulet ala gelée
Les Cendons de veau ala Flammande	Les ailes de poulet ala marichal
La matelotte de Rôti d'agneau	Les escalopes de lapreaux ala financière
Les ailes de poulet au Rôti de Bouillade	La Blanquette de poulet
Hors-d'œuvre du Rôti 4 Hors-d'œuvre	
Les filets de lapreaux	Les Noix de paule
Les filets de caneton	Les Cotelettes de poulet grillées
Les Rissoles	Le Salmi de Caille
Les lapreaux	Les filets de poulet ala M ^{re} D'hotel
La langouste panée	6 plats de Rôt
Les œufs pochés	Les poulets
Les petites Diabètes	Les lapreaux
	Le caneton de Rouen
	Le Chevreuil
	Le Chapon au Rôti
	Le levra piqué
2 Moyenne Entremette	
Le Bisuit de Savoie	
20 petites	
Les petites pois	Les petites pois
Les artichaux glacés	Les laitues au Bouillon
Les fèves de marais	Les épinards
Les asperges	Le Blanc manger
Les choux-fleurs a l'essence	La gelée de Citron Couvrée
Les Concombres en Cordon	La crème au Laffé
La macédoine ala Toulouse	Le miroton de pomme
Les haricots verts	Les œufs pochés
Les pains ala Duchesne	Les gros canetons unis
Les gâteaux ala fève	Les Rubans frits

Figure 6 Royal Menu (1788)

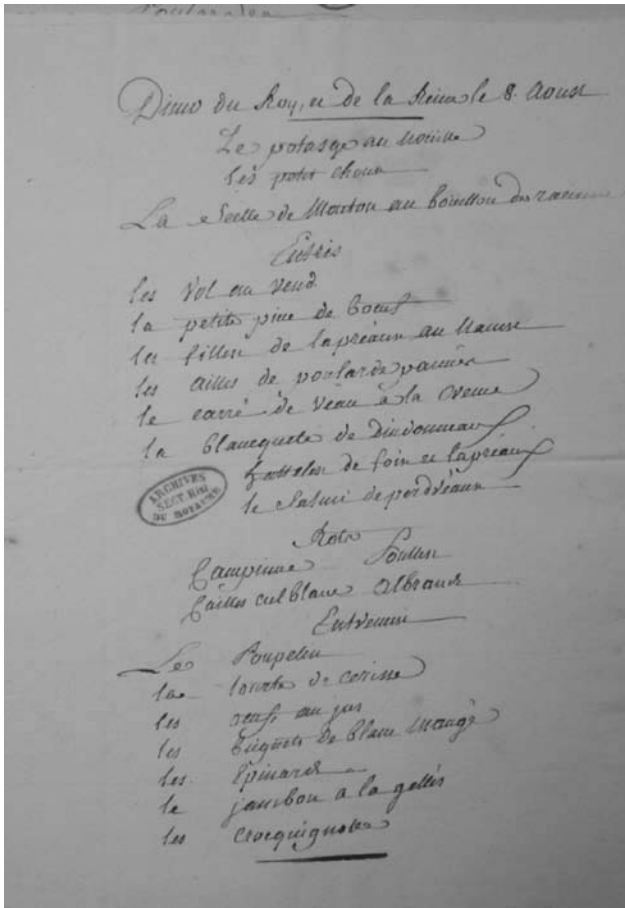


Figure 7 Royal Menu (1792)

Evidence of this trend can be observed in a menu from 1792 which highlights that the king and queen now dined together. The royals were served twenty dishes rather than sixty-five.¹¹¹ One is still far from a modern nutritionist's comfort zone, but the reduction was nevertheless significant. It seems clear that an extensive redefinition of what constituted a reasonably impressive royal banquet had taken place.

of the American Philosophical Society, 72 (1982), 62–72; and Timothy Tackett, 'Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789–1792', *The American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 691–713.

¹¹¹ AN K 1719, no.83.

It was, only on 25 July 1791, during his house arrest, that Louis XVI was informed that the cost of dining at court was approaching 2 million livres per year.¹¹² This constituted a tremendous outlay even when compared to the opulent standards of Versailles. It was obvious to the author of the report that savings could easily be made if the king decreed a substantial rupture with tradition. He noted that, since the court's arrival in the capital, the monarch dined daily with the members of his family. In spite of this sensible arrangement, each prince and princess continued to retain a separate dining establishments staffed by a great number of cooks and table servers. The writer (probably Laporte) proposed the kitchen department should be unified into one large unit serving the entire royal family. The second economy suggested dealt with the large amount of food left unconsumed at the royal table. It was advised that these leftovers could be served to the palace staff, who were being nourished by yet another separate kitchen. From the other menus, stored in the Archives Nationales dating from the revolutionary period, it would seem that the king took this advice to heart and that there was a significant reduction in the extravagance of court dining.¹¹³

From a diplomatic angle, the exchange of gastronomic delicacies between the courts of Europe continued unperturbed by political events. The Grand Master of the Knights of St John wrote to his ambassador, the Bailli de Virieu, to make sure that the annual ceremony for the presentation of oranges from Malta to the queen continued to be observed.¹¹⁴ The marquis de Cordon, the Piedmontese Ambassador, also acted as Monsieur's intermediary in the acquisition of truffles from Piedmont.¹¹⁵ The king's table still remained the most exclusive and best provided in the realm.

The radical press portrayed the king as a Rabelaisian monster gorging on prodigious quantities of food on the backs of the starving poor. During the ill-fated flight to Varennes Louis XVI's stopped to dine at Saint-Ménéhould.¹¹⁶ This probably slowed his progress and contributed to his capture by the Revolutionary authorities. The gluttonous king, ensnared whilst banqueting, was a favourite subject of jest.¹¹⁷ After his return, Louis XVI was portrayed by Hébert as either a fat bourgeois

¹¹² AN C 184, no.146. ¹¹³ AN K 1719, nos.57–107.

¹¹⁴ AN M 968, no.156; and Alain Blondy, *Parfum de Cour, Gourmandise de Rois: Le Commerce des oranges entre Malte et la France au XVIIIe siècle, d'après la correspondance entre Joseph Savoye, Épicier à Paris, et son fils, l'Abbé Louis Savoye, Chapelain Conventuel de l'Ordre de Malte* (Malta, 2003), 15–20.

¹¹⁵ ASTo, Francia, Lettere Ministri, Mazzo 235, dépêche no.251, Paris le 13 novembre 1789.

¹¹⁶ Spang, *Invention of the Restaurant*, 123–38. ¹¹⁷ Ibid.

or drunkard.¹¹⁸ These insulting epithets proved popular, and many irreverent prints were disseminated, portraying the monarch as a pig or in the process of consuming gargantuan meals. As the Revolution progressed it became difficult for the crown to claim that the opulence of the king's table reflected the might and power of the French Nation.

The Constitution and question of the *deux battants*

The tension that characterised the relationship between legislative and executive branches of government, during the early Revolution, has been studied in great detail by Antoine de Baecque.¹¹⁹ In a sophisticated article, this scholar chronicles the changing rituals adopted to receive the king in the Assembly's debating chamber. Examples range from the silent disapprobation of Mirabeau on 15 July 1789, to the rapturous and deferential welcome provided on 4 February 1790.¹²⁰ De Baecque concludes that the rituals for receiving the king in the National Assembly were very open-ended and flexible (perhaps even a barometer measuring public opinion towards the crown). It proved difficult for the monarchy to appropriate these rituals and use them as a traditional manifestation of *éclat*. Furthermore, the fact that it was the Assembly that regulated the relationship between crown and deputies meant that it always had the upper hand when it came to creating a positive public image.

The monarchy's contribution to these ceremonies was hopelessly anachronistic. The heralds who, on horseback, announced the opening of the new legislature in every square of the capital, constituted an historical curio rather than an effective symbol of power.¹²¹ The king's decision to use outmoded forms of vestimentary exhibitionism to impress the Nation's representatives was greatly misjudged. The Bailli de Virieu noted that every time Louis XVI went to the Assembly, he always wore the elaborate *habit habillé*.¹²² It was only when he attended the sessions of the Paris Commune in late April 1791 that he wore the simpler *frac*.¹²³

It is true that this ceremonial was far less complicated than that observed during the *ancien régime*. Nevertheless, it was too old-fashioned for a public that was gradually falling out of sympathy with the very concept of courtliness. On 10 August 1792 Louis XVI fled to the Assembly to seek assistance in quelling the large anti-monarchical

¹¹⁸ *Père Duchesne*, no. 61, 1–6.

¹¹⁹ De Baecque, 'From Royal Dignity to Republican Austerity', 671–96.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 676.

¹²¹ *ASPr*, *Francia* 82, Parigi 2 ottobre 1791. ¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Parigi 24 aprile 1791.

insurrection which had broken out in Paris. He was politely listened to and then reminded that the deputies could not deliberate on political issues in his presence.¹²⁴ The king and the royal family were temporarily accommodated in the *logographe* behind the Presidential rostrum while the Legislative proceeded to suspend his executive authority.¹²⁵ The constitutional ceremony for receiving the executive power within the debating-chamber sought to display symbolically the monarch's subordinate relationship to the National Assembly. It was yet another sign of the crown's failure to win the battle over public representation.

There were two further examples of interactions involving the king and Assembly. In the first a deputation from the Assembly travelled to the Tuileries to present its compliments to the king on the morning of New Year's Day. The original ritual of 1790, involving sixty deputies, drew little comment, apart from an incensed Desmoulins who saw it as an intolerable form of slavish behaviour, unworthy of a free people.¹²⁶ The 1791 ceremony evoked less enthusiasm but was still relatively well attended.¹²⁷ By December 1791 the Assembly did not even deliberate on whether to send a delegation to pay its respect to the king. The *Gazette de France* noted somewhat whimsically, on 1 January 1792: 'the court was very brilliant'.¹²⁸ This official gazette also revealingly remarked that only three institutions complimented the king on this day. These included the directories of the *départements* of 'Paris' and of the 'Seine et Oise'. The last institution to travel to the Tuileries to wish the monarch a happy New Year was the municipality of Versailles.¹²⁹

During the *ancien régime*, it had been customary to honour the most important guests at court by symbolically opening both sides of the French doors in the rooms through which these distinguished individuals progressed. This gesture of respect became an area of bitter contention between the court and National Assembly during 1792. A furious debate had arisen in the press, and the Assembly itself, over the issue of the 'deux battants'. Previously, on 2 September 1791, Duport, the Minister of Justice, wrote to the king advising him that the delegates bearing the revised Constitution should have their importance recognised by ordering that both sides of the French doors inside the Tuileries be opened.¹³⁰ In early 1792 some noticed that when less important decrees were brought to be sanctioned, only one side of

¹²⁴ AP XXXI, 596–7. ¹²⁵ AP XLVII, 636–7.

¹²⁶ *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, no.8, 340–42.

¹²⁷ *Père Duchesne*, no.1 1791, 4–6; and *Journal Général de la Cour et de la Ville par M. G******, 1791, no.3, I, 21.

¹²⁸ *Gazette de France*, vendredi 6 janvier 1792, no.2.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, mardi 10 janvier 1792, no.3, 11. ¹³⁰ AN C 185, no.540bis.

the French doors leading to the royal study was left open. Journalists like Prudhomme interpreted this as a deliberate slight directed at the Nation's representatives.¹³¹ When deputies performed the solemn act of presenting laws for sanction they expected to be received with the utmost deference and respect. That is to say, both sides of the French doors in the rooms through which they processed were to be opened.

Article 77 of the law concerning the organisation of the Corps législatif demanded that each month four commissioners should be appointed to present new laws to the king, for his sanction. They were to be preceded by one of the ushers of the Salle du Manège and introduced without delay into the Salle du Conseil to meet the king.¹³² The system, which had its origins in October 1789, had worked smoothly until problems emerged in February 1792.¹³³

On 6 February 1792, the deputy Thuriot reported on the delegation, sent the previous day, to present Louis XVI with the monthly instalment of new laws approved by the Assembly.¹³⁴ Thuriot was furious over the manner in which they had been received. He explained that, when his deputation arrived at the Tuileries, nobody was there to receive them. Finally, when the usher of the king's bedchamber appeared he asked them to wait in a side room because the royal council was still in session. The four deputies refused and they were, after sometime, admitted into the Salle du Conseil. Here they vociferously protested against their treatment at the hand of a servant of the royal household.

They also complained that only one *battant* of the French doors had been opened during their palace visit. A motion was proposed, supported by both Couthon and Gensonné, that those responsible for opposing the execution of Article 77 be arrested and tried.¹³⁵ Before the situation degenerated completely, a letter from the king was received and was read to all the deputies. Louis stated that he was sorry for the misunderstanding which had occurred. During the Constituent Assembly it had been the court's practice to open both *battants* of the palace's French doors to delegations numbering between twenty-four to sixty deputies. For groups below this number it was ordinary practice to open only one side of the doors. The king apologised for the previous day's misunderstanding and promised that in future he would be guided by the Assembly's wishes.¹³⁶

The deputy Lejesne was unimpressed and related how previous delegations, in which he had participated, had been subjected to even greater

¹³¹ *Révolutions de Paris*, 4 au 11 février 1792, no.135, 245–53.

¹³² AP XXVII, 155. ¹³³ AP IX, 211. ¹³⁴ AP XXXVIII, 197–8.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 198–9. ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 199.

mistreatment.¹³⁷ He described how: 'we were received in an antechamber where one of those men with epaulettes and gold braid mocked us with the most condescending and insulting of smiles'. Finally Vergniaud interrupted proceedings and stated that valuable time was being wasted over a trifling issue. He suggested that as the king, in his letter, indicated his willingness to accept a change in procedure, that the entire issue could be sent to the Comité de Législation to be regulated. This hardly resolved the problem; and the debate, momentarily, descended into chaos as radical deputies argued that the question was one of major importance. They screamed that the dignity of the French people had been insulted. When order was finally restored, Vergniaud's motion was adopted and from henceforth both *battants* of the palace doors would have to be opened to greet the commissioners of the Assembly.¹³⁸

The points of contact between royalty and the national representation were not instances of political harmony. These two bodies did not behave as two components of a greater constitutional machine, but rather they were the expression of rival systems, which sought to obstruct each other. The legislative branch was deeply distrustful of a monarchy whose power it had forcibly arrogated without the consent of the reigning prince. The Assembly was always apprehensive that the monarch's appearance could undermine the authority it had fought so hard to establish.

Royal life at the Tuileries from 1789 to 1792 was a story of incurable decline. Each year brought with it restrictions of life at court. Yet amongst all this turbulence the institution managed to hollow out a small space in which it was able to operate. A recognisable routine took shape and, except for the brief interruption from June to September 1791 after the flight to Varennes, it survived right to the end of the monarchy. This was perhaps the greatest failure of the system in a time of Revolution. To recreate an *ancien régime* routine in the middle of Revolutionary Paris was not the best means of endearing the constitutional monarchy to a politicised populace, inebriated by the promises of change and reform. The rigid attachment to tradition and the token measures aimed at reducing court expenditure were considered unconvincing. Worse, the radical press saw this unshakeable regard for ritual as an expression of nostalgia for a corrupt and unjust past. They were correct only in so far as Louis XVI certainly regretted the breakdown of a system of order and authority which he certainly believed was divinely ordained.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 200–1.

¹³⁹ Girault de Coursac, *L'éducation d'un Roi*, 193–96.

The monarchy's behaviour at court confirmed the worst fears of progressives, whilst at the same time the actions of radicals validated the negative expectations of the court. Slowly, a dialogue of the deaf became established between Assembly and crown. It seems difficult to believe that, after the attack on the church and the forced dismissal of the highest-ranking courtiers had taken place, the monarchy could still interact in a meaningful way with a regime that had deprived it of its very foundations.

Part II

Reform and survival of the *ancien régime*

4 The Royal Guard during the French Revolution

The military dimension of European princely courts has been a neglected aspect of recent studies.¹ The prince's home was not only the seat of government, religion, diplomacy and public spectacle, it was also one of the most important garrison posts in the realm.² It was here that the elite regiments and special units of the royal army were stationed. The king, as commander-in-chief, represented his supremacy, within the armed forces, by closely associating with those noble officers and well-trained troops who served in his personal guard.³ Admittedly, soldiering at Versailles was of secondary significance in comparison to other European courts; the most notable examples being the militarised households of Prussia, Austria and Sardinia.⁴ Evidence of this can be seen in the French courtiers' disdain of uniform.⁵ The French courtly aristocracy preferred the old-fashioned *habit habillée* and rarely ever wore military dress. The one notable exception was the feast of Saint-Louis, when the officers of the court wore their regimental gala dress. Elsewhere on the continent military uniform had become *de rigueur* in royal households. The monarchs of Britain and Sweden took this trend a step further by creating a hybrid form of dress, to be worn by the

¹ Studies on the *Maison Militaire du Roi* include: David C. O'Brien, 'Traditional Virtues, Feudal Ties and the Royals Guards: The Culture of Service in the Eighteenth-Century *Maison Militaire du Roi*', *French History*, 17 (2003), 19–47; Guy Rowlands, 'Louis XIV, Aristocratic Power and the Elite Units of The French Army', *French History*, 13 (1999), 303–1; and Bodinier, *Les Gardes du Corps de Louis XVI*.

² Adamson, ed., *The Princely Courts of Europe*, 12.

³ Guy Rowlands, *The Dynastic State and the Army under Louis XIV, Royal Service and Private Interest 1661–1701* (Cambridge, 2002), 346–9.

⁴ Beales, *Joseph II*, I, 172–3; Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great: A Military Life* (London, 1990), 247–62; Christopher Clark, *The Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia 1600–1947* (London, 2006), 95–101 and 159; and for Savoy, see Robert Oresko, 'The Sabaudian Court 1563–c.1750', in *The Princely Courts*, ed. Adamson, 231–53.

⁵ Philip Mansel, 'Monarchy, Uniform and the Rise of the Frac 1760–1830', *Past and Present*, 46 (1982), 112–15.

officials of their household, which emphasised the complementarity of court and army.⁶

Despite lagging behind the militaromania of the rest of Europe, the army played a crucial part in the royal routine in France. Throughout most of the eighteenth century, until the reforms of the comte de Saint-Germain, there were over 10,000 troops stationed at Versailles.⁷ The Gardes du Corps and Cent-Suisses were employed by the various Grands Maîtres des Cérémonies in the numerous public festivities and rituals associated with the monarchy. From the reign of Louis XV, once a year, the court was treated to a yearly 'trooping of the colour' performed by the Gardes Suisses on a parade ground called the *trou d'enfer* close to the palace of Marly.⁸

The diplomatic role of troops continued to be of high symbolic value.⁹ All newly appointed Ambassadors travelling through France stopped at every garrison post where they received the *honneurs militaires*.¹⁰ By the time a diplomat reached court it was hoped that he would be so bowled over by the military strength of his hosts that he would send reports to his sovereign describing the tremendous might of France. Perceived military power was as important as actual strategic resources in the European diplomatic game.¹¹

The vast majority of French soldiers, especially those stationed in Paris, took part, at some time or other, in public festivities. These ranged from religious functions to parades or other forms of choreographed training exercises. The drill manuals before the Seven Years' War were very much concerned with ceremony.¹² Entire chapters were devoted to relating the correct fashion of presenting arms whilst almost simultaneously kneeling before the 'Blessed Sacrament'.

As might be expected, if the regular army prescribed such an onerous number of ritual obligations, the king's personal body guard multiplied these requirements.¹³ Periodically, each of the four Capitaines des Gardes du Corps was appointed as the officer-on-duty at court. He was

⁶ Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 31–3, 51–4 and 57–63.

⁷ Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 56–7.

⁸ Pierre Victor de Besenval, *Mémoires du Baron de Besenval sur la cour de France* (Paris, 1987), 16; and as Colonel Général des Suisses et Grisons, the comte d'Artois, kept richly decorated notebooks of his revues of the Swiss Guards. See, BA, Ms. 4689.

⁹ Jeremy Black, *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society 1550–1800* (London, 1991), 27 and 96; and, M. S. Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime 1618–1789*, 2nd edn (Stroud, 1998), 131–5 and 175.

¹⁰ SHAT, Ya 516, chemise 22, honneurs et préséances, 'Notes sur les honneurs à rendre aux ambassadeurs à leur arrivée en France'.

¹¹ Blanning, *The Origins of the Revolutionary Wars*, 28.

¹² Huguequin collection. AN M 655, especially Paragraphe 184.

¹³ *Ibid.*, paragraphes 170–8.

required to accompany the king everywhere: from work to hunting to religious services.¹⁴ Not even the Grands Officiers de la Couronne had such constant contact with the king. A Capitaine des Gardes on duty took up his station at the morning *lever* and even slept in the antechamber, directly outside the royal bedroom.

By 1789 the Maison Militaire, if one includes the Gardes Français, numbered about 6000 men.¹⁵ However, the Gardes Français were considered unreliable and had acquitted themselves rather poorly in previous conflicts.¹⁶ In the end, Louis XVI could only rely positively on the unwavering loyalty of the 1800 noble Gardes du Corps. It was for this reason that Saint-Priest and La Tour Du Pin decided in September to quarter the Flanders regiment in Versailles in order to reinforce the troops guarding the court. The officers of the Gardes du Corps hosted a banquet in the royal opera theatre to welcome their counterparts from the Flanders regiment. As these noblemen fraternised, they raucously expressed their loyalty for the king and their disdain for the National Assembly. Their offensive behaviour towards the tricolour cockade and their decision to sing Grétry's 'Oh Richard, oh my king', during the so-called orgy of Versailles, was one of the immediate events which triggered the march of the women of Paris on the court.¹⁷

Early on the morning of 6 October 1789 the Gardes du Corps failed to stop an angry crowd of *poissardes* (fishwives) from accessing the palace. This allowed a group of rioters to enter Marie Antoinette's apartments. The insurgents, in the struggle to enter the palace, decapitated two royal guardsmen. The queen narrowly escaped meeting the same fate by fleeing through a secret passage, which connected her bedroom to the king's apartment.¹⁸ It was clear that a military unit, whose actions had caused such a remarkable breakdown in public order, could not hope to be reassigned to guard duty once the court was forced to move to Paris. The fate of the king's military household, for the twenty-one months following the court's departure from Versailles, remained undecided. Plans were drawn up to recall the Gardes du Corps to active duty, however these came to nothing. Eventually these four historic companies were abolished by the National Assembly four days after the flight to Varennes.¹⁹

¹⁴ Bodinier, *Les Gardes du Corps*, 19–21. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶ The Gardes Français who played such a crucial role in the storming of the Bastille also had a vital part in guarding the court at Versailles. Their military track record was somewhat equivocal. See, Jean Chagniot, 'Une Panique : Les Gardes Français à Dettingen 27 juin 1743', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 24 (1977), 78–95.

¹⁷ Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, I, 251–3.

¹⁸ Furet and Richet, *La Révolution Française*, 97–8.

¹⁹ AP XXVII, 520–1.

From October 1790 to March 1792 the constitutional monarchy was protected by both the National and Swiss Guards. The personal safety of Louis XVI, and the ceremonial duties inside the palace, were entrusted to a small elite unit: the Cent-Suisses, commanded by the duc de Brissac.²⁰ The National Guard was assigned to the exterior surveillance of the Tuileries. A small detachment of this citizens' militia was allowed access to the king's apartments and participated in the *service d'honneur*.²¹ Yet, for the most part, the internal safety of the royal household was the responsibility of the Swiss Guards. This regiment numbered 2000 men, and was endowed with two centuries of battle experience.²² Under the efficient control of Major Bachmann, who repeatedly lamented the demise of 'our good German discipline', the soldiers of this regiment remained in good order.²³

Peculiarly, the usually tactful Louis XVI showed barely concealed contempt for the new citizens' militia which was assigned to patrol his gardens. It seems safe to assume that he considered these pseudo-soldiers to be little better than gaolers. Each Chef de Division of the National Guard periodically took on the duties of the absent *Capitaines de Gardes du Corps*.²⁴ Many of the courtiers attending the Tuileries, who had previously been royal guards, made the patriot guardsmen feel very unwelcome. The case of the prince de Poix, a member of the Noailles family, who enthusiastically endorsed and participated in the institution commanded by Lafayette (his second cousin's husband), was the exception rather than the norm.²⁵

In 1790 Louis XVI started to take some regular exercise, by riding in either the Bois de Boulogne or Champs Élysées. During these hacks, he refused to be accompanied by the Chef de Division on duty and only the duc de Brissac had permission to ride by his side. Similarly during the rare carriage journeys which the monarch took to visit sites around Paris, like Notre-Dame and the Gobelins factory, he refused the Divisional Commanders of National Guard access to his carriage.²⁶ Lafayette further complained that bourgeois officers were not being supplied with horses, while members of the *noblesse présentée* at court benefited from greater access to the royal stables.²⁷

²⁰ AN C 183, no.97bis.

²¹ Roger Dupuy, *La Garde Nationale 1789–1872* (Paris, 2010), 43–198.

²² Rodolphe de Castella de Delley, *Le Régiment des Gardes Suisses au Service de France du 3 mars 1616 au 10 août 1792* (Fribourg, 1964), 5, 92 and 148; and Jean Chagniot, *Paris et l'armée au XVIIIe siècle, Étude politique et sociale* (Paris, 1985), 365–8.

²³ SHAT, Ya 292, 10 État Major, chemise 1 Premier Major, Copie de ma lettre au Général Mayerfisch écrit en Mars 1790.

²⁴ AN 114 AP 130, fol.117. ²⁵ Bodinier, *Les Gardes du Corps*, 510–11.

²⁶ AN 114 AP 130, fol.118. ²⁷ AN C 184, no.355.

Philippe-Louis de Noailles, prince de Poix, one of the few liberal Capitaines des Gardes du Corps, advised publicly that the king should wear the uniform of the National Guard at a forthcoming review. The normally mild-tempered Louis XVI answered the prince in a note which fully expressed his irritation.

I wish, Monsieur, to reply again, that I may have strong reasons for not complying with your request. Regardless of the confidence I may have in M. de La Fayette, and his advice on how I choose to dress, it should be noted that I may have good reasons for not seeing eye to eye with him on this matter ... you on the other hand do not have my confidence in any way; you learned quite by chance of his [Lafayette's] request and you have taken it upon yourself to speak of it to all the officers of the National Guard stressing the bad impression which my refusal to wear their uniform would make; not content of this you use my own people to spy on my household and criticise the orders I may give from time to time. ... I know that some silently disapprove of the actions that circumstances force me to undertake, but they do not condemn my behaviour.²⁸

The prince's initial zeal for the reforming agenda of the liberal deputies of the Second Estate and his political support for Lafayette damaged his standing at court. The king expressed a loss of confidence which was surprising; especially when one considers that both the Prince's father and uncle were among the most powerful magnates in France.²⁹ Indeed the maréchal de Mouchy, Poix's father, was Governor of Versailles.³⁰ While Louis XVI's declaration was sufficiently mortifying, far more serious was the accusation of spying for the patriot party. This piece of correspondence demonstrated the king's unwillingness to be associated in any way with the National Guard. The Convention later deemed this note to be sufficiently compromising for it to be published as part of the papers used in preparing the case against Louis XVI in December 1792.³¹

Yet, the picture was more ambiguous than this one letter might suggest. The monarch did, at times, indulge in gesture-politics towards the National Guard in order to satisfy public opinion. However, as Louis XVI made clear in his letter to Poix, he did so under coercion. The king also expected that his courtiers refrain from interfering in 'the actions that circumstances force me to undertake'.³²

Among notable concessions granted by the king was the decision to dress the Dauphin in a miniature version of National Guard's uniform for the Feast of the Federation.³³ This was by no means the only way

²⁸ AN C 184, no.316. ²⁹ Wick, *A Conspiracy of Well-Intentioned Men*, 65–6.

³⁰ *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1790). ³¹ AP LIV, 490–1. ³² AN C 184, no.316.

³³ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 19 luglio 1790.

in which the royal family sought to improve relations with the Parisian militias. On 14 February 1790 the entire court attended a *Te Deum* at Notre-Dame. After the religious ceremony, the king witnessed the blessing of the new standards of the National Guard.³⁴ A month later, on 22 March, these same soldiers participated in the religious procession which marked the anniversary of Henry IV's triumphal entry into Paris.³⁵ All these ceremonies briefly softened the public concern regarding the monarchy's diffidence toward the National Guard.³⁶

In the early 1790s, the court also attended the military reviews which took place at the Champ de Mars and Plaine de Sablons. The earliest review, at which the king was present in person, was staged on 18 October 1789, in the Champs Élysées. Little by little, as discipline improved, so too did the performance of military manoeuvres of these citizen soldiers. On 20 June and 11 July 1790 the king reviewed three divisions of the National Guard on the Champs de Mars.³⁷ Antonio Caccia, the secret agent of the Duke of Modena, described the review of 20 June in the following terms:

The day before yesterday, on the Champ de Mars, the king reviewed 15,000 troops of the Parisian National Guard. It was a superb sight, the Queen with the Dauphin were present and everything was performed with admirable discipline.³⁸

Certainly 15,000 men involved in complicated military manoeuvres, accompanied by marching music, was an impressive sight and an instrument which the monarchy traditionally had used to its advantage.

In the following year no reviews were held. After the flight to Varennes, from June to September, the National Guard was assigned to keep the royal family under house arrest. Three other parades did take place in 1792, but these involved the king inspecting hastily formed volunteer regiments marching off to the front.³⁹ In this context such military performance had little to do with the celebration of the crown and much more to do with the frantic effort to ensure the survival of France and her Revolution.

³⁴ BnF Ms.Fr. 11697, fols 37–8 ³⁵ Ibid., fol.51.

³⁶ Louis Philippe used the reviews of the National Guard in 1830s to greater effect than did his legitimatist cousins. Mathilde Larrère, 'Ainsi paraissait le roi des barricades, les grandes revues royales de la garde nationale, à Paris, sous la monarchie de Juillet', *Le Mouvement Social*, 179, (1997), 9–31.

³⁷ AN C 221, no.160, *Journal de Louis XVI*.

³⁸ ASMo, Francia, Busta 227, Lettere Antonio Caccia, Parigi 22 giugno 1790 e 27 luglio 1790.

³⁹ AN C 221, no.160, *Journal de Louis XVI*.

Reviews were popular public spectacles for the greater part of the Parisian population.⁴⁰ In the past they had regularly enjoyed an afternoon's excursion to witness the monarchy flaunt its military muscle.⁴¹ However, the radical press drew attention to what it perceived as the more sinister side of proceedings. After all, the king still received the salutes and *honneurs des armes* as commander-in-chief of the army. Many wondered if this deference was compatible with the National Assembly's decision to withdraw from the king not only the power to make peace and war, but also his absolute discretion over military appointments and promotion.⁴² The situation was to become even more complex after the king's failed flight. The radical minority of 1790 was to become the preponderant voice of 1792.

The Swiss Guards stationed at Tuileries remained loyal and well disciplined throughout the entire period. These 2000 'foreign' troops with their bright red uniforms had been a common sight in eighteenth-century Paris.⁴³ They not only guarded the king at court, but also patrolled the many supply depots within the city. Their barracks were located at Courbevoie, on the outskirts of the capital, rather than at Versailles. Though these troops were in effect mercenaries, many became well integrated in their adoptive country, and remained in France after their tour of duty. A very large portion of retired Swiss troops opened taverns in the Parisian region. Another significant group were employed as reliable porters in the great Parisian mansions. In this capacity they were mercilessly caricatured by the journalist Louis-Sebastien Mercier.⁴⁴ So the Swiss, far from being considered 'the enemies in our midst', were part of the urban landscape of eighteenth-century Paris.

The nominal head of the Gardes Suisses was the regimental colonel, the comte d'Affry who, having reached the venerable age of 79, participated little in the actual administration of the regiment. The effective commanding officers were the regimental lieutenant-colonel and major: respectively the marquis de Maillardoz and the chevalier Bachmann.⁴⁵ The Chevalier, as a keen follower of the Prussian model of discipline, mercilessly drilled and punished his subordinates. Among his papers are many letters and other documents relating to life in the regiment between 1789 and 1792. His inflexible character emerges clearly from his voluminous correspondence. In a letter to a

⁴⁰ Gibiat, *Hiérarchies Sociales et Ennoblement*, 89–98.

⁴¹ Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, V, 209–12. ⁴² AP XV, 661–2.

⁴³ Chagniot, *Paris et l'armée*, 365–8. ⁴⁴ Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, V, 30–4.

⁴⁵ Jérôme Bodin, *Les Suisses au Service de la France, de Louis IX à légion étrangère* (Paris, 1988), 256

friend's wife, he explains with remarkable frankness why he had to quit Paris in August 1789:

The reason I was forced to leave Paris in August and head for Versailles was due to some Grenadiers who had deserted and in particular one individual named Chamillard, a nasty piece of work, whom I had often punished by making him run the gauntlet ... they complained about me to M. de La Fayette and to the Paris Commune.⁴⁶

In spite of this bad start, the Major led the Swiss Guards throughout the entire Revolutionary period without further difficulties. His name, surprisingly, did not appear in the denunciations and investigations of Comité des Recherches of National Assembly.⁴⁷ He steered clear of scandal by limiting his criticisms to the impact of the Revolutionaries' policies on the army. Bachmann's correspondence tries to avoid compromising statements concerning the political changes occurring in France. As a professional, and extremely proud, soldier he only treated subjects that impacted directly on his everyday experiences. His letters were characterised by a ferocious resentment of the National Assembly's ban on the exemplary physical chastisement of soldiers. Yet, these same pieces of correspondence never remark on the difficulties of court life in Paris, despite the fact that, as an elite guardsman, Bachmann was constantly in close contact with the royal family.

The major devoted considerable time to examining the morale of the other Swiss regiments serving in France. He eloquently expressed his relief that the Swiss Guards were never attracted by the sedition which had caused other units, like the Swiss regiment of Châteaueux at Nancy, to mutiny.⁴⁸ Among Bachmann's most serious concern, during his time protecting the Tuileries, was to curtail duelling between Swiss troops and soldiers of the French army of the line.⁴⁹ Another substantial area of concern was preventing his men from attending the radical political clubs within Paris. This was not mere paranoia; an association called the Club Helvétique had been founded with the express purpose of preaching the revolutionary canon to the Swiss nationals in the capital.⁵⁰ In order to prevent the clubs from recruiting his men, the comte d'Affry distributed a circular in which he reminded the authorities

⁴⁶ SHAT, Ya 292, 10 État Major, Chemise 1, Premier Major, Xbre 1789, Ma réponse à une femme de mes amies en Suisse.

⁴⁷ AN D XXIX bis, dossier 351, fol.22, lettre du soldat Masson: 'the Swiss Guards are for the king and not for the Nation'. 11 August 1791.

⁴⁸ Scott, *The Response of the Royal Army to the French Revolution*, 92–5.

⁴⁹ SHAT, Ya 292, 10 État Major, Chemise 1, Premier Major, Extrait de ma lettre à mon frère en date du 10 mai 1790.

⁵⁰ Bodin, *Les Suisses au Service de la France*, 254–5.

of the city of Paris that Swiss troops were expressly forbidden from attending political gatherings.⁵¹

The *Capitulations*, the treaties negotiated and renewed periodically between the Swiss Cantons and the kingdom of France, were a great advantage to the officer-corps of the Guard. They provided not only a wide degree of latitude when it came to imposing discipline on Swiss regiments, but effectively gave officers complete jurisdiction over their men. Swiss troops serving in France were immune from the ordinary course of justice and could only be tried at a court-martial presided over by their own commanding officers. The *Capitulations* solved without too much complication the potentially thorny issue of the army oath of 1791. The comte d'Affry reminded the politicians of the Constituent Assembly that his troops, as Swiss nationals, could not be bound by the internal requirements of the French army. Therefore a compromise was reached by which the Gardes Suisses swore a modified oath.⁵² This new version omitted references to the king but included the ambiguous phrasing that these soldiers were prepared to fight both the external and interior enemies of the French Constitution.⁵³ This wording considerably muddled the waters, rather than unifying the fragmented allegiance of the foreign troops in the service of France

The ordinary Swiss troops stationed at the Tuileries were assigned to a normal military routine, which included administrative work and regular guard duty at the palace. The service regulations of these mercenaries listed in rigorous detail all the possible infractions to military discipline which could be committed while on guard. Amusingly, this included the punishment of being sent to prison for forty-eight hours for any trooper caught chasing game in the gardens of the Tuileries.⁵⁴ The punishment for untidiness was reserved to a disciplinary committee which decided on a case by case basis what sanction to deliver. Revealingly, officers were to teach by example by being both impeccably dressed and well groomed. It was obvious that proximity to the court and the royal person required a smartness which went beyond what was usual in the ordinary army of the line. The regiments of the court were not only military units but also another visible manifestation of the monarch's power.

⁵¹ SHAT, Ya 292, 10 État Major, Chemise 1 Premier Major, Copie de la lettre de M. d'Affry du 10 Mai 1791.

⁵² Ibid., Chemise 2 état du Service, Série de punitions ordonnées par M. le Colonel le 25 février 1791 pour la garde chez le roi ou près de la famille royale.

⁵³ Ibid., Chemise 1 Premier Major, Copie des lettres de MM les Capitaines du rég.t des gardes Suisses à leurs Souverains respectifs en date du 29 Juin 1791.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Chemise 2, Service, 25 février 1791 pour la garde chez le Roi.

The officers of the Swiss Guards must have been reliable, as no punishments were specified for those found wanting in the fulfilment of their duties. Indeed, the regulations declared that it would be redundant to define a sanction for a captain not turning up for guard-duty as such a contingency had never occurred. It seems clear that the Swiss Guards were not only a regiment of mercenaries in the service of the king of France but, more importantly, constituted one of the most professional and elite units in the French army. The flight to Varennes, remarkably, caused few problems for the regiment. The day after Louis XVI left for Montmédy, the Assembly summoned the comte d'Affry and his general-staff to receive orders on how to maintain public order in Paris. After which the Count and his officers reaffirmed their complete obedience to the wishes of the National Assembly.⁵⁵

One of the more unexpected outcomes of Louis XVI's actions, in the summer of 1791, were the secret negotiations which took place between crown and Feuillants (July–August) aimed at making the Constitution acceptable to both parties. One concession given to royalists was that the king was to have a personal guard of 1800 men. This was not an illusory promise, but became part of the constitutional settlement. In the second chapter of the Constitution of 1791 it was stated specifically in Section 1, Article 12:

The king will be provided, excluding the guard of honour furnished by the National Guard of his place of residence, with a guard paid for by the funds of the *liste civile*; this unit will not exceed the number of 1200 men on foot and 600 on horseback.⁵⁶

The legal enshrinement of the king's solemn right to protect himself epitomises the deeply pessimistic view of the French state which came to prevail among the legislators of the Constituent Assembly.⁵⁷ The institution was to be deeply unpopular for two principal reasons. First, it became a pressing concern that the king had at his disposal an armed body of men outside the control of the regular French Army. The question to whom these troops were ultimately accountable remained ambiguous. The final reason which made this institution publicly 'suspect' was its organisational proximity to the old Gardes du Corps.

From the projects and draft regulations drawn up to establish the king's Constitutional Guard, three conflicting priorities emerged. First, it was expected that this unit should be substantially more cost-efficient

⁵⁵ Ibid., Chemise 1, Premier Major, Copie de ma lettre à M. le Landstathalter Hauser du 24 Juin 1791.

⁵⁶ *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1792), 95.

⁵⁷ Pierre Lafue, *Louis XVI et l'échec de la Révolution Royale* (Paris, 1942), 203–10.

than its predecessors. Second, it was decreed that this unit, though not part of the regular army, should be as military in character as possible. To that effect, this body of soldiers was to divide its time equally between duties at court and ordinary garrison posts. Finally, and most importantly, this guard should enhance the *éclat* of the French crown and promote the old-fashioned idea of *émulation* among other army units.⁵⁸ This was one more particular circle which the monarchy and its royalist officers would find impossible to square.

Court officials found it difficult to conciliate splendour with parsimony. Indeed, the proposed uniforms exemplified the resurgence of many of the old ideas of courtly extravagance. The cavalry unit's dress was very elaborate. It was proposed that, as at Versailles, mounted troopers should wear cuirasses decorated with images of Apollonian suns. The uniforms of officers were to be liberally adorned with gold braid and silver lace. One of Marie Antoinette's letters to Barnave expressed eloquently the court's inability to understand that vestimentary flamboyance was offensive to the revolutionary public: 'The uniform [of the guard] has been changed entirely. It is now exactly like the king's livery.'⁵⁹ The National Assembly had banned the wearing of livery (19 June 1790), and had disqualified domestic servants from being active citizens.⁶⁰ In consequence, the image of soldiers wearing the royal colours cannot have been in the least reassuring either to radical republicans or moderate constitutionalists.

Contemporaries, and subsequent scholars, have speculated as to whether this military unit could have defended the monarchy successfully during the insurrection of 10 August 1792.⁶¹ This seems a *question mal-posée* since it presupposes that the king's Constitutional Guard was a cohesive military reality, and that it could have intervened effectively in the revolutionary maelstrom. The unit itself existed only for seventy-six days and was composed of barely 2000 men.⁶² Of this number, 750 had been recruited from the army of the line and 200 were extracted

⁵⁸ AN O¹ 3696, no.3.

⁵⁹ Marie Antoinette to Barnave, 10 December 1791, in Lever, ed., *Marie-Antoinette Correspondance*, 726; and Jean, comte de Semallé, *Souvenirs du Comte de Semallé, page de Louis XVI* (Paris, 1898), 31.

⁶⁰ Sièyes, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers état?*, chapter 3, 41; and Cissie Fairchild, *Domestic Enemies, Servants and Masters in Old Regime France* (London, 1984), 229–33.

⁶¹ Campan, *Mémoires de Madame Campan*, 390–1; Havre-Cröy, *Mémoires de Madame la duchesse de Tourzel*, 416–17; Hézecques, *Page à la cour de Louis XVI*, 63; Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, I, 892–3; David P. Jordan, *The King's Trial: Louis XVI vs. the French Revolution* (London, 1979), 32; Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 216; and Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy*, 285 and 298.

⁶² Mareschal de Bièvre, 'La Garde Constitutionnelle de Louis XVI (1791–1792)', *Carnet de la Sabretache, revue militaire rétrospective*, 289 (1924), 331–9.

from the National Guard.⁶³ Hence, for over half of the appointments the king had limited control regarding the choice of candidates. Conversely, for the other half of the guard, the duc de Brissac, the commander-in-chief, sought young gentlemen of good birth.⁶⁴ It will not come as too much of a surprise to learn that this *amalgame avant la lettre* was not a success story. Soon, the patriotic element in the guard was made to feel very uncomfortable, and many were dismissed on trumped-up charges of insubordination.

Many deputies of the Constituent, inspired partly by Montesquieu, believed that the fragmentation of sovereignty into separate powers was the best means of curbing the arbitrary power of the monarchical executive.⁶⁵ In theory as the branches of the state had equal powers it seemed logical, on the abstract level at least, that they should also possess equal dignity. However, apart from moderate deputies, few understood the issue in these simple and abstract terms. For the radical press, and to some extent the Assembly itself, sovereignty resided complete and indivisible with the legislature, while the king was merely the *premier fonctionnaire* of the nation. It became increasingly difficult, from this point of view, to accept a military unit which exalted the chief civil servant over the nation's representative legislature.⁶⁶

Jérôme Pétion, as mayor of Paris, made himself the spokesmen for these concerns. On 16 March 1792 the Constitutional Guard marched to the Hôtel de Ville where it took the civic oath. After it had done so, Pétion admonished the troops with the following words:

Gentlemen, you shall soon begin your duties; which you no doubt consider to be sacred. Do you wish to prove to the king your devotion for his person? – Respect the constitution. Do you wish to prove to him your attachment? – Be attached to the constitution. Do you wish to prove to him your loyalty? – Be faithful to the constitution. The enemies of the king are those who would outrage the Nation. His wellbeing is now inseparable from the public wellbeing.⁶⁷

The guard was duly warned. They were not a private individual's personal army but, on the contrary, they were a unit which the nation had delegated to protect its executive. An impressive changing-of-the-guard

⁶³ AN O¹ 3696, dossier 4, rapports et notes pour le Roi, no.2. ⁶⁴ Ibid., fol.2.

⁶⁵ Montesquieu, *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols (Paris, 1951), II, 396–407; and Norman Hampson, 'The French Revolution and the Nationalization of Honour', *War and Society: Historical Essays in Memory of J.R. Western, 1928–1971*, ed. M. R. D. Foot (London, 1973), 199–212.

⁶⁶ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 281–5; and cf. Timothy Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary: The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture 1789–1790* (University Park, PA, 1996), 188–95 and 282–5.

⁶⁷ *Gazette Universelle ou papier nouvelles de tous les pays et de tous les jours*, no.78, 310.

ceremony followed. The concluding phase of the occasion highlighted the divergence between the public's expectations and the monarchy's intentions. The National Guard took up its sentry positions in the gardens and external courtyards, while the Constitutional Guard entered the palace itself and took charge of the interiors.⁶⁸ Thus within the public imagination a murky and opaque space remained. The king, and more importantly those who had access to his person, were not under the watching eye of the heroic citizen army.

Lynn Hunt identified 'transparency' as a key concept within the Revolutionary rhetoric.⁶⁹ Government, in order to be free of corruption, had to be a public concern and, in order to achieve this, had to be open and visible. It could no longer be considered the king's business or mystery.⁷⁰ The Constitutional Guard's behaviour served to heighten an already growing sense of distrust, which existed between king and populace. It saluted officers, royal officials, knights of Saint-Louis and members of the royal family in hierarchical order.⁷¹ The general staff accompanied the king from one room of the palace to the other and had discretion over who was admitted into the royal presence.⁷² Whenever the king left the palace, his guards, in full ceremonial formation, lined the corridors from the royal bedroom down the grand staircase of the Tuileries right up to the royal carriage.⁷³

Very soon, the public imagination was exercised. Some asserted that the Queen, dressed as a guardsman, left the palace every night to go to the Bois de Boulogne to chair the *comité autrichien*.⁷⁴ Others affirmed that they still could hear soldiers and officers address the duc de Brissac, the colonel of the Constitutional Guard, as 'Monseigneur'.⁷⁵ Unable to see what the guards were up to, the public began to imagine potential conspiracies.⁷⁶ The greatest evidence for them was that these troops indulged in practices and rituals which the Revolution had made redundant.

In February 1792, Charles Lejean, a hairdresser, was forced for economic reasons to take lodgers into his home in the faubourg Saint-Germain. He chose to accommodate four troopers from the

⁶⁸ AN AF I 1, nos 52 and 9. ⁶⁹ Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class*, 44–6.

⁷⁰ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 65. ⁷¹ AN AF I 1, nos 43–9.

⁷² *Ibid.*, no. 39. ⁷³ *Ibid.*, nos 36 and 39.

⁷⁴ The deputy Claude Basire collected several dossiers of denunciations targeted against the *Garde Constitutionnelle*. He later used their contents in a speech, presented on 29 May 1792 before the Legislative Assembly, which successfully demanded the dismissal of the king's Guard. See, AN F⁷ 4590, cahier 1, no. 61; and AP XLIV, 275–8.

⁷⁵ AN O¹ 3696, no. 178.

⁷⁶ Hardman, 'The real and Imagined Conspiracies of Louis XVI', in *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, ed. Campbell, Kaiser and Linton, 63–82.

Constitutional Guard. Lejean became increasingly agitated as, on a daily basis, he listened to the counter-Revolutionary sentiments expressed by his guests. These included the horrifying plan of climbing onto the roof of the Jacobin club and throwing paint bombs on the patriots below. Lejean, an enthusiastic radical, decided to reproach and confront these men for their lack of virtue. He described his own conduct during the Revolution and exhorted them to follow his virtuous example. The climax of this sermon was definitely the description of his personal role in the storming of the Bastille. Disaster struck when his lodgers asked to see his certificate as a *Vainqueur de la Bastille*. Lejean obliged them and one of soldiers snatched the document from his hands and in an unambiguous gesture of disdain used the paper to 'wipe his backside'. The other soldiers, feeling that their colleague had expressed their own point of view too subtly proceeded to beat the horrified Lejean senseless. After this ordeal the hapless wig-maker hurried to his local Comité de Surveillance where he signed a deposition detailing what had befallen him.⁷⁷ Whatever the real military or social nature of Louis XVI's Constitutional Guard may have been, it was its public perception which was going to determine its fate.

Many guardsmen, who had been dismissed by their aristocratic officers, signed written denunciations and made inflammatory speeches at the Jacobin club. The guard François-Joseph Wiltz was imprisoned and discharged for allegedly hanging a placard at the bottom of his bed inscribed with the words 'give me liberty or death'. He used the money and opportunities provided by the friends of the constitution to launch tirades against his former superiors. Even the Jacobin proof-reader, selected to polish Wiltz's writings, considered his speeches too long and rambling to be effective as propaganda.⁷⁸

It has been suggested that the Constitutional Guard was far more heterogeneous in its social composition, than has previously been acknowledged. Interestingly, the only sociological analysis of the guard concludes that there was little overlap between the old Gardes du Corps and the new Gardes Constitutionnels.⁷⁹ Only four former Gardes du Corps made it onto the staff of the Constitutional Guard. Perhaps the fact that it was in this unit that the military careers of two of the most celebrated Napoleonic Marshals, Murat and Bessières, were launched provides further evidence that the Guard was able to incorporate some aspects of the new military culture unleashed by the Revolution.⁸⁰ It also seems safe to assert that any lack of continuity was largely due to

⁷⁷ AN O¹ 3696, no.81. ⁷⁸ Ibid., no.9.

⁷⁹ Mareschal de Bièvre, *La Garde Constitutionnelle de Louis XVI*, 341–9. ⁸⁰ Ibid.

the mass emigration of the officers of *Maison Militaire du Roi* before and after June 1791 (over sixty per cent had left France by this date).⁸¹

The Constitutional Guard was uncontroversial as a purely military institution, dedicated to providing protection for the French Monarchy. It was when it behaved in the manner of an *ancien régime* guard of honour that its subversive potential came to the fore. As the number of denunciations grew, the grumbling in the faubourg Saint-Antoine became acute. The Legislative Assembly did not possess the nerve or the internal cohesion to allow the situation to continue. They decreed the disbandment of the guard. After toying with the idea of a veto Louis XVI acquiesced on 31 May.⁸²

For the next seventy-one days the security situation at the Tuileries returned to the old model of a shared responsibility between National and Swiss Guards. However in the radicalised context of 1792 this *modus vivendi* was to prove barely adequate.⁸³ Events on 20 June and 10 August showed that the National Guard was half-hearted in its determination to protect the Tuileries, and that the Swiss Guards were too few to defend the palace complex efficiently.

In the end, Louis XVI's failed review of his guard on the morning of 10 August became the symbolic obsequies of the constitutional monarchy.⁸⁴ It also marked the nadir in the decline of royal spectacle. The physical presence of the king before his troops failed to rally them.⁸⁵ In front of the bewildered monarch his erstwhile defenders defected to the Republican cause.⁸⁶ The competent Baron Durler was left with the unenviable task of organising the defence of the palace without clear instructions.⁸⁷ In spite of the unfavourable circumstances, the Swiss Guards proved able to hold the insurgents at bay for roughly two hours. Major Bachmann's staunch devotion to his duty condemned him to be

⁸¹ Bodinier, *Les Gardes du Corps de Louis XVI*, 58.

⁸² Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy*, 285; and AP XLIV, 195, 275–84 and 292–309.

⁸³ Cf. Rodney Allen, *Threshold of Terror: The Last Hours of the Monarchy in the French Revolution* (Stroud, 1999), 21–8, and 116–24.

⁸⁴ H. More Stephens, 'M. de Durler's Account of the Defence of the Tuileries on 10 August 1792', *The English Historical Review*, 2, (1887), 350–7, here 352; and Allen, *Threshold of Terror*, 65–71.

⁸⁵ Napoleon in particular felt that this loss of nerve was the primary cause for the fall of the French Monarchy: 'In France, on the contrary, had Louis XVI put up a determined [armed] resistance, if he had possessed the courage, energy and ardour of Charles I, he would have triumphed'. Emmanuel de Las Cases, *Mémoires de Sainte-Hélène* (Paris, 1968), 5 May 1816, 247.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ The marquis de Maillardoz and the chevalier Bachmann accompanied the king to Logographe in the Assembly and were unable to assume personal command the Swiss Guard. Ibid., 353–7; and Allen, *Threshold of Terror*, 92–100, and 125–38.

among the first political prisoners to be guillotined in September. His prophecy 'I shall be avenged' was unfulfilled.⁸⁸

The monarchy's refusal to employ the National Guard positively to improve its image proved a fatal error. The misconceived attempts by the king to get the public to swallow the return of the Gardes du Corps never materialised. It alienated moderate constitutionalists and gave republicans symbolic ammunition, which they used to discredit Louis XVI's brief tenure as a constitutional monarch.

⁸⁸ Bodin, *Les Suisses au Service de la France*, 270.

5 Court presentations and the French Revolution

Distinction and equality

The *Moniteur*, on 22 February 1790, unearthed a strange report, which had been circulating in several local newspapers.¹ An officer of the National Guard, on duty at the Tuileries palace, had been quietly enjoying a game of *trictrac*. All of a sudden, without it quite being clear how, Louis XVI entered onto the scene. The monarch, rather than reproaching the soldier for his lack of assiduousness in the exercise of his duties, joined the poor bewildered soul in his game.²

The author of this piece of journalism constructed a parallel between this officer and Molière's hapless character Monsieur de Pourceaugnac. Unlike the original comedy, Molière's provincial oaf from Limousin was recast as the hero of the piece. Thanks to the benefits brought forth by the Revolution Pourceaugnac could now operate unhindered by either the snobbish scorn or affected manners of the aristocracy.³ For the *Moniteur*, the convivial behaviour of the king towards the officer was clear evidence of the regenerative effects of the Revolution.

It is of note that this article was written in early 1790, shortly after Louis XVI's 4 February speech, in which he declared himself satisfied with the French Revolution's reforms.⁴ This piece, like those in most newspapers, expressed the hope that, through this act, the vile and corrupting influence of court intrigue would be forever erased.⁵

¹ *Moniteur*, 22 février 1790, no.53, p.427. ² Ibid.

³ Jean Baptiste Poquelin, known as Molière, *Œuvres complètes*, 2 vols (Paris, 1956), II, 411–60.

⁴ AP XI, 427–31.

⁵ Mirabeau saw the issue quite differently: 'You will have heard of the king's decision [to go to the Assembly], his peculiar speech, his oath, the pantomime and the astounding effect of all these developments, even if you had no knowledge of these happenings you can easily guess their effects. Monsieur scored an own goal through his cowardice, as did the king in empty rhetoric and Saint-Priest [Minister of the Royal Household] in craftiness; all the actors tried to outdo one another in this comedy; and most consider that M. La Fayette played the *ingénue* role [in all this drama]. If he [the king] scores a few points of popularity by eliciting the artificial and convenient plaudit of Paris, I am

Yet, the tale in the creative imagination of the editors of the *Moniteur* had another, somewhat unexpected, moral.

It is clear that the unaffected manners of the bourgeoisie are not those of courtiers ... We shall make a single observation here; and it is this, that in France it will no longer be necessary to be presented but henceforth one will need to be eligible.⁶

Like much Revolutionary rhetoric, this reflection was a cross between a statement of principle and a veiled threat. The king may have been enjoying good relations with the Assembly at this time: however, his courtiers were increasingly unpopular and suffering a barrage of press criticism. A great outpouring of pamphlet literature aimed at challenging not merely the nobility's pre-eminence, but also its very right to existence, had inflamed political debates in early 1790.⁷

After all, the Declaration of the Rights of Man famously stated in its first article:

Men are born, and remain, free and equal in their rights. Social distinctions can only be founded on public utility.⁸

The concept was further concretised by the final clause of Article 6:

All citizens are equal in the eyes of the law, therefore they are equally admissible to all public dignities, positions and offices, according to their ability and without any other distinction apart from their virtues and their talents.⁹

The political thinking behind these two articles embodied the direct opposite of the system which had regulated access to royal office during the *ancien régime*.¹⁰ Exclusivity, privilege and proofs of nobility were intrinsic to the structure of promotions in the kingdom of France (not mention most of *ancien régime* Europe).¹¹ Yet, the criticism contained in

convinced that he is compromising his power, and I am willing to prove this to your complete satisfaction. This course of action, furthermore, will not be without consequences in the provinces, ... one is behaving with anything but good faith'. [written to the comte de La Marck, 6 February 1790]. Bacourt, ed., *Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck*, I, 464.

⁶ *Moniteur*, 22 février 1790, no. 53, p. 427.

⁷ Anon., *Observations sur le préjugé de la noblesse héréditaire* (London, 1789).

⁸ Article 1 of the Rights of Man, see 1791 Constitution, in *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1792), 83.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 84; and AP IX, 236–7.

¹⁰ Vivian R. Gruder, *The Royal Provincial Intendants: A Governing Elite in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York, 1968), 117–41.

¹¹ Over 12,000 public offices were reserved for the nobility. Ten thousand offices were reserved for nobles serving in the army, 1500 bursaries in the royal schools and 1200 benefices in the church. See Benoît Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris, 1999), 13–23.

the *Moniteur's* article was not aimed at the high administrative offices present in the monarchy's civil service. Its target was far closer to home. The newspaper piece, by referring to the *noblesse présentée*, was essentially attacking the *Honneurs de la Cour*. The *Honneurs* were an elaborate process through which the most distinguished noblemen and women of France, after their lineage had been verified, held the right to be presented individually to the king and queen.¹²

At first impact it might seem that the king's private social arrangements were a trifling matter, and that only obsessive radicals could have considered them an issue of the utmost importance. However, contemporary historians of the Revolution often argued, and unsurprisingly disagreed, over the importance of this form of ceremonial induction. For instance Timothy Tackett, in his analysis of the noble deputies elected to the Estates General, concludes that almost sixty-two per cent were eligible to be presented at court.¹³ In spite of his protestations against determinism, he obviously believes that the social background of deputies, though far from a foolproof means of determining political behaviour, can serve as a useful barometer.¹⁴ Equally Edna Lemay, in her biographical dictionary of the deputies of the Constituent Assembly, not only lists the nobles' military careers, but her compilation reads like a 'who's who' of those admitted to the *Honneurs de la Cour*.¹⁵

Others see the impact of this special group on French History as far more circumscribed. William Doyle argues that, even among those presented at court, almost half lacked the necessary genealogical proofs and that the system was characterised by flexibility rather than rigidity.¹⁶ He is supported in this line of thinking by Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret. In his review essay he lists, in detail, those individuals who were exempted from normal scrutiny and admitted automatically into the king's presence.¹⁷

Merely to discuss the small group of men and women presented at court as a social category is a reductive exercise. Two principles need to be borne in mind when analysing this symbolic hierarchy. The *Honneurs*

¹² See *Honneurs* entry, in Bély, *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime*, 640–1; and William Doyle, *Aristocracy and Its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford, 2009), 20–1.

¹³ Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary*, 28.

¹⁴ 'Its [upbringing] was an influence that would strongly affect many members of the nobility in their fundamental assumptions about the nature of society and social relationships ... Compared to the nobles in France as a whole in 1789, the deputies sent to the Estates General were in many respects remarkably homogeneous'. *Ibid.*, 34–5.

¹⁵ Edna Hindie Lemay, ed., *Dictionnaire des Constituants, 1789–1791*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1991).

¹⁶ Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 117.

¹⁷ Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *La Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle de la Féodalité aux Lumières* (Paris, 1976), 48–50.

de la Cour was a complex system and above all else belonged to the realm of ritual. Court presentation was supposed to be lived as an experience. As the Bourbon Monarchy collapsed, the ritual survived only with the greatest difficulty. This ceremonial practice, instead of buttressing and legitimising the court, was damaging its very credibility.¹⁸

The changing nature of the *Honneurs*: genealogy vs the public

François Bluche is the only scholar who has directly given the *Honneurs de la Cour* a full academic treatment.¹⁹ Thanks to rigorous quantitative research Bluche concluded that, in fifty-eight years, 942 families were accorded this prestigious award.²⁰ Of this number, 462 had satisfied the stringent genealogical requirements. Families such as the Montmorency-Luxembourg, descending from the most ancient barons in Christendom, were admitted thirty times to the *Honneurs* while lesser provincial families could expect to be presented only once.²¹ Bluche's monograph presents an economy of privilege that was peculiar and controversial. The study falls short of examining the ritualistic nature of the process and concludes by listing the families of those presented at Versailles.

There is much to recommend this work which is filled with useful facts, figures and anecdotes. The key problem is the impression of immobility which it conveys. Erroneously, one is led to believe that from 1732 to 1790 the *Honneurs* continued to travel along the same lines and remained a bastion for aristocratic exclusivism. Admittedly, it cannot

¹⁸ The *Honneurs de la Cour*, court office and the right of entry into Versailles were not synonymous. Many courtiers, including ministers, were not members of the *noblesse présentée*. These individuals did have the right to move freely and participate in the life of the court, but were of lower standing in the aulic hierarchy. Those presented were a very small proportion of the inhabitants of the Château de Versailles. 'Presentation' was a symbolic act, generated by the monarchy, to bestow prestige on its most favoured nobles. Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 10.

¹⁹ See, François Bluche, *Les honneurs de la cour* (Paris, 1957). This study presents a compendious analysis of the Fonds Chérin held by the manuscript department of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. This collection comprises over 4000 dossiers spanning the years 1732–1790. Each file, addressed to the Généalogiste des Ordres du Roi, contains the papers relating to a petition for admission to the *Honneurs de la Cour*. Every entry in this catalogue is accompanied by a brief quotation, taken from Chérin's writings, commenting on the quality of each candidate's birth. BnF Ms.Fr. 31563–31776, 'Chérin 1–214'; and Jean-Philippe Gérard, ed., *Répertoire des Ressources Généalogiques et Héraldiques du Département des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Paris, 2003), 37–46 and 241–6.

²⁰ Bluche, *Les honneurs de la cour*, 40.

²¹ Bodinier, *Les Gardes du Corps de Louis XVI*, 494–7; and Saint-Allais, III, 269–316.

be argued that the system was undergoing a process of democratisation. Its justification, and the problems facing it, evolved in the final thirty years of its existence.

The origins of formal presentation as a court ritual are obscure. It is clear that, already by the time of Louis XIV, the king attempted to keep tight control of those allowed into his presence and those permitted to share in his daily activities.²² In spite of this, there seems to have been no written procedure which laid out the manner in which young noblemen were to be officially received at court and acknowledged by the sovereign as persons of superior birth.²³ The first registers, listing gentlemen permitted to hunt with the king for the first time and ladies bestowed the honour of curtsying before the royal family, were kept in 1732.²⁴ As the list expanded Louis XV decided to issue a formal *règlement* to keep tighter control of the ceremony.²⁵

On 17 April 1760 the *Conseil d'État* issued an *arrêt du conseil* in the form of a *règlement*.²⁶ In an abrupt, and typically peremptory fashion, it decreed eight articles, which clearly established the conditions for admission to this sought-after privilege.²⁷ Only noblemen whose lineage dated to before 1400 (the *ancien régime* definition of time immemorial)

²² See Chaline, 'The Kingdoms of France and Navarre', in *The Princely Courts of Europe*, ed. Adamson, 87; Levron, *La vie quotidienne à la cour de Versailles*; and Solnon, *La Cour de France*, 427.

²³ Service as pages had been commonly accepted as an effective means of launching nobles from a tender age directly into both court life and subsequently into military careers. In any one year there were over 152 patrician children serving as royal pages. Admission criteria into the Grand Écurie were based on genealogical proofs which required that a candidate demonstrated that his family's nobility could be traced to 1560. During the eighteenth century, over 4000 aristocratic children were admitted into the royal service. Only forty per cent of these young Gentilshommes were later presented at court, making a position as a royal page far less exclusive. The pages continued to exist at Versailles unperturbed by the Revolution until November 1792 when the National Convention abolished them. Hubert Willems and Jean-Yves Conan, *Liste alphabétique des Pages de la Petite Écurie du Roi* (Paris, 1997), 9–15; Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 24; François Bluche, *Les Pages de la Grande Écurie: Dictionnaire Généalogique*, 2nd edn (Paris, 2005); Hézecques, *Page à la cour de Louis XVI*, 13–18; and Gaston de Carné, *Les Pages des Écuries du Roi, l'École des Pages* (Paris, 1886), 54–75; Gaëtan d'Aviau de Ternay, *Les Pages des écuries du Roi, des Reines et des Dauphines: Dictionnaire Biographique* (Paris, 2006), 7–12 and 40, and Louis de Ribier, *Preuves de noblesse de pages auvergnats, admis dans les écuries du roi, 1667–1792* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1909), 9; and AP LIII, 579–80.

²⁴ François Bluche, *Les honneurs de la cour*.

²⁵ In Vienna's Hofburg there was a close connection between appointment to court office and ceremonial presentation. Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 124; and Mansel, *Prince of Europe, The Life of Charles-Joseph de Ligne*, 19–20.

²⁶ Antoine, *Le Conseil du Roi*, 342–65.

²⁷ BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Chérin 213, fol.84.

had the right to automatic presentation.²⁸ For women seeking this honour, only the genealogy of their spouse could be taken into account, notwithstanding the quality of their own birth. It was clear that women marrying lesser nobles, or worse *roturiers*, risked losing the *considération* which accompanied aristocratic high-rank.²⁹

The Généalogiste des Ordres du Roi, a position created in 1595, was charged with examining the proofs submitted by candidates.³⁰ He was also given the role of adjudicating on whether or not they conformed to the high standards demanded.³¹ The Genealogist was warned, and threatened with heavy penalties, not to admit any individual to the *Honneurs* unless he was fully satisfied that the necessary conditions had been adequately met.

It will come as little surprise that the process of examining noble proofs could take several years. The Genealogist was obliged to pay his workforce out of his own wages. This guaranteed that his department, the Cabinet des Titres, was permanently short-staffed.³² Furthermore, the verification of proofs for the *Honneurs* was not his only duty.³³ The process of obtaining verification of noble status could be a deeply frustrating exercise for candidates. By 1780 Bernard Chérin was beseeching the king to grant him a personal guard to protect him from angry petitioners.³⁴ Those rejected by the Cabinet des Titres vividly remembered and resented their treatment at the hands of d'Hozier and Chérin. In particular, bitterness was further fuelled by the fact that the *règlement* prescribed specific loopholes.

Those who counted a Chevalier du Saint-Esprit among their ancestors were allowed automatic presentation, regardless of how recently their family nobility had been acquired. Certain offices and dignities could, at the discretion of the king, be allowed to share in the *Honneurs*

²⁸ Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 97–100.

²⁹ Alan Forrest, 'Respect et reconnaissance dans la France révolutionnaire', in *La considération*, ed. Claudine Aroche and Jean-Claude Vatin (Paris, 1998), 59–76.

³⁰ Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 30–4.

³¹ For each degree of noble affiliation two written proofs were required. Only authenticated notarial records were valid, though other documents could be accepted as corroborative evidence. Jean-Yves Belin, *Bernard Chérin 1718–1785 généalogiste des ordres du Roi: Biographie* (Chatou, 1993), 9, BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Chérin 213, fol.84; and Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 25–9.

³² Belin, *Bernard Chérin*, 30.

³³ Chérin was also charged with examining the *preuves de noblesse* for the Chevaliers des Ordres du Roi, noble female chapter houses (mainly those on the Rhine), Pages (with the help of the d'Hozier clan), all prospective Army and Navy cadets, and finally the proof for the Lieutenants des Maréchaux de France. BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Chérin 213, fol.133; and Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 39–54.

³⁴ Belin, *Bernard Chérin*, 47.

de la Cour.³⁵ This, in particular, caused resentment and scandal when Louis XV broke his own rules. He ensured that his own mistresses and their families, no less, were admitted to enjoy this special honour. Indeed, the introduction of Mme de Pompadour, Mme Du Barry and the marquis de Marigny caused embarrassment and significant ceremonial difficulties.³⁶

It was probably with this in mind that an improved *règlement* was issued on 30 April 1774.³⁷ However, Louis XV's unexpected death a few weeks later made it necessary for his successor to confirm this *arrêt*. It was eventually ratified on 8 June of the same year.³⁸ Louis XVI also made it clear to the duc de Villequier, one of the *Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre*, that he wished to keep a tight rein on those admitted to the *Honneurs*.³⁹ In order to achieve this objective, the king insisted on seeing every dossier submitted by aspirant noblemen and reserved the final decision for himself. Indeed several files are annotated in the king's own hand and reasons for the rejection of petitions are generally administrative in nature.⁴⁰

At first glance the new set of regulations, established in April 1774, seem almost identical to the previous incarnation. The biggest differences lay in the addition of an extra clause and in a brief preamble which illustrated the reasons for the king's decision to reform the *Honneurs*. The revised articles provide evidence of a deep shift in the reasoning and justification that lay behind this ritual. 'Court presentation' was transformed from an honour, purely celebrating the ideal of high birth, to also being a reward for service.⁴¹ A good genealogy, though still essential, was no longer sufficient for those claiming the right to enter the king's carriages. They also had to hold the rank of colonel in the army or other equivalent dignity in other branches of the royal administration. It was expected that the origin of a family's nobility had to be military.⁴² This was an effective means of ensuring

³⁵ BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Chérin 213, fol.84.

³⁶ Pierre de Nolhac, *Louis XV et Mme de Pompadour: Études sur la cour de France d'après des documents inédits* (Paris, 1904), 108–12 and 277–92.

³⁷ BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Chérin 213, fol.87. ³⁸ *Ibid.*, fol.92. ³⁹ AN C 220, no.1.

⁴⁰ For instance several noblemen were not formally allowed to hunt with the king because their elder brothers had already been given this honour and Louis XVI considered it unnecessary. AN M 608 and MM 816, see entries for comte de Brachet-Florenac, comte de Charry and vicomte de Chateauneuf Bandon as examples of younger sons not allowed entry into the king's carriages.

⁴¹ For a comparative interpretation of the idea of state service, see 'The Prussian way' in Blanning, *The Culture of Power*, 195–9.

⁴² The only compromise to be found was in the genealogical proofs. If an ancestor had died before attaining the age of his majority, only one piece of written evidence, rather than two, was required. The descendants of Maréchaux de France were added to the

that the *parlementaire* robe nobility, in the rather tense context of the Maupeou coup, was excluded from the *Honneurs de la Cour*.⁴³ Louis XVI, as shown, was keen to maintain the royal prerogative to admit whomsoever he wished to this award. Yet a concession had to be made. If the king did exempt someone from authentication, then a reason had to be recorded in three registers.⁴⁴

It could be suggested that the second *règlement* was born of the crises brought forth by the Seven Years' War, the *Parlementaire* crises and the increase in public criticism of 'courtliness'.⁴⁵ The French Monarchy felt, perhaps trying to imitate its British and Prussian rivals, that extending the meritocratic principle of 'service' to encompass its honours system was a good antidote to public concerns over the manner in which merit was rewarded in France.⁴⁶

The second *règlement*, however, fell short of its promises. In spite of its claims to be acknowledging merit, there is little evidence that a new caste of elite public servants was coming into being. In a quasi-Tocquevillian fashion, typical of many *ancien régime* attempts at reform, the monarchy was unable to make headway.⁴⁷ Progressives perceived these concessions as at best inadequate and at worst insultingly limited in their scope. On the other side of the fence, those small provincial *hobereau* whose nobility was of ancient origin, but unable to aspire to an army colonelcy, felt wronged and cheated. The attempt at compromise, rather than giving the monarchy breathing space, displeased many. The fact that proposals for the reform of the system of court presentation continued through 1780s emphasises that dissatisfaction had not been put to rest.

The sudden death of Bernard Chérin on 12 May 1785 sparked a significant public debate on the *Honneurs de la Cour*.⁴⁸ In theory, all controversy concerning who was to succeed him should have been impossible. The title of Genealogist of the King's Orders should

list of those exempt from the official requirements. BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Chérin 213, fol.87.

⁴³ Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris*, 356–8; and Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 67–70.

⁴⁴ Copies of which were kept individually by the First Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, the Premier Écuyer, and finally the Genealogist of the King's Orders.

⁴⁵ Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit Nobility, Royal Service and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France 1600–1789* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1996), 218–20.

⁴⁶ David Bien, 'La réaction aristocratique avant 1789, l'exemple de l'armée', *Annales: Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 29 (1974), 41; and cf. Colin Jones, 'Bourgeois Revolution Revivified, 1789 and Social Change', in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective*, ed. Peter Jones (London, 1996), 86–7.

⁴⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (Paris, 1967), Livre III, chs. III, V and VII.

⁴⁸ Belin, *Bernard Chérin*, 53.

have been inherited, through a *droit de survivance*, by Bernard's son, Louis-Nicolas-Hyacinthe Chérin. However the incumbent was only 23 years of age when he inherited the office. Although he received the salary of his office, he was not permitted to exercise its functions for a further two years. This provided an opportunity for all the individuals thwarted in their ambitions by Chérin *père* to launch a coordinated effort to abolish this office.

Within two weeks of Chérin's death, rumours were circulating that the Cabinet des Titres was to be abolished and replaced by a commission of experts. This prompted the marquis de Guenard to write, as early as 28 May 1785, to the baron de Breteuil, then *Ministre de Maison du Roi*. He sought a position on this rumoured new *Comité des Titres*.⁴⁹ Soon many more self-interested *précis* found their way onto the Minister's desk. Two in particular were written by important figures in the genealogical world. The first was by Lemaitre, the genealogist attached to both the households of Monsieur and the comte d'Artois. The second came from Bronod de La Haye who, as *Roi d'Armes de France*, stood to gain much from the rumoured abolition of Chérin's office.⁵⁰ All these observations and notes alluded to the inherent abuses of power in the Chief Genealogist's position. They asked how could one man wield so much authority and at the same time be expected to exercise it with virtue?⁵¹

In spite of this onslaught, the young Chérin was not bereft of friends. By the time a formal proposal of reform was presented to the Baron de Breteuil, talk of abolishing the *charge* had lost credibility. At the end of the period of two years training, Chérin felt confident enough to appeal to the tribunal of public opinion. In order to establish his credentials, he published a treatise on the issue of nobility and its related legislation.⁵² Far from quelling controversy, Antoine Maugard, the rival *Généalogiste de l'Ordre de Saint-Hubert de Bar et de Lorraine*, printed a public polemic so as to criticise violently and embarrass his adversary.⁵³ The need felt by these two individuals to seek public support, for an issue which directly affected only a tiny fraction, is testament to

⁴⁹ AN O¹ 281, no.26, fol.5. ⁵⁰ Ibid., no.26, fols. 8 and 13.

⁵¹ Bronod de La Haye stated that it would be better, for all involved, if the functions of the Genealogist were returned to the King and Heralds-at-arms. He argued that it made sense for one of the kingdom's oldest heraldic officials to examine proofs of nobility. AN O¹ 281, no.26, fol.13.

⁵² Louis-Nicolas-Hyacinthe Chérin, *Abrégé chronologique d'édits, déclarations, règlements, arrêts et lettres-patentes des rois de France de la troisième race, concernant le fait de noblesse* (Paris, 1788).

⁵³ Antoine Maugard, *Lettre à M. Chérin sur son abrégé chronologique d'édits et etc. concernant le fait de noblesse* (Paris, 1788).

the rising power of the public as a force to be reckoned with in the late eighteenth century.⁵⁴ The time when ceremony was its own justification was over.

Royal government was well aware of this threatening development. It was for this reason that Breteuil sought expert advice. A proposal was drawn up by Louis Jean-Baptiste Ardillier de Laumont.⁵⁵ It was a forty-page document which exposed, in great detail, how all genealogical issues, relating to court honours, were to be regulated in future.⁵⁶ Unfortunately the document is undated, but it was certainly written between 1785 and 1787.⁵⁷ The project included a list of candidates who might suitably fill the positions it proposed to create. In spite of the meticulous planning involved, the scheme suffered the same fate as Breteuil.⁵⁸ In the end, it was superseded by events like so many of the monarchy's final attempts at reform.

The manuscript is interesting when compared to the previous two *règlements*. Gone is the self-assurance and reliance on the internal logic of the process of court presentation. The public, not genealogy, had become the protagonist. Transparency and accountability had become the watchwords.⁵⁹ At its most basic level, Ardillier's proposal sought to create a Heraldic Committee of three officials, headed by Chérin, which would carry out the functions of the old Cabinet des Titres. The real innovation was to come in the form of a Heraldic Chamber. This institution was to be a court of appeal, where private individuals could appeal the decisions of the Heraldic Committee. To further encourage accountability, the committee would, like a court of law, hold public sessions twice weekly.⁶⁰ Ardillier, from the very beginning, leaves one in no doubt as to why he felt such changes to be necessary:

Everybody knows the extent to which innovations can be delicate and after careful deliberation, and mature reflection, it seems fair that the current genealogist should be honoured with the title of head of the Heraldic Chamber

⁵⁴ James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), 45–75.

⁵⁵ Administrateur Général du Domaine and a Chevalier de Saint-Michel. See Benoît Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel 1665–1790* (Paris, 2008), 183; and Gourdon de Genouillac, ed., *Dictionnaire des Anoblis 1270–1868, suivi du Dictionnaire des Familles qui ont fait modifier leurs noms 1803–1870* (Paris, 1875), 10.

⁵⁶ AN O¹ 281, no. 26, fols 17 and 18, plan d'un règlement pour les jugements des preuves de noblesse. and Choix des Personnes qui peuvent composer le Comité Héraldique.

⁵⁷ This is supported by a direct reference made to the fact that Chérin *jeune* still had not started to exercise his duties.

⁵⁸ The baron resigned in 1788 and Laurent de Villedeuil, his successor, had not sufficient time to implement it.

⁵⁹ Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, 44–6.

⁶⁰ AN O¹ 281, no.26, fol.17.

and that he should be provided with two assessors, who will be in effect his deputies, and that this change should speed up the process and end current complaints against endless bureaucratic delays. It should also be noted that clearly defined procedures, and the cooperation of three individuals will dissipate what currently is perceived as the arbitrary, hard and even illegal decisions of a single individual. The public and the courts will be satisfied and this reform, far from being a dangerous innovation, will bestow a sense of legality to the process [of verifying genealogies].⁶¹

The public, with increasing strength, had been refusing to accept that the business of government was the king's monopoly.⁶² In order to get its critics on its side, the monarchy had to come to terms with them. Perhaps Breteuil hoped that the monarchy could, by gaining the reading public as an ally, be sufficiently strong to weed out corruption and abuse. However, exposing the inner workings of the court's administration was not enough to satisfy general opinion. Critical discourses demanded changes which were further-reaching. Fatally, this was something which the symbolism of royalty could not accommodate. The public might be permitted to view how the monarchy came to choose which of its patricians were to be honoured. However, it could never share the authority to make this decision. Soon, as with the more important issues of finances, legislative authority and executive power, the Revolution was to radicalise the debate. The Cabinet des Titres was not a static monolith. In the second half of the eighteenth century it sought, with the help of the monarchy, to adapt to the challenges it faced.

Presentation as a ritual

Of all the privileges reserved for the nobility that which brings it into contact with its sovereign is doubtless the most precious. It announces both to the nation and to foreigners that the great houses of this realm possess all of the fundamental qualities of this eminent order, that is to say ancient lineages, important landholdings, distinguished office, illustrious [marriage] alliances and above all else military service on which their fortunes were first established.⁶³

The preamble to the second *règlement* described the epitome of the nobleman. It was a person made conspicuous by his ancestry, wealth, personal service and valour.⁶⁴ The text's chief purpose, however, was not to define nobility, but rather it was a declaration that the greatest

⁶¹ Ibid., fols 2–3. ⁶² Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 65.

⁶³ BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Chérin 213, fol.87. ⁶⁴ Ibid.

noblemen and women were those closest to the king's physical body. An assumption was made that, as the royal presence endowed the body politic with coherence, so too did it transfer a portion of its power and dignity to those ritually admitted into its presence.

The term ritual is highly ambiguous in its signification; it has been used to describe practices as ordinary as dining to sacrificing animals for religious purposes. The meaning of ritual employed in this chapter is more circumscribed. It denotes a stage-managed event, dotted with symbolic markers, which allowed participants and spectators to emerge with a feeling of having undergone a common experience which altered them in some way. The monarchy, and those courtiers who publicly demonstrated their deference by being presented, hoped to be empowered by the ceremony. As the eighteenth century progressed, the traditional prestige associated with the *Honneurs* was challenged. As long as the monarchy deployed its time-honoured ceremonies to represent itself to its subjects, it could not hope to find a *juste milieu* between regal dignity and a rational enlightened honours system.

The work of cultural anthropologists and religious historians elucidates further the tension that exists between the 'actual' and the 'ideal' elements present in many rituals. Clifford Geertz, classically, saw the significance of ritual and religion embodied in its own internal logic. He fought against previous intellectuals, who saw religious and symbolic practices as a sort of artichoke which needed careful peeling away of its layers, so as to arrive at a socio-economic heart or reality.⁶⁵ Geertz believed that in rituals, the 'ideal' and the 'actual' were synthesised in a common experience which allowed harmony to be restored within the community.⁶⁶ The view is somewhat optimistic because 'society as imagined' and 'society as it is' do not coalesce easily but on many occasions collide violently.

The concept of 'mirrors and models', adds a further layer of complexity.⁶⁷ According to this theory the 'actual' and 'ideal' do not merge as one, but coexist uneasily side by side in rituals. A ritual, like a 'mirror',

⁶⁵ 'The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life'. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (London, 1970), 47.

⁶⁶ 'The acceptance of authority that underlies the religious perspective that the ritual embodies thus flows from the enactment of the ritual itself. By inducing a set of moods and motivations – an ethos – and defining an image of cosmic order – a world view – by means of a single set of symbols, the performance makes the model for and the model of aspects of religious belief mere transpositions of one another'. In Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 118.

⁶⁷ Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge, 1990), 24–8, and 38.

reflects a tangible image. At the same time, the image may be perceived as 'model', that is an ideal of what 'should be' rather than of what 'is'.⁶⁸ This 'creative tension' may reach a crisis point when the tangible image in the 'mirror' and the 'model' lose their correlation over time. This was the fatal flaw of the monarchy's constant reliance on representation through ceremony. Unfortunately for the Bourbons, messages, especially symbolic ones, are not straight-flowing rivers. Their meaning at times meanders unexpectedly. 'Court presentation' sought to reinforce the prestige of the monarchy and the respectability of the high nobility. However, in reality, court intrigue and anachronism compromised the effectiveness of the rite.

Lear's confused cry: 'oh reason not the need', expresses eloquently the strain between objective 'need' and the concept of 'royal display as a necessity'.⁶⁹ Absolute monarchies did not reason in terms of the purely material needs of the state. The superfluous, the symbolic and the sacred were just as important. Court presentation acquired a myriad of different meanings (religious, monarchical, hierarchical and political), which made it dangerously overcharged. This line of argument has been employed by several scholars. They see the Revolution as the culmination in a long process in which the symbolic and religious language of the monarchical state lost efficacy.⁷⁰ Dale Van Kley, in his noteworthy historiographical contribution to the understanding of the Revolution, attempted to tie together the process of religious strife, monarchical reform and the enlightenment.⁷¹ Examining three centuries of history he identified religious disagreement as the leitmotif of *ancien régime* France.

Van Kley interpreted Louis XIV's model of 'sacral absolutism' as un compelling and in conflict with a society which had been deeply transformed through the course of the eighteenth century. The theory of the king's two bodies, royal saintliness and thaumaturgy, no longer strengthened the monarchy. Interestingly there is a chronological

⁶⁸ 'Rituals tend to blur these two processes, which is perhaps the very source of the creative tension in rituals, the tension between a conservative mirroring of what is and the utopian modelling of what might be. Rituals are inherently ambiguous in their function and meaning'. Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2005), 5.

⁶⁹ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act II, Scene IV.

⁷⁰ 'The metaphor of ritual as theatre is a very telling one, since the audience in the theatre are just as significant to the drama as the actors on stage ... Thus, both the King and his subjects were protagonists in the evolution of political ritual'. In Mack P. Holt, *Renaissance and Reformation France* (Oxford, 2002), 10–11.

⁷¹ Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution 1560–1791* (New Haven, CT, 1996).

meeting point between Van Kley's crisis of 'sacral absolutism' under Louis XV and his decision to implement the first *règlement* for the *Honneurs de la Cour*.⁷²

The monarchy, during the *Parlementaire* crises, resorted to its traditional means of defence: ceremony. From 1759 to 1760 it devised an elaborate rite for honouring the hereditary grandees of the court on whom it relied in the ongoing struggle against the defiance of the appellate courts of the realm.⁷³ At the same time, the crown created a ritual that was perceived as anachronistic. Presentation as defined in 1760 did not conform to public opinion, which generally distrusted the noble magnates of Versailles.

It is impossible to investigate further the layers of signification present in the *Honneurs* without a brief discussion relating to what the performance of this ritual entailed. The procedure for introducing ladies to the king and queen offers itself as a good starting point.⁷⁴ Once Chérin verified the proofs of nobility submitted to him as authentic, and Louis XVI sanctioned the request, the Premier Gentilhomme de la Chambre on duty arranged for a suitable date for the candidate to be presented.⁷⁵

When the date was set, the families of the prospective *dame présentée* proceeded to purchase the official costume prescribed for this occasion. This was a dress which, without exception, was monumentally expensive.⁷⁶ The families of the women in question, through conspicuous consumption, desired their daughters not merely to look *soignée* but also to act as the living embodiment of their power, good taste

⁷² Ibid., 165–70.

⁷³ Defauconpret, *Les Preuves de Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 67–70; and Julian Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris*, chs.6 and 7.

⁷⁴ For a late Victorian comparison, see Jacqueline Ansell, 'The Seal of Social Approval or "How Girls are Presented at Court"', *Court Historian*, 4 (2000), 151–60.

⁷⁵ One should bear in mind that presentation was not necessarily the moment when an individual made the acquaintance of the royal family. A significant proportion had been introduced personally to the Bourbons from a very young age. Adède d'Osmond, *Memoirs of the Comtesse de Boigne*, 2 vols (New York, 2003), I, 3–14.

⁷⁶ Among the papers seized by revolutionaries at Tuileries are the bills relating to the purchase of the dress for the presentation of the princesse de Talmond, which was delivered on 20 February 1785. Thirty-six different fabrics were purchased, not to mention the subsequent addition of jewels and other garnishings. The princess's dress, with its extremely long train, which would in all probability be only worn once, cost the phenomenal figure of 2600 livres. Philip Mansel's work on court costume illustrates that even the Revolution did not put an end to such conspicuous consumption. The vicomtesse de Preissac in 1790 spent 1200 livres on her dress. According to Daniel Roche an eighteenth-century French peasant could spend as little as thirty livres per year on clothing AN M 664, no.4, fol.3, Saint-Allais, X, 151–92; Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 71, n.93, Saint-Allais, IV 217, and XVI 164–79, and Roche, *The Culture of Clothing*, 217.

and prosperity.⁷⁷ As the important day approached the aspirant *dame présentée* placed her *coiffeur*, *perruquier* and other servants at the ready for this important occasion. The only remaining requirement was for a court godmother to be selected. This lady, preferably of at least equal rank, was to introduce her godchild personally to the royal couple.⁷⁸ Her role was to cement the paternalistic nature of eighteenth-century court society. She was the symbolic expression of noble girl's aristocratic affiliation to a specific court faction and interest group. The Noailles, Rohan, Montmorency and other great families all presented their own *protégées* and made sure that these youthful and inexperienced girls were not seduced by politics of rival aristocratic factions. The system, however, did not always work smoothly when it was confronted by unusual circumstances. Louise d'Orléans, princesse de Conti, was embarrassed by being coerced into presenting the marquise de Pompadour in 1745. For a Princesse du Sang to introduce a *roturier* (commoner) was considered a great dishonour.

The reality of the court godmother was probably simpler than the complicated reminiscences of nineteenth-century pseudo-memoir writers.⁷⁹ The *journal des cérémonies* maintained by the Premiers Gentilshommes de la Chambre recorded the names of the ladies chosen for each individual presentation.⁸⁰ The court godmother added prestige, but any subsequent influence on the social life of the *protégée* would depend on individual circumstances. The key significance of this figure was in reinforcing the ritualistic properties of the *Honneurs*. It effectively added a religious layer to the proceedings. The presenter, like a godmother at baptism, uttered the candidate's name. At this precise moment the candidate was fully recognised as a *dame présentée*. By having undertaken the ritual, she became a full member of her clan and was empowered to move about the court with greater confidence. Indeed, the three genuflections, before the queen, reminded the audience that a slow symbolic progress to maturity was being achieved.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Chaussinand-Nogaret, *La Noblesse au XVIIIe Siècle*, 85.

⁷⁸ Bluche, *Les honneurs de la cour*.

⁷⁹ Étienne Léon Lamothe-Langon, *Memoirs of the Comtesse Du Barry* (Paris, 1908), 42–6; and Marquise de Créquy, *The Noblesse of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1904), 148.

⁸⁰ AN O¹ 824, fols 1–187.

⁸¹ For duchesses and princesses the ritual was enhanced by the bestowal of the *droit de tabouret*. Alexandre Marie Léonor de Saint-Mauris, prince de Montbarrey, *Mémoires Autographes de M. le Prince de Montbarey, Ministre Secrétaire d'État au département de la Guerre sous Louis XVI, Grand d'Espagne de la Première Classe, Prince du Saint-Empire, Grand Préfet des dix villes Impériales d'Alsace, Lieutenant Général des Armées du Roi. etc.*, 3 vols (Paris, 1826), III, 7.

For men, the process was simpler. Once the Genealogist had given his seal of approval, countersigned by the king, and the First Gentlemen of the Bedchamber set the date, all was ready for the presentation to take place. The candidate would then be introduced to the king at the morning *lever* by the First Gentleman on duty, the day before the candidate was to join the royal hunt. The costume needed for this occasion was an embroidered tail-coat known as the *habit habillé*. A simple bow, acknowledged by the king, was the symbolic gesture employed. Early the following morning, he would be assigned his personal mount from the Grande Écurie.⁸² Afterwards, wearing a *débutant's* grey hunting livery, he would climb into one of the carriages accompanying the king.⁸³ Once the party reached the location of the hunt, the king would perform the *botter* ceremony, where the royal boots and hunting apparel were presented in a fashion similar to the *lever*.⁸⁴

Once the hunt set off, the candidate had to prove himself a competent horseman in order to avoid embarrassment. The inability to control one's horse, running over the hounds, or worse, to overtake the king, could make one's position at court very difficult.⁸⁵ This was a strenuous masculine activity; prowess as a huntsman brought favour and honour. The ritual could only be considered a complete success if, during the *débotter* ritual, the king remarked positively on the *débutant's* horsemanship. By engaging in the shared activity of violent pursuit, a bond and sense of hierarchical community between the king and his greatest nobles was established.⁸⁶

The ritual's meaning, found in the testimonies of those who personally participated, conveys the psychological impact of this event. For the great noble this was a rite of passage. It marked the threshold between the constraints of youth and full adulthood. It was an event to which a substantial segment of a memoir could usefully be devoted. This phenomenon can be easily illustrated by reference to the two most famous recollections of court presentations. One is the personal account of the marquise de La Tour Du Pin and the other is drawn from the reminiscences of the future vicomte de Chateaubriand. They were admitted both to the *Honneurs de la Cour* in 1787.

⁸² Philippe Salvadori, *La Chasse sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1996), 197.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 204–5. ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 216. ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 217–24.

⁸⁶ The spectacle of the royal hunt was to occupy a pre-eminent place right up the last days of the court's residence in Versailles. The Vénérerie and Vol du Cabinet even participated in the procession and opening ceremony of the Estates General. Fifteen royal falconers with birds of prey in hand processed behind the officers of the royal household. Salvadori, *La Chasse sous l'Ancien Régime*, 196 and 228; and Amélie Dumortier-Laparra, 'La Maison Bouche Royale', I, 212–17.

However their backgrounds were fundamentally different. Henriette-Lucy Dillon, of Jacobite descent, came from a prosperous family of courtiers.⁸⁷ Before being presented, her family had held the important office of Dame du Palais. On the other side of the divide was René-François de Chateaubriand. He came from a provincial Breton noble family. His father had briefly suspended his nobility in order to improve the family's fortunes by embarking on a career in trade with the Caribbean colonies. He spent his life away from Versailles. After his presentation, he avoided the court atmosphere which had terrified him.

Though both fundamentally interpreted the court as a corrupt and corrupting influence, nevertheless they felt drawn by its splendour. Mme de La Tour du Pin stated: 'to be at court resounded like a magic word'.⁸⁸ Likewise Chateaubriand was deeply impressed by the Sun King's palace. So much so that he felt that Louis Quatorze had not died, but lived on in the rooms and elaborate rituals of Versailles. He exclaimed: 'you have seen nothing in life, until you have seen the pomp of Versailles'.⁸⁹ What marked the specific memory of both participants was the malevolence which exuded from the crowd of courtiers scrutinising them. This was one of the highest symbolic honours that the crown could bestow.

Chateaubriand's recollection included a rather vivid description of Louis XVI's unease during the presentation itself. He depicted this 'unhappy monarch' as suffering from nerves almost as much as the *débutants*.⁹⁰ The king moved towards the young René-François as if he was going to address him, only to turn away at the last second. Other memoirs reinforce the idea that the monarchy acquitted itself poorly when called upon to give a convincing performance at these ceremonies.⁹¹

This impression, which so many historians have stressed, is in part unfair.⁹² It may well be the case that Louis was unable to establish the commanding presence of his predecessors, but once in the saddle his charisma noticeably increased. Even Chateaubriand, who was given a lunatic mare fittingly named the 'Heureuse' (The Gleeeful One) to ride, commented on how the king was respected greatly as master of the

⁸⁷ O'Callaghan, *The History of the Irish Brigades in the Service of France*, 46–59.

⁸⁸ Henriette-Lucy Dillon, *Mémoires de la Marquise de la Tour du Pin: Journal d'une Femme de Cinquante Ans 1778–1815* (Paris, 1979), 67.

⁸⁹ François-René, vicomte de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*, 5 vols (Paris, 1997), I, Livre IV, chapter 9.

⁹⁰ Ibid. ⁹¹ Saint-Priest, *Mémoires*, I, 230.

⁹² Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 36.

hunt. The refusal to hunt from Paris, after the end 1790, was taken as a clear expression of the king's displeasure with the course of events.⁹³

Chateaubriand claimed to have taken home some very clear notions from his experiences at court.

Such was my first impression of the city and the court. I found its society far more odious than I had anticipated; but if it horrified me, it did not discourage me; I felt confused but knew that I was superior to what I had glimpsed. I acquired an invincible distaste for the court; this distaste, or better still a disdain which I could not hide, made social success impossible and later would even threaten to make me fall from the zenith of my career.⁹⁴

Though the elder, and far from modest, René-François admits that this attitude did not help him to further his military career, it nevertheless deeply changed him. The unintended outcome was that, for this young nobleman, the experience of the *Honneurs* reinforced his literary aspirations and gave him the mental independence to pursue them. In spite of having carefully choreographed a spectacle of hierarchy and power, the young candidate had recreated the experience to suit his own personal ends.

The young Henriette-Lucy Dillon, wearing Marie Antoinette's own pearls, acquitted herself respectably during the ceremony, but found the day after more trying.⁹⁵ Presentation, for her, marked an important threshold: 'Although the queen decided that I would only exercise my position as lady in waiting in two years' time, however from this moment onwards I was considered as if I was already in office'.⁹⁶

For the marquise de La Tour Du Pin Gouvernet, the occasion marked her transition from a newlywed adolescent into a valued official of the queen's household.

Common to both experiences was the criticism of the *Honneurs* as a contrived system without reasonable justification. Though this judgement was probably made with the benefit of much hindsight, similar critiques were already in circulation. That both these testimonies refer to 1787 is significant. The convocation of the Assembly of Notables had made the political landscape more unsettled. Notions of privilege and status were soon to be under heavy bombardment. The nobility's malaise with royal patronage was indicative of a major shift in mentality. The monarchy was in a delicate situation. The fact that the *Honneurs* was a ritual made it difficult to reform in order to bring it into line with new ideas concerning meritocracy and public utility.

⁹³ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 174.

⁹⁴ Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*, I, Livre IV, chapter 9.

⁹⁵ Dillon, *Mémoires de la Marquise de la Tour du Pin*, 75. ⁹⁶ Ibid., 87.

The end of the *Honneurs de la Cour*

The exact lineage of this former noble proves how little you can trust the pronouncements of genealogists, including those of M. Chérin, who awarded this family a certificate permitting them access to the king's carriages [in order to join the royal hunt]. A privilege given in principle only to those who could trace noble ancestors back to 1400 ... It was to such dubious titles, of which only unreliable copies [of the required proofs] were submitted, that M. Chérin bestowed certificates for the king's carriages. You can judge, for yourselves, from this the merit of the certification provided by M. Chérin, to which former nobles used to attach such importance.⁹⁷

From 1790 to 1791 the former *Feudiste* (expert in seigneurial law) Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, who eventually became a deputy of the Convention, edited a satirical genealogical journal lampooning the nobility.⁹⁸ The publication's motto, 'had our father Adam purchased the office of king's secretary we'd all be nobles [today]', was emblematic of the periodical's agenda.⁹⁹ This journal regularly presented the genealogies of the great aristocratic houses of France. Instead of exalting the quality of high birth as in the past, this publication exposed the ambiguous origins of nobility. It depicted the histories of aristocratic clans as tales of corruption, vice and violence. In most entries Dulaure uncovered, with glee, the unglamorous and unfeoffed surname of the grandes of France.

He was particularly virulent in his attack of the family of the marquis de Champcenetz, the Governor of the Tuileries palace. The author, having identified a cook amongst this nobleman's ancestry, drew parallels between this aristocrat's behaviour and that of lower servants.¹⁰⁰ Every imaginable piece of historical gossip was presented as incontrovertible fact.

The Revolutionary parody of distinction established on genealogical titles was taken to its extreme conclusion in a theatre piece aptly named the Noble Roturier (Noble Commoner).¹⁰¹ Written at the height of the terror, the plot centred on a nobleman who hired a genealogist to find commoners in his family tree. When told his task, this researcher

⁹⁷ See entry for marquis d'Asnieres in Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, *Liste des noms des ci-devant Nobles, Nobles de race, Robins, Financiers, Intrigans, et de tous les aspirans à la noblesse, pu escrocs d'icelle; avec des notes sur leurs familles*, 3 parts (Paris, 1790), III, 63–6.

⁹⁸ Kuscinski, *Dictionnaire des Conventionnels*, 224; and Doyle, *Aristocracy and Its Enemies*, 242–3.

⁹⁹ Dulaure, *Liste des noms des ci-devant Nobles*, I, 4. ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, I, no.13, 1–2.

¹⁰¹ Emmet Kennedy, 'Taste and Revolution', *Canadian Journal of History*, 32 (1997), 380.

exclaimed with relief that finding commoners was simple; making up aristocratic pedigrees was the tricky bit. The manner in which genealogy came to be regarded as a vicious symbol of corruption has been given multiple explanations. Yet no clear narrative explanation of the phenomenon is readily available.

The Cahiers de Doléances of 1789 still bore respect for the old hierarchical order. When they attacked privilege it was usually pecuniary in nature rather than honorific.¹⁰² As the king lost control of the situation in June 1789, the ambitions of the Third Estate increased.¹⁰³ Among the first honorific privileges to be lost by the nobility was the right to be presented to the royal family.

It is ironic that the beginning of the end for the *ancien régime* started with a series of mass court presentations. The Estates General of 1789 had been summoned to help solve the looming financial difficulties threatening the French crown.¹⁰⁴ Much has been made of the opening ceremonies as a form of propaganda: an expedient through which the monarchy sought to assert its leading role.¹⁰⁵ The emphasis on the great procession of 4 May 1789 has obscured preceding events. It is undoubtedly the case that this religious festivity and its badly conceived order of precedence severely taxed the already strained patience of the Third Estate. After all, two days previously, on 2 May 1789, all the deputies of the Estates General had been presented to the king.¹⁰⁶

Each Estate was to be introduced at different times and every deputy was introduced individually by the marquis de Dreux-Brézé, the Grand Maître des Cérémonies. As many deputies had yet to arrive (those from Paris had not yet been elected) only 800 persons were inducted rather than the full 1200.¹⁰⁷ Already from this day, the symbolic subordination

¹⁰² John Markoff, *The Abolition of Feudalism: Peasants, Lords, and Legislators in the French Revolution* (University Park, PA, 1996), 572.

¹⁰³ Tackett, *Becoming Revolutionary*, 155–8.

¹⁰⁴ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 87–93.

¹⁰⁵ Furet and Richet, *La Révolution française*, 73–4; and AN K 1719, no.41, fol.6.

¹⁰⁶ Mass introductions were not a new phenomenon to the *ancien régime*. Each New Year's Day the Sovereign Courts, the Prévoté des Marchands and other corporate bodies from Paris travelled to Versailles to present their compliments to the king. This was not a prestige-enhancing exercise, but rather a symbolic means of asserting the submission of these institutions to the royal centre. It was also a solemn way of marking the official beginning of the new administrative year. The names of the individuals introduced were not registered, as their name and positions already appeared on the *Almanach Royal*. Their appearance at court was merely recorded in its corporate form. *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1789).

¹⁰⁷ 'The king before opening the Estates General wishing to meet the deputies, who will be assembled around his person, grants them the honour of being presented. His Majesty has fixed today Saturday for this ceremony; considering that the great number of deputies makes it impossible for him to receive them all at the same time,

of the Third Estate was manifest. They were last in the pecking order. By the time of their introduction, Louis XVI was visibly bored. As many deputies were already hostile to the court this symbolic snub did little to endear them to the system of the *Honneurs*.

The ritual of presentation continued routinely throughout the last months of the court's stay at Versailles. The court list of those noble youths allowed to hunt with the king ended, on 24 April 1789, with the prince de Cröy.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, Chérin's list for presentations ended earlier, on 31 March.¹⁰⁹ However, these individuals were unlikely to have been the last to hunt with the king. Some other young patricians, in all probability, would still have been presented in the period from April to September, though this number is bound to have been small (as the court was in mourning for the death of the Dauphin). As Louis XVI stopped hunting after the October days, no noblemen was given the privilege of being presented after this date. By the time Louis started hunting again briefly, the system of presentations had been eliminated.¹¹⁰

Nonetheless, ways around the problem of the abolition of the royal hunt were found. It was decided to issue certificates in the conditional tense. These stated that had it not been for present circumstances, the gentleman in question, having had his proofs verified, would, most certainly, have been permitted to hunt with the king.¹¹¹ It is very difficult to know what to make of these documents as it was uncommon for Chérin to issue such certificates. Nevertheless the continuing importance of aristocratic lineage can be discerned from the large number of letters sent by noblemen to the Cabinet des Titres requesting that the original documents which had been transmitted previously for verification be returned to their owner. The comte de Saint-Priest, Ministre de la Maison du Roi,

orders that the deputies of the clergy will meet him at eleven o'clock in the morning in the Salon d'Hercule; those of the nobility will be introduced to him in the same place at one o'clock in the afternoon; and finally that the deputies of the Third Estate will meet him three hours later. His Majesty commands that for this visit all deputies will wear their ceremonial uniform'. *Journal de Paris*, 2 Mai 1789, no.122.

¹⁰⁸ Cröy proofs had been verified on 16 March 1789. AN O¹ 828, fol.141; and BnF Ms.Fr. 31775, Cherin 213.

¹⁰⁹ The vicomte de Sartigél and the chevalier de Mandelot were the last names recorded by the *Généalogiste*. Ibid.

¹¹⁰ The king started riding again in May. *Moniteur*, 15 mai 1790, no.135, 363; and Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 183.

¹¹¹ This specific wording is confirmed by papers in the Chérin collection. A copy of the certificate delivered to the comte Fagan de Derry stated: 'M. le Comte Fagan has not been granted the honour of entering the king's carriages, but his proofs are in order, and he would have been admitted to this honour had not His Majesty's hunts been suppressed. This is the sole reason why he has not been able to enjoy this [privilege]'. Bluche, *Les honneurs de la cour*; and BnF Ms.Fr. 31638, Chérin 76.

1789–1791, intervened twenty-five times on behalf of nobles wishing to have their papers returned in 1790.¹¹² As the Minister was merely the most important of the many petitioners hounding Chérin during this time, the number of requests made must have been far larger.¹¹³

While a great many did choose to regain their family papers, others pursued their claim to the bitter end. The marquis Du-Parc-Locmaria's letter to Chérin, on 2 January 1790, is an example of a nobleman who, most certainly, had not given up on the hope of being presented.

Monsieur, your father had the goodness of promising me to review my file within eighteen months. Despite the fact that in the present circumstances these certificates are meaningless, it is equally true that prejudices are not as easily dissipated as we are led to believe nowadays. I ask you therefore, Sir, to have the goodness to peruse my papers, I flatter myself that you shall discover indeed that I descend from the House of Du-Parc-Locmaria, and that in consequence my lineage far exceeds what is required by the proofs for the *honneurs de la cour*. You will in no way commit an injustice in certifying this truth. I do not intend to draw any personal advantage from this fact, I merely act in the interest of those who bear my name.¹¹⁴

Obviously the mystique of presentation was still attractive to conservative nobles at this time. Radicals could attack the basis of nobility, but it was extremely difficult to erode the belief system on which it had been grounded. The comte de Barruel Beauvert's letter to the conservative *Gazette de Paris* demonstrated that many still believed in the innate superiority of their Estate.

It is true that in the eyes of the law we are, and should be perfectly equal. But elsewhere it is equally easy to prove that we are very different and shall remain so forever, especially if you compare us individually. Come forth you ugly and misshapen little things! Come closer and you will realise that you are below my shoulder height and that you are weak, cowardly and insolent! If I did not despise you so much, I would soon give you a blow with my sword or ground you to the floor with a few strikes of my cane ... and you! You poor, ignorant cretins just you wait before I bestow upon you again the benefit of my counsel and purse.¹¹⁵

¹¹² AN O¹ 501, fols.10, 14, 40, 47, 61, 138, 150, 184, 216, 245, 250, 306, 388, 431, 478, 514, 571, 577, 595, 733, 743, 752, 794, 903, 925.

¹¹³ Unfortunately, as only forty per cent of the archive of the Cabinet des Titres survived the Revolution, it is difficult to know precisely how many patricians sought to have their documents returned. On 16 May 1792 the Legislative Assembly ordered that the archives of Cabinet des Titres stored in the monastery of the Grands Augustins be burned on the Place des Grèves. The order was duly carried out on 7 August 1792. *Moniteur*, 6 août 1792, no.219, p.331.

¹¹⁴ BnF Ms.Fr. 33262, fols 102–3.

¹¹⁵ Thanks to Dr Harder for drawing my attention to this letter. BnF NAF 307, no.3045.

What corroborating evidence did Barruel offer for these bold statements? He simply answered that his genealogy has been certified by d'Hozier.¹¹⁶

In the course of the last months before the *Honneurs* were abolished, some sought to make a breach in the system, which seemed at long last to have become vulnerable. In March 1790 commandeur d'Estourmel, the brother of a noble deputy of the Constituent Assembly and a high-ranking official in the Order of Malta, ordered Chérin to review urgently Du Crocq's dossier.¹¹⁷ The commandeur's petition demanded the overturning of a sentence, passed by the *recherches de noblesse* of 1668, which declared that the Du Crocq family had usurped its noble status.¹¹⁸ In the last months of its official existence the Cabinet des Titres was busier than ever. Even after it was officially abolished in June 1790 it would take a further two years before the business of this department was finally wound down.¹¹⁹

Gentlemen were no longer admitted to the *Honneurs* after September 1789, however for ladies the ceremony continued in full pomp. The *Moniteur* and *Gazette de France* recorded all ladies presented from the beginning of the Estates right up to the last formal induction on 23 May 1790. Even the October Days did not deter ambitious ladies from their quest of being received at court. Exactly a week after the royal family's arrival in Paris, the marquise de Fernay wrote:

Circumstances change with such frequency, Sir, that I believe it is necessary for me to ask you personally to accelerate the process for being presented [at court], you cannot imagine the disgust I feel in having to intervene personally.¹²⁰

Noble families, throughout this unstable period, still considered it a vital matter that their daughters should be presented at court. No fewer than forty ladies were admitted in the period April 1789 to May 1790, which represents an above average figure.¹²¹ Missing from this list was the comtesse de Saint-Priest, the Greek wife of the royal minister, who having been presented on 23 May 1790, was the last person to receive this privilege.¹²² Presumably this was not an accident as her husband, behind the scenes, was preparing the way for the abolition of this ritual.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.. ¹¹⁷ Blondy, *L'Ordre de Malte au XVIIIe siècle*, 283, n.4.

¹¹⁸ BnF Ms.Fr. 33262, fol.58.

¹¹⁹ Jean-Philippe Gérard, *Répertoire des Ressources Généalogiques et Héraldiques du Département des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (Paris, 2003), 38.

¹²⁰ BnF Ms.Fr. 33262, fols 56–7.

¹²¹ Twenty-four ladies were introduced in 1789 and sixteen in 1790. AN O¹ 829.

¹²² *Moniteur*, 28 mai 1790, no.148.

On 4 June 1790, less than a fortnight after his wife's presentation, Saint-Priest dispatched the following letter to Chérin:

The king charges me, Sir, with informing you that His Majesty no longer wishes that you receive the genealogical proofs that used to be required in order to accede to the honour of being presented. You will take every necessary step to enact His Majesty's decision.¹²³

The Minister's resolution to have this information published, through both private printers and the revolutionary press, suggests that the court was attempting to sway public opinion in its favour. After all, at this time Louis XVI was still negotiating the extent of the endowment of the *liste civile*. Equally, the marquis de Lafayette had written directly to the king complaining that the *noblesse présentée* serving in the National Guard was benefiting from privileges not accorded to ordinary officers of this unit.¹²⁴ The marquis proposed that the practice of presentation be abandoned *tout court*. Regardless of the official end of the *Honneurs* on 4 June 1789 the constitutional court did not abandon the practice, but rather it continued secretly. In September 1790 the comtesse de Mellet sought the honour of having her daughter presented, regardless of the abolition of this ritual.¹²⁵ Others followed her example. As late as 1791, the comte de Bouthiller requested the honour for his daughter-in-law.¹²⁶ Louis XVI noted on the margin of this epistle that he had asked Mme Élisabeth to answer that in the present political conditions it would be impossible to grant the comte's request.

It seems plausible that the abolition of the nobility was also related with the end of the *Honneurs*.¹²⁷ There is no direct correspondence, or evidence, connecting these separate issues. Consequently it is difficult to ascertain whether Louis XVI and his court willingly approved these changes. During this time a group of liberal nobles, the Society of 1789, was meeting at the Parisian *hôtel* of the duc de La Rochefoucauld.¹²⁸ The correspondence of the comte Mirabeau with the comte de La

¹²³ François-Emmanuel Guignard, comte de Saint-Priest, *Copie de la lettre de M. le Cte de Saint-Priest à M. Chérin, De Paris, le 4 juin 1790* (Paris, 1790); and *Moniteur*, 8 juin 1790, no.159, 566.

¹²⁴ AN C 184, no.355. ¹²⁵ AN O¹ 435, fol.108; and Saint-Allais XI 132–50.

¹²⁶ AN C 184, no.255 bis; and Saint-Allais XIII 268.

¹²⁷ Louis-Nicolas-Henri Chérin, *Considérations sur le Décret de l'Assemblée relatif à la Noblesse Héritaire, aux noms, aux titres et aux armoiries* (Paris, 1790).

¹²⁸ 'I found them [the society of 1789] very heated, over the motion banning chivalric sashes and the hereditary nobility, and they wanted to arrange a plan of campaign which I found comical. All in all, you can do very little with these lap-dogs except leaving them to yap discordantly amongst themselves'. Mirabeau to La Marck, 4 June 1790. Bacourt, *Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck*, II, 34; and cited in Doyle, 'The French Revolution and the abolition of the Nobility', in *Cultures of Power in Europe*, ed., Scott and Simms, 299.

Marck suggests that this group was behind these reforms concerning the honorific privileges of the Second Estate.¹²⁹ Whatever the intended outcome of the decision to dispense with the *Honneurs* may have been, in the end it merely made the radicals bolder in their demands.

From the beginning of the Revolution, the Assembly had been in the process of recasting the ritual of presentation to suit its political ends. As early as 27 July 1789, it had issued its second set of parliamentary procedures.¹³⁰ The right to receive directly deputations and petitions appeared among the prerogatives of the legislative chamber.¹³¹ To be able to receive petitions necessarily entailed that one also had the right to deliberate on their contents. The Constituent had silently arrogated one of the oldest prerogatives of the monarchy.

For the first two months, those personally bringing their petitions to the bar of the Assembly were listened to and politely sent on their way.¹³² Slowly, new additions were included in the process. Those who made rousing speeches would have their peroration officially published.¹³³ The representatives of a just cause would be permitted to sit amongst the deputies for the remainder of the session. Among notable visitors to the Assembly was a delegation of former slaves from the colonies and also Jean Jacob, a 120-old-man, from the Jura region who had come to celebrate his newly acquired freedom.¹³⁴ It seems likely that a contrast was intentionally highlighted between the courtiers presented at court and the simple citizens fraternally greeted by their representatives in the Assembly.

The court was not unaware of this development. Louis XVI responded by receiving some intellectuals and celebrities at court. For instance, on 14 January 1790, Dr Dutrône Lacouture gave the royal court a lecture on possible improvements to sugar-cane production.¹³⁵ Among the more surprising introductions during 1790 was that of the Corsican patriot Pasquale Paoli, who was presented by Lafayette on 8 April.¹³⁶ This individual was still technically a rebel and had been forced into exile for over twenty years by the French crown.¹³⁷ There is no record of what was said during this event but Paoli did receive the

¹²⁹ Bacourt, *Correspondance entre le Comte de Mirabeau et le Comte de la Marck*, II, 34.

¹³⁰ André Castaldo, *Les Méthodes de Travail de la Constituante: Les Techniques délibératives de l'Assemblée Nationale 1789–1791* (Paris 1989), 113.

¹³¹ AP VIII, 302. ¹³² *Ibid.*, 433.

¹³³ Castaldo, *Les Méthodes de Travail de la Constituante*, 359–69.

¹³⁴ The *vieillard* Jacob had been received by Louis XVI two weeks previously. When asked by the monarch the secret of his great age he answered that, in order to live long, a diet of welds was essential AP IX, 478 and 483–514; and AN C 31.

¹³⁵ *Moniteur*, 14 janvier 1790, no.14, 104. ¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9 avril 1790, no.99, 92.

¹³⁷ Michel Vergé-Franceschini, *Paoli: Un Corse des Lumières* (Paris, 2005), 383–439.

rank of Lieutenant-General.¹³⁸ The monarchy was obviously engaged in a positive publicity campaign while at the same time tried to defend its right to make military promotions.

After the flight to Varennes, the Constituent Assembly became more audacious in its parody of the *Honneurs*. It described the process by which petitioners were granted the right to sit amongst the deputies as the *Honneurs de la Séance*. The Legislative Assembly took this mockery even further. Months before the fall of the monarchy, they admitted to the *Honneurs de la Séance* the mutinous soldiers of the Chateauxvieux regiment and an anonymous curé who had announced his intention to marry.¹³⁹

The *Honneurs*, throughout their existence, proved controversial. During the Revolution this ritual threatened to undermine the quickly declining authority of the king. In the end, the court resorted to jettisoning this unpopular ceremony. The Jacobin Republic and Directory experimented with several different ideas on how to honour those citizens which had distinguished themselves positively. However, it was only under the French Empire that the reforming concepts of the 1780s were implemented. As Philip Mansel states '[Napoleonic court presentation] was a political gesture which implied a desire to serve the Empereur'.¹⁴⁰ Genealogy had been omitted from the equation, court presentation moved from the celebration of superior birth to becoming the reward for conspicuous state service. This change was one which the restored Bourbons in 1815 were eager to preserve.¹⁴¹

For those who had experienced the true ritual process of the old system, it remained a flamboyant relic of their youthful memory and part of that ineffable *douceur de vivre* which had contradistinguished elite sociability under the *ancien régime*. The nineteenth century created a black legend of the evils of the Cabinet des Titres which far exceeded its true importance. The court could not destroy its symbolic rituals without undermining its legitimacy. In the end one is left in the difficult position of describing a ceremony that was both an institution and a state of mind. To try to separate one from the other would be a futile exercise.

In his later career Chérin pursued a military career and became a relatively successful Revolutionary general.¹⁴² He was left with the

¹³⁸ *Moniteur*, 9 avril 1790, no.99, p.92.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13 mai 1792, no.134, p.369; and TNA, FO 27, Box 38, despatch no.18, Paris 11 April 1792.

¹⁴⁰ Mansel, *The Court of France 1789–1830*, 68. ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁴² Rafe Blaufarb, *The French Army 1750–1820: Careers, Talent, and Merit* (Manchester, 2002), 1–2.

unenviable task of trying to reconcile his previous career with his subsequent profession. He defended his virtuous conduct as Genealogist of the King's Orders, but at the same condemned the viciousness of his former clients. The comte de Saint-Albin described the last moments of the mortally wounded Chérin at the siege of Zurich, in 1799. As the pain and agony of death overcame this once-powerful court official, he asked those around him to come closer. As they did so, he gasped the word 'Sièyes'.¹⁴³ Whether this was a cry of agony or relief we shall never know.

¹⁴³ Alexandre Charles Omer Rousselin de Corbeau, comte de Saint-Albin, *Notice sur Chérin général de division chef de l'état-major général de l'armée du Danube, mort à Arau le 20 prairial à quatre heures de l'après midi, par suite de la blessure reçue dans la journée du 15 en avant de Zurich* (Paris, 1799), 7.

**The renewal of the royal Orders of Chivalry
in *ancien régime* France**

In February 1779 the marquis de Paulmy¹ wrote to the prince de Montbarey stating that ‘when the king’s commands are clearly expressed his subjects must obey without a single complaint or murmur’.² Like much official correspondence of the eighteenth century, an opening declaration of complete submission to the royal will was merely the prelude to a litany of grievances. The issue which deeply troubled this important nobleman concerned a decree recently issued. It prescribed how individuals, who were both members of the Orders of the Saint-Esprit and Saint-Louis, were to wear the insignia of these institutions.³ The marquis wrote a total of five letters, which included two detailed reports, in which he professed that it was not his wish to remonstrate but, at the same time, expressed his view that the old-established manner of wearing both Orders, beneath the azure sash of the Saint-Esprit, was ‘most honourable’.⁴

The academic study of the Bourbon Orders of Chivalry has been almost completely neglected by professional historians.⁵ These highly exclusive and aristocratic corporations often have been dismissed as mere curios, which only could interest an antiquarian penchant for the bizarre. In truth, a large number of amateurs have brought the

¹ Bio Uni XLIV, 148–9; and Anselme, Supplément IX (2), 974.

² BA, Ms. 6117, fol.398.

³ Article 14 declared: ‘All the knights and knight commanders of the order of the Saint-Esprit who are also members of the Order of Saint-Louis will not wear the insignia of this order beneath their azure sash but on the *bouttonnière* of their suits’. Ibid., fol.396.

⁴ In the end the comte de Maurepas was forced to reply that his request to wear the Orders in the previous fashion had been rejected personally by Louis XVI. Ibid., fol.393.

⁵ The notable exception is Jean-Pierre Labatut, ‘Louis XIV et les Chevaliers de l’Ordre du Saint-Esprit’, *XVIIe Siècle*, 128 (1980), 267–77.

subject into disrepute. Their obsessive emphasis on the *phaléristique* study of honours systems, not to mention the efforts of a few eccentrics to legitimise the claims of non-reigning dynasties, has in many ways discredited the entire subject.⁶ It must be conceded that the empirical research of these publications is meticulous. However, it is important to use such studies with caution and to place their findings in a wider context and interpretative framework.

After all, the Bourbon Orders of Chivalry were not considered by contemporary noblemen to be a trifling matter. The most liberal and enlightened grandees of France were attracted by their siren-like qualities. Even the nascent American Republic created the society of the Cincinnati in order to reward the officers who had fought in the War of Independence with bejewelled medals and other insignia.⁷ The Revolutionary reformers of the 1790s may have successfully abolished numerous *ancien régime* institutions. However, the Orders of Chivalry proved to be remarkably resilient. The governments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries accelerated their creation, multiplication and expansion.⁸ Even communist regimes created exterior badges of merit to reward meritorious individuals whilst paradoxically emphasising their intrinsic equality.⁹ The government of contemporary Venezuela, despite its dislike of all things 'Imperialist', has spent considerable effort changing the direction of the charging horse depicted in their national Order of the Liberator.¹⁰ They seem to recognise that a steed retreating and one advancing are not, semiotically speaking, quite the same thing.

⁶ For notable examples of eccentrics and megalomaniacs, see Clive Cheesman, *Rebels, Pretenders and Imposters* (London, 2000).

⁷ Munro Price, 'The Court Nobility and the origins of the French Revolution', in *Cultures of Powers in Europe*, ed. Scott and Simms, 293–4; Guy Stair Sainty, 'The Society of the Cincinnati', in *Burke's Peerage and Gentry, World Orders of Knighthood and Merit*, eds. Guy Stair Sainty and Rafal Heydel-Mankoo, 2 vols. (Buckingham, 2006), II, 1833–40; and for a highly innovative study of this society see William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies*, 99–137.

⁸ For a good summary of nineteenth-century elites, see Colin Heywood, 'Society', in *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Tim Blanning (Oxford, 2000), 70–6; Röhl, *The Kaiser and His Court*, 91–5; even Henry Christophe in his newly formed kingdom created an Order of Chivalry, Clive Cheesman, *The Armorial of Haiti: Symbols of Nobility in the Reign of Henry Christophe* (London, 2007), 9–11; Ulla Tillander-Gdenhielm, *The Russian Imperial Award System 1894–1917* (Helsinki, 2005), 57–138; Laurence Wodey, 'Le légionnaire et son insigne', in *L'Insigne de l'Honneur, de la légion à l'étoile 1802–1815*, ed. Anne de Chefdebien and Charles-Philippe de Vergennes (Paris, 2005), 177–86; Anne de Chefdebien, ed., *Grands Colliers: L'Orfèvrerie au service d'un idéal* (Paris, 1997), 86–106; and for the colonial orders, see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford 2001), 85–100.

⁹ See Stair Sainty and Heydel-Mankoo, *World Orders of Knighthood*, I, 1066–74.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 1716–17.

Despite this general neglect, some distinguished scholars have piloted various methodological approaches in which to study institutions which were sustained by meritocratic discourses.¹¹ Sir Lewis Namier's controversial prosopographical work, analysing the House of Commons during the early reign of George III, painted an institutional landscape which revealed the self-interested motivations and ideological vacuousness of those individuals elected to Parliament in the middle of the eighteenth century.¹² It identifies self-advancement as the key inducement which prompted elites to strive for public and material prestige during the eighteenth century.

The desire to quench this thirst for personal glory was at the heart of the revolutionary attack on those Chevaliers rewarded by the *ancien régime*.¹³ However, this reading is too dismissive when it comes to the cultural and propagandistic significance of institutions that sustained themselves on meritocratic pillars. Had mere naked self-interest animated the hundreds individuals who were members of the Royal Orders they could easily have surrendered their old medals for new republican badges of virtue.¹⁴ The religious convictions of these elites, and also their belief that their careers under the *ancien régime* had not been devoid of value, made them cling to their decorations. Was this mere vanity? To a certain extent perhaps; but these men were certainly also moved by a sense of loyalty towards the previous system of government (which admittedly, coincided with their self-interest). They expressed visible support for the *ancien régime* by publicly brandishing its marks of preferment. Such ostentation became intolerable in the political context of 1791.

The first modern academic treatment of Chivalric Orders was made, in 1987, with the publication of Prof. Boulton's 'The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood'.¹⁵ While the analysis presented in this monograph was sophisticated and wide-ranging, for the Late Middle Ages, he made the somewhat unwise claim that 'no further changes of any

¹¹ Smith, *The Culture of Merit*, 1–10.

¹² John Cannon, 'Namier, Sir Lewis Bernstein (1888–1960)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35183 and Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, 2nd edn (London, 1957), 2–61.

¹³ Doyle, *Aristocracy and Its Enemies*, 255–9.

¹⁴ SHAT, Ya 224, no.15 remise des croix 1793.

¹⁵ D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, *The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood in Later Medieval Europe, 1325–1520* (Bury St Edmunds, 1987). Cf. Gunnar Boalt, Robert Erikson, Harry Glück and Herman Lantz, *The European Orders of Chivalry* (Stockholm, 1971), 63–4, and 67; and Peter Galloway, *The Most Illustrious Order: The Order of St Patrick and Its Knights*, New edn (London, 1999).

consequence' were introduced into the European Orders of Chivalry from 1570 to 1790.¹⁶ It did not take long for scholars to pick up this gauntlet and three years subsequently Charles Herman's doctoral thesis successfully refuted claims that dynastic decorations in Europe were anachronistic and moribund in the early modern period.¹⁷ His study of France's royal Orders (1469–1715) showed how these organisations underwent a great moment of experimentation and renewal throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century.¹⁸ He argued convincingly that Louis XIV's creation of the Order of Saint-Louis, in 1696, not only modernised the outdated concept of medieval knighthood but also laid solid foundations for Europe's contemporary honours system. In many ways this pioneering Order of military valour preceded many of the innovations implemented, a century later, by subsequent regimes, like those of Napoleon and the Third Republic.¹⁹

The past decades have seen the royal Orders of Chivalry in Europe studied from a variety of perspectives. The most prominent technique employed certainly has been prosopographic in nature. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this chapter, such a methodology is unsuitable. The reason is quite straightforward. There were no appointments to the Order of the Saint-Esprit, and a mere thirteen Knights were admitted into Saint-Michel, in the period from 1789 to 1791.²⁰ Obviously this sample is too small to extrapolate meaningful conclusions regarding the changes occurring in aristocratic society during the Revolution. The most viable solution is to analyse the decline of these institutions by examining the clandestine, and at times overt, struggle, between the crown and the National Assembly, for their reform and eventual abolition.

During the Constitutional Monarchy, the Orders assembled seven times at the Tuileries, where they performed their traditional rituals.²¹

¹⁶ For a revision of his original views, see D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton, 'The Curial Orders of Knighthood of the Confraternal Type', in *World Orders of Knighthood*, eds. Stair Sainty and Heydel-Mankoo, I, 229–37.

¹⁷ Charles Wendell Herman, 'Knights and kings in early modern France Royal orders of Knighthood 1469–1715' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1990), 11–15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, see chapter concerning Ordre de Saint-Louis, 237–60.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 269. The subject has again suffered from renewed academic neglect until the completion in 2007 of an innovative doctoral thesis which piloted a new methodology which mixed cultural history with prosopography. It analysed how the Restoration and Hanoverian Monarchies resurrected Orders of Knighthood in the period 1660–1750 as means of promoting ministerial and dynastic objectives. Antti Matikkala, 'The Orders of the Garter, the Thistle and the Bath and the formation of the British Honours System 1660–1760' (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2007).

²⁰ MLH, Fonds Tiolier, Carton 14, liste des chevaliers de Saint-Michel 1817.

²¹ Descriptions can be found in the official court circular the *Gazette de France*.

Little by little, the public's tolerance of these spectacles was eroded. The abolition of the seigniorial rights, and of the nobility as a separate caste, indicated that displays involving aristocratic comportment reminiscent of France's past were no longer to be endured. In order to understand this reversal of fortunes one must appreciate fully how these Orders were a critical and indissoluble component within Bourbon 'representational culture'. It has been fortunate that the research for this chapter coincided with the re-opening of the archives of the Museum of the Legion of Honour. Until recently most of the eighteenth-century documents relating to the royal Orders were thought destroyed.²² In May 1792 the Legislative Assembly had ordered that all documents relating to matters of chivalry be burnt publicly in Place Vendôme.²³ It has been my good fortune to discover that Caminade des Castres, the Herald of the Orders of Saint Esprit and Michel, and Blin de Sainmore, the historiographer of these Orders, covertly rescued a great number of documents.²⁴ This chapter will focus on the reality and activities of the Bourbon Orders as revealed by these new archival materials. It will treat the ceremonial, organisational and political decline of each Order separately.²⁵ In eighteenth-century France, these chivalric institutions were revitalised and, in many ways, the foundations were laid for the development of a continental model for a state honours system. In the

²² *Moniteur*, 13 mai 1792, no.134, 371; and Lauer ed., *Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Collection Clairambault*, vol. Introduction et Table Alphabétique, v–xi.

²³ 'Published in Paris in execution of the law of 16 May 1792, fourth year of liberty, it is ordered, on Tuesday 7 August in Place Vendôme at two o'clock, that the following papers shall be burned: 1. 600 archives boxes, or thereabouts, forming the bulk of the state collection of genealogical titles and proofs of nobility. 2. around 200 archive boxes containing an assortment of 263 volumes concerning the knights, knight-commanders and officers of the order of the Saint-Esprit from its creation to the present day'. *Moniteur*, 6 août 1792, no.219, 331.

²⁴ These papers were hidden in Rouen. Here the local revolutionary authorities did confiscate these documents and marked them out for destruction, but in the end they proved too inefficient to carry out their iconoclasm. The papers stayed in the possession of Caminade Des Castres who, in 1816, bequeathed them to his successor as Herald of the restored Order of Saint-Esprit, Nicolas Pierre Tiolier. After 1830 the papers remained for a century in the Tiolier family and then disappeared. In 1930 the auction house Drouot advertised the sale of these important archival documents. Thanks to the gift of a wealthy American philanthropist, Harry Normont, the Museum of the Legion of Honour was able to purchase the collection. Véronique Wiesinger and Anne de Chefdebien, 'Les archives de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit au musée de la Légion d'Honneur', *Bulletin de la Société des Amis du Musée national de la Légion d'Honneur et des ordres de chevalerie*, 5 (1994), 40–53.

²⁵ The Orders of Saint-Lazare and that of Saint-Hubert de Lorraine will be omitted as they were not court Orders and Louis XVI was their protector but not their Grand Master. For a detailed history refer to Patrick de Villepin, *L'Ordre de Saint-Hubert de Lorraine et du Barrois 1416–1852* (Paris, 1999) 157–73.

second half of the century, the Order of Saint-Michel was transformed into an organisation whose principal aim was to recompense individuals who had made a significant contribution to the artistic, architectural, scientific, industrial and even commercial advancement of the realm.²⁶

Most remarkable of all was Turgot and Marie Antoinette's project to create a female Order dedicated to Sainte-Clotilde.²⁷ This proposed society of pious women was to reflect the female hierarchy of the court. These privileged ladies were to be made 'socially useful' by allowing them to endow and control several charitable foundations. It was certainly to the queen's detriment that the project failed to gain ground and was eventually abandoned. In the end, it was her image as an 'egotistic spendthrift' which was to capture the popular imagination.²⁸ The century also witnessed an evolution in the vestimentary prescriptions of the Orders of Chivalry. In 1779, the elaborate and ruinously expensive costumes worn during important festivities were simplified. This decision conformed to contemporary fashions, which preferred simpler and more practical garments.²⁹

This being said, any description of the Bourbon dynastic Orders which emphasises their progressivism must also allow for the notable continuities which persisted. Many traditional aspects of medieval and early modern knighthood survived well into the early 1790s. At the heart of the system stood the king, who continued to be the undisputed *fons honorum* (fount of honour) of the realm. The sovereign prince was the supreme arbiter and dispenser of justice.³⁰ This fact entailed that he not only imposed either punishment, or clemency, on the guilty, but also that he bestowed gifts on the meritorious. The monarch's power was only theoretically limited by the stipulations of his coronation oath. The king of France became officially Grand Master the day after his coronation in Rheims, when he swore to preserve and defend the Orders of Knighthood.³¹ The royal monopoly over the state's system of honours was as close to a constitutional principle as one could get in the *ancien régime*. At the summit of France's chivalric world stood one man who was committed to its ultimate survival.

²⁶ Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 83–8.

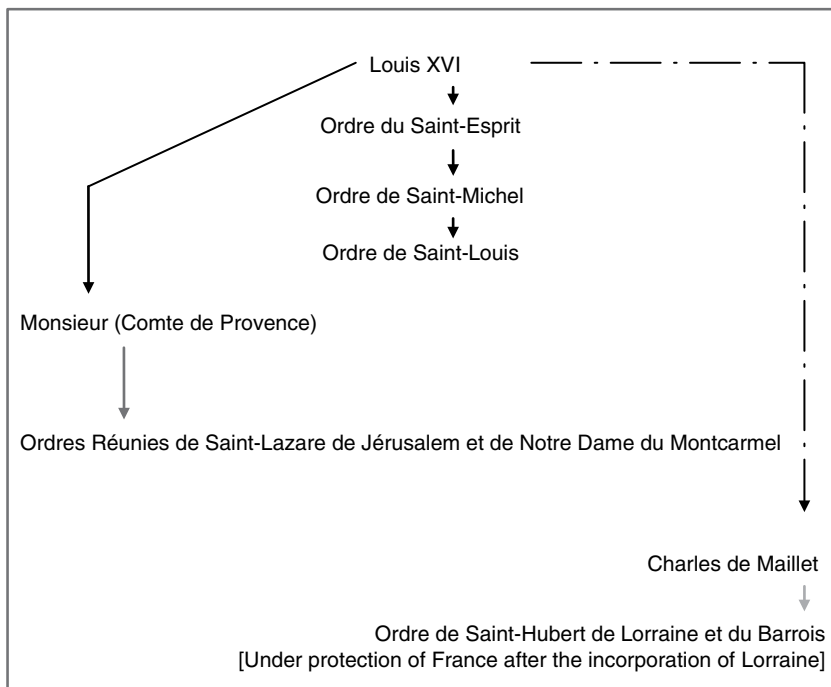
²⁷ BnF Ms.Fr. 8130, cited in Gabriel Vauthier, 'Mélanges', *Revue de l'Histoire de Versailles et de Seine et l'Oise*, 30 (1928), 130–8.

²⁸ Ibid., 137.

²⁹ Anon., *Les Statuts de l'Ordre du St. Esprit Établi par Henri III Roi de France et de Pologne au mois de Décembre 1577* (Paris, 1788), 343–4.

³⁰ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 113–15.

³¹ Richard Jackson, *Vive le Roi! A History of the French Coronation from Charles V to Charles X* (London 1984), 59; and BnF, Clairambault Collection, Ms. 1246.

Table 2. *Organisational diagram for the French Chivalric Orders, 1789–1792*

For a monarch like Louis XVI, almost from birth, knighthood and chivalry were a concrete reality of everyday life. At court he was surrounded by Dukes, and other noblemen, who flamboyantly bore the insignia of these different dynastic institutions. The future king, as duc de Berry, at the tender age of three was promoted to the position of Grand Master of the Ordres Réunies de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem et du Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel.³² Once Louis XVI became Dauphin,

³² The genealogical criteria for admission to this congregation were strict (nine degrees of noble affiliation). Furthermore, the Order of Saint-Lazare was only secularised in 1772 and prior to this date, like the Order of Malta, had been a military and clerical confraternity. Its most senior members like monks took vows of obedience and chastity. Its traditions dated back to the crusades and they were charged with a special ministry for those afflicted with leprosy (hence the choice of Saint-Lazare as a patron). Henry-Mechoir de Langle and Jean-Louis de Treouret de Kerstrat, *Les Ordres de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem et de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel aux XVIIe et XVIIIe* (Paris 1992), 20–1 and 38–41; Desmond Seward, *The Monks of War: The Military Religious Orders* (London, 1972), 41–2; Girault de Coursac, *L'Éducation d'un Roi*, 45; and for a bizarre argument stating that the Order continues to exist, see Guy

he resigned the Grand Mastery of this Order; which then passed to his eldest brother Monsieur, comte de Provence, who would seek to transform it into an establishment aimed at supporting the Ségur ordinance of 1781.³³ From his earliest childhood the king wore the symbols of his dynasty, and retained a particular affection for those loyal *grandeess* whom he elevated annually into royal knighthood.

The Orders of Chivalry were a vital component of court life for several reasons. Principally, the royal household contained the largest collection of decorated noblemen in the entire realm. Secondly, the palace of Versailles, and later the Tuileries, were the venues for the chapters, processions and solemn liturgical services of the majority of the dynastic Orders.³⁴ The exception to the rule was the Order of Saint-Michel whose members held their meetings, twice yearly, at the Convent of the Cordeliers in Paris. The admission into the Orders often reflected a lifetime service to the crown. The military, political and administrative functions of the more important members often required that they reside at court. Non-attendance at chivalric feasts in Versailles was a considerable offence which was punished with fines.³⁵ Entrance into an Order of Knighthood changed the life of its members very rapidly. Their social precedence increased from the moment of their reception. They marched ahead of the ordinary nobility at processions and their access rights at court increased. From the day they were granted admission until their death they wore the insignia of the dynastic congregation to which they belonged.³⁶

Another dimension, which few appreciate, relates to the chivalric elements of the 'Family Compact' negotiated between the senior and cadet branches of the House of Bourbon.³⁷ A convention was signed between Louis XV and Charles III (5 June 1760) which stipulated the manner in which their successors and heirs were to receive, and how they were to wear, their respective dynastic badges.³⁸ The exchange of Orders of Chivalry between royal families, or sometimes their Ambassadors, was a routine exercise between European reigning

Coutant de Saisseval, *The History of the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem between 1814–1930* (The Hague, 1990), 6–7.

³³ Laurence Wodey, 'Le Collier des ordres réunis de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel et de Saint-Lazare de Jérusalem', *Histoire et archives*, 4 (Paris 1998), 8; and David Bien, 'The Army in the French Enlightenment: Reform, Reaction and Revolution', *Past and Present*, 85 (1979), 77–8. In 1788 the Order of Saint-Lazare held its only Chapter at the École Militaire in Paris.

³⁴ MLH, Fonds Tiolier, O 1803 and O 1804.

³⁵ Anon., *Statuts de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit*, 12. ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁷ John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain 1700–1808* (Oxford, 1989), 137–41.

³⁸ MLH, Fonds Tiolier, Carton 14, Chevaliers Étranger, no.246.

houses since at least the sixteenth century.³⁹ However, this arrangement between Bourbon cousins was exceptional. It deemed that the king of Spain, Prince of Asturias and king of the Two Sicilies, were automatically members of the Saint-Esprit. Reciprocally, the king of France and Dauphin were, by right, knights of the Spanish Golden Fleece. It is clear that the other junior branch of the dynasty, the dukes of Parma, did not benefit from a similar 'fast track' arrangement.⁴⁰ All this serves to highlight the existence of a European culture of dynastic chivalry. Monarchs sought to cement good relations with their 'non-domestic' families, and knighthood was an attractive medium through which such diplomatic patronage could be cemented. Paris became the European capital of the *phaléristique* industry.⁴¹ Remarkably, Paris produced not merely the jewellery for the French Bourbon Orders of Chivalry, but also the paraphernalia and insignia for the decorations of their Spanish and Neapolitan cousins.⁴²

The Order of Malta⁴³ added an extra layer of complexity to the life of the court. This large international organisation had experienced an important rebirth in the eighteenth century when its Grand Master's diplomatic status was upgraded and he was recognised by the Catholic powers of Europe as a king in all but name.⁴⁴ The three French *langues* (chivalric jurisdictions) alone represented half of the Order of St John's revenues.⁴⁵ Unlike Austria, or Italy, where Josephism had sought to curtail the power of the Knights of St John, in France they benefited from the special protection of the crown.⁴⁶ The lands of the Order of

³⁹ Per Nordenvall, ed., *Kungliga Serafimerorden 1748–1998* (Stockholm, 1998), 145–67.

⁴⁰ The rulers of this modest north Italian duchy were required to undergo the formal ceremony of induction into both of their cousin's Orders. ASPr, Francia 76, *Papiers relatifs à la réception du Prince Don Louis de Parme dans l'ordre du Saint-Esprit le 12 Novembre 1786*.

⁴¹ Stair Sainty and Heydel-Mankoo, eds, 'Arthus-Bertrand', in *World Orders of Knighthood*, II, 1985–7; and Duke Ferdinand of Parma constantly, through his embassy in Paris, ordered enamelled crosses and ribbons for his daily use. ASPr, Francia 79.

⁴² In December 1779 Don Ferdinand ordered almost thirty crosses and medals through his agent in Paris. Ibid., Le Marquis de Canossa à monsieur le Chevalier de Llovera à Paris, le 13 juin 1778; and Le Comte de Sacco à monsieur le Chevalier de Llovera à Paris, le 25 décembre 1779.

⁴³ The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem to give it its full title.

⁴⁴ Alain Blondy, *L'Ordre de Malte au XVIIIe Siècle*, 37–40.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 22. The Order was sufficiently important to publish an *Almanach de Malte* in French. This edition, like its royal equivalent, listed the officers, members, organisation, prayers, feasts and entrance criteria for the Order. Anon., *Almanach de l'Ordre de Malte pour l'Année 1769, à l'usage de la Noblesse qui se destine à entrer dans cet Ordre* (Paris, 1769).

⁴⁶ Blondy, *L'Ordre de Malte au XVIIIe Siècle*, 251.

St John, like other ecclesiastical establishments, benefited from the right to collect tithes. This made the institution very prosperous. By mid-century the focus of Maltese diplomatic activity had switched from Madrid to Paris.⁴⁷ The kings of France, since at least the seventeenth century, received an annual gift of some falcons from the Grand Master. This ritual had evolved from being a symbol of submission into one of independence. In 1530 the Emperor Charles V (as King of Naples) gifted the island of Malta to the Knights of St John in return for an annual payment of one falcon.⁴⁸ To assert the end of this suzerainty, subsequent Maltese Grand Masters decided to send falcons to the kings of France. It was a ritual that persisted right up to the 1790s.⁴⁹

The religious dimension of these congregations was to experience little alteration. The insignia of all the royal Orders were eight-pointed crosses. This symbol was copied from the badge worn by the Knights of St John. Each point on the cross symbolised one of the eight beatitudes of the gospels.⁵⁰ The semiotics of these institutions proclaimed the quest for moral perfection, and religious orthodoxy, to which its membership aspired. Every French Order (excluding the Institution du Mérite Militaire) was dedicated to a patron saint. Their members had to be practising Catholics.⁵¹ The process of obtaining the religious certificates necessary for entry into the Orders was complex. The bishop of the diocese in which a candidate resided was required to write to the Chancelier des Ordres du Roi. This letter was supposed to confirm that the aspirant knight was a practising Catholic, and to vouch for his good morals.⁵² The continued observance of the spiritual mission of these

⁴⁷ Ibid., 144–5.

⁴⁸ Claude Petiet, *Le Roi et le Grand Maître* (Paris, 2002), 86.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 87–9; and ‘From Paris, 11 June 1790. On the sixth of this month, the Bailli de Virieu, Minister Plenipotentiary of the Spanish *Infante*, the Duke of Parma, and the Chevalier de la Fontaine, presented to his Majesty a falcon which traditionally the Grand Master of the Religion of Malta has sent as a tribute each year. This gift was received by the Chevalier de Forget, Captain in charge of His Majesty’s *Vol du Cabinet*’. *Gazette de France*, 11 juin 1790, no.47, 232; and the King of Denmark also gifted Icelandic falcons to the King of France, see P. Charliat, ‘Les Oiseaux du Nord et la Fauconnerie Royale’, *Revue de l’Histoire de Versailles et de Seine et Oise*, 31 (1929), 118–25.

⁵⁰ Anne de Chefdebien, Laurence Wodey and Bertrand Galimard Flavigny, *Musée National de la Légion d’honneur et des ordres de Chevalerie* (Paris, 2006) 23.

⁵¹ Charles Marchal and Sophie Michel, ‘Les Ordres du Roi’, *Art et Curiosité* (Paris), 58; Anon., *Statuts de l’ordre du Saint-Esprit*, 58; and Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 84.

⁵² Attached to these documents was a questionnaire completed by the curé who most regularly administered the sacrament to the candidate. This was a bureaucratic machine which expended much time and energy in ensuring that the Orders were uncorrupted by heresy. AN M 616 ; AN O¹ 281 for an example of Christian oath; and

chivalric institutions highlighted the Bourbon's determination to uphold their vision of sacred kingship and to defend the realm from any heretical contamination. It is also noteworthy that a specific quota of membership was reserved for the higher clergy within these corporations.⁵³ These institutions, unlike their European equivalents, did not possess clerical officers like chaplains or grand priors.⁵⁴ It was expected, in all probability, that those clergymen who were members would officiate at ceremonies according to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the realm.⁵⁵

Despite this commitment to total religious unity, it should be remembered that, during the second half of the eighteenth century, France sought to find ways in which it could better accommodate its protestant minority.⁵⁶ On 10 March 1759, at the height of the Seven Years' War, Louis XV created the Institution du Mérite Militaire.⁵⁷ Its administrative structure was a precise replica of the Order of St Louis.⁵⁸ The chief

SHAT, Y^e 208, no.5 Serments, Instruction pour recevoir les chevaliers dans l'ordre de Saint-Louis.

⁵³ Anon., *Statuts de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit*, 11.

⁵⁴ See *Almanach Royal* from 1774 to 1792; and the Order of Saint-Louis had a specially appointed aumônier see, SHAT, Ya 222, chemise Aumônier.

⁵⁵ It should also be remembered that the Grand Almoner of the king's chapel was *ex officio* a commander of the Saint-Esprit. It is likely that this senior cleric, usually a Cardinal, acted as the Order's chaplain. Not all Grand Almoners enjoyed an uninterrupted tenure of this office. After the diamond necklace affair, Louis XVI requested that Rohan return his *grand collier du Saint-Esprit*. This was regarded by all as one of the most tangible signs of his disgrace. Anon., *Statuts de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit*, 12; Feuillet Des Conches, Lettre CVII in *Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette et Madame Élisabeth Lettres et Documents inédits*, I; Anon., *Almanach Royal*; and Abbé Géorgel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des événements de la fin du dix-huitième siècle depuis 1760 jusqu'en 1806–1810, par un contemporain Impartial, Feu M. l'Abbé Georgel, Jésuite, ancien secrétaire d'ambassade et chargé d'affaires de France à Vienne, grand-vicaire de l'Evêché de Strasbourg et vicaire-général de la grande-aumônerie de France sous le prince Louis de Rohan, Cardinal Evêque de Strasbourg, etc.; publiés par M. Georgel, Ancien Avocat au Parlement de Nancy, à la Cour de Trèves et à la cour de Cassation, Neveu et Héritier de l'Auteur*, 2nd edn, 6 vols (Paris, 1820), 103, 138, 200, 204 and 216.

⁵⁶ Nigel Aston, *Religion and Revolution in France 1780–1804* (London, 2000), 70.

⁵⁷ A. Cloarec, 'L'Ordre Royal et Militaire de Saint-Louis and L'Institution du Mérite Militaire', *Art and Curiosité*, 59 (1975), 22–4; and cf. 'Already that epicurean philosopher the Duke of Vendôme, had proposed to Louis XIV to decorate with some badge those officers whose religion did allow them to obtain the cross of Saint-Louis. The wise Monarch replied: "... the State only recognises the Catholic Religion, and it would be inexpedient to recognise another within my armies." The request of the Duke of Choiseul on the same issue found Louis XV more receptive ... This Prince established in favour of those foreign non-Catholic officers a reward known as the *Croix de Mérite*; and this act was celebrated as a victory in all the *Cercles* and philosophical newspapers'. See Lievin-Bonaventure Proyard, *Louis XVI détrôné avant d'être Roi ou tableau des causes de la Révolution Françaises et de l'ébranlement de tous les trônes*, 6th edn (Paris, 1803), 105.

⁵⁸ SHAT, Y^e 226, Ordre de St. Louis pensions établi en 1787–8, Institution du Mérite Militaire Pensions; Ibid., Institution du Mérite Militaire; and SHAT, Y^e 227 enregistrement des brevets.

purpose of this organisation was to reward those Swiss and foreign troops, in the service of France, who were of the Protestant faith. It was hoped that this decoration would help the process of integration into the French armed forces.

The French chivalric Orders, unlike other ceremonial institutions, presented an eclectic mix of innovation and tradition. They rewarded merit conceived in terms of state service, military valour and cultural innovation. Yet, by the same token, entry into most of these congregations was limited to persons of a specific segment of society. Proofs of nobility, and of Catholic orthodoxy, were still essential elements within the *ancien régime* system of reward. It was probably this uneasy balance of progress and anachronism which made the reform of the Bourbon honours system controversial. France would have to wait for the Napoleonic Empire before an alternative model could be established fully.⁵⁹

Ordre de Saint-Louis

On 10 May 1693 Louis XIV founded the Ordre de Saint-Louis at Versailles.⁶⁰ It differed considerably from the royal single-class Orders created in the previous four centuries. This military honour combined elements from both the older religious and military confraternities. Like the Knights of St John, the membership of Saint-Louis was divided into distinct classes; however unlike this medieval institution entry was not contingent on genealogical proofs. It was the only Order in France which did not have a genealogist assigned to it. The foundation charter declared: 'that merit and distinguished service within our armies are the sole criteria for admittance'.⁶¹

The innovation was unprecedented. The Ordre de Saint-Louis was to be large, and open to all military officers who distinguished themselves in the army and navy. Unlike the other dynastic institutions, where chevaliers paid fees for admittance,⁶² the Knights of Saint-Louis were granted generous pensions relative to their rank.⁶³ Strangely the king

⁵⁹ Jean Tulard, *Napoléon et la Noblesse d'Empire* (Paris, 2003), chapter 4; Philippe Lamarque, 'Le bicentenaire du blason impérial', *La Revue Napoléon*, 33 (2008), 10–15. For a magisterial study of the Napoleonic honours system see Natalie Petiteau, *Élites et mobilités: La Noblesse d'Empire au XIXe Siècle 1808–1914* (Paris, 1997).

⁶⁰ Christophe Guimaraes, *Les insignes et médailles commémoratives de l'ordre de Saint-Louis 1693–1830* (Paris 2004), 21; and Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 113–15.

⁶¹ SHAT, Ya 207 fol.1.

⁶² ASPr, Francia 76, réception du Prince Don Louis de Parme dans l'Ordre du Saint-Esprit.

⁶³ SHAT, Ya 207, fol.10.

does not seem to have limited its numbers. He specified, rather, that the size of the Orders should be proportionate to its revenues.⁶⁴ The insignia of the Order was to be a Maltese cross with a depiction of Saint-Louis at the centre, with the phrase *bellæ virtutis præmium* (reward for martial prowess) inscribed. The annual general assembly of the Order, known as the Messe des Cordons Rouges, took place on the feast of Saint-Louis, 25 August.⁶⁵ The monarch, Grands-croix, Commandeurs and Chevaliers would process to the royal chapel to celebrate a corporate mass. The innovation proved popular and, by the end of Louis XIV's reign, 1800 Knights had been appointed; far exceeding figures initially anticipated.⁶⁶

The appointment criteria and remuneration bestowed on knights represented the biggest departure from traditional chivalric culture. During Louis XVI's reign several ministers of war and of the navy tried to improve the efficiency of the Order of Saint-Louis. It was decided in 1779 that one-sixth of vacancies would be filled by naval officers. During the same year, the important decision was taken to abolish the venal officers who administered the Order and to transfer their functions to officials already working in the Ministère de la Guerre.⁶⁷

In December 1785 an edict was issued which increased penalties against those who illegally bore the Croix de Saint-Louis. Nobles, who wore the Order without having been awarded it, were to be dishonourably discharged from the army and imprisoned for twenty years. The sanction for commoners was much harsher. If caught wearing the Saint-Louis they were to be sent to perpetual galley service. Peculiarly, those found trafficking in false insignia of the Order received merely a fine and six months in prison.⁶⁸ It is unclear whether anybody was ever prosecuted under this legislation but it was a powerful symbol that those excluded from honours who dared to appropriate them would be severely punished. The monarchy's harsh defence of its dynastic institutions confirmed its attachment to the ideal of a society of orders in which the Second Estate was always the favoured son.

⁶⁴ The 1693 charter stated that the membership would consist of one-twelfth grand crosses, one-quarter Knight-Commanders and two-thirds ordinary Chevaliers. Ibid., fol.2.

⁶⁵ Ibid., fol.8.

⁶⁶ Herman, 'Royal orders of Knighthood', 260.

⁶⁷ The prince de Montbarey argued that these officials were paid annually over 50,000 livres and did little of practical benefit to justify their continued existence. SHAT, Ya 207, fols 65–78, Ya 208, édit du 1er Juin 1780, Article 63 ; and Constitution de l'ordre de Saint-Louis fol.7 and Article 7.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Croix de St. Louis, Ordonnance du Roi concernant ceux qui portent la Croix de Saint-Louis ou le Ruban de cet Ordre sans titre du 29 Décembre 1785.

Table 3. *Period of service required for admission to the Ordre de Saint-Louis*

Colonels and Mestres de Camp: eighteen years of service
Lieutenant-Colonels: twenty years of service
Majors: twenty-two years of service
Captains and Sub-Captains: twenty-eight years of service
Lieutenants, Sub-Lieutenants and Standard Bearers: twenty-eight years of service
1 Years spent on active campaign in a theatre of war counted double.
2 Thirty years of service in a garrison were required for admission.

France's involvement in the American War of Independence not only created a burden on the national budget, but also a strain was placed on the economy of honours. Young adventurers, such as Lafayette, were made Knights of Saint-Louis for conspicuous gallantry, despite having served previously a mere three years in the French cavalry.⁶⁹ The Order was clearly dominated by the military elite of the *ancien régime*. Those who had served bravely in battle and those with long careers were rewarded by the monarchy. The feast of Saint-Louis was one of the few days at court when full military dress was worn. It was a court requirement that Commandeurs and Grand-Croix wore the gala uniform, appropriate to their rank and regiment, embellished with the insignia of Saint-Louis.⁷⁰ The visual effect of this meritocratic society was somewhat spoilt by the king's insistence that the normal hierarchy of the court continue to take precedence over the military rank. Those wearing the Cordon Rouge were assigned subordinate positions in the procession to and from the royal chapel.⁷¹ The impression which emerged was that the importance of genealogy still exceeded that of merit. The

⁶⁹ SHAT, Ya 223, no.12 Nominations collectives des Chevaliers 1705–1790, '1 May 1783 the king awarded the cross of Saint-Louis to the Marquis de Lafayette as a reward for his distinguished service in America; he was formally received into the order by his uncle the duc d'Ayen. The marquis is summarily dismissed as 'the scourge of France and Europe', by Alex Mazas and Theodore Anne, *Histoire de l'Ordre de Saint-Louis*, 3 vols (Paris 1860), II, 349. Also generals, such as the comte de Rochambeau, were elevated to the highest position of Grand Croix from early in the American War (1779). It coincided with a moment when the military successes of the French Navy meant that an uncharacteristically large number of admirals and sea captains were appointed to the Order. The most famous names included La Peyrouse Du Galaup (1777), La Mothe-Picquet (Commandeur 1780 and Grand Croix 1784) and Du Couëdic (posthumously 1777). Ibid., Ya 223, no.12 Nominations collectives des Chevaliers 1705–1790 and no.13 Nominations collectives dignités 1739–1787.

⁷⁰ SHAT, Ya 208, édit du 1er Juin 1780, article 56; and Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 31–2.

⁷¹ They walked behind the Princes du Sang, Princes étrangers, Duc et Pairs, Maréchaux de France and the Chevaliers des Ordres du Roi. Ibid., article 57.

oppressive observance of traditional court precedence condemned the Bourbon Orders of Knighthood to be portrayed as reactionary bastions of privilege.

Ironically perhaps, one of the last ceremonies to be held at Versailles was the Messe des Cordon Rouges, on 25 August 1789.⁷² The only account given, except for the unenlightening report in the official *Gazette de France*, is to be found in Henri d'Ormesson's unpublished memoirs. This sometime Ministre d'État and Contrôleur-Général des Finances remembered that the entire general staff of the newly instituted Parisian National Guard, of which he was a member, attended the event *en masse*. It was also his recollection that this was the first occasion on which the new uniforms for the National Guard were worn. The most worrying aspect for the court was the menacing presence of a large contingent of *poissardes* (fishwives) from the market of Les Halles.⁷³ Ormesson remarked that it was unusual to recall how these women seemed relatively placid, considering that in under two months they would be the protagonists of the October Days. The National Assembly also sent a delegation of forty-eight deputies to participate in the celebrations.⁷⁴

The following year the Order held its last Chapter, on 25 August 1790. According to the Genoese ambassador, the Marchese Spinola, Louis XVI returned from Saint-Cloud to the Tuileries with the express purpose of attending the ceremony of the *Cordons Rouges*.⁷⁵ The Assembly again sent a small delegation.⁷⁶ As there were no promotions the event seems to have proved uncontroversial.⁷⁷ Regardless of the abolition of the nobility a few months previously, the Order seems to have been able to carry on its life as before.

It was not until 1 January 1791 that the Assembly decided to interfere in the administration of the Order.⁷⁸ It decreed that henceforth

⁷² *Gazette de France*, 1 septembre 1789, no.70, 347–8.

⁷³ Henri d'Ormesson, *Mémoires particuliers pour l'instruction de mes enfants sur les principaux événements de ma vie depuis ma naissance*, written between 15 October 1795 and April 1796. In AN 144 AP 130, fol.114.

⁷⁴ AP VIII, 485–6.

⁷⁵ The celebrant of the Mass was the abbé Ganderatz, who was to preach a large number of sermons at court during the Revolution. ASGe, Archivio Segreto Lettere Ministri Francia 2262, Parigi 30 Agosto 1790.

⁷⁶ AP XVIII, 259.

⁷⁷ 'The king wearing the insignia of the royal and military order of Saint-Louis processed to the chapel of the Tuileries palace, preceded there by the Grand Crosses and Knight Commanders of this order, who marched according to their rank and seniority of service, as prescribed by the edict of January 1779.' *Gazette de France*, 31 août 1790, no.70, 349–50.

⁷⁸ AP XXI, 747.

all officers, regardless of rank, would be awarded the medal after twenty-four years of service. Even more distressing for the noble elite of the army was that those *Officiers de Fortune*, those who had started their career as simple rank and file, were to be admitted more easily than ever before into the *Ordre de Saint-Louis*.⁷⁹ The years served as an enlisted soldier would now count the same as those served as an officer. Theoretically, this meant that a man who had served twenty-three years as a soldier and only one as an officer could be decorated. The final article of the decree also had a retroactive effect in so far as it allowed retired officers, whose regiments had been disbanded, the right to apply for the medal provided they had served twenty-four years. Judging from the registers of appointments for the years 1790–1791, it seems clear that the numbers of those admitted into the Order more than doubled.⁸⁰ The Revolution had done little to quench the thirst public honour and recognition.

In the period prior to the flight to Varennes the attention of the Order had turned to understanding the implications of the new legislation on state pensions. In 1790 it had been decided that an individual could not benefit from more than one pension. In relation to the Order of Saint-Louis, the treasury decided that the Chevalier's annuity could be paid in its totality, regardless of whether recipients possessed other government emoluments. The sting in the tail was that the annuity from the Order would have to be subtracted either from the knight's government pension or from his salary. This removed a great deal of power from the king, who until then had used the Order to supplement the income of his loyal military officers.⁸¹

The reduction of the Saint-Louis to a mere mark of distinction made it certainly less efficient instrument of royal patronage. The Assembly had other plans in reserve for this institution. After all, it had started debating pensions and uniforms for the *Vainqueurs de la Bastille* whom it considered national heroes.⁸² The deputies had

⁷⁹ SHAT, Ya 208, *Croix de St. Louis*, relative à la décoration militaire.

⁸⁰ The estimate proposed here is based on the registers of appointment for 1791 which are twice as voluminous as those from the preceding years. SHAT, Ya 220 and 221, approximately 2600 letters are contained in these registers. And in February the Assembly decreed that one year of duty in the colonies would count as eighteen months. SHAT, Ya 208, *Loi relative à la décoration militaire pour les officiers des régiments coloniaux*.

⁸¹ This restriction effectively signified that those still in active service would not receive any monetary advantage from being members of the Saint-Louis. Ibid., *Instruction pour les pensionnaires de l'ordre de Saint-Louis*.

⁸² Michel Grasse, ed., *Les Vainqueurs de la Bastille: Dictionnaire biographique et historique* (Paris, 2007), 5–6.

successfully appropriated the nation's sovereign powers in 1789 and had now effectively become a rival *fons honorum*. After Varennes, as the king was under house arrest, there were no celebrations for the feast of Saint-Louis.⁸³ Article 2 of the law on the suppression of the Orders of Chivalry stated that, pending the creation of a national order of merit, the Chevaliers de Saint-Louis would be allowed to continue wearing their insignia. The continued existence of this military award incensed the radical press, especially Prudhomme. He went so far as to suggest that the survival of this institution provided the court with a counter-Revolutionary fifth column.

If you believe the whisperings of our friends at the court, the time is close at hand when the twelve or fifteen thousand Knights of Saint-Louis, present in the Capital, shall be put to work. It seems that the numbers of those being enrolled is still expanding because, despite the suppression of the Orders of Chivalry, the medals are still being distributed prodigally; even officers of the National Guard are receiving them. These [promotions] have included among others M. Barret, a Major in the battalion of the Oratoire Section, who has earned his medal by playing 'horsey' with the son of Louis XVI, when he was on guard duty [at the Tuileries].⁸⁴

This attitude was, in many ways, to characterise the continuing relationship between the public and these military chevaliers. Knights of Saint-Louis featured prominently in many of the denunciations of counter-Revolutionary conspiracies collected in 1792 by the deputy Bazire for the Paris Commune.⁸⁵

On 26 September 1791 one of the last acts of the Constituent Assembly was to eliminate the exclusively Catholic character of this organisation. It decreed that knights would no longer be obliged to swear the oath of allegiance to the king, nor submit themselves to religious proofs.⁸⁶ All were now to be admitted, regardless of faith. It was this act which truly ended Louis XVI's power of patronage. He lost the ability to reward those who were loyal and close to his own religious convictions. On 28 October the Protestant members of the Institution du Mérite Militaire were amalgamated with the Chevaliers de Saint-Louis.⁸⁷ The chivalric dimension of the court life was effectively at an end.

⁸³ 'Here there were no public festivities for the day of Saint-Louis: considering that the king is a prisoner it would have risible to do otherwise. It is impossible to ascertain when the royal family will be released. At the moment they are not even permitted to receive the Corps diplomatique'. ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 28 Agosto 1791.

⁸⁴ *Révolutions de Paris*, 6 au 9 août 1791, no.109, 233.

⁸⁵ AN F⁷ 4590, fols 36, 40, 45, 61 and 67.

⁸⁶ SHAT, Ya 208, Croix de Saint-Louis, Loi relative à la décoration militaire.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Proclamation du Roi, en exécution des loix relatives à la décoration militaire, du 28 octobre 1791.

The monarchy was overthrown two weeks before the feast of Saint-Louis. The hostility towards the old Chevaliers de Saint-Louis, which had been latent during the Constitutional monarchy, found its full expression during the Jacobin Republic. The National Convention never agreed on what was to replace this military honour, but it took the decision, on 28 July 1793, that all those possessing Croix de Saint-Louis were to surrender them or else they would be considered *suspect*.⁸⁸ A few dozen officers did yield these vestiges of the *ancien régime*, but the vast majority held on to this reminder of more youthful days.⁸⁹ In the end, the Republic had no more success in defining an objective form of military recompense than its monarchical predecessor. The description of the proposed *Décoration Militaire* was highly abstract and far more concerned with who was not worthy of reward. It was a denunciation of the *ancien régime* rather than a positive proposal.

It is necessary to limit the vice of bestowing rewards on virtue. The citizen who devotes his work and blood to the glory of the fatherland is worthy of [public] appreciation. But an individual, among freemen, cannot achieve distinction through marks of slavery or imbecility; the badge of liberty must be his reward. What worth can a cross, bearing the effigy of a king or a saint, have to a wise citizen? We no longer have kings, and we only honour as Saints those men who further the cause of the fatherland and humanity ... I propose therefore that our military decoration be a simple medallion surrounded by a laurel wreath with a likeness of Liberty, or Minerva, leaning on a pedestal, holding a lance and wearing a liberty bonnet. Around this symbol will be inscribed three words: Au Citoyen Vétéran (to the veteran citizen).⁹⁰

Ordre de Saint-Michel

The Order of Saint-Michel was the oldest royal institution of knighthood in France.⁹¹ The French reformation, and subsequent wars of religion, created a substantial increase in the number of Companions of Saint-Michel.⁹² Their numbers, which reached several hundred, were well in excess of the thirty-six knights prescribed by the original statutes.⁹³ Henry III had tried to reform the Order by reducing its membership so as to restore its prestige and exclusivity. However his decision, in

⁸⁸ Ibid., Décret de la Convention Nationale, No.1293.

⁸⁹ SHAT, Ya 224, no.15 Remise des croix 1793.

⁹⁰ SHAT, Ya 208, Décoration militaire, Quod faustum jucundum que sit Republica.

⁹¹ It had been created by the sixth Valois king, Louis XI in 1469. Boulton, *The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood*, 427.

⁹² Herman, 'Royal orders of Knighthood', 57–60.

⁹³ Boulton, *The Monarchical Orders of Knighthood*, 443.

1579, to create the Saint-Esprit was an effective admission of defeat.⁹⁴ For the next two centuries Saint-Michel existed in a state of limbo.⁹⁵

It was only during Louis XV's reign that the order was destined to develop into a form of public recognition for civilian merit.⁹⁶ Those individuals who made significant contributions to the sciences, arts and manufacturing which had beneficial effects for the general community were admitted into this confraternity. The aspirant knights required *deux races de noblesse* which made it significantly less exclusive, in comparison for instance to the Order of Saint-Lazare, which required nine degrees of nobility.⁹⁷ The knights met twice a year in the Cordeliers convent in Paris.⁹⁸ To stress the close relationship between the crown and the Knights of Saint-Michel, Louis XVI selected a commissioner each year to preside over the Chapters held at the Cordeliers.⁹⁹

Benoît Defauconpret's recent prosopographic study sheds new light on the social composition of the order. The results highlight the innovative character of this institution. During Louis XVI's reign only two of its members came from the ancient nobility of the realm. The vast majority of the other Chevaliers were *anoblis*.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the greater part of knights were ennobled less than a year before they were received into Saint-Michel: an astonishing result, which demonstrated that, by Louis XVI's reign, the genealogical requirements of this particular Order were basically ignored in favour of rewarding persons with a conspicuous record of civic merit. The largest proportion of its members came from the civil service, but, by the end of the reign, there was a noticeable increase in medical practitioners.¹⁰¹ Also worthy of note

⁹⁴ Anon., *Les Statuts de l'Ordre du St. Esprit*, 6 and 56.

⁹⁵ Although it was the oldest chivalric institution in France, it was, at the same time, subordinate to the more recently created royal confraternity of the Saint-Esprit. Things were further complicated by the fact that the Knights of the Saint-Esprit (often referred to as Chevaliers des Ordres du Roi) were technically also members of Saint Michel. Ibid., 29; and Herman, 'Royal orders of Knighthood', 322–4.

⁹⁶ Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 40–2.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 43.

⁹⁸ They convened on the feast of the apparition of the Archangel Michael on 8 May and on the first Monday of Advent, when they celebrated a *Requiem* mass in memory of the deceased Companions of the Order. The Knights wore a black sash with an enamelled Maltese cross bearing an image of St Michael with his lance running through Lucifer. Ibid., 32–3, 40; and MLH, Fonds Tiolier, O 1804, Journal de l'ordre de Saint Michel, fol.3; and AN O¹ 283, fol.141.

⁹⁹ Ibid., fol.5.

¹⁰⁰ Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 45–55.

¹⁰¹ This squares neatly with research which has identified Versailles as one of the great medical centres of Europe. Ibid., 70, Colin Jones, 'The Médecins du Roi at the End of the Ancien Régime and in the French Revolution', in *Medicine at the Courts of Europe, 1500–1837*, ed. Vivian Nutton (London, 1990), 214–67; and Pierre Brassart, 'Contribution à l'étude du Monde Médical Versaillais sous le règne de Louis XVI

was the creeping influence of 'money' into the order. A total of eighteen financiers were admitted between 1761 and 1790. To be added to this category were eight captains of industry, whose enterprises ranged from the luxury trades to textiles to weaponry.¹⁰²

When examining the arts it is apparent that architects and musicians were the most appreciated cultural innovators of the age.¹⁰³ Louis XVI promoted two composers into Saint-Michel. Admittedly, all the musicians promoted were members of the *Musique du Roi*.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, the vast majority of the architects given this form of preferment worked under the auspices of the Surintendance de Bâtiments du Roi. Individuals like Richard Mique, who had worked on Compiègne, Saint-Cloud and redesigned the interiors of the Tuileries, when the court moved there after the October Days 1789, were typical of those architects rewarded.¹⁰⁵ The profile of those who were honoured in the field of visual arts is impossible to define with precision. For instance it is unclear why an official portraitist such as Van Loo should have been received into the Saint-Michel, while Duplessis, who had virtually an identical career path, did not receive the black sash.¹⁰⁶ Defauconpret's study is exhaustive but remains incomplete due to the revolutionary destruction of many documents relating to this Order.¹⁰⁷

The confraternity of the Archangel Michael was among the few chivalric institutions, under direct royal patronage, where appointments continued to be made during the Revolution.¹⁰⁸ There were ten promotions in 1789 and three the following year. Unfortunately the last Chapter recorded was held on 8 May 1789. Beyond this date it has been difficult to confirm whether or not the Order continued to hold its ceremonies.¹⁰⁹ Those appointed in 1789 included two architects, three civil servants, three medical doctors, one engineer and one diplomat.¹¹⁰ The

et pendant la Révolution' (unpublished Thèse for a Doctorat en Médecine Diplôme d'État, 1965), 16–26, 35–6.

¹⁰² Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 67–9. ¹⁰³ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰⁴ Oddly, François Giroust the senior Surintendant de la Musique du Roi turned down the *Cordon Noir*: 'He felt that this decoration added nothing to real merit, and that it had been bestowed to so many individuals that it disgusted men of true merit'. See John Douglas Eby, 'François Giroust (1737–1799) and the late Grand Motet in French Church Music', 2 vols (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, King's College London, 1986), I, 111.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 73–4.

¹⁰⁶ Jean-Paul Chabaud, *Joseph-Siffred Duplessis, un provençal, peintre du Roi* (Mazan, 2003), 50–9.

¹⁰⁷ He fails to identify a mere 19 of the 464 Chevaliers de Saint Michel appointed between 1664 and 1790. Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 75.

¹⁰⁸ *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1791), 242–6.

¹⁰⁹ For a description of this last recorded session, see *Mercure de France*, 27 juin 1789, 183.

¹¹⁰ Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 194–6.

biographical sketches provided by Defauconpret are less detailed when it comes to those appointed the following year. Two of the last three appointees were, Rousseau de Joinville, a counsellor of the city of Paris, and Massot, a doctor in the Gardes du Corps.¹¹¹ After Napoleon's fall, the Restoration Bourbons tried to make contact with the surviving members of the Order.

On 16 August 1814 Rousseau de Joinville wrote to the Marquis d'Aguesseau, the Maître des Cérémonies, to claim his place in the Saint-Michel.

I beg His Majesty to confirm my nomination to the Order of Saint-Michel with a duplicate certificate. I was received into [the said Order] through the goodness of His August brother Louis XVI for the performance of secret services (which I cannot reveal), which it was my good fortune to carry out to great personal risk to my life. I wore this decoration right up to moment when the different orders of chivalry were suppressed.¹¹²

During the first full year of the Revolution the crown, according to this source, was using this medal not merely as a recompense for civic achievement, but also as political reward. It is a shame that Rousseau de Joinville did not dwell further on what these secret services actually entailed.¹¹³

It is a pity that more sources concerning the activities of the Order of the Archangel Michael during the Revolution have not survived. This institution represented a significant step forward in the achievement of a modern civilian Order of merit. It was unfortunate for the Bourbon dynasty, which had promoted its advancement, that it did so little to be associated with this innovative corporation. The fact that the monarch hardly ever took part in the ceremonies of the Order condemned it to a marginal role in the positive promotion of the public image of the French monarchy. The early 1790s would have provided potentially the perfect opportunity to use this Order to reward the political and cultural protagonists of the Revolution. Instead the dynasty's inertia, and strict adherence to tradition, allowed it to appoint a mere three individuals who were on the periphery of events. Yet again Louis XVI

¹¹¹ AN M 629, letter dated 11 May 1817. Unfortunately there are no clues regarding the identity of Jourdain Deleoge, the last person to be officially recorded. Defauconpret, *Les Chevaliers de Saint-Michel*, 196–7.

¹¹² MLH, Fonds Tiolier, Carton 1, demande d'être confirmé dans son admission à l'ordre de St. Michel [marked no.8].

¹¹³ There is also a letter from Dedelay d'Agier which clarifies that this former provincial mayor was appointed to the Saint-Michel in 1790. He also explains that he was elevated as reward for his efficient administration of large experimental farms during the last years of the *ancien régime*. MLH, Fonds Tiolier, O 1802, Correspondance relative au service de Caminade de Castres, lettre 4 Juin 1814.

neglected an obvious means of political leverage. The politicians of the 1790s were certainly susceptible to flattery and their inclusion in the oldest institution of the realm might have elicited greater sympathy towards other monarchical representations of power.

Ordre du Saint-Esprit

Among the many excellent paintings preserved within the Wallace Collection, in London, is a medium-sized portrait after the style of the artist Jean-Marc Nattier.¹¹⁴ It shows a Knight of the Saint-Esprit, presumed to be Louis-François-Armand Du Plessis, duc de Richelieu, in the process of dressing for one of the Order's ceremonies.¹¹⁵ The sitter in this canvas is making an indisputable statement of hierarchical superiority and of unashamed vestimentary opulence. The duke who commissioned this portrait was very proud of this magnificent chivalric costume. The way in which he chose to manifest this pride is more subtle perhaps than the striking initial impact of this portrait might suggest.

First it should be noted that the subject of this tableau has chosen to be represented in a state of partial dress. This permits the painter to exhibit the silver and black robes of the Order. At the same time, the large mantle, richly embroidered with gold tongues of fire, is prominently displayed on a divan which fills almost half the canvas.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, not merely is the protagonist sumptuously attired but so too is the *valet de chambre*, in the background, who busily gathers up his master's cloak. This is a grandee who can afford to maintain a liveried household worthy of his elevated position and wishes to advertise the fact.¹¹⁷ The plumed *bonnet à la Henri IV* and the red heels of his shoes also constitute important devices through which his status as a courtier is conveyed.¹¹⁸

Dress is probably the most direct means of illustrating naked power and hierarchical precedence.¹¹⁹ It is an easy and automatic means of allowing the audience, viewing a ceremony, to know who is on top and who at the bottom. Few European institutions, except perhaps for the Golden Fleece, were able to equal the Ordre du Saint-Esprit's powerful and compelling visual discourse of power. Its members were proud

¹¹⁴ www.wallacecollection.org/collections/gallery/artwork/959.

¹¹⁵ Aileen Ribeiro, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe 1715–1789* (London, 2002), 183–204.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. ¹¹⁷ Ibid. ¹¹⁸ Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Michelle Gilbert, 'The Person of the King, Ritual and Power in a Ghanaian State', in *Rituals of Royalty*, ed. Cannadine and Price, 316–26.



Figure 8 *Armand de Vignerot Du Plessis, Maréchal-Duc de Richelieu, wearing the ceremonial costume of the Ordre du Saint-Esprit (c. 1732–1742)*

of their association with this confraternity, and were flattered by its semiotic claims to social supremacy.

It is true that most did not copy the extravagant tableaux chosen by this particular sitter. However, all who were members of this Order bore its insignia flamboyantly in their own portraits. Statesmen, on opposite sides of court faction, such as Calonne, Vergennes and Breteuil can be observed painted in oils conspicuously wearing the embroidered plaque and azure sash of the Saint-Esprit.¹²⁰ Orders became part of their award holder's identity.¹²¹ To be expelled from the Order was the ultimate

¹²⁰ Though it should be noted that both were *ex officio* Officiers Commandeurs rather than Chevaliers of the Order.

¹²¹ The newly dubbed Knight held the right to use the title Chevalier des Ordres du Roi in all official and notarial documents. For an example from the king's stables. See AN O¹ 976, no.40.

disgrace. For someone like Calonne the request, made during his exile in London, that he return his decorations was a clear sign of his fall from power.¹²²

The Saint-Esprit was the most honourable distinction in existence in the kingdom of France; there was no greater reward.¹²³ From a socio-logical angle, its membership represented an uneasy mixture of birth, political trade-off and military merit. It was as difficult for the king to exclude the great court families from membership of this Chivalric Order as it was for him to keep them away from government and court offices. The Lorraine, Rohan, Noailles, Rochefoucauld, Talleyrand, Rochechouart and many other important aristocratic clans found their way into the Order almost as a matter of birthright. It is important not to have an overly rigid, or Namierite, reading of this economy of honour. Birth and honour were certainly inextricably intertwined but so too was birth and service to the state.¹²⁴ Regardless of their self-promotion and interest these individuals spent considerable portions of their career in the administration of public resources. For better or for worse, they floated, or drowned, at court according to the manner in which they balanced the pursuit of personal aims with the achievement of government policies.

During the entire reign, Louis XVI appointed seventy-six court nobles to the Saint-Esprit.¹²⁵ This number included four Princes of the Blood and two foreign sovereigns, whose admission was effectively automatic. It is apparent, when it comes to analysing the rest of the group, that almost a third of entrants were either of Royal, or at the very least ducal, blood. From 1776 to 1789 the king protected this elitism by nominating exactly twenty dukes and nine archbishops. Nevertheless, there were some noticeable differences within this select group. Some, like the Saulx-Tavannes, had very recently seen their lands and titles erected into a *Duché-Pairie* in 1787.¹²⁶ Others, like the Crussols, came from the oldest ducal lineage in the *ancien régime* and the chief of the

¹²² Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 123.

¹²³ Anon., *Les Statuts de l'Ordre du St. Esprit*, Article 83, 56.

¹²⁴ Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (London, 2005), chapter 5.

¹²⁵ These statistics have been compiled by referring to the *Almanach Royal*, 1776–1789, and comte de Colleville and François Saint-Christo, eds, *Les Ordres du Roi Répertoire Général Contenant les Nomes et Qualités de Tous les Chevaliers des Ordres Royaux Militaires et Chevaleresques ayant existé en France de 1099 à 1830 (d'après les brevet originaux des Archives Nationales) avec une Histoire des Ordres du Saint-Esprit, de Saint Michel, de Saint-Louis, etc.* New edn. (Paris, 2001).

¹²⁶ Robert Forster, *The House of Saulx-Tavannes, Versailles and Burgundy 1700–1830* (London, 1971), 214–21.

clan was as duc d'Uzès the premier peer of France.¹²⁷ Similarly the other fifty knights varied considerably in background.

Retired diplomats were represented by individuals such as Breteuil, Montmorin and the Bailli de Suffren. Equally, the queen's party had been rewarded with a noticeable number of favourites of the calibre of Polignac, Choiseul, Guines and Loménie de Brienne. The military elite were awarded a large portion of available vacancies. Naturally, heroes of the American War such as Rochambeau and d'Estaing were popular choices for admission. Yet one must not forget that the Saint-Esprit counted all of the eleven living Marshals of France amongst its membership.¹²⁸

The pattern of promotions was erratic to say the least. The years 1774, 1775, 1779 and 1783 were devoid of appointments. There were large variations in the rates of those received in other years. An uneventful time, such as 1781, witnessed only the elevation of Don Ercole III Duke of Modena.¹²⁹ While 1784, the year after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, heralded the appointment of twenty-six Chevaliers.¹³⁰ The Ordre du Saint-Esprit did not constitute a regular and predictable honours system. Its membership, though broadly socially homogeneous, did not evolve through a linear progression of promotions. Its evolution, like any government body, was contingent on political circumstances and the policies pursued by its Sovereign Grand Master. During the Revolution there were no further receptions. It seems to have been difficult for Louis XVI to reward credibly those subjects who had so recently shattered his power. The Chevaliers who assembled seven times between October 1789 and February 1791 were identical (except for the missing émigrés) to those who had met regularly throughout the entire reign.

The king took an active role in the ceremonies and organisation of the premier Order of the Bourbon dynasty. He attended all rituals, and the decision to appoint new Knights lay entirely in his hands. The day after his coronation at Rheims, in a spectacularly pompous display of

¹²⁷ Christophe Levantal, *Ducs et Pairs et Duchés-Pairies Laïques à l'Époque Moderne (1519–1790): Dictionnaire Prosographique, Généalogique, Chronologique, Topographique et Heuristique* (Paris, 1996), 338 and 948–50.

¹²⁸ Admittedly eight had been promoted during the previous reign. *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1789); and Christophe Brun, Eric Jauffret, Cosette Millet-Bex and Jean Reveille, eds, *Dictionnaire des Maréchaux de France du Moyen âge à nos jours* (Paris, 1988), 12.

¹²⁹ ASMo, Francia, Busta 225, letters dated from January to February deal mainly with the duke's admission into the Saint-Esprit.

¹³⁰ Colleville and Saint-Christo, *Les Ordres du Roi*, 46–7; and MLH, Fonds Tiolier, O I 1803, Saint-Esprit procès verbaux, fols 172–90.

monarchical power, he swore his oath and was received as Sovereign and Grand Master of the Saint-Esprit.¹³¹ The most old-fashioned of the Chivalric Orders was typically also the one most favoured by Louis XVI. The Order was to enter into conflict with the Revolution. It spoke the undiluted language of the *ancien régime*, whereby privilege was inherent in the order of things. Surprisingly the Revolution only abolished this noble corporation in late July 1791.¹³²

There are not many accounts relating the *cérémonies des cordon bleus* during the early 1790s. The *Gazette de France* records with meticulous precision the order of the procession and the fact that, throughout the entire period, there were no promotions. However one is never told how the spectators of Paris reacted to the procession of knights going to and from the Tuileries. The only suspicious circumstance was the return from emigration, in April 1790, of the Prince de Conti, who had left France at the same time as his cousin, Condé.¹³³ The official reappearance at court of this Prince, during a ceremony of the Saint-Esprit, did arouse some negative press coverage.¹³⁴ However, as the royal declaration of 4 February had marked the zenith of the constitutional monarchy's popularity, these murmurings quickly subsided.

During this time, the Russian historian Nikolaj Karamzin visited Paris where he witnessed one of the ceremonies:

[While in Paris] I also visited the interior of the [Tuileries] palace. On Pentecost [23 May 1790] I proceeded to the [royal] chapel following closely behind the knights of the greatest French Order of Chivalry [the Saint-Esprit]. Just behind these [knights] the queen and her ladies-in-waiting processed. The most senior knights were clad in old-fashioned chivalric costumes ... At the same time some curious spectators forced their way into the private apartments, and I followed them from room to room, all the way to the [royal] bedchamber. 'Where are you going Gentlemen? And what are you up to?' enquired the court lackeys. 'We are having a look around,' replied my companions and surged forward ... Despite all this, my eyes were not merely examining the objects before us, but also the people present. There were many ministers and ex-ministers, courtiers and former servants of the king, who shrugged their shoulders as they observed the indecent conduct, the noisy comings and goings of these badly dressed youths, who walked about with great awkwardness. I myself walked behind them with a deep sense of malaise. And asked myself is this the court of France which was once so celebrated for its pomp and splendour?¹³⁵

¹³¹ Ibid., Carton 12, Louis XVI, Réception du Roi de chef et Souverain, Grand Maître des Ordres de St. Michel et du Saint-Esprit.

¹³² AP XXIX, 43.

¹³³ Diesbach, *Histoire de l'émigration 1789–1814*, 65.

¹³⁴ *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, no.18, 291–2.

¹³⁵ Nikolaj Mihajlovič Karamzin, *Voyage en France, 1789–1790* (Paris, 1885), 146–7.

This traveller asks an interesting rhetorical question and it is revealing that, during these important court occasions, a state of disorder descended on the Tuileries. This description seems to suggest that curiosity was the force that drove these rowdy spectators. When it transformed into violent hostility it became difficult for Louis XVI to continue to observe these rituals. Considering that the law of 19 June 1790 abolished all titles, including that of Chevalier, the continued survival of the Saint-Esprit was decidedly anachronistic.

This did not deter a considerable group from seeking admission. A list, almost certainly dating from 1790, of seventeen candidates for the Collier des Ordres du Roi was proposed to Louis XVI.¹³⁶ None were successful in their goal but it is enlightening to note that no change had taken place in the social composition of aspirant knights. Among this group were four dukes and another five nobles who were members of the cadet branches of ducal houses. Naturally one cannot draw broad conclusions from a single list, yet also worthy of attention is a letter written by Claude-Charles de Marillac, vicomte de Damas and Governor of Martinique, to the king in 1790. In his letter he exposed the difficulties of administering this colony. He subtly hinted at the fact that Vice-Admiral d'Estaing had received the decoration while he was governor of the island in 1774 and suggested that the policy of rewarding colonial administrators could be resumed. In the margin of this letter there is an annotation in Louis XVI's hand which reads:

I have replied that I shall never forget the remarkable zeal which he displayed whilst in my service but that I cannot make any promises in advance to bestow the *cordon bleu* and that I believe that in the present [circumstances] this reward would prove more damaging to him than beneficial.¹³⁷

This is one of the rare occasions during the Revolution when the king clearly expresses his thoughts regarding the Ordre du Saint-Esprit. It is not that this candidate was unworthy, nor that the future of the institution was uncertain, but rather that the present political circumstances hindered the Order from functioning as normal.

The royal decision, that only a small delegation from the National Assembly was to be permitted to attend the Saint-Esprit's rituals of knighthood, caused some discontent.¹³⁸ The continuing situation was characterised by a standoff. Neither side was sure what action to take. The monarchy persisted in its traditions. At the same time, the Assembly commissioned the deputy Camus, a former canon lawyer, to draw up

¹³⁶ AN C 189, no.22. ¹³⁷ AN C 184, no.341.

¹³⁸ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 4 gennaio 1790.

a report on the Orders of Chivalry. On 12 June 1791 events took an unexpected turn. On this day, the court circular announced that the ceremony of the *Cordons Bleus* had been cancelled. Prudhomme, the radical journalist, could not resist ridiculing what he considered to be the absurd nature of the Saint-Esprit:

The Holy Spirit, last Sunday the day of Pentecost, did not descend in tongues of fire upon the plumed bonnets of *messieurs* the grand crosses. There were no promotions, processions, chapters or chapel services. Only the Cent-Suisses, wore their baggy britches and their strawberry-shaped hats in the style of Henri IV, but the one hundred knights did not get into their uniforms for this ceremony. The court is in mourning; and after all the good city of Paris is a profane place which cannot decently serve as the theatre for this drama ... This year, M. Blin de Saintmaure, historiographer, shall note in the annals of the Order: that on this day of Pentecost 1791 the imprisoned court abandoned its finery.¹³⁹

He confidently declared that, under the new constitution, the old court customs had come to a timely end. After all, elaborate pomp and spectacle was the hallmark of despotism.

We good patriots must remain insensible before such privations ... Isn't it remarkable how, early in the morning, a hundred gentlemen could march behind a king dressed-up like a *dog's dinner* without blushing. Admittedly there is no law against farces and masquerades; but suffice it to say, that a free people demand that their leader be dressed more appropriately.¹⁴⁰

Prudhomme ended his commentary by expressing the hope that Louis's decision to dispense with this ceremony would mark the true beginning of his reign as 'restorer of French liberties'. The constitution demanded a simple, unadorned and virtuous king.

Louis XVI more inspired than in previous years, has probably come to realise that to invite even one of these *pukka-grandeess* was unconstitutional. Especially before a nation which no longer recognises the [concept of] nobility, and he [Louis XVI] must have felt that the time had finally come to renounce this criminal childishness worthy of the court of Henry III, but certainly inappropriate for a monarch who has received the titles of first citizen of the Empire, restorer of liberty and father of the French constitution?¹⁴¹

In this concluding remark, the tension between traditional royal representations and the Revolution is exposed with clarity. The king of a regenerated France was expected not to behave in the same fashion as his 'tyrannical predecessors'. The radical left of the Assembly and the

¹³⁹ *Révolutions de Paris*, 11 au 18 juin 1791, no.101, 491.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 492. ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

press did not wish to achieve a synthesis between old and new. The past was to be jettisoned.

Much to the chagrin of Revolutionary journalists, the cancelled ceremony of the Saint-Esprit was due more to the planning of the flight to Varennes than with the monarchy's desire to modernise. Louis XVI's failed escape turned public opinion against him. It proved to the minds of many that, despite the king's public declarations, he did not accept the new Constitution. Worse, he considered that many of the concessions made after June 1789 had been extracted from him under duress and were consequently invalid. On 31 July 1791 Camus's report was completed. It was no surprise that it advised an all out abolition of all institutions of chivalry.¹⁴² Under the auspices of the Le Chapelier Law (which abolished guilds and corporations) and the very principle of equality, Camus attacked the dynastic Orders on three fronts. First, they constituted independent corporations within the state, which served to fragment the unified allegiance of citizens to the Nation. Most serious of all were the admission criteria for these institutions, which were clearly anti-egalitarian. To crown his argument, Camus referred to Orders like the Knights of St John, which required religious vows from some of its members. He argued that such vows had already been banned by the law dissolving the regular and contemplative monastic orders.¹⁴³

The rest of the debate was characterised by an air of consensus towards the findings of the report. Those who did object, such as Malouet, did so by referring to the fact that the confiscation of the possessions of such orders would offend Malta.¹⁴⁴ This, in turn, would damage France's trading interests in the Mediterranean and the Levant. The fact that under the *ancien régime*, theoretically, only the king as Grand Master had the power to dissolve Orders of Chivalry, unsurprisingly was never discussed.

The final decree which was passed in favour of suppression was divided into four parts. The first article abolished all Orders of Chivalry based on distinctions of birth and forbade all citizens from wearing their exterior marks. The second clause preserved the Order of Saint-Louis on a temporary basis, awaiting the foundation of a new national order of merit. The third part filled a loophole, which had existed in the law of 19 June 1790 abolishing the nobility. Former Chevaliers and nobles were forbidden from placing the prefix *ci-devant* before their old aristocratic title. Until now this had been a ploy used by conservative noblemen to continue asserting their status. The final article of this law

¹⁴² AP XXIX, 35–7. ¹⁴³ Ibid., 37. ¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 38–9.

stated that all those who persisted in their membership of foreign orders of knighthood would automatically lose their French citizenship.¹⁴⁵ The National Assembly was leaving nothing to chance. Only the issue of what was to replace the Orders was left open. Yet again, no concrete decision was taken over what form the new decorations of merit should take. What was certain was that the king, and his European brother-monarchs, were not endowed with the god-given right to elevate any single French citizen above the rest.

In September, on his first public appearance after the flight to Varennes, Louis XVI only wore the Order of Saint-Louis.¹⁴⁶ The Bailli de Virieu lamented the passing of an honourable institution¹⁴⁷ while Louis Prudhomme was incensed at the continued survival of the Saint-Louis.¹⁴⁸ Five days after sanctioning the Constitution, Louis XVI wrote to the kings of Spain and Naples informing them that he had stopped wearing the Saint-Esprit and also, which was diplomatically more sensitive, the Golden Fleece. He concluded his emotional letter by assuring Charles IV that: 'I shall always consider myself attached in my heart and soul to the Knights of this Order'.¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately it has been impossible to find the Spanish king's reply. However the answer sent two months later by the king of Naples, from the Palace of Portici, was preserved.¹⁵⁰ Ferdinand IV expressed initial surprise and pain on learning of his cousin's actions. There was a small rebuke for Louis XVI who was criticised for giving a bad example to the rest of Europe. The letter concluded with an expression of sympathy for the difficult times which the French monarchy was facing. The king of Naples' shocked reaction to the end of the Saint-Esprit represented the last significant event in the history of this Order in the 1790s.

The Revolution constituted a delay in the advancement of the French modern honours system. For eleven years no marks of distinction were bestowed on the equal citizens of the Republic. It was only under the Directory that those who excelled in combat received the *Armes de Récompense Nationale*.¹⁵¹ These were usually swords engraved with a brief expression of national gratitude followed by the recipient's name. However for the great majority 'liberty' was to be its own reward. As

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁶ The law suppressing the Orders of Chivalry had made a specific exception of both the king and dauphin. Nevertheless Louis XVI who had worn the Order for over thirty-seven years decided in the interest of conciliation to shed the Saint-Esprit.

¹⁴⁷ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 18 settembre 1791.

¹⁴⁸ *Révolutions de Paris*, 10 au 15 octobre 1791, no.118, 71–3.

¹⁴⁹ AN C 220 no.38. ¹⁵⁰ AN C 221 no.163.

¹⁵¹ Chefdebien, Wodey and Flavigny, *Musée National de la Légion d'honneur et des ordres de Chevalerie*, 48–9.

the chorus of battle-hardened village elders clumsily sing in Gossec's opera/deist oratorio 'le triomphe de la république':

Heirs to our courage,
Our Sons have before them a greater destiny,
They have over us one advantage:
[Alas] We were not born Republicans.¹⁵²

The free accordingly did not require external inducements to fight, as their reward was the justice of their cause.¹⁵³ Indeed the absence of medals does not seem to have deterred the Revolutionary armies from pouring over Europe's frontiers. On their way to Egypt in 1797 they stopped at Malta, where they put an end to the Knights of St John's three centuries of rule over the Island. In this way they pursued the Constituent Assembly's mission to stamp out all military and religious orders of Knighthood. The exile of the last reigning Grand Master, Ferdinand von Hompesch zu Bolheim, left the Order in a state of disarray for the next eighty years.¹⁵⁴

On the other side of the political divide, no international recognition was given to the abolition of the Dynastic Orders. Louis XVIII, during the entire period of his exile, continued bestowing the insignia of Saint-Louis, and later the Saint-Esprit, on those who fought in the armies of the coalition, and to his loyal retinue of émigrés.¹⁵⁵ For such a traditionalist, the idea that the *fons honorum* could be transferred from monarchy to nation was unthinkable. Even more interesting was the French Maltese Knights' move to offer to Paul I of Russia the Grand Mastery of the Hospital of Jerusalem. They hoped that this powerful monarch, with a Black Sea fleet, could restore the rule of the island of Malta to the Knights of St John.¹⁵⁶

The central problem for the Revolutionaries was that their Constitutions did not preclude the Nation from bestowing rewards. The 'rights of man' clearly postulated that social distinction could be founded on talent and virtue. It was not merely preferable that exceptional individuals be given public recognition; it was virtually an ethical

¹⁵² François-Joseph Gossec, *Le Triomphe de la République ou Le Camp de Grand Pré*, Chaconne Digital CHAN 0727. Libretto 63.

¹⁵³ Ambrogio A. Caiani, 'The Levée en Masse', www.ieg-ego.eu/caiania-2010-en.

¹⁵⁴ Blondy, *L'Ordre de Malte au XVIIIe Siècle*, 367–80.

¹⁵⁵ Colleville and Saint-Christo, *Les Ordres du Roi*, 49–50, 148–9, and 437–51.

¹⁵⁶ The Abbé Georgel, *Voyage a Saint Pétersbourg en 1799–1800 fait avec l'ambassade des Chevaliers de l'Ordre de Saint Jean de Jérusalem, allant offrir à l'Empereur Paul premier la grande maîtrise de l'Ordre pour servir à l'histoire des événements de la fin du 18^{ième} siècle par feu M. l'Abbé Georgel, Jésuite, ancien secrétaire d'ambassade et chargé d'affaire de France à Vienne* (Paris, 1818).

duty. Unfortunately for the Revolution, the eighteenth-century French monarchy had experimented with virtually every imaginable type of organisation aimed at rewarding individual merit. There were single-class dynastic orders, multi-class military orders and civilian orders of merit. It was difficult for the politicians of the Convention, who were trying to achieve a complete break with the past, not to create a reward which was reminiscent of an *ancien régime* predecessor.

By the time of Napoleon's decision in 1802, to found the Legion of Honour, analogies with the *ancien régime* had become less politically sensitive.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Napoleon, by calling this award for military and civilian merit a Legion rather than an Order, had already avoided the most controversial part. Gradually, as the consulate became an Empire, the Legion adopted many features which made it more reminiscent of its chivalric predecessors. It was only in 1816 that the wheel came full circle. The restored Bourbons had no difficulty in incorporating the Légion d'Honneur into their dynastic institutions. They merely replaced the effigy of the Empereur with that of Henri IV.

¹⁵⁷ Petiteau, *Élites et mobilités*, 26–34.

7 Louis XVI's chapel during the French Revolution

Sacred monarchy

In the past two decades, the role played by religious controversies during the period immediately preceding the French Revolution has been the subject of much scholarly analysis.¹ A great deal of attention has been lavished on the *Parlementaire* and Jansenist crises of the second half of Louis XV's reign.² They are interpreted as either embryonic, or fully fledged, offensives aimed at undermining the juridical and religious foundations of the Bourbon monarchy. Michael Walzer has suggested that the trial and execution of Louis XVI was the culmination of an even longer process in the evolution toward modern political society.³ In spite of having examined in detail the legal and ideological underpinnings of the late Bourbon monarchy, few of these studies have analysed in depth the ritual and liturgical elements of monarchical rule.⁴

This chapter intends to correct this imbalance by examining the centre of the cult of 'sacral monarchy'; namely the king's chapel. In terms of historical research, the 'religion of Versailles' is a well-travelled road. John McManners' work did much to re-evaluate the subject's importance. However, his treatment of the royal chapel did not deal with the

¹ An earlier version of this chapter first appeared as 'Louis XVI's Chapel and the French Revolution (1789–1792)', *French History* 22:4, 425–45. See the various contributors in Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture: The Political Culture of the Old Regime*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1987).

² Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution*, chapters 3 and 4; Jeffrey W. Merrick, *The Desacralisation of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1990), chapter 5; Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, 111–36; and Swann, *Politics and the Parlement of Paris*, 34–44.

³ Michael Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI* (Cambridge, 1974), 8–34.

⁴ Other historians examining royal ritual and ceremonial rarely venture into the Revolutionary period. For example, Ralph Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva, 1960); Hanley, *The Lit de Justice of the Kings of France*; and F. Leferme-Falguières, *Les Courtisans: Une société de spectacle sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2007).

impact of the Revolution.⁵ While it is true that the monarchy takes centre-stage in his account, when he is describing the political struggle over the Civil Constitution of the clergy, the part played by the ecclesiastical household is only briefly sketched out.⁶ The intention here is to reassert the importance of the religious legacy inherited by Louis XVI and those clergymen who administered his devotions. It will be argued that the religious, symbolic and ceremonial configuration of the court of the last *ancien régime* Bourbon monarch limited the dynasty's options when it came to political negotiations. These constraints made the quest for a mutually acceptable compromise with the anti-clerical National Assembly extremely difficult, if not impossible.

'Sacral Kingship' has been defined loosely, and different experts in the field have applied it to the symbolism, politics and governance of *ancien régime*. However, it seems important to emphasise that the first, and most fundamental, ingredient of 'sacrality' was historical in nature. A sense of grandeur and legitimacy was established through a close association of the Bourbon's dynastic history and divine providence. The main element in this narrative was the baptism of Clovis, King of the Franks, by St Remigius of Rheims in 496. Legend had it that, before the baptism of this pagan prince, a dove descended from heaven and presented St Remigius with a *sainte ampoule* which contained a magical chrism that bestowed thaumaturgical powers on the kings of France.⁷

Secondly, the king's personal religious behaviour was set forth as exemplary. It was insufficient for the sovereign merely to assert his title of *Rex Christianissimus et fils aîné de l'église* (Most Christian King and eldest son of the Church); he needed to ostentatiously assert this claim. In order to do this the religious practices of the court had to be both rigorous and distinctive.⁸ Louis XVI was the lay-canon of several churches. In consequence, he filled an intermediate position between congregation and priesthood during the masses he attended in person.⁹ The religious claims pursued by the King of France endowed him with great authority over the high clergy of his

⁵ For 'The Religion of Versailles', see McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century*, I, 29–57.

⁶ John McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church* (London, 1969), 43–59.

⁷ Bloch, *The Royal Touch*, 77–8 and 223–8.

⁸ Paul Kleber Monod, *The Power of Kings Monarchy and Religion in Europe 1589–1715* (London, 1999), 199–200.

⁹ 'On the reasons why the king of France dresses in violet for certain periods of mourning at court. He does so because, through the prerogatives of his crown, he is the first and hereditary canon of the churches of St. Hilaire, in Poitiers, St. Julien in Mans, St. Martin in Tours, d'Angers in Zion, and of Châlons'. AN KK, 1453, fol.1.

realm, and sought to assert his pre-eminence over the other crowned heads of Europe.¹⁰

The fact that 'the public', in the second half of the eighteenth century, was unprepared to take these assumptions of 'sacrality' at face value seems to be well established.¹¹ Nevertheless it is equally clear that Louis XVI continued to pursue these religious claims which constituted an important pillar on which the legitimacy of the Bourbon dynasty was founded.¹² The religious dimension strengthened the juridical authority of the monarch and allowed him to press forth his assertion of undivided sovereignty.¹³ The deliberate confusion of the representation of power with actual physical authority was an important feature of the crown's public image.¹⁴ After all, a monarch who was a divinely appointed deputy was certainly endowed with more legitimacy than one who sat on the throne through mere heredity, or worse, brute force.

When it came to writing a constitution, the politicians of the National Assembly sought to reconcile the monarchy with the new values of the regenerated French state.¹⁵ The redefinition of the separation of powers divested the king of his law-making capacity. This development also necessitated that Louis XVI relinquish the symbolic idea of a heavenly pact. The deputies could not rest easily as long as their reforms could potentially be interpreted as an usurpation of the divinely appointed order of things. Swept away by the excitement of their transformative vision, they failed to realise that 'sacrality' was an important component of the Bourbon dynasty's religious beliefs and convictions.

¹⁰ For the alternative of 'Pietas Austriaca', see Timothy Blanning, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648–1815* (London, 2007), 445–8; and Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio, 'The Ceremonial of Majesty and Aristocratic Protest: The Royal Chapel at the Court of Charles II', in *The Royal Chapel in the Time of the Habsburgs: Music and Ceremony in the Early Modern European Court*, ed. Juan José Carreras, Bernardo García-García and Tess Knighton (Woodbridge, 2005), 246–99.

¹¹ Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, 92–135; Arlette Farge, *Subversive Words: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France* (London, 1994), 151–95; Merrick, *The Desacralisation of the French Monarchy*, 27–48; cf. Joseph Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead in Revolutionary France: Revolution and Remembrance, 1789–1799* (Cambridge, 2007), 6–8; and cited previously in Alain Boureau, *Le Simple Corps du Roi: L'Impossible sacralité des souverains français XVe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1988), 41 and 62–3.

¹² Girault de Coursac, *L'Éducation d'un roi*, 193–4 and 215–43.

¹³ Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty*, ed. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge, 1992), 44; and cf. Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 35.

¹⁴ Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, 129.

¹⁵ Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary*, 65–74 and 263–71; Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 281–5; and Paolo Colombo, 'Costituzione, Sovranità e Monarchia. L'immagine dell'Antico Regime nella Riflessione Politica dell'età Rivoluzionaria', in *L'Europa delle Corti alla fine dell'Antico Regime*, eds. Cesare Mozzarelli and Gianni Venturi (Rome, 1991), 31–45.

Several important Catholic authors explained the relationship between monarchy and religion as quasi-symbiotic in nature. Bossuet's catechism of 1687, the standard instrument for the diffusion of Catholic doctrine in the over 40,000 parishes of France for almost two centuries, referred to the monarchy in two specific instances.¹⁶ The first reference was to be found in the lesson elucidating the fourth commandment of the 'Decalogue': honour thy father and mother. The catechist was urged to explain that this rule did not merely apply to one's parents. Implicit in this commandment was the God-given allegiance which tied a subject to his prince.¹⁷ To reinforce this point of view, parishioners were ordered to include in their evening prayers an appeal beseeching God to preserve not only the king but also every individual member of the royal family within the first degree.¹⁸

The fundamentalist interpretation of this royal cult can be observed in the Saillant collection of theological manuscripts. A treatise entitled *On the Eucharist*, composed in the form of a catechism and written most likely during the 1780s, expressed continuing intellectual proximity between politics and theology. Its goal was to clarify the canon from the Council of Trent, which declared that 'Christ is truly, really and substantially contained' in the Eucharist.¹⁹ The catechism in question, in order to explain this complicated doctrine divided Christ's presence in the Eucharist into three separate forms of divine immanence. It stated that: 'the presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is manifest in three different ways: presence of figure, presence of faith and presence of virtue'.²⁰ The author then set out to explain each of the three ways in which Christ is made present during communion.²¹ It is interesting

¹⁶ Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Catéchisme du Diocèse de Meaux par le commandement de Monsr. L'illustrissime and révérendissime Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Evêque de Meaux Conseiller du Roi en ses conseils ci-devant précepteur de Monseigneur le Dauphin premier aumônier de Madame la Dauphine* (Paris, 1687), 23 and 236. Napoleon was a great admirer of the 'Bossuet catechism' and when he became Emperor he had a revised edition printed which made specific reference to how his dynasty was but another manifestation of divine providence in France's history. See Jean François de Mandolx, *Catéchisme à l'usage de toutes les églises de l'Empire Français* (Amiens, 1807), viii–xi and 55–7.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ 'Prions pour le roi, pour Monseigneur le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine, Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne, and pour toute la famille Royale. Seigneur, sauvez le Roi bénissez sa famille. Conservez la maison de Saint Louis votre serviteur, and faites que ses enfants soient imitateurs de sa foi'. In Bossuet, *Catéchisme de Meaux*, 236.

¹⁹ H. J. Schroeder, ed., *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford, 1978), 73; and *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City, 1993), Section 2, A3. V. 1374.

²⁰ BA, Ms. 5826, fol.4.

²¹ See 'The Reformation as a Revolution in Ritual Theory', in Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 163–97.

that this theologian explains two of the three ways in which Christ is manifest in the Eucharist by analogy to the different mediums through which the king made his own physical presence felt throughout the realm. The catechist begins by explaining that Christ is present figuratively in the Eucharist in the same way as the king of France is present figuratively in a room where his portrait hangs.²² He elucidates what is intended by 'presence of virtue' by likening it to an individual who is made present through his authority or office. For the author, Christ is present in the Eucharist in the same way as the king is present in public buildings like prisons or courts of law.²³ From this treatise emerged an understanding that the bodies of Christ and the king shared certain mystical qualities which, in the monarch's case, permitted him to exercise a divinely sanctioned temporal authority.²⁴

The best example of where this mystical authority was made visible was the king's chapel. In the last ten years, specialists in aulic history and musicology have been re-evaluating the importance of this 'sacred space'.²⁵ John Adamson goes so far as to see not only the chapel, but the entire early modern court as a 'theatre of piety'.²⁶ It is true that other European examples, such as the Habsburg courts and their monastery-palaces, *El Escorial*, the *Alcázar* and *Klosterneuberg*, took regal piety to unprecedented heights.²⁷ The chapel at Versailles, completed in 1710 and located in a side wing of the palace complex made a poor comparison.²⁸ The Imperial and Spanish courts were recognised by the papacy as constituting independent dioceses in their own right; a prerogative the French monarch never managed to equal.²⁹ The Grand-Aumônier de France exercised his office within the ecclesiastic jurisdiction, not only of the Archbishop of Paris but, what was more humiliating, under that of the Curé de Notre-Dame de Versailles as well.³⁰ Yet by 1780s

²² *Présence de figure*. BA, Ms. 5826, fols 5–6. ²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 271–87.

²⁵ Schaich, ed., *Monarchy and Religion*; Carreras, García García and Knighton, eds, *The Royal Chapel in the Time of the Habsburgs*; Jean Mongrédien and Yves Ferraton, eds, *Le Grand Motet Français (1663–1792): Actes du colloque international de musicologie* (Paris, 1984).

²⁶ Adamson, ed., *The Princely Courts of Europe*, 41.

²⁷ John H. Elliott, 'Philip IV of Spain: Prisoner of Ceremony', in *The Courts of Europe*, ed. Dickens, 169–91; and Derek Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder: European Catholic Monasteries in the Age of Revolution, 1650–1815* (Cambridge 2003), 54.

²⁸ Martha Mel Stumberg Edmunds, *Imaging Divine Kingship in Louis XIV's Chapel at Versailles* (London, 2002); and Newton, *La Petite Cour*, 43–4.

²⁹ Nicole Reinhardt, 'The King's Confessor: Changing Images', in *Monarchy and Religion*, ed. Schaich, 173, n.88.

³⁰ AN K 1712, no.29.

indications were that the other European Courts seemed to be moving away from a religious focus.³¹

The opposite was the case in France where the chapel was still a vital component of court life. It remained the site where the monarch publicly asserted the dynasty's Catholic orthodoxy. It also provided the most important source of church patronage in the realm. The *aumônerie* controlled several commendatory abbeys, religious houses, charitable foundations, hospitals and a large number of scholarships to Parisian *collèges*.³² Its fate during the Revolution is instructive for two reasons. Its survival right up to 10 August 1792 provides an enlightening case study of one of the few traditional royal institutions which existed during the entire constitutional monarchy. Similarly the friction, suspicion and antagonism which surrounded the chapel during the Revolutionary era highlighted how old-fashioned royal Catholic ceremonial was extraneous to the aspirations of the newly constituted French Nation. The case of the king's chapel allows a better understanding of both the nature of the monarchy headed by Louis XVI and the challenge posed by the Revolution.

The royal chapel and its historians

The historiography of the Chapelle Royale has often been neglected. From the mid nineteenth century right up to late twentieth century little academic work was produced on the chapel as an institution. For the generations of historians interested in theories of 'state-building', and for their successors, preoccupied by the 'social and economic structures' of history, Louis XVI's chapel provided little inspiration.³³ Such scholars had considered the eighteenth century as a period when court and government became separate entities, and also as a time of increasing secularisation.³⁴ The growth of the bureaucratic state seemed to have consigned the royal chapel to oblivion.

Such had not been the case during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it had been a relatively popular subject of historical

³¹ Beales, *Joseph II*, I, 156–9. ³² Tr. Drts. I, 435–40.

³³ Elias mentions the chapel only when describing the architectural layout of Versailles. See Elias, *La Société de Cour*, 67; Mousnier's two-volume survey of the institutions of absolute monarchy does not mention the Royal Chapel in the section examining the Church. Roland Mousnier, *Les Institutions de France sous la Monarchie Absolue, 1598–1789*, 2 vols (Paris, 1974), I, 281–316.

³⁴ Schaich, ed., *Monarchy and Religion*, 4.

research.³⁵ The last narrative account, written before the Revolution, was composed by the abbé Oroux de Fontaine-le-Comte in 1776. He was a royal chaplain, ideally situated to write his history.³⁶ He not only had privileged access to the *registres de la Grande Aumônerie*, but his finished work was granted the honour of being published by the imprimerie royale. In essence, it was an official history printed with both the king's patronage and blessing. The authors main purpose was not to offer a general history of France, from the standpoint of the king's ecclesiastic household, but rather 'to put before his readers' eyes a series of astounding acts of piety, singular virtues, edifying deaths, majestic ceremonies and etc'.³⁷ The work was a catalogue of virtues and acts of piety intended to lead readers to one irrefutable conclusion. The abbé Oroux was certain that France's prosperity was inextricably bound with the exercise of the 'one true faith'. History provided an unbroken chain of evidence that the monarchy was the divinely appointed guardian of a compact which had brought countless blessings. In an age when both religion and monarchy were under siege, the abbé Oroux felt the *philosophes* needed intellectual chastisement and the populace a reminder of higher truths.³⁸

Sixty years later, when Castil-Blaise published another history of the Chapelle musique, the agenda had mutated considerably. Two years after the July Revolution, this musicologist saw the purpose of the royal chapel not in furnishing an apology of 'Sacral monarchy', but rather in the provision of patronage for church music. His text was an urgent appeal for funding: 'the dissolution of the chapel has injured the empire of harmony'.³⁹

It was not until the late 1980s, that the chapel as an institution and liturgical venue, returned to the fore.⁴⁰ In spite of some initial hesitation,

³⁵ Guillaume Du Peyrat, *Histoire ecclésiastique de la cour, ou antiquités and recherches de la chapelle and oratoire des Rois de France, depuis Clovis Ier jusqu'à notre temps* (Paris, 1645); and Louis Archon, *Histoire Ecclésiastique de la Chapelle des Rois de France, sous les trois races de nos Rois*, 2 vols (Paris, 1704–1711).

³⁶ Abbé Étienne Oroux, *Histoire Ecclésiastique de la Cour de France, où l'on trouve tout ce qui concerne l'histoire de la chapelle and des principaux officiers Ecclésiastiques de Nos Rois*, 2 vols (Paris, 1776–1777).

³⁷ Ibid., I, x.

³⁸ Ibid., I, ix.

³⁹ Castil-Blaise, *Chapelle-Musique des rois de France* (Paris, 1832), 256–8.

⁴⁰ John McManners, 'The Religious Observances of Versailles under Louis XV', in *Enlightenment Essays in Honour of Robert Shackleton*, ed. G. Barber and C. Courtney (Oxford, 1988), 175–88; it was later revised expanded into a chapter of a two-volume history of the French Church in the eighteenth century. See 'The Religion of Versailles' in *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century*, I, 29–57. For the most recent work on the Chapel at Versailles, see Maral, *La Chapelle Royale sous Louis XIV*, 53–93, and for a very useful glossary see 435–57.

especially in the opening sentence: 'this essay deals with a superficial theme', John McManners proceeded to prove the importance of Louis XV's ecclesiastical household. He did so firstly by focusing on the size – over 400 clerics and musicians – and finally by elucidating the liturgical obligations imposed on the king and the courtly elite. The chapel was a place where disputes regarding hierarchy were resolved and where the sovereign proved his Christian credentials.⁴¹ In spite of this renewed interest, the Chapel continues to remain a little-known and -studied institution.⁴²

The civil list accounts of the constitutional household do record conspicuous royal expenditure on the religious dimension of court life. However there is no unified calculation for the administrative cost of running the Aumônerie. Chaplaincy expenses appear under a myriad of headings, and in the inventories of a host of different departments of the royal household, from 'aumônes, domains, dépenses imprévues & etc' to 'Menus Plaisirs'.⁴³ To complicate matters further there was a separate accounting department named the Trésorerie Général des Offrandes et Aumônes, headed by Jacques-Joseph Lenoir, which kept its own separate list of accounts which have today disappeared.⁴⁴ The Musique du Roi, which officially was part of the Aumônerie, was also paid separately, to the tune of a quarter of a million livres per year.⁴⁵ Whatever the costs of the 'Religion of Versailles' may have been; they must have constituted a sizeable portion of the entire budget of the Maison du Roi.⁴⁶

Even McManners admits that his own estimate (which he made in the interest of simplification) of over 200 clergymen ministering to the

⁴¹ Giles Barber, "Il a fallut même réveiller les Suisses": Aspects of Private Religious Practice in a Public Setting in Eighteenth-Century Versailles', in *Religious Change in Europe, 1650–1914: essays for John McManners*, ed. Nigel Aston (Oxford, 1997), 75–102.

⁴² One can hardly blame researchers for shying away. After all, the archival source material available is both fragmentary and equivocal. The Archives Nationales possess only one carton that deals directly with the Aumônerie. The whereabouts of the original registers and financial documents outlining the day-to-day running of this department are unknown. AN O¹ 750.

⁴³ AN O¹ 3084, deuxième état.

⁴⁴ Very little has survived from this bureaucratic office. I have found only three receipts for the year 1788–1789. BnF Ms.Fr. 6803, fols 395–6 and 401.

⁴⁵ AN O¹ 842.

⁴⁶ The precise figure, unless new accounts or sources emerge, will probably never be known. The 1780s were a turbulent time in the accounting procedures for the royal household. On 17 August 1780 Louis XVI decided to streamline all accounting for the household, through an agency called the Chambre aux deniers. All expenditure had to be approved by the Contrôleur Général Mesnard de Chouzy. AN O¹ 767 no.1; and Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 61 and 65.

court at Versailles is a significant under-estimation.⁴⁷ Military chaplains for the over 6000 troops stationed at Versailles, the seventeen independent Aumôneries serving the other Princes du Sang, the chaplains ministering to the servants of the Grand Commun, the Lazarist community of Versailles and the chaplains of chaplains, inevitably inflate this figure.⁴⁸

All that can be said with certainty is that the king granted sixty 'brevets' to those clergymen ministering to him directly. It must be noted that the Aumônerie was one of the more dynamic and streamlined departments of the Maison du Roi. None of its offices were automatically venal in nature, though for two important positions very valuable *brevets de retenue* were issued. The other *charges* had been liquidated by the crown in 1720s.⁴⁹ So the crown, in most cases, had substantial freedom to appoint and remove incumbents at its own discretion, something it could hardly afford to do in other areas of the household.⁵⁰

It is true that ordinary salaries were relatively low for ecclesiastics working for the king. The Grand Almoner was paid 14,400 livres per year, which was a very small sum for, arguably, the highest church appointment in the realm. The meagreness of such remuneration is apparent if one considers the wages of the director of music (a relatively junior official), which totalled 10,500 livres.⁵¹ Furthermore, most salaries were liable for detractions for food, lodging and 'livery expenses' that further reduced these small *honoraria*.⁵² The reason was simple; all of clergymen serving the king at court were deemed to be resident in their benefices; thus were exempt from penalties for absenteeism. Therefore they could hold multiple benefices and church appointments without fear of prosecution. Indeed, all officials in the Aumônerie held abbeys *in commendam*, and therefore court prelates could match, and at times exceed, the status and authority of secular courtiers.⁵³

⁴⁷ McManners, 'The Religious Observances of Versailles', 176.

⁴⁸ SHAT, Ya 142-4; *Almanach Royal* for each year of Louis XVI's reign reveals the enormous number of clerics ministering to the different members of his family; and finally for Cardinal de Montmorency's own ecclesiastical household see AN T 1467.

⁴⁹ The value of the two remaining offices requiring *brevets de retenues* attests to the continuing market demand for positions in the king's household. The title of Premier Aumônier was worth 2500 livres and that of *Maître de l'Oratoire* was valued at one hundred and twenty thousand livres, in both cases immense sums. Oroux, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, II, 602, AN C 189 no.21; and Tr.Drts. I, 446.

⁵⁰ Horowski, 'Office-holding and Career Mechanisms at the Court of France', 167-9.

⁵¹ The only exception was the Confesseur du Roi who was paid quite handsomely; see AN O¹ 263 fol.3.

⁵² Tr.Drts. I, 440; and AN O¹ 842.

⁵³ For the power and wealth of French monastic institutions, see Beales, *Prosperity and Plunder*, 84-6; and McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, I, 95-140 and 472-504.

Table 4. *Personnel of the Chapelle du Roi in 1789*

Aumônerie
1 Grand Aumônier de France
1 Premier Aumônier du Roi
1 Aumônier Ordinaire du Roi
1 Maître de l'Oratoire
1 Confesseur
1 Prédicateur Ordinaire
8 Aumôniers (2 servant par quartier)
Chapelle Oratoire
1 Chapelain Ordinaire
8 Chapelains (2 servant par quartier)
1 Clerc de Chapelle Ordinaire
8 Clercs de Chapelle (2 servant par quartier)
1 Sacristain de la grande Chapelle
1 Sommiers Ordinaire
2 Sommiers (1 servant par semestre)
Grande Chapelle
1 Sous-Maître
8 Chapelains (4 servant par semestre)
1 Clerc ordinaire
4 Clercs de la Grande Chapelle (2 servant par semestre)
10 Clercs par commission
1 Bibliothécaire
1 Imprimeur
1 Noteur
Total: 63 clergymen (38 present each quarter)

Source: AN O¹ 750 and *Almanach Royal* of 1789

Far from being moribund, the king's chapel was one of the most vibrant and powerful institutions in the kingdom of France. In 1788 it even resisted a proposal for amalgamation with the queen's chapel, which would have led to the suppression of twenty ecclesiastical offices.⁵⁴ The chapel exerted significant influence over the patronage of benefices, there was a notable overlap between its membership and that of the Conseil de Conscience.⁵⁵ However its most important function

⁵⁴ AN O¹ 750, no.39. Memoirists and historians insist the queen played a significant role in the selection of Cardinal-Prince Rohan's successor, Louis-Joseph de Montmorency. See Nigel Aston, *The End of an Elite: The French Bishops and the Coming of the Revolution 1786–1790* (Oxford, 1992), 49 and 102; and 'She rejected the candidacy of Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld because she considered him to be an imbecile', in A. Cans, 'Lettres de M. de Boisgelin, archevêque d'Aix, à La Comtesse de Gramont', *Revue Historique*, 79 (1902), 316–23, here 322–3.

⁵⁵ Admittedly Louis XVI no longer took advice from his confessor over Church appointments. See McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, I, 49–50 and 55; and Antoine, *Le Conseil de Roi*, 128–31 and 505–6.

Table 5. *Days of Grande Chapelle*

New Year's Day*
Second of January*
Feast of the Purification*
Palm Sunday
Holy Thursday
Good Friday
Easter
Pentecost*
Assumption of the Virgin Mary
All Saints
Christmas

* denotes a celebration associated with the Ordre du Saint-Esprit
Source: Ouroux, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, II, 638.

was the choreography of the king's routine. It scheduled and organised the king's daily devotions and the most important annual celebrations. It was the central medium through which the king's sacrality was made manifest. Unsurprisingly, it was one of the institutions with which the Revolution almost immediately crossed swords.

The chapel and the Revolution

A 'war of ceremony' was how Georges Lefebvre described the opening shots fired in the clash between Third Estate and crown in May 1789.⁵⁶ It is important to note that most of the ceremonial in question was religious at heart. Proceedings began, on the morning of 4 May, with a spectacular Christian procession. It included delegates from the three orders and officers of the royal household, who set off at a slow pace from the parish of Notre Dame de Versailles to the parish of Saint-Louis.⁵⁷ The occasion was very reminiscent of Corpus Christi celebrations. The king, dressed in full regalia and marching under a great canopy, sprinkled with fleurs de lys, was followed closely by the monstrance displaying the Blessed Sacrament.⁵⁸ The entire occasion was intended to remind all of the proximity of the two mystical bodies, which had so strongly influenced traditional religious and political thought.⁵⁹ Christ's body stood in lieu of the heavenly kingdom and

⁵⁶ Lefebvre, *The French Revolution*, 106.

⁵⁷ Lemay, *La vie quotidienne des députés*, 18.

⁵⁸ *Mercure de France*, 16 mai 1789, 123; and AN K 1719, no. 41.

⁵⁹ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ, 1957), 193–232.

Louis XVI's body was the incarnation of the state.⁶⁰ The Aumôniers, chaplains and other ecclesiastics, marching ahead of the monstrance, portrayed the essential role played by the chapel in staging this spectacle. Once this procession reached its destination, both deputies and the court attended a mass celebrated by the Archbishop of Paris,⁶¹ followed by a sermon preached by the Bishop of Nancy.⁶² As the crown and the Third Estate became locked in a struggle over the sovereignty of the state, courtly and religious ritual was the immediate victim of this mêlée. Deputies of the Third Estate complained vociferously that Versailles's ceremonial apparatus impeded the nation's progress.⁶³

Initially, most deputies made some effort to accommodate the religious requirements imposed by Versailles. On 9 May 1789 they attended, in large numbers, the anniversary mass celebrated in memory of Louis XV.⁶⁴ This manufactured piety soon crumbled as the deputies of the Third Estate refused to accept their subordinate role in the deliberations of the Estates General. Their dissatisfaction found symbolic expression in an increasing tendency to withdraw from the religious festivities of the court. It was noted in the *Mercure* that on the feast of Corpus Christi, which fell on 18 June, a mere day after the Third Estate declared itself to be the National Assembly, only 'some deputies' attended the procession. The enthusiasm for royal rites and rituals had started to evaporate.⁶⁵ The mood for the confrontation that would occur in five days, at the infamous *Séance royale*, had been set. Matters were not helped by the death of the Dauphin on 4 June 1789.⁶⁶ The mandatory two-month mourning period served to alienate the deputies.⁶⁷ Not only did the king become more withdrawn and out of touch with the realities of politics, but the deputies were further inconvenienced by religious court prescriptions at a politically sensitive moment. Court regulations, concerning the death of the crown prince, required that three different sets of embellishments be added to clothing. These additions were to convey, symbolically, the three distinct stages that expressed the intensity of the mourning period.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ 'He displayed himself, presented himself as an embodiment of some sort of "higher" power ... Representation [is] inseparable from the lord's concrete existence', in Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 7.

⁶¹ For his support to the Artois clique he was the victim of an attempted lynching on 24 June 1789. Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution*, 164.

⁶² Lemay, *La vie quotidienne des députés*, 19–20.

⁶³ Dreux-Brézé, *Les Dreux-Brézé*, 317–19 and 339.

⁶⁴ *Mercure de France*, 6 juin 1789, 27; and *Journal de Paris*, 20 mai 1789, no.140, 363.

⁶⁵ *Mercure de France*, 4 juillet 1789, 23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 13 juin 1789, 76–7.

⁶⁷ AN O¹ 1044; Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 14749; and Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary*, 143.

⁶⁸ For the first month all those present at court were required to wear black *habits* (which suited the Third Estate deputies well as this was already their basic uniform) with the

The procedure for putting to rest the earthly remains of the Dauphin was equally elaborate. Tradition prescribed that the young prince's body was to lie in state for three days. His heart was to be embalmed and translated to the convent of Val de Grâce. At the conclusion of these nine days of ritual, Louis XVI headed for the tranquillity of the Palais de Marly, where he escaped the regimentation of Versailles. This move increased his isolation from the centre of political events.⁶⁹ By the time a delegation of the Third Estate paid its last respects to the Dauphin on 6 June 1789, the breach between crown and national representation was sealed.⁷⁰ After the storming of the Bastille the deputies would no longer defer to the king's religious sensibilities. In future, they might commission patriotic *te deums* and special blessings, but the sacral aura of monarchy was something the Assembly refused to recognise.⁷¹

On 27 July 1789, the comte de Clermont-Tonnerre (the head of the committee synthesising the 40,000 *cahiers de doléances*), admitted that the *cahiers* were equivocal on the issue of whether a French Constitution existed already or had to be created *ex novo*.⁷² He felt, nonetheless, that there was sufficient support for the Assembly's decision to frame a written Constitution.⁷³ Mounier's proposals regarding the 'fundamental law of the land' appeared to be largely written in the language of the Old Order.⁷⁴ The king's person was still sacred and, at this early stage, church patronage still was an inseparable component of the crown's prerogatives.⁷⁵ Article 30 even proclaimed: 'the king never dies'.⁷⁶ However, while the appearance of monarchical 'sacrality' had been preserved, the reality was quite different. These ancient juridical maxims were no longer couched in a language which derived its ultimate legitimacy from a divinely appointed order. On the contrary, the natural order had

addition of goatskin shoes, sleeve cuffs of batiste, bronze belt-buckles and swords. Subsequently, they were to exchange their bronze accoutrements for silver ones and sleeve cuffs made of muslin were added to the black suits. Finally, at the end of the *deuil*, etiquette demanded that gentlemen wear doubled and finely cut sleeve cuffs AN KK 1453, fol. 1, Henri-Évrard, marquis de Dreux-Brézé, *Costume de cérémonie de MM. les députés des trois ordres aux États généraux* (Paris, 1789); and Mansel, *Dressed to Rule*, 16–17 and 72.

⁶⁹ Furet and Richet, *La Révolution Française*, 77–8.

⁷⁰ *Mercure de France*, 27 juin 1789, 158–60.

⁷¹ For the Feast of the Federation in 1790, the former court composer Gossec was assigned the task of composing a *Te Deum* with Revolutionary lyrics. Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics 1787–1799* (New York, 1996), 44.

⁷² Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 261–2. ⁷³ AP VIII, 283–5.

⁷⁴ Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 254–8.

⁷⁵ AP VIII, 285–7; *Almanach Royal* (Paris, 1792), 94; and cf. Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 35–46.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 287.

become more material and intelligible, through the exercise of human reason. This was exemplified by Article 30: 'According to the law, the king never dies, that is to say that, by the sole power of the law all of the royal authority is transmitted immediately upon the death of the monarch to his successor'.⁷⁷ The Catholic faith finds little accommodation in this realignment. It is the smooth functioning of a juridical mechanism which regulates monarchical succession. The recognition that the early revolutionary reformers borrowed from France's past, in order to move beyond the *ancien régime*, was especially significant. It was hoped that, by shedding the religious mantle, a violent breach between past and present could be avoided. As will be documented, the deprivation of the religious aura was to make Louis XVI unable to function even as a constitutional monarch.

A mere five days after the taking of the Bastille, in a clear statement of where his priorities lay, the king presided over what proved to be the last great religious ceremony of Versailles. After an extremely long process of negotiation and ceremonial delays, the last Grand Aumônier of the *ancien régime*, Louis-Joseph de Laval-Montmorency, Bishop of Metz, received his long-awaited crimson robes.⁷⁸ The pageantry involved in the last stage of a Bishop's promotion to the status of *prince de l'église* was an interesting mix of royal, religious and diplomatic symbolism.⁷⁹ The final act in the investiture of a new Cardinal involves the bestowal of the crimson *biretta*. Early on the morning 19 July 1789, a large procession made its way through the Palace of Versailles.⁸⁰ Upon reaching the Salon d'Hercule he knelt before the king and removed his skull cap. In a gesture reminiscent of his own coronation, Louis then raised the Cardinal's *biretta* and placed it on the head of his Grand Almoner.⁸¹ Very soon such a ceremonious display, where royal chaplaincy, monarchy and papacy celebrated their effective monopoly over church appointments, became unthinkable as the political atmosphere reached boiling point.⁸²

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *Mercur de France*, 27 juin 1789, 158–60; Saint-Allais, III, 308–9; and Anselme, Supplément IX (2), 804.

⁷⁹ AN F¹⁹ 1906, dossier 11.

⁸⁰ The papal ab Legate, Montmorency's nephew in this case, accompanied by several Camerieri Segreti of the papal household and the Introduteur des Ambassadeurs, was charged with presenting the *biretta* to the king. Louis had chosen the Salon d'Hercule, where ambassadors usually presented their credentials. On the other side of the *château*, in the queen's apartments, the Grand Aumônier, escorted by a detachment of Cent-Suisses, progressed through the palace. William R. Newton, *L'Espace du Roi: La Cour de France au château de Versailles 1682–1789* (Paris, 2000), 348.

⁸¹ *Mercur de France*, 8 août 1789, 58.

⁸² This was not however the last Church appointment made by Louis XVI. In 1790 the Bishopric of Boulogne fell vacant and was bestowed on a commoner. McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, I, 214.

In early October the women of Paris, followed by the National Guard, forced the king to give his assent to the constitutional decrees promulgated by the Assembly throughout August and September. They also took the king and National Assembly captive back to Paris. It was hoped that an enforced confinement, and the threat of popular pressure, would make it impossible for Louis XVI to climb down from his concessions.⁸³ The life of the royal family in the Tuileries was not particularly felicitous. Louis, naturally prone to melancholy, sought solace in the comfort of regular and assiduous Christian practice. During his enforced sojourn in the French capital, Louis continued to record day-to-day events in his diary. His previous obsession with hunting gave way to a scrupulous auditing of his religious devotions. From October 1789 to July 1792 he registered no fewer than 468 entries, varying from masses to vespers to special feast days.⁸⁴ The promulgation of the Constitution was the only diary entry which recorded the National Assembly's legislative work. The rest bore testament to a traditional sovereign's day-to-day routine, divided between religious rituals and official ceremonies.

Unsurprisingly, once it became clear that his stay in Paris was to be long term, the reorganisation of the royal chapel was among the top priorities of Louis XVI. The nearby Feuillant house of the rue Saint-Honoré was to provide the solution. This well-to-do monastic institution, which could trace its origins to a royal endowment,⁸⁵ proved well suited to the task of ministering to the court. Once the Assembly freed 'citizens' from monastic vows (13 February 1790), the survival of the Feuillant community was dependent on the fate of the monarchy. An agreement was reached with the Assembly's ecclesiastical committee that allowed these Cistercian monks to continue residing in their convent. The monks were required to sign a joint declaration stating that they did not dwell together as a religious community, and that their main aim was to facilitate the king's devotions.⁸⁶ In spite of the mutual convenience of this arrangement, the crown proved less than appreciative. In February 1791, the hard-pressed Feuillants complained to the Grand Almoner that they had not yet received any remuneration.⁸⁷ This potentially embarrassing situation was rectified by Louis XVI on 28 July, when he paid 10,000 livres of arrears.⁸⁸ The monks also grumbled that, although the entire community helped to run the Tuileries chaplaincy, only a dozen of their brethren appeared on the

⁸³ Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy*, 107–8.

⁸⁴ AN C 221, no.151. ⁸⁵ AN S 4166. ⁸⁶ AN O¹ 750, no.55. ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, no.53.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, no.52.

official pay-rolls. In spite of these vexations, these members of the regular clergy clung steadfastly to the foot of the throne, right up to the last days of the monarchy. It seems not unreasonable to suppose that one of these Cistercians was the last to minister to the king on the night of 9 August 1792.⁸⁹

The monarchy's first year in Paris was to be disrupted far more by logistics than by popular agitation. The ecclesiastical household remained essentially the same and continued to be headed by cardinal de Montmorency; who hosted in 1790 a banquet for the Fête de la Fédération in order to please the Parisian municipal authorities. It was somewhat ironic, considering that exactly the year before he had interpreted the taking of the Bastille as the visible manifestation of divine retribution.⁹⁰ The Paris populace, in 1790, did not impact negatively on the king's private religious practices and even participated in the great religious events at court. This was a situation which 1791 and the debate over the Civil Constitution of the clergy was to completely overturn.

The greatest problem for the Aumônerie lay in the size of the Tuileries' chapel, which was miniscule in comparison to the cathedral-like dimensions of that in Versailles.⁹¹ This space was not only small, but was situated on the first floor and awkward to access. It was located precisely above quarters of the duc de Brissac, Capitaine des Cent-Suisses, and the royal family entered their private box by using the terrace to the right of the Salle des Cent-Suisses. This balcony possessed a limited seating capacity and could only accommodate members of the royal family and their immediate retinue. Furthermore, the interior décor was modest, and only the altar could boast noticeable embellishment. Again this made for poor comparison with the *chapelle* in Versailles.

As a direct result of these environmental factors, the royal family's piety was significantly transformed. Gone were the daily public spectacles of Versailles. In Paris, private worship was much more sedate and in many ways invisible to the masses. A wooden gallery was erected on the terrace facing the gardens and a screen shielded the Bourbons within the tribune from the public's curious gaze.⁹² Louis XVI also decided to dispense with the rule of etiquette, which had indicated that each

⁸⁹ François de La Rochefoucault, *Souvenirs du 10 Août 1792 et de l'Armée de Bourbon* (Paris, 1929), 3.

⁹⁰ Louis Joseph de Montmorency-Laval, *Instruction Pastorale de son Éminence Monseigneur le Cardinal de Montmorency Évêque de Metz sur les troubles qui désolent le royaume. Donné à Versailles le 19 septembre 1789* (Metz, 1789); and Aston, *The End of an Elite*, 102.

⁹¹ The Tuileries Chapel was roughly 200 m² while the Sun King's Chapel at Versailles was over 900 m². Stumberg Edmunds, *Imaging Divine Kingship*, 32.

⁹² AN O¹ 1682, no.556.

The Tuileries Palace during the 1790s

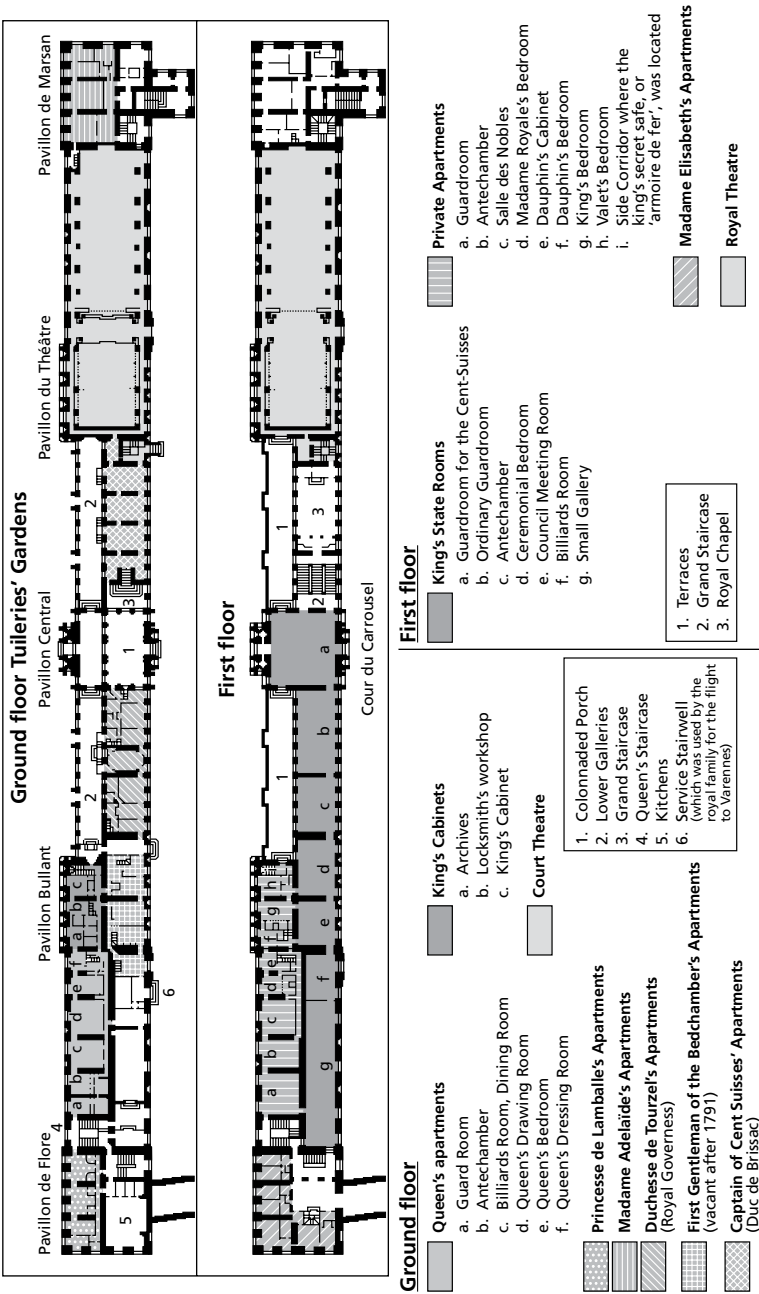


Figure 9 Plan of Tuileries (c. 1789–1792)

member of his family attend religious services separately. The move was applauded by the press, which interpreted it as both a wise economy and an inspiring display of family solidarity.⁹³

The king, after the morning *lever*, seems to have continued to attend midday mass every day in 1790.⁹⁴ The chapels in the palaces of the Tuileries and Saint-Cloud provided the main venues for the religious rites of the royal family. On days, which were not special feasts, the king and his family were seated in the tribune. On more special occasions an armchair covered by a canopy was placed on the right-hand side of the altar. Here the king continued, as in the past, to assert his intermediate state between priesthood and laity. During the 'liturgy of the word' he was presented with the gospels to kiss and before the consecration, after the altar had been sprinkled, he received incense.⁹⁵

More usually however, the ordinary court mass, during the Revolution, was a very calm affair. The king passively listened and prayed in exactly the same manner as the rest of the congregation. It was only following the flight to Varennes that daily worship was disrupted dramatically. After he was placed under house arrest, the king was no longer allowed to hear mass in the palace chapel.⁹⁶ A temporary altar was set up in the Galerie de Diane where the royal family alone, with a few loyal servants, listened to midday mass.⁹⁷ The permission to return to worship in the Tuileries chapel coincided directly with Louis XVI's acceptance of 1791 Constitution. The occasion was celebrated by a special religious service.⁹⁸

The exile of the principal officers of the Aumônerie, in May 1791, greatly disheartened the king. There seems to be little evidence illuminating how the religious life of the court developed between October 1791 and the fall of the Monarchy in the following year. Only Mme Campan's account of the Sunday services preceding 10 August, which witnessed major disturbances within the royal chapel, sheds some light on the issue. The king suffered the indignity of being insulted on his way to Mass by national guardsmen.⁹⁹ At Vespers that evening, whilst singing the *Magnificat*, radical spectators deliberately emphasised and repeated the verse 'he hath put down the mighty from their seat and hath exalted the humble and meek'.¹⁰⁰ At this critical juncture the

⁹³ *Journal Général de la Cour*, 14 janvier 1790, no.xiv, 107–8.

⁹⁴ Comte d'Hézacques, *Page à la cour de Louis XVI*, 43 and 155.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* ⁹⁶ Couty, *La Vie aux Tuileries*, 124.

⁹⁷ Haver-Crôy, *Mémoires de la Duchesse de Tourzel*, 295.

⁹⁸ ASPr, Francia 82, Parigi 11 settembre 1791.

⁹⁹ Campan, *Mémoires de Madame Campan*, p. 414; and Allen, *Threshold of Terror*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ 'Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles'. *Ibid.*

royal family was no longer capable of performing its ritual duties in a dignified manner.¹⁰¹

Although daily worship had become less ostentatious, special religious occasions and monarchical feast days were still celebrated with all the traditional pomp and ceremony. Further evidence of this conservative mindset can be observed in the ceremonies of Holy Week. These served as potential flashpoints in the troubled relationship between royal tradition and revolutionary radicalism. Palm Sunday was the starting point of Pascal week. However, it was only on Maundy Thursday that proceedings properly got under way with the ritual of the *pedilavium*.¹⁰² Here the royal family re-enacted the episode from St John's Gospel when Christ, prior to the Last Supper, in an act of exemplary humility, washed the feet of the twelve apostles.¹⁰³ Thirteen children, or elderly paupers, shared the honour of having their feet rinsed by the successor of Saint-Louis. On the same evening, the public dining ceremony of the *grand couvert* was inverted. Before a large audience of onlookers, the Princes of the Blood processed to and from the kitchens bearing dishes and plates filled with food. They then assisted the king in serving thirteen paupers at table. The queen, regardless of the domesticisation mentioned previously, enacted a separate female version of the *cène*. So while Louis XVI was busy washing feet and serving at table, so too were Marie Antoinette, Mme Royale, Mme Élisabeth and Mmes Tantes who replicated the ceremony exactly. This week-long rigorous ceremonial purification demonstrated that Catholic orthodox observance was an irrenunciabile element of Bourbon regal piety.

In 1790 these ceremonies were carried out to the letter. As the abolition of the nobility had yet to take place, the hierarchical dimension was fully preserved. The king was the first to communicate, on 5 April 1790, at the parish church of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois. He received the host from Cardinal de Montmorency. The Comte de Provence and the Premier Aumônier, the Bishop of Senlis, were given the honour of holding the altar cloth during this ritual.¹⁰⁴ The next day the queen also performed her Pascal duty and Mme Élisabeth had the honour of holding the altar cloth. During the next seven days Mmes Tantes, Mme Élisabeth, the comte and comtesse de Provence all followed the royal example.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ The comte de Provence, the king's eldest brother in exile, was trying at this time to be recognised as the 'lieutenant of the realm'. See Price, *Fall of the French Monarchy*, 233–5.

¹⁰² Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles*, 139–40.

¹⁰³ Jerusalem Bible, John 13: 1–20.

¹⁰⁴ *Gazette de France*, 13 avril 1790, no.30, 146.

¹⁰⁵ They each chose the greatest nobles of the realm to hold the altar cloth at their respective ceremonies. Those chosen were the Princess Dowager of Chimay, the

It was also during this time that Marie Thérèse de France, Mme Royale, made her first communion (7 April 1790). Like the king, she received the sacrament from cardinal de Montmorency at the parish church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. When the service ended, she and her fellow first communicants processed to the Châtelet.¹⁰⁶ Here, in this notorious prison, they personally released fifteen prisoners detained for bad debt. Once released, the king's daughter bestowed 100 livres to each former inmate to enable them to set off on a fresh new start. She also donated 1300 livres, from the day's offertory collection, for the care of the prison's sick.¹⁰⁷

While the life of the 'living' Bourbon dynasty was continuing, more or less as normal, political events in the city of Paris came to disturb the remains of both Louis XIII and Louis XIV. The hearts of these two monarchs had been preserved, in large urns supported by silver angels, in the formerly Jesuit Église de la culture Saint-Catherine.¹⁰⁸ It was decided in October 1790, by the Administration des biens nationaux du département de Paris, to sell the silver angels.¹⁰⁹ There is no source material which relates how Louis XVI received the news that the hearts of his predecessors were to be evicted from their resting place. The expenditure accounts of the Menus Plaisirs, which organised the translation of the hearts from the church of Sainte-Catherine to the convent of Val de Grâce, have survived.¹¹⁰ They allow for a brief reconstruction of the manner in which these royal relics were transferred. A procession was organised on 29 November 1790 to carry the hearts through Paris. It must have been a relatively impressive spectacle considering that the royal Grand Master of Ceremonies, the marquis de Dreux-Brézé, was asked to direct proceedings personally. The entire ceremony cost well in excess of 3000 livres.¹¹¹ This episode allows one to better contextualise the attack on the royal necropolis of Saint-Denis in 1793. As early as 1790 the remains of deceased kings were no longer regarded as sacrosanct and unmovable in their final resting place.¹¹² Organisational and

princesse de Ghistel, the princesse de Narbonne, the duchesse de Duras, the duchesse de Caylus, the marquise de Sèrent and finally the comtesse de Balby. While Monsieur selected his favourites the duc de Lévis and the duc d'Havry to hold the *nappe*. See *Gazette de France*, 6, 9 and 13 avril 1790, no.28, 137–8, no.29, 142, and no.30, 145–6.

¹⁰⁶ For highly polemical description of this event, see *Révolutions de Paris*, 12–17 avril 1790, no.40, 132.

¹⁰⁷ *Journal de Paris*, 12 avril 1790, no.102, 410; and *Gazette de France*, 16 avril 1790, no.31.

¹⁰⁸ AN D XIX 44, no.702. ¹⁰⁹ AN D XIX 69, no.456.

¹¹⁰ AN O¹ 3090, *sixième état dépenses imprévues, chapitre trois*. ¹¹¹ *Ibid*.

¹¹² Christopher M. Greene, 'Alexandre Lenoir and the Musée des Monuments Français during the French Revolution', *French Historical Studies*, 12 (1981), 200–22.

economic considerations came to override the final wishes of deceased rulers. This may be considered a sign of the change in mentality towards the traditional royal cult. The Civil Constitution of the clergy of 1791 was to place monarchical worship, and the new ideas surrounding the organisation of the Church, in profound conflict.¹¹³

The National Assembly's decision to incorporate the institutional structure of the Catholic Church into its constitutional settlement was to prove one of the most controversial pieces of legislation implemented during the Revolution. In July 1790 the National Assembly abruptly accepted a series of proposals originating from its Comité Ecclésiastique. These sought to solve, once and for all, the position of the Catholic Church in the newly regenerated French state. The scheme essentially reduced the number of dioceses and required all clergymen to swear to uphold the constitution as salaried public officials.¹¹⁴ The Holy See remained silent for the better part of a year. It has been assumed by many that recent events in the Habsburg Monarchy and Russian Empire had induced the Assembly to expect that a negotiated settlement would eventually be reached with the Papacy.¹¹⁵ Louis XVI, in spite of grave reservations and a deep personal crisis of conscience, consented in late July. The Assembly, in light of this success, grew bolder. By the end of the year it passed a decree which established the modalities and timetable according to which all clerics would have to take the civic oath. In late November the king sanctioned this legislation. The flood gates were suddenly opened in March 1791, when the official Papal brief, *quod aliquantum*, condemning the Assembly's actions, arrived in Paris.¹¹⁶

The reception of the Civil Constitution by the clerical establishment only heightened the sense of turmoil. In particular the response of France's leading prelates deeply affected the king. Only 7 of 160 bishops consented to take the oath.¹¹⁷ The parish clergy, with some

¹¹³ Timothy Tackett, *Religion, Revolution and Regional Culture in Eighteenth Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), 6; Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 147; and Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 18.

¹¹⁴ McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church*, 39

¹¹⁵ Derek Beales, *Enlightenment and Reform in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York, 2005), 236–42 and 256–60; Dale Van Kley, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France 1757–1765* (London, 1975), 205–7; and Blanning, *Pursuit of Glory*, 363.

¹¹⁶ 'This National Assembly has arrogated the *potestas* of the Church and has come to establish a strange order of things which is contrary to both dogma and ecclesiastical discipline'. For an Italian translation of this Papal brief see <http://digilander.iol.it/magistero/p6quodal.htm>.

¹¹⁷ McManners, *The French Revolution and the Church*, 48.

significant regional variations, was more evenly split on the issue of the constitution than their superiors.¹¹⁸

Throughout March and April 1791 the bishops, now publicly chastised by the press as recalcitrant, put sustained pressure on the king to prevent the looming schism. The Archbishop of Narbonne (who began his career as a court cleric celebrating Maundy Thursday in 1766), accused the Assembly of introducing Protestantism through the back door.¹¹⁹ Exactly at the same time, the Archbishop of Paris, using more allegorical expressions, denounced the 'raving wolves seeking to devour the lord's flock'.¹²⁰

Court preachers were also among the most vociferous in their protest against the Assembly's ecclesiastical reforms. The most well-known, and detested, of all was the conservative deputy the abbé Maury, who had made his début in 1773 and had received the honour of presenting his sermons at court no fewer than seven times.¹²¹ In early May 1790 the abbé Rousseau, another successful court preacher, had protested to the monarch against the Assembly's decision to put Church property at the disposal of the Nation.¹²² It is important to realise that to have served as a *Prédicateur du Roi*, prior to 1789, did not automatically determine an individual's political alignment. The abbé Fauchet, who had been curé of the parish of Saint-Roch in Paris and had been frequently invited to preach at court in the 1780s, took an extremely progressive stance towards revolutionary politics.¹²³ He was a founder of the radical club the *Cercle Social* and approved whole-heartedly of the Civil Constitution of the clergy. In May 1791 he was consecrated constitutional bishop of the department of Calvados. Fauchet's career however cannot be viewed as characteristic of the experience of most *Prédicateurs du Roi*. On the whole they constituted a group that was opposed to the Civil Constitution and put great pressure on Louis XVI's already fragile conscience.¹²⁴

In 1791 the religious ceremonies of the court of the Tuileries were transformed into situations fraught with the potential for embarrassment. It had been normal procedure, during the *ancien régime*, that newly appointed bishops were presented to the king at his *levée* by the Grand Aumônier. When, in February, the first two constitutionally elected bishops sought this honour, cardinal de Montmorency boycotted the

¹¹⁸ Tackett, *Religion, Revolution and Regional Culture*, 298.

¹¹⁹ AN C 183, no.2. ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, no.11. ¹²¹ AN 223, no.431 fols 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

¹²² AN 183, no.4. ¹²³ AN 223, no.431 fols 4, 5 and 6.

¹²⁴ Augustin Theiner, ed., *Documents inédits relatifs aux affaires religieuses de la France 1790–1800 extrait des archives secrètes du Vatican*, 2 vols (Paris, 1857), I, 336–8.

event.¹²⁵ The Grand Aumônier had already offended the Assembly the previous year during the controversy surrounding the publication of the *livre rouge* of royal pensions.¹²⁶ The absence of the senior chaplain of the court left these two constitutional clergymen with nothing to do but appear at court in the informal *robe courte*, rather than the typical pontifical robes, as they had not received papal confirmation. The First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, the Duc de Villequier, was left with the embarrassing task of introducing these clerics to a frosty Louis XVI.¹²⁷

The Assembly was incensed at the rebuff suffered by the constitutional clergy at the hands of the king's ecclesiastical household. On 27 February 1791 a denunciatory petition from the Section des Quatre-Nations was presented at the bar of the Salle du Manège.¹²⁸ It demanded that Cardinal de Montmorency either take the constitutional oath or be expelled from the royal court. The abbé Gouttes thought the motion did not go far enough. He demanded that the office of Grand Aumônier be abolished in perpetuity. The moderate politician Bouche pre-empted further debate by asking that the issue be referred to the Assembly's ecclesiastic committee. This motion was easily carried. Thus the swallowing of this very bitter pill was deferred for the time being. However, the disturbing aspect of this case, for Louis XVI, was the rediscovery that his religious routine could have a direct impact on national politics.

Montmorency, after this event, proceeded with more caution in order to steer clear of renewed political controversy. There is an undated note from this period, among the *armoire de fer* papers, in which the Cardinal announces his intention to resign his Bishopric of Metz in order to remain Grand Almoner. One can easily suppose that he took this course of action in order to stave off conflict with a potential constitutional successor in his diocese and to defuse any accusation of pluralism.¹²⁹ Regardless of which choice was made; it was difficult for

¹²⁵ Mousset, ed., *Un Témoin ignoré de la Révolution*, 123–4; and for one of the few analyses of the electoral process of Constitutional Bishops, see Malcolm Crook, 'Citizen Bishops: Episcopal Elections during the French Revolution', *The Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), 955–76.

¹²⁶ AP XIII, 296. ¹²⁷ Ibid. ¹²⁸ AP XXII, 551.

¹²⁹ 'The cardinal de Montmorency is thus firmly resolved to resign his See of Metz, in order to remain solely at the king's service regardless of whatever salary it shall please His Majesty to set aside for the office of Grand Aumônier de France. He [Montmorency] will receive any emolument with respect and gratitude and as he does not have a penny of his own. He will wisely manage any monies entrusted to his care through the king's beneficence. He considers no sacrifice too high and will be perfectly content that His Majesty confirms his continued service and do justice to his sentiments of respect, submission, fidelity, attachment and limitless devotion which he treasures in his heart, right up to his last breath, for the kindest of masters'. AN C 189, no.16.

members of the ecclesiastical household to weather the storm at this critical political juncture. Famously, when the abbé Poupard, Louis XVI's confessor for some fifteen years, took the constitutional oath he was discreetly dismissed. His replacement was the abbé Enfant, head of Eudiste monastic community. He had been a court preacher since 1774 and significantly he was the last ecclesiastical official nominated to conduct the royal Lenten homily series for 1791.¹³⁰ Apart from these facts he has left virtually no trace of his activities during this time. It has only proved possible to find an undated report warning that the abbé Enfant was soon to be denounced at his section for suspicious activities.¹³¹

The crisis over the Civil Constitution reached its immediate climax during Easter week 1791. A letter from the Bishop of Clermont advising the king to abstain from receiving communion from constitutional priests, had disastrous consequences.¹³² Its immediate effect was that a large crowd surrounded the Tuileries and physically prevented the king from journeying to Saint-Cloud, where it was suspected he would take communion from a non-juring priest.¹³³ The next day, Louis XVI made a speech at the National Assembly seeking support. When little concrete assistance was offered, his impotence became apparent.¹³⁴ In a later declaration, justifying his flight to Varennes, the king made specific reference to these events.¹³⁵ His lack of personal religious freedom was among the key reasons which had precipitated his attempt to reach the borders of France.

The damage to the public image of the crown was considerable. The link between piety and monarchy was portrayed in a critical and derisory fashion. Prudhomme went so far as to accuse the court of inventing secret, quasi-satanic, rituals. According to this radical journalist, Hosts consecrated by constitutional priests were defiled by courtiers and officers of the royal household within the precincts of the Tuileries.¹³⁶ Furthermore, the fact that the king only employed refractory clergy in his household made him a traitor to the Revolution.¹³⁷ The *chapelle*

¹³⁰ AN C 223, no.431, fols 4 and 8. ¹³¹ AN C 183, no.10.

¹³² Ibid., nos.12 and 13. ¹³³ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 183.

¹³⁴ AP XXV, 201. ¹³⁵ AP XXVII, 483–4.

¹³⁶ *Révolutions de Paris*, 19–26 mars 1791, no.94, 106–7. This article is reminiscent of reports of events at Versailles which circulated at the start of October 1789. The episode in question was known popularly as 'the orgy or banquet of Versailles'. Patriotic indignation was roused by descriptions of officers of the Gardes du corps and the Régiment de Flandres trampling tricolour cockades and singing Grétry's aria 'oh Richard oh mon Roi', at an official banquet held in the presence of the Royal family. This incident contributed enormously to the march of *poissardes* on Versailles on 5 October 1789. For a detailed description, see Schama, *Citizens*, 459–61.

¹³⁷ AN C 223, no.431, fol.9.

became a definite liability in a politically charged atmosphere, in which religious orthodoxy was interpreted by the radical population as both traitorous and fanatical.

Documents subsequently discovered in the *armoire de fer* revealed that officials close to Louis XVI had sought the advice of Talleyrand (at this time Bishop of Autun and one of the seven bishops who took the oath).¹³⁸ Although Talleyrand, from his London exile in 1792, officially denied proffering such advice, it seems interesting that no subsequent disowning of these papers was made in his memoirs. In spite of protestations of loyalism and orthodoxy, Talleyrand did not immediately follow his Episcopal brethren in their uncompromising stance. He chose the opposite route, going so far as to consecrate the first constitutional bishops.¹³⁹

It is impossible to state with absolute certainty that the advice, contained in these papers concerning the religious situation of 1791, was the direct result of secret contacts between Talleyrand and officials of the royal household. However, its content is characteristic of his pragmatic personality. One document states that Talleyrand was to make an appeal to the Assembly that those clergymen refusing to take the civil oath be allowed to continue to worship as before. He suggested that the Nation should recognise orthodox Catholics as a new religious group, and taking inspiration from across the English Channel, he proposed that they be named *non-conformistes*.¹⁴⁰ He assured the king that, once the political situation had quietened down, he could as easily choose to be a *non-conformiste* as he could choose to convert to Calvinism.¹⁴¹ Such a proposal could not have reassured a monarch who prided himself on holding the title of *filz aîné de l'église* and who, at his coronation, had insisted on taking the oath to extirpate heresy. To allow traditional Catholicism to become a minority cult would have been a complete betrayal of Louis's regal commitments.

The letters in the *armoire de fer* also allege that Talleyrand proposed that the abbé Poupert, curé de Saint-Eustache and former royal confessor, be appointed Grand Almoner. The prospect of replacing the loyal, high-born and orthodox cardinal de Montmorency with a popular and constitutional curé was bordering on the impertinent. The matter was

¹³⁸ AN C 184, no.203.

¹³⁹ Talleyrand-Périgord, *Mémoires du Prince de Talleyrand 1754–1808*, I, 28 and 132–6; and Harris, *Talleyrand: Betrayal and Saviour of France*, x–xi, and 53–5, 72–3.

¹⁴⁰ Talleyrand did in fact, on 7 May 1791, read a report relating to the issue of religious freedom for non-juring priests but its content is far more moderate than suggested by the documents in the *armoire de fer*. AP XXV, 643–6.

¹⁴¹ AN C 184, no.204.

nullified by the Cardinal's forced emigration and the crown's decision to leave the position vacant.¹⁴²

The death of the Dauphin, Louis-Xavier in June 1789, had highlighted the negative impact that the excessive religiosity of the court could have on political events. The next three years reiterated that Louis XVI had not understood the lesson in ceremonial flexibility which the events of 1789 had urged on him. In response to the growing radicalisation of the Revolution, the royal household devised ways of expressing its dissatisfaction with the *status quo*. The mandatory international mourning period for the death of foreign sovereigns presented courtiers with an excellent means of implicitly voicing discontent. From October 1789 to May 1792 some observed that the court had become increasingly scrupulous in the observance of the *deuil* or official mourning. The comte de Saint-Priest, early in 1790, had drawn the king's attention to the extravagant costs of the each *deuil*. The royal clothing alone for each individual time of mourning cost over 800 livres.¹⁴³ In the opinion of this moderate minister this form of courtly piety provided radicals with excellent ammunition in their campaign to discredit the monarchy. For the three and a quarter years during which the monarchy and the Revolution coexisted, the court was in official mourning for a total of 374 days. This figure represented an average of 108 days per year. Mourning was very much a public spectacle as it was visually expressed. Important courtiers were required to dress in black and the king, because of his status as a cathedral canon, wore violet (if the deceased individual in question was a reigning monarch).¹⁴⁴

The average of all the *deuils* during the Revolution was equivalent to nearly three times the typical mourning period during the greater portion of Louis XVI's reign. It was hardly surprising that the Russian traveller Karamzin, who visited the Tuileries at this time, thought that the French court's reputation for vestimentary splendour was unwarranted.¹⁴⁵ Equally, the sombre atmosphere at court did not go unnoticed in the radical press. Camille Desmoulins was infuriated by the manner in which royalist newspapers reported the court openly mourning 'foreign despots'.¹⁴⁶ The decision to lament Leopold II and his Neapolitan Bourbon wife, the Empress Marie Louisa (1 March and 15 May 1792),¹⁴⁷ proved particularly controversial, especially considering that,

¹⁴² AN C 223, no.388. ¹⁴³ AN C 184, no.172. ¹⁴⁴ AN KK 1453.

¹⁴⁵ Karamzin, *Voyage en France*, 101–2; and Marie-Louise-Victoire de Donnissan, *Mémoires de la Marquise de la Rochejaquelein, 1772–1857* (Paris, 1984), 102.

¹⁴⁶ *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, no.3, 97–8.

¹⁴⁷ *Gazette de France*, 28 mai 1792, no.61, 253; and Vicomte de Richemont, *Correspondance Secrète de l'abbé de Salamon chargé des affaires du Saint-Siège pendant la Révolution avec le Cardinal Zelada 1791–1792* (Paris, 1898), 352.

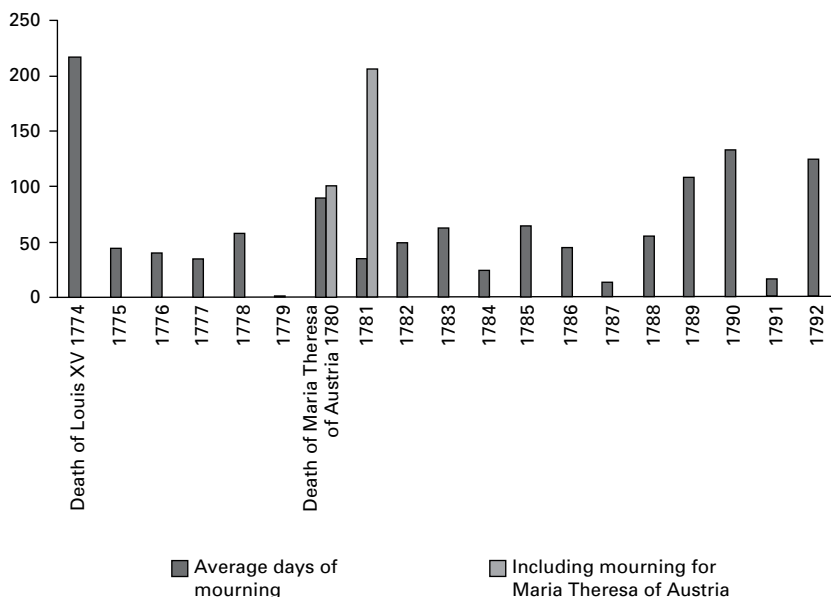


Figure 10 Total number of days of Court mourning during Louis XVI's reign

by April 1792, France was at war with their son, Francis I of Hungary and Bohemia.

By June the situation had worsened considerably. Louis XVI did not even participate in the Corpus Christi procession. His decision was, in all probability, connected to the events in the previous year. The Constituent Assembly, unaware of the plans to escape, had voted unanimously, on 20 June 1791, to accompany the king to the Corpus Christi procession.¹⁴⁸ By the time of the feast itself (23 June 1791) Louis XVI had fled and had been stopped at Varennes.¹⁴⁹ The Revolutionaries' willingness to tolerate the religion of the court had come to an end. In 1792 the Legislative Assembly voted not to attend and the Paris municipality discouraged citizens from taking part in the procession.¹⁵⁰

The music of the royal chapel was another area ripe for confrontations. The *Musique du Roi* had a notorious reputation for conservatism.¹⁵¹ It could hardly have been otherwise, considering that the

¹⁴⁸ AP XXVII, 351.

¹⁴⁹ Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 105–7.

¹⁵⁰ *Révolutions de Paris*, 2 au 9 juin 1792, no.152, 456–8.

¹⁵¹ Catherine Massip, 'The Chapelle Royale in the Time of Louis XIV', in *The Royal Chapel in the Time of the Habsburgs*, eds. Carreras, García García and Knighton, 61.

official court composer was François Giroust.¹⁵² He had been kept on by Louis XVI deliberately because his music did not conform to contemporary tastes. Though an avowed admirer of Haydn, Giroust had made his name by composing over ninety *grand motets*, and the 1775 coronation mass.¹⁵³

Proof of his traditionalist stance was evident in Giroust's stuffy penchant for setting 'domine salvum fac regem', to music.¹⁵⁴ Prudhomme made the public suggestion that the king's official composer put to music the prayers for the salvation of the realm's 'gentem' rather always beseeching that God preserve the 'regem'.¹⁵⁵ Remarkably, Prudhomme was surprised and angered that his advice went unheeded. So, in retaliation, he proceeded to advise the proscription of Latin in constitutional churches.¹⁵⁶ He considered that this redundant tongue was too susceptible of being disfigured into a secret royalist code. Again, the king's inflexible support of a reactionary composer, rather than replacing him with more elastic artists such as Grétry or Gossec to head his chapel, confirmed royal opposition to any alteration which might diminish its religious authority. The *grand motet*, in the end, shared the same fate as the monarchy it sustained.¹⁵⁷

The tale of the fall of the French Monarchy in 1792 has received numerous interpretations. Some, like the political theorist Michael Walzer, see the beheading of Louis XVI as a symbolically charged event, a ritual even, which marked the climax of a long political and historical process. The king's trial and execution provided the tombstone beneath which the mystical power of the kings of France was buried.¹⁵⁸ By transforming the deposed king into a simple citizen, accountable to the laws and penalties imposed by the 'general will', the deputies of the National Convention broke the spell that had bound sovereignty to religion. The Revolution finally de-mystified government and founded the legitimacy of popular representation on reason rather than 'magical authority'.

Others have not been quite so sure that the end point was so exact, nor the ritual so convincing. The abbé Georgel, in his account of his

¹⁵² AN O¹ 842; and for his career, see Eby, 'François Giroust', in *Le Grand Motet Français*, ed. Mongrédien and Ferraton, I, 48–104.

¹⁵³ John D. Eby, 'Giroust et la Fin du Grand Motet: Un Epigone?', in *Le Grand Motet Français*, ed. Mongrédien and Ferraton, 291–2.

¹⁵⁴ For a European comparison. See Beales, *Enlightenment and Reform*, 104–7; and Eby, *François Giroust*, I, 253.

¹⁵⁵ *Révolutions de Paris*, 11–18 juin 1791, no.101, 494.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 19–26 mars 1791, no.89, 567–70.

¹⁵⁷ Jean Mongrédien, 'Le Grand Motet Français (1663–1792)', in *Le Grand Motet Français*, ed. Mongrédien and Ferraton, 4–5.

¹⁵⁸ Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution*, 88–9.

trip to Russia, tells of how Louis XVIII in exile continued the enchanted existence of a *Rex Christianissimus*, while staying at Mittau in Lithuania. The greatest symbol of continuity was the presence of cardinal de Montmorency at court as Grand Aumônier de France. In a land thousands of miles away from the birthplace of Saint-Louis, the religious ceremonial of Versailles continued.¹⁵⁹ While neither of these conclusions is mistaken, neither one, by itself, is sufficiently convincing.

If one turns to the actual context of the 1790s the picture is more complex. As this chapter has demonstrated, the demise of sacrality only became inevitable once the Revolution, through the Civil Constitution of the clergy, failed to reconcile past with present. Each time Louis XVI was confronted with religious innovation, his ability to respond effectively was handicapped by the institution he headed. Louis's first public appearance as a French prince in 1761 took place in the chapel at Versailles, where he stood in for Charles III of Spain as godfather to the comte d'Artois.¹⁶⁰ The last *ancien régime* King of France had been educated in a world that not only commended the external expression of one's religiosity as laudable behaviour, but viewed it as an intrinsic part of the dynasty's heritage. It is little wonder that once this spectacle was evicted from its natural setting of Versailles, and when most of the participants went into exile in 1791, the monarchy was left with an unworkable mechanism of royal representation. The *chapelle royale* at the Tuileries was the mere simulacrum of a cult of royalty which dated back to the reign of Louis XIV.

¹⁵⁹ Georgel, *Voyage à Saint Pétersbourg en 1799–1800*, 147–9.

¹⁶⁰ Girault de Coursac, *L'Éducation d'un Roi*, 62.

Conclusion

In June 1775 Louis XVI made his formal entry into the city of Rheims for his coronation.¹ A colossal *carrosse d'apparat* (ceremonial carriage), weighing one and half tonnes, had been constructed specially for the occasion.² It was decorated with gold statuettes, fleurs de lys and the coat of arms of France and Navarre. The panel of the door on the left side of the carriage was painted by the artist Jacques Chevalier. It depicted Louis XVI as a Roman emperor on a triumphal cloud, ushering a female allegory of the French Nation into an age of prosperity. The other figures surrounding the scene symbolised the cardinal virtues of abundance, justice and vigilance. In the foreground, being washed onto the cloud by a wave, were two figures in Native American dress that represented France's affluent colonial possessions. The *carrosse du sacre* constituted the masterpiece of a long tradition of artisanal craftsmanship dedicated to satisfying the Bourbon dynasty's thirst for glory. It was through such symbols and artefacts that the monarchy made manifest its power and magnificence.³ Conservative estimates place the cost of this carriage well above 50,000 livres.⁴ As a semiotic sign it was the physical incarnation of the Archbishop of Rheims's acclamation of the newly crowned monarch: *Vivat Rex in aeternum!*⁵

The coach was yet another manifestation of the *Rex Christianissimus*'s claim to divine election. Louis XVI's investiture as King of France did not put an end to the use of this vehicle, known simply as the *Sacre*. Throughout the reign it was to make important appearances at religious ceremonies within the parish of Versailles and finally, at the opening ceremony of the Assembly of Notables in 1787.⁶ After 1789, it made

¹ Jackson, *Vive le Roi*, 175–87.

² Rudolf Wackernagel, 'La Voiture du Sacre de Louis XVI, un vestige retrouvé en Suisse', in *Voitures, Chevaux et Attelages du XVIe au XIXe siècle*, ed. Daniel Roche (Paris, 2000), 143–7.

³ *Ibid.*, 153. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 152. ⁵ Jackson, *Vive le Roi*, 21.

⁶ Wackernagel, 'La Voiture du Sacre de Louis XVI', 148.

a discreet disappearance into the warehouses of the Petite Écurie. It re-emerged for the last time in April 1794, when it was taken to the *cour du carrousel* of the Tuileries palace.⁷

It proved impossible to find a buyer for such an impractical, and politically sensitive, mode of transport.⁸ The carriage was described by Monmayau, the deputy who proposed its demolition,⁹ as a 'monstrous assemblage built of the people's gold and an excess of flattery'.¹⁰ The gold from this coach was to go to the national treasury, while the bronze was sent to the Republic's foundries to be forged into cannons for the struggle against the crowned heads of Europe.¹¹ The panels from the carriage were deemed by Jacques-Louis David to possess little artistic merit. Consequently, it was decided that they should be burned. The historical elimination of the late tyrant's paraphernalia seemed to be a complete success. Never again would such corrupt and vain items of luxury burden the minds and pockets of the citizens of France. For over fifty years, the Musée Jurrassien d'Art et Histoire de Delémont exhibited an object which it simply labelled 'door of a carriage which belonged to the Prince-Bishop of Basle'.¹² It was only in the mid-1990s that the attention of a group of German scholars, and museum curators, was finally directed toward this peculiar artefact. After a lengthy correspondence they decided that this was a clear case of misattribution. After 200 years the panel of the left-hand door of the *Sacre* had been rediscovered.

This relic of a bygone age, when power and its representation were indivisible, represents a fitting conclusion for this book. It was not an accident that this entity, which was a visible sign of the power, wealth and sacrality of Louis XVI's House, should be among the final victims of the Revolution's slow campaign against Bourbon representational culture. Indeed it was something which the last *ancien régime* monarch had himself witnessed. After the fall of the Tuileries, on 10 August 1792, the king crossed the Place Vendôme as he was being transferred to the prison of the Temple. Apparently the king noticed that the equestrian

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Henri Lemoine, 'Les Écuries du Roi sous l'Ancien Régime', *Revue de l'Histoire de Versailles et de Seine et Oise*, 35 (1933), 208–9.

⁹ Alphonse de Beauchamp, *Biographie moderne, ou, Galerie historique, civile, militaire, politique, littéraire et judiciaire: contenant les portraits politiques de Français de l'un et de l'autre sexe, morts ou vivans, qui se sont rendus plus ou moins célèbres, depuis le commencement de la révolution jusqu'à nos jours, par leurs talens, leurs emplois, leurs malheurs, leur courage, leur vertus ou leurs crimes*, 3 vols (Paris, 1816), III, 1–2.

¹⁰ Wackernagel, 'La Voiture du Sacre de Louis XVI', 148.

¹¹ Ibid., 148–9. ¹² Ibid., 153.

statue of Louis XIV had been toppled from its plinth. An unknown bystander, in the crowd of onlookers, reportedly exclaimed: 'that is how the people treats its kings'. The phlegmatic Louis replied unperturbed: 'it is fortunate that it confines its attention to inanimate objects'.¹³ Thus was consummated the last of act of this dialogue of the deaf in which Constitutional Monarchy and Revolutionary Public stubbornly refused to communicate.

The Revolutionaries may not have succeeded in their goal of eradicating completely the *ancien régime* from both reality and memory. However, the radicals of the 1790s did persuade successfully contemporary opinion that the future ultimately, and irretrievably, lay in a different direction from the past. When the Bourbon cause did eventually wither away in 1873, the comte de Chambord's appeal to 'the principle I represent and my honour' fell hopelessly on ears that had been hardened by the eighty-year legacy of 1789.¹⁴ Indeed, resurrecting the spirit of Louis XVI in the context of the 1870s was about as effective as being Louis XVI in the 1790s. After the refusal to accept the tricolour as a flag, as a symbol of the Revolution, the Bourbon monarchy silently exited the stage of 'real' politics. Even that arch-supporter of hopeless causes, Pius IX, abandoned the 'eldest son of the church' to his fate in the realm of historical oblivion.¹⁵

This book has examined various aspects of the representational culture of Louis XVI's constitutional monarchy and proposes that its routine and rituals had a radicalising impact on the course of the French Revolution. The constitutional court and the new political culture of the 1790s coexisted side by side for three eventful years. Severe public criticism of the royal household was present throughout the entire period. As the Revolution radicalised, especially following the promulgation of the Civil Constitution of the clergy, the possibilities of accommodating the royal court within an increasingly hostile environment narrowed considerably. Louis XVI's unwillingness, rather than inability, to accept alternative forms monarchical representation, where neither God nor the Dynasty was the ultimate source of legitimacy, doomed all compromises to failure.

Other European monarchs, such as George III, Frederick II and Joseph II, had shown that a reduction in monarchical splendour could influence public opinion very positively in favour of the crown. This is not to say that Louis XVI was not facing a true dilemma when it came

¹³ Hardman, *Louis XVI*, 222.

¹⁴ Marvin L. Brown, Jr, *The Comte de Chambord: The Third Republic's Uncompromising King* (Durham, NC, 1967), p.124.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

to reforming the pageantry that surrounded his office. The festivities and etiquette of Versailles had been created at the height of France's international power and influence. To abandon the rituals of the court of Louis XIV was an implicit admission that France no longer occupied the summit of Europe.¹⁶ Louis XVI's love of his family history, and his sense of dynastic duty, made it impossible for changes and cutbacks to take place. For him a reduction in *éclat* was a symbol of defeat. He was not convinced that the semiotics of the old aulic culture could be transferred honourably to more efficient and modern symbols of power. This was the essential flaw which destined Bourbon representational culture first to stagnation and finally to collapse.

The deputies, on the other side of this struggle, had forged an abstract conception of power, legitimised through a mandate from the whole 'Nation', which proved highly effective in undermining the limited authority of the constitutional monarchy. During June 1789, there was a seamless, public and effective transference of sovereignty from monarch to representative assembly. Louis XVI's refusal to accept this *fait accompli* placed him on a collision course with the politicians of the 1790s. It may well be the case that the king desired only a constitutional monarchy on his own terms, rather than a complete return to the bad old days of absolutism.¹⁷ Yet this was no small matter, this was where the heart of this struggle for power lay. A constitutional settlement granted at the behest of a ruler signified that sovereignty was still located exclusively with the prince. On the other hand the constitution that was to be created by the National Assembly rested on the idea that the source of power, and the ability to create legislation, resided in the 'Nation'. The perceived will of the community of French citizens was the ultimate font of political legitimacy. It was this revolutionary vision of a political order symbolically anchored on the principle of national sovereignty which eventually won the day.

¹⁶ Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 71–83.

¹⁷ Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy*, 65–7.

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1,906 dossier 11 Cérémonie de la Barette

Série K Monuments Historiques

1,712, 1,719 Cérémonial Mélanges

KK 1,453 Registres des Deuils que le Roi a portés

Série M Ordres Militaires et Hospitaliers

608, Honneurs de la Cour, présentations, demandes, correspondance.

Arrêts et règlements concernant la noblesse

616 Preuves de noblesse pour l'Ordre de Saint-Lazare

629 Ordre de Saint Michel

655 Collection Huguequin

664 Papiers trouvés aux Tuileries

968 Correspondance de l'Ambassade de la Religion de Malte

- MM 816 Registre des entrées des carrosses du roi
 Série O¹ Maison du Roi
 102 Expédition des actes royaux par le Secrétaire de la Maison du Roi
 263 Registre des Ordonnances 1789–1791
 281 Cabinet Héraldique mémoires et correspondance
 435 Registres des Lettres reçus par le Ministre de la Maison du Roi
 500, 501 Lettres du Ministre de la Maison du Roi, Copie des Minutes
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 Chambre (1749–1785)
 828 Registres d'Audiences
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 Plaisirs
 3,300 Garde Meuble de la Couronne Décisions et états de prêts et distri-
 butions de meubles pour diverses causes
 3,696 Garde Constitutionnel de Louis XVI
 Série O³ Maison du Roi (Restauration)
 518, 525 papiers du Grand Maître des Cérémonies 1814–1830
 Série R⁵ Apanage de Provence
 483 Délibérations et décisions du Comité de Réforme et d'administration
 et du Comité des Finances de la Maison de Monsieur
 Série T Papiers Privés Tombés dans le Domaine Public
 146⁷ Papiers du Cardinal Montmorency
 Série S Biens des Établissement Religieux
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- 4,689 Régiment des Gardes Suisses du Roi, Revue de son Altesse Roïale
 Monseigneur Comte d'Artois Colonel Général des Suisses et Grisons
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 5,826 Collection Saillant
 6,117 Correspondance du Marquis de Paulmy-Argenson

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 11,697 Correspondance de Bailly et Lafayette
 31,638, 31,775 [Fonds Chérin, 76, 213] Preuves pour les Honneurs de
 la Cour

33,262 Correspondance des Chérins
 1,246 Collection Clairambault
 Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises
 307 Collection la Bédoyère

Musée de la Légion d'Honneur (MLH), Palais Salm, Paris

Fonds Tiolier

Carton 1 Ordre de Saint Michel
 Carton 11 Cérémonial qui doit être observé par un Novice
 Carton 12 Louis XVI, Réception du Roi de chef et Souverain, Grand
 Maître des ordres de Saint Michel et du Saint Esprit
 Carton 14 Chevaliers Étrangers
 O 1802 Correspondance relative au service de Caminade de Castres
 O 1803 and 1804 Procès-Verbaux Cérémonies

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Série Ya Archives administratives du département de la Guerre XVIIIème
 Siècle

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