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MONOLOGUE AND DIALOGUE

IN FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC

RADOSVETA VALTCHANOVA GETOVA

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To my mother,
and in memory of my father

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ABSTRACT

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
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Doctor of Philosophy

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by Radosveta Valtchanova Getova

This thesis investigates the relationship between rhetoric and power in the context of the radical cultural production of the French Revolution. It illustrates how power and rhetoric became inextricably linked in the revolutionary story and its history by exploring the discourse, constructed by the radicals in parliamentary speeches, visual art, revolutionary songs, theatre, and public decapitation to imprint their story on the minds of their audiences. In this way, the revolutionaries' evolving perception and interpretation of meaning and power is elucidated through the metaphor of rhetoric as violence.

  The methodological approach is an application of Bakhtin's dialogue/ monologue framework to the two main periods of the French Revolution: the creative beginnings interpreted as a vast dialogue, and the period of the Terror where monologue increasingly appears to dominate. It is argued that in effect the interplay of monologue and dialogue governed the entire rhetorical production of the radicals in the use of the revolutionary epic and the menippea: the epic being the 'centripetal forces' running the monological construct of the 'new order', and menippea operating as the subversive 'centrifugal forces' of dialogue, which reveals itself through parody and the carnivalesque of caricature, songs, utopian radical theatre, and the parallel festival culminating in the case study of the spectacle of the guillotine. Exploring the tensions between the epic and the menippea adds a further dimension to the study.

  The conclusion, drawing on Bakhtin's concept of dialogism highlights another aspect of the monologue/dialogue dichotomy through the struggle between revolutionary innovation and tradition. Banned by the revolutionaries who aspired to make a clean break with the past, tradition still fought its way into the new cultural forms and remains in the revolutionary symbols, which are embedded in the French cultural heritage to the present day.

Contents

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This work would not have been possible without the financial and moral support of my family and especially of my husband Vladimir Getov, without whom I might never have started. For being there all the time, I thank him with all my heart.

Declaration

This study is the result of work done wholly whilst in registered postgraduate candidature. Parts of the thesis have appeared in slightly different form in the following publications:

1. Part of Chapter 4 was presented at the International postgraduate conference *Endings*, University of Bristol (July 1998), and published as 'Le Spectacle de la guillotine - une fête révolutionnaire?' in *Endings*, ed. by Ann Amherst and Katherine Astbury (Exeter: Elm Bank Publications, 1999), pp.109-17.

2. Part of Chapter 2 was presented at the postgraduate colloquium *Rewriting the Political*, University of Exeter (July 1999) and appeared as 'Creating the Political: The Rhetoric of the French Revolution', in *Rewriting the Political*, ed. by Daniel Hall and Ben McCann (Exeter: Elm Bank Publications, 2000), pp.29-37.

3. Part of Chapter 5 was presented at the Voltaire Foundation Postgraduate Meeting, *La fête au 18e siècle*, at Lincoln College, Oxford (April 2000), and later appeared as 'La fête révolutionnaire: tradition et renouveau' in *Correspondence and Epistolary Fiction. La Fête. Science and Medicine. Voltaire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2002), pp.157-170.

4. Part of chapter 3 was presented at the Women in French 2000 conference: *Utopias* - Myddleton Lodge, Ilkley (May 2000), as 'Utopian Visions in French Revolutionary Theatre', and has been included in a forthcoming book on Utopias, at Strathclyde.

5. Finally, another part of Chapter 2 was presented at the Second International Graduate Conference, University of Durham: *Propaganda* (April 2000), as *Heralding a New World: Propaganda in Republican Images and Songs*.

Preface

To look at the symbolic dimensions of social action - art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, common sense – is not to turn away from the existential dilemmas of life for some empyrean realm of de-emotionalized forms; it is to plunge into the midst of them. The essential vocation of interpretive anthropology is not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others, guarding other sheep in other valleys, have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said.

Clifford Geertz[1]

The French Revolution, and particularly its political heritage, is a theme French intellectuals have constantly been going back to, rekindling an ongoing debate ranging from the re-examining of republican attributes in a dynamic modern world to the echoing of the regicide and its moral implications in a need to soothe a painful past. Yet only in more recent times have political and cultural aspects come under scrutiny and authors increasingly engaged in re-evaluating the cultural legacy of what was started in 1789 as a colossal political enterprise. A series of works have appeared during the last three decades of the twentieth century by historians, historians of art and intellectuals, indicating the growing interest, and revealing surprising levels of insights, in the field of cultural analyses. Authors like Keith Baker and François Furet, Mona Ozouf and Lynn Hunt, Jean Starobinski and Bronislaw Baczko, Roger Chartier and Robert Darnton, Maurice Agulhon and Daniel Arasse, Carol Blum and Genevieve Fraisse, to name only a few, have thrown new light on the political and cultural underlay of revolutionary events and opened up new areas for further study.

Following this trend, I have attempted to raise a series of questions related to the use of rhetorical strategies in a highly politicised French revolutionary discourse during the period 1789-1794, rhetoric being in my view the symbolic expression of ideas and beliefs with the aim of persuading. This seems to me a subject, which still needs further examination. For, as the Revolution was, most and above all, made of words and the ideas generated by these words, revolutionary rhetoric can be considered as one of its main ingredients.

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[1] From 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), pp. 3-30 (p.30).

Given the complexity of events and the huge amount of material and data of tremendous variety related to the French Revolution, I have to start with a limitation. This study is concerned primarily with the attempts of the revolutionaries to create new meanings and to impose new truths through different discursive practices in the period from 1789 to 1794, and mainly during the most radical phase of the Revolution, namely the Terror. The perspectives on French revolutionary rhetoric that will be presented in the following pages encompass a broad range of texts and my aim is to offer fresh insight into the ways in which ideas were symbolically represented through a new set of signs that were to form the corpus of Republican radical discourse.

My approach is interdisciplinary, drawing on several fields, yet grounded in cultural history. In re-examining the powers of revolutionary discourse, thus extending François Furet's perception of the word as an instrument of power, I am following Clifford Geertz in his anthropological approach of interpreting historical events as texts, with its emphasis on human subjectivity and contextual meaning. Geertz argued that ''culture' must be seen as the 'webs of meaning' within which people live, meanings encoded in symbolic forms [...] that must be understood through acts of interpretation analogous to the work of literary critics'[2] In the pages that follow, while focussing on the radicals' struggle for power through representation and on the way they were aiming to establish new revolutionary truths, I have attempted to analyse the 'story' and the 'discourse' of the radicals, in texts and related events, through the lens of the message/reception process.

A key element of my research – wherein I believe its novelty lies – involves an application of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical poetics. Drawing on Bakhtin's dialogue/monologue dichotomy and his idea of rhetorical violence, the material corpus is organised on three levels, in an attempt to reflect the manifold ways in which dialogue and monologue operated in the symbolic production of radical discourse. The first level is focussed on how plurality and dialogue in their 'Socratic' perception – as the essence of dialectical rhetoric and the main ingredients of the iconoclastic revolutionary project –

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[2] The excerpt at the beginning of this Preface illustrates the interpretive approach to culture of the American cultural theorist Clifford Geertz who, 'almost single-handedly, reconfigured the boundary between the social sciences and the humanities for the second half of the twentieth century'. For a comprehensive overview of Clifford Geertz's contribution to anthropology, see *Representations*, 59 (1997), a Special issue entitled *The Fate of 'Culture': Geertz and Beyond*, and edited by Sherry B. Ortner. The quotations are from Ortner's 'Introduction', pp. 1-13. On the 'Cultural Turn', Clifford Geertz, and the other influential proponent of the 'linguistic or cultural turn', Hayden White, see also Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, 'Introduction', in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

were gradually and eventually forced into monological practices during the reign of the Terror. The second level of interpretation explores radical rhetoric through Bakhtin's categories of the 'epic' and 'Menippean discourse'. Special attention is given to satire and parody in the creation of meaning and to the dialogical and monological relationships that govern symbolic practices. And finally, the third level addresses a group of questions that are associated with the concepts of dialogue and monologue from a broader perspective. These questions deal with the process through which rhetoric was used to shape the new consciousness, with representation and its interpretation by contemporary audiences; and with word coinage and the use of old words to express new meaning. These questions also examine the twofold act of message and reception through official speeches, theatrical entertainment and popular festivals. They explore the language of desire in utopia, and the distortion of the utopian dream by violence.

Looked at from the 'message' perspective, revolutionary rhetoric from the beginnings until the Terror could be interpreted as a polyphony - dialogue - monologue process. Looked at from the 'reception' perspective, it could be interpreted as a huge carnival. Even though the radicals were trying to impose meaning from above, the intended message was often dialogically altered and reshaped anew. This was a creative process where both sides took part and, through rival representations, new meanings of revolutionary symbolism were constructed, often in unexpected ways.

This is an ambitious study, broad in scope and highly focussed in detail. Many of the questions asked have answers that extend beyond its boundaries. However, by addressing them in a rhetorical context, I have attempted to uncover the particular strategies and general principles related to language and power that underpin a selection of revolutionary writings, ranging from speeches and pamphlets to fiction, visual art and inscriptions, and, from a broader aspect, to explore some general questions related to politics, symbolic practices and meaning, which would be valid for any epoch and society.

Introduction.

Discourse and the French Revolution: rhetoric, poetics and the politics of meaning

A human act is a potential text and can be understood
[...] only in the dialogic context of its time.

Mikhail Bakhtin[1]

La révolution même, cette idée « moderne », représente le projet scripturaire au niveau d'une société entière
qui a l'ambition de *se constituer* en page blanche par rapport au passé,
de s'écrire elle-même (c'est-à-dire de se produire comme système propre)
et de *refaire l'histoire* sur le modèle de ce qu'elle fabrique.

Michel de Certeau[2]

This study of the rhetoric of the French Revolution is about the invention and

representation of new symbols as vehicles and transmitters of ideas, which came to

replace the symbols and insignia of the *Ancien Régime*. The French Revolution saw an

eruption of symbolic production. Symbols were used abundantly in speeches and in the

theatre, in the press and in political caricature, in the new language and in the arts, in the

rituals of the civic festivals. This symbolic production, as the expression of revolutionary

projects and events transposed through various mediums – the manner in which the

Revolution wrote itself by itself, and the way it was received by those for whom it was

intended, generated new interpretations often charged with a multiplicity of layers of

meaning. When abolishing everything that connected them with the past, the

revolutionaries had to fill the political vacuum thus created by composing a new narrative.

They were writing a 'text' on their 'blank page', thus producing a story and re-writing

history.[3] In other words, to put it in the frame of Seymour Chatman's dichotomy in his

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[1] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. by Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p.107.
[2] Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 2nd edn, I: *Arts de faire*, ed. by Luce Giard (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), p. 201.
[3] Ibid.pp. 199-201. De Certeau designated as 'writing' ('écrire') the concrete activity that consists in constructing, 'sur un espace propre, la page, [...] un texte qui a pouvoir sur l'extériorité dont il a été tout d'abord isolé'. The quotation is from p.199. See also Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 134-5

approach to narrative, the present study is about the 'what' and the 'way' in revolutionary narrative – the linkages between the story and the discourse of the French Revolution.[4]

Between 1789 and 1794, the story of the Revolution evolved amidst upheaval and turmoil. In the heat of parliamentary debate, the revolutionaries challenged the very notion of the political and reshaped much of the ideas formerly associated with it. Moreover, in their search for order and control, they invested the political with an extraordinary symbolic and emotional content. As the story of the Revolution was unfolding, its discourse was taking ever changing forms. Through their language, symbols, and everyday activities, the revolutionaries worked to reconstitute society and so to create new social and political practices, yet the processes they triggered were in turn moulding their own understanding and experience of politics. In the outburst of political events, attitudes were evolving and new beliefs were being formed, new values were imposed, old symbols were reinvented, radical political ideas were promoted in the name of a general will.[5]

As with any large event in history, there were different stories of the Revolution, then and now, since the Revolution meant different things to different people. There were the personal or collective stories of revolutionaries belonging to different political factions; the stories of the aristocracy, of the counter-revolutionaries, of the *émigrés*, of every social group of the time, of men and women and of single individuals; and also the stories of historical or artistic interpretation from different epochs, intellectual creed and inspiration.[6] My interest lies mainly in the stories of the Revolution about itself, and more precisely, in the voice or the storytelling of the radicals. In their struggle for power, how did they construct their narratives? How was their story translated into different mediums?

In their quest for a new polity, the revolutionaries drew on two main sources: firstly, the Ancients – and thus they gave new life to old stories –, and secondly the

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[4] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp.9-12. Chatman describes his approach to narrative as 'dualist and structuralist, in the Aristotelian tradition' and posits 'a *what* and a *way*', calling 'the what of narrative' its 'story', and 'the way' - its 'discourse'. He grounds his theory in the writings of Roland Barthes, Tzvetan Todorov, Gérard Genette, Mikhail Bakhtin and Wayne Booth. In the pages that follow, I am using the term 'discourse' for 'symbols intentionally organised into a message'. See James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction* (Scottsdale, AR: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1997), p.8.
[5] In constructing their 'text', the revolutionaries were, as in Certeau's description of the process of writing, put in the position of the industrialist, the urban planner, or the Cartesian philosopher; they had to 'gérer l'espace, propre et distinct, où mettre en œuvre un vouloir propre'. See *L'Invention du quotidien,* p. 199.
[6] For example, Emmet Kennedy proposed three modes of viewing the Revolution through revolutionary imagination in the fine arts: reconciliation, celebrating the fatherhood of Louis XVI and the brotherhood of all men, and hoping for it to endure; the revolution as satire, through which 'the arts became vehicles to criticize and mock various orders, constitutions and figures of the old regime'; the commemorative mood, which glorifies and immortalizes the great events and the martyrs of the Revolution. See *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.235-292 (p.276).

Enlightenment, as a historical moment of powerful intellectual creativity which fed their project and made it possible for them to write their 'new story'. In fact, as Roger Chartier has pointed out, the revolutionaries consciously constructed 'a continuity' between the intellectual ferment of the Enlightenment and their project to reorganize the world, 'une continuité qui est avant tout l'oeuvre de justification et recherche de paternité'.[7] Moreover, as the revolutionaries were fired to create the world afresh, they set about replacing the symbolic system of the past by another, which would serve their purpose, and, perhaps more importantly, persuade the largest possible audience of the rightness of their cause. In doing that, they used violence in its various shades and expressions, as one of their main tools. For between revolution and violence, there is a fundamental link. Revolutions, in their modern conception, are overthrows, and violence is inherent in them.[8] Hannah Arendt's classic statement about violence in revolutions is as follows:

> [t]he relevance of the problem of beginning to the phenomenon of violence is obvious. That such a beginning must be intimately connected with violence seems to be vouched for by the legendary beginnings of our history as both biblical and classical antiquity report it: Cain slew Abel, and Romulus slew Remus; violence was the beginning and, by the same token, no beginning could be made without using violence, without violating.[9]

In the same vein, Simon Schama posits that 'in some depressingly unavoidable sense, violence *was* the Revolution itself'.[10] Moreover, revolutionary violence was purposeful, for – as it has been pointed out in an important recent book on public opinion in the

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[7] For an interesting discussion of the relationship between Enlightenment and Revolution and a compelling commentary on Daniel Mornet's *Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française,* see Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles de la Révolution française* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), translated by Lydia G. Cochrane as *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), esp. the chapter 'Lumières et Révolution, Révolution et Lumières', pp. 11-31. The quotation is from p. 15.

[8] On the modern concept of 'revolution' (stemming from *revolutio* - revolve, 'the action of a celestial object of moving in a circular or elliptical orbit or course around another; the apparent movement of the sun, stars, etc., round the earth; a single circuit of this nature [...], the recurrence or repetition of [...] an event; an anniversary', among other meanings given in *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, ed. by Lesley Brown, 1993), see Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963); Keith M. Baker, 'Revolution', in Colin Lucas, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture* , vol.2, *The Political Meaning of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), pp. 41-62; Mona Ozouf, 'Révolution', in *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, ed. by François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), pp. 847-58.

[9] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, p.10.

[10] See *Citizens* (London: Viking, 1989), p.xv. In fact, the idea of revolutionary violence, and especially the violence of the Terror have generated intense controversy in the historiography of the French Revolution and the debate is far from over. Thus, it is generally held by the Marxist interpreters of the Revolution that the Terror was 'the natural and inevitable climax' of the revolutionary events, whereas to the post-revisionist trend, the Terror was the 'inevitable outcome of the Revolution's political culture'. See T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolution: Class War or Culture Clash?,* 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp.54-5.

French Revolution – it was 'a deliberate means of legitimation by purification'.[11] In the pages that follow, the metaphor of rhetoric as violence represents an implicit aspect of my study. Thus, I examine revolutionary violence in its various verbal, visual and physical forms. It is my argument that since the revolutionaries were particularly aware of the power of rhetoric as symbolic expression, rhetorical violence was at the core of the revolutionary discourses which competed for legitimacy.

The term 'rhetoric' implies degrees of ambiguity, not least in that it can be seen from two viewpoints: namely activity – what we say and do with language – and interpretation – symbolic practices in the broadest sense, codified arts, theories of language. Existing scholarship on revolutionary rhetoric from the classical perspective, seen as the art of speaking, deals either with the political speeches or with the political language of the time, while a number of studies, published over the last three decades, have thrown new light on the cultural legacy of the Revolution from the perspective of its symbolic practices.

A number of contemporary texts and most of the early nineteenth-century histories of the Revolution provide various degrees of information on the great orators of the Revolution.[12] Of the late nineteenth-century historians, Alphonse Aulard was the first to put together the speeches of the Revolution. In his book *L'Eloquence parlementaire pendant la Révolution française* (first published in 1882), a compilation of the great speeches of the time, accompanied with brief profiles of the orators, he for the first time systematically studied and analysed the great political orators of this epoch. The first volume deals with the Constituent Assembly, and the second and the third, which form another separate piece of work, deal with the Legislative Assembly and the Convention.[13] The speeches of the French Revolution have, on the one hand, an extraordinary historical value, as we can understand the way a political culture was created at a time of upheaval and rapid revolutionary change; and they have also, on the other hand, a great literary value, as some of them represent real masterpieces of poetry and oratory art. Another important work in this field is *The Principal Speeches of the Statesmen and Orators of the French Revolution 1789-1795*, in two volumes, a collection of important speeches

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[11] See Jon Cowans, *To Speak for the People: Public opinion and the Problem of legitimacy in the French Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p.195.
[12] From memorial literature like Madame de Staël's *Considérations*, Thibaudeau's *Mémoires*, and H.M. Williams' *Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre* to Histories of the Revolution written by Mignet, Michelet, Lamartine, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Louis Blanc, Quinet, Tocqueville, Thomas Carlyle, and others.
[13] See Alphonse Aulard, *Les Orateurs de la Révolution : Les Orateurs de l'Assemblée constituante ; La Législative et la Convention*, 3 vols (Paris, Cornély, 1905-7).

delivered during the Revolution, edited by H. Morse Stephens, who also wrote a *History of the French Revolution*. The books contain invaluable information and many reports and speeches never reprinted before, including information on the guidance given by Robespierre to Saint-Just. These are fragments containing the Notes furnished by Robespierre to Saint-Just for the preparation of his report against the Dantonists, read to the Convention on 11 Germinal An II /31 March 1794. They are of the greatest historical value and they were published for the first time in the United Kingdom, in the Appendix of the book.

Apart from these main collections of speeches published at the turn of the last century, there was practically no major similar publication in recent times until François Furet and Ran Halévy's first volume of the *Orateurs de la Révolution Française* with preface and annotations, appeared in 1989.[14] A year earlier, Patrick Brasart published *Paroles de la Révolution: Les Assemblées parlementaires 1789-1794*, a detailed study of the structure and workings of the revolutionary assemblies with profiles of the main orators, which, in addition to giving an interesting historical overview of the birth of revolutionary rhetoric from a classical perspective, provides interesting insight into the parliamentary practices of this era, examines some aspects of the art of speaking as persuasion and the message/reception process, and opens up new perspectives for further research in the field of parliamentary rhetoric.[15] Also in 1989, Jacques Guilhaumou, who had already worked extensively on revolutionary language, and directed the *Dictionnaire des usages politiques du Français (1770-1815)*,[16] added his *La Langue politique et la Révolution française: De l'événement à la raison linguistique*,[17] followed, several years later, by another major work in the field of linguistics, *L'Avènement des porte-parole de la République (1789-1792): Essai de synthèse sur les langages de la Révolution française*.[18]

Thus, research on revolutionary rhetoric was revived in the final third of the twentieth century, and especially around the bicentennial of the French Revolution, when scholars both in France and in the English-speaking world began to devote more time to

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[14] François Furet et Ran Halévy, eds., *Orateurs de la Révolution Française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989) I: *La Constituante*.
[15] See Patrick Brasart, *Paroles de la Révolution: Les Assemblées parlementaires 1789-1794* (Paris: Minerve, 1988). See also Patrick Brasart, 'L'Eloquence révolutionnaire (1789-1794)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Tours, 1992).
[16] Together with Françoise Dougnac and Annie Geffroy, first five volumes published (Paris: Klincksieck, 1985-1991).
[17] (Paris: Meridiens Klincksieck, 1989)
[18] (Paris: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 1998).

this much-neglected subject. It has recently started to attract even wider attention, with debate about the nature of the revolutionary legacy and the role of historiography.[19]

Historiography and rhetoric

Historiography plays an important role in the constitution of historical knowledge. Nowhere is this more contentious than the French Revolution, even given 1989 and the collapse of communism. In the wake of the French revolutionary events, and during the two centuries that followed, a huge number of histories of the Revolution have been written and re-written from a variety of perspectives, and historical writing has generated much controversy and debate over a host of competing interpretations. Today, the passionate historiographical debate about the legacy of the Revolution is still open.[20]

From a theoretical perspective, there were two main historiographical approaches to the French Revolution, which can also be applied to the interpretation of revolutionary discourse: the French Marxist school and the Anglo-Saxon revisionist school of Revolutionary studies. Within these, the Marxist interpretation, or the turn towards social history, and the revisionist, are to a large extent identifiable in this field with cultural studies.[21]

When discussing modern French historiography on the Revolutionary period, it should be pointed out that since its beginnings as an academic subject, when Alphonse Aulard accepted the first chair at the Sorbonne in 1891,[22] up to the present time, the history of the French Revolution has been at the centre of the ideological debate between the Left and the Right in France. Indeed, the concept of revolution has played a decisive role in the constitution of modern France's political identity.[23] The question of the origins

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[19] See, for example, Lynn Hunt's chapter on 'The Rhetoric of Revolution' in *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 19-51; Winfried Busse and Jürgen Trabant, eds., *Les idéologues: Sémiotique, théories et politiques linguistiques pendant la Révolution française* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986); 'Communicating', in Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.293-328; 'Political Language: Speaking for the Revolution', in Noel Parker, *Portrayals of Revolution: Images, Debates and Patterns of Thought on the French Revolution* (London: Harvester, 1990), pp.13-37; John Renwick, ed., *Language and Rhetoric of the Revolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1990), and a number of other works which will be referred to in the following pages.

[20] For a detailed analysis of the discursive dimension of historical writing and the role of the historian as a writer and producer of texts, see Ann Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation: Three Narrative Histories of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[21] For a discussion of the present state of the debate and detailed suggestions for further reading on this matter, see T.C.W. Blanning, *Class War or Culture Clash?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

[22] See François Furet, 'Histoire universitaire de la Révolution', in *Dictionnaire critique,* pp 979-97 (980).

[23] See Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution: The Intellectual Left in Postwar France* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 124.

and the outcome of the revolutionary events is one of the main questions of dispute, for the official academic history of the Revolution has been appropriated by the intellectual Left.[24]

Within the French school, the Marxist interpretation of revolutionary discourse, in the tradition established by Albert Mathiez, Georges Lefebvre and Albert Soboul,[25] who saw the Revolution as a conflict between social classes, maintains that language is a reflection of social reality and is essentially based on the idea of the base and the superstructure.[26] Such a view closely mirrors the position established in the Soviet Union during the era of the Marxist - Leninist interpretation of cultural production, and in particular, of the writings of the French Revolution. Thus, the part dedicated to French revolutionary writings in the official publication of the USSR Academy of Sciences, *Istorija Francuzskoj Literatury* expressed the view – indeed at a much earlier stage than any interest shown in the Western world towards the cultural legacy, and in particular, towards the literature of the French Revolution (1789-1794) – that the literary creation of the period was a 'specific form of social consciousness'.[27] A similar treatment of the question is given by communist historians and critics in France like Maurice Dommanget and, especially, by Daniel Hamiche in his book on revolutionary theatre,[28] which represents yet another token of the French Communists' intellectual commitment to the

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[24] François Furet wrote about 'la mainmise de l'histoire sociale sur l'histoire révolutionnaire'. See *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris : Gallimard, 1983), p. 22.

[25] See Furet and Ozouf, *Dictionnaire critique,* pp. 982-9; Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, pp. 4, 126; Keith Baker and Steven Kaplan, 'Editors' Introduction', in Roger Chartier, pp. xiv-xv.

[26] Thus, commenting on a choice of revolutionary speeches, Roger Garaudy wrote: 'Du point de vue esthétique et littéraire, l'objet essentiel d'une étude des orateurs de la Révolution est de montrer comment la transformation économique, politique et sociale de la France a conditionné un renouvellement de l'homme total, une inversion de son attitude à l'égard du monde et de sa propre vie et, par suite, a modifié entièrement le climat humain de l'art et de la beauté.' See Roger Garaudy, ed., *Les Orateurs de la Révolution française* (Paris: Larousse, 1989), p.31.

[27] See Anisimov, I.I., Y.I.Danilin et al., *Istorija Francuzskoj Literatury*, 4 vols (Leningrad/Moskva: A.N. SSSR: 1956-59) II: *1789-1870*, (Moskva: ANSSSR, 1956), 11-80. All analyses and commentaries on the subject stress the bourgeois character of the Revolution, whose 'objective historical task' was the 'liquidation of the feudal relations of production' and the 'feudal form of exploitation' which were to be replaced by 'capitalist relations of production', or by 'a new, more progressive form of exploitation, the capitalist one' (pp.7, 12-13). The objective conditions of the epoch and the low state of development of the forces of production 'made satisfying the masses' needs' historically impossible. Special interest is given to the active and decisive part played by the masses, including peasants, workers and small retailers, and the authors are heavily reliant on references from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Herzen, Dobroljubov, Belinski, Lunacharski and other theorists of the Marxist-Leninist literary school.

[28] From the opening lines of his *Introduction*, Hamiche states that theatre, drama, the whole theatrical institution are essential parts of the 'social superstructure': '[s]i la base économique d'une société est le déterminant de la superstructure, il faut souligner que cette dernière peut réagir sur la base.' See Daniel Hamiche, *Le Théâtre de la Révolution: La lutte de classes au théâtre en 1789 et en 1793* (Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1973), p. 11. The above is followed by extensive quotations of Engels, Marx, Lenin, Mao, and Enver Hoxha, alternating with others, taken from Robespierre, Marat, Babeuf, Mably, and Buonaroti's works.

language of revolution and of the affiliation they sought, both historiographically and linguistically, in the radical politics of the Jacobins.[29] Such an interpretation of revolutionary language from the perspective of its social dimension is represented in France, among others, mainly in the works of Renée Balibar, Régine Robin and Jacques Guilhaumou.[30] In the United States, William Sewell, who has published a book on the language of labour in the years of the Revolution, has followed this trend. He has grounded his research on the 'new social history', and studied the changes that occurred in corporate language from the Old Regime until 1848.[31]

However, in the late 70s, the French historian François Furet gave a 'revisionist' interpretation of the French Revolution. Furet's name is associated with 'le Débat français', as he criticised the Marxist account of the events in the light of historical materialism.[32] Without diminishing the importance of 1789 – on the contrary, he emphasised its dimensions as 'one of those great universal events in history'[33] – Furet attacked overtly 'les historiens communistes de la Révolution française' in his writings.[34] Furet was the first to analyse the difference between *histoire commémorative* and *histoire conceptuelle*,[35] reflecting Michelet's and Tocqueville's contrasting accounts of the Revolution; in fact, he sees its period of development, between 1789 and 1794, as 'la

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[29] For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing Revolution*, pp.15-9. After the Liberation, when the Gaullists and the Communists were competing for political power in the process of rebuilding the French nation, divided by the Vichy regime, the Communists, grounding their claims on Marxist theory, gave their own historiographical account of the Revolution and revived the populist language of the period. On adopting the cult of 1789 by the French Communists, their reinterpreting the revolutionary events, and the political arguments between the Right and the Left on this subject, see Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 59-61.

[30] See Jacques Guillaumou, *La Langue politique et la Révolution française* (Paris: Meridiens Klincksieck, 1989, p. 11: 'Nous voulons montrer que le rapport inaugural entre la langue et la politique se réfléchit [...] dans une série d'événements historico-linguistiques qu'il importe de décrire si l'on veut rendre compte de la dynamique spécifique à la langue politique pendant la Révolution française.[...] nous essayons de décrire la langue politique des révolutionnaires en tant que catégorie réflexive de la conscience sociale et à partir de la dimension proprement linguistique de l'événement discursif.' See also Jacques Guilhaumou, 'Rhétorique et antirhétorique à l'époque de la Révolution Française', in *La Légende de la Révolution,* ed. by Christian Crosille et Jean Ehrard (Clermont-Ferrand: Université Blaise-Pascal, 1986). See also Marc-Eli Blanchard, *Saint-Just et Cie: La Révolution et les mots* (Paris: Nizet, 1980).

[31] See William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Sewell Jr published another book, *A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution: The Abbé Sieyès and What is the Third Estate?*, in 1994.

[32] See François Furet, *Marx et la Révolution française* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986). See also Sunil Khilnani, *Arguing*, pp. 173-5.

[33] In 'Une Révolution sans révolution?' (interview), *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 February 1986, pp.90-3. Quoted in Sunil Khilnani, p. 224n.

[34] See François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, p. 9. Himself a former member of the Communist Party, Furet was 'disenchanted with Marxism' and also abandoned the 'Annales' school to which he had subscribed for a number of years. See Keith Baker and Steven Kaplan, 'Editors' Introduction', in Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, p. xvi.

[35] Italics mine. See François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, pp. 13-32. In further notes, I shall be referring either to the French original, or to the English translation of this work.

rapide dérive d'un compromis avec le principe représentatif vers le triomphe sans partage de cette magistrature d'opinion: évolution logique, puisque dès l'origine la Révolution a constitué le pouvoir avec de l'opinion'.[36] To him, the Revolution created a world where representations of power governed all actions, and where political life was completely dominated by a network of signs. Thus, Furet argued that from the outset language had become the means of conquering and retaining real power.[37] He presented revolutionary discourse as a source and instrument of power in constructing the new political space. If power resided in words, then, the conflict of interests for power was replaced by the conflict between words – the symbolic struggle of competing discourses which aimed at appropriating the right to speak in the name of the people, as the people, or rather 'the people's will' ('la volonté du peuple') was the new locus where power resided. In Furet's view, the French Revolution established new symbolic practices that added new layers of meanings to politics.[38]

Furet also discussed the question of the deceptive character of revolutionary rhetoric. For him, the spoken word, which occupied 'toute la scène de l'action' during the revolutionary years, was constantly under suspicion, for it was by its very nature ambiguous. 'Elle [la parole] vise au pouvoir en même temps qu'elle en dénonce l'inévitable corruption'.[39]

A prominent French historian sharing Furet's views, whose name is associated with writings on the discourse of the Revolution, is Mona Ozouf. In her seminal study of the revolutionary festivals, she adopted the Durkheimian view of the integrative functions and the rallying effects of rituals as symbolic action.[40] A number of French historians involved in studies of symbolic practices, such as Michel Vovelle – whose writings are associated mainly with the history of *mentalités,*[41] Maurice Agulhon, Jean Starobinski, Pierre Nora, Daniel Arasse and others, started to consider the Revolution from its political

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[36] Furet, *Penser la Révolutuion*, pp. 72-3.

[37] Ibid., pp. 72-80.

[38] 'Il s'agit de savoir *qui* représente le peuple, ou l'égalité, ou la nation: c'est la capacité à occuper cette position symbolique et à la conserver, qui définit la victoire. De ce point de vue, l'histoire de la Révolution, entre 1789 et 1794, pendant sa période de développement, peut être considérée comme la rapide dérive d'un compromis avec le principe représentatif vers le triomphe sans partage de cette magistrature d'opinion : évolution logique, puisque dès l'origine la Révolution a constitué le pouvoir avec de l'opinion.' Ibid., pp. 72-3.

[39] Ibid., p.74.

[40] See Mona Ozouf, *La Fête révolutionnaire 1789 – 1799* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), trans. by Alan Sheridan as *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[41] For a more detailed discussion of 'l'histoire des mentalités' and the cleavage between historiographical use of American symbolical anthropology and French socio-cultural history, see the Introduction to Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 3-16. The Introduction and half of the essays that make up this book have first appeared in English.

aspects, as 'the birth of democracy', rather than 'the emergence of the bourgeoisie into the political arena'[42], a claim associated with the Marxist interpretation of the French Revolution. Their names have been associated with the methods of cultural anthropology and the psycho-cultural trend in historiography, and their works have been devoted to studying the significance of revolutionary political culture.[43]

The idea of the 'birth of democracy' also inspired the research of Geneviève Fraisse, but from a different perspective. She uses texts to interpret the history of the representation of sexual difference. Studying the questions of shared human identity and social equality as one of the founding principles of the Revolution, and sexual difference as embodying a logic of domination, she gives a gendered account of the discourse of the Revolution as controlled to a great extent by self-representation and the imaginary; that is, the way the revolutionaries were fantasising about their actions.[44]

Although in France the cultural approach to the Revolution is identified with the revisionist account, there are some cases where social aspects and cultural insights coexist in the works of some of the 'orthodox' Marxist historians.[45]

The Anglo-Saxon interpretation of the Revolution articulates the difference between the socio-economic grounding in analysing events by causal laws of explanation and the emphasis on decoding meaning. Since 1954, when Alfred Cobban, the 'father of revisionism', attacked for the first time the 'myth' of the bourgeois revolution in his inaugural lecture to University College, London, by throwing light upon the membership of the Constituent Assembly, a new space opened up before historical research, filled by an interest in the imaginary.[46] From then on, the history of revolutionary France and the history of art became intrinsically linked. From Richard Cobb, with his skilful descriptions of *le petit peuple*, to his follower Simon Schama who, in his *Citizens*, adopted the narrative form of nineteenth-century chronicles, to Theodore Zeldin's *pointillism* in the description of the individual, and George Rudé's psychologism in *The*

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[42] See S. Khilnani, p. 174.

[43] See the Foreword to Mona Ozouf's book *The Festivals and the French Revolution,* by Lynn Hunt, pp. IX-X.

[44] See Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison: la démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Aix-en-Provence: Alinéa, 1989), trans. Jane Marie Todd as *Reason's Muse: Sexual Difference and the Birth of Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[45] See, for example, Lefebvre's studies of the collective psychology of panic, in his book *La Grande peur*; similarly, Soboul's interest for the cults of popular saints and martyrs in his *Sentiments religieux et cultes populares pendant la Révolution,* interest inspired by Gramsci and Althusser's theories. For a fuller account on this point, see Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994), pp.219-23.

[46] Alfred Cobban's most important articles were published in *Aspects of the French Revolution* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968).

Crowd in the French Revolution, British historiography shows fascinating and novel interpretations of revolutionary practices.[47]

In the United States, we should note the influence, in the field of cultural history, of Victor Turner or Max Gluckman's symbolic anthropology, and, more particularly, of Clifford Geertz's social hermeneutics. Anthropology as a science of interpretation and uncovering of meaning, has become a favourite method for historians of culture who 'sought to dig beneath the formal productions of law, literature, science, and art to the codes, clues, hints, signs, gestures, and artefacts through which people communicate their values and their truths. Most important, scholars began to see that culture particularizes meaning because cultural symbols are endlessly reshaped in everyday social encounters'.[48]

History, story and rhetoric

For a long time, historians had been examining primary records by placing a special emphasis on the unfolding of events, giving their own political interpretation to contemporary documents and narratives. However, the relationship between literature and history has raised a number of questions about narrative and interpretation, or reproduction and signification, and both literary theorists and historians are now using semiotics and textual analyses in evaluating the symbolic meaning of historical data and the role of historical discourse. Paying a growing attention to the role of symbolic production as an object of study, but also to their own role of interpreters and decoders of signs, historians are moving away from a simply documentary approach to a textual one.[49]

As stated earlier, it is Clifford Geertz' interpretive theory, or his method of interpretive anthropology, drawing on a vast contextualisation and linked to 'text analogy', which has informed the project to analyse socio-political phenomena from a literary perspective, or 'to treat a society as a text' over the last thirty years or so. This project is known by the name of *linguistic turn*.

The 'textual' approach to French Revolutionary studies has been developed by the American historian Lynn Hunt, who belongs to the group of Anglo-Saxon historians, art

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[47] See Robert Gildea, *The Past*, pp. 7-9.
[48] See Joyce Appleby, p.218.
[49] For a more detailed analysis of the mid-nineteenth-century histories of the French Revolution, see Ann Rigney, *The Rhetoric of Historical Representation*, pp. X-XI. Drawing on Roland Barthes' *Le Discours de l'histoire*, and *L'effet du réel*, Hayden White's *Metahistory* and Michel de Certeau's *L'écriture de l'histoire*,

historians, literary critics and anthropologists linked to the journal *Representations*, published at Berkeley at the beginning of the eighties, and advancing the idea of a 'new cultural history' as a 'purely American' phenomenon.[50] Hunt has taken Furet's arguments further in developing the psycho-cultural context of the Revolution. She has centred her research on the political practices and the cultural structures underlying the power relationships during the Revolution. In her view, the revolution in politics was 'an explosive interaction between ideas and reality, between intention and circumstance, between collective practices and social context.'[51]

In her account of revolutionary politics, Lynn Hunt approaches the rhetoric of the Revolution from the perspective of Northrop Frye's 'generic plots'. She interprets the transformation of narrative structures that informed revolutionary rhetoric by a shift from comedy to romance, and then to tragedy. Thus, in the first years of reconciliation, comedy turns on a conflict between the *Ancien Régime* and the new social order, and this conflict is often dividing a son who wants to free himself from his arbitrary and conventional father. In the plot of comedy, the blocking characters are usually reconciled rather than repudiated altogether. A festive ritual celebrates the final reconciliation, as the happy emergence of the new society.

As reconciliation does not last, however, and the narrative of the Revolution does not come to a close in 1790, rhetoric, dominated by the radicals, moves on to the generic plot of romance. The Revolution is represented like a quest in which the heroes have to struggle against the demonic forces of counter-revolution.

The third generic plot is the one of tragedy and Hunt identifies it with the period of Terror. In tragedy, she writes,

> the half-human, half-divine hero (in France, the increasingly isolated republican leadership) has had an extraordinary destiny almost within his grasp, and the glory of his efforts never quite fades. The tragedy is that the goal was so right, yet the quest for it inevitably failed. The heroes who nevertheless made the attempt were making a noble sacrifice of themselves for the sake of the community.[52]

Rigney examines discursive representations and analyses of events as 'signifying constructs', or 'verbal fictions'.
[50] See Jacques Revel's Preface to the French translation of Lynn Hunt's book, *Le Roman familial de la Révolution française*, trad. Jean-François Sené (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995), p.II.
[51] See the chapter on 'The Rhetoric of Revolution', in Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, pp.19-51 (esp. pp. 12-13).
[52] See Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, pp.34-7. Hunt has developed further the family theme in her account of the Revolution through the prism of the Freudian family model. See *The Family Model of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). On the questions of paternal power and brotherhood, see also: Lynn Hunt, 'Discourses of Patriarchalism and anti-patriarchalism in the French

And, concludes Hunt, as the rhetoric of tragedy requires the noblest diction, the revolutionaries spoke their most dramatic lines during the Terror.

What especially interests me in Lynn Hunt's analysis of the politics of the French Revolution is her insistence on narrative and textuality in interpreting events, and the emphasis she gives to the explosiveness of revolutionary language and the constant tensions that governed revolutionary rhetoric. Indeed, Keith Baker has summarised these strengths in Hunt's account in the following terms:

> Hunt is right to emphasise that the text of the Revolution was constantly subverted, and that the claims of those enacting it were persistently undermined, by tensions and contradictions inherent within it. To understand these latter is to grasp why language remained so explicitly at issue, and so highly charged, throughout the revolutionary period. But this, in turn, requires us to approach that language as a historical creation. Because the French Revolution assumed its meaning as a radical rupture with the past, because it sought so unremittingly to cleanse itself from history, one is tempted to approach it as a radically new text of human action.[53]

The above commentary forcefully sums up the reasons I find Furet and Hunt's accounts so central to my study. Following Furet, Hunt explores 'how political language could be used rhetorically to build a sense of community and at the same time to establish new fields of social, political, and cultural struggle – that is, make possible unity and difference at the same time'.[54] These are problems that are central to my reading of French revolutionary rhetoric through the lens of Bakhtin's theories. The 'radically new text of human action' Keith Baker writes about could be termed 'the new epic' the revolutionaries created about themselves in their desire to break with the past. The 'tensions and contradictions' inherent within the text of the Revolution could be read as the centripetal and centrifugal forces of unity and diversity which underpin Bakhtin's monologue/dialogue dichotomy.

Dorinda Outram gives another textual approach to French Revolutionary events. In her gendered interpretation – which, like Hunt's, owes much to François Furet's approach – the Revolution opened up a new public space where new public bodies, invested with heroic dignity, delivered competing linguistic discourses to audiences made possible by mass politics. Following Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of *behaviour*, Outram claims that the symbolic physical behaviour of the participants in the French Revolution expressed

Revolution', in John Renwick, ed., *Language and Rhetoric of the Revolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp.25-40.
[53] See Keith Michael Baker, 'Introduction', in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.1-11 (p.10).
[54] See Lynn Hunt, 'Introduction: History, Culture, and Text', in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 1-22 (p.17).

through the use of the body, had a public resonance and so played a crucial role in the creation of the political culture of the Revolution. Not only was the body as political symbol invested with relations of power and domination; it created also those power relations, and the personal charisma of the orators as 'personifications of value systems' played a crucial role in constructing a new political ideology. Developing Furet's argument that the revolutionary experience was 'a competition for legitimacy among various sections of the French middle class through the appropriation of a validating political discourse and its embodiment,' Outram claims that as the competing discourses failed to obtain a decisive victory, a major task facing the 'new middle class' was to redistribute 'various attributes of the king's body throughout the new body politic' in the new public space. Outram concludes that the Revolution was committed to antifeminine rhetoric because it ascribed power to women in the Old Regime. In her view, Furet's account is 'gender-blind' and 'the record of discourse is separated from that of behaviour, embodiment and subjectivity.' Nevertheless, she admits his argument that words were synonymous of power, and that the French Revolution was 'the first point in French history at which persuasion of a mass audience was crucial and an integral part of the political phenomenon'.[55]

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It is against the background of these overlapping political, cultural, and literary historical contexts that I propose to study the discourse of the French Revolution and to give a new reading of a selection of documents and literary texts.

The Revolution was a multi-faceted event mobilising the theories of the Enlightenment, the music of the early romantics, and the painting of neo-classicism; all genres dedicated to creating a new aesthetic, whose main purpose was educating. In this huge project, the revolutionaries' new ideas sought inspiration in the past of Antiquity; their new, secular religion, which epitomised the utopian dreams of generations for a better world, pretended for novelty and coined unusual forms like the Civic calendar, yet drew to a great extent on Christianity. Moreover, the revolutionaries' will to educate went

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[55] See Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class, and Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 3-5, 22-29, 157.

The above historiographical overview is far from exhaustive. There is a huge literature on the French Revolution and it is not my task to analyze all these writings. However, I shall mention a number of authors the above lines have not death with and on whose works I shall draw to a greater or lesser extent in the pages that follow. These are Keith Baker and Roger Chartier, James Billington and Noel Parker, Peter France and John Renwick, Carol Blum and Susan Dunn, Emmet Kennedy and Daniel Arasse, René Girard and Yves-Marie Bercé, to name only a few.

hand in hand with persuasion as a main tool of political propaganda – a word and concept whose modern meaning was born in the days of the Revolution.

In the first years of the French Revolution rhetorical practices were mainly about words, but they were also the vehicles for the construction of symbolic meanings, and, at a time of rapid revolutionary reformulation of political structure and ideology, those symbolic constructions took the most diverse forms, from the tricolour cockade to revolutionary paintings, from the civic festivals to the radical theatre, from the revolutionary songs to the spectacle of the guillotine, from the dances around the liberty trees to the pamphlets and political caricature. For, in human history, rhetoric has culturally evolved into different and sometimes more complex forms in conjunction with other aspects of cultural evolution. Political institutions, religious practices, such as myth making and rituals, and artistic representations creating symbols are all part of this process.[56]

In this study I shall concentrate mainly on verbal and visual rhetorical forms, as they played a key role in the formation of the new citizen. I shall draw on parliamentary speeches, revolutionary caricature and republican stage representation, as well as on festivals as symbolic practices. I shall also look at the way words were combined with images in the creation of meaning. My approach will be a study of the rhetoric of the Revolution both from the perspective of its *meaning* and *the way it worked*.[57] In interpreting revolutionary rhetorical phenomena, I shall apply the methodology of literary theory in the field of cultural history, drawing on the writings of historians, historians of culture, art historians and literary theorists. These authors may well differ extensively in some aspects of their writings; I shall only use that which supports my own insight of the working of symbolic practices in historical context.[58]

As stated earlier, I propose to look at the discourse of the revolutionaries from a textual perspective, yet opening new dimensions. Rather than a shift from comedy to tragedy through romance, as in Lynn Hunt's account, the unfolding of revolutionary

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[56] See George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.4-5.

[57] For a more detailed discussion on the divergences between 'unity' and 'difference' or 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction' in anthropological writing, see Lynn Hunt, 'Introduction: History, Culture, and Text', in Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History*, pp. 14-15.

[58] As Hunt wrote, 'historians of culture [...] do not have to choose (or really cannot choose) [...] between unity and difference, between meaning and working, between interpretation and deconstruction. Just as historians need not choose between sociology and anthropology or between anthropology and literary theory in conducting their investigations, neither must they choose once and for all between interpretive strategies based on uncovering meaning on the one hand and deconstructive strategies based on uncovering the text's modes of production on the other.' See *The New Cultural History*, p. 16.

narrative could be interpreted through the prism of Bakhtin's dialogism. My approach will be both historical, exploring the political shift from the dialogue of the revolutionary beginnings to the monologue of the Terror, and rhetorical, analysing the monologic forces of tension and control as intertwined and in constant struggle with the boundless openness and infiniteness of constructive and destructive dialogue. For, as Bakhtin wrote, 'dialectics was born of dialogue'.[59]

Of course, it should be said from the outset that the sheer amount of information associated with the unfolding of the revolutionary events and their transposition into contemporary rhetoric, makes this an impossibly large enterprise. On the other hand, precisely due to the nature of the events and in order to better illustrate the above argument, such type of study needs to cover a larger historical span. This is why I shall look at the period from 1789 to 1794 (until the 9 Thermidor). The aim of this study is therefore to illustrate, through narrative theory, the way in which the story of the Revolution about itself was delivered and transposed into different mediums over the five-year period (1789-1794).[60] In doing so, I shall use Bakhtin's concepts of dialogue and monologue to demonstrate my claims.

In a broader, philosophical sense, Bakhtin's dialogism could be applied to illustrate many political systems at different times of human history, with monologue connoting any form of authoritarian rule imposing single truths, whereas dialogue, with its openness to new ideas and diversity, may be associated with any form of democratic government that respects human rights and the plurality of opinion. Indeed, monologue and dialogue, which are yet another expression of unity and diversity, are inextricably linked: they epitomise the never-ending struggle between the centripetal forces of control and the centrifugal forces of transgression. Moreover, in the light of Bakhtin's dialogic imagination, they are in constant interaction.

In the revolutionary years, the multi-voicedness of the beginnings, the political and philosophical effervescence, the openness to debate and new ideas, the factions competing to fill the political space, the word coinage, indeed the whole astonishing enterprise to change the world by breaking rules, transgressing established patterns and exploring new territories in order to establish new freedoms, but also new 'truths', suggest 'a plurality of equally authoritative ideological positions',[61] which I shall term dialogic interactions. The

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[59] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p.162.
[60] See note 4 above (p.1) on Seymour Chatman's approach to narrative.
[61] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.18.

ultimate idea of the triptych *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, presiding over every revolutionary effort for changes could be considered, in Bakhtin's terms, as 'a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other'.[62] By contrast, the monologic discourse and the 'truths' imposed by the Terror were constructed as 'the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself'.[63]

From a different perspective, yet again stemming from Bakhtin's dialogism, the way in which the radicals transposed their story of the Revolution was twofold: they used the epic (monologic) structure for the purpose of educating and glorifying the new ideals, as much as a serio-comical, carnivalesque (dialogic) rhetoric to destroy old values, to erase old 'truths', and to sow the seeds of republicanism in an impressionable audience.[64] On a deeper level, Bakhtin's theory of the word or utterance could illustrate the revolutionaries' rhetorical struggle for power. In constructing their epic story, the radicals appropriated the 'word' and deliberately transformed it into a 'single-voiced word'. In their discourse, they used the 'single-voiced word' directly, as 'object-oriented type' in parliamentary rhetoric, or indirectly, as the 'objectified form', incorporating their specific intentions in revolutionary 'characters', in theatrical representation, and in the arts. On the other hand, they used the 'double-voiced word' of satire and parody in theatre, caricature, and revolutionary songs for propaganda purposes. Yet in either case they subordinated it to their authorial 'strict intent'.[65]

It is interesting to analyse how by embracing the Liberty-Equality-Fraternity principles in the epic battle against the Old Regime, monologue gradually took over in radical discourse until it reached its highest point under the Terror and imposed a single-handed rule 'in the name of the people'. Through the achievements of the Revolution in the name of the people, the image of the people was deified; indeed it was substituted for

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] In discussing the genres of the serio-comical, Bakhtin pays special attention to Socratic dialogue and Menippean satire as two aspects of dialogic, 'carnivalized literature'. In his view, all genres of the serio-comical are related to reality: their subject is the 'living *present*'. They '*consciously* rely on *experience.*' [...] 'They reject the stylistic unity (or better, the single-styled nature) of the epic, the tragedy, high rhetoric, the lyric. Characteristic of these genres are a multy-toned narration, the mixing of high and low, serious and comic'. Among other 'inserted genres', they make wide use of parody. See *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.106-113.

[65] For a fuller commentary on Bakhtin's concept of 'the word', see David K. Danow, *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp.21-41. On the word as power struggle in discourse, see pp.29-31.

God. Ultimately, through the struggle for the right to represent 'the people's will',[66] the notion of 'the people' was invested with a new, epic power. This notion was adorned with an abstract, authoritarian value, despite its connotation of collectiveness; hence it became rigid and monological, lacking the freedom that dialogical interaction allows.[67]

Of the vast array of studies on the meaning and identity of the French Revolution, none concerned with its rhetoric has captured what is intended by this project. My account is not a historical survey of competing discourses in the wake of 1789, nor is it an overview of the cultural production of the Revolution. It is an attempt to take François Furet's argument one stage further by examining the ideology of the Revolution as a rhetorical system underpinned by dialogue and monologue. I argue that, by and large, the discourse of the Revolution was monological because it was a means of persuasion: it was also a way of reconstituting the social and political world. Yet the revolutionary poetics that informed the cultural creation of the first revolutionary years responded to a great extent to the demands of the day. It was persuasive-dialogical, as the whole revolutionary enterprise was dominated by an indomitable desire for transformation.

Grounding my research on the thesis that rhetoric is symbolic expression intentionally organised into a message, not only with the aim of influencing, but also as a means of achieving mutual meaning and of moving emotionally – a specific type of discourse in the broadest sense of the word – I have attempted to explore how the constructive rhetoric of the revolutionary beginnings degenerated into a destructive authoritarian discourse and how the dialogic nature of the former adopted the monologic characteristics of the Terror.

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[66] The right to express direct democracy and thus to control the Assemblies was gradually institutionalised in the Jacobin club (created in 1789 to maintain and propagate the principles of democracy and equality) which functioned as early as 1790 as 'l'image symbolique du peuple contrôlant l'Assemblée constituante, et préparant ses décisions.' In Furet's terms, Jacobinism laid down the model and the workings of direct democracy 'par la dictature d'opinion d'une société qui s'est approprié la première le discours de la Révolution sur elle-même.' See François Furet, *Penser la Révolution*, p.76.

[67] On the concept of Bakhtin's *epic monologism* (le monologisme épique), see Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', in *Critique* 239 (1967), pp.438-65 (p.452) : '*L'épique* qui se structure à des fins de syncrétisme met en évidence la double valeur du mot dans sa période post-syncrétique : parole d'un sujet ("je"), traversé inévitablement par le langage, porteur de concret et d'universel, d'individuel et de collectif. Mais, au stade épique, le locuteur (le sujet de l'épopée) ne dispose pas de la parole d'autrui. [...] Le principe d'organisation de la structure épique reste donc monologique. Le dialogue du langage ne s'y manifeste que dans l'infrastructure de la narration. Au niveau de l'organisation apparente du texte (énonciation historique/ énonciation discursive) le dialogue ne se fait pas ; les deux aspects de l'énonciation restent bornés par le point de vue absolu du narrateur qui coïncide avec le tout d'un dieu ou d'une communauté.' Kristeva's essay appeared in English as 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) pp. 64-91.

My research is also grounded on the assumption that the interplay of dialogue and monologue governed the entire rhetorical production of the radicals through the use of the epic and the menippea. The new epic, created by the revolutionaries, operated as the unifying, 'centripetal forces' that sustained the monological construct of the 'new order'. The menippea, by contrast, operated as the subversive 'centrifugal forces' of dialogue, which reveals itself through parody and the carnivalesque in the cultural production of the Revolution.

Throughout the French Revolution, all rhetorical forms became immensely politicised and sought to persuade the audiences in the rightness of the revolutionary cause: their main objective was the creation of new truths, but as the revolutionary experience developed, the need to persuade became more and more visible, gathering momentum in a peculiarly acute way under the Terror. The radical discourse thus constructed through naming and renaming, through coining new concepts and abolishing others sought to achieve 'meaning' through textual, visual and physical violence. Yet it was also impregnated with desire, made transparent through the fictional narratives of the revolutionaries as they shaped their ideal world. When constructing their text on the blank page of the new society that was to replace the *Ancien Régime*, the revolutionaries were writing an epic story. The act of writing represents itself a voyage, or rather - in Michel de Certeau's terms - 'une pratique itinérante, progresive et régulée – une marche [qui]

> compose l'artefact d'un autre 'monde', non plus reçu mais fabriqué. Le modèle d'une raison productrice s'écrit sur le non-lieu du papier. Sous des formes multiples, ce texte bâti sur un espace propre est l'utopie fondamentale et généralisée de l'Occident moderne.[68]

Political language and the fictitious construct of an ideal world were thus inextricably linked in radical discourse, and came to constitute the most important tool in the quest for power.

The utopian dream pursued by the revolutionaries through rhetorical constructions will therefore be another related aspect of my study. I am hoping to bring new insights into the way in which the poetics of utopia informed radical rhetoric and how it came to fill the vacuum in the political space left by the abolition of the *Ancien Régime*.

In sum, my aim is to contribute towards a better understanding of the discourse of revolutionary politics, illustrating how new symbolic practices, which were formed to shape attitudes, also acted as instruments of gaining and maintaining political power.

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[68] See Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien,* p.200.

I have organised my research in five chapters. *Chapter one* provides the theoretical background for my research and gives a brief overview of the existing literature in the field of rhetoric, and the theories and strategies I have adopted. The evolution of rhetoric as a concept has been dealt with in hundreds of thousands of pages. Nevertheless, some detailed reference is needed to classical rhetoric as 'the art of speaking', on the one hand, and to the 'new rhetoric' in the way it has been reworked in the present day, on the other. Further, the second half of this chapter examines in more detail Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism as a framework for the analysis of the rhetoric of the French Revolution.

From the period of the Constituent Assembly, when it all began, until the 9 Thermidor, the discourse of the French Revolution experienced major changes and a number of questions arise thereafter. How was it reshaped and what triggered those changes? Where were the concepts of 'innocence' and 'guilt' located? To what extent was language manipulated? How did political language act as an instrument of power? Why was the philosophical language of the Enlightenment, which opened brighter horizons, distorted by violence and fear? How was its dialogic form of the beginnings transformed into the aggressive, monological, authoritarian discourse of the Terror? As stated above, both at the level of representation and at the textual level, French revolutionary discourses were immensely politicised. Politics were set at the heart of speeches, pamphlets, caricature and literary production and therefore they all bore rhetorical characteristics and sought to persuade. The whole revolutionary debate was rhetorical, in the primary sense of the word, for its crucial task was to persuade the audiences about the new revolutionary 'truths'. Thus, *Chapter two* attempts to explore the question as to whether rhetoric is debate or oratory persuasion. Debate is usually associated with dialogue, whereas persuasion is, by definition, monologic. Yet in reality, dialogue and persuasion are not incompatible. In addition, this chapter analyses the evolution of revolutionary 'truth' and focuses on the revolutionaries' quest for power. From a Bakhtinian perspective, this chapter examines a range of texts illustrating the degradation of the dialogical discourse from the beginnings into the monologue of the Terror. It seeks to show the 'linguistic' manifestations of rhetoric and tries to investigate the rhetoric of ideological manipulation and political seduction. Further, through a selection of speeches, songs, caricatures, and symbolic practices like festivals, it applies the categories of epic and Menippean discourse. The epic was the medium through which

the radicals were glorifying their enterprise – the official vision of the revolutionary events – whereas the menippea was used in caricature, festivals and songs.

In *Chapter three*, entitled 'Representations of utopia in French revolutionary theatre', I attempt to examine rhetoric in some of its metaphorical extensions: the construction of a fictional narrative subordinated to the idea of 'revolutionary truth' and the creation and interpretation of myth through revolutionary theatre. Through the comparative analysis of two officially commissioned plays, *Nicodème dans la Lune* (1790) by Beffroi de Reigny, and *Le Jugement dernier des Rois* (1793) by Sylvain Maréchal, this chapter explores the poetics of utopia and deals with another set of questions. How was the revolutionary imagination represented in literary forms? How was the fictional world of the new ideas constructed? To what extent did the utopian adventure of the Enlightenment influence the shaping of people's minds? What was the role of the Theatre of the Revolution? In a detailed analysis of the two plays, this chapter examines dialogue and monologue in theatrical representation, articulated through the epic and the menippea.

In radical rhetoric, monologue reached its ultimate expression in the public decapitation. In staging the spectacle of the guillotine, the radicals brought to the audiences the fixed framework of a horrifying tale where the main character was not given the last word. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the ultimate and finalizing statement of this publicly exhibiting and confirming monologic ritual belonged to the authors. Yet by desacralizing the Father-King and by investing the Republic symbolically with divine rights, the political spectacle of the severed head embodied the monologue/dialogue dichotomy, where the Old and the New, Death and Rebirth interacted through the dialogic ritual of the transfer of sacrality. The guillotine amalgamated the epic and the carnivalesque, or, rather, it was, in the manner of the 'parallel festival' or the *journée*, the expression of what Bakhtin calls the 'serio-comical'. This represents yet another aspect of my study. Thus, *Chapter four* explores the spectacle of the guillotine and addresses the following questions: To what extent did the ritual of the scaffold respond to the eighteenth-century passion for popular spectacles and how did it relate to the most popular plays performed during the Terror? What was the 'rhetorical value' of the guillotine and where did it stand within the corpus of revolutionary drama? This chapter looks at the ritual of the guillotine as a form of carnival and expresses the view that although violence was banished from the official festival, the didactic setting of the guillotine made it to a large extent similar to a festival with carnivalesque elements.

Finally, *Chapter five* focuses on the interplay of dialogue and monologue through the relationship between tradition and innovation in radical rhetoric. In the context of the extraordinary variety of events, in which ideas and concepts erupted and then rapidly vanished, to be replaced by another idea, concept, experiment, how could the 'old' and the 'new' rhetorical forms in revolutionary imagery be distinguished? In an attempt to answer this question, I examine how, despite the revolutionaries determination to destroy the heritage of the *Ancien Régime* and to start building afresh, the Old lived through the new cultural forms they created. Thus, the aim of the final chapter is to assess how monologue and dialogue coexisted and interacted in the radicals' re-writing of the past while re-inventing the present. I discuss the relationship between innovation and tradition, or the interplay between the revolutionaries' determination to transform by creating a new, monologic epic, and the counteracting vitality of the old forms that continued to play an important role in radical imagery through a dialogue with the past. Hence, my attention is focused on another aspect of Bakhtin's dialogism. The key here is dialogue through intertextuality.

To conclude, the aim of my study is to give a new reading of the revolutionary struggle for political power in the light of Bakhtin's categories of monologue and dialogue. I am hoping to contribute towards a better understanding of the ways in which the radical story of the Revolution was transposed to different mediums in order to shape attitudes and minds, and how monologue and dialogue interacted in the creation of the new political culture.

Chapter One. Revolutionary discourse, rhetoric and 'truth'

Les Français ont fait, en 1789, le plus grand effort auquel se soit jamais livré aucun peuple, afin de couper
pour ainsi dire en deux leur destinée, et de séparer par un abîme ce qu'ils avaient été jusque-là
de ce qu'ils voulaient être désormais. Dans ce but, ils ont pris toutes sortes de précautions pour ne rien
emporter du passé dans leur condition nouvelle: ils se sont imposé toute sorte de contraintes
pour se façonner autrement que leurs pères; ils n'ont rien oublié enfin pour se rendre méconnaissables.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* [1]

Antiquity itself did not know the antiquity that we know now. [...]
In fact that temporal distance that transformed the Greeks into *ancient* Greeks had an immense
transformational significance: it was filled with increasing discoveries of new *semantic* values in antiquity,
values of which the Greeks were in fact unaware, although they themselves created them.

M. Bakhtin [2]

'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution,
circulation and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power
which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it.[...]
The problem is not changing people's consciousnesses or what's in their heads -
but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.

Michel Foucault [3]

The new interest in rhetorical theory during the last decades of the twentieth century has
taken different forms and brought forward a plurality of perceptions, and rhetoric has been
re-evaluated, reformulated and seen from various viewpoints and in manifold ways.[4]
While one group of authors have extended the traditional perception of rhetoric as the
study of argument, another group have been interested in re-conceptualising rhetoric as
the analysis of fictional narrative. A third group have attempted to reconcile philosophy
and rhetoric and have applied rhetorical insights to create a philosophy of discourse. In
fact, each of those thinkers has sought to apply classical rhetoric's categories to the

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[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1887), p.1.
[2] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. by Vern W. McGee, ed. by Caryl
Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p.6.
[3] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin
Gordon, trans. by Colin Gordon and others (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 109-133 (p.133). The above
quotation is given in English, as it first appeared in *Power/Knowledge*. See Colin Gordon's note, p. x.
[4] As Charles Bazerman wrote, '[i]nterpretive flexibility allows rhetoric, like Alice, to grow as small or as
large as you wish, depending on what kind of pill you would have us swallow'. See 'A Contention Over the
Term *Rhetoric*', in *Defining the New Rhetorics*, ed. by Theresa Enos and Stuart C. Brown (Newbury Park,
CA: Sage, 1993), pp. 3-7 (p.3).

diversity of their own theoretical enterprise.[5] Indeed, the various rhetorical theories are ultimately shaped by the particular philosophical worldviews of their proponents and represent 'an outgrowth of a particular intellectual climate; [...] one's theory of human symbolic influence is predicated upon a specific understanding of philosophical problems.'[6]

Most of the various aspects related to the modern definition of rhetoric as 'effective symbolic expression', grouped under the headings of 'art' and 'type of discourse'[7], could be identified in French revolutionary discourse. Symbolic action was purposefully practiced in the form of new rituals and insignia, in political speeches and in cultural production – for example theatre, poetry, songs and sculpture were used as tools of propaganda. Even political vandalism and the act of renaming participated in the creation of meaning. In an unprecedented passion for word-coinage, nearly two thousand new words were created during the revolutionary decade 1789-1799, while many others were given new meanings, symbolising new concepts brought by the Revolution, of which nearly five hundred have survived to the present day.[8] In a universe constructed of symbols, symbols made possible the transmission of experience by language alone; it was symbols again that allowed the author to transmit true or false messages, and audiences to imagine the possible, or to believe what they were told. An orator could easily persuade his audience by identifying with them. Thus new meaning was suggested by activating the aesthetic possibilities of signs through symbolic expression. The poetic imagination of revolutionary discourse played an important role in conveying the new message to the audiences. Indeed, the promise of a fairer world in the revolutionary projects as a whole enflamed the minds and fuelled the deeds of generations of revolutionaries. For the

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[5] See David Cohen, 'Classical Rhetoric and Modern Theories of Discourse', in *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action*, ed. by Ian Worthington (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.69-82 (p. 69). See also Robert Wess, *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric, Subjectivity, Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.1-38.

[6] See Richard Cherwitz, 'The Philosophical Foundations of Rhetoric', in *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, ed. by Richard A. Cherwitz (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990) pp.1-19 (6-7). In his overview, Cherwitz identifies various categories of thought that potentially impact rhetoric as '*realism, relativism, critical rationalism, idealism, materialism, existentialism, deconstructionism,* and *pragmatism*', placing the first four within the Anglo-American philosophical tradition, and associating the next three to Continental philosophical thought of the 19th and 20th centuries, pragmatism being rooted in both traditions: the Continental and the Anglo-American one.

[7] Rhetoric as a type of discourse: it seeks persuasion; it is planned; it considers the audience; it reveals human motives; it is a response and invites a response. Rhetoric as an art: it tests ideas; it provides voice for an idea; it distributes power; it shapes knowledge; it builds community, etc., see James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction* (Scottsdale: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, 1997), pp.5-30.

[8] Jacques Cellard, *Ah! Ça ira ça ira...: Ces mots que nous devons à la Révolution* (Paris : Balland, 1989), p VIII.

language of modern politics was produced to a large extent by the dialogue of imaginative symbols and theoretical disputes.[9]

The *Ancien Régime* was a rhetorical invention of the Revolution. It entered the language as a concept much later than the events, which triggered its creation,[10] and it would have been impossible without the temporal distance Bakhtin wrote about in the excerpt above. Yet, by the laws of dialectics, even before being brought into existence, it bore the ingredients that would shape the modern world. And while the notion of the *Ancient Greeks* was a discovery of generations which followed, the *Ancien Régime* was purposefully constructed with hindsight by those who had made fateful events possible, as they sought to draw a line between everything they had left behind and their revolutionary dreams.

Were the revolutionaries fully aware of what they were hoping to achieve? To a great extent, they were, and they believed in the novelty of their enterprise. But they also knew what they were against and the fact that they made such a sharp distinction between the Old and the New in their storytelling speaks of their determination to succeed. What they wanted was to break with the past and build an ideal world. This was a huge project, starting with a daring leap forward into the unknown, driven by something indefinable which generations of thinkers since Tocqueville have been trying to comprehend: the desire and the decision of a nation to question their past, to obliterate their ancestral traditions and to invent a new political identity for themselves.[11]

The very notion of *Ancien Régime* is a perfect example of how the revolutionaries moulded the linguistic material and made use of words that were not new to the language in order to create a new significance and to coin new concepts. It is this process of moving boundaries, of breaking the cultural conventions of textual practice, of generating ideas and shaping them into a new language, which was one of the most striking features of the Revolution. And it was this creativeness in the spirit of the Enlightenment that would put together abstract, universal notions for everyday use, foreshadowing the political discourse of the modern world, in order to carve out the progressive and democratic principles underlying the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* - a document that

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[9] See James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (London: Temple Smith, 1980), p.3.
[10] See Jacques Cellard, *Ah! Ça ira ça ira...*, p. 59.
[11] For a fuller investigation of this concept, see Diego Venturino, 'La Naissance de l' "Ancien Régime"', in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*: vol.2, *The Political Culture of the French Revolution,* ed. by Colin Lucas (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988), pp. 11-40.

is synonymous with modernity and still, two hundred years after its adoption, a touchstone for human freedoms.[12]

How could such revolutionary inventiveness construct a new collective consciousness? To what extent did revolutionary discourse shape revolutionary change and how did that discourse invade everyday language? How did the new concepts and the words articulating them enter the linguistic system, and how quickly did their elusiveness crystallise into clear ideas and definitions? Why did some words have positive, while others negative connotations? Did they come to mean the same to everyone and how at the beginning was any spectator of the events to interpret something never encountered before? Was word-creation motivated by the fashion for change, by need for change, or was it something driven by the constraints of fear?

When it first emerged, the notion of *Ancien Régime* did not have the same significance as today. Before being officially brought into scholarly writings by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1856,[13] it had undergone a long semantic evolution, which reflected the political turmoil and uncertainties of the first years of the Revolution. Indeed, the evolution of *Ancien Régime* as a term reflects perfectly what Michel de Certeau had in mind when he wrote about the activity of 'producing a text and producing a society as a text'.[14] In a narrative operation of 'boundary-setting' ('bornages'), thus creating a new space ('narrations organisatrices d'espaces'), the revolutionaries established by the notion of *Ancien Régime* 'an itinerary' through transgression. Yet, continues de Certeau, boundaries are not stable. 'Les bornages sont des limites transportables et des transports de limites.'[15] In such a manner, meaning at first a radical rupture with the past, as opposed to the newly acquired liberties, but still not implying a break with monarchy – for at this time Louis XVI was still participating in the new social contract –, *Ancien Régime* was constructed as a way of denouncing fourteen centuries of arbitrary government based on absolute monarchy. Only gradually and over time was it narrowed down through its use – reflecting the displacement of power from crown to nation – to its subsequent meaning connoting the repudiation of everything inherited from the divine right monarchy as an antithesis to the sovereignty of the people in the Republic.[16]

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[12] See Julia Kristeva, *Etrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), pp. 220-29.
[13] Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1887). See also Jacques Cellard, *Ah! ça ira ça ira...*, p. 59.
[14] See Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, pp.199-200.
[15] Ibid., p. 189. As de Certeau wrote, 'tout récit est un récit de voyage, – une pratique de l'espace'. p.171.
[16] See Diego Venturino, pp.12-13.

Until then it was, in the tide of newly coined words, combinations of words, or old words invested with new meaning, just another of the various new rhetorical devices. For, in revolutionary France, rhetoric, both as the art of speaking and as a type of symbolic expression, had become a powerful instrument of political and social change, as well as an important weapon in the struggle and control of power.

For centuries, rhetoric, in its classical definition, had been considered a fundamental element of the art of speaking. Its roots go back to the Ancients. Rhetoric was developed in Classical Greece and formed an essential part of the education in Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, and Early Modern schools. Most of the great speakers in the French revolutionary Assembly had been trained as real masters of eloquence who knew how to use language to sway their audience.

Since medieval times, French boys were taught the *trivium* at school, that is, as part of the first cycle of Arts subjects, they learned how to express themselves correctly and elegantly in Latin. The studies in classical rhetoric aimed, in the tradition of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, to train young educated people to speak artfully and persuasively in public on any subject. They followed strictly the models of planning, constructing and delivering a speech, taking into account the five main parts or 'canons' of rhetoric: *inventio*, (the subject of the speech with all the possible arguments available), *dispositio* (the arrangement or order of the speech), *elocutio* (the style of the orator), *memoria* (memory) and *pronunciatio* (delivery). In brief, 'the three duties of the orator' were to instruct (*docere*), to move (*movere*) and to please (*delectare*).[17]

Yet rhetoric was also the art of insincerity and of flattery, teaching the individual how to speak skilfully to people in the language they would like to hear; 'to put on a public mask of honesty and conviction, to weep when you are unmoved, to enter by deceit into the hearts of your unsuspecting audience'.[18]

From Plato's days to the present, rhetoric has predominantly been associated with the art of persuasion. Interestingly, the general perception of rhetoric, as a subject taught at school, changed over the years.[19] And to this day, although the term was subsequently

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[17] *Rhétorique* existed in the school curriculum in France until 1902. See Peter France, *Rhetoric and Truth in France: Descartes to Diderot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 4-10. See also George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-cultural Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.6-7.

[18] Peter France, p. V.

[19] For example, in Erasmus's Renaissance France, a great deal of attention was given to ornament and the elegance in writing and speaking, classical rhetoric being often used for training pupils in literary criticism as part of the study of literary texts, whereas in the pre-revolutionary epoch emphasis was put once again on the art of persuasion and the appeal to the emotions. See Peter France, pp. 14-16.

invested with various additional meanings, persuasiveness remains, of all the attributes of rhetorical language, the most essential one in modern political life. Politics and ideology are inextricably linked. Politics can be seen as 'the activity through which individuals and groups in any society articulate, negotiate, implement, and enforce the competing claims they make upon one another and upon the whole'.[20] As to ideology, it largely depends on rhetoric, and its main ingredient, persuasion.[21] To a certain extent, the modern meaning of rhetoric as persuasion could be seen as a legacy of the political debate brought into being in the years of the French Revolution, or, more precisely, of the political culture of the Revolution, as the revolutionaries devised a whole new programme of action with the aim of reconstituting the world.[22]

Most of the speeches pronounced at the tribune of the National Assembly in the different stages of the French Revolution followed Quintilian's order or *dispositio*. They were carefully prepared and started with an introduction, the *exordium*, followed by the statement of the case, the author's arguments, and then the refutation of the points made by opponents. In the peroration, the concluding stage of the speech, the orator appealed to the emotions of the audience in a last attempt to sway them in favour of his case.[23]

Certainly, as Colin Lucas has written, what is transmitted from one generation to another, in terms of political culture, is above all concepts without which inherited forms have little meaning. Each new generation adapts those concepts to its own needs and the revolutionaries did so, drawing on the legacy of the Enlightenment; they dreamt of a total rupture with the past yet they could not completely abolish the political culture of the Old Regime for they had been formed by it.[24]

When the deputies of the Third Estate decided to call themselves the National Assembly, in June 1789, they were by far the largest group of deputies in the *Etats*

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[20] See Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution,* p.4.

[21] As Stephen Bygrave wrote, 'ideology is motivated, in however concealed, contradictory or even unconscious a fashion, by a programme of action. It contains implicitly petitions, imperatives, exhortations and other devices which may serve either to legitimate the interests of a dominant group or to challenge those interests in the name of others. An ideology in fact depends on the devices codified as the sets of tropes of a rhetoric.[...] It depends on conscious acts of interpretation, and rhetoric can provide the formal strategies of those acts'. See Stephen Bygrave, *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.2. On rhetoric as 'the activity of persuasion', see p.4.

[22] It has been largely acknowledged that the French Revolution saw the birth of the modern political culture. See, for example, the collection of essays in Keith Michael Baker, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*: vol.1, *The Political Culture of the Old Regime* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987); Colin Lucas, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*: vol.2, *The Political Culture of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988).

[23] See Peter France, pp. 10-11. See also Peter France, 'Speakers and Audience: the First Days of the Convention', in John Renwick, ed., *Language and Rhetoric of the Revolution*, pp.50-68, esp. p.52. See also Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, p.33.

[24] *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture,* vol.2, p. XVII.

généraux, and formed a fairly compact and homogenous body in which the professions related to justice and the law dominated: judges, public prosecutors, solicitors, barristers, many of them having set up their own practices, in the fashion of the old society.[25] A large number of these deputies who would deliver speeches from the rostrum had had a thorough grounding in rhetoric, most of them being trained by the Jesuits, and although only a small proportion of the population was educated on the eve of the Revolution, that did not mean that educated people came exclusively from a wealthy background: Jesuit colleges gave free instruction to day-boys and many young people from the lower classes were able to take advantage of this.[26] Furthermore, the last decades of the eighteenth century had witnessed an extraordinary theoretical ferment which crystallised into new ideas through the works of the great philosophers of the Enlightenment, leading to a new expansion of terminology, word-coinage and the rethinking of major concepts of human thought in all branches of knowledge. One need only think of the huge project of Diderot's 35-volume *Encyclopédie* (1751-65) in order to comprehend the scale of propagation of philosophical ideas and circulation of thoughts.[27] For all these reasons, an increasing number of educated people from larger parts of society were being acquainted with philosophical language and made use of it in various ways.

One should not forget, however, that the vast majority of the people at that time were still totally illiterate and may have had difficulty in grasping the new ideas. When taking part in the political struggles, or, on many occasions, when participating in acts of transgression, they were rather driven by anger, hunger and misery. And even, when it all started, amidst the effervescence at the Constituent Assembly, in the discussions around the problem arising from the prerogatives of representation and the sovereignty of the people, a large part of the educated deputies themselves could not understand clearly the implications of what was really happening.[28]

The Revolution was not a one-way event.[29] Things were constantly moving, together with the fast developing events. One need only think of the real complexity of the

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[25]They were around six hundred, the double of each of the other two groups' numbers. See *Orateurs de la Révolution Française,* ed. by François Furet and Ran Halévy, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), I: *Les Constituants,* p. XV.

[26] See Peter France, *Rhetoric and Truth in France,* p. 5.

[27] For an interesting discussion of the Enlightenment and the relationship between the Enlightenment and the monarchical state, see Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles,* pp. 28-31.

[28] See Ran Halévy, 'La Révolution Constituante: les ambiguités politiques', in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture,* vol.2, pp.69-85.

[29] There is a huge literature on this subject, but the works with the greatest relevance to the statement above include Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*; Keith Baker, ed, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*: vol.1; Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles de la Révolution*

revolutionary experience in order to understand the nature of the changes. As Keith Baker wrote, 'improvised in the course of action, [the Revolution] was marked by the tensions and contradictions, the ambiguities and obscurities, inevitable in any historical creation'.[30] There has probably hardly ever been another period in human history during which so many values have been rethought, when so much has been annihilated, and so much, remodelled or rebuilt afresh. In the Constituent assembly, a wealth of ideas and concepts were being coined and born in discussion. Yet the struggle for power was already taking shape, for, as François Furet wrote, since the people were invested with ultimate sovereignty, power was deposited in the right to represent the people or, rather, it was in the hands of those who spoke for the people.[31] From the Constituent Assembly to the Convention, the art of oratory became a mighty weapon. Under the Convention and the rule of the radicals, the struggle for power engulfed many a talented orator. In the turbulence of events, realities had taken terrible forms – and so even expressing one's opinions could threaten survival.

If rhetoric played such a paramount role in the struggle for power, what forces governed the relationship between the former and the latter? Where was the line between debate and inducing belief, indeed could such a boundary be drawn at all? What was the balance between rhetorical reasoning and persuading? What was the nature of 'revolutionary truth'; how were new truths created and maintained by the radicals? What tensions were hidden in the act of constructing the new era out of impassioned linguistic inventions?

Throughout the evolution of rhetorical science over the past centuries, scholars have adopted different perspectives on the art of using language.[32] From the classical perspective, technical rhetoric, or the beginnings of formal training in rhetorical skills, is

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française; Jon Cowans, *To Speak for the People: Public Opinion and the Problem of Legitimacy in the French Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2001); François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*; François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds, *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*; Colin Lucas, ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*: vol.2.

[30] See Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, p.10.

[31] See François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, pp.73-4.

[32] The earliest findings related to this matter go back as far as the early Hellenic culture and are linked to Homer, although it has been established that the birth of classical rhetoric took place during the fifth century BC in the city of Syracuse, Sicily, when public speaking and oratory skills became increasingly important in the functioning of a new democracy. In fact, some authors locate the origins of rhetoric in the ability of people to find in symbols not only the capacity for communicating meaning, but also for using them for specific purposes, which led to a purposeful use of symbols to achieve specific goals, activities associated with the Greek city-states of the eighth through to the third centuries BC. For a fuller account, see Richard Leo Enos, *Greek Rhetoric Before Aristotle* (Prospect Heights, IL: Wavelands Press, 1993), p.4; James A. Herrick, pp.32-34.

associated with the school of the Sophists.[33] Because of their ability to persuade, the Sophists believed in the relative nature of truth, associating it with the diversity of places and cultures. Furthermore, they viewed absolute truth as unattainable, thus attributing to rhetoric an important role in the process of creating opinions. They saw truth as emerging from arguments, or as created by stylistic techniques.[34]

From the scepticism and the delight in argument of the Sophists,[35] who were concerned with the relationship between language and truth, to Aristotle, who is considered to be the father of rhetoric, as he wrote the first detailed and systematic treatise on this subject available to us, the main trends in the rhetorical theory of classical Athens have been adopted and followed by modern scholars too. Even the ancient antagonism between rhetoric and philosophy, which has divided thinkers since Socrates' time, remains a subject for debate.[36] In fact, in the Ancient world, rhetoric has predominantly been associated with persuasion as a necessary element in reaching decisions, based on beliefs.

From Plato's theory of ideas and universal forms as the true objects of knowledge, to the modern theories of discourse, human thought has unremittingly questioned language and the complexity of its reflection of reality; its relation with the real and the ideal, with reflection and invention, and with human emotions and the modes of expressing, suppressing or conveying them to others. The influence of the Ancient Greek

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[33] The Sophists were self-appointed professors of how to succeed in the civic life of the Greek states (the word is derived from the adjective *sophos* - 'wise' and could also be translated as 'craftsman'). Yet Sophists claimed to offer more than that: they were experts in 'practical wisdom', or *arete*, the ability to succeed in public life by managing intelligently one's personal affairs, and the qualities usually attributed to a natural leader. In order to achieve that, they offered teaching in how to argue either side of a case, which led Greek society to see the art of verbal persuasion as suspicious and dangerous. Such feelings were shared by Plato, who manifested in his dialogues an implacable hostility towards sophistry, and warned against the dangers of rhetoric (in the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras*), as well as by a number of Western thinkers from Plato's days to the present, including John Locke. See George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 25; James A. Herrick, pp.36-39, 52-54; see also Robert Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric: Gorgias, Plato, and their Successors* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.89; I.M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge, 1963), II: *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*, pp. 1-5; Edwin Black, 'Plato's view on Rhetoric', in *Landmark Essays on Classical Greek Rhetoric*, ed. by Edward Schiappa (Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1994), pp. 83-99.
[34] James A. Herrick, p. 40.
[35] See George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*, p. 207.
[36] For Aristotle, persuasion was rhetoric's most important characteristic and its principal aim. Aristotle thus converted Plato's devastating criticism of rhetoric into an advantage. On this, and on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and its opening words, 'rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectics', which oppose Socrates' thesis that 'philosophical arguments are *categorically* distinct from rhetorical pleas', see Robert Wardy's chapter 'Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: Mighty is the Truth and it shall Prevail', in *The Birth of Rhetoric*, pp. 108-138, esp. pp. 108-9. On a modern view of the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy, see Henry W. Johnstone, Jr, 'Foreword', in *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, ed. by Richard A. Cherwitz, with a foreword by Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1990), pp. XV-XVIII.

philosophers on subsequent thought was immense and all those perceptions, however varied across time and cultures they may be, are intimately linked with questions of rhetoric. It should not be forgotten that Aristotle's conception of knowledge of particulars, based on experience, and knowledge of the probable, grounded in belief, as well as his idea of absolute and probable truth, laid the foundations of his own *Rhetoric*.[37]

For generations of Western followers of the Aristotelian trend, the art of speaking and writing well was mainly a tool of vital importance for succeeding in any sphere of public life.[38] Traditional, or classical rhetoric, has always dealt with the rules of communication. With the triumph of modernity,[39] grounded in seventeenth-century Western rationality and the development of science, through the Enlightenment up to modern times, language was used to describe knowledge, to build arguments, to arrive at conclusions and to discover truth. In twentieth-century thought, however, the notion of language started being challenged and looked at from new perspectives. It was more and more associated with signs and symbols, with meaning and its ever-changing nature, with culture and power. The dominant, 'rational' paradigm[40] was called into question by new theories of discourse. Gradually, human thought contested the modernist assumptions that true knowledge and, truth in general, are possible to achieve, and contemporary disillusionment led to the disintegration of the modern Western world-view. Through the prism of post-modernism, and in a trend not dissimilar to the Sophists' questioning of the relationship between rhetoric and truth, in the second half of the twentieth century language was given an epistemic value as a medium through which truth could be created rather than discovered.[41]

These post-modernist trends stem from the theory of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who is often considered as the father of modern linguistics, as well as the founder of structuralism. A number of distinguished thinkers, labelled 'post-

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[37] See Ann Gill, *Rhetoric and Human Understanding* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1994), pp. 35-53.

[38] Over the centuries, rhetorical skills were mostly needed in training for the pulpit and the bar and in academic eloquence. See Patrick Brasart, *Paroles de la Révolution: Les Assemblées parlementaires 1789-1794* (Paris: Minerve, 1988), pp. 7-13.

[39] Scholars identify the beginning of the modern period 'from as early as the 16th century, with Gutenberg's invention of the movable type, to as late as the end of the 19th, when Freud published his psychoanalytic theories. Frequently, scholars place the starting date as the 17th century, finding in Descartes and the beginnings of modern science the foundations of modernity'. See Ann Gill, pp.198-9. Gill refers to Stephen Toulmin's description of modernism and to 'the 17th century's quest for certainty' as an 'attempt to decontextualize philosophy and science'.

[40] On the 'rational' paradigm and the foundations of Western rationality, see Ann Gill's overview, pp. 151-168. See also Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History* (New York: Norton, 1994), pp. 52-72.

[41] See Ann Gill, p. 172.

modern', or associated with structuralism in their exploration of the role of language in shaping human thinking – including Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida – are held to have drawn to a greater or lesser extent on Saussure's insights into language, developed in his lectures and published posthumously in France in 1915, under the title *Cours de linguistique générale*.

Saussure based his theory upon the distinction between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech, or utterance) and the assumption that language is constructed as a series of codes, organised around basic units or signs, each sign consisting of two components: acoustic, called *signifier* (*signifiant*), and mental, or conceptual, called *signified* (*signifié*). Language is studied in its *synchronic* aspect, corresponding to its structure, hence 'structuralism', although Saussure distinguished also a *diachronic* or historical aspect, related to the history and development of language. The question of meaning is crucial for structuralism. Firstly, there can be no meaning without difference, and secondly, as, according to Saussure, the linguistic sign is 'arbitrary' at both levels (*signifier* and *signified*), meaning arises from the arbitrary combination of signs registered in human understanding. This is summed up in the premise that 'language is a form, and not a substance', an insight which has had a great impact on most of the postmodern thinkers' works. [42]

This innovative structural approach represented a real revolution in the development of modern linguistics. [43] From Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology and 'grammar of myth', to Michel Foucault's power structures yielding truth, to Roland Barthes's idea that there is no such writing innocent of ideology, and that discourse is shaping reality in its own image, rather than reflecting it,[44] Saussure's theory has opened up the way for a deeper insight into the symbolic depths of language.[45]

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[42] See John Sturrock, 'Introduction', in *Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida*, ed. by John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1-18 (pp.2-10).

[43] It should be noted, however, that in the Saussurean *circuit de la parole*, or 'speech circuit', there are similarities with John Locke's seventeenth-century theory of communication, called also the 'translation theory' of understanding. On the other hand, in the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, or between *signifiant* and *signifié*, as well as in the famous dictum *la langue est une forme et non une substance*, elements of Saussure's theory can be traced back to Ancient Greek philosophical thought, namely Plato's doctrine of the real and nameable versus the ideal, or the finite and ever-changing objects of sense experience versus the timeless, unchanging, universal forms. On Saussure, see Roy Harris, *Reading Saussure: A Critical Commentary on the 'Cours de linguistique générale'* (London: Duckworth, 1987), pp. 118-9. See also Harris's interpretation of the intellectual origins of Saussure's *circuit de la parole*, pp. 204-5. On Plato and his ideas, see Crane Brinton, *Ideas and Men: The Story of Western Thought* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951), pp. 43-50.

[44] In *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*. See Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (London: Routledge, 1977), pp. 107-108.

[45] Language also played a central part in the work of Jacques Lacan, another French thinker labelled as 'structuralist', who believed, as a follower of Freud, that even the unconscious is structured as a language

Each of these 'post-modern' thinkers has approached language in original, often revolutionary ways. Since their writings, interest in language has broadened into interest in discourse in general and special attention has been given to the relationships between language, knowledge and power – one of the main concerns of post-modernism, and, as stated earlier, a matter that interests me in the present study of the rhetoric of the French Revolution.[46]

A common feature of post-modernism, associated mainly with the names of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, whose manifold interests converge to some extent on the subject of language and discourse, is that they both view truth as a function of language. In modern theories of discourse, the question as to whether language creates truth or enables the discovery of truth, is not new and, as mentioned above, could be traced back to the relativism and scepticism of Ancient Greek sophistry.[47]

At the same time, a number of other influential theories of language were brought forward in the West, related to language in its communicative functions. As a result of the disillusionment in rationalism and the disastrous consequences of 'scientific methods' being applied to social structuring, which were revealed in the wake of World War II, interest in rhetoric had been revived. These theories sought new ways of interpreting human values and looked again at traditional rhetorical questions such as argumentation, the audience, reception and meaning. They were associated with the names of Stephen Toulmin and his study of argumentation;[48] Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca and their 'new rhetoric', based upon the concept of audience, and the argumentative processes

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and that 'the imperative of the Word' is a law which has formed man in its image. See Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966).

[46] Apart from Lévi-Strauss, none of the other French thinkers mentioned above would accept happily the label of 'structuralists'; they would consider such thing as 'a gross violation of [their] freedom of thought'. In an attempt to determine the common ground between Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Foucault and Derrida (in his 'Introduction' to *Structuralism and Since*), John Sturrock separates them into two cathegories. Thus, 'Lévi-Strauss and Lacan are both universalists, [...] concerned with the operations performed by the human mind in general, not just with the workings of particular minds at particular times', whereas Barthes, Foucalult, and Derrida, are 'relativists, preoccupied with the historical dimensions of thought, its evolution through time, and its implications for given societies.' See John Sturrock, pp. 4-5.

[47] See George A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric*, p. 206.
To both Gorgias and Protagoras, absolute truth is unattainable as humans base their knowledge on perceptions and sensations, relying on *doxa*, opinion,[47] which operates in a realm outside of truth. See Ann Gill, *Rhetoric and Human Understanding*, p. 45. According to Gorgias, speech is very powerful as it triggers strong emotions and sensations, thus leading to a 'reality'. Furthermore, *logos* 'moulds' the soul and confers power.[47] On this point, see Robert Wardy's analysis of Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, in *The Birth of Rhetoric*, pp.38-44. The aphorism *Man is the measure of all things*, attributed to Protagoras, epitomizes the discussion of epistemological questions, which was begun by the fifth-century sophists. See I. M. Crombie, *An Examination of Plato's Doctrines*, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1963), II: *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*, pp.1-4.

[48] See Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

at play in persuading audiences;[49] as well as with Jurgen Habermas' theory of communication.[50]

Indeed, it is another group of scholars, working in the field of rhetorical theory during the same period, and seeking to re-conceptualise rhetoric in the light of larger issues such as fictional narrative, the cultural context in general, and the symbolic messages borne in language, who have paved the way for the development in post-modernist rhetorical thought. Among them, Kenneth Burke, arguably the most prominent American literary theorist of the twentieth century, whose name is associated with the rhetoric 'in context', or 'of situation', and who viewed literature as rhetoric and rhetoric as symbolic inducement, advocating the use of symbols 'to shape and change human beings'. We should also note I. A Richards and his study of metaphor and meaning in context, and Wayne Booth's rhetorical approaches to fictional narrative as 'the art of communicating with readers' and his attempt, drawing on classical conceptions of deliberation, to redefine persuasion as a process of 'mutual enquiry and exploration'.[51]

It is in such an intellectual frame that post-modernist thinkers have turned to rhetoric.[52] Although they differ extensively in their thought and resist standard classification schemes, post-modern thinkers reject authority and singularity and accept instead the plurality of meaning. What they have in common is that they place the signifier above the signified, with the latter occupying different semantic spaces for different people, in different contexts and at different times, hence creating a myriad of

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[49] The question of the audience and its active role in the creation of meaning as raised in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's theories of rhetoric is yet another question which could be traced back to classical rhetoric, more precisely to Aristotle's preoccupation with the role of the auditor as someone who is 'enabled' to arrive at a judgment. In Aristotle's *Rhetoric,* a primary importance is given to the auditors as 'cooperating partners in discourse'. See William M.A Grimaldi, S.J., 'The Auditor's Role in Aristotelian Rhetoric', in *Oral and Written Communication,* ed. by Richard Leo Enos (London: Sage Publications, 1990), pp. 65-81 (p. 67). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca shared Gorgias' fascination with 'the power of language to direct thought'. See James Herrick, p. 202.

[50] See Ann Gill's discussion on Habermas, pp. 207-9. See also James A. Herrick, pp. 205-9. See also Jürgen Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society (London: Heinemann, 1979); J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, trans. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), where Habermas develops the notion of public opinion. On Habermas and 'public opinion' in the French Revolution, see Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*; Jon Cowans, *To Speak for the People: Public Opinion and the Problem of Legitimacy in the French Revolution.*

[51] See David Cohen, 'Classical Rhetoric and Modern Theories of Discourse', in *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action,* pp. 69-82 (p.74); Wayne C, Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), 'Preface'. For a summary of Burke's theories, see James A.Herrick, pp. 224-227. See also Stephen Bygrave's book *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric and Ideology.*

[52] See David Cohen, p.69.

meanings. Thus, to the modernist notion of 'purpose', the post-modernists oppose the notion of 'play'.[53]

Jacques Derrida's name is associated with the concepts of 'deconstruction' and 'dissemination', the former challenging a number of commonly accepted notions such as traditional Western thinking about the relationship between speech and writing, authorship and identity, the latter an attempt to explore the indeterminacy of meaning. Unlike ambiguity, which allows the description and controlling of meanings, dissemination is a linguistic productivity, which cannot be dominated by any concept, a 'semantic dispersal', generated by the infinite possibilities for interpretation, due to 'the combined effects of analogy or order, which are impossible to control.'[54] To Derrida, the Saussurean concept of difference is crucial as difference plays an essential part in the constitution of meaning.[55] As to Michel Foucault, he was profoundly interested in the nature of discourse as related to desire and power, and in the questions of power underlying every discursive formation based on 'the will of truth' ('la volonté de vérité, comme prodigieuse machinerie destinée à exclure'):

> Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: [...] truth isn't the reward of free spirit, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged, with saying what counts as true.[56]

For Foucault, power is the capacity to control truth, and thus meaning. Meaning and truth are 'products of discourse and of power relations, which themselves stem from discursive

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[53] See Ihab Hassan's 'polarizations' opposing modernism and post-modernism, quoted by Ann Gill, p.200. Postmodernism has been described by Ann Gill in the following terms: 'It coincides with and embraces aspects of poststructuralism, deconstruction, post-Marxism, and feminism, and it reacts to Western reason, the notion of technological progress, and the exalted status of science. Whereas structuralism championed the role of the signifier over the signified, postmodernism furthers the poststructural and deconstructive challenge to the signifier – suggesting that, just as the "objects" created by language use have no "real" existence, neither do particular texts, which are changed with every reading, viewing or listening and which cannot be judged by independent standards. Among the aims of postmodern theorists, writers, and artists seem to be dismantling Aristotelian logic and Enlightenment metaphysics, challenging assumptions of a scientifically certifiable truth, denying individualism, and dismissing monolithic views of culture and the social order, thereby preserving cultural diversity.' See p.197.
[54] See Jonathan Culler, 'Jacques Derrida', in *Structuralism and Since,* ed. by John Sturrock, pp.154-180 (p. 160). On the critique of Saussure's concept of writing as inferior to speech, see p. 166.
[55] See James Arnt Aune, 'Rhetoric after Deconstruction', in *Rhetoric and Philosophy*, ed. by Richard A. Cherwitz, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assocites, 1990), pp. 253-273 (p.256-7).

practices'.[57] In Foucault's terms, 'power produces knowledge', 'power and knowledge directly imply one another'[58], and 'truth is the subject of "political debate and social confrontation", by which [he] means that truth becomes the subject of ideological struggle'.[59]

The nature of meaning and truth was also central to another thinker who has attracted much attention in scholarly research on discourse: the literary theoretician and philosopher of language associated with Russian Formalism,[60] Mikhail Bakhtin, who is considered by many as one of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century.[61] Western scholars and Bakhtin's compatriots themselves became acquainted with his works at a time when post-structuralism and post-modernism in the West were being increasingly concerned with questions about language as a production of meaning.[62]

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[56] See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, p.131. On the questions of discourse, desire and power, see Foucault's inaugural lecture *L'Ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), esp. pp. 10-12, 20-22.

[57] See Ann Gill, p.183.

[58] 'Le pouvoir produit du savoir', 'pouvoir et savoir s'impliquent directement l'un l'autre'. See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), p.32. See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p.27.

[59] In *Power/Knowledge*. See Ann Gill, p.183.

[60] Indeed, as Julia Kristeva wrote in her seminal essay on Bakhtin, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', published in France as early as 1967 : '[L]es analyses de *Mikhail Bakhtine* [...] représentent un des événements les plus marquants et une des tentatives de dépassement les plus puissantes de cette école. Loin de la rigueur technique des linguistes, maniant une écriture impulsive, voire par moments prophétique, Bakhtine aborde des problèmes fondamentaux qu'affronte aujourd'hui l'étude structurale du récit, et qui rendent actuelle la lecture de textes qu'il a ébauchés il y a environ quarante ans. Ecrivain autant que "savant", Bakhtine est l'un des premiers à remplacer le découpage statique des textes par un modèle où la structure littéraire n'*est* pas, mais où elle s'*élabore* par rapport à une *autre* structure. Cette dynamisation du structuralisme n'est possible qu'à partir d'une conception selon laquelle "le mot littéraire" n'est pas un *point* (un sens fixe), mais un *croisement de surfaces* textuelles, un dialogue de plusieurs écritures : de l'écrivain, du destinataire (ou du personnage), du contexte culturel actuel ou antérieur.' See p.439.

A whole group of prominent contemporary French structuralists and literary theorists working in the fields of semiotics and narratology – including Julia Kristeva, Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette – have drawn on Russian Formalism in their attempt to uncover meaning and its workings.

[61] See for example Wayne Booth's *Introduction* to M. Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. xiii-xxvii; David K. Danow, *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin: From Word to Culture* (London: MacMillan, 1991), pp.3-5.

[62] As a matter of fact this happened much later than Bakhtin's major works had been written, although yet unpublished, due to the political upheavals of Stalinist Russia, when he had already developed his innovative theories on language, linguistic communication and meaning. Some of his philosophical writings, dated as early as 1919 but unpublished until 1979, bear striking resemblances with Heidegger's and Sartre's works, thus outdating the writings of two of the greatest twentieth-century Western philosophers by giving independently like responses to the same philosophical questions which preoccupied thinkers in the tradition of Cohen's Neo-Kantianism and Husserl's Phenomenology. See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 94. For a more detailed analysis, see pp. 63-94. The comments given above are more precisely about *Art and Answerability* and Bakhtin's concept of responsibility. There is a similarity between this idea and Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), published eight years after the series of untitled texts from which the *Art and Answerability* was later compiled. See also Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 147.

Bakhtin was trained as a classicist but he responded in his works to all the major intellectual movements of his time. What is most striking about his theories is the diversity of areas and disciplines across which they are invoked. Bakhtin's name is associated with linguistics,[63] sociolinguistics and philosophy, historical poetics, semiotics and ethics, the social sciences and anthropology, literary and cultural studies to name only a few; indeed his project has been termed a 'unifying theory of language' or 'translinguistics', in so far as it grasped and rethought a vast area of topics which had previously belonged to separate disciplines.[64]

These are undoubtedly the reasons for which so many researchers from different political and philosophical creeds have been attracted to Bakhtin's theories. They have approached these theories in various original ways, and extended them to broader contexts. A substantial critical literature on Bakhtinian thought has been accumulated over the last two decades or so, as Bakhtin has become a major figure in contemporary theory across a broad range of disciplines.[65] From Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov in France, who have contributed a great deal to Bakhtin's understanding in the West, to his literary biographers Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, and his translators and editors Caryl Emerson and Gary Saul Morson in the United States, to his theorists Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd in the United Kingdom to name only a few, scholars across the political spectrum in the West have addressed questions which Bakhtin and the Bakhtin circle left unanswered, and expressed often competing interpretations of Bakhtin's works. Thus, Bakhtin has been appropriated by modernist and post-modernist thinkers, by literary scholars representing the intellectual Left and the liberal Right, and by Marxist theorists and neo-Marxist critics of modernity, some of them privileging the philosophical aspects

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[63] In his critique of structuralism, Bakhtin centred his argument around the predominance given by Saussure to language (*langue*) over speech (*parole*), thus opposing language conceived as a living dialogue to Saussurean linguistics. By using the word *слово*, which in Russian signifies 'word' as well as 'language', implying a word as it is uttered, not 'language' in its abstract meaning, Bakhtin rejected the structuralist vision of language as a monolithic conceptual system, and represented it as a series of utterances that form a profoundly dialogic discourse and so offer the possibility of moving beyond the theoretical impasse experienced by structuralism and, later by deconstructionist theory in their accounts of the structure and functioning of language. See *The Bakhtin Reader*, ed. by Pam Morris (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p.1. See also Kristeva's discussion in note 61 above. See also Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp.101-2.

[64] See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, p. 212.

[65] For a comprehensive overview of the critical literature in English accumulated on this subject until 1989 and a detailed bibliography, see Ken Hirschkop, 'Critical Work on the Bakhtin Circle: A Bibliographical Essay', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp.195-212. For an updated detailed bibliography, see Ken Hirschkop's important recent book on Bakhtin, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*.

of his works, others, the linguistic or the sociological.[66] More than ten years ago, Ken

Hirschkop wrote that 'the Bakhtin snowball is about to turn into an avalanche',[67] and

indeed, the interest in Bakhtin is growing both in the West and in post-communist Russia.

In a true Bakhtinan spirit, the meaning of his writings is being renewed in all new

contexts. The dialogue on his legacy goes on and 'shows no signs of losing momentum.'[68]

Bakhtin's main concern was the nature of discourse. Although his works are rarely

mentioned in books on rhetoric, all texts written by him, as well as most of the disputed

texts[69] deal with the nature of discourse, the creativity of language and the construction of

meaning as a result of dialogue. For Bakhtin, the word was the minimal structural unit.[70]

He distinguished between the sentence as a 'unit of language', perceived as 'a

grammatically organized entity', and the utterance as a 'unit of speech', or 'an

ideologically governed structure, designed to express fully a particular responsive

position', and concluded that 'the utterance is the basis of human communication'.[71]

Moreover, Bakhtin developed his own ideas on the 'implied' text (to be published

posthumously in Moscow in 1979), which bear a certain resemblance to Clifford Geertz's

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[66] On this point, see Caryl Emerson, 'Introduction: Dialogue on Every Corner, Bakhtin in Every Class', in *Bakhtin in Contexts: Across the Disciplines*, ed. by Amy Mandelker (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp.1-30. See also Ken Hirschkop, 'Introduction: Bakhtin and Cultural Theory', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, pp.1-38. In his discussion, Hirschkop shows that in their attempts to analyse 'modernism' and modern 'democracy', socialist theorists have embraced Bakhtin's theories, giving them 'a socio-historical twist, associating avant-garde estrangement and shock with traditions of popular subversive discourse'. Some theorists – namely Terry Eagleton and Allon White, who have interpreted Bakhtin 'as a "materialist version of Derrida"' –, Hirshckop continues, 'have even gone so far as to offer Bakhtin as a kind of Left alternative to deconstruction, who provides a socio-historical basis for the latter's formal practice'. See pp. 2, 35n.
[67] See Ken Hirschkop, 'Critical work on the Bakhtin Circle', p.195. See also pp. 197-202, for Hirschkop's discussion of the existing scholarship on Bakhtin in English.
[68] See Caryl Emerson, 'Introduction: Dialogue on Every Corner, Bakhtin in Every Class', in *Bakhtin in Contexts*. On Bakhtin's reading in Russia, see esp.pp.1-2, 14, 17-30. The quotation is from p.30. On the ongoing debate concerning Bakhtin's writings, see Ken Hirschkop's latest book, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*. Hirschkop discusses two main trends of 'misreading' of Bakhtin's work, 'often leading to [their] misinterpretation': the 'Russian-religious' and the 'American-liberal', the latter being described as 'significantly anti-Marxist'. See p.5.
[69] The question of Bakhtin's authorship concerning a number of texts published by Voloshinov and Medvedev, which was, according to the predominant part of scholars, due to Stalinist censorship in communist Russia, is still unresolved. For a more detailed discussion of this problem, see Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, pp.146-170. See also Simon Dentith's 'Introduction' to *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 3-21 (pp. 8-10, 20). See also David K. Danow, pp.5-8. See also Hirschkop's book *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy,* chapter three: 'Bakhtin Myths and Bakhtin History' (pp.111-193).
[70] On Bakhtin's concept of the word and the 'whole spectrum of 'words'' he refers to in his writings, among which the ''single-voiced' contrasted to the 'double-voiced word', the 'object-oriented' and 'objectified' word as opposed to various forms of stylised language; the 'direct word' juxtaposed to the 'parodistic word'; one's 'own word' as opposed to another's 'alien word'; the 'novelistic word', the 'authoritarian word', the 'laughing word', the 'internally persuasive word', the 'new word', and 'numerous other specifications and sub-categories – all of which may be appropriated under a rubric specifying either a monologic utilization of the word or its dialogic usage', see David K. Danow, *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp21-41, esp. p.27.
[71] Ibid., p.14.

literary understanding of cultural meaning as a text to be read, discussed earlier. In Bakhtin's theory, 'the word "text" is understood in the broad sense – as any coherent complex of signs [and] then even the study of art (the study of music, the theory and history of fine arts) deals with texts (works of art)'; the dialogical, or dialectical dimension is the idea that 'the text lives only by coming into contact with another text'.[72] In addition, Bakhtin situated the text in its context, within history and society, which are 'read' and 'rewritten' by the author as 'texts'.[73] Within the text, there is a never ending dialogue between words or utterances, linked together in a 'chain of meanings' which 'continues infinitely' in historical life, and where 'each individual link is renewed again and again, as though it were being reborn'.[74] Thus, at the centre of Bakhtin's thinking is a dialectical perception of the universe based on language perceived as a living dialogue. Another question central to Bakhtin's writings concerns the nature of meaning: there is no such a thing as a 'single truth', but instead meaning can be found in the diversity of history and context.[75]

Dialogism, as opposed to monologism, is a key concept in Bakhtinian thought. Indeed, dialogism is closely related to Bakhtin's theory of the word. The double-voiced word or utterance can interact with other words or utterances and form dialogic relations. For the double-voiced word is 'conceived as a sign not only bearing meaning, or having a referent, but as being potentially engaged in continuous dialogue'.[76] By contrast, monologism reflects the inability of the single-voiced word to interact with other words or utterances, as the single-voiced word 'does not take into account another speaker's utterance but focuses solely on the object of speech. [...] Such a word is "indissolubly fused with its authority – with political power, an institution, a person – and it stands and falls together with this authority".[77] As stated above, the theory of the word – or, in broader terms, dialogism – extends to the idea that utterances, texts, and indeed entire cultures can enter in concrete dialogic exchanges and thus communicate. In other words, as Ken Hirschkop put it,

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[72] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'The Problem of the Text', in *Speech genres and other late essays*, pp. 103, 162. 'The Problem of the Text' was written in 1970-1.
[73] See Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', p.439.
[74] See 'From Notes Made in 1970-71', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p.146.
[75] See the discussion of Bakhtin's view of meaning as opposed to the 'Personalist' and the 'Deconstructionist' conceptions of language in Western thought, in Clark and Holquist, pp.11-13.
[76] See David K. Danow, p. 24.
[77] Ibid. Danow's quote is from Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination*.

> Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is not a description of actual speech, even very good actual speech, but a philosophical idea, a characterization of our experiences of meaning [...] Dialogism is indeed about the two-sided aspects of meaning, but not in any sense necessarily about two people. Rather it refers to what other writers would call the intersubjective quality of all meaning: the fact that it is always found in the space between expression and understanding, and that this space – the 'inter' separating subjects – is not a limitation but the very condition of meaningful utterance.[78]

Indeed, dialogism is a rich concept, which allows various interpretations.[79] Not only has Bakhtin defined a number of its other manifestations in the various forms of voice interactions, such as Menippean discourse and carnival, satire and parody, collage and stylisation, redefined as 'the constant mixing of intentions of speaker and listener; as the way an utterance acquires meaning by inflecting past utterances; as the need of each form of speech to position itself stylistically among other existing forms';[80] dialogism's function varies across Bakhtin's texts.[81] Tony Crowley has characterised these changes between the early and late texts as 'the politicisation of philosophical concepts'. 'In the early use', Crowley argues,

> these terms refer to opposed 'world-views', one of which (monologism) is superseded by the other in an ethical and teleological progression. In their later use, however, the terms are employed in at least three distinct ways. First, to refer to the historical forces which are in conflict in discourse: dialogical versus monological forces. Second, to the effects brought about by the conflict: monological or dialogical forms of discourse. Third, to the nature of the conflict itself: given that the forces are always in conflict, the form which dominates at any one time has to engage in constant dialogical re-negotiation with the other in order to retain its position. This development from a static view of opposition to the perception of active historical conflict is crucial, since its stress on dialogical struggle as the foundation of all forms of discourse allows for the relation between particular dialogical and monological forms to be theorised from an historical perspective.[82]

In the above lines, Crowley offers a discussion of Bakhtin's dialogism from a 'social' perspective. He adds that the monological and dialogical forms in question can be 'viewed as the results of precise social struggles in which their status and positions are always at stake'.[83] Although my approach to Bakhtin's dialogism differs from this social interpetation, I am interested precisely in the constant tensions that governed the monologue – dialogue interplay in French revolutionary discourse and symbolic practices. This is crucial to my study of the rhetoric of the French Revolution, in so far as some of

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[78] See Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy*, pp.4-5.
[79] For a detailed discussion of 'the conflicts in the concept of dialogism [...] played out today in critical discussion', see Ken Hirschkop, 'Introduction: Bakhtin and Cultural Theory', pp.6-12, esp.p.11.
[80] Ibid., p.6.
[81] See Tony Crowley, 'Bakhtin and the History of Language', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd, pp.68-90 (p.69). Here Crowley is referring to Ken Hirschkop.
[82] Ibid., pp.69-70.
[83] Ibid. p.70.

Bakhtin's ideas on the nature of discourse bear, in my view, certain resemblances to François Furet's argument of the word as an instrument of power in the political struggle of competing discourses, discussed earlier.

Indeed, when Bakhtin examined discursive practices within their social and historical context, he argued that language is dialogic, and deeply ideological. He wrote that 'ideological evaluations are inherent in any act of understanding'.[84] But he also emphasised the constant struggle between the 'centrifugal' forces of dialogue and the 'centripetal' forces[85] of monologue, as monologue stifles dialogue, whereas the subversive tensions inherent in dialogue constantly threaten the centralising forces of unity and control:

> We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a *maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life. Thus a unitary language gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization.[86]

In this passage, Bakhtin explicitly states that for him, discourse is also governed by power relationships.[87] Indeed, Bakhtin's words could be applied to a larger discussion of the revolutionary plans to unify the French language in the context of the radicals' 'politics of centripetalisation', which aimed at re-educating the French nation.[88] Bakhtin argued elsewhere that 'discourse becomes an arena of battle between two voices'. And these are not only the 'hostilely opposed' voices of parody, the tensions, which result in the fusion of two voices, as in stylisation, or the 'double-voiced use of someone else's words [...] for conveying aspirations that are hostile to it'.[89] Bakhtin also reflected on the 'authoritarian', 'sacred' word, with its 'sacrosanct, impenetrable boundaries', with its 'inertness' and its 'withdrawal from dialogue'; the single-voiced, monologic word that

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[84] *The Bakhtin Reader*, p.4.

[85] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p 272.

[86] Ibid, p. 271.

[87] On this point, see also Graham Pechey's essay 'On the Borders of Bakhtin: Dialogisation, decolonisation', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, pp.39-67, esp. p.43.

[88] See Michel de Certeau, Dominique Julia and Jacques Revel, *Une politique de la langue. La Révolution française et les patois: L'enquête de Grégoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), and especially Grégoire's 'Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française' at the Convention, pp. 300-17. On the 'politics of centripetalisation' and the concept of the 'standard language' in nineteenth-century Britain, see Tony Crowley, 'Bakhtin and the History of the Language', in *Baktin and Cultural Theory*, pp.74-5.

[89] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.193-7.

'retards and freezes thought'[90]. In his opinion, the 'authoritative discourse', which 'demands our unconditional allegiance', is 'indissolubly fused with authority – with political power, an institution, a person – and it stands and falls together with that authority'.[91] For Bakhtin – and this is what makes his theory of discourse so relevant to the study of French revolutionary rhetoric I propose – power, as the expression of the unifying and centralising forces of monologue, is constantly at stake, as there are always other, decentralising tensions at work, which tend to undermine and, ultimately, to destroy monologue. In other words, the centripetal forces of constraint are unremittingly challenged by the centrifugal forces of subversion and variety. 'Alongside the centripetal forces', we read, 'the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward'.[92] This constant opposition between dialogue and monologue in Bakhtin's works provides, as Ken Hirschkop has pointed out, 'an implicit critique [of monologism], in the light of which the latter appears as a systematisation of language which prevents language from doing its job'.[93]

The notion of difference and variety is thus central to Bakhtinian thought. As Clark and Holquist wrote, 'few thinkers have been as fascinated by the plenitude of differences in the world as was Mikhail Bakhtin.'[94] For Bakhtin perceived differences in their simultaneity. 'Polyphony'[95] as well as 'heteroglossia' – two forms of the same linguistic phenomenon of semantic variety described by him – are, together with the concept of 'dialogue', part of that same universal and *boundless* context, of that same infinite chain of interrelated utterances in which everything is linked together.[96] There is yet another dimension to 'difference' in Bakhtin's understanding: that of the 'self' and the 'other', which lies in the 'dialogic encounter of two cultures'. This encounter does not result in the two cultures 'merging or mixing': out of it they emerge 'mutually enriched', each retaining its 'unity and *open* totality'. This is what Bakhtin called 'outsideness', that 'most powerful factor in understanding'. For 'it is only in the eyes of *another* culture', he wrote,

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[90] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p.133.
[91] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.343.
[92] *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.272.
[93] See Ken Hirschkop, 'Introduction: Bakhtin and Cultural Theory', p.5.
[94] Clark and Holquist, p. 1.
[95] As in the '*plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices*' in Dostoevsky's 'polyphonic world', opposed to 'the fundamentally *monologic* (homophonic) European novel'. See *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.6-8.
[96] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'From Notes Made in 1970-71', in *Speech Genres*, pp.132-158 (p.136).

> that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly [...]. A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; [...] and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths.[97]

That same difference, or variety, is at the heart of the 'semantic depths' of the world of culture and literature, which are 'bottomless as the depths of matter [in their] infinite diversity of interpretations, images, figurative semantic combinations, materials and their interpretations'.[98]

Bakhtin's interpretation of the narrative with his innovative insights on the word and human understanding, on space and time, his novel concepts of chronotope, heteroglossia, polyphony; the parallels he draws between 'the rhetorical word' and 'the novelistic word' between 'persuasiveness that is artistic' and 'rhetorical persuasiveness',[99] have allowed some authors to associate his work with rhetorical theory in terms of rhetoric of situation, drama, and narration, or storytelling.[100] He is also considered as 'one of the earliest of the contemporary European thinkers to turn his attention to problems of discourse in cultural contexts'.[101] The literary scholar and philosopher Tzvetan Todorov proclaimed him 'the most important Soviet thinker in the human sciences and the greatest theoretician of literature in the twentieth century'.[102] Wayne Booth, the American theorist who has found rhetorical dimensions in the writing of fiction,[103] wrote about him the following lines: 'If Bakhtin is right, a very great deal of what we Western critics have spent our time on is mistaken, or trivial, or both'.[104]

Among the various theories of human communication and rhetoric, modern views are mostly centred on symbols, meaning, the relationship between author/ orator and audience. Scholars are mainly concerned with the symbolic interactions between and among individuals, with the relationship between thought and expression. Yet they consider all of these activities as linked to persuasion. As discussed earlier, in its

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[97]See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Response to a Question from *Novy Mir*', in *Speech Genres*, pp.1-9 (p.7).
[98] Ibid., p.140.
[99] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'On Notes Made in 1970-71', in *Speech Genres*, pp.132-158 (p.150).
[100]Bakhtin's name has been associated with the 'New Rhetorics'. See Richard Fulkerson, '*Newsweek* "My Turn" Columns and the Concept of Rhetorical Genre: A Preliminary Study', in *Defining the New Rhetorics*, pp. 227-243 (p.228).
[101] Michael Holquist as quoted by Herrick, p. 231.
[102] Quoted in David K. Danow, *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin*, p. 4.
[103] See Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).
[104] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. xxv.

development throughout the centuries, rhetoric has been a concept encompassing the various ways in which individuals 'symbolically influence one another'.[105] Thus, rhetoric is seen as 'the intellectual art or study of persuasion', whereas oratory is 'the actual verbal communication with the intent to persuade, the application of the art of rhetoric'. Rhetoric and oratory are bound together and one cannot exist without the other.[106] Indeed, a great number of scholars who insist on rhetoric's symbolical nature, from Kenneth Burke,[107] for whom rhetoric is symbolic action in a universe constructed of symbols, to George A. Kennedy, with his interest in metaphor and rhetoric as a universal feature of expression and communication, to the structuralists and the post-moderns; all share the position that rhetoric in all its forms is persuasive and may be used to induce beliefs.

Bakhtin also reflected on rhetoric and on the concept of persuasion. For him, they both implied a desire to control. He reflected on the 'rhetorical word' as opposed to the 'novelistic word', on 'persuasiveness that is artistic' and 'rhetorical persuasiveness', and on the 'rhetorical argument' as opposed to 'dialogue'.[108] Thus, for Bakhtin, rhetoric implies victory, dialogue – mutual understanding. 'In rhetoric', he wrote,

> there is the unconditionally innocent and unconditionally guilty; there is complete victory and the destruction of the opponent. In dialogue the destruction of the opponent also destroys that very dialogic sphere where the word lives.'[109]

In the above lines, rhetoric, as an activity that enforces meaning through persuasion, is described as monologic. In Bakhtin's understanding, in the presence of the 'authoritative word', the 'word of the other' – the response that enables dialogue – is 'intentionally silenced'.[110] Therefore, rhetoric – or monologic persuasion – excludes dialogue. But if monologic persuasion induces beliefs or, in other words, creates meaning just like dialogue, then persuasion and dialogue are not incompatible. As Lucy Hartley has perceptively demonstrated, 'dialogue and persuasion are bound in a relationship which

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[105] See Richard Cherwitz,'The Philosophical Foundations of Rhetoric', pp. 6-7.
[106] Ian Worthington, ed., *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. VIII. In the same vein, Robert Wardy sees rhetoric as 'the capacity to persuade others; or a practical realisation of this ability; or, at least, an attempt at persuasion, successful or not'. Again, rhetoric is 'mere' rhetoric: it is the capacity to get others to do what its possessor wants, regardless of what they want, except to the extent that their desires limit what rhetoric might achieve: this, of course, is the rhetoric of ideological manipulation and political seduction. Whatever it might be, if rhetoric is persuasive and persuasion is power, the way Gorgias perceived it in his *Encomium of Helen*, rhetoric embodies power and 'no human contact is innocent of its manipulative presence'. See Robert Wardy, *The Birth of Rhetoric*, p.2.
[107] On Burke, see Stephen Bygrave, *Kenneth Burke: Rhetoric and Ideology*.
[108] See Mikhail Bakhtin, from 'Notes made in 1970-71', in *Speech genres*, p.150.
[109] Ibid.
[110] See David K. Danow, p.124.

reveals our quest for transcendental understanding (recognised in literary study as a search for meaning) and lies at the heart of our linguistic practices'.[111] In a commentary on Bakhtin's words about rhetoric and dialogue, Hartley describes rhetoric as 'an act of violence'. Rhetoric 'does violence to the word', she says, 'because it functions on an uncompromising binary of success and failure in language'.[112]

This is what I want to explore in the following pages: the metaphor of rhetoric as violence, applied to the symbolic practices of the French Revolution. Since every human enterprise involves symbolic influence, it contains, intentionally or not, a rhetorical component. In their quest for power, the revolutionaries intentionally used rhetorical tools to enforce meaning. Indeed, over the different stages of the Revolution, they activated the power of rhetoric and thus practiced verbal, visual and physical violence in order to educate the audiences in the new revolutionary truths. In this process, monologue and dialogue were in constant interplay and participated in the creation of new meaning.

Following François Furet in his representation of French revolutionary politics as competing discourses in the struggle for power, and drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dicourse, my reading of revolutionary rhetoric will concentrate on the storytelling of the revolutionaries. I shall thus try to illustrate the radicals' 'story-discourse' paradigm. By discourse, I mean symbols intentionally organised into a message with the aim of persuading and creating new truths. In other words, my main interest in the following pages will focus on the role played by symbols and signs, symbolic influence and symbolic action as tools in the revolutionaries' struggle for power. Through a new reading of a range of contemporary texts, it will be my aim to contribute to a better understanding of the processes in which power was wielded through symbolic action by means of persuasion.

On a deeper level, drawing on Bakhtin's dialogical poetics, I shall also look at the complex interplay of dialogue and monologue in revolutionary rhetoric. Was the rhetoric of the Revolution constructed in the form of debate or persuasion? To what extent was its discourse dialogic and how did monologic forms participate in the creation of truth?

For Bakhtin, dialogue was the principal source from which meaning is derived. Yet, as Lucy Hartley has argued, 'monologue is surely more successful in its communication of meaning as it enables those appeals to individuals, termed acts of

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[111] See Lucy Hartley, 'Conflict not Conversation: The Defeat of Dialogue in Bakhtin and de Man', in *New Formations*, 41 (2000), 71-82 (72). In her essay, Lucy Hartley analyses Bakhtin and de Man's perceptions of the relationship between dialogue and persuasion. While for Bakhtin rhetoric is antagonistic to dialogue, to de Man, rhetoric is complementary of dialogue. See p.77.

persuasion, without allowing them to occur at the expense of partiality.'[113] In effect, persuasion was always present in the revolutionary story, and in its discourse. It was visible from the first sessions of the Constituent Assembly, when the Revolution's narrative was dialogic by its nature and open to new ideas and heated debate. At this stage, persuasion was embedded in the tensions and contradictions, in the interplay of the desire and the will for power of the competing political factions. Under the rule of the Terror, when radical discourse imposed the openly monologic 'revolutionary truths' and so destroyed the creative dialogical debate of the beginnings, persuasion was at its highest. It was used as an instrument to maintain power.

But dialogue and monologue operated on yet another level during the revolutionary years. The radicals sought to impose new meaning through what Bakhtin called 'expunging the other's sacred word'. By dialogically destroying the system of the *Ancien Régime*, they created another monologic structure: the new revolutionary 'epic' which was to become in turn the 'sacred word' of the Revolution.[114] Bakhtin's 'dialogical principle' can also be applied to the study of authorship and the audiences; that is, the interaction of the message/ reception agents.[115] This is a process in which each participant is involved in the making of meaning; it is an infinite process in which fixed, or absolute truth is simply not possible, due to the infinite variety of possible interactions and interpretations of meanings.[116] Ultimately, Bakhtin's dialogism can be used to illustrate

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[112] Ibid., p.76.

[113] Ibid., p. 82.

[114] See M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 133.

[115]Julia Kristeva has described the 'three dimensions or coordinates of dialogue' in Bakhtin's writings: 'Ces trois dimensions sont : le sujet de l'écriture, le destinataire et les textes extérieurs'. See 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', p.440. 'Le statut du mot, continues Kristeva, se définit alors *a) horizontalemen* : le mot dans le texte appartient à la fois au sujet de l'écriture et au destinataire, et *b) verticalement*: le mot dans le texte est orienté vers le corpus littéraire antérieur ou synchronique.'

The addressee (le destinataire) is included in a book's discursive universe only as discourse itself. 'Il fusionne donc avec cet autre discours [...] par rapport auquel l'écrivain écrit son propre texte ; de sorte que l'axe horizontal (sujet-destinataire) et l'axe vertical (texte-contexte) coïncident pour dévoiler un fait majeur : le mot (le texte) est un croisement de mots (de textes) où on lit au moins un autre mot (texte). Chez Bakhtine [...], ces deux axes qu'il appelle respectivement *dialogue* et *ambivalence*, ne sont pas clairement distingués. Mais ce manque de rigueur est plutôt une découverte que Bakhtine est le premier à introduire dans la théorie littéraire : tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte. A la place de la notion d'intersubjectivité s'installe celle d'*intertextualité*, et le langage poétique se lit, au moins, comme *double*.' See pp. 440-1.

[116] See Lucy Hartley's discussion of Bakhtin and de Man's 'fascination with the volatility of literary language'in her essay 'Conflict not conversation', p.73: 'Their writings explore', Hartley continues, 'the struggle of language, and especially literary language, to mediate between an act of consciousness (a speech act or utterance) and the intentional object of consciousness (meaning), and in so doing they offer explanations of the way in which language relates to the world. Central to these explanations is an account of the errancy of language and its impact on the wish or desire to mean'.

the process in which 'an utterance acquires meaning by inflecting past utterances',[117] namely in the 'new' symbols, created by the radicals – such as the Liberty tree, the Phrygian cap, the revolutionary goddesses, and other revolutionary insignia –, which heavily relied on ancient cultural forms.

Using the idea of rhetoric as symbolic action purposefully practiced with the aim of persuading, then, together with François Furet's argument that in the years of the French Revolution 'mental representations of power governed all actions' and 'a network of signs completely dominated political life', my aim is to demonstrate the ways in which established signs, imbued with myths, metaphors, and strategic designs were used as media for the construction of new forms of self-consciousness. That is to say, my interest lies in how new signs were deliberately coined to replace old ones; how new meaning was created for political purposes, using verbal or non-verbal symbolic tools, and how political discourse and power relations were striving, in a constant struggle between closure and openness – monologue and dialogue – to shape the new mentality and to establish the new revolutionary truths of the changing French nation.

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[117] See Ken Hirschkop, 'Introduction: Bakhtin and Cultural Theory', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, pp.1-38 (p.6).

Chapter Two. A quest for truth and power

On pourrait [...] désigner au moins deux variétés [de récit]. D'une part, un *discours monologique* qui comprend 1) le mode représentatif de la description et de la narration (épique) ; 2) le discours historique ; 3) le discours scientifique. Dans tous les trois, le sujet assume le rôle de 1 (Dieu) auquel, par la même démarche, il se soumet ; le dialogue immanent à tout discours est étouffé par un *interdit*, par une censure. [...] D'autre part, un discours *dialogique* qui est celui: 1) du carnaval, 2) de la ménippée, 3) du roman (polyphonique). Dans ses structures, l'écriture lit une autre écriture, se lit elle-même et se construit dans une genèse destructrice.

Julia Kristeva[1]

In the excerpt above, Kristeva explores Bakhtin's categories of the 'epic' and 'Menippean discourse' as two different types of narrative: monologic and dialogic. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the French Revolution could be compared to a huge carnival. For revolutions are overthrows. Not imaginary, not for one night – but real ones, engulfed in bloodshed and tragedy, wiping out hierarchical relationships, but still belonging to that sphere of interregnum where everything is permissible, and proper laws do not exist. The makers of revolutions are impassioned by rebellious ardour, sacrifice and self-denial, but often gaiety, chaotic celebrations and joyful laughter accompany their deeds. In this way transgression, destruction and profanation emerge in carnival.

Carnival, such as Bakhtin saw it – 'life turned inside out', 'the reverse side of the world' (*'monde à l'envers'*) – is dialogic.[2] Indeed, the multi-voiced revolutionary enterprise started as a vast dialogue, which later came to be replaced by monologue. For in the Revolutionary years the deposition of the past went hand in hand with educating. Abolishment and dethronement were followed by the glorification of new deities. The new founding moment was expressed through the new revolutionary epic, whereas the 'enemy' in the broadest sense was purposefully ridiculed through Menippean satire. Indeed, dialogue and monologue interacted in various ways through the form and the content of parliamentary debate and radical symbolic practices. These are some aspects of the discourse of the radicals that the following pages seek to address.

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[1] See Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', pp.451-2.
[2] '[I]n the sense of the sum total of all diverse festivities, rituals and forms of a carnival type'. See *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.101-160, esp.p.122.

From dialogue to monologue: constructing the new epic.

Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person,
it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth,
in the process of their dialogic interaction.

Mikhail Baktin[3]

Dans aucun pays, ni dans aucun temps, l'art de parler, sous toutes ses formes,
n'a été aussi remarquable que dans les premières années de la Révolution.

Germaine de Staël[4]

La Convention se constitua le 20 septembre 1792,
et ouvrit ses délibérations le 21.
Dès la première séance, elle abolit la royauté et proclama la république.
Le 22, elle s'appropria la révolution, en déclarant
qu'elle ne daterait plus *de l'an IV de la liberté,*
mais *de l'an Ier de la république française.*

Mignet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*[5]

Of the various mediums through which the discourse of the French Revolution was
shaping the new political space, the emergence of political eloquence was a remarkable
new phenomenon. As Peter France put it,

> The sudden explosive expansion of the political scene confronted speakers with the need to work
> out new forms of speech for the new – often disturbingly new – situation. [...T]he rapid and often
> violent development of events both inside and outside the national assemblies threw down a
> formidable challenge to the deputies, who could feel, without too much exaggeration, that not only
> their own fate, but the fate of the nation (or indeed of the whole world) hung on the way they
> spoke.[6]

Indeed, parliamentary rhetoric epitomized to a high degree the interplay between the
desire and the 'will for power', represented by the competing political factions, and the
dialogic-monologic dichotomy in symbolic communication. Under the *Assemblée
constituante*, the revolutionary narrative was dialogic by its nature.[7] By contrast, in the

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[3] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.110.
[4]*Considérations sur la Révolution Française* (Paris:Tallandier, 1983), II, p.19.
[5] Mighet, François A.M., *Histoire de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1833), p. 254.
[6]See Peter France, 'Speakers and Audience: The First Days of the Convention', pp.51-2.
[7] It should be noted, however, that Bakhtin assimilated narrative discourse into epic discourse. For him,
narrative was a prohibition, 'a *monologism*, a subordination of the code to 1, to God.' See Julia Kristeva,
'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman' pp.445-6. Yet, as Kristeva argued, narration is always constituted
as a dialogical matrix ('une matrice dialogoque') by the receiver ('le destinataire') to whom this narration
refers. See, p.451.

years of the Terror, radical discourse imposed a monologic, unique 'revolutionary truth' and so destroyed the creative dialogical debate of the beginnings.

While most of the political speeches at the French assemblies of the Revolutionary period were meticulously written in advance, to be simply delivered from the rostrum, and often seemed to bear no reference to the words of the previous speaker,[8] being thus 'monologic' by their form, they still represented, at the initial stages, a form of heated debate. This debate was based upon theoretical dispute, through which new meaning was dialogically suggested very much in the way of the 'Socratic dialogue'.[9] One of the greatest debaters was Mirabeau. Danton always improvised, spoke extempore, with ardour and speed, which made him the best debater of the Convention. There were a number of other brilliant speakers, like Barnave, who excelled at exemplifying by improvising, or Cazalès and Maury, the two gifted improvisers from the 'Right'.[10] Indeed, as Bakhtin argued, even monologue could provoke a dialogic response in the audience during narration: the interaction between speaker and audience thus never disappeared, even when it was known that a simple interjection or expressing a disagreement with the Committee of Public Safety could lead to the guillotine. However, such interaction would most often be heard in the form of applause or exclamations of praise and recognition:

> *On applaudit. Tous les commissaires présents à la séance se lèvent en criant:* 'Oui, nous le jurons.'; *De nouvelles acclamations se font entendre. Tous les citoyens se lèvent et agitent en l'air leurs châpeaux. Un cri unanime:* 'Oui, nous le jurons !', *est plusieurs fois répété dans toutes les parties de la salle et dans les tribunes; On applaudit à plusieurs reprises; Des murmures interrompent l'orateur.*[11]

Thus, at the later stages of the Convention, with speeches like Robespierre's long harangues, the speaker-audience interaction deteriorated to a point at which rhetorical

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[8] For a detailed analysis of French oratory over the centuries, see H.Morse Stephens, *Orators of the French Revolution 1789-1795*, I, pp. 2-40. According to Stephens, the reason for which the political oratory of the French Revolution influenced the most important decisions of the assemblies was the absence of the system of parties and of party spirit. Thus, an orator could 'convince the majority of his hearers, and win their votes', whereas in the English Parliament, 'the most fervid eloquence is of no avail against the strong bonds of the party'. (p.17)

[9] I have in mind the speech practice, which Bakhtin linked to Socrates and his students. In it, Socratic truth (meaning) is the product of a dialogical relationship among speakers. 'D'après Bakhtine les dialogues socratiques se caractérisent par l'opposition au monologisme officiel, prétendant posséder la vérité toute faite'.See Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', p.456.

[10] On Barnave, Cazalès and Maury, see François Furet et Ran Halévy, *Orateurs*, pp. LIV-LV.

[11] Many of the speeches at the assemblies, reproduced by the *Moniteur*, contain such exclamations in the newspaper's accounts. H.M. Stephens has kept most of them in his compilation. See, for example, Danton's 'Speech on the Arrest of Suspected Persons', in H.M. Stephens, II, pp.255-257, or Robespierre's 'Speech on the Arrest of the Dantonists', ibid, pp.383-390.

performance was gradually engulfed in a process where power was wielded through symbolic action by means of monologic persuasion.[12]

The sharp contrast between the following passages from two of Robespierre's speeches, the first dated 30 May 1791, from the period when he sat in the Constituent Assembly, and the second, from 12 June 1794 (24 Prairial, An II), constitute a vivid illustration of the above:

> Je viens prier, non les dieux, mais les législateurs, qui doivent être les organes et les interprètes des lois éternelles que la Divinité a dictées aux hommes, d'effacer du code des Français les lois de sang, qui commandent les meurtres juridiques, et que repoussent leurs mœurs et leur constitution nouvelle. Je veux leur prouver : 1. que la peine de mort est essentiellement injuste; 2. qu'elle n'est pas la plus réprimante des peines, et qu'elle multiplie les crimes beaucoup plus qu'elle ne les prévient.[13]

> Citoyens, lorsque les chefs d'une faction sacrilège, lorsque les Brissot, les Vergniaud, les Gensonné, les Guadet et les autres scélérats dont le Peuple français ne prononcera jamais le nom qu'avec horreur, s'étaient mis à la tête d'une portion de cette auguste Assemblée; quand ils parvinrent, à force d'intrigues, à la tromper sur les hommes, et par une conséquence naturelle, sur les choses, c'était sans doute le moment où la partie de la Convention qui était éclairée sur ces manœuvres liberticides, devait faire des efforts pour les combattre et les déjouer. Alors le nom de la Montagne, qui leur servait comme d'asile au milieu de cette tempête, devint sacré, parce qu'il désignait la portion des représentants du peuple qui luttaient contre l'erreur. Mais du moment que les intrigues furent dévoilées; du moment que les scélérats qui les tramaient sont tombés sous le glaive de la loi [...] il ne peut y avoir que deux partis dans la Convention, les bons et les méchans, les patriotes et les contre-révolutionnaires hypocrites (On applaudit).[14]

Indeed, the discourse of the Revolution played an important part in the substantial political change from the Constituent Assembly to the Convention. In the animated discussions of the first years, when, as Madame de Staël put it, the art of speaking in all its forms reached its climax, revolutionary rhetoric adopted the shape of a vast dialogue, with all its inherent tensions between speaker and audience, or between various speakers,[15] yet constructive and open to new ideas, even when opposing different political factions:

> Comment doit être faite la vérification des pouvoirs? L'Assemblée a prouvé qu'ils ne peuvent être soumis à un autre jugement qu'à celui de la collection des représentants de la nation. Ce principe,

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[12] When Legendre, one of Danton's admirers, proposed that the Dantonists should be heard at the Convention, he was quickly silenced by Robespierre. See Robespierre's speech on the arrest of the Dantonists, in H.Morse Stephens, II, pp. 383-390.

[13] 'On the Abolition of the Punishment of Death', in H. Morse Stephens, *The Principal Speeches*, II, p.299.

[14] 'Séance du 24 Prairial An II (12 juin 1794), Contre les continuateurs de Danton, d 'Hébert et d'autres', in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, pp.492-3.

[15] On the development of political oratory in the revolutionary years, see Furet et Halévy, *Introduction*, and Patrick Brasart, *Les Assemblées parlementaires 1789-1794* (Paris: Minerve, 1988). After the abolition of the 'bureaux' for constitutional discussions as a first step towards more transparency and a 'radicalisation' of the Assembly in the autumn of 1789, and its transfer to the *Manège des Tuileries* , there was a tighter 'popular' control and the Assembly was already purged of its first moderate members. See Furet and Halévy, pp.LVI-LVII.

> dont la vérité est démontrée à chaque page du procès-verbal des conférences, ne peut être abandonné.
>
> Dans cette position, la noblesse refuse l'ouverture de conciliation; par cet acte elle dispense les communes de l'examiner; car il suffit qu'une partie rejette un moyen conciliatoire pour qu'il doive être regardé comme annulé. [...]
>
> L'assemblée des communes, délibérant sur l'ouverture de conciliation proposée par MM. Les commissaires du roi, a cru devoir prendre en considération l'arrêté que MM. de la noblesse se sont hâtés de faire sur la même ouverture.
>
> Elle a vu que MM. de la noblesse, malgré l'acquiescement annoncé d'abord, établissent bientôt une modification qui le rétracte presque entièrement; et qu'ainsi leur arrêté à cet égard ne peut être regardé que comme un refus positif.
>
> Par cette considération, et attendu que MM. de la noblesse ne se sont pas même désistés de leurs précédentes délibérations contraires à tout projet de réunion, les députés des communes pensent qu'il devient absolument inutile de s'occuper davantage d'un moyen qui ne peut plus être dit *conciliatoire*, dès qu'il a été rejeté par une des parties à concilier.[16]

The above lines express, as early as June 1789,[17] the same positive and productive desire to reform the world, which will appear in later speeches, pronounced at the Constituent assembly. A set of symbolic expressions and words, such as 'les envoyés du peuple', 'les représentants de la nation française', 'les destinées de la France', 'régénérer la nation', 'l'utilité réciproque', 'l'union sociale', 'le bonheur des associés', 'l'inégalité de consommation et de jouissance', 'l'égalité de droits', 'les droits de l'homme', will enter the discourse of the Revolution from its first days :

> Les représentants de la nation française, réunis en Assemblée nationale, reconnaissent qu'ils ont par leurs mandats la charge spéciale de régénérer la Constitution de l'Etat.
>
> En conséquence ils vont, à ce titre, exercer le pouvoir constituant, et pourtant, comme la représentation actuelle n'est pas rigoureusement conforme à ce qu'exige une telle nature du pouvoir, ils déclarent que la constitution qu'ils vont donner à la nation, quoique provisoirement

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[16] Abbé Sieyès, 'Motion sur la vérification des pouvoirs' 10 juin 1789, in François Furet et Ran Halévy, eds., *Orateurs de la Révolution française*. 1. 'Les Constituants' (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), pp.999-1000. I have chosen Seiyès' speeches as an illustration, since the author of *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers état?* was one of the key figures of the months preparing July 14 1789; one of the most enduring political figures and profound philosophers of the Revolution, whose works formed to a large extent the public opinion of his time, a prominent ideologist of the representative government, one of the leaders of the Constituent Assembly and, later, a deputy at the Convention, whose political career ended as a senator under the Empire. In fact it was Sieyès who urged the deputies of the *Tiers Etat* to call themselves *Asssemblée nationale* in June 1789. He took an essential part in laying down the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*.

[17] The events of May, June and July 1789 marked the beginning of the new legitimacy. As François Furet wrote, '[l]es pensées, les paroles sont libérées non pas seulement de la censure et de la police – elles l'étaient, en fait, depuis plusieurs années – mais de ce refoulement intérieur que crée le consentement spontané à des institution séculaires: le roi n'est plus le roi, la noblesse n'est plus la noblesse, l'Eglise n'est plus l'Eglise. D'ailleurs, l'irruption des masses populaires sur la scène de l'histoire offre à la pédagogie politique un public nouveau et immense, dont l'attente transforme les conditions de la communication sociale. Discours, motions, journaux ne sont plus destinés en priorité à l'attention des gens instruits, mais soumis à l'arbitrage du 'peuple'. La Révolution inaugure un théâtre où la parole libérée des interdits cherche et trouve un public défini par son apesanteur. Ce double déplacement des règles du circuit symbolique qui entoure et protège le pouvoir est le fait majeur du printemps 89.' See *Penser la Révolution*, pp. 68-9.

obligatoire pour tous, ne sera définitive, qu'après qu'un nouveau pouvoir constituant, extraordinairement convoqué pour cet unique objet, lui aura donné un consentement que réclame la rigueur des principes.

Les représentants de la nation française, exerçant dès ce moment les fonctions du POUVOIR CONSTITUANT,
Considèrent que toute union sociale, et par conséquent toute constitution politique, ne peut avoir pour objet que de manifester, d'étendre et d'assurer *les droits de l'homme et du citoyen.*[18]

It is not my task to analyze in detail the ideas deposited in the projects for the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. Neither do I intend to study all the debates of the Constituent Assembly. There are numerous examples - in fact any speech from this period could be used to illustrate the dialogical openness and the freedom of expression, which informed the discourse of the Revolution at this stage. Not only did it allow the new ideology to be established. It also allowed a consensus to be born out of competing opinions.[19] Even as late as 1792, the debates on whether the king was inviolable and sacred or whether he could be tried – and, later, the king's trial itself – allowed freedom of expression and a variety of opinions. The members of the Convention, although virtually all of them agreed that Louis was guilty of various misdeeds, were still uncertain about the identity of the king. The latter was being characterized in their speeches, proposing and opposing a trial, in contradictory terms, alternately as 'monarch, citizen, rebel, alien, tyrant, traitor, and supernatural monster'.[20] It is interesting to note, however, that at this time the depictions with negative connotation already outnumbered the positive ones. The word *monstre* was particularly favoured, as an archetypal image of the evil which had to be destroyed for the common good. It was widely used by a number of speakers who in such a way metaphorically violated the sacred image of the King during the trial.[21] Robespierre himself applied it abundantly in his speeches: 'Il est rentré dans le néant, ce monstre que le génie des rois avait vomi sur la France! Qu'avec lui disparaissent tous les

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[18] Abbé Sieyès, 'Reconnaissance et exposition raisonnée des droits de l'homme et du citoyen', 20 et 21 juillet 1789, in François Furet et Ran Halévy, p.1005.
[19] Thus, the debates in 1789 around *La Déclaration des droits de l'homme* included speakers from a broad spectrum like Lally-Tollendal, Sieyès, Malouet, Duport and Mirabeau; concerning *L'Organisation du pouvoir législatif et la sanction royale*, Lally-Tollendal, Malouet, Mirabeau, D'Antraigues, Mounier, Thouret, Sieyès ; concerning *Les biens du clergé*, Talleyrand, Maury, Thouret, Clermont-Tonnerre, Mirabeau, Boisgelin, Le Chapelier. The debates *Sur le droit de paix et de guerre et sur le « pacte de famille »* in 1790 included D'Aiguillon, Malouet, Clermont-Tonnerre, Maury, Mirabeau, Boisgelin, Cazalès, Barnave, Le Chapelier, and Barnave. See Furet et Halévy, pp. CXXVI-CXXXI.
[20] See Susan Dunn, *The Deaths of Louis XVI: Regicide, and the French Political Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p.16.
[21] In the speeches of Abbé Grégoire, Bertucat, Vadier, Lakanal, Noël Pointe, Gabriel Bouquier, Joseph Serre, Jean-Bon Saint-André, Louchet.

crimes et tous les malheurs du monde!'[22] Ironically, so powerful was its connotation of 'enemy of the people' that it was later applied to Robespierre during his Thermidorean trial.[23]

Words, such as *monstre, traîtres, scélérats, hommes perfides*, were being used as the rhetoric of the Revolution was gradually distorted from passionate debate to long harangues pronounced from the rostrum of the Convention; and its dialogic form from the beginnings, when it responded to and anticipated other utterances, degenerated into a highly authoritarian discourse. The figures of speech remained rich and expressive, in the fashion of the time, and the desire to achieve the goals set was more than ever present in revolutionary discourse; the rhetoric described a beautiful, utopian world, yet at the same time it was distorted by violence and fear of the 'enemy'. Increasingly radical rhetoric concentrated on suspicion, guilt and punishment of the hidden, indiscernible, but omnipresent enemy as opposed to the people and the people's representatives:

> Les députés des assemblées primaires viennent d'exercer parmi nous *l'initiative de la Terreur* contre *les ennemis de l'intérieur*. Répondons à leur vœu; non, *pas d'amnistie à aucun traître*. *L'homme juste* ne fait point de grâce au *méchant*. Signalons la *vengeance populaire* par *le glaive de la loi* sur *les conspirateurs de l'intérieur* [...]. Je demande donc qu'on mette en état d'arrestation *tous les hommes vraiment suspects*; mais que cette mesure s'exécute avec plus d'intelligence que jusqu'à présent où, au lieu de saisir *les grands scélérats*, les *vrais conspirateurs*, on a arrêté des hommes plus qu'insignifiants.[24]

> Je sens à quel point il est important de prendre des *mesures* judiciaires qui *punissent* les contre-révolutionnaires. [...]*Les ennemis de la liberté* lèvent un front audacieux [...] arrachez-les vous-mêmes à la vengeance populaire, *l'humanité vous l'ordonne*. [...] N'est-il pas nécessaire que des lois extraordinaires, prises hors du corps social, épouvantent *les rebelles* et atteignent *les coupables* ? Ici *le salut du peuple* exige de grands moyens et des *mesures terribles*. [...] Organisons un tribunal [...] afin que *le glaive de la loi* pèse sur la tête de *tous ses ennemis*.[25]

> [L]e *vaisseau de la raison* doit avoir *son gouvernail*, c'est la saine politique. Nous n'aurons du succès que lorsque la Convention, se rappelant que le Comité du Salut Public est une des *conquêtes de la liberté*, donnera à cette institution l'énergie et le développement dont elle peut être susceptible.[...] Eh bien ! *soyons terribles*, faisons la guerre en lions. Pourquoi n'établissons-nous pas un gouvernement provisoire qui seconde, par *de puissantes mesures*, l'énergie nationale ?[...] Nous avons dans la France *une foule de traîtres à découvrir et à déjouer*. Eh bien ! Un gouvernement adroit aurait *une foule d'agents*.[26]

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[22] See 'Second speech', delivered at the Festival of the Supreme Being (20 Prairial, Year II – 8 June 1794), in Stephens, II, pp. 420-1 (p.420).

[23] In Thuriot's speech, commented in Jules Michelet's *Histoire de la Révolution française*, quoted by Dunn, p,23.

[24] From Danton's speech of 12 August 1793, 'On the Arrest of Suspected Persons', in H.Morse Stephens, II, pp.255-7.

[25] From Danton's speech of 10 March 1793, 'On the Establishment of a Revolutionary Tribunal', in H. Morse Stephens, II, pp.195-7.

[26] From Danton's speech of 1 August 1793, 'On the Erection of the Committee of Public Safety into a Provisional Government', in H. Morse Stephens,II, pp. 251-5. In his speeches, Danton firmly supported

When Danton spoke the above lines, could he have imagined that only eight months later Robespierre would use the same allegations against him? With the Terror becoming the order of the day, 'enemies' and 'traitors' were found everywhere, even amongst the most fervent militants of the Revolution. Thus, in his speech on the arrest of the Dantonists, Robespierre crushes any attempt (Legendre's proposition) to allow that they should be heard defending themselves:

> Il s'agit de savoir si quelques hommes aujourd'hui doivent l'emporter sur la patrie. [...] Parce qu'il s'agit de savoir aujourd'hui si l'intérêt de *quelques hypocrites ambitieux* doit l'emporter sur *l'intérêt du peuple Français*.[...] Je dis que quiconque tremble en ce moment est *coupable* ; car jamais *l'innocence* ne redoute la surveillance publique.[...]

> Au reste, la discussion qui vient de s'engager est un *danger pour la patrie*; déjà elle est une *atteinte coupable portée à la liberté* ; car c'est avoir outragé la liberté que d'avoir mis en question s'il fallait donner à un citoyen plus de faveur qu'à un autre; tenter de rompre ici cette égalité, c'est censurer indirectement les décrets salutaires que vous avez portés en plusieurs circonstances, les *jugements* que vous avez rendus contre *les conspirateurs*, qu'on veut soustraire au *glaive de la justice*, parce qu'on a avec eux un intérêt commun ; c'est rompre l'égalité.[27]

Then followed Saint-Just's report on the so-called conspiracy :

> Il y a donc eu une *conjuration tramée* depuis plusieurs années pour absorber la Révolution Française dans un changement de dynastie. Les factions de Mirabeau, des Lameth, de Lafayette, de Brissot, de d'Orléans, de Dumouriez, de Carra, d'Hébert; les factions de Chabot, de Fabre, de Danton, ont concouru progressivement à ce but par tous les moyens qui pouvaient empêcher la République de s'établir, et son gouverneent de s'affermir.

> Nous avons cru ne devoir plus temporiser avec *les coupables*, puisque nous avons annoncé que *nous détruirons* toutes les factions; elles pourraient se ranimer et prendre de nouvelles forces; L'Europe semble ne plus compter que sur elles. Il était donc instant de les détruire, afin qu'il ne restât dans la République que *le peuple et vous* et *le gouvernement dont vous êtes le centre inviolable.*

> Les *jours du crime* sont passés: malheur à ceux qui soutiendraient sa cause! La politique est *démasquée. Que tout ce qui fut criminel périsse.* On ne fait point de républiques avec des ménagements, mais avec la rigueur farouche, *la rigueur inflexible* envers *tous ceux qui ont trahi.* Que *les complices* se *dénoncent* en se rangeant du parti des forfaits. Ce que nous avons dit ne sera jamais perdu sur la terre. On peut arracher à la vie les hommes qui, comme nous, ont tout osé pour *la vérité*; on ne peut point leur arracher les cœurs, ni le tombeau hospitalier, sous lequel ils se dérobent à l'esclavage et à la honte d'avoir laissé triompher *les méchants.*

> Voici le projet de décret:

> La Convention Nationale, après avoir entendu le rapport de ses Comités de Sûreté générale et de Salut Public, décrète d'accusation,

> Camille Desmoulins, Hérault, Danton, Philippeaux, Lacroix, *prévenus de complicité* avec d'Orléans et Dumouriez, avec Fabre D'églantine et *les ennemis de la République* ; d'avoir trempé

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every measure that would lead to the establishment of the Terror by which he was to be engulfed himself. Italics mine.

[27] From Robespierre's speech of 11 Germinal Year II, 31 March 1794: 'On the Arrest of Danton, Lacroix, etc.', in H. Morse Stephens, II, pp.383-390. Italics mine.

dans *la conspiration tendante à rétablir la monarchie*, et à détruire la représentation nationale et le gouvernement républicain : en conséquence elle ordonne leur *mise en jugement* avec Fabre d'Eglantine.[28]

All of the above passages represent competing claims, loaded with the maximalist, black-and-white rhetoric of suspicion, hatred, and desire to destroy the political opponent. In their speeches, the orators invariably dissociate themselves from the 'enemies' and 'traitors' – guilty of 'conspiring' against 'the people' –, and identify themselves with the 'innocents', namely the 'people'.[29] The desire to destroy the 'enemy', indeed the whole concept of the 'enemy' in all its metaphorical extensions was yet another expression of the revolutionaries' will for power, which fuelled the tensions in the discourses of the competing political factions. In effect, even if they achieved power, the revolutionaries were in constant fear of losing it; rather, from the very beginning, they were constantly striving to maintain power. Barère himself admitted this in the following lines.

> Depuis 1789, chaque faction a voulu gouverner, et cette manie gouvernante et despotique n'est pas encore passée; depuis 1789, chaque faction a cherché à accaparer la majorité, par la séduction ou par l'effroi. Toutes les passions les plus hideuses se sont revêtues tour-à-tour du patriotisme, comme d'un masque commun ; mais heureusement ces passions ainsi déguisées et affectant le même langage, ont fini par ne plus se connaître et par se tromper réciproquement. [...]
>
> Les deux Comités de Salut Public et de Sûreté générale n'oublieront jamais l'ensemble et l'énergie des fonctions qui leur sont confiées ; et ce double rocher saura bien repousser toutes les vagues de royalisme, et dominer toutes les tempêtes suscitées par l'aristocratie qui ne se corrige que le jour des jugements, et par l'ambition dominatrice qui ne se corrige qu'à l'échafaud.[30]

In their effort to introduce a radical new order, the revolutionaries aimed to re-create authority by creating a new political system, which would fill the vacuum left by the crumbling of the *Ancien Régime*. For, in the *Ancien Régime*, authority was synonymous with the king. The Revolution led to a displacement of power. By deciding to call themselves the National Assembly on June 17, 1789, the deputies of the Third Estate challenged the location of authority. The events created a situation in which, as François Furet put it, 'power was perceived by everyone as vacant, as having become intellectually and practically available'.[31] So rhetoric was employed to 'win' political space. In the years that followed, power became synonymous with what had come to replace the *Ancien*

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[28] Saint-Just, 'Report on the Conspiracy of Danton, Lacroix, etc. (11 Germinal Year II - 31 March 1794)', in H.Morse Stephens, *Orators of the French Revolution*, .506-539 (pp.538-9). Saint-Just's report against the Dantonists was based on notes, furnished by Robespierre. See Appendix, pp.559-574. Italics mine.

[29] See also Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 169-176, esp. p.173.

[30] See Barère's speech of 2 Thermidor, in Stephens, pp.116-7.

[31] *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p.47.

Régime and the king: the people.[32] Moreover, public opinion seemed to be very important, as it was the only means to keep power exclusively to the people.[33] Since public opinion was expressed in words, language was invested with a special political meaning as it became the instrument of the new political power and people who had never had a voice could speak, make political statements and ultimately political decisions.

The new political space that was opened up by the revolutionary events established the people, or the nation[34] as a new source of political legitimacy. Thus, the struggle for the privilege to represent the sovereign people or the people's will[35] became the main concern of the rival voices. On the other hand, the struggle to retain power produced specific competing discourses centred on speaking in the name of the people, dominated by a special set of words and expressions. Revolutionary language was to become sacred: it yielded authority and so the ability to speak for the people became a locus of authority.[36] François Furet has analysed this point in the following passage:

> Puisque c'est le peuple qui est seul en droit de gouverner, ou qui doit au moins, faute de pouvoir le faire, réinstituer sans cesse l'autorité publique, le pouvoir est aux mains de ceux qui parlent en son nom. Ce qui veut dire à la fois qu'il est dans la parole, puisque la parole, publique par nature, est l'instrument qui dévoile ce qui voudrait rester caché, donc néfaste; et qu'il constitue un enjeu constant entre les paroles, seules qualifiées pour se l'approprier, mais rivales dans la conquête de ce lieu évanescent et primordial qu'est la volonté du peuple.[37]

Authority could thus be identified with the authorship of the revolutionary text. However, in those years of upheaval, authority was uncertain. There were a number of leaders competing to take the place of the king as a traditional sacred centre of society, but none of them succeeded in achieving it. All of the different constitutions and successive

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[32] It is interesting to note how Mirabeau's '*représentants du* peuple *français*' (meaning both *populus* and *plebs*) came to replace the '*représentants connus et vérifiés de la* nation *française*' in Sieyès' proposition. Mounier had proposed *Assemblée légitime des représentants de la majeure partie de la nation, agissant en l'absence de la mineure partie'*. See Furet et Halévy, pp.LX-LXI.

[33] On this point, see Jon Cowan's discussion in his important book *To Speak for the People: Public Opinion and the Problem of Legitimacy in the French Revolution*, pp.126-135.

[34] The term 'nation' is linked to the issue of representation. The meaning of 'nation' evolved with the revolutionary events. In the displacement of power from crown to nation, the radical revolutionaries followed Rousseau. In *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?*, Sieyès gave a political definition of the 'nation' as 'a unitary body of citizens exercising an inalienable common will'. For him, the nation was 'the ultimate political reality, upon whose identity and will all else depended'. He wrote that 'a political society can be nothing other than the whole body of the associates. A nation cannot decide that it will not be a nation [...]. Similarly, a nation cannot decree that its common will shall cease to be its common will.' Sieyès' political language owed its principal inspiration to Rousseau. See Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, pp.224-251. The quotations are from p.247.

[35] The people's will as the 'general will' of the people, assembled as a sovereign body, in Rousseau's *Contrat Social*. See, on this subject, Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, pp. 256-7.

[36] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 72-75.

[37] François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, p. 73.

national assemblies were aspiring to become the fixed reference point for the Nation. As a consequence of this constant displacement of political authority and the inability to answer the question of who speaks for the Nation, 'charisma' was most concretely 'located in words'.[38]

The revolutionaries recreated authority by inventing a new, sacred language, a code, in the sense given by Bourdieu, for the official, legitimate language, which is bound up with the state.[39] Such language was one of their aims, which was reflected in their official documents. As Barère stated in his report of the 8 Pluviôse, year II: 'Nous avons révolutionné le gouvernement, les lois, les usages, les mœurs, les costumes, le commerce et la pensée même; révolutionnons donc aussi la langue, qui est leur instrument journalier.'[40] Language was made sacred as it was identified with the Nation, and words such as *révolution, nation, patrie, peuple, égalité, régénération, vertu, vigilance* , were used as ritual incantations, in the form of revolutionary oaths, which were to replace the charisma of kingship.[41] Yet from the very beginning, there was also a language of suspicion and denunciation – *les ennemis, les conspirateurs, les hommes vraiment suspects, les grands scélérats, les contre-révolutionnaires, les coupables, les rebelles, une foule de traîtres, hypocrites ambitieux, une atteinte coupable portée à la liberté, une conjuration tramée, les complices, ceux qui ont trahi, le crime, les méchants*[42] – a rhetoric, which was opposed to the sacred language of reconciliation. The dualism of revolutionary rhetoric pivoted on the opposition of good and evil. As Robespierre said: 'Le vice et la vertu font les destins de la terre: ce sont les deux génies opposés qui se la disputent'.[43] Hence, the narrative of the Revolution was dominated by an obsession with conspiracy, which became the central organising principle of French revolutionary rhetoric. For Rousseau's followers, *le peuple* was *la vertu*, and those acting against *le peuple* were their enemies. The opposition *peuple - ennemis du peuple* governed

[38] See Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, p.26. Hunt develops here Furet's argument.
[39] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire : l'économie des échanges linguistiques* (Paris: Fayard, 1982), pp.25-34.
[40] The whole report is published in Michel de Certeau, Dominique Julia and Jacques Revel, *Une politique de la langue: La révolution française et les patois* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), pp. 291-299; the quotation is from p.295.
[41] See Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, p.21. On the linguistic politics of the Convention, see Sylvain Auroux, 'Le sujet de la langue: la conception politique de la langue sous l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution', in W.Busse and J.Trabant, eds., *Les Idéologues: Sémiotique, théories et politiques linguistiques pendant la Révolution française* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986), pp.259-278 (p.269).
[42] See the quotations discussed above.
[43] In his speech of 18 Floréal, Year II, 7 May 1794; see H. M. Stephens, pp.390-417 (p.394).

revolutionary discourse and produced a 'maximalist' rhetoric, centred around the 'aristocratic plot'.[44] As François Furet wrote,

> L'activité révolutionnaire par excellence tient dans la production de la parole maximaliste, par l'intermédiaire d'assemblées unanimes mythiquement investies de la volonté générale. A cet égard, toute l'histoire de la Révolution est marquée par une dichotomie fondamentale. Les députés font des lois au nom du peuple, qu'ils sont censés *représenter*; mais les hommes des sections et des clubs, eux, *figurent* le peuple, sentinelles vigilantes chargées de traquer et de dénoncer tout écart entre l'action et les valeurs, et de réinstituer, à chaque instant, le corps politique. La période qui va de mai-juin 89 au 9 Thermidor 94 n'est pas caractérisée, du point de vue intérieur, par le conflit entre la Révolution et la Contre-Révolution, mais par la lutte entre les représentants des Assemblées succesives et les militants des clubs pour occuper cette position symbolique dominante qu'est la volonté du peuple.[45]

The period described in the above lines was namely the 'public safety period', during which unmasking the enemy was common practice. Marat's *L'Ami du peuple* led the way and became, from Septembre 1789, a powerful agent in the escalating process of denunciation. Indeed, it expressed the most radical views, but the rhetoric of conspiracy eventually invaded all levels of political discourse in France. Anyone could be a traitor and an enemy of the Nation, yet the notion of 'aristocrats', which was the reverse of 'the people', epitomized everything the revolutionaries were against, all the sources of evil which had to be destroyed. The process of unmasking and denouncing reached its climax in Hébert's paper *Le Père Duchesne*; known for its vulgar language, and with a particular appeal to a specific readership among the small shopkeepers, artisans and workers, by 1791, this was raised to the status of *le Jésus Jacobin*.[46]

The struggle for political power began with the first expression of what was soon to become the most distinctive feature of radical discourse. As Furet has forcefully argued, the idea of the 'plot', as part of the 'imaginary discourse on power', was brought into being to counterbalance the idea of 'pure democracy', which had taken over the field of power. Thus, the 'plot' was the 'hidden threat' to 'pure democracy'. The concept of 'pure democracy' meant that the people were power or that power was the people. Yet the 'people', rather than being a concept that reflected real society, represented the Revolution's claim to legitimacy. Moreover, the discourse of the 'plot' was informed by two sets of symbols which complemented each other: the 'enemies' were necessary for the existence of the 'nation'; so the 'patriots' constituted themselves as a reaction against

[44] See Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, pp.74-9.
[45] Ibid. pp. 74-5.
[46] See Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*, p. 321.

that hidden force, which was secretly manipulated by the 'aristocrats'.[47] Thus, concludes Furet,

> La dérive potentielle de cet enjeu constituant est indéfinie, car l'égalité n'est jamais acquise, puisqu'elle est une valeur plus qu'un état de société ; et ses ennemis, plus que des forces réelles, répértoriées, délimitées, sont des incarnations sans cesse renaissantes des anti-valeurs. La charge symbolique du combat révolutionnaire est la donnée la plus immédiate des esprits et des comportements. [48]

Yet this chorus of denunciations, located at the centre of an egalitarian ideology, excluding the perpetrators of the plot, was at the same time highly integrative. Against the 'traitors', 'conspirators', 'agents' and 'foreign spies', encompassing all the 'enemies' of the Revolution, stood the *nous* of the speaker from the rostrum, inevitably identifying himself and being part of the *peuple* (but not always with the audience), as it can be seen from Robespierre's speech, *Pour des mesures de sûreté générale*, of the 12 August 1793:

> La seule mesure à prendre est de balayer rapidement de *nos* armées les *aristocrates*; les *hommes notoirement suspects* qui les déshonorent.[...] Que le glaive de la loi, planant avec une rapidité terrible sur la tête des *conspirateurs*, frappe de terreur *leurs complices*! Que *le peuple* lève enfin sa tête triomphante, et les *tyrans* ne sont plus! Il faut donc stimuler le zèle du Tribunal révolutionnaire; il faut lui ordonner de juger les *coupables* qui lui sont *dénoncés*, 24 heures après la remise des preuves; il faut plus, c'est de multiplier son action; car *nous* sommes infestés des *agents d'Angleterre*; il faut que *nous* soyons contr'eux aussi terribles qu'ils sont *perfides* et *barbares*.[...] Que ces grands exemples anéantissent les séditions par la terreur qu'ils inspireront à *tous les ennemis de la Patrie*! Que *les patriotes*, en voyant votre énergie, retrouvent la leur, et *les tyrans* sont vaincus![49]

Foreign spies, such as those *agents d'Angleterre* with whom France had been 'infested', according to Robespierre, were attacked in a particularly vehement manner in the radical rhetoric during the Terror. Revolutionary attitudes were cosmopolitan at the beginning,[50] yet they deteriorated to such an extent under the Terror, that foreign subjects were persecuted, accused of treason, and forbidden to stay in most of the bigger French cities for the length of the war; some of them were even guillotined. Moreover, those who sought to protect them in various ways – first the Girondists, and later the Dantonists and

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[47] See Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, pp. 75, 78-81.

[48] Ibid., p.80.

[49] *Oeuvres complètes de Maximilien Robespierre*, éditées par Marc Bouloiseau et Albert Soboul Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), X, *Discours*, pp. 66-7. Italics mine.

[50] Thus, a decree was approved on August 26 1792, as proposed by Marie-Joseph Chénier, conferring the title of 'citoyen français' to those foreign writers and learned men who, "dans diverses contrées du monde, ont ùûri la raison humaine et préparé les voies de la liberté". Among those 'adopted': Joseph Priestley, Thomas Paine, Jeremy Bentham, George Washington, James Madison, Thaddeus Kosciusko, Friedrich Schiller. See Julia Kristeva, *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, p.232.

the Hebertists – were in their turn sent to the scaffold.[51] Indeed, when violence became the order of the day, words like *agents*, *traître*, and *ennemi* acquired a new semantic value; they were invested with a terrifying meaning and became synonymous with guillotine and death. In his 'Report on the Conspiracy of Danton, Lacroix, etc.,' Saint-Just said: 'Il y a quelque chose de terrible dans l'amour sacré de la Patrie; il est tellement exclusif qu'il immole tout sans pitié, sans frayeur, sans respect humain, à l'intérêt public'.[52] Ironically, the 'plot' theme had impregnated revolutionary discourse to such an extent that after the fall of Robespierre – the great spokesman of the radicals and one of the authors of the 'plot' – his opponents transferred it to his image and started unmasking him. The fall of Robespierre, the orator who epitomized *par excellence* the monological principle in his speeches during the Terror, brought parliamentary rhetoric back to its dialogical form from earlier days after the 9 Thermidor, when new voices began to be heard.

It is interesting to analyse how the revolutionary narrative was constructed. As language, and in particular the spoken word, had become an instrument of power, revolutionary discourse, which was a means of persuasion, hence rhetorical, was by the same token authoritative. The authoritative word, in Bakhtin's thought, is religious, political or moral; the word of a father and of teachers. 'The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own. It binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it.[53] To Bakhtin, however, the authoritarian word is a *prior discourse*, which is located in a distanced zone, 'organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher'.[54] Yet as the revolutionaries were breaking with the past by creating a temporal discontinuity, their discourse was located either in the present, or in the future. They were using the past mostly as a contrast when speaking about the *Ancien Régime*, to congratulate themselves on the completion of glorious deeds or to refer to the new founding moment:

> Les rois de l'Europe ont vu par-tout leurs armées repoussées ou arrêtées, leurs sujets fatigués, le peuple français déterminé à défendre sa liberté et assez puissant pour exterminer tous ses ennemis; la République s'affermissant par l'énergie de la Convention nationale.[55]

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[51] On the revolutionaries' changing attitudes towards the foreigners, see Julia Kristeva, *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, pp. 230-43.
[52] See H.Morse Stephens, pp. 506-539 (p.507).
[53] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 342.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Robespierre, 'Séance du 8 Frimaire, An II', in *Œuvres complètes*, p.210.

Such manipulation of time categories further enabled them to praise themselves for goals yet unaccomplished or even to translate their desire into reality:

> La victoire est certaine, puisqu'enfin nous sommes déterminés à vaincre. Le terme des coupables victoires de la tyrannie est passé, puisqu'enfin nous allons déployer contr'elle les seules armes qui puissent la terrasser, le courage invincible et la sagesse qui doit le diriger.[56]

Thus, in the radicals' epic discourse, which proclaimed victory and triumph over the enemy, the revolutionary hero was embarking on an 'adventure plot', 'placed wholly at the service of the [revolutionary] idea'.[57] The revolutionaries had rather created a new dimension of temporality, very similar to the Bakhtinian categories of *'adventure time* (time taken out of history and biography)', with its 'boundless and infinite nature' or *'fairy-tale time'*.[58] The present and the future were even merging into one, which included a romantic, utopian vision of the future incorporated in the present:

> L'âme des républicains s'élève insensiblement à mesure des progrès de la Révolution ; elle devient encore plus énergique, et leur courage est plus exalté, en raison des dangers et du malheur. La passion de la liberté les suit en tous les lieux ; elle les console dans les fers ; elle les encourage dans l'adversité ; et les chants par lesquels nous célébrons nos victoires et notre indépendance, les consolent d'être condamnés à vivre au milieu des implacables ennemis de la République.[59]

But there was also the 'mythic present', which, although being inherently undatable, was indeed the moment of creation of the new community, 'the sacred moment of the new consensus' celebrated in the ritual oaths of allegiance at the altars of Liberty.[60] In this sense, the revolutionaries were constantly re-writing the history of the Revolution in their pursuit of the true founding moment of the new era.

Indeed, the revolutionaries were creating a new glorious epic.[61] But the story they were writing was not about a distant past. It was about themselves, or, rather, about the

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[56] 'Pour des mesures de sûreté générale', speech of Robespierre, 12 August 1793, in *Œuvres complètes*, X, p.66.
[57] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.194-5.
[58] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p.15
[59] Speech of Barère, of 21 Messidor Year II, 9 July 1794, 'On the heroism of the Sailors of the 'Vengeur', in H.M.Stephens, pp.96-7.
[60] Lynn Hunt introduced the term 'mythic present'. See *Politics, Culture, and Class*, p.27.
[61] For a similar discussion in a different context – namely the 'epic' state of the Soviet Union in the 1930s – see Ken Hirschkop's book *Mikhail Bakhtin: an Aesthetic for Democracy*, pp. 288-9. 'Both the ethnically based nationalisms of the twentieth century and the project of historical Communism, which mixed class and national definitions together', Hirschkop writes, 'appear to incarnate the notion of an historical people. Although typically premised on a national or class-based heroic past, their focus, in so far as they are specifically ideologies or *mobilization*, is on the creation of a glorious future.[...] The future they strive for

French people's achievements. To Bakhtin, '[t]he world of the epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of 'beginnings' and 'peak times' in the national history, a world of fathers and founders of families, a world of 'firsts' and 'bests''. However, as the past had been darkened by the anti-values of the *Ancien Régime*, in the sense that a people who had lived for centuries in servitude lacked a glorious collective memory, the grandeur of the new epic – the victory of the people over monarchy – was located in the present and in the future. The revolutionaries were thus 'removing' themselves from their own time. When inventing a new identity, they adopted a new religion and celebrated the new beginnings by recasting time. The new era of the Republic was being celebrated by a new, Civic calendar. And so their epic was about their own heroic time, about their own heroic fatherland, about the founding moment of the Republic, and it was being written for the future, for those to whom the Revolution would represent a glorious past:[62]

> Ce sera un bon sujet d'entretien pour la postérité, c'est déjà un spectacle digne de la terre et du ciel, de voir l'assemblée des représentants du peuple français placée sur un volcan inépuisable de conjurations, d'une main apporter aux pieds de l'éternel auteur des choses, les hommages d'un grand peuple ; de l'autre, lancer la foudre sur les tyrans conjurés contre lui, fonder la première république du monde, et rappeler parmi les mortels, la liberté, la justice et la nature exilées (*On applaudit*).[63]

By writing their epic story of the Revolution, the radicals were transferring to contemporary events and, indeed, to future deeds, 'the time-and-value contour of the past, thus attaching them to the world of fathers, of beginning and peak times – canonizing these events, as it were, while they are still current':[64]

> Nous lui apprendrons, nous [à la postérité], les noms et les vertus de héros morts en combattant pour la liberté ; nous lui apprendrons dans quelle terre les derniers satellites des tyrans ont mordu la poussière ; nous lui apprendrons à quelle heure a sonné le trépas des oppresseurs du monde.[65]

This epic story of the revolutionaries remained monological, like the 'classical' epic structure, defined by the narrator's absolute point of view, which coincides with the

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is in reality 'the future memory of a past' [...], that is, a future in which the nation can transcend the present by being an object of commemoration and epic memory'.

[62] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 3-40 (pp.13-14).

[63] From Robespierre's speech on 7 Prairial, An II (26 May 1794), 'Sur les crimes des rois coalisés contre la France', in Marc Bouloiseau et Albert Soboul, éditeurs, *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre* X, *Discours – 27 juillet 1793 – 27 juillet 1794*, pp. 473-8 (pp.473-4).

[64] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 14-15.

[65] From Robespierre's speech on 18 Floréal, An II (7 May 1794) 'Sur les rapports des idées religieuses et morales avec les principes républicains, et sur les fêtes nationales', in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre*, X, p. 445.

wholeness of a god or community.[66] To write their new epic, the revolutionaries used the language and the concepts of tradition: the 'good' as opposed to the 'bad', or 'virtue' versus 'vice'. But they were transposing them to a contemporary setting. As I argued earlier, single truth concepts were gradually developed and consolidated, polarizing 'le peuple', 'la vertu du peuple', 'les représentants du peuple', 'les patriotes' on the one side, and '[les] rois et valets des rois', 'tous les tyrans armés contre le peuple français', 'toutes les factions qui s'appuient sur leur puissance pour détruire notre liberté', 'les tyrans et tous leurs complices', 'les êtres pervers', 'les factions qui tendent sans cesse à corrompre et à déchirer la République', in short, 'les ennemis', on the other side.[67] Even the intertextual dimensions of tradition were banned in the name of the new, 'single truth' ideas, although tradition fought its way and survived through different forms of collective expression, collective memory and the resistance to the new order as in the spontaneous, 'parallel' festivals and the popular resistance to the revolutionary calendar.

In their vision of the present and the future as opposed to the past, however, the revolutionaries were most often using 'real historical time'.[68] They incorporated historical time in their huge project of educating the French people and, indeed, they hoped that their example would spread to neighbouring people and incite uprisings against the tyrants.[69] We could even speak, when interpreting the narrative of the Revolution, of *the man in the process of becoming* as a Bakhtinian category intertwined with 'historical emergence',[70] and with the time-space relationship between the Revolution and the *Ancien Régime* as a creation of the Revolution. This is how Bakhtin described the emergence of this new type of man:

> He emerges *along with* the world and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other. This transition is accomplished in him and through him. He is forced to become a new, unprecedented human being.[71]

In Bakhtin's dialogism, monologue naturally appears as the most appropriate term to oppose dialogue. Yet, for Bakhtin, dialogue could be monological and monologue could be dialogical. This is what Tzvetan Todorov calls 'an intertextual dimension' of

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[66]See Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', p. 452 : 'le point de vue absolu du narrateur qui coïncide avec le tout d'un dieu ou d'une communuté'.

[67] See Robespierre's speech of 18 Floréal, as above, pp. 474-6.

[68] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p.24.

[69] See Julia Kristeva, *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, p.231.

[70] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p.23.

[71] Ibid.

Bakhtin's aesthetics: in fact, Todorov writes, the opposition of the dialogic and the monologic gives way to 'an internal cleavage' ('une scission') of the dialogic, which assumes different forms.[72]

On the one hand, Bakhtin speaks of the 'hierarchical place' of the speaker, and the 'corresponding hierarchical position of the addressee of the utterance'.[73] On the other hand, there is 'the sacred (authoritarian) word; the peculiarities of its behaviour in the context of speech communication [...] (its inertness, its withdrawal from dialogue, its extremely limited ability to combine in general and especially with profane – not sacred – words)'. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the relationship between the orators and their audience at the beginnings of the Revolution, until the end of the Constituent Assembly in September 1791, was one of a living, Socratic dialogue. In the heat of revolutionary debate in the Assembly, the speakers and the listeners participated together in the creation of discourse. The new projects and decrees may have been delivered in an authoritarian way, yet the debate contributed greatly to the shaping of new ideas and the coining of new words. New meaning was created through the dialogic nature of truth. Thus, after a heated debate, the deputies decided to call themselves 'the National Assembly' on 17 June 1789. Two days before, l'Abbé Sieyès had proposed 'La dénomination d'Assemblée des représentants connus et vérifiés de la nation française'.[74] In his first and second *Discours sur la dénomination de l'Assemblée,* pronounced on 15 and 16 June, Mirabeau, after having carefully presented his well-founded arguments, proposed that the Assembly should be called *représentants du peuple français.*[75] Similarly, when he proposed to replace the 'aristocratic, oppressive and discouraging' literature of the Académie, in his *Prospectus de la Société des Amateurs de la langue française*, presented in 1791, Domergue was thinking of founding a 'Republic of Letters': 'que dans notre société des amateurs de la langue, tous soient égaux en droits: l'homme, la femme; l'académicien, le simple littérateur; l'habitant de la capitale, celui des départements; le correspondant français, le correspondant étranger'.[76] At this stage, oratory art and eloquence – and indeed persuasion – took part in the dialogue.

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[72] See Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhaïl Bakhtine: le principe dialogique* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), pp. 99-100.

[73] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres,* p.153

[74] *Motion sur la constitution des communes en assemblée des représentants connus et vérifiés de la nation française, 15 juin 1789.* In: François Furet et Ran Halévy, *Orateurs de la Révolution française. 1. Les Constituants* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), p.1002.

[75] 'Premier discours sur la dénomination des assemblées', in Furet et Halévy, pp. 624-635 (p.629).

[76] Quoted by Sylvain Auroux, 'Le sujet de la langue, p.271.

From the overthrow of monarchy, in September 1792, and especially after the execution of the King in January 1793, the dialogic form of parliamentary debate, originally structured like Socratic dialogue and stemming from 'the Socratic notion of the dialogic nature of truth', was gradually destroyed by its assumption of a monologic character. Revolutionary epic adopted a highly authoritative form and delivered ready-made truths to educate the audiences. Indeed, Bakhtin's interpretation of monologue applies to any discourse, which seeks to deny the dialogic nature of existence, which 'is addressed to no one and does not presuppose a response'[77].

Under the Terror, an omnipresent, 'anonymous threat'[78] darkened the speeches of the main orators (in the Convention and in the Committee of Public Safety). The struggle against conspiracy, which had begun as the discourse on power in revolutionary society, became the only instrument for preserving real power. Those who held power (for example Robespierre) used it to unmask their enemies, or the plot, a 'counter-power' potentially more powerful than power itself, in order to destroy any possible rivals in the struggle for power. In such a manner radical discourse revived the idea of absolute power, conflicting with the revolutionary ideal.[79] To the various petitions presented at the Convention, Robespierre, as President, invariably responded in an authoritative way:

> *Le Président.* L'aristocratie, l'avarice et la tyrannie coalisées font tous leurs efforts pour perdre la liberté ; ils mettent tout en usage pour réussir ; et la Convention n'a cessé de veiller pour déjouer leurs complots. Elle a une dernière conspiration à déjouer : c'est celle qui a pour but d'affamer le peuple.[80]

The following text from the *Journal des Jacobins*, comments on Robespierre's speech at the Convention *Contre l'indulgence envers les traîtres* as the answer to another petition from the Bordeaux sections:

> *Robespierre* établit que ceux qui viennent ainsi, au nom du peuple, demander la grâce des traîtres, sont démentis et désavoués par le peuple.[...] Le peuple a besoin de vengeance, et la loi ne peut pas lui en refuser une si légitime.[81]

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[77] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'The Problem of the Text' in *Speech Genres*, p. 117; on the form and content of Socratic dialogue, see *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, p.110*.

[78] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p. 143.

[79] See François Furet, *Penser la Révolution française*, p.79.

[80] 'Sur une adresse des citoyens de Vincennes concernant les subsistances'. Séance du 26 août 1793. From *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, No 240, p.1022, as reproduced in *Œuvres complètes de Robespierre*, X, p.82

[81] Séance du 30 août 1793. Ibid., p.86. 'Une députation des commissaires des sections de Bordeaux a présenté une pétition demandant le rapport du décret mettant hors la loi les membres de la Commission populaire de cette ville. L'un des arguments avancés avait été que cette commission avait été établie par le peuple : « en la frappant, c'est attaquer sa souveraineté » (the quotation is from *Le Moniteur*).

And again, among many other examples, the manner in which Robespierre – together with Barère – defended the revolutionary truth when he responded to the attacks of the opposition at the Convention on 25 September 1793:

> La vérité est la seule arme qui reste entre les mains des intrépides défenseurs de la liberté pour terrasser les perfides agents de l'aristocratie. Celui qui cherche à avilir, à diviser, à paralyser la Convention est un ennemi de la patrie, soit qu'il siège dans cette enceinte, soit qu'il soit étranger (*On applaudit*) ; qu'il agisse par sottise ou par perversité, il est du parti des tyrans qui nous font la guerre. Or il existe, ce projet d'avilissement, il existe dans les lieux mêmes où le patriotisme devrait régner, dans les clubs qui prétendent être plus que patriotes. On fait la guerre à la Convention, dans la personne de tous les défenseurs de la liberté. Mais ce qu'il y aurait de plus déplorable, ce serait que ce lâche système eût ici des partisans.[82]

As Bakhtin wrote,

> Authoritative discourse may organize around itself great masses of other types of discourses (which interpret it, praise it, apply in it various ways), but the authoritative discourse itself does not merge with these [...] it remains sharply demarcated, compact and inert. [...] its semantic structure is static and dead, for it is fully complete, it has but a single meaning, the letter is fully sufficient to the sense and calcifies it. [...][it] demands our unconditional allegiance. [It] permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it. It enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it. It is indissolubly fused with authority - with political power, an institution, a person - and it stands and falls together with that authority. [83]

For Bakhtin, the authoritative word is often a word spoken by another, in a foreign language, as in the case of foreign-language religious texts used in a number of cultures.[84] In fact, the new, secular religion of the radicals was based upon a whole set of new concepts that needed either new words, or words that had already been established in politics or in everyday life, but invested with a new meaning in order to create a 'religious' dogma. The revolutionaries' epic was an 'all-inclusive' discourse – built upon expressions, such as *nous voulons*, *tous les hommes*, and *chaque individu* –, which was at the same time 'exclusive', as it was based upon the two extremes of 'black-and-white', opposing *le vice* and *la vertu*, *l'esclave* and *le tyran*, *la tyrannie* and *la liberté*, *le faux révolutionnaire* and *le patriote*, as well as canonizing absolute values such as *la justice éternelle* and *la félicité universelle* versus *la tyrannie* and *le vice*, and *les passions basses*

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[82] 'Pour le Comité de Salut public et contre Briez', in *Œuvres complètes de Robespierre*, X, pp.116-7.
[83] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, p.343.
[84] Ibid.

et cruelles.[85] This was an accomplished monologic utopian model, which was very straightforward, and where the incomplete, or any compromise, were impossible, because everything was subordinated to a single ambitious idea.

> Nous voulons un ordre de choses où toutes les passions basses et cruelles soient enchaînées, toutes les passions bienfaisantes et généreuses éveillées par les lois; où l'ambition soit le désir de mériter la gloire et de servir la patrie; où les distinctions ne naissent que de l'égalité même; où le citoyen soit soumis au magistrat , le magistrat au peuple, et le peuple à la justice; où la patrie assure le bien-être de chaque individu, et où chaque individu jouisse avec orgueil de la prospérité et de la gloire de la patrie; où toutes les âmes s'agrandissent par la communication continuelle des sentiments républicains et par le besoin de mériter l'estime d'un grand peuple; où les arts soient les décorations de la liberté qui les ennoblit, le commerce la source de la richesse publique, et non seulement de l'opulence monstrueuse de quelques maisons.

> Nous voulons substituer, dans notre pays, la morale à l'égoïsme, la probité à l'honneur, les principes aux usages, les devoirs aux bienséances, l'empire de la raison à la tyrannie de la mode, le mépris du vice au mépris du malheur, la fierté à l'insolence, la grandeur d'âme à la vanité, l'amour de la gloire à l'amour de l'argent, les bonnes gens à la bonne compagnie, le mérite à l'intrigue, le génie au bel esprit, la vérité à l'éclat, le charme du bonheur aux ennuis de la volupté, la grandeur de l'homme à la petitesse des grands, un peuple magnanime, puissant, heureux, à un peuple aimable ; frivole et misérable, c'est-à-dire, toutes les vertus et tous les miracles de la République, à tous les vices et à tous les ridicules de la monarchie.[86]

To the great majority of the listeners, this type of 'externally authoritative discourse' has a single meaning. It has to be accepted as it is, it has to be obeyed:[87] its semantic structure is closed, 'finite' – such were the speeches of Robespierre from the period of the Terror.

In the case of Saint-Just, however – whose speeches were to a great extent influenced and shaped by Robespierre – Robespierre's discourse, taken as 'another's discourse', becomes '*simultaneously* authoritative and internally persuasive'.[88] Rather than being closed and inert, its semantic structure acquires an inherent power of action, it is open, as it becomes the discourse of someone who has acknowledged and adopted someone else's discourse, and has made it his own. As Bakhtin wrote, this is a discourse which is 'tightly interwoven with one's own word'. Robespierre's discourse is 'acknowledged' by Saint-Just; it is 'internally persuasive' for him. In Bakhtin's terms, 'such discourse is of decisive significance in the evolution of an individual consciousness: consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourses surrounding it, and from which it cannot initially separate itself'.[89]

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[85] See 'Discours du 17 Pluviôse an II (5 février 1794) : Sur les principes de morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention nationale dans l'administration intérieure de la République', in *Œuvres de Maximilien Robespierre,*.X (1967), pp.350-367.
[86] Ibid. p.352.
[87] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*, pp. 342-347.
[88] Ibid., p. 342.
[89] Ibid., p.345.

The above, together with what Bakhtin calls the 'individual's ideological becoming', could be used to interpret the question of the shaping of a leader's followers within the larger context of the creation of new truths. In Bakhtin's thought, as we have already seen, dialogue is a process in which both the speaker and the listener participate actively. As opposed to Saussure's listener, who is always passive, Bakhtin's listener is a partner in the speech communication. As long as he understands the meaning of speech, he takes 'a responsive attitude toward it'.[90] Any understanding of live speech is 'inherently responsive' because it is 'imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another'. Thus, what is heard and understood by the listener will sooner or later find its response in his subsequent speech or behaviour.[91]

In this way, the monologism of the revolutionaries' epic story, by inducing beliefs, was moulding the consciousness of their most passionate followers. In fact, the revolutionaries were true believers and they described – indeed promised – a radiant future for the people in their impassioned speeches. There is little difference between constructing an epic story and belief.[92] 'La logique épique cherche le général à partir du particulier', Julia Kristeva wrote. 'Elle suppose donc une hiérarchie dans la structure de la substance; elle est, par conséquent, causale, c'est-à-dire théologique: une *croyance* au sens propre du mot'.[93] One might even call it an *ideology*, since the revolutionaries shaped and reshaped their ideology in the very process of writing their story.

With their new language of exclusion, inclusion and sacredness, the revolutionaries in fact practiced rhetorical violence, which played a vital role in destroying their opponents. Constructing the discourse of the plot and the enemies, naming and renaming, establishing new concepts and truths were just a few of the multiple strategies used in their struggle for power.

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[90]Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p. 68.
[91] Ibid., pp. 68-69.
[92] On revolutionary faith, see James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (London: Temple Smith, 1980), pp.3 -19.
[93] See Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', pp.452-3.

Revolutionary epic and menippea in republican propaganda.

Marquis, baron, comte, duc, prince sont des expressions jadis inventées par l'orgueil,
adoptées par la bassesse, maintenant effacées par le niveau de l'égalité
et reléguées sur la scène pour devenir un objet de dérision et d'horreur.

Condorcet, *Sur le sens du mot révolutionnaire*, 1er juin 1793[94]

Monologic belief systems invariably hold that a single truth is contained
in a single institution, such as the state, or in a single object,
such as an idol or text, or in a single identity, such as God,
the ego conceived as an absolute subject,
or the artist-genius who produces unique texts.

Mikhail Bakhtin[95]

Political propaganda served as a vast medium through which attitudes could be shaped
and the epic story of the Revolution could be brought to the audiences. It was perhaps the
revolutionaries' most powerful instrument for gaining political power and controlling
meaning. Propaganda is, by its very nature, relevant to different spheres of human
communication. How are ideas propagated? Anything that could be represented by images
in sculpture, drawing or painting; anything that could be expressed by words, in speeches,
pamphlets, the press and theatre, or by symbols and signs in general, could be used for
propaganda. Propaganda and rhetoric go hand in hand and when we think of the old art of
persuasion, taught by the sophists who were experts in influencing others by speaking
skilfully, we are not short of examples. Propaganda raises the questions of moral
dirigisme and censorship, of creating and then decoding meaning, of communication,
audience, reception, and interpretation. But above all, propaganda is monologic, for it is
based on representation[96] and persuasion, and is dominated by single truths. It is therefore,
as Bakhtin wrote about monologism, 'a denial of the equal rights of consciousnesses vis-
à-vis truth'.[97] In this sense, monologic propaganda in its most extreme form could be
associated with violence – 'as the triumph of might rather than the word'.[98] For, in the
radicals' dominant political discourse, their 'centripetal' message was intended to imprint

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[94] As cited by Sonia Branca-Rosoff, 'Luttes lexicographiques sous la Révolution française. Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie', in W. Busse and J. Trabant, éditeurs, *Les Idéologues*, pp.279-297 (p.291).
[95] See Clark and Holquist, p.348.
[96] For Bakhtin, representation was a 'prohibition' and monologism. See Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', p.454.
[97] In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*; quoted by David K. Danow, *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin*, p.85.
[98] See David K. Danow, p.85.

the new epic on the audiences' minds. Moreover, by delivering their authoritative message, the radicals were imposing silence. In other words, they were intentionally silencing the 'word of the other'.[99]

There have been few ages when political propaganda has been so openly practiced as in the years of the French Revolution. Indeed, the secular meaning of 'propaganda' came into being during that time.[100] The *congregatio de propaganda fide* of Christianism was translated into a new medium through which the uneducated masses were to comprehend the new ideals borne from the Revolution. It was an ambitious and arduous enterprise, on a grander scale than anything seen before. A huge project to regenerate the nation was developed by the revolutionaries, mobilizing the 'official' artists of the day, which had to be strictly followed by the press, educational institutions, and every sphere of cultural life. In September 1791, the Jacobin *Société des Amis de la Constitution* gave official guidelines that special attention should be given to the news, the almanacs, the songs, the dances, and the spectacles in propagating the new ideals.[101] New civic festivals, which had to bring forward the new symbolism through image and sound, were imposed, as part of that same project, from Paris to the provinces.[102] From David's neo-classical paintings to his stark portraits, immortalizing revolutionary martyrs; from the demolition of churches and royal tombs to the creation of new museums in order to propagate 'the revolutionary spirit'; from the dilapidation of sacred statuary to the erecting of statues of Liberty and the celebration of new republican insignia; from the popular satirical songs adapted to old religious tunes, sung around Liberty trees and adding to the rhythm of

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[99] Ibid., p. 124.

[100] See 'Propagande', in *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française Le Robert*, ed. by Alain Ray, 2 vols (Paris: Dictionnaires Robert, 1992) : 'Propagande, littéralement 'qui doit être propagée', est l'adjectif verbal, au féminin, du latin 'propagare' (propager). Le mot a été introduit comme terme religieux dans *Congrégation de propagande* ou par ellipse *propagande*. Celle-ci fut instituée le 22 juin 1622 par le pape Grégoire XV, sur un projet de Grégoire XIII, pour répandre la religion catholique et diriger toutes les missions. [...] C'est pendant la Révolution française que le mot a pénétré le langage politique pour désigner une association ayant pour but de propager certaines opinions publiques (1790) et, par métonymie, l'action organisée en vue de répandre une opinion ou une doctrine politique (1792). Cette valeur s'est enrichie d'emplois nouveaux avec le développement des manipulations d'opinion par les régimes totalitaires et avec les techniques de communication de masse, d'autant que les mots anglais, allemand, etc. correspondant sont analogues. [...] Pendant la Révolution ont été formés les dérivés *propagandiste* (n. et adj., 1792) et *propagandisme* (n.m., 1794).'

[101] See Serge Bianchi, *La révolution culturelle de l'an II: Elites et peuple (1789-1799)* (Paris: Aubier, 1982), p.173-8.

[102] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire* (Paris : Gallimard, 1976), trans. by Alan Sheridan as *Festivals and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

music the joy of transgression when using profane words, to patriotic hymns that led the army in battle: everything was subsumed within revolutionary propaganda.[103]

It was during the period of radical rule from 1792 until 1794 that state propaganda reached its height. At this time, diffusing political ideas was synonymous with political pedagogy. Art was politicised and used as a social weapon with increasing consideration given to its expressive dimensions. Images in the broadest sense of the word – from sculpture and paintings to revolutionary symbols through to satirical prints – combined with music – in the form of hymns and songs which had the power to unite – to carry an overt political message aimed at creating opinion and assisting the republicans; in effect a whole programme of persuasion was controlled from above, purposefully conveying new ideas of power, prestige, and authority to the masses.

The monologic discourse aimed to instil suspicion of the enemy and to denounce every potential traitor; this is particularly evident in the following speech of Robespierre at the Convention, against *Paméla*, François de Neufchâteau's version of Richardson's novel: [104]

La Convention a rendu un décret par lequel elle ordonne aux théâtres de jouer trois fois par semaine des pièces patriotiques. Le même décret ordonne que les théâtres, qui joueront des pièces aristocratiques et injurieuses à la révolution, seront fermés. Le Théâtre de la Nation est dans ce cas et doit encourir la peine prononcée par la loi contre le délit.

Il y a quelque temps qu'on vint dénoncer au Comité de salut public une pièce de ce théâtre, où des signes, des décorations aristocratiques étaient prodiguées avec une insolence affectée; une pièce dont le style annonçait l'intention formelle de jeter un vernis d'odieux sur la Révolution salutaire qu'a opérée le peuple français; où le gouvernement anglais était loué avec une affectation condamnable, ce qui ne pouvait être fait que dans la vue d'en imposer au peuple, sur les abus de ce gouvernement monstrueux et lui en faire désirer un semblable. L'ordre fut envoyé de suspendre les représentations de la pièce et d'en représenter le manuscrit au Comité du salut public. [...]

J'engage le citoyen qui vient de vous faire la déclaration à s'adresser au Comité du salut public, et y déposer ce qu'il a vu. Il faut que non seulement ce spectacle où l'on ose prêcher avec tant d'impudence la contre-révolution, soit détruit, mais il faut même poursuivre tous ceux qui dorénavant se permettront en public un seul propos aristocratique, une seule opinion scélérate et contre-révolutionnaire. (*Applaudi*) [105]

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[103] On this subject, see Emmet Kennedy, A Cultural History of the French Revolution; James A. Leith, The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965); Noel Parker, Portrayals of Revolution: Images, Debates and Patterns of Thought in the French Revolution (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990).

[104] Previous accusations had led to the arrest of Neufchâteau himself and the actors of the *Théâtre de la Nation*. Neufchâteau's version of the play followed Goldoni much more than Richardson. In this new retelling, Neufchâteau had made Pamela of noble birth, which was considered as very offensive by the Jacobins, especially in 1793. Thus, the play was banned, the theatre was declared closed, and the actors and the author of *Pamela* arrested. See Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), pp.158-160.

This passage is yet another example of the scale of the radicals' control and re-established censorship over cultural production in the years of the Terror.[106]

Just as the struggle of the radicals to maintain power in parliamentary rhetoric was expressed through the maximalist language of the revolutionary epic and the 'conspiracy' discourse or the idea of the 'aristocratic plot', the transposition of this same idea in fiction, songs, and the fine arts revolved around a number of mini-plots.[107] The same many-faceted story was easily adaptable to any circumstances and was reflected in similar ways in the attitude towards the king, the royal family and kingship in general; in the treatment of the invisible and unidentifiable 'enemies' which included the 'aristocrats' as the epitome of everything associated with the Old Regime; the 'émigrés'; the 'English', indeed all the 'foreigners'; and the collective denomination of 'traitors', as opposed to the 'patriots' devoted to the nation in whom the 'general will' was deposited..

The idea of the 'aristocratic plot' (*le complot aristocratique*) and the epic battle of the 'people' against it was expressed by overt radical propaganda. This took different forms, from open calls for urgent militant action in the public speeches at the Assembly, to articles and pamphlets – Marat was perhaps the most vehement and vitriolic author of such pamphlets – and also, derision, satire and parody in republican drama, political caricature and revolutionary songs.

Much in the spirit of John Locke's empiricism – a philosophical tradition which maintains that all or most significant knowledge is based on sense experience, as opposed to Cartesian rationalism – it was the thinking of the time that in order to exist the human soul had to reflect sensations, and thought depended on sensory experience. Thus, Condorcet argued that humans were 'perfectible' and 'malleable'.[108] In keeping with eighteenth-century empiricism, and the belief in the ability of men's mind to be trained, visual representation was one of the revolutionaries' main concerns. Statues, grand

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[105]'Séance du 2 septembre 1793 Contre *Paméla*, de François de Neufchâteau, in *Œuvres complètes de Robespierre*, X, pp. 89-91.

[106] On the liberation of thought and speech from censorship in the summer of 1789, see footnote 17 above. On censorship during the Revolutionary years and the revolutionary plans to mobilize the fine arts, see James A. Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799*, pp.96-128. On censorship in theatre during the Terror, see Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution*, pp. 38, 42-4, 103, 120, 123, 129-135, 155-165, 171-9.

[107] The word play occurring with the two meanings of 'plot' is not intentional. On the idea of the 'aristocratic plot' (from the French *le complot aristocratique*), the struggle against it as the discourse on power and the means of conquering and preserving power, see François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, pp. 50-55; On the 'plot' as a component of narrative, from the Russian *сюжет (sjuzet)*, as the Russian formalists called the 'story as actually told by linking the events together', see Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, pp.19-20.

[108] See Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural H istory*, p. 66: 'By 1801 Destutt de Tracy had pushed Lockean sensationalism so far that he could assert that "to think is to sense and nothing but to sense".'

spectacles and music were always present in their projects, as they seemed to possess an immediately persuasive power: strong images would impress and mould the souls of the public as soft clay. Such was the role of the civic festivals as a form of propaganda. Translating Rousseau's educational principles into political practice, they were aiming to train every citizen in the republican ideals. Such a grand initiative, however, had two pernicious consequences: moral *dirigisme* and censorship, for if man were so impressionable and so pliable, he needed to be controlled and cautiously protected from any harmful influences.[109]

Of the numerous speeches, pamphlets and decrees paying homage to the arts and spectacles as means of educating, I shall only mention Robespierre's great speech at the Convention of 18 Floréal Year II (7 May 1794) where he analysed the principles which, according to him, should form the foundations of a permanent republican system. The speech was delivered nearly 4 years after the first Federation festival in July 1790, yet it is a good example of the importance given to civic festivals for propaganda:

> Un système de fêtes [...] seroit à la fois le plus doux lien de fraternité et le plus puissant moyen de régénération.[...] Que toutes tendent à réveiller les sentiments généreux qui font le charme et l'ornement de la vie humaine, l'enthousiasme de la liberté, l'amour de la patrie, le respect des lois.[...]Tu donneras ton nom sacré à l'une de nos plus belles fêtes, ô toi, fille de la Nature! Mère du bonheur et de la gloire! Toi seule légitime souveraine du monde, détrônée par le crime; toi à qui le peuple français a rendu ton empire, et qui lui donnes en échange une patrie et des mœurs, ô, auguste Liberté! tu partageras nos sacrifices avec ta compagne immortelle, la douce et sainte Egalité. Nous fêterons aussi l'Humanité; l'Humanité, avilie et foulée aux pieds par les ennemis de la république française. [...] Nous célébrerons aussi tous les grands hommes, de quelque temps et de quelque pays que ce soit, qui ont affranchi leur pays du joug des tyrans, et qui ont fondé la liberté par de sages lois. Vous ne serez point oubliés, illustres martyrs de la République française! Vous ne serez point oubliés, héros morts en combattant pour elle: qui pourroit oublier les héros de ma patrie! La France leur doit sa liberté, l'univers leur devra la sienne.[110]

These civic festivals were designed to celebrate the glory of the French people and their revolutionary acquisitions. They were inspired by the myth of the ideal, epitomized in classical models, with their archetypal beauty and order. Thus, in their dialogue with the past, the radicals were establishing 'monologic intertextual relations between past and present cultural artefacts and the context allotted to them'.[111] Neo-classical statuary,

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[109] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire,* pp.235-6 : 'Le dirigisme d'une part, "puisque s'il est bon de savoir employer les hommes tels qu'ils sont, il vaut beaucoup mieux encore les rendre tels qu'on a besoin qu'ils soient": formule vigoureuse du *Discours d'économie politique* de Rousseau, que chacun ici [...] reprend à son compte. Et la censure, car si l'homme est cette cire molle indéfiniment pétrissable, n'importe quel contre-enseignement peut défaire ce qu'un bon enseignement aura produit.'

[110] *Oeuvres de Maximilen Robespierre*, X: *Discours*, p.459.

[111] Although I discuss intertextual borrowings from the past as 'dialogue' in Chapter Five, I am referring here to what David Shepherd wrote about Soviet culture in his essay 'Bakhtin and the Reader'. A parallel could be drawn between the all-encompassing project of *regeneration* of the radicals in the French

especially goddesses of Liberty and Reason, were used to enhance the strengths of the new system. But there were new symbols too, like the Phrygian cap of liberty, the liberty trees and the altars of the fatherland, which started emerging as part of a total programme for regenerating the nation. Some of those symbols had already been anchored in popular tradition, like the liberty trees, which were a new variation of the maypole, for example. Others, like the Phrygian cap, or the tricolour cockade, were the fruit of political innovation, but they rapidly entered everyday life, at some stage even became parts of costume, and became indispensable to any major political initiative. In such a way, the revolutionaries were creating a new rhetoric, which was to a large extent based on classical or folkloric tradition but was also cunningly blended with new political symbols. Thus, they were educating by coining a new culture and new meanings to suit their aims.

But since the creation of meaning is in the realm of the dialogical, to what extent was revolutionary propaganda dialogic, and to what extent was it monologic? I argued earlier that propaganda is, by its very nature, and in principle, monologic, as it is concerned with single truths. Such statements would be valid to the extent that new meaning is generated in order to persuade, to claim new territories in the political struggle for power, a role that was played by the official festival. Hence, we can talk of 'monologic intertextual relations between past and present', as discussed above. Yet the revolutionaries' borrowings from the past can also be interpreted as dialogic, as I argue in Chapter five, for 'intertextuality' is just another term for 'dialogism'.[112] Moreover, seen in the developing context of the Revolutionary events, the festivals clearly reflected the dialogic/ monologic dichotomy in the changes from the Constituent Assembly to the reign of the Terror. This could be seen by comparing the openness and joyfulness of the first Festival of the Federation, which was the beginning, rather than the celebration of something, for it reflected a Revolution that was still 'foisonnante d'espérances', and the 'creaking stiffness' of the Festival of the Supreme Being, advocated by Robespierre,

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Revolution, and the vast re-education program of the Soviet regime. The revolutionaries appropriated Neo-classicism in the same way that, more than a century later, Socialist Realism was declared 'the officially sanctioned "method" for Soviet literature and art in general.' Shepherd argues that 'the monologic, restrictive understanding' of Social Realism as a synonym for 'Party-mindedness' was 'symptomatic of a more generalized process whereby the Stalinist state gathered to itself the right of first and last word on all matters of import'. 'In the cultural sphere', Shepherd continues, 'this meant not only an insistence on "portrayal of reality in its revolutionary development", a goal whose posts were constantly changed to accompanying declarations of its immutability. It also set in train a project (one which continued well beyond the Stalin years) of establishing, often with peculiarly unsubtle authority, definitively monologic intertextual relations between past and present cultural artefacts and the context allotted to them.' See *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, pp.91-108, esp. pp.100-101.

which foreshadows 'le gel de la Révolution'.[113] Yet meaning in the revolutionary years was also being created in another, rather spontaneous way, in the margin of the official festivals. This is where carnival and menippea were brought into play. It will be my argument throughout this study, that most of the characteristics of Menippean satire, described by Bakhtin, can be found in the cultural production of the Revolution.

When defining Menippean satire in his important study of Dostoevsky's writings, Mikhail Bakhtin claims that this genre has become 'one of the main carriers and channels for the carnival sense of the world in literature, and remains so to the present day'.[114] Of menippea's basic generic characteristics, detailed by him, Bakhtin emphasises particularly the 'scandal scenes, eccentric behaviour, inappropriate speeches and performances, that is, all sorts of violations of the generally accepted and customary course of events and the established norms of behaviour and etiquette, including manners of speech.'[115]

Indeed, the revolutionary *fêtes*,[116] forms of unofficial celebrations with compensatory inversion within, or, more frequently, outside the official festivals, called 'les réjouissances des sans-culottes', were taking place in an improvised, carnivalesque manner, transgressing rules, legalising what the crowd thought permissible and thus allowing mockery to take over. Again, in Bakhtin's terms, they were 'full of sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations'. For '[t]he menippea loves to play with abrupt transitions and shifts, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and disunited things, mésaillances of all sorts'. But most importantly, they were loaded with meaning, as they were reflecting real, current events, that which, to Bakhtin, is 'the last characteristic of the menippea: its concern with current and topical issues. This is, in its own way, the "journalistic" genre [of antiquity], acutely echoing the ideological issues of the day'.[117]

These spontaneous *fêtes* usually celebrated good news brought by messengers to which the crowd reacted by dancing and singing popular songs around the liberty trees, by forming joyful processions accompanying the coffins of monarchy or superstition, by

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[112] Intertextuality as another term for Bakhtin's 'dialogism'. See note 115 (p.47) above. See also Tzvetan Todorov's discussion of intertextuality and dialogism in *Mikhaïl Bakhtine: le principe dialogique*, pp. 95-115 (esp. p.95).

[113] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, pp.33.

[114] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 113.

[115] Ibid. p. 117. For a detailed analysis of Menippean satire, or *menippea*, see pp.112-20.

[116] In French the same word is used for *fête* and festival. The distinction made is between *fête* and *fête parallèle*, or *journée*. Noel Parker, in *Portrayals of Revolution*, pp. 50-58, distinguishes the spontaneous *fête* from the officially staged festival, associating it with the traditional *fête* that flourished under the *Ancien Régime*.

[117] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 117-8.

taking over a church or by ridiculing the effigies of royalty and Catholicism. Satire and parody were much used in such initiatives, and burlesque effects were achieved by exaggerating some distinctive features of the objects of derision or by bringing out certain physical deformities as in the case of the exceedingly long noses of the *Feuillants* or the long ears of the aristocrats.[118] Similar effects were sought by deforming the costumes of the effigies or by degrading allusions: Marie-Antoinette and the king were represented in rags; the statues of saints were surrounded by nettles and thorns; a woman representing the city of Toulon, occupied by the English in 1793 and called 'the whore of kings', was dressed as a prostitute; other figures, like the bishop giving mechanically and endlessly his repeated blessings, or the pope represented as a costumed dwarf, ridiculed the clergy. Parody correspondences were also sought by animal representation, regarded by revolutionary sensibility as a means of grotesque debasement, as in the case of the crowned pigs, goats pulling feudal insignia, donkeys harnessed with Episcopal ornaments or wearing a bishop's mitre and a pig in royal attire, animals carrying kings, popes, bibles, crucifixes and all sorts of other objects tied around their necks and to their tails. Mona Ozouf gives an account of the peoples' club of Pau meeting to discuss on how they could represent 'le ridicule des présidents, conseillers, avocats, prêtres, huissiers, procureurs', which is highly suggestive about the way public opinion was created in those days.[119]

Since Greek antiquity, satire and parody have been used as a tool for persuasion.[120] Elusive and variable, they are easily adaptable to different circumstances and intentions, especially parody can be found in the most diverse contexts of everyday life.[121] In the revolutionary years, they were brought into play as much in the press as in theatre, indeed in all spheres of everyday life, even in parliamentary debate, as both satire and parody go hand in hand with breaking the rules, upturning the existing order, in short, with negation and transgression, all of which were inherent to the Revolutionary project. But satire and parody were mostly experienced during spontaneous street celebrations, or in the fêtes echoing the official festivals by giving way to carnival. And, of course, they were present

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[118] Exaggeration, for example the long noses and ears, was widely used in political caricature of the time. See for ex. the *Last Procession for the Burial of the Civic Oath* (engraving, ca. 1790-91), or *Long Live the King! Or Speculators and Politicians Foiled* (engraving, ca.1814), reproduced in Emmett Kennedy, *A Cultural History*, pp. 268, 390;

[119] The parodic festivals of mockery took place mainly between Vendémiaire and Ventôse; Year II. See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire,* pp.101-6, 109. The quotation is taken from p. 103.

[120] See Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979). For a brief overview of the modern interpretations of parody, see Beate Müller, ed., *Parody: Dimensions and Perspectives* (Rodopi:Amsterdam-Atlanta GA 1997), pp.1-10.

[121] See, on this subject, Judith Wechsler, *A Human Comedy: Physiognomy and Caricature in 19th Century Paris* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982).

in political caricature and satirical songs. More often overt than veiled, revolutionary satire and parody stood apart from their classical models by their vindictive, militant, officially commissioned messages. Thus, rather than being used as instruments of subversion, the satire and the parody of the radical rule were mostly directed at enemies past and present, and used as educational and propaganda tools, aiming to reaffirm the new acquisitions and the revolutionary values and perceptions. Moreover, in many cases they led to, or were reflecting real political reforms and their target had already been defeated or punished for past wrongs.

Parody as ridiculing imitation is usually perceived as the more opaque sister of satire. How did parody, in its verbal and nonverbal varieties, work on the dialogic/ monologic level? How did the revolutionary audiences, that is to say 'the people' who were to be educated, respond (or fail to respond) to the new messages sent to them?

Following Bakhtin's theory of the utterance, the way in which the radicals were ridiculing unequivocally everything associated with the Old Regime was a pure form of monologue. Yet the pictorial and behavioural parodies generated by the crowd in the 'multi-toned narration' of the carnivalesque parallel festivals achieved symbolic significance by dialogical interactions through the mixing of high and low in the serio-comical of Menippean satire. In such intertextual relationships, two messages, and two authorships are involved in the creation of meaning. By emphasizing the process of active reception, in which a reply is generated in inner speech, Bakhtin describes parody as the relation of any utterance (literary or non-literary), to the context of its origin and reception. To him, parody and stylisation are types of 'double-voiced words', or utterances that can be interpreted as the expression of two speakers. The creator of a 'double-voiced word' borrows 'another's utterance' and uses it 'for his own purposes by inserting a new semantic orientation into a word, which already has – and retains – its own orientation'.[122] The audience of a double-voiced word is therefore exposed to both utterances and, respectively, to both speakers' points of view and forms a new meaning on the basis of such a double-voiced message. Moreover, a parodic utterance is always 'one of open disagreement'. The second utterance discredits the first one by representing it and thus introduces a new 'semantic direction' which invalidates the semantic direction of the original. Two conflicting voices are thus opposed in the parodied utterance, the second one representing a 'higher semantic authority than the first'. In this way 'the audience of

the conflict knows for sure with whom it is expected to agree'. However, the parody would not be recognized if the audience is remote from or unaware of the first utterance. In such a case there would be a misidentification, 'mistaking an intended parody for its object'.[123]

Sometimes, the resemblance with the object of parody was too obvious for the crowd to be mistaken, like for example when they followed the coffin of Monarchy, or took over a church for their dancing and feasting, or else there were additional elements contributing to the creation of meaning: nuns dancing *La Carmagnole* or dragons dressed like priests. In revolutionary radical discourse, monarchy is overthrown: it is a thing of the past, defunct, and there is no going back, so the ceremony of the burial symbolized the irreversibility of the revolutionary process and the coffin, which represents the Monarchy, would be recognized without difficulty. At other times, however, the images represented were more ambiguous and further clarification was needed, like in the case of a calf's heart, carried around at a festival with an inscription explaining that it was an aristocratic heart. For such reasons, during a public decapitation of effigies in Alès, large labels were put across their chests, explaining their identity: *aristocrate, fédéraliste, fanatique*.[124]

In this way, spontaneous and improvised celebrations, carnivalesque in a Bakhtinian sense[125] – subversive in so far as they allowed the unleashed popular energy to transgress the official directives from Paris, but on the other hand, also legalizing what was already a reality – gave birth, by the dialogical clash of revolutionary joy and revolutionary violence, to a new, unofficial metaphorical representation.

And still, new meaning was mostly created during the official festivals which had an overt didactic function. Many of the allegorical figures chosen to represent a given idea were not familiar to the crowd, so people had to be taught how to interpret the 'new truth'. The following description of the Festival of Simonneau (June 1792), given in *Les Révolutions de Paris*, makes a good example of the problems encountered in interpreting allegories:

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[122] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevski's poetics*, as quoted by Gary Saul Morson in 'Parody, History, and Metaparody.' See Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, eds., *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1989), pp. 63-86 (p.65).
[123] Ibid., pp.66-7.
[124] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, pp.106-7.
[125] Mikhail Bakhtin has developed the question of popular carnival as transgression in *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by H. Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968). On carnival transgressing the rules of the existing order, see pp.108-10.

> Le plus curieux de toute la procession était une espèce de requin porté en haut d'une pique qui le transperce; l'animal marin ouvre la gueule et montre les dents; sur son corps est écrit, respect à la loi. On dit que la pique est la loi; le peuple est le requin. Nous croyons au contraire que la pique est le peuple, le requin sera tout ce qu'on voudra, ou le despotisme, ou l'aristocratie, ou le fanatisme religieux. Le département auroit bien dû dans son programme prévenir les incertitudes du spectateur à cet égard. Ce trait de finesse nous échappe. Le roi des Chinois, il est vrai, a pour armes un poisson ; mais nous ne sommes pas à Pékin. M. Quatermer nous doit deux mots d'explication; c'est lui qui était le maître de cérémonie.
>
> Des gardes nationales en grand nombre semblaient escorter le monstre marin, qui n'effraya personne, et qui fit rire tout le monde. Il n'en fut pas de même du glaive de la loi, avec cette inscription vraiment belle : elle frappe pour défendre.
>
> Mais pourquoi recouvrir le socle qui le portait d'un tapis de gaze d'or ? Pourquoi rapprocher la vue de ce métal de l'idée de la justice ? Il fallait ici beaucoup de sévérité dans les ornements ou point du tout. Les ordonnateurs de la fête emploient en cet endroit le mot latin *lectisternium* ; mais puisqu'ils voulaient faire preuve d'érudition, ils devaient au moins l'explication de ce mot au peuple.[...]
>
> Sur une chaise curule dorée, surmontée d'une petite sainte Minerve d'argent, s'offrait à tous les regards le livre figuré de la loi, tout ouvert. On s'attendait que ce spectacle ferait plus d'impression, mais il ressemblait trop au livre d'église et aux chasses de nos saints, d'autant mieux que ceux qui portaient ces objets étaient vêtus comme nos prêtres postiches qu'on emprunte pour nos processions de Fête-Dieu. Plusieurs bonnes femmes y furent prises ; il ne leur manqua que la présence de leur curé. L'illusion eût été complète, s'il y avait eu des encensoirs ; car on voyait plusieurs corbeilles tenues par des enfans qui ne différaient des enfans de chœur que parce qu'ils n'étaient point tondus.[...]
>
> Un groupe de femmes suivait [...]. Cette troupe de dames en blanc, et couronnées de chêne, n'eut pas tout le succès désiré. Quoi qu'on en dise, les femmes ne sont point faites pour le grand jour.
>
> La statue colossale de la loi fermait la marche ; elle était représentée par une femme assise et appuyée sur les tables des droits de l'homme, qu'elle semblait vouloir recouvrir sous son manteau. On lui donna pour attribut un sceptre ; un frein eût peut-être été plus convenable ; c'était l'attribut de la loi chez les anciens ; et puis , il ne faut point accoutumer le peuple à confondre la loi avec la royauté.
>
> On nous mènera loin avec l'inscription placée sur le socle de cette figure : les hommes vraiment libres sont esclaves de la loi.
>
> Nous aimons mieux ces trois mots écrits autour du trône de la loi : Liberté, égalité, propriété.[126]

This passage demonstrates how easily metaphorical representation could result in ambiguity. How would the revolutionaries impress the meaning of *le glaive de la loi* on the audiences' minds? To those familiar with the parliamentary rhetoric of the times, it connoted the radicals' struggle against the 'plot'.[127] Yet to the people who, according to *Les Révolutions de Paris* had turned up in large numbers, it meant little. Similarly, the boundaries between the abstract images of Liberty and Reason, Equality and Fraternity were often blurred, or, these were later confused with the image of the Republic. This is why naming was also needed. Just like representation, naming in the revolutionary

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[126] As reproduced in Mona Ozouf, *La Fête révolutionnaire*, pp. 86-7

process could be considered as a monologic practice, for it was imposed from above; its aim was to forge new links and to amalgamate the novel concepts and their discursive expression, thus deliberately preventing any free interplay of meanings.

David, the artist who is associated with the triumph of Neo-Classicism over Rococo and with the revival of art as propaganda,[128] but who was also responsible for planning and organizing some of the greatest revolutionary festivals, was particularly aware of the role of art in educating. For one of his projects, he had designed a huge statue of Hercules and, in order to facilitate the decoding of his idea, or, rather, to link the idea with the image, he had devised a system of naming. The statue David proposed to the Convention in November 1793 (but which was never realised) would be erected on a pedestal formed by the debris of the demolished royal statues of Notre-Dame. It would represent the image of a giant in the form of the French people.

> Que cette image imposante par son caractère de force et de simplicité porte, écrit en gros caractères sur son front: Lumière; sur sa poitrine: Nature, Vérité; sur ses bras: Force; sur ses mains: Travail. Que, sur l'une des mains, les figures de la Liberté et de l'Egalité, serrées l'une contre l'autre, et prêtes a parcourir le monde, montrent à tous qu'elles ne reposent que sur le génie et la vertu du peuple. Que cette image du peuple debout tienne dans son autre main cette massue terrible et réelle, dont celle de l'Hercule ancien ne fut que le symbole.[129]

Thus, in order to avoid any possible ambiguity, new links would be created between words and visual representation, and the audiences would be educated how to interpret the new 'truths': in revolutionary radical discourse, the giant would epitomize the enlightened mind; the virtuous and truthful heart; the might and the laborious deeds of the regenerated French people.

Words were important, as they were the medium through which ideas were to be impressed on people's minds. In the festival, nothing went without them. The visual was overlaid by the verbal. Speeches, oaths, sermons and anthems, and an enormous proliferation of banners, placards and inscriptions accompanied the processions, duplicating the *tableaux vivants*, the statues and busts. What was the reason for this recourse to words? Why had images to rely on commentary? Was it again the logic of

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[127] See for example 'le glaive de la loi' in the passage from Danton's speech quoted on p. 55, and ' le glaive de la justice' in Robespierre's speech quoted on p. 56.

[128] For a detailed account of the processes which led to the revival of art as propaganda, as a reaction to the frivolous *Rococo*, see James A. Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799*, pp.3-26. See also Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p.258.

[129] See Judith E. Schlanger, 'Le Peuple au front gravé', in Ehrard et Viallaneix, pp. 387-395. The quotation is from p. 387.

empiricism and the belief that good learning is achieved by repetition? Or was it a lack of confidence in the educative power of images?

David's project is yet another example of the malleability of symbols: Hercules, whose mythical strength was traditionally associated with the power of the French kings,[130] represented in this particular context and, in republican insignia in general, the vigour of the French people. Allegory, because of its abstraction and its classical references, was the most appropriate form for representing republican virtues.[131] When creating the republican insignia, the radicals extensively borrowed from ancient Greek and Roman iconography, but also from masonic and even catholic symbols and often created the most unexpected combinations of meanings. Thus, the words *Lumiere, Nature, Verité, Force, Travail*, imprinted on the giant's body, were to provide a fixed translation and to limit the margin for interpretation, or, in other words, to prevent the uncontrolled movement of meaning.[132]

The process of naming as part of the revolutionary propaganda initiative is of particular interest from a variety of perspectives. Monologic naming and renaming were a common practice under the Revolution. In a speech pronounced at the Convention in July 1794, Barère declared on behalf of the Committee of Public Safety that all the gates of Paris should be renamed. Paris would become 'la ville *aux cent portes*, et chaque porte signalera un triomphe ou une époque révolutionnaire':

> Les victoires qui se succèdent ont inspiré une autre pensée, un autre projet au Comité du Salut Public; c'est celui de les consacrer sur des monuments existants, et de former, des tableaux des victoires des républicains, un monument nouveau pour l'instruction publique.[...]
>
> La prise de Charles-sur-Sambre, ou de Charleroi, fera oublier la Porte du miraculeux Saint-Denis : on écrira, et on lira en passant, à la tête de cet arc de triomphe : 'Tel jour la garnison de Charleroi se rendit à discrétion, et se recommanda à la générosité républicaine'.
>
> Les faits héroïques de la reprise de Toulon seront gravés sur les colonnes qu'on a déshonorées par le nom de Barrière du Trône ;[...] les triomphes de l'armée d'Italie pourront bien être substitués, sans regret, au nom de la Porte de l'Etoile; l'assaut du Mont-Cenis ne retentira-t-il pas mieux aux oreilles républicaines que le nom de Barrière de la Conférence ?[...]
> [L]es littérateurs nous rappelleront le style lapidaire, et donneront sans doute à la langue Française la précision et la brièveté de la langue Latine, tant renommée pour inscriptions.
>
> C'est ainsi que l'instruction nationale sortira des pierres même entassées par la tyrannie, et que la victoire fera une nouvelle conquête en réhabilitant les monuments honteux de la fiscalité. C'est aux arts à lui faire encore expier ses crimes envers le peuple ; c'est à la Convention à sanctionner cette disposition aussi politique que morale de ces édifices aussi inutiles qu'ils furent odieux. [...] Qu'il se relève donc aujourd'hui , ce génie des arts, et qu'il prouve que, devenus enfants de la

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[130] See Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, p. 102-7.
[131] On the use of allegory in Revolutionary iconography, see Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat: L'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1789 à 1880* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).
[132] On the role of words in the festivals, see Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, pp. 253-8.

República, ils ont brisé les chaînes du despotisme, et abjuré la flatterie corruptrice qui les corrompit eux-mêmes. C'est à vous, citoyens, de tout régénérer ; et pour y parvenir, vous n'avez qu'à le décréter.[133]

In this way, by naming, the revolutionaries were creating new concepts. Monologic practices were creating new meaning. Applying what Bourdieu termed 'le mystère de la magie performative'[134], not only were they coining sacred words, they were also investing existing words with new meanings. Yet as Bakhtin wrote, 'meaning emerges between people'[135] and often the same word meant different things to different people, especially in the case of words such as *égalité, liberté, fraternité, ennemi, traître*. For example, the concept of the Terror (*la Terreur*) as a system of government (in 1793), was coined by those who had initiated the rule of the Terror. Thus, in his speech of 17 Pluviôse, year II (3 February 1794), Robespierre declared that the Republic was founded on two principles, virtue and its emanation, terror: "La vertu sans laquelle la terreur est funeste, la terreur sans laquelle la vertu est impuissante".[136] However, words such as *terrorisme, terroristes, terroriser,* and *terrificateur* appeared after the *9 Thermidor* and were created by the victims of the Terror – those who had been 'terrorised'.[137] By contrast, in the revolutionaries' 'epic' vocabulary a number of new coinages appeared with negative connotation associated with the 'aristocratic plot', such as *internés, septembrisés, noyés, guillotinés* – to name only a few – all of which were synonymous of the 'enemies' and 'traitors' punished for their 'crimes'. Various concrete meanings were developed over the years for many concepts coined by the Revolution. As Lynn Hunt put it, 'the Revolution did not mean just one thing in the 1790s, and its meanings continued to proliferate in the generations that followed.'[138]

Naming was also used in printed images. Often an image, easily understandable for the learned part of the public, would be completely opaque to the uneducated. Therefore images needed further explanation and so the print's inscriptions often contributed to the creation of meaning.

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[133] Report on the New Names to be given to the National Monuments of Paris (13 Messidor Year II – 1 July 1794), in H. Morse Stephens, pp.90-93.

[134] See Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, p.101.

[135] See Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.13.

[136] As quoted in Jacques Cellard, *Ah! Ça ira ça ira... Ces mots que nous devons à la Révolution* (Paris: Balland, 1989), p.319; See also Carol Blum, p.30.

[137] See Jacques Cellard, *Ah! Ça ira ça ira...*, pp.318-320.

[138] See Lynn Hunt, 'Foreword', in *Re-creating Authority in Revolutionary France*, ed. by Bryant T. Ragan and Elizabeth A. Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992), pp ix-xii (p.xii).

It has been argued that popular prints responded to the message of the Revolution better and in a quicker way than fine art.[139] Conceptually, they evolved through several stages, each portraying a different understanding of the Revolution or reflecting different periods of political events and the changing propaganda strategies. Satirical prints, ridiculing the old regime, alternated with images bringing the people into the political stage and, later, with allegorical representations of the Republic and the civic virtues, followed by new satirical prints against the Jacobins after the fall of Robespierre and, under the Directory, images of soldiers and generals.[140]

Indeed, printed images flourished at the time of the Revolution. The extraordinary proliferation of the press only intensified their production. Daily newspapers quickly expanded, distributing the latest news.[141] This is how the reportage images were born, reproducing recent or current events, as some newspapers, like Camille Desmoulins' *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant*, occasionally used engravings as illustrations. Republican propaganda engravings in year II (1793-1794) were published in special periodicals.[142] And again, the monologue/ dialogue dichotomy reveals itself through the two principal modes of representation: the revolutionary epic, reflected through neo-classical techniques, and epitomized by the patriotic engravings – among which the reproductions of David's well-known paintings of revolutionary martyrs *Marat assassiné* (1793), *Lepelletier de Saint-Fargeau*, (1793), *Le jeune Bara* (1794) – on the one hand, and the carnivalesque Menippean discourse of radical caricature, on the other.

Political caricature, which saw a rapid development at this time, formed a highly polemical visual discourse together with other overt propagandistic and allegorical prints,

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[139] James Leath draws the conclusion that the demand for revolutionary art constantly mounted during the first three years of the Revolution, but the response to it was only limited and ineffectual. Only when control fell into the hands of the Jacobins did pressure upon artists really intensify, urging them to put fine arts in service of republican ideals. (More precisely after the creation, in the autumn of 1793, of the 'Société populaire et républicaine des arts', which advocated the use of art as propaganda). See James Leith, pp. 104-132. Nevertheless, a study conducted by Emmet Kennedy confirms the findings of James Leith and Stanley Izderda that the overwhelming production in fine arts, which was from 11.9 % to 27,8 % between 1789 and 1793, was in the form of landscapes and portraits, neither of which, according to Kennedy, lends itself to propaganda. It would appear that the interest in portraiture was due to the desire of the middle class to commemorate itself as the new elite. See *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*, p.237.

[140] See Lynn Hunt, 'Engraving the Republic: Print and Propaganda in the French Revolution', in *History Today*, No 30, October 1980, pp. 11-17, as referred to in Noel Parker, p. 95.

[141] Le *Journal de Paris*, the first French daily paper, inspired by the *London Evening Post*, appeared as late as 1 January 1777. See *Histoire Générale de la Presse française*, éditée par Claude Bellanger, 5 vols (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969-76), I: *Des origines à 1814* (1969), p. 241.

[142] The *Recueil des actions héroïques et civiques des républicains français*, published by the Committee of Public Safety at the beginning of 1793, and the *Recueil des traits héroïques et civiques*, a daily paper commissioned by the Convention in September 1793. See Michel Melot, 'Caricature and Revolution: The Situation in France in 1789', in *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799* (Los Angeles: Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts, Wight Art Gallery, UCLA, 1988), pp.25-32 (p.31).

emblems and current event prints, and for this reason was largely exploited both by the revolutionaries and the counter-revolutionaries. Political caricatures were distributed by print-sellers, together with other historical and allegorical images. Republican political caricatures as just another, subtler form of propaganda, were also published in Hébert's newspaper *le Père Duchesne*,[143] which was particularly popular among the *sans-culottes* for its rough, even vulgar language. Commissioned to official artists of the day like David,[144] or created by unknown engravers, political caricatures relied on the grotesque or sought to ridicule by the obscene and the scatological, and thus exposed the object of ridicule to an imagined physical assault. They either reflected the tensions between the rivalling factions, or echoed the patriotic mood of a nation in war and fought a real war of images. In this way, by using the epic and menippean satire as a form of visual rhetorical violence, they played their part in the creation of new meaning, and so contributed to a large extent to the shaping of the revolutionary character.[145]

Revolutionary caricature was used as an instrument for shaping attitudes through the power of imagery. Thus, the 'enemies', embodied by the royals, the clergy, the *émigrés* or the aristocrats in general, the foreign spies (*les étrangers*), of whom mainly the English, or abstract allegorical figures, like Superstition, Ignorance, Despotism, the Hydra of Federalism, were parodied in the funniest or most vicious of shapes. The queen, who was particularly hated, was mainly represented in a series of debasing pornographic caricatures, whereas the king was most often represented as a pig.[146] Thus, in a caricature captioned *La famille des cochons ramenée dans l'étable* (ca.1791), after the flight of the royal family to Varennes in June 1791, the king and his family are depicted as seated in a cart and have all kept their human heads, but their limbs are hoofed, as those of pigs. Elsewhere, in a caricature echoing again the Flight to Varennes and entitled *Louis le parjure. Valet de chambre de M. la Baronne de Korf suivant sa Maîtresse dans sa fuite* (ca.1791), the king's head is given a pig's body, yet he is still easily recognizable. In those, as well as in a number of other examples, the parody targets' features are easily

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[143] Especially from No 13, 1791. See *Histoire générale de la presse française*, p. 457.

[144] On David's caricatures, see Albert Boime, 'Jacques-Louis David, Scatological discourse in the French Revolution and the Art of Caricature' in *French Caricature and the French Revolution*, pp. 67-82. Boime claims that there is a link between David's neo-classical imagery and political caricature.

[145] On the distinction between portrait caricature and political caricature, the latter holding not only the subject of ridicule, but everything the subject stands for, see James Cuno, 'Introduction', in *French Caricature and the French Revolution*, pp. 13-22.

[146] On this subject, see Annie Duprat, *Le Roi décapité : essai sur les imaginaires politiques* (Paris: Cerf, 1992), pp. 77-87,170-187; *Les Rois de Papier : La caricature de Henri III à Louis XVI* (Paris: Belin, 2002), pp.160-1,188-192, 203, 227. On Marie-Antoinette, who was portrayed mainly as a harpy before the Revolution, and as different more 'trivial' debasing animals after the Revolution, see pp. 140-8.

identifiable, otherwise the audience would have remained unaware of the 'original utterance', and therefore the effect of the parody would have been lost. Moreover, the caricature's author uses 'naming' by adding supplementary explanations for further clarification. Thus, in another, particularly biting caricature from 1792, captioned *Les animaux rares ou la Translation de la Ménagerie royale au Temple, le 20 Aoust*, where Louis XVI is a turkey, and the queen, a she-wolf, all the figures are numbered and the accompanying cartoon-like text reads:

1. Le sans-culotte [recognizable by the phrygian cap; he herds the royal family]...*Maudits Animaux, nous les engraissions de notre sang et ils voulaient nous faire égorger*
2. Le Dindon... *A moi la Fouette, ou si non on me mènera à la Guillotine*
3. La Louve...[bare breasted] *Ah, Maudits Jacobins, ils ont fait échouer tous les projets*
4. Les Louveteaux ...*Ils dévoreront bien des petits Poulets* [147]

The caricatures described above are particularly evocative as the animal figures in question were associated with the vilest characteristics that could be transferred metaphorically to a human being. Animal representation was a common feature of revolutionary caricature. The animal figure and all associations with it were regarded by the revolutionary sensibility as particularly grotesque and debasing, even as a form of malediction.[148] As Judith Wechsler has demonstrated, caricature draws on the tradition of physiognomics – 'the classification of people into character types according to outward bodily signs' – and pathognomics – 'the interpretation of changing emotions by facial or bodily expression'.[149] In the tradition of Charles Le Brun's treatises on human expression, the correspondence of physical appearance and moral character was a popular belief in late eighteenth-century French culture.[150] Perhaps *cochon*, widely used at this time as a term of abuse, was the most debasing animal figure to be associated with the king, with all its connotations of dirt, gluttony, obscenity and impurity; its symbolism went back as far as Scripture, whereas *dindon* was traditionally associated with vanity, emptiness, foolishness and stupidity, especially as placed against *louve*, which connotes depravity and debauchery, and tends to mean a 'prostitute'.[151]

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[147] Unless otherwise stated, the caricatures commented in this chapter are published in the catalogue of the exhibition *French Caricature and the French Revolution*, as above (pp.37, 189, 38).
[148] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, p.104.
[149] See *A Human Comedy*, p.15.
[150] On the established tradition of physiognomic writing, Lavater, and Le Brun, see Wechsler, pp. 23-5, 178-9n. See also Lucy Hartley, *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.15-43.
[151] From the Latin *lupa – louve, prostituée*. See *Trésor de la langue française du XIX e et du XXe siècle*, 16 vols *(1789-1960)* (Paris : Gallimard, 1971-1994).

As to *parjure*, the other attribute frequently used to describe Louis XVI is of particular interest from a historical and legal point of view. At the time of his trial, Louis XVI was debased to a 'tyrant', 'monster', and 'enemy'. He was accused of treason towards his nation and he would be subsequently often referred to as a 'traitor'.[152]

The royal family was the object of numerous parodic representations. Further caricatures portray the king as a fool, as a stupid child, a double-faced Janus,[153] or wearing a Phrygian cap and holding a bottle of wine, the caption underneath explaining: *Nouveau pacte de Louis XVI avec le peuple le 20 Juin 1792. L'An 4me de la liberté.* [154] When it came to the royal execution, however, there were hardly any representations of the event in France – almost all prints on this subject were foreign.[155]

One curious anonymous French caricature from the period of the Terror, entitled *Dialogue* (1793) echoes the monologic/ dialogic implication of Louis decapitation in a particularly striking manner. It depicts a crown, on the left, bearing the caption *je perds une tête*, and on the right, a guillotine with the words *j'en trouve une*. The monarch's body is missing.[156] Through this gruesome and bare simplicity, the caricature symbolizes the irreversibility of the process in which the monologic ritual of the guillotine transfers the power of the King to the people. I shall discuss this point in more detail in Chapter four.

The viewers of these bitterly ironic caricatures must have found the same level of satisfaction in the contact with the subversive power of humour, as did the participants in the mockeries of the *fêtes parallèles*, out of transgressing boundaries that had been considered sacred. By simply observing the obscene or debasing images, and by associating them with the real objects of ridicule, they were violating centuries of history and thus taking part in the creation of revolutionary meaning.

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[152] Kings who had ruled arbitrarily and wilfully had been called 'tyrants' long before the Revolution in medieval times. The word 'traitor' seems more interesting when it comes to describe a king. Under the *Ancien régime*, the laws of treason expressed in the most perfect way the king's embodiment of the State. As Michael Walzer has pointed out, 'although the king could not be conceived to commit any crime, treason was peculiarly alien to him, for it was a crime against his own person. [...] [Treason] was usually thought to require an act aimed directly at the king's person (or some member of his immediate family).[...] Hence no king can possibly be a traitor, whatever actual harm he does to his subjects or to his kingdom, unless perhaps he harms himself.[...] In France, the revolutionaries made a [...] radical break with the legal past; they wrote a new constitution and a new criminal code. Yet the king remained inviolable up to the moment he was actually brought to trial, and there were no earlier trials which set any precedent for his.' See Michael Walzer, ed., *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, trans. by Marian Rothstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp. 42-5.
[153] See Annie Duprat, *Les Rois de papier*, pp.189-199 ; *Le Roi décapité* – illustrations.
[154] Reproduced in *French Caricature*, p.180.
[155] See Hunt, 'The Political Psychology of Revolutionary Caricatures', in *French Caricature*, pp.33-40. See also Duprat, *Le Roi décapité*, pp. 50-3, on the French prints on this event.
[156] This caricature is reproduced among the illustrations of Annie Duprat's book *Les Rois de papier*. See *Dialogue* (BN, Estampes, De Vinck 5180 P 24 165), and p.196.

Revolutionary songs. *Le Roi* and *le Peuple* : an 'inverted' dialogue.

Revolutionary songs were another medium through which the revolutionary story of the radicals was transposed; they were yet another illustration of the workings of epic and Menippean discourse. Here meaning was created as a result of combining words with music, and rhetorical violence was practiced through the use of satire and parody.

Songs have always played an important role in French popular culture. Without songs, it has been said, the revolutionary energies of 1789 would have been unleashed at a much earlier stage. Since *La Fronde* and its satirical pamphlets, the *mazarinades,* French peasants and bourgeois were used to express themselves freely in verse, prose, and melody.[157] At the time of the Revolution, it was believed that music, especially in the form of songs with repeatable verses, would enhance the process of propagating the new ideas. And if new texts were adapted to old popular tunes, they would be easier to retain:

> [Les chansons] sont un moyen que le gouvernement emploie sur la multitude... Il est tout-puissant. Que l'on mette les principaux traits de notre révolution en strophes variées... et le patriotisme passant avec elles dans toutes les âmes les parcourra comme l'éclair et fera les délices de notre jeunesse... Il sera doux à des patriotes d'aller porter à leurs concitoyens une joie véritable, des danses, des airs à boire et de chanter avec eux Vive la Nation, vive la Liberté... or quand l'esprit de la Révolution aura ainsi passé dans la veine de la jeunesse, y-a-t-il une force sur terre qui ose les combattre.[158]

Indeed, it is interesting to note that, statistically, of all the fine arts brought into play by the revolutionaries within their propaganda enterprise, music and, especially, songs, were the only medium where revolutionary themes prevailed.[159] Most of the republican songs of the Revolution were produced between 1793 and 1794. Of the 3000 songs written from 1789 until 1799, 590 titles appeared in 1793 and another 700 in 1794. After 1794, there was a sharp decline in the production of songs.[160]

The revolutionaries made use of songs to persuade the public in the rightness of the new thinking and to instil in their hearts love of the republican ideas, a firm belief in a

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[157] See Emmet Kennedy, p.43.
[158] Speech of Coupé de l'Oise at the Jacobins, January 1791, quoted in Serge Bianchi, p. 179.
[159] See Emmet Kennedy, p.235-6. Kennedy has compared statistical studies of the genres and subjects of arts submitted to the salons in the Louvre after 1789, a study of the theatrical repertoire in Paris under the Revolution, and a statistical study of songs based on a catalogue published by Constant Pierre in 1904, *Les Hymnes et les chansons de la Révolution.* According to this catalogue, only about 5 percent of the revolutionary songs were set to new music.
[160] See Serge Bianchi, p.178-9.

better future and feelings of aversion towards the enemies of the Revolution. Through epic discourse, in the form of allegorical hymns, anthems and civic songs, regularly repeated at festivals and other forms of collective gathering, new words and concepts, associated with the new ideas and beliefs, were being imprinted, in keeping with the beliefs of the time, on the aural and visual sans-culottes' senses. Patriotic war songs were another powerful means of propaganda, officially recognized and urged by the revolutionaries. They were used to lift the spirits of the French army defending an endangered fatherland. Thus, in 1792, the battle song of the army of the Rhine (*Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin*), whose refrain expressed powerfully its emotion and which had become extremely popular throughout the territory of the country, was baptised, on October, 17 the 'hymn of the Revolution'.[161]

Songs reflected the general mood. They could be heard almost everywhere: on the streets, at festive gatherings, in the theatre, at public meetings, at the Convention, where Chenard and Narbonne, of la Comédie Italienne, sung on 5 July 1793. And their texts were about almost everything: from *Le Serment du jeu de Paume* and public decrees, to the New Calendar, from *Les Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (Mis en vaudeville avec le texte au-dessus de chaque couplet)*, to *La douce guillotine aux attraits séduisants*; from hymns to Agriculture, Adoption, Equality and Reason, to songs dedicated to the martyrs of Liberty; from 'chansons de guerre', to satirical songs about Marie-Antoinette, Philippe d'Orléans, the English, *Les émigrans*, and many others.[162]

Whether purposefully composed by the great Mehul, Gossec, Catel, Langlé, Cherubini or Grétry for the texts of Marie-Joseph Chenier, Richard, Rouget de Lisle, Valcour or Maréchal, to be chanted in festivals, echoing the official guidelines and glorifying the assets of the Revolution, thus coming within the framework of the 'epic' (monologic) expression of revolutionary discourse,[163] or simply written in short rhyming lines and sung to old, favourite tunes,[164] or yet accompanying a play in theatre where the public joined in and took part in the spectacle, thus representing dialogue, they were a

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[161] *La Marseillaise.* See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, pp.96-7.

[162] Unless otherwise stated, most of the songs commented in this chapter come from Louis Damade, *Histoire chantée de la Première République 1789 à 1799 : Chants patriotiques, révolutionnaires et populaires* (Paris : Paul Schmidt, 1892) ; Pierre Barbier et France Vernillat, *Histoire de France par les chansons*, 4th edn, 8 vols, (Paris : Gallimard, 1957), IV : 'La Révolution'.

[163] For example the *Chant du 14 Juillet* (1790) ; text – Marie-Joseph Chénier, music – Gossec.

[164] Thus, *Le Serment du Jeu de paume* (1789) was sung on *Mon petit cœur à chaque instant soupire* ; *La Prise de la Bastille* (1789), on *Aussitôt que la lumière*; *L'abolition des privilèges* (1789), on *Avec les jeux dans le village* ; *Frères, courons aux armes !* (1789), on *Il pleut, il pleut bergère*; *Les Veux de la nation*, on *Vive Henry IV !; Projet de décret (trouvé dans les papiers e Mirabeau Tonneau)*, on *Vive le vin, vive l'amour*.

popular yet powerful way of binding together a multitude of people. This was especially true for satirical songs like *Ça ira* where different new texts were improvised and added to suit the occasion. Hymns, especially, with their solemnity, were expected to create an emotional impact and were conceived 'to come to the aid of rhetoric, by sharpening and emphasizing the inflections of speech, so that it can communicate in large assemblies'.[165]

Often more than one song was sung to the same popular tune.[166] Such songs were easy to remember and to perform and very fashionable in those years, as we can see from the following lines, coming from the preface of a *Recueil d'hymnes et couplets patriotiques*, published in Rouen, in An II:

> Le peuple français, naturellement joyeux exprime ses sentiments d'allégresse par des chants qui caractérisent la situation de son âme. Il est aujourd'hui tout brûlant d'amour pour la liberté qu'il a conquise, pour l'égalité qu'il veut maintenir, et pour sa patrie qu'il veut sauver ![167]

Yet revolutionary songs served also as a safety valve for the crowd's passions. They were often conceived as satires of everything associated with the *Ancien Regime* or as parodies of sacred hymns. When singing satirical songs, hidden among the collective performance of the multitude, often dancing at the same time around liberty trees, individuals could allow themselves to release their energies in an enjoyable way. Similarly, during theatrical performances, the audience would express shared feelings in the spontaneous chanting of a familiar revolutionary refrain. As Laura Mason wrote in her important recent study *Singing the French Revolution*:

> Singing was a fluid and highly improvisational means that moved easily between oral and print cultures. Because most songs were "composed" by rhyming new verses to familiar tunes, anyone who had the most rudimentary sense of rhyme was qualified to become a "songwriter". Easy composition made songs a timely means of communication which, like newspapers and cheap engravings, was highly responsive to the movements of events. The advantages of easy composition were reinforced by the facility with which songs were reproduced and communicated. A song sheet was cheap, [...] and often smaller than the palm of one's hand, so easy to transport and easy to hide. But, more important, [...] words are learned quickly when set to a familiar tune; thus singing offered special advantages to a society, which was only partially literate and in which the free circulation of information was intermittent at best.[168]

The revolutionaries deliberately emphasized the contrast between the new words and the tunes of old sacred hymns. By doing so, they were creating new 'transtextual' links

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[165] See Noel Parker, *Portrayals,* p.58-9.

[166] *Couplets sur la Fédération* (1790) and *La Déroute des agioteurs* (1790) , on the tune of *On doit soixante mille francs. Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (1789), and *Couplets sur la suppression des costumes religieux décrétée le avril 1792,* on *Philis demande son portrait.*

[167] Quoted in Louis Damade, p. V.

between text and music, consciously or not, and thus were either elevating the meaning of the text to a new sacredness, through the sacredness of the old hymn anchored in the sensibility of the audiences, or they were debasing the sacred hymns associated with the Old Regime by transposing them into a more mundane and lower register.[169]

Parodying texts and music was a common trend in eighteenth-century culture and the revolutionaries were often using similar techniques.[170] Patriotic and war songs, adapted to old, familiar tunes, were extremely popular and enjoyable to the audience.

The revolutionary songs, created in the first years after 1789, are largely invested with a dynamic power relationship opposing the two protagonists of the Revolution: the king and the people. As in all other types of artistic works, assisting or reflecting political changes in the course of the Revolution, the official, republican trend in songs, as part of political propaganda, was degrading the king's image, while deifying the image of the people.

In pre-revolutionary France, the figure of the king was invested with the notion of divine rights. Even at the time immediately following the revolutionary outbreak, Louis XVI, who was in general accepted well by his people, was still seen, although with condescendence and even at times with derision, as a paternal figure.[171] Gradually, however, as the authority of the king was eroded, he was denied his political power and finally overthrown; hence the word 'king' became synonymous with 'traitor' as opposed to the 'virtue and loyalty of the people'.

As I argued earlier, republican propaganda in general played a crucial role in the process of eroding the king's image over the first years of the Revolutionary decade. During the period from 1789 until the abolition of monarchy by the Convention in

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[168] Laura Mason, *Singing the French Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787-1799* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 2.

[169] On 'transtextuality' and on parody as a 'transtextual' transposition, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris : Editions du Seuil, 1982), pp. 7-19.

[170] It should be noted that originally, *parody* (fro. Gr thr. Late Latin *parodia*) meant 'burlesque song or poem'; in music, it is 'a composition that employs reworked material from another piece or passage, with serious intent'. See *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* , 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). On the etymology and the meaning of 'parody', see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes*, pp.17-18: 'le fait de chanter à côté, donc de chanter faux, ou dans une autre voix, en contrechant – en contrepoint –, ou encore de chanter dans un autre ton : déformer, donc, ou *transposer* une mélodie. Appliquée au texte épique, cette signification pourrait conduire à plusieurs hypothèses. La plus littérale suppose que le rhapsode modifie tout simplement la diction traditionnelle et / ou son accompagnement musical.[...] Si telles furent les premières parodies, elles ne touchaient pas au texte proprement dit (ce qui ne les empêchait évidemment pas de l'*affecter* d'une manière ou d'une autre). [...] Plus largement, et en intervenant cette fois sur le texte lui-même le récitant peut, au prix de quelques modifications minimes (minimales), le détourner vers un autre objet et lui donner une autre signification.'

[171] See Lynn Hunt, 'Discourses of Patriarchalism and anti-patriarchalism in the French Revolution', in Renwick, John, ed., *Language and Rhetoric of the Revolution*, pp.25-49.

September 1792 and the regicide of January 1793, often described as the beginning of the Terror,[172] the political figure of the King-father was gradually stripped of its power and degraded to the status of a criminal, until it was replaced by the female allegorical figure of the Republic. Long before the scaffold, Louis XVI had suffered a metaphorical death.

Traditionally, the image of the king, who had been considered for centuries as God's representative on Earth, was sacred and inviolable. In the first years of the Revolution, known also as the period of reconciliation, or the 'patriarchal stage', when Louis XVI was still participating in the political life of the country and his inviolability was recognized by the Constitution of 1791,[173] he was depicted and celebrated in the festivals, in revolutionary theatre, in prints and in songs as the 'good king', the 'father of the Nation' and the person who had helped to bring about the new order:

> Vive Louis seize!
> Ce bon roi citoyen ;
> Son cœur est aise
> De faire notre bien.[174]

And also:

> Au Roi.
> Roi chéri que je révère
> Digne objet de notre amour
> Permet qu'un peuple de frères
> T'offrent leurs vœux tour à tour.
> De cette union parfaite
> Naît la douce égalité
> Et chacun de nous répète :
> Vivons pour la liberté ![...]
>
> Serment civique.
> Jurons tous d'être fidèles
> Aux lois, à la nation,
> Au roi qui règne par elles,
> A la constitution ;
> Qu'enfin notre espoir se fonde,
> Et que notre liberté,
> Donnant un exemple au monde
> Passe à la postérité.[175]

As the mystique of kingship disappeared, images of the king and kingship in general were gradually either replaced by republican insignia (Louis XV's statue was removed from *Place de la Révolution*, where the guillotine was moved for the royal execution, and was

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[172] See Michael Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, p.6.
[173] Ibid., pp. 63-4.
[174] 'Les voeux de la Nation'(1789), in Louis Damade, p.31
[175] 'Le Serment de la Confédération , le 14 Juillet, par les fédérés de Senlis', Damade, 72-3.

to be replaced by a giant statue of Liberty), or completely destroyed, like the statues of kings from the cathedral Notre-Dame and the royal tombs and bronze statues from the basilica of Saint-Denis in Paris, which were all demolished or melted down during the Terror, in late 1793.[176] After the king's execution in January 1793, even the word 'roi' was banished from the French language, and replaced by 'loi'.[177] By contrast, as the months and years went by and the king was gradually stripped of his mythical powers, the symbolic power of the people progressively increased, until the two conflicting processes met and, through the king's complete obliteration, the figure of the people was invested with supreme rhetorical sovereignty. The people acquired an epic weight and, in their turn, became *le souverain.*[178]

The following anonymous song from an earlier period, entitled *Portrait des rois* (1791), and sung to the popular tune *Colinette au bois s'en alla*, provides an amusing interpretation of the people's sovereignty theme, as inversion of the divine right absolutism:

> Imaginez-vous des zéros 000, 000
> Qui sans chiffre restent capots...
>   Ecoutez, en deux mots :
> Pour le peuple, un chiffre placez,
> Avant les zéros le mettez, 1 000 000
>   Cela forme un nombre ;
> Mais, si vous mettez, si vous placez
> Le chiffre tout au bout, 000,000,1
> Les zéros ne font plus qu'une ombre
>   Et le chiffre est tout.[179]

This is an interesting example of how Menippean discourse shaped new meaning, which allows at least three possible levels of interpretation. The satiric mode is most conspicuous. A second reading could be given in the context of the numbers theory. The pun rests on the relationship between persons and numbers – the symbolic power of the king versus the numerical power of the multitude, and the mathematical weight of the digit 1 as opposed to one million. Another message arises from the unique nothingness of the zero and the decimal fractions' powers of 10. Through a third reading, the idea of the

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[176] For a more detailed account on this matter, see Emmet Kennedy, pp. 204-9.

[177] On banishing the word 'roi' from the French language, see Marc-Eli Blanchard, *Saint-Just & Cie: La Révolution et les mots* (Paris : Nizet, 1980), p.41.

[178] See, for example, Varlet's expression, when speeking at the Convention on 17 September 1793, on behalf of the 'majorité des sections parisiennes': 'Avez-vous pu, sans attenter aux droits du *souverain*, réduire les assemblées du peuple et en prescrire la durée ?'. Published by *Le Moniteur* and reprinted in *Oeuvres Complètes de Robespierre*, X, p.109. Italics mine.

[179] As reproduced in Louis Damade, pp. 102-3.

monologic 'rule of 1' is dialogically abolished through an elementary mathematical manipulation, where the digit 1 is shifted to the least significant place value in the number, connoting, by the same token, the idea of the people's sovereignty.

In another song of similar inspiration, *Romance dédiée au gros Louis,* by Ladré (*1792*), sung on the tune of *Pauvre Jacques*, the king is reduced, in an act of ultimate debasement, to a 'zero', as if he were nobody and simply did not exist, a cipher devoid of feelings, thoughts, and dignity:

> *Pauvre Sire*, tu n'as plus de veto.
> *Roi trompeur* d'un *peuple si juste*,
> Va, *gros Louis*, tu n'es plus *qu'un zéro*,
> Tu n'auras pas le sort d'Auguste.
> *Monarque ingrat*, réclame tes flatteurs,
> Tâche qu'ils te rendent ta gloire ;
> Sur *tes complots, tes projets destructeurs*,
> *Le peuple a remporté victoire.*[180]

In the closing stanzas, the king, portrayed here as 'parjure roi, fourbe et sans équité', is stripped of his divine rights and receives the ultimate penance: 'la nation prend ta couronne'.

Caricature, revolutionary plays, staging the eradication of kingship, and satirical songs with carnivalesque structures that degraded the royal family all played an important part in eroding the paternal image of the king. The king was the subject of increasingly hostile attacks related to the accusations of treason against France after the flight to Varennes. The attitude towards him changes drastically as he is suspended from his functions on being brought back to Paris.

Even before the execution, Louis' obliteration from the officially shaped public memory had been symbolically prepared. Such a peculiar 'degré zéro' was necessary to the republicans in order to prepare the ground for erecting the public image of the people.

> Monarque autrefois si fêté
> Des bons François l'unique idole,
> Pour avoir trop mal écouté
> Tu fréquentas mauvaise école.
> Souviens-toi de cette leçon,
> Tu viens de ternir ta mémoire.
> Réfléchis bien dans ta prison
> Que vertu seule fait gloire.[...]
> Si ton sort fut d'être abusé,
> Les Français ne veulent plus l'être ;

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[180] 'Romance dédiée au gros Louis ci-devant roi', reproduced in Pierre Barbier and France Vernillat, pp. 102-3. Italics mine.

Pour ce que tu nous a causé
Apprends comme on punit un traître.[181]

After September 22 1792, the new Republic wrested power from the metaphorical death of the king and, by the same token, instilled in the nation, with the help of an 'electricity thunderbolt', two powerful feelings - hatred and love:

Vive la République
Dont la force énergétique
Imprime à notre nation,
Par un troit électrique,
    L'horreur des rois,
    L'amour des loix
    Et de la république[...]
Le peuple a repris tous ses droits.
Et sa puissance antique ;
Il a déraciné des rois
L'arbre chronologique,
    Et consacré
    L'arbre sacré
    De notre république.[182]

In the above lines, the republic, as opposed to the king, is synonymous with the people. One could easily substitute *republic* for *people*, especially if it were in a *democracy*, as in the tautology from the song below:

[R]ien ne vaut mieux ma foi
Qu'une ré ré ré
Qu'une pu pu pu
Qu'une ré
Qu'une pu
Qu'une république
Bien démocratique.[183]

Elsewhere, in the war song *Le Chant du départ*, by Marie-Joseph Chenier and Méhul, the French sovereign people sets on a mission to eradicate kingship and to liberate the entire world:

Tremblez, ennemis de la France,
Rois ivres de sang et d'orgueil !
Le peuple souverain s'avance :
Tyrans descendez au cercueil !
    Chœur des guerriers :
La république nous appelle
Sachons vaincre ou sachons périr ,
Un François doit vivre pour elle,

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[181] 'Au ci-devant roi' (1792), in Damade, p.52.
[182] 'La République' (22 septembre 1792), in Damade, pp.158-9.
[183] 'Le grand projet', by M.Marchant. Ibid., pp.120-1.

> Pour elle un François doit mourir .

The concluding stanza forcefully illustrates the idea of France's revolutionary messianism:

> Sur ce fer, devant Dieu, nous jurons à nos pères ;
>   A nos épouses, à nos sœurs ,
> A nos représentants, à nos fils, à nos mères,
>   D'anéantir les oppresseurs :
>   En tous lieux, dans la nuit profonde
>   Plongeant l'infâme royauté,
>   Les François donneront au monde
>   Et la paix et la liberté.
>   La république nous appelle, etc,[184]

It is curious to note, however, that at a time when the word 'roi' was invested with such a negative connotation, France was being represented as the 'Reine des nations'.[185]

In identifying and portraying the two main characters at the Revolutionary scene – the deposed king as the symbol of the decaying old regime, and the people as the incarnation of progress and the new ideals – the radical cultural trends often elided the temporal boundaries, introducing a new 'revolutionary' time, which neatly separated the past from the present and the future and, at the same time, blurred reality and fiction. Thus, the past would exemplify everything the Revolution had achieved or was still aiming to achieve. The present would include future plans or enterprises which had not yet been accomplished. The future would often embrace unattainable tasks, such as to achieve a utopian, perfect new order, which the revolutionaries promised to the masses.

This constantly recurring dialogical interplay between the future and the past is abundantly exemplified in most revolutionary songs, especially those dealing with the *roi-peuple* dichotomy. The more the past is blackened, the brighter appears the future: it is as though the glorious future were born, through a sudden metamorphosis, out of the rigid and ugly shell of the past's chrysalis.

In representing the public to itself, political discourse in revolutionary propaganda, whether in speeches, hymns or popular songs, had to provide a new, albeit utopian image of a coherent, heroic and active multitude, enlightened in the new ideals, and enriched with a set of new values. This could be seen as yet another form of political manipulation. *Le peuple* appears thus as the collective figure of virtuous and patriotic individuals, the

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[184] 'Le Chant du départ. Hymne de guerre (14 Juillet)' (1794), Paroles de Marie-Joseph Chénier ; Musique de Méhul, as reproduced in Louis Damade, pp.362-5.
[185] 'Hymne à la Liberté', by Desorgues, in Damade, p.365 : 'De chêne et de lauriers ceins ta superbe tête/ Reine des nations, chère à l'égalité,/ France enorgueillis toi, c'est aujourd'hui ta fête, / La fête de la liberté'.

'bons François' instilled with moral purity, who have been transformed from 'subjects' to 'citizens' – as in 'Citoyens que rien n'arrête/ Dans le cours de vos exploits'[186] – masters of their own destinies:

> Le destin des patriotes
> Est d'affranchir l'univers ;
> Sur la tête des despotes,
> Peuples, nous briserons nos fers.
> C'est ici la juste guerre
> Des peuples contre les rois ;
> Aux oppresseurs de la terre
> Nous redemandons nos droits.[187]

Were the above stanzas and, revolutionary songs in general, dialogic or monologic? A straightforward classification would be the one dividing hymns and satirical songs, as hymns and officially commissioned songs, celebrated in the controlled context of festivals and other organised commemorations, extolled the revolutionary ideals and great revolutionary achievements.[188] They often preached revolutionary virtue, glorified the new goddesses of Liberty and Reason or the victorious French army, and thus participated in the creation of the new revolutionary epic, which yielded the new revolutionary truths. Their texts and music were purposefully written with the aim of educating. In this respect, they could be qualified as monologic. On the other hand, even by the intertextual dimension of their symbolism, hymns participated in the same destructive-constructive dialogue as popular and satirical songs with their more overtly carnivalistic messages. No other cultural form under the Revolution more perfectly exemplified the contrast between the 'new' and the 'old', 'good' and 'evil', than did the hymns and popular songs of that time. And they did it in a more overt way than the political speeches or pamphlets, as they were even more expressive, easy to grasp and accessible to all.

Indeed, songs were perhaps the most dialogic of all revolutionary symbolic artefacts, allowing limitless alterations and contributions from the audiences and, above all, from their interpreters. As Laura Mason pointed out, 'the moment when a song achieved its full expressive potential [was] the moment of performance':

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[186] 'Serment de la Confédération', in Louis Damade, pp.72-3.

[187] 'Chanson patriotique', ibid., p.103.

[188] For example 'Hymne à la Raison', Première décade de Nivôse, An II de la République française (Décembre 1793), paroles du Citoyen Sylvain Maréchal, Musique de Grétry, as reproduced in Louis Damade, pp.311-12 : *Divinité de tous les âges !/ Toi qu'on adore sans rougir ;/ Raison ! que nous aïeux peu sages/ Sous le joug de l'erreur firent longtemps gémir,* etc.

A song came fully to life only in being sung, for then the latitude for reinforcing, appropriating, and manipulating lyrics was enormous. Singers made songs their own with vocal inflections, gestures, and the particular circumstances under which they chose to sing. And audiences helped to shape a song's meaning by reacting to the singer's interpretation and expressing their own opinions with shouts and applause, or even another song. Song lyrics made statements about revolutionary events and ideas, but it was through the performance of those lyrics that singers and audience "discussed" and reshaped such statements. Clearly, performance did more than simply extend the vitality of this genre. Even as ease of composition and dissemination broadened the accessibility of songs, performance lent singular weight to individual appropriations, shifting emphasis from the content of a particular song to the ways in which it was used. Individuals of all social backgrounds and every political stripe composed their own songs, but they also reshaped those of others, mocking or distorting lyrics whose meaning may have once seemed fixed. More than that of any other genre, the meaning of a song was as much dependent on appropriation and context of performance as it was upon content, format, or presumed authorial intent.[189]

Some songs were therefore not only dialogic; they were truly polyphonic, for they reflected the multi-voicedness of the audiences' infinite reinterpretations. Such songs were Ça ira and La Carmagnole,[190] which had many different versions, but above all, the battle song of the army of the Rhine that later became La Marseillaise. La Marseillaise was originally written in 1792, as a war song. Its author, Joseph Rouget de Lisle, an amateur composer, was a constitutional monarchist. Yet the song was so successful and its text allowed so much freedom of improvisation for various contexts, that from a tune for the king's soldiers it became a republican anthem; it was appropriated by the fédérés from Montpellier and Marseilles who headed towards Paris and participated in the taking of the Tuileries on the Journée of 10 August 1792. This is how La Marseillaise was born – as a street song of the Parisian crowd – and appropriated by the republicans.[191] Today, it is still modern France's national anthem.

If, from a Bakhtinian perspective, propaganda in general, as a religious and political concept, and, in particular, as an example of representation with the aim of persuading, is monologic in the sense of Bakhtin's 'ideological monologism'[192] – its essence being to propagate and consolidate ideas, to teach, to preach and to impose single truths –, we have seen from the material analysed above that speeches, caricatures and songs actively shaped new attitudes and dialogically created new meaning. For, Bakhtin

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[189] Laura Mason, p.3.

[190] Ibid., pp. 93-6.

[191] Ibid., pp. 94-103, esp. p.99: 'the Marseillaise had, from its very outset, a single, definitive version that was fixed in print. [...] The song's lyrical stability didn't prevent other songwriters from using its tune or writing new verses that preserved the original choruses or rhyme scheme; but, after one final verse was added in the autumn of 1792, there were no alternate versions, only imitations and parodies. [...] Performed at local and national festivals and sung in public gardens and fraternal dinners, its tune would be appropriated for the creation of more than two hundred new songs'.

[192] Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp. 79-81. As Bakhtin wrote, 'A monologic artistic world does not recognize someone else's thought, someone else's idea, as an object of representation' (p.79).

argued, in every monologue there are dialogical dimensions. In revolutionary discourse, monologue and dialogue were intertwined and inextricably linked. In their project to reorganize the world, the revolutionaries had to face external opposition and internal subversion, yet they displayed unity and control. This was embedded in the epic story they constructed about themselves. Whether in a planned manner or in a completely accidental way – through the double-voicedness of satire and parody, through Menippean discourse and intertextual borrowings from the past – dialogue incorporated itself in the monologic epic story of the radicals. In a monologic frame, dialogue largely participated in the creation of meaning.

So, far from being 'sterile',[193] the revolutionary years were animated by a creativeness, which gave birth to a whole new political culture.[194] Curiously, the symbols linked to the most radical phase of the Revolution are well alive in a country, which prides itself with its traditions of democracy and freedom. This is yet another illustration of the role that new symbols played during those years of upheaval for transmitting and consolidating the republican ideals and how, through a destructive genesis, new meaning was constructed. For, in the light of Bakhtin's dialogism, new meaning was created at the intersection of the centripetal forces of unity and control, embedded in the official programmes and decrees, and the centrifugal forces of creativeness. 'The centripetal forces [...] embodied in a "unitary language", operate in the midst of heteroglossia', Bakhtin wrote. 'Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward.'[195]

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[193] A number of studies over the last 20 years have revalued the opinion, shared by a number of scholars, that the idea of using art as propaganda in the French Revolution was 'sterile'. See James Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France,* pp.129-156.
[194] Authors like Michel Vovelle, Maurice Agulhon, Jean Starobinski, Mona Ozouf, Bronislaw Baczko, Daniel Arasse, James Billington, Lynn Hunt, Laura Mason, Dorinda Outram, Emmett Kennedy, Noel Parker.
[195] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp.271-2.

Chapter Three. Representations of utopia in French revolutionary theatre:
Nicodème dans la Lune and *Le Jugement dernier des rois*

Nothing but fine Utopian Worlds i' the Moon
Must be new Form'd by Revolution

Robert Heath[1]

Critical and imaginative works are answers to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are *strategic* answers, *stylized* answers. For there is a difference in style or strategy, if one says "yes" in tonalities that imply "thank God!" or in tonalities that imply "alas!". So I should propose an initial working distinction between "strategies" and "situations". [...] These strategies size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude toward them. This point of view does not, by any means, vow us to personal or historical subjectivism. The situations are real; the strategies for handling them have public content; In so far as situations overlap from individual to individual, or from one historical period to another, the strategies possess universal relevance.

Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*[2]

Pour Aristote, la créativité du poète ne se manifeste pas au niveau de la forme verbale, mais au niveau de la fiction, c'est à dire de l'invention et de l'agencement d'une histoire. « Le poète, dit-il, doit plutôt être artisan d'histoires que de vers, puisque c'est par la fiction qu'il est poète, et que ce qu'il feint, ce sont des actions ». Autrement dit, ce qui fait le poète, ce n'est pas la diction, c'est la fiction.

Gérard Genette, *Fiction et diction*[3]

One of the most striking examples of the radicals' transposing the story of the Revolution, in ways that allowed them to reach a wider audience, was the combined use of the verbal and visual rhetoric of the performance arts in commissioned theatre. The revolutionaries faced the challenge of constructing new narratives filled with new symbolic representations, which were in fact just another discursive vehicle for their political ambitions. This became particularly evident under the radical rule of the Terror.

The revolutionary enterprise was the attempt of a group of believers to abolish centuries of tradition, and fulfil their dream, following the American example, to create a

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[1] 'The English poet Robert Heath appears to have been the first to link political revolution with social change'. See James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith* (London: Temple Smith, 1980), pp.18-19.
[2] Quoted by Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), p. 230.
[3] (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991), p.17.

perfect society.[4] The history of ideas is rich in examples of fictitious constructs representing a better elsewhere, or social projects to reorganise the world. Inevitably, such concepts have been shaped by an intellectual effort based on the pursuit of a social goal, by a common desire to reform or destroy the existing order and replace it by creating a new, imagined social frame. Each civilization has produced its Ideal Cities. In social writings, the juxtaposition of present-future or here-elsewhere strives to convey a social message and draws on a boundless and ardent aspiration for human perfection. In a similar way, the revolutionaries' desire for a radical break with the past, their choice to invent a new identity themselves and their leap into the unknown in search of the Ideal City, epitomised the Utopian voyage par excellence.[5]

Everything in the Revolution, even the worst atrocities of the Terror, was accomplished in the name of the dream of a better social order. Whether the enterprise was successful, and what the implications of pursuing that dream were, is another question. We shall be talking here about utopia, as no place and no time could offer the frame for this huge project promising a glorious future. Utopia was a favourite fictitious construct of the epoch. Indeed, the revolutionary experience was the locus where utopian dream met with reality, becoming utopian practice day by day. Moreover, as values and action were inextricably linked in revolutionary ideology – or rather, action encompassed to a great extent the world of values and thus became the very meaning of life – the revolutionaries were fully conscious of their role in the making of history and were fascinated by the idea that in their enterprise to bring about equality they had no objective limits, only enemies: the aristocratic plot.[6]

The Declaration of the Rights of Man was by itself the first and most enduring project of the utopian ideal brought into reality. The principles upon which the declaration was created, conjuring up the image of a free and liberal world and the dream of a Golden Age which had haunted human thought since ancient times, were among the principles in Plato's *Republic* and indeed the fundamental principles around which More's *Utopia* and all subsequent utopian writings were constructed.

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[4] On the question of revolutionary belief, see Billington, p. 3: 'Modern revolutionaries are believers, no less committed and intense than were the Christians or Muslims of an earlier era. What is new is the belief that a perfect secular order will emerge from the forcible overthrow of traditional authority'.
[5] As Mona Ozouf wrote, 'La Révoution s'imagine, se veut fille d'utopie'. See *La fête révolutionnaire*, p. 18.
[6] As James Billington put it, 'At a deep and often subconscious level, the revolutionary faith was shaped by the Christian faith it attempted to replace. Most revolutionaries viewed history prophetically as a kind of unfolding morality play. The present was hell, and revolution a collective purgatory leading to a future earthly paradise. The French Revoluton was the Incarnation of hope, but was betrayed by Judases within the revolutionary camp and crucified by the Pilates in power.' See *Fire in the Minds of Men,* p.8.

Utopia, we read in the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, is 'an imaginary or hypothetic place or state of things considered to be perfect; a condition of ideal (especially social) perfection'; it is also 'an imaginary distant region or country', and 'an impossibly ideal scheme, especially for social improvement.' Yet, as Louis Marin wrote:

> L'utopie est un discours, mais elle n'est pas le discours du concept : elle est le discours de la figure, un mode figuratif particulier du discours : fiction, affabulation, récits 'anthropomorphisés' et descriptions 'concrètes', roman exotique et tableau représentatif, autant de caractères qui lui sont propres. Elle est une des régions du discours dont l'imaginaire constitue le milieu, et, quelles que soient la force ou la précision, l'assurance ou la cohérence des thèses du discours utopique, celles-ci n'accèderont jamais de leur mouvement propre au statut du concept. Elles resteront enveloppées par la fiction, habillées des vêtements bigarrés de l'affabulation.[7]

Utopia means, as in More's fictional construction, 'nowhere'; it is the antithesis to any real place; it is a dream. Yet it embodies somewhere, often in a quite specific form.

In building their dreamland, the revolutionaries drew extensively on the classical models; one has only to think of David's *Oath of the Horatii* and *Brutus*[8] and the infatuation of the times with neo-classicism. But they had also inherited the ideas of the Enlightenment and its interest in improving the condition of man, reflected in utopian thought, which was particularly fertile in France throughout the seventeenth and especially in the eighteenth century.[9] Utopian writings were influenced by pastoral literature which had shaped the sensibility of the age, but also by a taste for the exotic, and shared an interest in distant lands, in explorations, in great discoveries, in short, in seeking new horizons for human progress.

Two main trends, or classical paradigms, prevailed in utopian discourse from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Firstly, the utopia of the imaginary voyage centred on the discovery of an ideal land, preferably an island, followed by the return of the explorer to his native country; and, secondly, the utopian projects of ideal legislation. These two paradigms are translated into various blends of fictitious constructions. The eighteenth century in particular provides a wealth of such writings, and they are often amalgamated, as any description of a perfect society would imply the critique of the existing social

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[7] See Louis Marin, *Utopques: jeux d'espaces* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1973), p.22.
[8] See Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 70-4. See also Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris, pp. 211-254.*
[9] For a more detailed overview of Utopias in the Enlightenment, see Marie-Louise Berneri, *Journey Through Utopia* (New York: Schocken Books, 1950), pp.174-206. See also David Fausett, *Writing the New World: Imaginary voyages and Utopias of the Great Southern Land* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993), pp. 3-4, 163-171

order, which is to be replaced, and any legislator seeking to create an ideal world would base his project on an imagined model.[10]

The fashion for satirical imaginary travel was set by Cyrano de Bergerac's *Autre monde ou les Estats de la Lune,* a violent attack against Catholicism and the monarchy; Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* was translated into French shortly after its publication in English and enjoyed immediate success. Much like *Gulliver's Travels,* Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* served as a model for numerous imitations, ranging from one-man utopias to new idyllic families or ideal communities set up on a desert island, as a refuge from artificial social convention. Other examples include Gabriel de Foigny's *Les Aventures de Jacques Sadeur* – an imaginative utopian description of life in Australia; Rousseau's projects on Corsica or for the government of Poland; Diderot's fictitious description of life in Tahiti in *Supplément au voyage de Bouganville* (published in 1796); Sebastien Mercier's *L'an 2440, rêve s'il en fût jamais,* which anticipated the French Revolution and predicted, as early as 1770, a future republican government for France;[11] Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Arcadie*; Restif de la Bretonne's pre-revolutionary picture of a communist utopia in *La Découverte australe par un homme volant, ou le Dédale français,* to name only a few. Following the tradition established by Plato, Thomas More, Bacon, Campanella and Fénelon, utopian travel writings grew so popular that a huge *Collection des Voyages imaginaires* in 28 volumes was published in 1787-89.[12]

In this intertextual context[13], the revolutionaries borrowed extensively from the genre, while enriching it with new elements, blending non-fiction themes (based on true stories and historical facts) with radical imagination.[14] Further, what made such writings different from all previous eighteenth-century utopias, was their overtly didactic character and the unconcealed use of social criticism to impress political beliefs on the minds of the masses.

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[10] See Bronislaw Baczko, *Lumières de l'Utopie* (Paris: Payot, 1978), p. 33.
[11] See, for instance, the opening lines of *L'An 2440*: 'Auguste et respectable année, qui dois amener la félicité sur la terre; toi, hélas! que je n'ai vue qu'en songe, quand tu viendras à jaillir au sein de l'éternité, ceux qui verront ton soleil fouleront aux pieds mes cendres et celles de trente générations successivement éteintes et disparues dans le profond abîme de la mort. Les rois qui sont aujourd'hui assis sur des trônes ne seront plus; leur postérité ne sera plus: et toi, tu jugeras et ces monarques décédés et les écrivains qui vivaient soumis à leur puissance.' (Paris: France Adel, 1977), p.33.
[12] For a more detailed discussion of Restif de la Bretonne's writings, see James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men* (1980), pp. 79-83, and Bronislaw Baczko, *Lumières de l'Utopie,* pp.157, 238-9. On Sebastien Mercier's *L'An 2440 (The Year 2440),* see Billington, pp.38-9.
[13] 'Intertextual' as dialogic. See discussion in Chapter 2.
[14] On 'non-fiction', see David Lodge, 'The Non-Fiction Novel', in *The Art of Fiction* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1992), pp.202-5.

But how does utopia relate to Bakhtin's dialogic / monologic concept? Could the utopian model of the Revolution be perceived as dialogic? On the one hand, since revolutionary discourse from the beginnings implied and reflected the Ideal City in the making, with all the constructive interactions at the Assembly, it would seem that it could. The abolition of differences, which adopted the dialogical structure of carnival, 'expunging the other's sacred word'[15] of the *Ancien Régime*, is one of many examples that illustrate this. Moreover, the concept of Utopia as an escape, as a dream, as a transgression of an existing order to be replaced by another, is dialogic. On the other hand, when imposing a new order with rules and regulations, either as a return to the origins of humankind or as a set model for social organisation, utopia becomes authoritarian, hence monologic. So, we might assume that in revolutionary utopia, prohibitions (representation, monologism) and their transgression (dream, dialogism) coexist.[16]

Furthermore, where does utopia meet with revolution? Are the two even compatible?

In the classical model of the Ideal City, as More first described it, transgression as a concept was banished. Yet as argued above, utopia itself, as a form of escape, as a way of rejecting an existing order by imagining another, was a form of transgression. The border between transgression and revolutionary violence is even more problematic. When violence becomes law, as it was under the Terror, then legitimate coercion is surely just another form of transgression.

There was however little collective dynamism and very little revolutionary hope in eighteenth-century utopias. The utopian models were far from being programs. Utopia may or may not lead to revolution, then, but revolution, once in process, imagined itself and saw its image in the mirror of utopia. As Mona Ozouf wrote:

> C'est la naissance d'un optimisme historique qui rétrospectivement pourvoit l'utopie d'un activisme qu'elle n'avait à aucun degré. C'est donc la révolution qui voit dans les formes de l'utopie un optatif et y déchiffre le projet d'un autre monde. C'est elle qui prête à l'utopie l'idée qui en est la plus antinomique: qu'il y a dans le cours de l'histoire humaine un temps faste et un temps néfaste, et que les 'bons' événements doivent mûrir comme des bons fruits.[17]

The above lines describe in a perceptive manner the complex dialogic interplay that governs the relationship between utopia and revolution. Indeed, in the French Revolution,

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[15] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres*, p.133
[16] See Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman', p.454.
[17] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, p.18.

the utopian dream was becoming possible through political and social reforms and the ideal society was beginning to take shape, at least in the minds of the revolutionaries. A revolutionary rhetoric of fiction emerged, describing the new world as it was making its first uncertain steps, and educating in the new ideals, but also, and primarily, imagining the future, through the impassioned speeches at the National Assembly, the symbolism of the civic festivals, the unseen proliferation of the political press, the visual arts and the theatre. As in the late eighteenth century, theatre was very much a social occasion, and even a place for political expression in the audience.[18] The stage was already considered as a powerful medium across which the public could be educated, and the revolutionaries were particularly careful about the content of the theatrical repertoire.

How did this repertoire, ranging from comedies and vaudevilles ridiculing the old regime, to tragedies on classical themes, plays about military heroism and the struggle for freedom, fit into the utopian paradigm? How did it sustain the discourse of debate and persuasion? In other words, how did Bakhtinian dialogue and monologue operate in revolutionary theatre?

In an attempt to answer these questions I shall look at two theatrical works from different periods of the Revolution, which in my view abound in utopian images.[19] They could be used to illustrate the elusive idea of 'corporate experience', dear to the revolutionaries and evident in most utopian writings. They can also be used as another example of the dialogue-monologue dichotomy in revolutionary discourse, reflecting the changing political circumstances under which they were created. And last, but not least, they could serve as an example of how stage representation, as a combination of the tools of rhetoric (communication) and poetics (creation, through simulation of imaginary actions and events, as defined by Aristotle), produced or consolidated newly created meanings through shared experience.[20]

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[18] On the part taken by the audience in theatrical performances and their shared reactions, see Noel Parker, *Portrayals of Revolution: Images, Debates and Patterns of Thought on the French Revolution*, pp. 40-43.

[19] Of all the sources that I have consulted on *Nicodème*, only Michèle Sajous found similarities with other utopian writings of the time. See her Introduction to L.-A. Beffroy de Reigny, *Nicodème dans la Lune ou la Révolution pacifique: folie en prose et en trois actes*, ed. by Michèle Sajous (Paris: Nizet, 1983), pp. 15-16, 18n.

[20] On poetics and language as a source of creating meaning, see Gérard Genette, *Fiction et Diction* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991), pp.16-17: '*Poièsis*. Ce terme, je le rappelle, signifie en Grec non pas seulement 'poésie, mais plus largement 'création, et le titre même de *Poétique* indique que l'objet de ce traité sera la manière dont le langage peut être ou devenir un moyen de création, c'est-à-dire de production d'une œuvre. Tout se passe donc comme si Aristote avait établi un partage entre deux fonctions du langage: sa fonction ordinaire, qui est de parler (*légein*) pour informer, interroger, persuader, ordonner, promettre, etc., et sa fonction artistique, qui est de produire des œuvres (*poiein*). La première relève de la rhétorique – on dirait plutôt aujourd'hui de la pragmatique –, la seconde de la poétique. Mais comment le langage, ordinairement instrument de comunication et d'action, peut-il devenir moyen de création ? La réponse d'Aristote est claire:

The first play, an attempt to reconcile the revolution with monarchy in the early stages, and thus reflecting the 'dialogic' stage in revolutionary writings, is *Nicodème dans la Lune ou la Révolution pacifique - folie en prose et en trois actes, mêlée d'ariettes et de vaudevilles*, written by Louis Abel Beffroy de Reigny, or Cousin Jacques.[21] It was one of the most popular plays produced in Paris in 1790, 'one of the first boulevard plays to succeed both as entertainment and propaganda, for the traditional drama in these popular houses - fast moving, comic, full of song, spectacle, and farce - was not easily adapted to propagandistic ends'.[22] By late 1793, the play had already been performed on 363 occasions.

The first performance on 7th November proved a huge success. The audience was delighted and the author was greeted with frantic applause. The popularity of Cousin Jacques was such that all seats had been sold in advance and even places in the corridors of the Théâtre-Français Comique et Lyrique went for high prices.[23] The plot revolves around Nicodème's adventures on the Moon. A French inventor's apprentice, invited by his master on a balloon trip in order to escape the uncertainties of the Revolution, Nicodème arrives on the Moon and shares with the lunar inhabitants the revolutionary example of France, teaching the local peasants how to live amicably with their emperor. The happy ending glorifies a peaceful and optimistic transition to the ideal condition already existing in Nicodème's land, hence 'la Révolution pacifique'.

The second play, *Le Jugement dernier des rois*, a one-act play written by Sylvain Maréchal, is an example of how, for political purposes, authoritarian 'monologue' was used in propaganda, merging stage fiction with the re-creation of real life scenes. The play was performed for the first time at the Théâtre de la République, on 18th October 1793, two days after the execution of Marie-Antoinette,[24] and mirrored the Terror and the events

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il ne peut y avoir de création par le langage que si celui-ci se fait véhicule de *mimèsis*, c'est-à-dire de représentation, ou plutôt de *simulation* d'actions et d'événements imaginaires ; que s'il sert à inventer des histoires, ou pour le moins à transmettre des histoires déjà inventées. Le langage est créateur lorsqu'il se met au service de la fiction, et je ne suis pas non plus le premier à proposer de traduire *mimèsis* par *fiction*'.

[21] Beffroy de Reigny was a prolific author who had already enjoyed great success with his light topical plays staged in the minor theatres and very much sought after by the audiences of the Revolution. In his early years he had edited a comic review successively called *Les Lunes*, *Le Courrier des Planètes*, *Le Courrier de la Lune et des Planètes*. The moon was one of his favourite tropes to the extent that he joyfully called himself 'le cousin lunatique'. See L.-A. Beffroy de Reigny, *Nicodème dans la Lune*, p.16

[22] See Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution*, pp. 70-71.

[23] Ibid.

[24] See Louis Moland, *Théâtre de la Révolution, ou Choix de pièces de théâtre qui ont fait sensation penant la période révolutionnaire* (Paris: Garnier, 1877), p. XVIII.

following the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793. From its first performance, *Le Jugement* was an immediate success; however, it was performed only 25 times.[25]

Le Jugement dernier des rois is among the much-cited plays of the revolutionary period. It has received – indeed suffered – widespread critical attention, as nearly every study on revolutionary fiction refers to it, yet none of the authors seem to have seen it as a utopia.[26] It has been mostly used as an illustration of 'bad theatre' serving propagandistic ends, or as an example of extremist writing under the Terror. There are however a few very enthusiastic, politically inspired, reviews. Thus, it is either qualified as 'a model revolutionary play', a 'rupture',[27] 'one of the most dramatic and successful Jacobin plays'[28] and 'a sans-culotte verdict on monarchy',[29] or as 'one of the most infamous plays of the Revolution'.[30] One author draws attention to its inventiveness and calls it a 'fantasy-spectacle' which brings the people on stage,[31] while another describes it as a satire, 'the ultimate theatrical piece because it touches the untouchable'.[32]

The author, Sylvain Maréchal, was a dedicated revolutionary, whose works include numerous projects of restructuring society and abolishing religion,[33] and whose ideas led him to be the first to predict an egalitarian social revolution in the eighteenth century,[34] even if he also proposed a 'law prohibiting women from learning to read'.[35] Together with Babeuf, he was later involved in the radical Conspiracy of the Equals.

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[25] According to Beatrice Hyslop's findings, cited by Noel Parker, *Portrayals of Revolution: Images, Debates and Patterns of Thought on the French Revolution* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p.70. Emmet Kennedy notes 22 performances in *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*, p. 275. See also Kennedy's note on the mysterious disappearance of the play from the repertory in early 1794, suggesting that 'official orders may have been responsible, for such plays were the work of Hébertists or ultrarevolutionaries who Robespierre felt were trying to discredit the Revolution by their excesses'. (p. 363).
[26] With one exception : see Izabella Zatorska, 'De l'Utopie à la prophétie: La mutation de l'utopie dans le théâtre de la Révolution' in Jozef Heistein, ed., *La Révolution française et ses fantasmes dans la littérature* (Wroclaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wroclawskiego, 1992), pp. 15-21.
[27] See Daniel Hamishe, *Le Théâtre de la Révolution: La lutte de classes au théâtre en 1789 et en 1793* (Paris: Union Générale d'Edition, 1973), pp. 171, 182.
[28] See Gwynne Lewis, *Life in Revolutionary France* (London: Batsford, 1972), p.170.
[29] See Graham E. Rodmell, *French Drama of the Revolutionary Years* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 157.
[30] Marvin Carlson, p. 176.
[31] See Noel Parker's *Portrayals of Revolution*, p. 48.
[32] See Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History*, p. 276.
[33] See for example Maréchal's *Dictionnaire des Honnêtes gens, rédigé par Sylvain Maréchal pour servir de correctif au Dicionnaire des Grands Hommes, précédé d'une Nouvelle édition de l'Almanach des honnêtes gens* (Paris: Gueffier jeune, 1791), where he proposes a new civic calendar, placing Jesus Christ next to Aristotle, Columbus, Hobbes, Newton, Descartes and Epicurus among others.
[34] James Billington, p. 6. According to Billington, the first (December 1825) Russian revolution's slogan, "From the spark comes the flame", is attributable to Sylvain Maréchal. See also Serge Bianchi, *La Révolution culturelle de l'An II: Elites et peuple (1789-1799)* (Paris: Aubier, 1982), p. 284, on Maréchal's saying in 1796: 'La Révolution française n'est que l'avant-courrière d'une autre révolution... qui sera la dernière'.
[35] On Maréchal's project, see Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison: La démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes* (Aix-en-Provence : Alinéa, 1989), pp. 13-45.

Maréchal's revolutionary utopianism, which came to include extreme atheism and anarchism, was much influenced by Morelly's radicalism, but also both by Rousseau and by the German preromantic poets.[36]

The plot is simple: the sans-culottes of all the European countries have decided to imprison their kings on a desert island and abandon them to their fate. George III, Catherine the Great, the King of Prussia, Pope Pius VI, the King of Poland, the King of Naples, have been chained and brought to the island where an active volcano awaits them and will engulf them in lava. The sans-culottes arrive on the island in a ship – another favourite figure of the time, 'le Vaisseau qui porte la fortune de la République' was one of Robespierre's favourite metaphors[37] – while after the execution of the king, Marat wrote of the revolutionaries landing on the 'island of liberty' and burning the boat that had brought them to it.[38] The civic festivals were described as 'ile[s] fortunée[s] dans la monotonie des jours laborieux'.[39]

The only inhabitant of the island, an old man, unjustly exiled by the despotic King of France, lives peacefully alone in a small cabin flanked by a rock where one can read the inscription: 'il vaut mieux avoir pour voisin un volcan qu'un roi', and below, 'Liberté' and 'Egalité'. There are also numbers and at the rise of the curtain, the old man is adding another, apparently to mark a new day, much in the manner of Defoe's Robinson. Historical time is suspended.[40] In the foreground, a volcanic mountain evokes the symbolic revolutionary mountain present at that period in most civic festivals. The old man's contact with the outer world is confined to the visits of a group of savages 'of all ages and both sexes' inhabiting a neighbouring island. They bring him fruits, game and fish and in exchange, he has committed himself to educate them, teaching them how to

[36] Morelly's *Code de la Nature* outlined the foundations of a primitive agrarian communism based on the redestribution of property, which was a source of inspiration for Gracchus Babeuf and Buonarotti in their utopian project of the Conspiracy of Equals. See Billington, p. 51.

[37] See his Speech of 18 Floréal, Year II. See *Oeuvres de Maximilien Robespierre,* X, p. 462.

[38] In *Journal de la République française* (one of the variations on *L'Ami du peuple*) of 23 January 1793, as quoted by Lynn Hunt, in *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 57. In fact Marat was reproducing Cambon's words 'Nous venons enfin d'aborder dans l'île de la Liberté, et nous avons brûlé le vaisseau qui nous y a conduits'. See Marc Eli Blanchard: *Saint-Just et Cie: La Révolution et les mots* (Paris: Nizet, 1980), p.42.

[39] A paraphrase of a quotation from Dubois-Dubais' *Discours,* 'Les fêtes sont dans la navigation de la vie ce que sont les îles au milieu de la mer, des lieux de rafraîchissement et de repos.' See Mona Ozouf, *La fête,* p.205.

[40] There is some confusion surrounding Maréchal's dating of the play, as the old Frenchman says that he has spent 20 years on the island, whereas in real time 20 years earlier (in 1773) the ruling king would have been Louis XV, and the Queen, Marie Leczinska would have died in 1768. Such a remark is inconsistent, as we a talking here about utopian time. See Jacques Truchet, ed., *Théâtre du XVIIIe siècle,* 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), II, pp. 1561-2.

worship the Sun.[41] When the representatives of the rebellious European sans-culottes arrive on their ship, bringing the royal prisoners to the island, the French representative breaks the news:

> Te dire tout, serait trop long. Voici l'essentiel: Bon vieillard! Tu as devant toi un représentant de chacune des nations de l'Europe devenue libre et républicaine, car il faut que tu saches qu'il n'y a plus de rois en Europe.[42]

This simple plot, however, allows a multifaceted reading of the play at different levels. It could be seen as a utopia in that it represents a fantasy return to the equality of origins. Furthermore, many distinctive features of eighteenth century utopias are present, for example, the voyage by sea and the robinsonesque setting of the virtually uninhabited but inhabitable fertile island, regularly visited by neighbouring 'savages', in the middle of nowhere. From our perspective in modern times, it is a 'prophecy', as the title itself suggests: *Prophétie en un acte, en prose*. The unfolding events were seen by a visionary, in a dream. Louis-Sebastien Mercier's prophetic *L'An 2440: Rêve s'il en fut jamais* immediately springs to mind.

Yet the play could also be read as parody. Not only as a parody of utopia which takes the shape of dystopia, with the incongruous representation of the European kings and queen quarrelling, swearing, spitting and fighting over a crust of bread. The author himself states openly that he is using a literary parody (of Gresset's *Le Méchant*), another favourite reference point at the time.[43] With its staging of the exiled kings and the sans-culottes in a radical overturning of the master-slave relationship, the play could also be seen as an example of carnivalized writing. Its grotesque inversions and degradation, its parodies and discrownings[44], and the abolition of differences conveyed both by the fantasy return to the equality of origins and the idea of the European commonwealth, which is

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[41] Thomaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* and his Universal Republic may have influenced Maréchal. Although Campanella was not a revolutionary like Maréchal, he was a reformer who fought for a better system of society. For a more detailed discussion of Campanella's utopian ideas, see Berneri, pp. 88-102.
[42] Sylvain Maréchal, *Le Jugement dernier des rois*, p. 309.
[43] See Maréchal's words to the audience bofore the first performance : 'Citoyens, rappelez-vous donc comment, au temps passé, sur tous les théâtres on avilissait, on dégradait, on ridiculisait indignement les classes les plus respectables du peuple-souverain, pour faire rire les rois et leurs valets de cour. J'ai pensé qu'il était bien temps de leur rendre la pareille, et de nous en amuser à notre tour. Assez des fois ces *messieurs* ont eu les rieurs de leur côté ; j'ai pensé que c'était le moment de les livrer à la risée publique, et de parodier ainsi un vers heureux de la comédie du *Méchant* : Les rois seront ici-bas pour nos menus plaisirs. Gresset. Voilà les motifs des endroits un peu *chargés* du Jugement dernier des Rois. (Extrait du *Journal des Révolutions de Paris*, de Prud'homme, t. XVII, p.109, in-8.). In Moland, ed., *Théâtre de la Révolution*, p.302.
[44] The term 'discrowning' is used here in the context of Bakhtin's perception of carnival. See *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.124-6.

itself another theme common to utopia and the revolutionary project, all reproduce the practice of carnival.[45]

At the same time, through the plot, which carnivalized and thus degraded a whole system of values, through the power of its liberated language and the familiarizing role of laughter, with its upturn of the hierarchy of orders, through the sharp contrasts, some features of the play could also be read as containing elements of a dialogical Menippean satire. Bakhtin associated Menippean satire in Roman times with the freedom of Saturnalian laughter.[46] The allusion to carnival in *Le Jugement dernier* is made transparent. Despite the seriousness of the subject, which mirrors political reality to a certain extent, and thus sustains causality (the European kings and queen, together with the Pope, must perish, following the fate of the French king), the audience is warned that the events on stage unfold in a dream. In this way, the epic and the carnivalesque go hand in hand:

> *En ce temps-là: revenu de la cour, bien fatigué, un visionnaire se livra au sommeil, et rêva que tous les peuples de la terre, le jour des Saturnales, se donnèrent le mot pour se saisir de la personne de leurs rois, chacun de son côté.* Ils convinrent en même temps d'un rendez-vous général, pour rassembler cette poignée d'individus couronnés, et les reléguer dans une petite île inhabitée, mais habitable.[...]L'embarras des nouveaux débarqués ne fut pas mince.[...] Plus de valets, plus de courtisans, plus de soldats. Il leur fallut tout faire par eux-mêmes. Cette cinquantaine de personnes ne vécut pas longtemps en paix; et le genre humain, spectateur tranquille, eut la satisfaction de se voir délivré de ses tyrans par leurs propres mains.[47]

In this radical shattering of the canonical image of tradition and absolute power, represented by royal authority, nothing is preserved of the epic past of monarchy, and 'everything sacred [...] is offered to us without any distancing at all, in a zone of crude contact, where we can grab at everything with our own hands'.[48] A new glorious 'epic' is created instead, proclaiming victory and triumph over the enemy; it is a new story about the French people's achievements. In this sense, *Le Jugement dernier* is a highly authoritative, 'epic'/monologic play, which dictates the utopian ideal of equality. It is revolutionary propaganda written for specific purposes and echoing real events, building

[45] For a fuller commentary on the carnivalesque in Bakhtin's writings, see Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.65-87.
[46] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 26-7.
[47] See Sylvain Maréchal, 'Le Jugement dernier des rois', in *Théâtre de la Révolution ou Choix de pièces de théâtre qui ont fait sensation pendant la période révolutionnaire*, ed. by Louis Moland (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1877) pp. 299- 325 (p.301). Italics mine. The text is preceded by the following explanation: 'L'idée de cette pièce est prise dans l'Apologue suivant, faisant partie des LECONS DU FILS AINE D'UN ROI, ouvrage philosophique du même auteur, publié au commencement de 1789 et mis à l'*index* par la Police'.
[48] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 25-6. For a detailed analysis of Menippean satire, see Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 112-122.
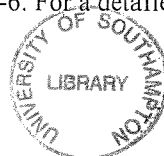
on special effects to attract a wide, unpretentious audience and to teach them the 'new truths'.

It was stated above that *Nicodème dans la Lune* reflects the 'dialogic' or 'reconciliation' phase of the Revolution, whereas *Le Jugement dernier des rois* mirrors the monologism of the Terror. When *Nicodème* was first performed, France was still a constitutional monarchy and remained so even after Louis XVI's flight to Varennes in June 1791. The king was granted immunity by the Constitution, his person was inviolable and he was still considered as 'father' of the nation, in the spirit of regeneration through reconciliation:

> Un Prince est une Rose
> Qu'amuse le Zéphyr;
> A peine est-elle éclose
> Qu'on cherche à la flétrir.
> Une épine cruelle
>   Offrant ses traits
> De cette fleur si belle
>   Défend l'accès. [...]
> Cette Rose est l'emblème
>   De Votre Majesté
> Chez vous le diadème
>   Couronne la bonté:
> Mais, ce qui nous chagrine
>   Hélas! à Seigneur!
> Vos flatteurs sont l'épine;
>   Et vous, la fleur.[49]

In the above, the 'good' emperor of the Moon is surrounded by unscrupulous advisers, 'le prélat, le ministre et les seigneurs', but later 'le curé' helps Nicodème to inform the ruler of his subjects' sufferings.

By contrast, when *Le Jugement dernier* was performed during the Terror, it was widely believed in revolutionary circles that kingship created the main obstacle to equality and thus had to be abolished. Louis XVI had been accused of treason for plotting with the agents of foreign monarchs at war with France.[50] The play is highly authoritative, reinforcing the newly established order, and hence monologic.

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[49] *Nicodème dans la Lune*, p.101.

[50] It is interesting to note that the idea of a sentence of banishment instead of the punishment of death, developed to some extent in *Le Jugement dernier des Rois*, had been expressed in some of the speeches during the trial of Louis XVI. Thus, Thomas Paine, who opposed the death penalty, but at the same time considered himself to be an international revolutionary, proposed that Louis should be exiled to the United States and rehabilitated through plain living. The English original of Paine's speech of 7 January 1793 has been reprinted in Michael Walzer, *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*, trans. by Marian Rothstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), pp.208-214.

Yet, from a different perspective, both the first and second plays could be read as monologic, in that they endeavour to glorify the example of the French, creating a mythic, epic image of France and the French people. Thus, Nicodème reflects: 'faut croire qu'i' s'ra v'nu autrefois des Français dans c'te Leune... et qu'ils y auront laissé nos coûteumes... c'est ça tout justemant'.[51] Similarly, in *Le Jugement dernier*, the French lead the way to universal happiness:

> L'exemple des Français a fructifié : ce n'a pas été sans peine. Toute l'Europe s'est liguée contre eux ; non pas les peuples, mais les monstres qui s'en disaient impudemment les *souverains*. Ils ont armé tous leurs esclaves; ils ont mis en œuvre tous les moyens pour dissoudre ce noyau de liberté que Paris avait formé. On a d'abord indignement calomnié cette nation généreuse qui, la première, a fait justice de son roi : on a voulu la modérantiser, la fédéraliser, l'affamer, l'asservir de plus belle, pour dégoûter à jamais les hommes du régime de l'indépendance. Mais à force de méditer les principes sacrés de la Révolution française, à force de lire les traits sublimes, les vertus héroïques auxquels elle a donné lieu, les autres peuples se sont dit : [...][f]raternisons plutôt avec nos aînés en raison, en liberté.[52]

Indeed, the epic concept of France and the French sans-culottes, articulated through a reification of their mission to set an example and to lead the way to universal happiness, was a favourite republican idea. Less than four months after the first performance of the play, Robespierre was saying in his speech of 17 Pluviôse, an II (5 February 1794):

> Que la France jadis illustre parmi les pays esclaves, éclipsant la gloire de tous les Peuples libres qui ont existé, devienne le modèle des Nations, l'effroi des oppresseurs, la consolation des opprimés, l'ornement de l'Univers! Et qu'en scellant notre ouvrage de notre sang, nous puissions voir au moins briller l'aurore de la félicité universelle!... Voilà notre ambition! Voilà notre but.[53]

And, three months later, in his report of 18 Floréal Year II (7 May 1794), when setting out before the Committee of Public Safety the founding principles of a permanent republican system, his words are most suggestive:

> Le peuple français semble avoir devancé de deux mille ans le reste de l'espèce humaine ; on seroit même tenté de le regarder, au milieu d'elle, comme une espèce différente. L'Europe est à genoux devant les ombres des tyrans que nous punissons [...] C'est peu d'anéantir les rois; il faut faire respecter à tous les peuples le caractère du peuple français.[54]

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[51] *Nicodème dans la Lune*, p.121.
[52] *Le Jugement dernier*, p. 310.
[53] 'Discours sur les principes de morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention nationale dans l'administration intérieure de la République', Séance du 17 Pluviôse an II (5 février 1794), Robespierre, *Oeuvres complètes*, X, p. 352.
[54] Robespierre, *Oeuvres complètes*, X, pp.445, 462.

On the other hand, both plays could also be read as dialogic, from a number of perspectives. In *Nicodème dans la Lune,* the miraculous voyage opens up as a story built on a play of mirrors: life on the Moon is the mirror image of life in France, but a distorted image, for viewers can recognize the mores of their country in the *Ancien régime*. The Moon reflects France before the Revolution; it is a dreamland, but a bad-dream land: a dystopia. Thus, Nicodème lands on the Moon only to discover, to his great disappointment, that life out there is the exact replica of terrestrial life:

> J'vois q'la leune est comme la terre;
> Q'tout ça se r'ssemb' com' deux goutt' d'ieau;
> Q'c'est pein' pardu! Si l'on espère
> Ici rencontrer du nouvieau...
> Tous les curieux comm' Nicodème
> En v'nant ici, s'ront bien punis...
>> Ducs et marquis,
>> Fiers et petits,
>> Ptits prélats.
> Bon altiers et ben plats;
> Ma foi, si l'monde est par-tout d'même
> Valait autant rester la-bas.[55]

Indeed, as the story unfolds, Nicodème experiences a growing surprise to discover how similar things are to the normal everyday he knows. Even the lunar peasants and labourers speak in his local *patois*. Nicodème, 'voyageur aérien', thus roams between reality and fiction, and the action unfolds in a very recognizable world organised around a model familiar to the audience of the time, but which is also unreal, as it already belongs to the past, and now only exists in its mirror projection onto the Moon. It is as if Nicodème were taken back in terrestrial time, yet living in the present of the Lunar Empire, in order to share his experience with its inhabitants and teach them how to live a better life.

This space/time inter-textual interplay, a peculiar dialogical relationship of two conflicting worlds, amalgamating them and placing them against each other, in order to bring out the advantages of one and the negative sides of the other, was a favourite practice of seventeenth and eighteenth century utopian writing. Going back to the past or forward into the future and mastering space was one of the main characteristics of Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde'*. Similarly, in Hartlib's *Noland* (1666) the Moon is an exact replica of England.[56] Transposition in space, where utopian writing was most at home, was chosen for its abstract suitability. It was also in line with a fashion of the time – aerostats spectacles were a popular attraction in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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[55] *Nicodème dans la Lune*, p. 120.

The Montgolfiers had conquered space in 1783[57], and in 1790 André Garnerin launched a hydrogen balloon for the festival of Federation. In the aerostatic civic festival, the magical machine captivated the crowd and everyone looked up into the sky, fascinated by scientific invention.[58] Both the fictitious world which life on the Moon represents, as an inverted utopia constructed outside the Earth on a space island, and the ascent into the heavens as an utopian journey, show many similarities with utopian writings of the time. Beffroy de Reigny's utopian image of harmony achieved in France projected onto the dystopian image of the lunar empire, which is corrupted by aristocracy and clericalism, could also be seen as a satire of nobility and the clergy in the rest of Europe at the time.

In Maréchal's *Le Jugement dernier des rois*, the destructive/ constructive dialogue, illustrating the two conflicting worlds, is located rather in the opposition of the sans-culottes and their respective kings, and also in the comparison between unspoiled 'savages' who have never been corrupted by kingship,[59] and Europeans who, by contrast, have achieved the universal Revolution. Ultimately, it is located in the idea of confronting past and present. There is a sea voyage to a desert island but, instead of *Robinson*'s shipwreck, the act that triggers the new beginning has been planned in advance, very much in the manner of More's *Utopia*. However, whereas the Moon is a real place, which, although veiled in mystery and beyond reach, can at least be seen by the naked eye, the island in this second play is a true 'nowhere', and bears a number of characteristics of the utopian model: it is fertile and uncivilised, utterly unspoiled, and awaits the labourer who will be rewarded with a bountiful crop. The utopia-dialogue unfolds at two levels, the first being the idyllic setting of the island, and the second, the idea of a European republican commonwealth. However, rather than being articulated through life on an inherently idyllic island, the utopian idea is conveyed by a fictional image: the projection of a new world belonging to the fraternising sans-culottes of Europe, and which to some extent resembles with More's federation of cities. This is made possible by the carnivalesque universal overthrow of kingship enacted through the exiled kings. The symbolic death of the kings and Pope as narrative closure paves the way for the beginnings of the new world.

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[56] Ibid., p. 18n.

[57] On the *globes airostatiques* and the audiences of the times, see Simon Schama, *Citizens*, pp. 123-5.

[58] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, p. 157. On André Garnerin's balloon, see Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre*, p. 70.

[59] 'Ces sauvages sont nos aînés en liberté: car ils n'ont jamais eu de rois. Nés libres, ils vivent et meurent comme ils sont nés.' See Maréchal, *Le Jugement dernier des rois*, p. 314.

At the same time, the play appears as dialogic through its reading as parody, or as a Menippean text rich in inventiveness. It is also dialogic insofar as, like carnivalesque or Menippean discourse, comic and tragic at once, combining satiric and utopian elements with macabre naturalism:

> ### UN SANS-CULOTTE SARDE:
> Voici dans cette boîte sa majesté dormeuse Victor Amédée Marie de Savoie, roi des marmottes.
> [...]
> LE ROI DE SARDAIGNE, sortant de sa boîte, bâillant et se frottant les yeux :
> J'ai faim, moi... Ah ! ah ! où est mon chapelain pour dire mon *Benedicite* .
>
> ### UN SANS-CULOTTE RUSSE :
> (Catherine monte sur la scène, en faisant de grands pas, de grandes enjambées.)
> Allons donc, tu fais des façons, je crois ...... Voici sa majesté impériale, la Czarine de toutes les Russies ; autrement, madame de l'enjambée; ou, si vous aimez mieux, la Catau, la Sémiramis du Nord : femme au-dessus de son sexe, car elle n'en connut jamais les vertus ni la pudeur. Sans mœurs et sans vergogne, « elle fut l'assassin de son mari, pour n'avoir pas de compagnon sur le trône, et pour n'en pas manquer dans son lit impur.»

In this play too, we can talk of the dialogical polysemy of the utopic figure as the utopian narrative merges with dystopia - the deserted island now inhabited by the squabbling kings of Europe, and their imminent death looming as the volcano threatens in the background. Nevertheless, violence itself is carnivalesque; it is confined to the act of imprisoning the crowned, and forcing them to work for their living, although this in itself might be considered the ultimate transgression of kings' supremacy. Even in so radical a play, there is still no formal execution. Regicide, considered as the symbolic representation of the Revolution, is allegorically left to Mother Nature. The crowned will be consumed by a volcanic eruption.

Utopia works therefore through a more complex interplay of images and at multiple levels. The story unfolds in a dream, told by a visionary. Utopia reveals itself through a futuristic image of Republican Europe and is achieved by carnivalesque transgression. Violence does not exist in utopias, but transgression is situated at the crossroads of utopia and revolution, where ideology and the revolutionary ideal meet with reality. The play is constructed on shifting boundaries: there is a constant interplay of reality and fiction as real historical figures - like the kings of the European countries, the Queen of Russia and the Pope - are placed in a fictitious setting. They speak and act incongruously and grotesquely (swearing and fighting, for example, over a crust of bread), in an act of transgression, violating the sacred character of kingship and religion:

L'impératrice et le pape se battent, l'une avec son sceptre et l'autre avec sa croix; un coup de sceptre casse la croix; le pape jette sa tiare à la tête de Catherine et lui renverse sa couronne. Ils se battent avec leurs chaînes. Le roi de Pologne veut mettre le holà, en ôtant des mains le sceptre de Catherine.

LE ROI DE POLOGNE

Voisine, c'en est assez. Holà! Holà!

L'IMPERATRICE

Il te convient bien de m'enlever mon sceptre, lâche! Est-ce pour te dédommager du tien que tu as laissé couper en trois ou quatre morceaux?

LE PAPE

Catherine, je te demande grace, *escolta mi:* si tu me laisses tranquille, je te donnerai l'absolution pour tous tes péchés.

L'IMPERATRICE

L'absolution! Faquin de prêtre! Avant que je te laisse tranquille, il faut que tu avoues et que tu répètes après moi, qu'un prêtre, qu'un pape est un charlatan, un joueur de gobelets... Allons, répète:

LE PAPE

Un prêtre... un pape... est un charlatan... un joueur de gobelets.

LE ROI D'ESPAGNE, à part, dans un coin du théâtre.

Quelle trouvaille! J'ai encore un reste de la ration de pain qu'on me donnait à fond de cale. Quel trésor! Il n'y a point de roupies, point de piastres qui vaillent un morceau de pain noir, quand on meurt de faim.

LE ROI DE POLOGNE

Cousin, que fais-tu là à l'écart? Tu manges je crois, j'en retiens part.

L'IMPERATRICE et les autres rois se jettent sur celui d'Espagne pour lui arracher son morceau de pain
Et moi aussi, et moi aussi, et moi aussi.

LE ROI DE NAPLES

Que diraient les sans-culottes, s'ils voyaient tous les rois d'Europe se disputer un morceau de pain noir?

Les rois se battent: la terre est jonchée de débris de chaînes, de sceptres, de couronnes; les manteaux sont en haillons.

SCENE VII : LES ACTEURS PRECEDENTS ET LES SANS-CULOTTES

Les sans-culottes, qui ont voulu jouir de loin de l'embarras des rois réduits à la famine, reviennent dans l'île pour y rouler une barrique de biscuit au milieu des rois affamés.

L'UN DES SANS-CULOTTES, en défonçant la barrique, et renversant le biscuit.

Tenez, faquins. Voilà de la pâture. Bouffez. Le proverbe qui dit : *Il faut que tout le monde vive,* n'a pas été fait pour vous, car il n'y a pas de nécessité que des rois vivent. Mais les sans-culottes sont aussi susceptibles de pitié que de justice. Repaissez-vous donc de ce biscuit de mer, jusqu'à ce que vous soyez acclimatés dans ce pays.

SCENE VIII : LES ROIS se jettent sur le biscuit.[60]

This passage illustrates the manner in which the utopian narrative of the radicals is represented through a complex interplay of epic/ ideology/ propaganda/ single truth/

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[60] Louis Moland, *Théâtre de la Révolution*, pp.322-324.

monologue, on the one hand, and menippea/ parody/ transgression/ carnival/ dialogue on the other. Indeed, as argued above, monologue and dialogue are inextricably linked and in constant interaction in the revolutionaries' storytelling.

Although the messages of *Nicodème* and *Le Jugement* are conveyed differently, a number of similarities emerge from a comparative analysis. Both plays were written during the French Revolution as a direct response to the demand for political propaganda. They reflected and were the product of revolutionary reality or, in other words, utopian ideas as text were born by utopic practice. When read through Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, they are both deeply monologic in that they are impregnated with ideology, considered by Bakhtin as 'the monologic principle'. 'In literature', Bakhtin wrote, 'the statement of an idea is usually thoroughly monologistic'.[61] Moreover, in his discussion of the types of prose discourse, Bakhtin explicitly claims that drama is monologic.[62] Yet in both plays, dialogue operates at various levels. In both cases, the utopic discourse discloses a complex relationship of shifting narrative plans. Both plays are constructed around a transposition in space, and centre on France's revolutionary example. They may be considered as dystopias, conjuring up, in counterpoint, the utopian ideal, the latter being opened up by their closure. And, finally, in both plays, utopia's narrative closure marks the true beginning - an opening or liberation into pure dialogism. In *Nicodème dans la Lune,* this is the image of France mirrored in space and reflected by other worlds; in *Le Jugement dernier,* it is the social changes about to dawn across Europe, which were triggered by the events of the French Revolution.

From the above, one may conclude that the two plays are governed by implicit dialogical relationships and, despite the overtly authoritative message of the second play, or the mere fact that both were written with propaganda purposes, the dramatic action reverberates around a complex interaction of ideas and solutions which trigger a variety of responses and thus contribute to the creation of meaning through the presence of satire, parody, carnivalesque reversals and fantasy elements.

Both *Nicodème dans la Lune* and *Le Jugement dernier des rois* relate the fictional act of embarking on a voyage, with all its dialogical openness, reflecting, as if through a distorting or magnifying mirror, 'good' and 'bad', 'virtue' and 'vice'. The ultimate aim is to bring about an ideal system of freedom and harmony, and both are impregnated with desire, made transparent through verbal expression and theatre. What

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[61] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.82-3
[62] See *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.188.

sets them apart, however, is that whereas the former seeks to achieve this peacefully, thus *la Révolution pacifique*; the latter does so by transgression and violence, in differing approaches which clearly reflect two distinct phases of the Revolution: namely the dialogic and the monologic. The first play carries the marks of pre-revolutionary sensibility, in that it is impregnated with hope and optimism; in the second, terror is the order of the day.

The sheer interplay of mirror images in *Nicodème dans la Lune* encourages, indeed epitomizes dialogue: there is a clear exchange of ideas between the Earth and the Moon as the plot reflects plans to regenerate the nation through reconciliation at a time when the King was still considered as a paternal figure and his role was consolidated by the Constitution. The title itself, based on evocative word play,[63] suggests a light, amusing plot, a pleasant adventure full of unexpected twists, while the subtitle, *Folie en prose*, speaks of carnivalesque joy. By contrast, *Le Jugement dernier des rois* echoes the public beheading of Louis in 1793. There is no going back after the Last Judgement. Monologic belief is at its heights throughout the play and, in contrast to *Nicodème*, whose title permits some vagueness of meaning, *Le Jugement*'s authoritarian mission is apparent from the very message in the title which leaves no room for ambiguity. Its monological 'truth' seeks to convey meaning to an audience much larger than the physical public in the auditorium.[64] Indeed *Le Jugement dernier des rois* is an interesting title in so far as it constitutes a parody and a paradox. How could kings be judged? As argued in Chapter 2, the trial of Louis XVI had represented a novel ethical case in French history. Yet the title in question broadens this idea and extends it to *all* European kings in particular, and to *kingship* in general.

Thus, the utopian message in both plays is conveyed through irony, satire and parody – concentrating mainly on the themes of oppression/inequality, clergy and kingship. Despite the fact that satire and parody act as forms of transgression, a 'transgression of the law of meaning', made possible through the 'revolutionary practice of language',[65] nevertheless, by the same token, they convey new meaning, as argued in Chapter Two.

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[63] Cf. *La Lune,* as a fantasy location, where the action unfolds, and *être dans la Lune : to have one's head in the clouds, be in a dream.* See *Collins Robert French Dictionary* (Glasgow/Paris: Harper Collins – Le Robert, 1993)

[64] See Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), p.73: 'Le titre s'adresse à beaucoup plus de gens, qui par une voie ou par une autre le reçoivent et le transmettent, et par là participent à sa circulation.'

[65] On the use of irony as 'la transgression de la loi du sens' in utopian writings, see Louis Marin, p. 110.

Indeed, in his description of Menippean satire, Bakhtin pointed out the following characteristics, which are all, to a greater or lesser extent, clearly present in both plays:

> The most important characteristic of the menippea as a genre is the fact that its bold and unrestrained use of the fantastic and adventure is internally motivated, justified by and devoted to a purely ideational and philosophical end: the creation of *extraordinary situations* for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea, a discourse, a *truth* embodied in the image of a wise man, the seeker of this truth. We emphasize that the fantastic here serves not for the positive *embodiment* of truth, but as a mode for searching after truth, provoking it, and, most important, *testing it.* To this end the heroes of Menippean satire ascend into heaven, descend into the nether world, wander through unknown and fantastic lands, are placed in extraordinary life situations [...]. Very often the fantastic takes on the character of an adventure story; sometimes it assumes a symbolic or even mystical-religious character [...]. A very important characteristic of the menippea is the organic combination within it of the free fantastic, the symbolic [...] with an extreme and [...] crude [...] *naturalism.* [...]
> Boldness of invention and the fantastic element are combined in the menippea with an extraordinary philosophical universalism [...] The menippea is a genre of "ultimate questions".[...]
> The menippea often includes elements of *social utopia* which are incorporated in the form of dreams or journeys to unknown lands; sometimes the menippea grows outright into a utopian novel.[66]

I already mentioned in Chapter Two other characteristics of the menippea, such as the 'scandal scenes, eccentric behaviour, inappropriate speeches and performances', the 'sharp contrasts' – 'the emperor who becomes a slave', and 'its concern with topical issues', all of which are exemplified in *Le Jugement dernier*.[67] There are also a number of related questions, which spring from a comparative analysis of the two plays. It is interesting to note, for instance, how the idea of 'foreignness' is conveyed. Although written at different periods, both plays are impregnated with the unprecedented cosmopolitan openness of the initial stages of the Revolution, reflecting the utopian ideal of universal uprisings against all tyrants. The lunar inhabitants in *Nicodème* are friends (although of inferior standing, the Moon being pictured as a 'province' of France). The neighbouring 'savages' in *Le Jugement dernier* are portrayed in a similar fashion. They are to be educated by the French, which to some extent mirrors the messianic ideas of France's leading role in the world. By contrast, the sans-culottes representing European countries in the same play are brothers, as long as they share the common republican ideal of brotherhood. During the Terror, attitudes towards foreigners changed. The principles of universal equality, inherited from the Enlightenment, were to be affected by the political passions in an endangered Republic ravaged by war from all sides and torn apart by the rule of the Terror. Under the rule of the radicals, foreigners were suspected of treason and

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[66] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 114-9.
[67] Ibid.

usually considered as spies, 'agents', plotters and, in general, enemies, which reflected the generally hostile attitude towards foreigners in classical utopias, as Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia*.[68]

Another issue central to utopian writing, which applies in general to revolutionary writing to the extent that the latter bears many similarities with utopian discourse, is the question of time. We are talking here of the extra-temporal aspect inherent in all utopias, of a specific utopian time which exists outside historical time, as historical time is suspended. But can we really speak of utopia, or, rather, of *uchronia*,[69] in the case of a play which represents in 1790 the events of 1789, as does *Nicodème dans la lune*? Or in the reality of 1789 portrays a utopian image of history?[70]

Instead, the real time of the heroic of the revolutionary achievements, or the chronotope, as Bakhtin called it,[71] is blurred with the fictional no-where and no-time. The time of the fairy tales, as in *Le jugement dernier des rois*:

> Le peuple français s'est levé. Il a dit: *je ne veux plus de roi*; et le trône a disparu. Il a dit encore: *je veux la république*, et nous voilà tous républicains. [...Et] les autres peuples se sont dit: Mais, nous sommes bien dupes de nous laisser conduire à la boucherie comme des moutons ou de nous laisser mener en laisse comme des chiens de chasse au combat du taureau. Fraternisons plutôt avec nos aînés en raison, en liberté. En conséquence, chaque section de l'Europe envoya à Paris de braves sans-culottes, chargés de la représenter. Là, dans cette diète de tous les peuples, on est convenu qu'à certain jour, toute l'Europe se lèverait en masse,... et s'émanciperait... En effet, une résurrection générale et simultanée a éclaté chez toutes les nations de l'Europe; et chacune d'elles eut son 14 juillet et 5 octobre 1789, son 10 août et 21 septembre 1792, son 31 mai et 2 juin 1793.[72]

This is what Ernst Bloch sees as man's ability to conceive his future as reality and as present; man's 'forward dreaming' and boundless capacity to construe 'that which is now' as that 'which is not yet', namely the 'utopian instinct which is the mainspring of his politics'.[73]

It should be noted in this respect that most of the plays of the Revolution, and especially the two plays in question, were written as pieces of propaganda. They echoed real events on the stage, incorporating utopian elements, as was the fashion of the time.

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[68] See Julia Kristeva, *Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, pp. 168-9, 187, 196-217, 230-43.

[69] According to the distinction of E. Bloch (*Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 1955), 'Uchronias' look back to a glorious past, whereas 'utopias' are 'future-oriented sources of militant optimism and secular revolution'. See Billington, p.524n. In fact, the term 'uchronia' was coined by Renouvier: 'l'utopie des temps passés... l'histoire, non telle qu'elle fut, mais telle qu'elle aurait pu être', as quoted by Alain Pons, in: 'Préface', Louis Sébastien Mercier, *L'an 2440* (Paris: France Adel, 1977), pp.9-30 (p.13).

[70] See Michèle Sajous Introduction to *Nicodème*, pp. 15-16.

[71] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, pp. 42-9.

[72] Sylvain Maréchal, *Le Jugement dernier*, pp. 310-1.

Transposition in space as a utopian strategy was used as a figure, yet transposition in time, in this case in the past, 'uchronia', reflected the 'heroic past' which the two plays were celebrating: In *Nicodème*, the glorious events of 1789, and in *Le Jugement dernier des rois*, the events of the Terror.[74]

We have already seen that utopian characteristics and revolutionary elements are closely intertwined. But if utopia is not revolution, is revolution utopia? In the Revolution utopia and utopian practice merge. Utopia may be a reinforcement of reality, or reality in the making. Utopia is also ideology, or a 'stage' for ideological representation.[75]

Whereas in *Nicodème dans la Lune,* the representatives of the clergy and the aristocracy are forced to cooperate with the people on the basis of reconciliation, in other words, to engage in dialogue, in *Le Jugement dernier des rois,* transgression takes the monologic form of violence. Through the symbolic universal abolition of kingship as a response to recent events in Paris, revolutionary violence, rather than distorting the utopian dream, appears as that which brought it to fulfilment. Resource to violence was necessary to defeat the 'aristocratic plot'. Radical revolutionaries believed that violence would end all violence. Revolutionary violence is often described as a 'volcanic eruption' or 'the birth path in a new order'.[76] One thinks of Robespierre's Republic of virtue: 'la vertu sans laquelle la terreur est funeste; la terreur, sans laquelle la vertu est impuissante. La terreur n'est autre chose que la justice prompte, sévère, inflexible; elle est donc une émanation de la vertu'.[77]

According to the Marxist-Leninist vision of social progress, the 'peaceful revolution' is utopia (in the sense of something impossible to achieve, in that revolutions need violence in order to succeed), but in the classical utopian project, violence is banned. Utopia and violence are thus incompatible. Yet some form of transgression is needed in any ideal city. How otherwise would differences be abolished? Even in More's *Utopia,* the transgression of private property appears as a fundamental defining law.[78]

So, returning to the question of utopia and transgression, the very act of bringing the sovereigns of Europe to the desert island, treating them as convicts and submitting them to extreme indignities might be interpreted as the ultimate form of transgression. But

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[73] Quoted in George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 227. The last quotation is of Steiner's words.
[74] See Sajou's argument in Befroy de Reigny, pp. 15-16. On Bloch's distinction between 'utopias' and 'uchronias', see Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men,* p. 524n.
[75] See Louis Marin, p. 110-14.
[76] See James Billington, p. 25.
[77] 'Discours du 17 Pluviôse, an II', in *Oeuvres Complètes,* X, p.357.
[78] See Louis Marin, p. 111.

was not the Revolution itself a transgression? In the Ancien Régime, the King and Pope had been sacred figures. However, historically, the regicide of January 1793 and the campaign of dechristianisation were already legitimate acts of transgression. This raises the question of what the audience was experiencing while watching such plays. Were they in search of a collective act of catharsis to soothe a guilty conscience by reducing the 'killing of the father' to a mundane spectacle? Utopic transgression is held to be 'absolute'.

> Absolue, elle est la loi comme son autre: elle est la négativité de la réalité réalisée ou plutôt figurée, représentée dans une fiction qui est ainsi le seul moyen de la présenter dans un discours. L'utopie, c'est la figure dans le discours et par le discours, qui en représente la fin, à savoir la pratique réelle de transformation de la réalité, de contestation et d'institution, de transgression de la loi: [c'est la] figure de la négativité historique.[79]

As to *Le Jugement dernier des rois,* in it the world is turned upside-down. The sans-culotte, the lowliest of the old regime, becomes master and judge of former sovereigns. Thus, this play's judgement is 'relentless, final, and complete'.[80]

Let us return to Mona Ozouf's words on utopia and revolution:

> Loin que l'utopie fournisse à la Révolution le miroir dans lequel elle se reconnaît pour telle, c'est la Révolution qui renvoie à l'utopie ses traits véritables; ceux, non du bonheur, mais de l'ordre inflexible qui le prépare; non de l'imagination, mais de la mortelle minutie, dont Bernardin de Saint-Pierre pressentait qu'elle favoriserait la Terreur; et celui de la violence dont doit se payer l'abolition des différences.[81]

Remarkably, in most utopias, since the beginning of conscious discussion of social problems, the ideal city obeys inflexible laws. Experience has shown however that monologism, in the form of rigid structures, that is too much order and inflexible rules, does not always work for the best in the real world. In the historical reality of the Revolution, the utopian project could find no place without becoming distorted. For, as Edgar Quinet wrote,

> Le malheur est que nos utopies sont presque toutes nées dans la servitude; elles en ont conservé l'esprit. De là vient qu'elles sont disposées à voir un allié dans tout despotisme naissant. Nos créateurs de systèmes dédient leurs rêves au pouvoir absolu. Comme leurs idées contredisent souvent la nature humaine, ils se confient souvent au despotisme du soin de les établir. Le cours des choses ne va pas à eux, il faut donc le contraindre par l'autorité arbitraire. D'où ce goût décidé pour le plus fort. Il ne l'est jamais assez à leurs yeux.[82]

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[79] Ibid., p.113.
[80] See Emmet Kennedy, p. 276.
[81] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête* révolutionnaire, p.20.

Today, the values of the Enlightenment, which the revolutionaries dreamed of and fought for, are questioned. Liberty, equality and fraternity in their purest form, as imagined in those days, still seem to remain in the realm of utopia. Utopia is 'an impossibly ideal scheme for social improvement', we are told.[83] Can the dream ever be fulfilled? For, as Marin wrote,

> [L'Utopie] est bien une fiction et elle obéit pour se construire aux exigences inaperçues de l'idéologie dont historiquement elle relève et dont, comme produit d'un moment, elle ne saurait se déprendre; elle nous indique, par là, que l'histoire est une fiction,qu'elle-même appartient aux discours que les hommes tiennent sur l'histoire, qu'elle est modelée par eux, articulée par ces discours qui lui donnent un sens.[84]

From a message/reception perspective, both plays are persuasive and, as works of propaganda, they mirror the official political trends of the revolutionary moment of their creation.[85] The audience is openly invited to embrace the message sent from the stage: a peaceful revolution, which tolerates, even celebrates the king, or a radical republican revolution. As to the reception of the two plays, we have seen that, according to contemporary sources, they both enjoyed considerable success among the audiences of the time, yet revolutionary theatre as a whole has been a term of criticism rather than of praise among critics of all times. Most views seem unanimous: the theatre of the Revolution was 'bad theatre' or, at least, such plays were not literary masterpieces.[86] If we are to accept this notion, which could hardly be contradicted, then what accounts for the success of such plays? Moreover, how can one consider a theatrical work with such mass appeal as objectively 'bad'?

The answer to this question extends beyond the simple relationship between the stage and the public, and, indeed, beyond the scope of the present study. It involves issues, ranging from dramatic form and the artistic perception of the audiences, to problems of shared feelings, carnival and transgression.[87] It is true that the above plays were both

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[82] Ibid., as quoted by Mona Ozouf.

[83] The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary in 2 volumes, ed. by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)

[84] Louis Marin, p.113.

[85] During the Terror, Beffroy de Reigny had to adapt *Nicodème dans la Lune* to the new circumstances. Under the Direcory, the play would be substantially rewritten and staged in the *Théâtre de la Cité* from 31 December 1796. See Michele Sajous in her Introduction to the play, pp.44-5.

[86] Such opinions were expressed by a number of authors. See Graham Rodmell, *French Drama of the Revolutionary Years*, pp.205, 207; Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution*.

[87] See, for example Paul d'Estrée, *Le Théâtre sous la Terreur (Théâtre de la peur) 1793-1794* (Paris : Emile-Paul, 1913), pp.VII-VIII : 'Aux premiers appels de cette liberté naissante, les salles de spectacles s'étaient transformées en arènes politiques, où spectateurs, auteurs, acteurs, s'invectivaient et se gourmaient le moins courtoisement du monde... Quand le désordre dépassait les limites permises, la police intervenait,

intended to be fantasy spectacles narrating stories that would both suit the revolutionaries' aims and appeal to the crowd. As was seen in Chapter Two, since dramatists were urged to appropriate the republican language and to take up themes that would enhance revolutionary acquisitions, their plots often echoed real events, inviting the audience to empathize, even to participate. Thus, the decoration made wide use of popular stage sets, props and costumes; the authors brought the people on stage; they adapted new revolutionary songs to popular tunes, in order to enable the public to take part; even real saltpetre, which was so much in demand at the height of the war, when the play was performed, was provided by the government for the volcano eruption in *Le Jugement dernier des rois.*

Furthermore, as the two plays were reflecting real political events, even an unsophisticated audience could without difficulty grasp the message sent from the stage. Satire and parody were not difficult to interpret, as the objects of ridicule – mainly the aristocracy and, in the second play, kingship – were widely known and easily recognized. Besides, in both plays the authors inform the public about the outcome well in advance: Nicodème's mission is to teach the lunar inhabitants the example of the French, whereas in *Le Jugement,* the sans-culottes mission is clear from the very beginning. For, as Wayne Booth wrote, '[t]here can be no dramatic irony, by definition, unless the author and audience can somehow share knowledge which the characters do not hold.[...] In much of the great comic fiction, for example, our amusement depends on the author's telling us in advance that the characters' troubles are temporary and their concern ridiculously exaggerated.'[88]

These reflections could afford yet another explanation for the enthusiasm in the reception of such plays. Members of the audience would often respond spontaneously to the action unfolding on the stage.[89] Spectators were able to relate to the plot, identify with the performers and indeed take part in the action together with them, thus rehearsing

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mais bien souvent pour être honnie et rossée par les belligérants. N'importe, chacun avait pu manifester *librement* suivant ses idées et ses convictions : seulement ce milieu était peu favorable pour une autre *liberté*, celle de l'art dramatique, que gênent singulièrement les trop bruyantes explosions, simultanées ou successives, d'enthousiasme ou de malveillance.

[88] See Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, pp.175-6.

[89] For a more detailed account of the revolutionary audiences' response, see Louis Moland, *Théâtre de la Révolution, ou Choix de pièces de théâtre qui ont fait sensation pendant la période révolutionnaire* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1877), pp.V-XXXI. See also Noel Parker's comments in *Portrayals of Revolution*, pp.38-39: 'Shows in the theatre at the time produced behaviour and emotions in the auditorium which encouraged members of the audience to feel that they belonged together.[...] Attending and responding together to the actors was a 'performance' by them of a role as members of the public that had been newly turned into a republican collectivity. Members of the audience engaged in a 'performance', in the sense of a pattern of behaviour appropriate to fostering their involvement in their position in the new social-political order'.

reactions imagined to embody the behaviour of a republican audience, or blame vehemently those portraying evil characters and accuse them of treason. We should note at this point that in radical theatre, there was a problem in reconciling representation and revolutionary transparency. Indeed, in the monologue/dialogue interplay, the 'single truths', which aimed at reinforcing revolutionary 'norms', [90] were often blurred. They were conveyed through the imaginary and represented both the revolutionary dream – which had, to a certain extent, already become a reality –, and real events in the form of new civic acquisitions, the pursuit of the 'enemies' and the search for transparency. As a result, theatrical representation suffered. In fact, during the Terror, when even the response of the audiences was controlled,[91] the whole idea of representation was turned upside down, as dramatic fiction collapsed into political reality and 'the definition of dramatic truth shifted from embracing the plausible in some abstract sense to the actual in the most concrete terms'.[92] Reception thus adopted unexpected forms as stage fiction and theatrical illusion were distorted. Only what reflected republican virtues and real political events, like in *Le Jugement dernier*, was considered to be good theatre, an early precursor of what was to be proclaimed later as 'socialist realism' by the Marxist-Leninist theory of art.

Under the Terror, radical imagery was increasingly present in Jacobin rhetoric and bestowed authoritatively on the audiences, thus remaking social and political life from the top down. It sought to achieve monological goals, replacing dramatic ambiguity by explicit messages and morals, and thus reducing 'the risk that spectators would find their own private meaning in the works'.[93] Yet in the political upheaval of the revolutionary years, there must have been other, more undefined aspects to the stage/audience interaction that worked intertextually, in a dialogical frame, and shaped the message-reception process, involving the fluid and ever changing attitude of different

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[90] See Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of fiction,* p.177: 'As a rhetorician, an author finds that some of the beliefs on which a full appreciation of his work depends come ready-made, fully accepted by the postulated reader as he comes to the book, and some must be implanted and reinforced'.

[91] As Paul d'Estrée wrote: 'Dans la période aui suivit [...] les tumultes ne furent pas moins formidables, mais bientôt ils cessèrent. Le Vent de la Terreur avait soufflé sur les théâtres. Il ne fut plus permis aux directeurs, aux auteurs, aux acteurs, au public lui-même, d'avoir autre opinion, ou tout au moins d'en exprimer une, qui ne fut celle «à l'ordre du jour ». L'argument de la guillotine répondait victorieusemet à la moindre objection ou velléité d'opposition'. See *Le Théâtre de la Terreur*, p.VIII.

[92] On the popular sentiments among audiences of revolutionary plays, and their refusal to 'suspend disbelief for the sake of drama', which led to 'the fusion of stage and street', and the gradual disappearance of the dramatic distance that distinguished the part from the player, see James H. Johnson, 'Revolutionary Audiences and the Impossible Imperatives of Fraternity', in Bryant T. Ragan, Jr, and Elizabeth A. Williams, eds., *Re-creating Authority in Revolutionary France*, pp. 57-78 (pp.59-60). The quote comes from p.67.

[93] Ibid., p.69.

groups of society and thus forming a variety of constantly shifting and sometimes competing social meanings.

Chapter Four. The guillotine, the civic festival and carnival

La Révolution fut par excellence l'une de ces grandes circonstances où la vérité, par le sang qu'elle coûte, devient si lourde qu'elle requiert, pour s'exprimer, les formes mêmes de l'amplification théâtrale.[...] L'écriture révolutionnaire fut ce geste emphatique qui pouvait seul continuer l'échafaud quotidien. Ce qui paraît aujourd'hui de l'enflure, n'était alors que la taille de la réalité. Cette écriture, qui a tous les signes de l'inflation, fut une écriture exacte: jamais langage ne fut plus invraisemblable et moins imposteur. Cette emphase n'était pas seulement la forme moulée sur le drame; elle en était aussi la conscience. L'écriture révolutionnaire fut comme l'entéléchie de la légende révolutionnaire : elle intimidait et imposait une consécration civique du Sang.[1]

Roland Barthes[1]

In the monologic world, *tertium non datur*: a thought is either affirmed or repudiated; otherwise it simply ceases to be a fully valid thought.

Mikhail Bakhtin[2]

The monologue of the radicals reached its ultimate expression in the ritual of public decapitation. More than any other of the symbols which emerged in the turmoil of the revolutionary years, the guillotine, as the image of the Terror, captured the public imagination and gave birth to a multitude of stories, 'stories told at the foot of the scaffold by those about to ascend, or by people returning from the spectacle'.[3] In staging the spectacle of the guillotine, the radicals brought to the audiences a horrifying yet fascinating tale, which inevitably unfolded in a predictable pattern and the main and sole character played the tragic role of their own death. In the radicals' storytelling, the hero of the story was not given the last word: the final word belonged to the authors.[4] The fixed framework of this finalizing, publicly exhibiting and confirming monologic ritual, which, in a highly symbolic fashion desacralised the old order and, by the same token, invested the new order with a new sacrality, had the task of educating the audiences in the new revolutionary truths. In effect, the monologic ritual of the guillotine 'inscribed' the law of the Terror on the bodies of the Revolution's 'enemies' 'in order to make them its text'.[5]

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[1] *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p.20.

[2] *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.80.

[3] See Daniel Arasse, *La guillotine et l'imaginaire de la Terreur* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), p.9.

[4] On 'the ultimate and finalizing authorial evaluation of a character' in a monologic work, see M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.70-71.

[5] Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, p.206. See also pp. 207-8: 'Pour que la loi s'écrive sur les corps, il faut un appareil qui médiatise la relation de l'une aux autres. Depuis les instruments de scarification, de tatouage et de l'initiation primitive jusqu'à ceux de la justice, des outils travaillent au

As Daniel Arasse wrote, by sacrificing a body deemed sacred by the theory of the divine right of kings, the Revolution performed a sort of 'inverted sacrament', and at the same time both founded and consecrated the Republic; this was a new concept of 'national representation'.[6] Further, by reforming capital punishment and by secularizing death in public[7] – the Guillotine was inaugurated on 25 April 1792, on the *Place de Grève*, with the public decapitation of a criminal – the revolutionaries demonstrated yet another time their will to put an end to the practices of the *Ancien régime*.[8]

We have already seen in Chapter Two and Chapter Three that the 'monologic design' in which creating new meanings was purposefully planned by the radicals often gave birth to dialogic interactions. Its reception espoused unexpected patterns and the final outcome was beyond their control. The 'single truths' delivered by the 'narrators', monologic by their intentions, gained new significance through the practice of dialogism. This was so because the 'narratees' often associated the information fed to them with their previous knowledge and experience, and together with the imposed new concepts, parallel forms were born, more appealing to the crowd, in an intertextual historical context. The problems of representation and misinterpretation in the revolutionary festivals discussed in Chapter Two, and of representation and transparency in radical theatre discussed in Chapter Three, are yet another manifestation of the above. A similar expression of the discrepancies between revolutionary aims and their reception can be observed in the spectacle of the guillotine.

As a public event, the ritual of the guillotine was intended as a spectacle of punishment, but the ways in which the crowd responded to it paradoxically resembled a festive occasion, similar to the expression of the popular celebrations during the 'parallel' festivals, when hidden energies were unleashed in a carnivalesque manner.

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corps.[…] Cette machinerie transforme les corps individuels en un corps social. Elle fait produire à ces corps le texte d'une loi.'

[6] See Daniel Arasse, *La guillotine et l'imaginaire de la Terreur*, p.14.

[7] For a discussion on this subject, see Arasse, p. 41: 'Pour beaucoup, la mort personnelle demeure un rapport sacré entre le mourant et son âme, entre cette âme et Dieu. Si la rapidité assure indirectement cette invisibilité qui protège le sacré, elle n'en constitue pas moins une atteinte à ce même sacré, car elle prétend réduire à un instant le moment du passage de la vie à la mort, cette *hora mortis* au long de laquelle le mourant peut encore obtenir son salut. En supprimant même la notion de *mourant*, puisque c'est un vivant qui se retrouve instantanément mort, la machine ouvre une interrogation d'une profondeur et d'une complexité suffisantes pour que de multiples débats s'engagent à ce propos.'

[8] Arasse has demonstrated, referring to sources and events, that during the Terror, the guillotine was used in accordance with a perfectly coherent policy. 'Les textes contemporains concernant l'emploi systématique de la guillotine comme *machine à gouvernement* indiquent que le grand théâtre macabre organisé autour de l'échafaud vise en particulier à forger une *conscience publique* (Saint-Just) en la régénérant révolutionnairement après les siècles d'avilissement qu'a connus le peuple sous le règne de la tyrannie.' See Daniel Arasse, pp.13-14. On the 'inauguration' of the Guillotine, see pp.37-42.

At first sight, one would say that there is not much in common between the Revolutionary civic festival and the ritual of the guillotine, the former evoking glorification and joyful celebrations, deliberately excluding violence; the latter, concentrating on punishment, violence, and death. Still, the festival, highly staged by its organizers in a 'centripetal' manner, and the act of decapitation for political reasons were both intended to impress as spectacular events. They both belonged to the same revolutionary project of educating through strong images, as required by the empiricist and sensationalist spirit of the century, thus serving the same mechanisms of indoctrination. This was because the people who inspired the revolutionary festivals were indeed the same who proclaimed the Terror – a period which focused on the purest of ideas, and yet gave birth to the most atrocious of events.

The festival of the French Revolution – a political invention, which sought inspiration in Greco-Roman Antiquity in order to glorify the New Order – did not survive the revolutionary effervescence. By contrast, the guillotine – another reinvention of the day, originally proclaimed in the spirit of Enlightenment as a tool for more 'humane' executions – is still, together with the Liberty - Equality - Fraternity triptych, one of the most enduring – albeit horrific – symbols of the Revolution in the French collective memory. With the capital punishment of the King, the ritual of the guillotine celebrated a crucial metamorphosis: the death of the Old Regime and the birth of the Republic. When discussing the relations between 'the social' and 'the symbolic', it has long been accepted that 'classic metaphors of transformation' were modeled on 'the revolutionary moment' and that expressions like 'the festival of revolution' belonged to that group of metaphors, which had been so important, historically, for 'the radical imagery'. Metaphors such as 'the world turned upside-down' were believed to 'conceptualize the social and the symbolic or the cultural as stitched together in a relationship of rough correspondence; so that, when the social hierarchies are overthrown, a reversal of cultural values and symbols' was 'certain sooner or later to follow.'[9]

Yet it was just such 'classic' metaphors of transformation that the organisers of the revolutionary festival were seeking to imprint in the new citizens' minds. As argued in the previous chapters, albeit in a relationship in which the symbolic prevails over the social in the power/ culture interplay, the revolutionary festival was purposefully conceived from 'above' to create new cultural values. Its purpose was to stage a celebration or a

[9] See Stuart Hall, *Metaphors of Transformation,* preface to Allon White, *Carnival, Hysteria, and Writing: Collected Essays and Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp.2-3.

commemoration, most often the didactic apotheosis of great revolutionary events. This was all part of the greater process of reversal and substitution, in which a new political culture was to be established, fighting a real war of symbols in the struggle for power. It was also the utopian elsewhere imagined by the organisers – the ideal setting for a new ideal world populated by new ideal citizens – where the new principles would reign over an ordered and happy society.

The revolutionary festival, or rather festivals – since there was a multitude of such events over the revolutionary decade, in Paris and in the provinces, which were dedicated to the Federation and to the Supreme Being, to the Republic, to Youth and to Virtue, to Nature and to Old Age, to the Sovereignty of the People, and so many more – are difficult to classify.[10] According to Jules Michelet, the main purpose of the festival was to unite.[11] In Alphonse Aulard's view, it had a political aspect, and this opinion is shared by a number of historians in present days.[12] Various attempts for classifying the festivals can be found in different sources, depending on the historian's attitude (whether sympathetic to the Revolution or hostile to its events), but classifications were also made by chronological order, by drawing contrasts in their character, or in their content. Yet despite their apparent diversity, two main groups of festivals can distinctly be shaped. The first group embraces the festivals of reconciliation, the second – the festivals of transgression. Or, to put it slightly differently, there were the official festivals, organised from above, which according to Durkheim, could generate a collective state of excitement; and also the spontaneous festivals, or the rejoicing crowd, which in the Freudian interpretation of festivals, bring collective excitement mainly through the transgression of prohibitions. On one side, the community was capable of generating collective exaltation within itself; on the other, violence erupted as the unique source of festive joy.[13]

In Bakhtin's interpretation of the festival mainly as a popular festivity, the carnival unleashes hidden energies, which lead to a reversal of order, an upturning where the 'high' becomes 'low' and the 'low' 'high'. Bakhtin draws special attention to the ambivalent nature of carnival images, which are 'dualistic', as 'they unite within themselves both poles of change and crisis: birth and death [...], blessing and curse [...], praise and abuse, youth and old age, top and bottom, face and backside, stupidity and

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[10] On this subject, see Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire.*
[11] See Jules Michelet, *Le Banquet: papiers intimes* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1989), pp.222-23.
[12] For a more detailed overview, see Mona Ozouf, *La fête,* pp.30-43.
[13] Ibid.

wisdom'. He further explores other characteristics of carnival thinking, as 'paired images, chosen for their contrast [...] or for their similarity, [...] the utilization of things in reverse', as well as the ambivalent character of the image of fire in carnival and of carnival laughter itself as genetically 'linked with the most ancient forms of ritual laughter', which was itself 'always directed toward something higher' and 'linked with death and rebirth, [...] with symbols of the reproductive force'.[14]

The Durkheimian festival, such as conceived by the revolutionaries, had to educate. To Rousseau, who influenced Robespierre, the festivals and the celebrations played a paramount role in the moulding of the citizens' character. Abbé Grégoire valued the importance of the sign as a vehicle of political meaning and attributed to it the ability to express varied historical realities. Marie-Joseph Chenier, one of the main organisers of the revolutionary festivals, wrote in the preface to *Charles IX*, about the 'contagiousness' of images, gestures and words.[15]

The Festival of the Federation in 1790, which celebrated the first anniversary of the Revolution, is a perfect example of the patriotic or civic festival, set against the background of national reconciliation and the theme of stabilizing the conquests of the Revolution. The oath taking, with all the solemnity of the ritual, as part of the celebrations all over the country, is the ultimate expression of the attachment to the revolutionary idea, the founding act that embodies the meeting point of these 'one-day crowds' with the 'principles of eternity'.[16]

But as we have seen in Chapter Two, there was also another type of festival, which existed as a marginal event, side by side with and outside the official programmes and the ideal model, conceived and propagated by the organizers. These festivals were neither announced nor planned and gave a special place to riot and mockery, parody and burlesque, violence and transgression.

The 'other' or 'parallel' festival in the revolutionary years, called the 'wild' festival (la 'fête sauvage'), and the 'réjouissances des sans-culottes' – which took place without being planned or organised, within the local, provincial transposition of the festivals in Paris,[17] and where violent episodes and carnivalesque elements could be observed – has much in common with the Freudian and especially the Bakhtinian interpretation. A number of examples where celebration and riot, rejoicing and violence

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[14] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.126-7.
[15] See Marie-Joseph Chenier, *Oeuvres*, 8 vols (Paris : Guillaume, 1824-26), I, pp.12-13.
[16] See Jean Starobinski, *Les Emblèmes de la Raison* (Paris : Flammarion, 1979), p.65.
[17] Most of these festivals took place mainly in Year II. See Mona Ozouf, *La fête*, pp. 49-51; 99-124.

go hand in hand have been mentioned in contemporary documents.[18] In the 'other' festival, centrifugal dialogical forces were opposing the centripetal forces of the official festival staged from above.

Yet in these parodic and violent festivals of compensatory inversion – where often symbols of the *Ancien Régime* as burlesque effigies of priests or the royal family were ridiculed or burned – the crowd, who were playing out powerful metaphors of social and symbolic transformation under the disguise of carnival, were in fact representing something real, something that had already happened. In other words, by the mocking of the king and aristocracy, the crowd were playing out, or echoing in a joyful way the reality of the upturned symbolic order. The inverted categories of value and hierarchy thus represented had been officially legalised and, as supreme authority was located in the 'people', popular 'low' language and rude verbal plays were an example of what Bakhtin saw as carnival or the 'intrinsic reversibility of all symbolic order'.[19] Yet in the Revolution the moment of upturning was not temporary. It was there to last, albeit still governed to a great extent by the rules of carnival.

In these riotous carnivalesque celebrations, brimming with vitality and imagination and full of ambivalence – as violence and joy were inextricably linked[20] – the crowd would bring the pews out of the churches and remove the weathercocks, feast with wine and dance around the early Liberty Tree. As Mona Ozouf wrote,

> Le mélange de l'effusion et de la violence se retrouve partout, et c'est lui, réalisé dans des proportions inégales, qui fait hésiter sur le sens de ces manifestations. Que le premier de ces éléments domine, le rassemblement de la communauté garde à l'évidence son caractère festif; mais le second affleure partout, prêt à l'emporter : il suffit d'un curé récalcitrant, qui se refuse à décorer le Saint-Sacrement d'un ruban tricolore, pour que l'exubérance festive, d'un coup, tourne à l'émeute. [21]

Could the spectacle of the guillotine, with its ghastly theatrical setting for a didactic spectacle in the name of a new justice, imagined values and sublime ideals, be seen as a form of celebration, close to the revolutionary festival? It would appear that it could, for it was deliberately intended, much in the spirit of the festivals, as a ritual of revolutionary

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[18]Ibid. See also Yves-Marie Berce, *Fête et révolte : Des mentalités populaires du XVIe au XVIIIe siècles* (Paris : Hachette, 1976), p.7.

[19] See Stuart Hall, *Metaphors of Transformation,* p. 7.

[20] On the principle of 'ambivalence' expressed in carnival culture in Bakhtinian thought, see Hirschkop's discussion in 'Introduction: Bakhtin and cultural theory', in Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd, eds., *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, pp.1-38 (p.34).

[21] Some of those early gatherings, where fear coexisted with celebration, and joy with violence, gave birth to the official federations. For a more detailed overview, see Mona Ozouf's account in *La fête*, pp.49-55 (the quotation is from pp.49-50).

regeneration, and systematically used as a huge stage showing the same play with the same, repeated end. It represented not only the negation of the Old regime. It was just as much the re-creation of a new social order. To its organisers, however, the public decapitation had nothing to do with the festival: there was no place for violence in the festivals for it had officially been banned from them.

But the organisers were far from being able to control the way events would turn and, as in the popular, or marginal festivals which erupted in a parallel manner – where immense energies were released, giving way to violence and transgression and turning upside down the official programmes – the spectacle of the guillotine too often obeyed its own, intrinsic rules. Various, often contradictory meanings emerged from the intricate relation between the obscene and the sublime of such events and what was intended from above was not always to be interpreted in the desired way.[22] This is yet another example of the discrepancies between the organisers' intentions, embodied by the epic of the radicals' storytelling, and the audiences' response, as the workings of the carnivalesque. From a monologic-dialogic perspective, both official festivals and the ritual of the severed head were imposed from above, in a monological frame, but within that monological mould, menippea revealed itself through the celebrations of the crowd.

The spectacle of the severed head reached its highest point at the ceremony of the decapitation of Louis XVI. The guillotine had first been used to punish ordinary criminals. When it became the ultimate instrument for political punishment, however, it was invested with a special symbolic power. Rhetorically, it was the monologic symbol of 'punitive power' ('le pouvoir punitif').[23] It was also the epitome of the radical's struggle to maintain power and, as seen in Chapter Two, the figure of the scaffold was used in parliamentary rhetoric as a threat to the 'enemies of the people' and as a sacrosanct symbol of 'justice' done 'in the name of the people'. Rhetorical figures such as 'le glaive de la loi' and la 'sainte Guillotine', often adorned the radicals' speeches during the Terror.

To a certain extent, the crowds had been prepared for the execution of the King. At first, violence in the festivals of mockery was purely symbolical, even when it was at its highest in the autumn and winter of *An II*, during the *dechristianisation* period. Revenge was mainly aimed at signs and symbols. The Revolutionary *journée*, where the *fête* degenerated into *anti-fête* is another expression of such violence. Indeed, the unconstrained joy of the crowd turns sour in the descriptions by Sebastien Mercier, in *Le*

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[22] The 'obscene' and the 'sublime' as yet another expression of the 'low' and the 'high', in Bakhtin's discussion of the carnival.

Nouveau Paris, of the *journée d'octobre 1789* when the royal family is brought back to Paris, in the *journée* of the return from Varennes, or else the *journée* of the assault of the Tuileries, and the *journée* of the trial of the King.[24] Thus, the *journées émeutières*, together with the *fêtes sauvages*, the satirical songs and the caricatures ridiculing the King and the Queen, the carnivalesque processions with debasing animal representation, with burned and even guillotined royal effigies and mock executions, had paved the way for the real execution. Later, guillotine and festival were joyfully amalgamated in the menippea of mimed violence, when the execution of the King was re-enacted in public with a real scaffold. On the day of the first anniversary of the King's execution, in January 1794, the Convention voted to hold an improvised festival and when the deputies arrived on *Place de la Révolution*, they had to witness the day's executions. That same day, in the provinces, people were seen carrying beheaded straw figures. Carnivalesque festivals echoed the event in different parts of France. In such a way, during the Terror, the boundaries between real violence and its representation were blurred. For, as Mona Ozouf wrote, although the representation introduced an element of 'distance', from the "guillotine in effigy" (often set up in the same place) to the real one was but a step.[25]

The real spectacle of the guillotine, however, was much more than a simple act of substitution, much more than a carefully controlled act of transgression or compensatory inversion liberating the crowds and neutralizing social violence. The ritual of the decapitation drew all eyes at once towards the scaffold. Since the very inauguration of the guillotine, it had become a sensational event. The suspense and the gruesome appeal of the highly staged ceremony; the anticipation of the frightening scene of the severed head falling in the basket; the natural curiosity and the fascination with the macabre deeply rooted in the psyche of the crowd, attracted masses of spectators in an irresistible way, achieving the perfect convergence of individual emotions. It should not be forgotten that in the middle ages and up to the time of the Revolution death and mutilation in public had been spectacles that played the role of important crowd pleasers or crowd pullers.[26] Although the revolutionaries ostensibly used the public execution for their monologic didactic purposes, simultaneously staging the 'expiation' of crimes

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[23] See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*, p.34.

[24] See Catherine Lafarge, 'L'anti-fête chez Mercier', in *La fête de la Révolution : Colloque de Clermont-Ferrand, juin 1794*, Jean Ehrard et Paul Viallaneix, éd., pp.503-23. See also Ozouf's comments, *La* fête, pp. 101-8.

[25]For a fuller description of the 'Other' festival, see Mona Ozouf, *La fête,* pp .101-14. The quote comes from p. 108. See also Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, p. 63.

[26] See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, pp. 9-19.

perpetrated against 'the people' and intimidating their 'enemies', there was no doubt that this also gratified some terrible need within the gathered spectators and, being full of meaning, participated in the creation of the new, 'revolutionary' truths.

The terrifying monologism of the guillotine was deposited in yet another of its features. The instrument of public decapitation combined the cold precision of the machine, operated by the basic laws of mechanics, with the mutilation of the human body. As Daniel Arasse wrote,

> Réussite fonctionnelle des arts mécaniques appliqués, excluant tout rapport humain dans l'exécution elle-même, elle lave certes le bourreau du sang de ses semblables, mais elle mutile toujours le corps en son articulation symbolique la plus forte, tout en privant le condamné d'un ultime face à face, de son dernier corps à corps. C'est au prix d'une hideuse boucherie qu'elle met abstraitement à mort et elle est ainsi le lieu d'une tension extrême entre la rationalité de sa technologie et la sauvagerie sanglante de sa fin.[27]

Yet dialogic menippea is present in the spectacle of the severed head, and all the more so when the figures of the king and queen of France appear on the scaffold before the gathered multitude. The sacrificing moment of Louis XVI's execution on 21 January 1793, which is, by the same token, inaugurating the new order, is the epitome of what Bakhtin has described as the genre of menippea. Moreover, the guillotine was already used to punish ordinary criminals, and so the execution of the King, who was symbolically invested with divine and sacred majesty,[28] desacralizes his figure and reduces regicide to a commonplace event.[29] By transgressing the monarchic power, the ritual of the guillotine dialogically transfers power to the Republic.

Thus, by desacralizing the King, the act of the beheading invested the Republic with a new sacrality. At the same time, the guillotine redoubled in symbolic power and acquired the attributes of a political festive figure, common to both the political spectacle and the civic ritual celebrated by the radicals. Thus, in a peculiar monologue/dialogue interaction, the political spectacle of the severed head under the Terror represented a founding sacrifice, a transfer of sovereignty: it amalgamated the epic and the carnivalesque, or, rather, it was, in the manner of the 'parallel festival' or the *journée*, the expression of what Bakhtin calls the 'serio-comical'. In Bakhtin's terms, the serious

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[27] *La guillotine et l'imaginaire de la Terreur*, p.10.
[28] On the 'sacrality' of the King, see Roger Chartier, *Les Origines culturelles de la Révolution française*, pp.138-9. See also Daniel Arasse, pp. 67-71.
[29] See Daniel Arasse, *La guillotine et l'imaginaire de la Terreur*, pp. 41, 115-17; Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*, pp.58- 62. Further quotations of French contemporary sources published in the book are reproduced from the French translation, *Le Roman familial de la Révolution française, trans. Jean-François Sené* (Paris: Albin-Michel, 1995).

genres, as tragedy and epic, are enclosing and monological. They 'presuppose (or impose) an integrated and stable universe of discourse'. By contrast, the serio-comic genres are dialogical. 'Menippean forms open up, anatomize. The serious forms comprehend man; the Menippean forms are based on man's inability to know and contain his fate. To any vision of a completed system of truth, the menippea suggests some element outside the system.'[30]

The authorities were staging the inauguration of the guillotine as a great event. They were well aware of the crowd it would draw to *Place de la Grève* and were anxious to take precautions against any violent reactions from the audience. The machine was still a novelty and, although it put an end to the *Ancien Régime*'s ritual of capital punishment, it would take time before it acquired its own political ritual and reached its full meaning. Thus, at the inauguration, La Fayette, general commander of the National Guard, was asked by Roederer to ensure the protection of the new machine from any damage.[31] Yet the press of the time published perplexing reports on the audiences' response during the spectacle. Thus, the *Chronique de Paris* wrote the following:

> Le peuple d'ailleurs ne fut point satisfait : il n'avait rien vu ; la chose était trop rapide ; il se dispersa désappointé ; chantant pour se consoler de sa déception un couplet d'à propos : Rendez-moi ma potence de bois, Rendez-moi ma potence ![32]

Such a frivolous approach on the part of the audience in the most gruesome of circumstances was common in the turmoil of the Revolution. As mentioned above, it was the fascination with the macabre that attracted numerous spectators around the scaffold, yet there was another factor: the new machine ensured egalitarian punishment[33] and in this manner execution was reduced to commonplace.

Again in Bakhtin's terms, the genres of the serio-comical are all united by 'their deep bond with *carnivalistic folklore*' and they are saturated with a 'specific *carnival sense of the world*', which locates image and word in them in a 'special relationship to

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[30] See Phillip Holland, 'Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Menippean Satire, Humanist and English', PhD dissertation, University of London, 1979, pp.36-37, as quoted in Mikhail Balhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.106-7n.

[31] 'Le nouveau mode d'exécution, Monsieur, du supplice de la tête tranchée attirera certainement une foule considérable à la Grève et il est important de prendre des mesures pour qu'il ne se commette aucune dégradation à la machine. Je crois en conséquence nécessaire que vous ordonniez aux gendarmes qui seront présents à l'exécution de rester après qu'elle aura eu lieu, en nombre suffisant sur la place et dans les issues pour faciliter l'enlèvement de la machine et de l'échafaud.' See J. Delarue, *Le métier de bourreau*, Paris, 1979, quoted by Arasse, *La Guillotine et l'imaginaire de la Terreur*, p.38.

[32] Cited by Lenôtre. See Arasse, *La Guillotine et l'Imaginaire de la Terreur*, p.181-2n.

[33] 'Tout condamné à mort aura la tête tranchée': this was the celebrated article 3 of the French code of 1791. Quoted by Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, p.18.

reality'. These genres all contain a strong rhetorical element, yet in the 'atmosphere of *joyful relativity* characteristic of a carnival sense of the world', the rhetorical element is altered: 'there is a weakening of its one-sided rhetorical seriousness, its rationality, its singular meaning, its dogmatism', Bakhtin wrote. And he added that such a carnival sense of the world 'possesses a mighty life-creating and transforming power.'[34]

The above suggests a comparison between the guillotine and the festival, in its celebratory and riotous forms. I have argued earlier that both the spectacle of the guillotine and the civic festival were highly staged from above with the purpose of educating the audiences. As the official festival was aimed at celebrating and reinforcing the new ideas and principles, there was the ghastly and implacable 'logic of the guillotine', which publicly exhibited and confirmed what had been announced from the rostrum of the Assembly.[35]

In a manner akin to the civic festival, the theatricality of the guillotine made of its spectacle a collective act focussing on the inversion of established relations, a Durkheimian gathering of the multitude to celebrate the festive ritual of almighty Reason. This was a ritual very much like the punitive 'liturgy of torture and execution' ('la liturgie des supplices') under the *Ancien Régime*, as defined by Michel Foucault, which was established by the Terror in an exercise of terror[36] to replace the religious rituals of the past and to celebrate the ultimate act of transgression: the decapitation of the King-father, a sacred figure in the peoples' imagination over the centuries.[37]

The main protagonists acting from the gruesome stage were conscious that they were giving their first and last performance and should maintain their dignity. A lot has been written on the last moments of the King at the scaffold. Marie-Antoinette thinks of the 'spectacle' she would become in several hours.[38] Legend holds it that Danton, in his final moments, said to his executioner: 'N'oublie pas surtout, n'oublie pas de montrer ma tête au peuple: elle est bonne à voir', to which the executioner complied with a theatrical gesture. *Le Vieux Cordelier* wrote that the ''les habitués de ce speclacle' se moquent des 'abonnés de l'opéra et de la tragédie' qui ne voient qu'un 'pognard de carton' et des comédiens qui jouent le mort.'[39] For '[c]e n'était pas l'amour de la République qui attirait

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[34] See *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*, p.107.
[35] See Arasse, *La guillotine et l'imaginaire de la Terreur*, p. 14: 'une 'logique de la guillotine' qui, sur la place publique et avec une force démonstrative inégalable, donne à voir et confirme ce qu'annoncent les discours de l'Assemblée.'
[36] 'La cérémonie punitive est donc au total 'terrorisante''. See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, p.53.
[37] See Arasse, *La guillotine*, p. 115.
[38] See Edmond et Jules de Goncourt, *Histoire de Marie-Antoinette* (Paris: Charpentier, 1879), p. 481.
[39] Daniel Arasse, p. 114.

tous les jours tant de monde sur place de la Révolution, mais la curiosité, et la pièce nouvelle qui ne pouvait avoir qu'une seule représentation'. This is how Camille Desmoulins described the people's attitude towards the spectacle of the guillotine.[40] In Paul d'Estrée's terms, theatre and the guillotine played the role of focal points for civic education, which complemented each other whenever necessary, according to the inspiration of the municipality, or the views expressed by the superior administration.[41] Indeed, the horror of these spectacles in which an immense crowd, drawn by the foretaste of other people's suffering gathered and took a strange pleasure in following the blood-spattered show where everything was happening for real,[42] was gradually amalgamated with everyday life and often the same public that had witnessed the spectacle of the guillotine in the morning, went to see a play in the theatre the same evening. Thus, the guillotine became part of the theatrical life under the Terror:

> Dans les entr'actes, un acteur s'avançait sur le bord de la scène, pour annoncer au public le nombre des victimes qui venaient, ce jour même, de perdre la vie sur la place de la Révolution ; et cette annonce était accompagnée d'une chanson à la façon des bagnes, dans laquelle on célébrait [...] le bruit sourd de la hache et l'éloge des services qu'elle rendait à la liberté.[43]

This monstrous and perverse joy at the contact with violence, which stems both from the fear of the guillotine and the satisfaction of feeling protected, is part of the spectacle. Festival and spectacle coexist at the foot of the scaffold and the organisers, in search of the 'sublime', praised by Robespierre and Saint-Just, are striving to ensure the good quality of the representation, so that it should remain engraved in the consciousness of the spectators.

Like the processions in the revolutionary festivals of funeral celebrations, the ceremony of the guillotine followed a distinctive itinerary, which started at the gates of the prison and ended at the scaffold. It usually lasted between one and a half and two hours. The ritual spectacle was pre-established and consisted of three phases. In the first, the victim was displayed to the public in the open tumbrel as the procession slowly progressed across the city. In the second, the execution itself, several 'serialized' elements followed each other at an accelerated rhythm: the getting down from the carriage, the disrobing, the haircut, the farewell to the confessor, the ascending of the scaffold, the strapping to the board, the decapitation. And finally the closure of the spectacle, in which

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[40] Ibid.

[41] See Paul d'Estrée, *Le Théâtre sous la Terreur (Théâtre de la peur) 1793-1794*, p.50.

[42] See the description of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, p. 483.

[43] Grégoire (Lombard de Langres), *Mémoires de l'exécuteur*, 1830, p.107. Quoted by Estrée, p. 294.

the people enacted and at the same time received its didactic, moral and political message.[44] In the final act, the executioner picked up the severed head and showed it to the shouting crowd. This theatrical gesture accompanied every political spectacle and became the ultimate feature of the edifying 'epic' ritual of the guillotine. It was a highly dramatic ending to elaborate the monologic storytelling of the radicals.

Indeed, the radicals were particularly well aware of the importance of the public punishment of the King as a political spectacle and even compared it to a civic festival. In his speech against granting the King a trial, on 3 December 1792, Robespierre insisted: 'Quoi qu'il arrive, la punition de Louis n'est bonne désormais qu'autant qu'elle portera le caractère solennel d'une vengeance publique'.[45] In the *Journal de la République française*, Marat compared the decapitation to a 'religious festival', inspired by 'feelings of fraternity'. He also expressed the hope that by desacralizing power, the execution would yield power to the people. Louis Prudhomme, like Marat, emphasized the 'religious and ritual aspects of the killing', and expressed in the *Révolutions de Paris* his regret that the execution did not take place on the national altar used in the Festival of Federation, as it required a much larger audience: 'L'étendue vaste du champ auroit permis à un bien plus grand nombre de témoins d'assister à ce mémorable événement, qui ne pouvait en avoir trop.[46]

The public execution of the King was, to a large extent, 'part of a calculated strategy for setting the Revolution on the path of no return', as Susan Dunn pointed out. But there was more to it. The Jacobins bestowed on the royal decapitation a powerful symbolic value. 'They portrayed it as the ritualistic founding act of a new social order, attributing to Louis the unusual sacred status of a sacrificial victim who possesses the supernatural ability to purify and regenerate the nation through his own death'.[47]

The image of the severed head, frequently represented in classical mythology and Christian iconography, is often echoed in radical revolutionary rhetoric. In this image, monologue and dialogue coexist in the most peculiar manner. Indeed, epic monologism at its highest, not in a metaphorical frame, but in a terribly real form, is inextricably linked with Menippean dialogism. The symbolic birth of the radiant New Order from the

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[44] Arasse, pp. 115-7, 197n.
[45] See Stephens, *Principal speeches*, II, p.364.
[46] See Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp.57-8. The French quote is borrowed from the French translation of the book, *Le Roman familial*, p.76.
[47] See Susan Dunn, *The Deaths of Louis XVI: Regicide and the French Political Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p.4.

severing of the head of the Old Regime was the utmost expression of the Terror. In the epic story of the radicals, this represented yet another translation of Jason decapitating the Dragon or Hercules killing the Hydra of Lerna, dialogically extended into the Latin Hercules crushing the Hydra of Federalism, and the figure of Liberty triumphant over the Hydra of Tyranny.[48]

Yet the Menippean side of the spectacle was perhaps most visible in the discrepancies between the noble aims of the machine, grounded in 'Reason', and its horrible performance. Beheading with the guillotine as a political punishment under the Terror implied that it would continue to cut off heads as long as the political system was threatened with enemies. In a gruesome monologic/ dialogic line, The King was followed by the Queen, then by the Girondists and finally by the Jacobins. Thus the beheaders were beheaded themselves in an unlimited dialogic 'open-endedness' of the executions.[49]

The representation of the royal execution was an ambivalent projection of the contemporary imagination. On the whole, the commentary on the event in the press was rather restrained. Only the most radical press provided more extended analysis of the meaning of the King's death.[50] In the monologic/ epic story it created, radical iconography reproduced the final gesture and emphasized the severed head of the King, dripping with blood and accompanied by the inscriptions *Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons* (the call to arms from *La Marseillaise*), and *Matière à réflexion pour les jongleurs couronnés*.[51] The image of the severed head represented simultaneously the cult of the political *head*, as the archetype of the sovereign monarch, on the macrocosmic social level, and the concept of *head* in its anatomical meaning, on the microcosmic level of the human body.[52] Another idea closely linked with the decapitation of the King was the notion of rehabilitation, stemming from the expiation of sins by conjuring up martyrdom. It has been argued that by their sacrifice and by the will of God, Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette have both redeemed through their suffering the sins of all the French. For suffering is the road to martyrdom.[53] From there, there is only one step to the concept of resurrection that captured the public imagination. Indeed, royalist iconography, inspired

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[48] See Gilbert Durand's theory on the archetype of the Hero as a destroyer of dragons. *Les Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (Paris : Bordas, 1969), pp. 181-8.
[49] See Ronald Paulson, 'The Severed Head: The Impact of French Revolutionary Caricatures on England', in *French Caricature and the French Revolution*, pp.55-65 (p.58).
[50] See Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance*, pp.56-7.
[51] See *French Caricature and the French Revolution*, p.194.
[52] See, for more details on the 'schèmes verticalisants', Durand, pp.156-7.

by the Christian canon, inevitably implies the idea of resurrection: the King-martyr is represented still alive, at his last hour, stretching his arm towards the people, paternal and dignified.

The image of the severed head of the King conjures up another celebrated image drawn from that same Greek mythology the revolutionaries revered so much: Medusa's head held up by Perseus, all too familiar from its representation by Leonardo da Vinci, Benvenuto Cellini and many others. Legend holds it that those who saw Medusa's head were petrified. By this act of demonstration of power by public display, or 'la monstration du monstre', the ritual theatre of the guillotine reveals to the audience the true face of the tyrant in his mortuary mask; 'the image fixes the 'petrifying' conclusion of a theatrical rite addressed to anyone who felt 'nostalgic for tyranny''.[54] Did Danton seek to horrify the crowd or was he crying for mercy by saying his last words? We will never know. Whatever the answer, mythical figures had their importance in creating theatricality and recreating the tragic at the time of the Revolution.[55]

There is yet another aspect of the monologue/dialogue reciprocity in radical rhetoric, related to the audiences' interpretation of the spectacle of the guillotine. A set of questions spring to mind when we discuss the radicals' monologic concern with theatricality and its implications on visual representation. I am thinking here of Michael Fried's concepts of 'absorption'and 'theatricality', which he used to describe the relationship between representation and beholder in the interpretation of French eighteenth-century painting.[56] At a time when French artists and art critics were preoccupied with the attempt to escape 'the theatricalizing consequences of the beholder's presence' in painting and in drama,[57] we might assume that the staging of the spectacle of the scaffold and, even more so, the images representing the act of decapitation and its victims implied a strong monologic statement which nevertheless triggered a dialogic response from the audience. In Michael Fried's account of the painter-beholder relationship, 'absorption', which emerges in French painting as a reaction against the futility of the Rococo, opens up a new dimension between the subject of the

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[53]See Pierre Laguenière, 'Révolution française : théâtralité des héros et des martyrs', in *La Légende de la Révolution : Actes du Colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand sous la réd. de Christian Crosille et Jean Ehrard*, pp.271-77.
[54] This is the gesture of Perseus holding out the head of Medusa to petrify the tyrant Polydectes. See Arasse, *La Guillotine,* pp.144, 202n.
[55] See Pierre Laguenière, p. 275.
[56] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the age of Diderot* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp.4-5.
[57] Ibid., esp. pp.107-160.

representation and the observer, ushering the latter in by allowing them to contemplate the canvas at their ease and even to identify with the object of representation by merging with its surroundings. By contrast, 'theatricality' of representation keeps the observer at a certain distance and 'its temporality becomes asymmetrical with the temporality of viewing'.[58]

In this context, the highly staged spectacle of the guillotine imposed by definition a theatrical, monologic dimension upon the audiences, yet the spectacular effect was constructed on the protagonists' sufferings and the victims appeared in a state of deep absorption. Indeed, the tragic circumstances of the moment consisted in the victims' awareness of the public's attention and in their attempt to overcome their distress and preserve their dignity. The imminence of death, the ultimate agony on the one side and the festive anticipation on the other, generated a clash, a peculiar discrepancy and a violent tension, hence dialogue, between the observer, awaiting the spectacular, and the observed, deeply absorbed in their meditation.

The macabre nature of the visual representations of the severed head in its monologic/dialogic dimensions still haunts the imagination of the French today and those linked with the Revolution are part of this imaginary. For, the revolutionary Terror, with the moral implications of which intellectuals, historians and writers are still wrestling, leaves us perplexed by the ultimate mystery of the epoch: that of death, conquered by the promise of regeneration. The menippea, implicit in this death/regeneration or decrowning/crowning diptych, draws, from a Bakhtinian perspective, on classical mythology, the symbolic, the macabre, on mystical-religious elements and on crude naturalism,[59] and it is perhaps the most dramatic idea justifying the Terror. As Susan Dunn has forcefully pointed out, the Jacobins' theory of social change and renewal, which justified the regicide, 'made political murder the necessary means for political progress'. That same idea 'would later be used in the twentieth century to justify the violence and repression of totalitarian regimes'.[60]

As discussed earlier, Lynn Hunt draws upon one of Freud's famous texts (*Totem and Taboo*, 1913) to illuminate the execution of the King through the collective political

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[58] On this subject, see also Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, pp.45-50: '[T]he figures of spectacle are seen to exist in an incremental moment at which they reveal all of their beauty, power, or suffering, whereas the viewer exists in a time that is prolonged, extended, his eye probing slowly, unhurriedly, ruminatively; and the painting which allows too great a disparity to arise between these two kinds of temporality risks cleavage – it will be found too hot, too explosive.'

[59] See *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetic,* p.115.

[60] See Susan Dunn, p.4.

unconscious of the French at the time of the Revolution. In Hunt's reading of the rhetoric of the Revolution, this political unconscious was 'structured by narratives of family relations' and the French 'in a sense did wish to get free from the political parents of whom they had developed a low opinion, but they did not imagine replacing them with others who were of a higher social standing'. The revolutionaries' family romances were not 'neurotic reactions to disappointment – as in Freud's formulation – but creative efforts to reimagine the political world, to imagine a polity unhinged from patriarchal authority.' Thus, the execution of the King (the ritual killing of the father by his sons), 'the first great act of sacrifice', marks the transition from one order, based on paternal authority (the Old Regime), to a new, democratic order, based upon fraternity. The family and the figure of the father are desacralized. By killing/ eating the father, the sons (the people) accomplished their identification with him. As Lynn Hunt wrote, '[i]n Freud's interpretation of the murder of the father, the sense of guilt felt by the band of brothers "can only be allayed by the solidarity of all the participants".' Regicide was not an act of cannibalism as it was ritualized. Only by eating the King could the people become sovereigns themselves.[61]

Indeed, we could ask, from a message/reception perspective, to what extent the crowd really shared the feelings of those who organised the regicide. After the royal execution, France was to undergo the enforced dechristianization campaign of Year II (September 1793-August 1794). It was also a question of a true dechristianization,[62] in the sense that the decapitation happened at a time when the attitudes of the French evolved, when the philosophical trends and the criticism of the Enlightenment crossed their paths with pre-romantic mysticism, combined with the doctrines of sentimentalism, at a time when Christianism, far from being extinguished, would reappear in an even more exalted manner, at the very time when Robespierre intended to eradicate inequality and to impose grand and noble principles by means of dictatorship and terror. How did the crowd, whose political maturity was still far removed from the new ideals of the epoch, perceive the execution of the sacred figure of the King?

When narrating the royal decapitation in the presence of eighty thousand armed men who shouted with joy and some of which ran towards the scaffold at the sight of blood, Sebastien Mercier draws attention to the ritual aspects of the event:

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[61] See Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance*, pp.xiii –16, 58-60. Freud's quotation is from p.58.
[62] See Michel Vovelle, *Religion et Révolution : la déchristianisation de l'an II* (Paris : Hachette, 1976).

> Son sang coule; c'est à qui y trempera le bout de son doigt, une plume, un morceau de papier ; l'un le goûte, et dit : Il est bougrement salé ! Un bourreau, sur le bord de l'échafaud, vend et distribue les petits paquets de ses cheveux [...] chacun emporte un petit fragment de ses vêtements ou un vestige sanglant de cette scène tragique. J'ai vu défiler tout le peuple se tenant sous le bras, riant, causant familièrement, comme lorsqu'on revient d'une fête.[63]

Of course, such commentaries on the King's death reflect the beholder's own political attitudes towards royalty, revolution, death penalty, and moral issues surrounding the decapitation. Through the different descriptions found in contemporary documents, political propaganda merges with the legend of the Revolution refracted through the prism of republican or royalist interpretation. Even Jules Michelet glorified the spectacle of the scaffold in his 'History of the French Revolution': 'Sa mort fut une espèce de fête. [...] Charrettes, bancs, échafaudages, tout se préparait pour faciliter cet agréable spectacle. La place devint un théâtre.'[64]

I discussed earlier the extraordinary fascination of the crowd for the hideous in mass gatherings. When exploring the entertainment world of the Parisian marketplace in the pre-revolutionary period of the eighteenth century and its carnival atmosphere, 'unified by derisive laughter at the world outside', Robert Isherwood pointed out its important dimensions in French culture and the weight of its tradition. Throughout the century, as in the past, crowds were attracted by curiosities like acrobats, funambulists, exotic animals and animal fights, optical magic, new *automates* and machines, and fair audiences watched with fascination people with deformities, exhibited for entertainment.[65] Although popular festive tradition was banned from the Revolution, there are many examples of how objects of historical hatred offered to the public have served as means of release.

Public cruelty and the public's passion for blood spectacles had their roots in the practices of the *Ancien Régime*. During the first years of the Revolution, it 'exploded' as a 'spontaneous and grotesque popular violence', a violence to which the Terror was intended to substitute a 'cold and empty death'.[66]

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[63] Quoted by Catherine Lafarge, 'L'anti-fête chez Mercier', in Ehrard et Viallaneix, p.512.

[64] As quoted by Arasse, *La Guillotine et l'imaginaire de la Terreur,* p.111.

[65] See Robert M. Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.3-8, 36-55.

[66] Thus, Bertier de Sauvigny and Joseph François Foulon were both murdered by crowds in the summer of 1789: 'After Foulon, who was accused of complicity in a plot to starve the population, was decapitated by the crowd that had 'arrested' him, his mouth was stuffed with hay and his head was mounted on a pike that was carried through the streets. The trunk of his body was pulled along behind, until nothing was left but a bloody pulp. Along the parade route, the crowd presented the head to his son-in-law, Bertier de Sauvigny,who was in turn mutilated, with his head and heart mounted on pikes and paraded through the streets'. See James Schmidt, 'Cabbage Heads and Gulps of Water: Hegel on the Terror', in *Political Theory*, 26 (1998), 4-32 (pp. 12-15).

The festive scene around the scaffold much resembled a fair or a fair theatre. The crowds flocked for the spectacle, followed by street vendors, farceurs, funambulists and marionettists, who all contributed to the social familiarity incited by an open, public space. The guillotine became the principal backdrop and the leading actor of a spectacle in an open-air theatre, a drama of the highest order that all could understand, a 'hypnotic attraction in the great squares of Paris' inspiring both revulsion and fascination, a 'mass for the masses [which] offered the certainty of a blood sacrifice and the promise of collective redemption'. The spectacle was free and it made any other theatrical spectacle on the Parisian stages seem pale by comparison. The great actor Talma of the Théâtre de la République in the Palais-Royal was often present among the spectators, together with his colleagues.[67]

While *la sainte Guillotine* was the awesome leading lady in a gruesome morality play, the other leading actor in this 'collective ritual' was the people. As discussed earlier, from attentive spectators, on some occasions they became active participants in the spectacle. Such was the obsession of the eighteenth century with theatricality that life in actuality competed with life on stage. In his description of 'the revolutionary play that unfolded in Paris', Evreinov, the man who was in charge of the greatest open-air revolutionary pageantry in the Soviet Union, recreating the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks in Saint Petersburg, pointed out that the 'Great Revolution was as much theatrical as political. Only those succeeded who had an artistic temperament and a sense of timing'. In his view,

> The First revolution changed only the *mise-en-scène* and changed the roles... Having established a purely theatrical equality, the first thing to be concerned with was costume: the painter David sketched the costume of the "free citizen", the actor Talma tried it on in the theatre, and the people approved it and adopted it. The wigs were burned, the back of the neck was cut short, and people began to greet one another with a spasmodic nod of the head, imitating those who were guillotined.[68]

Indeed, as James Billington wrote, '[t]he revolution's "passion for theatricality" extended even to the bodies of the decapitated victims, as "people played with them, sang to them,

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[67] After its inauguration in the Place de Grève, the guillotine was moved in August 1792 to the Place du Carrousel, where it stood in front of the royal palace. From April 1793 it was on permanent public display and in May it was transferred into Place Louis XV. It remained there until the end of the Terror. See James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men*, p. 47.
[68] Quoted by Billington, p. 48.

danced, laughed, and greatly amused themselves with the awkward appearance of these actors who so poorly played their 'funny' roles".[69]

It is evident from the above that in the spectacle of the guillotine, monologue and dialogue were inextricably linked. Real transgression and imagined transgression, real violence and its representation were often indistinct in the response of the audience, at the foot of the scaffold or in echoing real events. Indeed, transgression is an intrinsic part of carnival, and carnival in its Menippean dimension was present in every kind of radical transgression during the Revolution. For the symbolic was always present, rooted in the very principles of the reforms and of the new civic religion, and it was the very reason for the ultimate transgression of deliberately and legitimately taking human lives. In their quest for a new order, the men of the Idea collided with 'evil, depravity, baseness, and vulgarity in their most extreme expression', deposited in their enemies.[70] Like in popular carnival on the public square, in which the primary carnivalistic act is the ritual '*mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king*', epitomizing '*the pathos of shifts and changes, of death and renewal*', the symbolic crowning of the Republic through its institution, following the symbolic discrowning of the King through his real death, united the most noble of intentions and the ultimate atrocity of the public decapitation. By the same token, they united the Bakhtinian carnivalistic categories of change and crisis, blessing and curse, praise and abuse, and birth and renewal through death.[71]

In the official programmes of the radicals during the Terror, the severing of the head, for all its spectacular and didactic features, could not be perceived as a festival. It was a ritual of political punishment.[72] However, far from instituting the execution on the guillotine as a civic festival, the revolutionaries deliberately insisted on its didactic purposes and used it to confirm and reinforce what had been announced at the Assembly. Thus, in the audience's response the spectacle of the guillotine often worked as a didactic festival, but also as a theatre for the masses and popular entertainment.

The revolutionary civic festival officially glorified virtue and banished violence. Yet, as Mona Ozouf wrote,

[69] Ibid.
[70] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* p.115.
[71] Ibid., pp. 124-5,126-7.In his description of carnival, Bakhtin distinguishes between carnival crowning / decrowning, in which the symbols of authority are 'two-levelled' in meaning, and the non-carnival world, in which the real symbols of power are 'single-levelled, heavy, and monolithically serious'.
[72] See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, pp. 51-3.

> plus sûrement encore que les codes de participation à la fête, la guillotine fonctionne comme ce qui
> tranche entre le vice et la vertu. La violence révolutionnaire apparaît alors non comme ce qui
> pervertit la fête utopique, mais comme ce qui l'accpmplit.[73]

It could be claimed therefore, as Arrasse put it, that the spectacle of the severed head was 'la plus courue et la plus régulière des fêtes révolutionnaires'.[74]

In radical rhetoric, the ritual of the severed head as a political act embodied the monologue/dialogue dichotomy, confronting the rules of the Terror and carnivalized laughter through a peculiar dialogic relationship between the Old and the New. In the spectacle of the scaffold, Death and Rebirth were inextricably linked: on the one hand, epic monologue imposed single truths; and on the other, carnivalistic dialogue enabled transgression and menippean laughter. Thus, by transgressing the monarchic power, the ritual of the scaffold reduced regicide to a commonplace event. By desacralizing the King, it resacralized the Republic. In this peculiar monologue/dialogue interaction, the political spectacle of the severed head under the Terror represented a founding sacrifice, a transfer of sovereignty.

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[73] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire,* p.20.
[74] See Arasse, *La guillotine,* p.114.

Chapter Five. Monologue, dialogue and intertextuality in revolutionary meaning

On voit que l'histoire est une galerie de tableaux où il y a peu d'originaux et beaucoup de copies.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien régime et la Révolution*[1]

D'après Bakhtine les dialogues socratiques se caractérisent par une opposition
au monologisme officiel, prétendant posséder la vérité toute faite.
La vérité ('le sens') socratique résulte des rapports dialogiques des locuteurs;
elle est corrélationnelle et son relativisme se manifeste par l'autonomie des points de vue des observateurs.
Son art est l'art de l'articulation du fantasme, de la corrélation des signes.

Julia Kristeva[2]

There can be neither a first nor a last meaning; it always exists among other meanings
as a link in the chain of meaning, which in its totality is the only thing that can be real.
In historical life, this chain continues infinitely,
and therefore each individual link in it is renewed again and again,
as though it were being reborn.

M. M. Bakhtin[3]

There was another context in which monologue and dialogue coexisted and interacted in the radicals' re-writing of the past while re-inventing the present: namely the relationship between innovation and tradition, or the interplay between the revolutionaries' determination to transform by creating a new epic and the counteracting vitality of the old forms that continued to play an important role in radical imagery. A number of signs and symbols belonging to the past were in this way mobilised for the purpose of the revolutionary enterprise.

As I argued in Chapter Two, the new 'epic' of the revolutionaries could be identified with monologism in the storytelling of the radicals. Indeed, the revolutionaries firmly believed in modelling the people's minds and, consequently, they purposefully created powerful propaganda tools in order to achieve a complete reversal of cultural values and symbols. The new cultural forms, the new signs and symbols invested with special meaning, were intended to abolish the insignia of the *Ancien Régime* and it was hoped that they would be imprinted in the audiences' imagination. A particularly striking

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[1] Page 97.
[2] Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine; le mot, le dialogue et le roman', p.456.
[3] See 'From Notes made in 1970-71', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, p.146.

example of this is the republican civic calendar, adopted in October 1793, which replaced the Catholic Gregorian calendar as part of the radicals' de-christianisation campaign.[4]

In this chapter I want to illustrate that although the rhetoric of the revolutionaries was monologic by intent, in their aim of achieving a clean break with the past and inventing a radically new iconography, a new language, a new system of values, indeed a whole new epic, their rhetoric was at the same time dialogic in content, in the sense that they were borrowing extensively from the cultural forms of the *Ancien Regime*. A dialogue with the past is evident in a number of rhetorical devices that the revolutionaries believed were their own invention. Indeed, the coinage of signs and symbols inevitably carries the retrospective burden of history. No symbol ever loses completely its original meaning. Thus, in their attempt to innovate, the revolutionaries ended up reproducing that which had already been created by previous generations. Consequently, a number of 'new' republican symbols were derived from the *Ancien Regime*'s iconography, or may indeed have been modelled on it. My attention will therefore be focused on another aspect of Bakhtin's dialogism. The key here will be dialogue through intertextuality.[5]

As Bakhtin wrote in his 'characteristics of genre':

> A literary genre, by its very nature, reflects the most stable, 'eternal' tendencies in literature's development. Always preserved in a genre are undying elements of the *archaic*. True, these archaic elements are preserved in it only thanks to their constant *renewal*, which is to say, their contemporization. A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously. Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre. This constitutes the life of the genre. Therefore even the archaic elements preserved in a genre are not dead but eternally alive; that is, archaic elements are capable of renewing themselves. A genre lives in the present, but always *remembers* its past, its beginning. Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development. Precisely for this reason genre is capable of guaranteeing the *unity* and *uninterrupted continuity* of this development. For the correct understanding of a genre, therefore, it is necessary to return to its sources.[6]

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[4] See Marvin Carlson, *The Theatre of the French Revolution*, p.208n: 'The Republican Calendar, which replaced the Gregorian calendar in France, was decreed on 24 November 1793, but antedated to begin from 22 September 1792, the day on which the Republic had been proclaimed. Thus, Year II of the Republic began on 22 September 1793. The new calendar consisted of 12 months each of 30 days, with each month being divided into 3 decades (or periods of 10 days), instead of the 7-day weeks of the Gregorian calendar. This gave a year of 360 days. In addition there were 5 supplementary days (6 in a leap year) known by the name of sans-culottides and observed on public holidays. The Revolutionary Calendar was discontinued with effect from 1 January 1806.'

[5] I discussed earlier the term of 'intertextuality' (see Chapter One, p.47, note 116; Chapter Two, p.77, note 113), which was originally introduced by Juila Kristeva in her presentation of Bakhtin as another term for Bakhtin's 'dialogism', denoting the relation of every utterance to other utterances. See Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhaïl Bakhtine: le principe dialogique*, p. 95. Kristeva officially introduced the term 'intertextuality' in *La Révolution du langage poétique*. See the 'Introduction' to Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p.15

This passage provides a good starting point for my argument. In it, the concept of 'contemporization' of old forms through their 'constant renewal' may be read as yet another expression of intertextuality: the New engages in a dialogue with the Old and, broadly speaking, they merge together in endless combinations of meaning. Thus, in the following pages, I shall talk about rupture, but also about continuity. I shall argue, following Bakhtin, that to a large extent, the new revolutionary insignia *remembered* their past. Bakhtin's commentary is about literary theory, yet it can be applied without difficulty to any aspect of the broader field of cultural studies. For Bakhtin wrote himself that 'dialogic relationships in the broad sense are also possible among different intelligent phenomena, provided that these phenomena are expressed in some *semiotic* material. Dialogic relationships are possible, for example, among images belonging to different art forms.'[7]

Indeed, in the Revolution such dialogic relationships were evident among all the media through which the new ideas were propagated. We have already seen how political ideas were synonymous with political pedagogy, how revolutionary propaganda mobilized the theatre and the fine arts, patriotic songs and political caricature, the speeches at the Assembly and the press, indeed every sphere of cultural life, in the huge project to educate the masses. These civic festivals were in their own right an impressive political project with didactic purposes, which had to disseminate the new symbolism through image and sound. As I argued earlier, the expressive dimensions of art were used as a political weapon, and images, broadly defined, carried an overt political message. Imposing statues of Liberty replaced the old royal insignia, and new civic goddesses supplanted the old sacred statuary; Liberty trees proliferated by the hundreds across the country, satirical songs were adapted to old religious tunes, and the red Phrygian bonnet became inseparable from the new citizen's costume. During the 'Cultural Revolution in Year II',[8] the new 'epic' of the radicals was imposed upon all aspects of cultural life, with the specific objective of effacing all which remained from the 'vulgar era' of the eighteen past centuries, and introducing with hindsight the new era from the birth of the Republic on 22 September 1792. Through its project to reinvent the world anew, the Revolution was inventing itself the image of an Origin. But to what extent did revolutionary art really reject tradition? Was it indeed a real beginning, or it was, on the contrary, as many have

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[6] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* p. 106.
[7] Ibid., p.185.
[8] See Serge Bianchi, *La Révolution culturelle de l'An II : Elites et peuple (1789-1799).*

argued, a mere imitation of the past?[9] Where did the revolutionaries seek inspiration for their project?

The immediate answer is mainly in the past, with its double model of the Athenian democracy – in that Ancient Greece, of which Michelet would later extol the civic festivals[10] – and the Roman republic. As Mona Ozouf wrote, 'c'est avec des images de chars, d'athlètes, de concours gymniques, de palmes et de couronnes, que l'homme des Lumières franchit la rampe de la Révolution.'[11] But inspiration was also sought in the present – in the turmoil of everyday events through which, day by day, new history was being written – and in the future, which bore the utopian model of the ideal city and the promise of a better life. Thus, by operating in a Janus-like way, towards the future and towards the past, tradition reveals its ambivalent nature, or 'double-voicedness', to use Bakhtin's term.[12] First, there is the moment of rupture, providing a glimpse into the future. Yet it is precisely tradition, which gives the momentum to the dynamic charge, that posits the original meaning of 'revolution': namely the endless going back to the origins, which brings about progress.[13]

Moreover, dialogue in radical discourse reveals itself through yet another perspective: that new dimension of temporality in the relationship between the present and the past, or the future and the past. One might even infer a relationship between the present merged with the future in the revolutionaries' 'adventure plot', on the one hand, and the past associated with the 'aristocratic plot', on the other, where the former is represented by the 'people', and the latter, by the 'enemies of the people'. The dialogic relationship between the present and the past is also manifest in that constant re-writing of the history of the Revolution by the radicals, in search of its true founding moment; indeed in the new epic they were creating about themselves they constructed a heroic present, allowing themselves the chance to remove themselves from their own time and to recast future time through the past. Viewed from a different angle, dialogue between the present and the past in the revolutionaries' epic was implicit in the act of unmasking and denouncing the enemies, for if the 'aristocratic plot' were left unmasked and undestroyed, the past represented a real threat for the present and the future of France.

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[9] See Yves-Marie Bercé, *Fête et révolte : Des mentalités populaires du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris : Hachette, 1976), p. 89.
[10] See Jules Michelet, *Le Banquet : Papiers intimes* (Paris : Calmann Levy, 1879), p.216.
[11] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire*, p. 12.
[12] The 'double-voiced', as opposed to 'single-voiced discourses'. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p.189.
[13] As discussed in Chapter One. On 'the meanings the French gave to the term "revolution" before 1789', see Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, pp.204-223.

A further fascinating aspect of the dialogue/monologue dichotomy springs from the potentially unlimited opposition between the two sets of symbols, which informed the discourse of the 'aristocratic plot' and complemented each other, as discussed in Chapter Two: the ever present and invisible 'enemies' were in fact indispensable for the existence of the patriots; the latter constituted themselves as a reaction against that hidden force, secretly manipulated by the 'aristocrats'. In this sense, the trials and the executions of the King and the Queen were full of multiple layers of meaning, among which a prevailing one is the dialogic opposition of virtue and vice, where the virtuous present and future were opposed to the evil of the past impersonated by the royal couple. Indeed, the present – past dichotomy is explicit in many aspects of the revolutionary propaganda in parliamentary speeches, in caricature, in theatre and songs, and to a large extent in the civic festivals, which embodied the revolutionary spirit and the orderly utopian future of the new citizen as opposed to the Old Regime.

In the revolutionary civic festival, Classical Antiquity already offered its model of a republic, celebrated by processions, triumphal arches and colossal statues – a model associated with the myth of the ideal, but also with the ideas of the Enlightenment, in particular the Rousseauian ideal of the return to Mother Nature. The festivals' purpose in the republic, as Rousseau saw it, was to express the people's sensibility and to teach them to live united and in love.[14] Thus, the didactic civic festivals celebrated the glory of the French people yet were inspired by the models of Classical Antiquity.

With its fascination for simplicity, archetypal beauty, and order, neoclassicism had gradually become the predominant style in architecture and painting from the middle of the eighteenth century. This art of ideals and principles was a reaction against the Rococo style but it served another purpose. For the neoclassical doctrine perfectly suited the revolutionary ideals and indeed, one of the Revolution's most remarkable cultural architects, and perhaps the main choreographer of the official civic festivals, David, was neoclassicism's main representative in France. The neoclassical artist preferred allegory and symbols, the mythological to the real, as mythological figures exemplified archetypes that raised the individual to 'superhuman ideality'.[15]

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[14] In Rousseau's *Lettre à d'Alembert.* See Ehrard et Viallaneix, p.74. As discussed in Chapter Two, *Robespierre* insisted that the most magnificent of all spectacles was the spectacle of an assembled people. '[R]éveiller les sentiments généreux qui font le charme et l'ornement de la vie humaine, l'enthousiasme de la liberté , l'amour de la patrie, le respect de la loi', such were the aims of the festival. See 'Discours sur les rapports des idées religieuses et morales avec les principes républicains, et sur les fêtes nationales', 18 Floréal An II, in *Oeuvres de Maximilen Robespierre*, éd. Marc Bouloiseau and Albert Soboul, 10 vols, X: *Discours*, pp.458-9.
[15] See Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*, p.81.

In such a way, the culture of the *Ancien Régime* survived to a large extent in the revolutionary festival. The legendary and allegorical figures, and the props and the costumes of the dynastic ballets reappeared, although invested with a new meaning. Thus there is a visible continuity, which characterises the transition from the *Ancien Régime* to the Revolution on the artistic level. Authors are unanimous in mentioning the vitality of the neoclassical movement in France, which survived until the beginnings of the July monarchy. Indeed, neoclassical art was itself a reworking of the past, and neoclassical statuary was a favourite rhetorical tool in republican symbolism as part of the programme for regenerating the nation. The urban festival was abundant with architectural features and a realistic architectural style replaced the marvellous of the baroque theatre of the second half of the eighteenth century.[16] Similarly, in the village festival, a number of borrowings from the past appear through various forms of popular tradition like the maypoles transformed into Liberty trees, and the Phrygian bonnets, which started emerging as part of the 'joyful entries' in the course of 1790 and the beginning of 1791. [17]

Tradition and innovation were inextricably linked in the revolutionary festival. Indeed, the historical permanence of many centuries could not so easily be effaced under the monologic frame of radical rule or even during the whole decade of rapid revolutionary transformation. At the eve of the Revolution, festivals, which were deeply anchored in the psyche of the people, still 'meant the formalization of leisure, the ritualization of instincts, the perpetuation of ancient customs. They were not simply the notorious wild play of Carnival but an elaborate symbolic ritual.'[18] Thus, in the following pages I shall try to show how a number of newly coined revolutionary symbols, which entered rapidly everyday life – and are even part of the French political culture of today – were actually only the fruit of political innovation, not invention, as they had already been anchored in popular tradition; they were simply borrowed from the iconography of the past. In fact the new, monologic, epic rhetoric of the revolutionaries was to a large extent based on classical or folkloric tradition. It was dialogically blended, in what Bakhtin called 'double-voiced discourse', [19] to create a new culture and a new meaning to suit the new political aims of the revolutionaries (and 'the Crowd').

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[16] See Daniel Rabreau, 'Architecture et fêtes dans la nouvelle Rome', in Ehrard et Viallaneix, pp.355-375.
[17] See Michel Vovelle, *La Métamorphose de la fête en Provence de 1750 à 1820* (Paris: Aubier/Flammarion, 1976), p.105.
[18] See Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution*, p.49.
[19] I am thinking here of Bakhtin's term 'stylization' as an expression of 'double-voiced discourse'. In stylization, 'the author may also make use of someone else's discourse for his own purposes, by inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has, and which retains, an intention of its own.' Thus,

The 'new citizen' came into contact with most of the new revolutionary symbols in the civic festivals. In the organisers' minds, these orchestrated gatherings were indeed a successful medium for imprinting their ideals in the audience's perceptions. For public festivals and ritual gatherings remain an important form through which customs and beliefs can be transmitted symbolically from one generation to the next. They are a 'perennial structure of culture' and, I argue, demonstrate how hard it is to break cleanly and categorically with the past. For example, at the time of the revolutionary prohibition of popular festivals, the Fête Dieu – a traditional Catholic festival that had honoured the Blessed Sacrament since the fourteenth century – was still being celebrated throughout France. As Emmet Kennedy wrote:

> The Revolution was more of an interruption in the cycle (The Fêtes Dieu *were* suppressed during the Terror) than an obliteration of popular festivals. The Revolution's attempt to moralize forms of diversion gave way to the more traditional and spontaneous Bacchic festival, which reappeared explosively between 1801 and 1803 and lasted beyond mid-century. In 1832 in Paris, Carnival was celebrated after an outbreak of cholera with 182 public balls and 874 private balls. The same themes of egalitarianism that had levelled and the old social distinctions reappeared.[...].The Revolution had altered rather than abolished the old hierarchy. Carnival could survive because the conditions that caused it had largely survived. [20]

So, dialogic tradition fought against the new epic of the radicals through historical permanence. This peculiar dialectics, which united tradition and innovation in the festival could be linked to Bakhtin's words on the 'archaic elements' which are 'capable of renewing themselves', and the 'genre' which 'lives in the present, but always *remembers* its past, its beginning'. We might infer that tradition is sustained above all in the aptitude of any social formation to set itself up as a divinity, like the primitive societies described by Durkheim. For this aptitude found its ultimate expression under the Revolution.[21]

We could, then, speak of a peculiar form of continuity. Indeed, whatever name a given society may choose for its divinities, the system of beliefs would follow the same or similar codes. The Republic of the Classical Antiquity, the Old Regime, and every form of government thereafter has used the festival to consolidate their power. From the primitive

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stylization 'forces another person's referential (artistically referential) intention to serve its own purposes, that is, its new intentions'. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 189.

[20] See Emmet Kennedy, pp.49-50.

[21] See Emile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1925), pp. 305-6: 'Cette aptitude de la société de s'ériger en dieu ou à créer des dieux ne fut nulle part plus visible que pendant les premières années de la Révolution. A ce moment, en effet, sous l'influence de l'enthousiasme général, des choses, purement laïques par nature, furent transformées par l'opinion publique en choses sacrées: c'est la Patrie, la Liberté, la Raison. Une religion tendit elle-même à s'établir qui avait son dogme, ses symboles, ses autels et ses fêtes. C'est à ces aspirations spontanées que le culte de la Raison et de l'Être suprême essaya d'apporter une sorte de satisfaction officielle.'

societies to the twentieth century totalitarian regimes, the festival and its insignia have played an important role. Yet it is here that the innovation resides. It is embedded in the multitude of archetypes amalgamated together, in the cunning blending of ideas, which give birth to new forms enriched with unexpected features and signs. For if one insists on tracing a festival's borrowings, one should start from the festival itself, as festivals have existed since the beginning of human time. The concept of festival is itself anchored in tradition. This is why the 'new' festival the revolutionaries were seeking to invent as part of their new 'epic', was often moulded following the established religious or civic patterns. Such was the contradiction that opposed the monologic desire of a rupture with the past to the dialogic links with that same past. For we well know that every beginning bears elements of its own end. After all, apart from *a complete overthrow of an established social order,* 'revolution' means *a cyclic recurrence of an event, going back to the origins and a new beginning.*[22]

Bakhtin expressed a similar idea with his notion of dialogic continuity:

> No artistic genre ever nullifies or replaces old ones. But at the same time each fundamentally and significantly new genre, once it arrives, exerts influence on the entire circle of old genres: the new genre makes the old ones, so to speak, more conscious; it forces them to better perceive their own possibilities and boundaries, that is, to overcome their own *naiveté.* [...] The effect of new genres on old ones in most cases promotes their renewal and enrichment.[23]

In the above lines, Bakhtin once again explores the concept of memory, the impossibility of new-ness, and the circular movement of progress. Or, to put it slightly differently, he comments on the dialogue between the present and the past. And again, his commentary can be extended to broader perspectives. In it, the Old is perpetuated through the New, for every form of novelty draws, in some way, on the experience accumulated by previous generations. Moreover, the New remodels and enriches the Old through its own creativity.[24]

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[22] From the Latin 'Revolutio': 'Retour au point de départ', *Littré* , 1872.

[23] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* p.271.

[24] We should add to the above, in a slightly different context, yet still in the framework of the dialogue with the past, that to Bakhtin, dialectics in its Hegelian meaning, as the Russian Bolsheviks understood it in their constant seeking inspiration in the French Revolution, was monologic rather than dialogic. As Caryl Emerson pointed out in the 'Editor's Preface' to Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (p.xxxii),'Bakhtin was not sympathetic to the ultimate fusion or erasing of differences. He had little use for grand nineteenth-century schemes of philosophical evolution toward a disembodied truth. [...] Bakhtin's "dialogic" does not mean "dialectic"; his universe owes much more to Kant than to Hegel'. We read in his 'Notes from 1970-71' the following lines: 'Dialogue and dialectics. Take a dialogue and remove the voices... remove the intonations... carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness – and that's how you get dialectics.'

In their desire for novelty, the organisers of the Revolutionary festival were widely criticized for their extensive borrowings.[25] It is true that a spirit of syncretism ruled over a multitude of symbols, which drew on antiquity and popular tradition, on Freemasonry and Christian iconography, mixing statues, obelisks, pyramids and Liberty trees. Yet there was something new and unique in them, which has to be due to the creativity of the moment. Michelet has expressed this in his enthusiastic manner in the descriptions of the Federations of July 1790.[26]

Even at the early stages of the Revolution, the Festival of the Federation, which was inspired also by the festivals of the American Independence, is a perfect example of this will to emulate the grandeur of the republican festivals of Greco-Roman antiquity. Indeed, a number of features were borrowed from the Ancients: the staging and the architectural design, recreating the circus of antiquity; the amphitheatre, which was to frame the spectacle and to ensure a good view for everyone; the 'sharing of emotions'; the altars, even the presence of the monarch at his throne, like emperor Trajan surrounded by his people. Thus, in writing their new epic, the revolutionaries were dialogically transposing the values of the Ancient world to the present time. Yet it was all supposed to be about a new festival, unrivalled in human history, as it was the first to stage a spectacle, whose magnificent object was a nation celebrating its newly acquired sovereignty.[27]

Thus, despite their desire for novelty, the organisers drew on the repertory of the past. Indeed, the festival *remembered* its past. Of course it should be said that the recourse to antiquity was deliberate, as the Republic willingly mirrored itself in its ancient image.[28] Yet from the Parisian model to its numerous provincial duplications, the triumphal arches recall the official festivals of the Ancien Régime: the statues of Liberty are draped like Greek goddesses; and these new symbols seem familiar, at least to the learned observer. But precisely because they seem familiar, they become easily imprinted in the collective

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[25] See Mona Ozouf, *Festivals,* pp.27-30, 271-8.

[26] *Le Banquet*, p.197: 'Quand des millions d'hommes essayèrent comme a tâtons le symbole de la foi nouvelle, peu, très peu s'expliquaient qu'ils fondaient une religion, et la plupart ignoraient qu'en leur inspiration naïve quelque chose revenait pourtant aux précurseurs de la révolution, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, même à ses lointains prophètes du XVIe siècle et des temps plus reculés. Ce grand peuple se trouva, ce jour du 14 juillet, le dernier des philosophes et le premier des apôtres. De la longue traînée de lumière qu'avaient laissée les premiers, il fit, sans s'en apercevoir, une foudroyante étincelle de flamme électrique, où se rencontra précisément le germe et la conception du monde nouveau'.

[27] See Ehrard et Viallaneix, pp. 131-8.

[28] See the interesting discussion on the various possible reasons of the recourse to antiquity, provided by Mona Ozouf in *La fête*, pp. 327-35.

imagination. Thus, the Masonic level became the symbol of Equality;[29] the fasces were proclaimed the symbol of State authority; the Eye of surveillance was borrowed from Catholic symbolism, but also from Masonic symbolism. The sceptre of Reason served Liberty to strike Ignorance and Fanaticism. All these female images of goddesses, admirably described by Maurice Agulhon, are very similar to each other and can be distinguished only by their particular attributes. They are highly monologic by their belonging to the revolutionary epic, yet intrinsically dialogic by their message and their mixed origins. Thus, Liberty wears the Phrygian bonnet of the liberated slave; Truth holds a mirror, and Agriculture, a bundle of wheat.[30]

If symbolism is inherent in every society, it acquires a peculiar significance in periods of political, social or cultural upheaval, in which new figures and images are born. As far as the revolutionary festivals are concerned, the new symbols played a crucial role in them as they were instrumental in legitimising the new ideas and creating the new mythologies of the Revolution, that new epic the organisers were so eager to bring into being. 'S'il n'y étaient pas, wrote Durkheim, les sentiments sociaux ne pouvaient avoir qu'une existence précaire.'[31] Moreover, Durkheim continued, if the movements by which these sentiments are expressed are connected with something that endures, the sentiments themselves become more durable.[32]Thus, regular festivals were needed so that the symbols could remain forever imprinted in the audiences' minds.

Yet revolutionary symbolism could also be seen as a bearer of transcendent values, where every symbol would be the dialogic expression of tradition and novelty, uniting the revolutionary experience of the individual and the masses. Being by their nature malleable, multifaceted and polysemic, these symbols evolve, enrich themselves, lose parts of their meaning, sometimes even disappear altogether or, by contrast, acquire new significance and give birth to unusual forms.[33] So, which were the symbols most often used by the Revolution and how were they created?

We can find them all at once in the civic festival, as educating the new citizen in the new ideas was its only and main purpose.

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[29] On the triangle, a key symbol for all Masons, and also an omnipresent key symbol in revolutionary iconography, epitomised by the revolutionary trilogy Liberty-Equality-Fraternity and by the revolutionary tricolor, see James Billington, *Fire in the Minds of Men,* pp.105-7.
[30] See Maurice Agulhon et Pierre Bonte, *Marianne : Les visages de la République* (Paris : Gallimard, 1992), pp.15-16.
[31] Emile Durkheim, p. 320.
[32] Ibid., p.321.
[33] See Elizabeth Liris, 'La Révolution française à la recherche de son propre symbolisme', in Jean Croisille et Jean Ehrard, éd., *La Légende de la Révolution,* pp. 161-170 (p.162).

The Liberty tree, present in all the festivals, decorated with tricolour cockades and red bonnets, is one of the most common symbols of all cultures and all ages. A sovereign attribute of Rousseau-esque life, invested with more symbolic and pedagogic meaning than a decorative one, it is linked with the aspiration to freedom.

The archetypal tree of Gilbert Durand, which is the 'arbre de vie', the 'arbre - colonne', is linked to the myths of vegetation and the Christian Crucifix, and is often associated with an artificial tree. Far from being a simple symbol of vegetation, it is filled with multiple layers of meaning. The tree's messianic and rebellious characteristics are deposited in its cyclic optimism, in its ascending verticality, in its mythical links with the fire 'hidden' inside the wood, but also with man, through the peculiar 'métamorphose à rebours' represented by stone or wooden human figures.[34]

As to the Liberty tree itself, it originated from the ancient custom of the maypole. Its ancestry has been traced to the ancient rural customs of Provence. It has been associated with the peasant tradition to invoke fertility.[35] It has been also linked with Freemasonry. According to Michel Vovelle, during the revolutionary years it became, together with the Patriotic altar, a centrepiece of the festival in the public square.[36] In her detailed reading of the symbolic erection of the maypole – from the numerous varieties of the *mai sauvage* as the 'rebellious' and 'riotous' tree, frequently emerging in scenes of popular violence and replacing the weathercocks and the pews removed from the churches (thus carnivalesque, and dialogic), to the peaceful (but monologic) Unity, Equality, and Fraternity Trees as variations of the revolutionary Liberty Tree –, Mona Ozouf demonstrates how, in her view, Revolutionary symbolism might be articulated on peasant tradition.[37] Born out of insurrection and scenes of violence, the maypole of the early years was a sign that violence had come to an end and symbolically guaranteed that with the passing of the old order, the new order would remain in place.[38] The Liberty tree, a transition between the maypole of folklore and the tree made official by the Revolution, was erected at the juncture of tradition and innovation. It replaced and was indeed seen by the revolutionaries themselves as a substitute for the abolished Christian cross (as recorded in a number of documents) and was used as a didactic rhetorical tool to

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[34] See Gilbert Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Bordas, 1969), pp. 378-80; 391-9.
[35] See Serge Bianchi, *La révolution culturelle de l'an II: Elites et peuple 1789 - 1799*, p. 75.
[36] Michel Vovelle, *Métamorphoses de la fête en Provence*, p. 179.
[37] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête*, pp. 281-315.
[38] Ibid., p. 294 : 'Il couronne les excès, mais en leur donnant un coup d'arrêt et garantit symboliquement que le vieil ordre changé, il ne faut plus que change le nouveau.'

consolidate the new ideas. It was a 'pedagogical tree', a 'witness', commemorating the end of the Ancien Régime abuse and Liberty reconquered.[39] The setting up of a maypole as an inaugural festive gesture was performed for the first time during the American Revolution, in Philadelphia.[40]

A number of theories have been advanced to interpret the creation of this revolutionary symbol in France. In any case, it is certain that there was imitation of the past. Gregoire, for example, recognised the links between the Liberty tree and the maypole, to which he attributed 'la possibilité d'exprimer des réalités historiques très variées.' To him, the maypole had declined under despotism, only to be regenerated when transferred from 'Angleterre aux rives de la Delaware; là il retrouva sa dignité primitive et les *may-poles* redevinrent, dans chaque commune, les signes de ralliement de citoyens'.[41] Yet, as Mona Ozouf suggested, beyond all these reasons, there is 'un recours à un verdict populaire intemporel, à une manière de spontanéité transcendantale'.[42] The types of trees varied from one region to another – they were pines in the South and oaks in the central parts of France. In 1793, when the symbol was already well established, there were nearly sixty thousand Liberty, Unity and Fraternity trees throughout the country.[43]

Topped almost inevitably by the red cap and decorated with the tricolour cockade – thus gaining by association of ideas the attribute of Liberty – the tree is invested with a triple function: it cumulates the ideas of the new religion and freedom, while reaffirming its links with nature and popular tradition. It was present in all festivals without exception, and is considered to have been a most cherished of Revolutionary symbols. Thus, the Liberty tree, which epitomised to the highest level the revolutionary idea, reveals itself as profoundly dialogical through its history, its carnivalesque connotations from the riotous festivals in the first years of the Revolution, and its deep roots in popular tradition.

Another celebrated revolutionary symbol was the sacred mountain. It is frequently represented in the contemporary engravings of the Festival of the Supreme Being on the Champ de Mars, and is always dominated by the Liberty tree. This revolutionary symbol was also present at the Festival of Reason – celebrated seven months before the Festival of the Supreme Being, on 20 brumaire (10 November 1793) – when a plaster mountain

[39] See *La fête*, pp. 294-316.
[40] Ehrahd et Viallaneix, p.295.
[41] Quoted by Mona Ozouf, *La Fête*, p. 297.
[42] Ibid.
[43] See Serge Bianchi, *La Révolution culturelle*, p.75.

was erected inside Notre-Dame as a pedestal to the goddess of Reason.[44] Yet the mountain was not a revolutionary invention. It has been described among Gilbert Durand's archetypes as a symbol of the eternal aspiration of mankind towards the sublime. Just as in the ancient civilisations the pyramids and the funeral tumuli were dedicated to the cult of the Sky, in Chinese culture the mountain symbolized the idea of sunshine and flowing air. It is also associated with the solar cult of the god Belin – the Celtic Apollo –, and with Saint-Michael in Christianity.[45] According to Bachelard, even the tiniest hill could be a source of inspiration for those who nourish their dreams from Mother Nature.[46]

Often associated with the Liberty Tree, another highly malleable, thus dialogic symbol, used in the monological epic of radical iconography as the antipode of kingship, is inevitably present in the revolutionary festival: namely the goddess of Liberty, which reincarnated through her manifold faces the Goddess Mother – the most ancient and the richest of the archetypes described by Gilbert Durand. Here we meet the ancient Greco-Latin tradition of the allegory, long ago codified by Western culture for its usage in the arts, and representing the highest abstract values by the visual symbol of a woman's body. Allegories were widely used by the revolutionaries. Often, during the festivals staged around the statue of Liberty, a young woman was carried as a living allegory in a carnival-like manner. The meaning of Liberty, whose image first appeared in July 1789 on a seal of the municipality of Paris, evolved over the first years of the Revolution. It became also the symbol of Equality and Unity and indeed, of most revolutionary virtues and qualities. It was associated with Minerva. It reappeared in the festivals of Year II as the goddess of Reason and, after the abolition of monarchy in 1792, it merged with the representation of the French Republic, substituting itself to the Tyrant King.[47] Thus, the paternal authority of absolutism is dialogically transferred to the maternal authority of the Republic, represented by the people.

Intertextuality in radical rhetoric finds its ultimate expression in the creation of yet another republican symbol, borrowed from the past: the image of Hercules embodying the people's strength. With Liberty as the conquest of the sovereign, the people also needed a

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[44] Mona Ozouf has found evidence in texts, written well before the Montagnards episode, expressing unambiguously the purpose of the mountain: 'la proximité du ciel'. See *La fête,* p.161.
[45] See Gilbert Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, pp. 138-144.
[46] As quoted by Gilbert Durand, *Les structures,* p. 142.
[47] See Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat: l'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1789 à 1880.* See also Elisabeth Liris, 'La Révolution française à la recherche de son propre symbolisme', in Christian Croisille et Jean Ehrard, *La Légende de la Révolution,* pp.161-171.

new face. Yet as symbols were being coined and evolved day by day, one could assume that the political moment of radical rule under the Terror demanded some kind of transposition of values, a shift towards austerity, leading to the gradual effacement of the feminine and maternal features of Liberty, which gave way to the virile attributes of Hercules as an epitome of the French people. As discussed earlier, in November 1793, David proposed to the Convention to erect on the Pont-Neuf, at the place of Henry IV's statue, a monument, which would stand on top of the debris of the destroyed statues of kings of Notre-Dame, and would represent 'l'image du people géant, le peuple français'. The figure would hold in one hand 'les figures de la Liberté et de l'Egalité, serrées l'une contre l'autre, et prêtes à parcourir le monde, [qui] ne reposent que sur le génie et la vertu du peuple'. David's proposition is quite specific as to his choice of mythological references : the French people will be embodied by Hercules: 'Que cette image du peuple debout tienne dans son autre main cette massue terrible et réelle, dont celle d'Hercule ancien ne fut que le symbole'.[48]

The myth of Hercules had been used during the Ancien Régime as a popular symbol of royal authority and power. In revolutionary mythology, its cumulative virtues stemmed both from its learned origin (the Gallic Hercules) and its figure in folkloric tradition (through its carnivalistic reincarnations). It impersonated the might of the French people, replacing and at the same time embodying and even protecting the image of Liberty. As Lynn Hunt has pointed out:

> Like any powerful symbols, Hercules was multivalent; he transmitted more than one message at once. He could be "popular", fraternal, parricidal, and antifeminist even while he was a transposed and magnified sign of monarchy itself. Hercules reflected Jacobin and radical aspirations; he symbolized the alliance between radical deputies and the popular classes of Paris and served as a weapon in their ideological armory. Hercules could be taken as a barely veiled warning to the educated and as a reminder of the ways in which their world had been transformed by the Revolution. The people, the new, formidable giant, had become king. [...] Yet, what did Hercules mean to the people? The colossus – officially unnamed – was only an enormous giant to the popular classes. The resonance for them was not with the classics or with French history, but with the monsters, heroes, and perhaps even with the saints of popular tales.[49]

Although officially unnamed, the figure of the colossus was easily identifiable by the club he was holding and by his crushing of the Hydra, one of the legendary exploits of the

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[48] I have already discussed David's project in Chapter 2 in connection with the visual as related to the verbal in propaganda. See Judith Schlanger, 'Le peuple au front gravé', in Ehrard et Viallaneix, pp.387-395 (p.387). See Also Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, pp. 94-110. On the Gallery of the destroyed kings in Notre-Dame, see Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History*, pp. 204-6.
[49] Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, pp. 104-5.

hero.[50] Ten days after David's proposition, the Convention voted a new seal of state, on which a giant Hercules was to be the emblem of the radical Republic.[51] The figure of Hercules had already appeared in other projects of David's, namely two columns designed respectively for the festival of the Supreme Being and the festival of Unity and Indivisibility.

Through its various reincarnations, this highly monologic symbol, representing in the radicals' epic the people crushing the Hydra of federalism, is loaded with intertextual meanings by its linkages with the mythological and folkloric traditions, and even by its reversed values connoting the dialogic interplay of the might of the people, as opposed to its association with royal authority in the past. All the more so that the monument proposed by David was to be erected on the debris of the demolished statues of kings from Notre-Dame, and on the very place of Henry IV's statue.

A similar coexistence of monologic/ dialogic symbolic values in radical imagery, loaded with multiple layers of meaning, was deposited in the Statue of Liberty / guillotine diptych. We have already seen that the Liberty/ The Republic, which eventually came to embody the French people, was substituted for the image of the King. This new meaning was reinforced by the fact that for pedagogical reasons, the guillotine was placed opposite the statue of Liberty, which was itself erected on the base of Louis XV's statue in Place de la République; in this way Liberty symbolically witnessed the executions, for, in fact, the political ritual of the scaffold was being accomplished in her name. This singular symbolic presence, by which two of the most famous emblems of the French Revolution were conflated and, at the same time, amalgamated, was creating new meaning, associating Liberty and Death, an image that would haunt revolutionary iconography for years to come.[52] It would transcend the Revolution of 1789 to adopt various forms of self-sacrifice in the name of the revolutionary faith in the ideal of human freedom.[53] Thus, the

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[50] On the Labours of Hercules, see *The Cambridge Encyclopedia*, ed. by David Crystal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990):'[Hercules] undertook twelve Labours for Eurystheus of Argos: (1) to kill the Nemean Lion, (2) to kill the Hydra of Lerna, (3) to capture the Hind of Ceryneia; (4) to capture the Boar of Erymanthus, (5) to clean the Stables of Augeas; (6) to shoot the Birds of Stymphalus, (7) to capture the Cretan Bull, (8) to capture the Horses of Diomedes, (9) to steal the Girdle of the Amazon, (10) to capture the oxen of the giant Geryon, (11) to fetch the Apples of the Hesperides; (12) to capture Cerberus, the guardian of Hades.'

[51] Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, pp. 94-95. See the sketch of Hercules by Dupré, matching the guidelines of the Convention for the new seal of state, on p.95.

[52] See the description of Liberty and the guillotine, on Place de la Révolution, given by the Goncourts in *L'Histoire de la Société française* : 'Sur cette place, autour de la guillotine debout, autour de la Liberté de plâtre, déjà bronzée par la vapeur du sang, des milliers de têtes coiffées de rouge ondulaient comme un champ de coquelicots'. As quoted by Arasse, *La guillotine*, p.113.

[53] See for example the revolutionary engraving *Liberty or Death*, by J.-B. Regnault, an III (1794-95), representing Liberty holding a level and a Phrygian bonnet, on one side, and Death as a skeleton dressed in

monologic epic of the radicals, which elevated political decapitation to a ritual spectacle in the name of the republican ideals, established itself through the dialogic interplay of Liberty and the Guillotine. The guillotine, allegorised by the presence of the statue of Liberty, acquired further evocative associations and, from a machine for public decapitation, transformed itself into a tool for maintaining political power, indeed it became an allegory itself.[54]

But not only through imagery did the past transpire in revolutionary rhetoric. Revolutionary music too was loaded with intertextual meanings. Music was reputed to be one of the most indisputably new features, yet it appears to have been heavily laden with borrowings. I already discussed in Chapter Two how revolutionary songs made their way through popular old tunes. Further, apart from the Masonic song, of which a number of lyrics were reproduced in the revolutionary hymns, the harmonic column was yet another borrowing from Freemasonry. It consisted of grouping several wind instruments, which, at the eve of the Revolution, consisted of two clarinets, two horns and two bassoons. Indeed, in their didactic project, the revolutionaries gave a special importance to the wind instruments.[55]

It has been long recognized that the French Revolution marked a decisive stage in the rise of romanticism in opera. Indeed, as Edward Dent has pointed out, it diverted 'the operatic current from comedy to romance'. The new public, which had arisen, demanded 'opera of a more exciting type'. However, Dent added,

> The plots appear to become suddenly Romantic in our modern sense of the word, but we find that nearly all of them are old stories which have furnished opera plots to the classical age of Scarlatti and Haendel. The difference lies in their presentation, and in the music which clothes them.[56]

In their endeavour to recast time, the revolutionaries did succeed in erasing a number of things that belonged to the past. Indeed, they sought their identity in the radical break with

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black, holding a scythe, on the other, with the spirit of rebellion in the middle in the form of a winged flying angel. Reproduced in Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History*, p. 306.

[54] Similar arrangements were made in Brest and Orange, where the guillotine was placed in front of improvised 'mountains'. See Arasse, *La Guillotine*, p.116.

[55] As Sarrette insisted, in his speech of 30 Brumaire, an II: 'Les fêtes nationales n'ayant et ne pouvant avoir d'autre enceinte que la voûte du ciel, puisque le Souverain, c'est-à-dire le Peuple, ne peut jamais être renfermé dans un espace circonscrit et couvert, et que seul il en est l'objet et le plus grand ornement, les instruments à cordes ne peuvent pas être employés : l'intempérie de l'air s'y oppose d'une manière absolue et la qualité de leur son ne comporte pas d'ailleurs qu'ils soient entendus au loin ; il faut donc préférer et préférer exclusivement les instruments à vent, sur lesquels l'air n'a pas la même influence et dont le volume de son […] est des fois plus considérable'. Quoted by Mona Ozouf, 'Le renouvellement de l'imaginaire', in Ehrard et Viallaneix, *La fête de la Révolution*, pp. 303-22 (pp. 314-15).

[56] See Edward J. Dent, *The Rise of Romantic opera*, p.176.

the past.[57] Some of the rhetorical inventions they introduced did not survive the test of time. Others, however, have remained to the present day. The Civic calendar, for example, marking the beginning of the 'new time', which had to replace the birth of Christ by the founding of the Republic on 21 September 1792, lasted for 10 years, although it did not survive the turmoil of the Revolution.[58] One of the most vehement critics of the Revolution, Jean-François La Harpe, wrote the following on this subject:

> On n'oubliera comment Lebon et presque tous les commissaires dans les départements traitaient les pauvres gens qui osaient s'*endimancher*, qui ne célébraient pas la *décade*. Et puisque nous en sommes à cette fameuse décade, l'une des plus belles inventions du *génie révolutionnaire*, et longtemps l'une de ses plus grandes espérances pour l'extinction du *fanatisme*, on ne peut se dispenser de dire un mot de la *décade*.[...] Je laisse de côté les violences usitées sous le régime *montagnard* et *jacobin* pour forcer le peuple à fêter la *décade* : la tyrannie fut poussée au point que quand les pauvres habitants de la campagne venaient les jours ordinaires de marché, que la décade avait changés, apporter leurs denrées dans les villes, ils étaient chassés outrageusement par les *autorités constituées*, et menacés de la prison et de la confiscation de leurs denrées, s'ils ne revenaient pas au jour marqué par la *décade*, surtout si ce jour était un dimanche, attendu que quiconque observait le dimanche était un *fanatique*.[59]

The substitution of a 'rational' calendar for one based on 'superstition', the introduction of the ten-days week with the *décadi* – the tenth day – as a day of rest, the decimal division of the day, and the use of seasonal names to substitute for the months of the year are only some of many examples of the revolutionaries' inventiveness.[60]

Was the failure of the republican calendar really due to its novelty, which broke with tradition by destroying it? Indeed, the Revolution was more of an interruption than an obliteration of tradition. It seems that the intertextual dimension remained essential. The dialogic link with the past proved to be crucial in those years. For many centuries, festivities and celebrations had been the normal accompaniment to the life of any community and habit played an important role in everyday activities. The revolutionary prohibition of the Catholic calendar and enforcing the Republican one broke habit and the rhythm of popular culture was destroyed. Removing Sunday as a day for resting and worship from the pattern of everyday life was like interrupting the pulse of its existence.

[57] See Mona Ozouf's article 'L'Idée républicaine et l'interprétation du passé national', in *Le Monde*, 19 juin 1998, p.14 : 'C'est dans la brisure avec le temps que les Français ont cherché leur identité républicaine ; à la différence des Américains , ils ne pouvaient pas la demander à la traversée d'un espace.'
[58] The Civic calendar, proposed by Romme and designed by Fabre d'Eglantine, introduced the decimal system, compared to the metric system. It preceded by two weeks the official dechristianization campaign. For more detail, see Serge Bianchi, *La Révolution culturelle,* pp.198-203; Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History,* pp.345-52.
[59] Jean-François de La Harpe, *Du Fanatisme dans la langue révolutionnaire ou De la persécution Suscitée par les Barbares du dix-huitième Siècle contre la Religion Chrétienne et ses Ministres* (A Londres de l'Imprimerie de Baylis, Greville-Street, 1797), p.59.

We have seen that the civic festival borrowed extensively from the past. In fact, the revolutionary festivals emulated Catholic ceremonies, which had largely relied on visual and aural effects. Civic funerals for republican martyrs mirrored religious ceremonies glorifying saints, and 'civic catechisms' in secular schools replaced the religious catechisms of the old regime in the propagation of the new religion. As Emmett Kennedy put it,

> [t]he very similarity of the revolutionary project to the Catholic mission undoubtedly helped their collision. But the differences were only too real; the religion of the Revolution was not simply an inversion of Catholicism, but incorporated Protestant, pagan and libertine elements.[61]

Indeed, the traditional festivals under the Ancien régime, religious or profane, dynastic or popular, were created, granted, supervised and channeled, or even forbidden by the civil and religious authorities.[62] But the revolutionary festivals were so too. The traditional festivals were repetitive and followed established rituals. Improvisation and spontaneity were rarely observed in them. But the same thing could be said about the official instructions given for the civic festival.

Could we speak of a real revolutionary innovation in this case? Or is it simply a matter of eclectic substitution for traditional values and symbols? Michel Vovelle has demonstrated that in Provence, the traditional festival resisted, or sometimes adapted itself to the new conditions of political life.[63] Comparing the revolutionary festival with the urban and rural festivals of the past, he talks about 'temps court' and 'temps long'. If we compared the popular festival, anchored in many centuries of tradition, and the revolutionary festival, which was imposed, 'structured and, apparently more rational', it seems that the latter was less able to survive than the forms it attempted to abolish.[64] Furthermore, Mona Ozouf has demonstrated that the revolutionary festival did not succeed in its 'desperate wish to compete with religion'[65] by staging a civic religious ritual, as Catholicism was not easy to eradicate. 'Par quoi remplacer ce qu'on a abattu, et que substituer au catholicisme?' she asks.[66]

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[60] For a more detailed discussion of the Republican calendar, see Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History*, pp. 345-353

[61] Ibid., p.329.

[62] See on this subject Abel Poitrineau, 'La fête traditionnelle', in Ehrard et Viallaneix, pp.12-13.

[63] *Les métamorphoses de la fête en Provence,* p.102.

[64] Michel Vovelle, *La mentalité révolutionnaire : Société et mentalités sous la Révolution française* (Paris: Messidor/Editions sociales, 1985), p.157.

[65] 'Le désir éperdu de faire aussi bien que la religion.' See *La fête*, p. 324.

> Comment établir la religion nouvelle? A cette question, vrai leitmotiv des assemblées révolutionnaires, la première réponse est donnée par cette imitation qu'a favorisée l'euphorie syncrétique de l'aube révolutionnaire. Remplacer, c'est d'abord imiter. Copier, diront les méchantes gens.[67]

Where then is the true change so much needed for inventing the new revolutionary origin? It lies mainly in the sheer desire to innovate and to replace. But it is also embedded in the new secular religion, the new martyrs, the new symbols, in which allegories and folkloric elements are merged, in the new political power and the new rhetoric, which sustained it. And in the fact that, as Vovelle wrote, the 'grand art', which has become politically committed, has taken to the streets to inspire the staging of the revolutionary festival.[68]

The innovation also emerges from those spontaneous forms, which – as discussed in Chapter Two – appeared in the margin of the official festival, and in which the collective imagination brought about unexpected forms. In these forms, folkloric tradition merged with learned culture. It is from that amalgamation of symbols that the new revolutionary iconography was born, or – as Anita Brookner wrote – from 'the dissolution of Antique symbols in their more Rousseau-esque medium of emblems and significance: virtue, old age and virginity are symbols sufficient unto themselves.'[69]

We have already seen how the revolutionaries were consciously imitating the Greco-Roman Antiquity. They were inspired by ancient values and so glorified republican virtues. When Robespierre exclaimed 'On ne parle jamais sans enthousiasme des fêtes nationales de la Grèce',[70] he expressed not only

> une nostalgie d'esthète, ni même le besoin moral de peupler de grands exemples une mémoire qui s'en est vidée. C'est aussi, surtout, dans un monde où se décolorent les valeurs chrétiennes, le besoin du sacré. Une société qui s'institue doit sacraliser le fait même de l'institution [...]. Là est la clef de la paradoxale victoire que la Révoluion donne aux Anciens sur les Modernes. [...] L'Antiquité [...] a un privilège absolu, car elle est pensée comme commencement absolu. C'est une figure de rupture et non de continuité, et la ferveur qu'elle suscite n'en est pas diminuée mais relancée.'[71]

Indeed, there was more than sheer imitation of the forms of the *Ancien Régime* in the message of the Revolution. We could speak instead of an ultimate form of emulation – a current practice in those times –, which animated the works of a number of illustrious artists. This is how the Revolution materialized in the minds of its contemporaries. And

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[66] Ibid., p. 323.
[67] Ibid.
[68] *La mentalité révolutionnaire*, p.15
[69] Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1980), p.104.
[70] From his speech of 18 Floréal Year II (May 1794), quoted in Chapter 2. *Oeuvres*, X, p.458.

this is how the dialectics of tradition and innovation revealed itself. Emulating symbols and forms as links, which are being reborn infinitely in historical life's 'chain of meaning', as Bakhtin wrote, and 'which in its totality is the only thing that can be real'.[72] Artistic genres are often intertwined. Human creativity can be unlimited, yet it constantly evolves around certain fundamental ideas. Is it then so strange that the revolutionaries chose to adopt the Greco-Roman tradition within the greater tradition of emulation, and to appropriate the attributes of a goddess, which was able to appeal to the masses and to embody the Republican virtues?

Thus, the festival emulated the festivals of Greece and of Rome, but at the same time, as Bakhtin wrote, it enriched itself with new distinctive features. There was indeed an amazing syncretism in the fusion of old symbols that were supposed to be a novelty. The ancient goddesses, crowned with laurels and appropriated by the revolutionaries for their new beginnings, were also bearing the red bonnet, which conjured up ancient Phrygia to the elites, but to the masses was evocative of the popular insurrections in Brittany.[73] This highly dialogical symbol would herald a new, purely French political imagery: a republican iconography, in which the triptych Liberty-Republic-France would reign through the multiple representations of Marianne, whose face would change many times over the two centuries from the Seal of the First Republic to its latest media reincarnations, but would always symbolise the indomitable revolutionary spirit. As to the tricolour cockade, the royal white between the colours of Paris, which became a compulsory decoration under the Revolution, it would give the French their national flag, and the banner of revolt for decades to come.

The bare-breasted Marianne brandishing the French flag in Delacroix's famous painting, *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (1831), is an evocative example of this dialogic exchange between past and present ideas, of this sort of intertextual 'chain of meaning', in which symbols and forms are being emulated and reborn infinitely as the 'links' Bakhtin wrote about; of this transcendent substance, which is the artist's inspiration, and of the fact that the revolutionary idea and the striving for liberty are perpetuated despite frontiers and time. To the uninitiated beholder, Delacroix's painting, which has become iconic by dint of being reproduced by the thousands, embodies through the astonishing allegory of Liberty, purely and simply the French Revolution, and only a few associate it directly with

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[71] See Mona Ozouf, *La fête,* p.332-3.

[72] See the excerpt at the beginning of this chapter.

[73] On the Bonnets Rouges of Brittany in 1675, see Serge Bianchi, *La révolution culturelle,* p.138. The red Phrygian cap as a revolutionary symbol was officially introduced in 1792.

July 1830. Yet it has been demonstrated by research involving Delacroix's work and his private correspondence, that when composing his painting, the artist had drawn inspiration not from 'Les Trois Glorieuses', but from images already created during the Greek war of independence, the same bloody events in which an entire people desperately fought for freedom, and in which Lord Byron met his death. A number of unpublished studies, sketches, and drawings by Delacroix, inspired by Greece's struggle against the Turks, throw light on *La Liberté guidant le peuple*'s genesis and show that in Delacroix's imagination a long maturing project had merged with the revolutionary events he witnessed in France, giving birth to a painting which, reaching far beyond its subject, has become the epitome of 'revolution' on a strictly pictorial level and which, more than a century and a half after its creation, still generates feelings of communicable exaltation.[74]

I have already discussed the complex dialogic / monologic interplay embedded in another major revolutionary symbol – the guillotine. By its spectacular staging, the execution at the scaffold pertains both to a theatrical spectacle and to a political act, to a revolutionary festival and to a civic religious ritual. Although it was not a French invention, the guillotine has become one of the hallmarks of the French Revolution, one of its most vastly circulated stereotypes. Its macabre connotations have been gradually obliterated as, being the instrument of regicide and the founding act of the Republic, the guillotine was also and most of all the ultimate expression of the people's will, whence its sacredness.

Thus, it could be said that in radical symbolism, dialogue and monologue meet, or rather that dialogic tensions weaken, even destroy the monologism of the revolutionaries' new 'epic' in the intertextual context of the present versus the past. As Bakhtin wrote,

> The weakening or destruction of a monologic context occurs only when there is a coming together of two utterances equally and directly oriented toward a referential object. Two discourses equally and directly oriented toward a referential object within the limits of a single context cannot exist side by side without intersecting dialogically, regardless of whether they confirm, mutually supplement, or (conversely) contradict one another, or find themselves in some other dialogic relationship (that of question and answer, for example). Two equally weighted discourses on one and the same theme, once having come together, must inevitably orient themselves to one another. Two embodied meanings cannot lie side by side like two objects – they must come into inner contact; that is, they must enter into a semantic bond. [75]

Related to the above is another interesting case of innovation, intertextuality and, at the same time, monologue/ dialogue interplay in radical rhetoric, which stems from the

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[74] See Lola Faillant-Dumas et Jean-Paul Rioux, *La Liberté guidant le peuple de Delacroix* (Paris : Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1982), pp.5-8.

processes of naming/renaming, coining new words and concepts, and investing old words and concepts with new meaning as a favourite practice of the revolutionaries. Set in a monologic context and indeed monologic by intent, such words and concepts often generated various interpretations. This depended on the period of the revolution in which the words and concepts were brought about, on their acceptance or rejection by the audience, and on the connotations they were loaded with, which allowed for two and even more separate and often conflicting, literal or figurative meanings to coexist in the same word/ concept. Thus, the word *fanatisme* was used in radical discourse to designate Catholicism.[76] *Terreur* was first used by Danton and, later, by Robespierre, as a punishment for those who lacked virtue. *Ennemi, aristocrate, lanterne* and many, many other words acquired connotations and expressivity far removed from their original meaning.[77]

There are numerous examples of imitation and emulation of the past in radical revolutionary rhetoric. We need only look at neo-classicism, promoted in the revolutionary years by David, which as a style, by definition, imitated the art of the past. Yet the relationship between tradition and modernity were governed by a complex interplay. On the one hand, the radicals deliberately banned the past, but the past remerged through tradition. On the other hand, they turned for inspiration to the ideals of Greco-Roman antiquity, but inspiration and artistic desire combated tradition and thus created new forms, which were to stay as the acquisitions of the Revolution. Indeed, the term 'revolution', itself highly monologic and nonetheless dialogic at the same time, is loaded with intertextuality. For, we shall say it again, before gaining its modern meaning, 'revolution' primarily described a circular movement of an object around another, a regular recurrence of a point or period of time. This is a term connoting drastic or radical change, innovation, transformation, but also representing the recurrence of events, anniversaries, monotonous repetition and all the figurative charge of the cyclic rotation, all the significance of the returning to the past yet pointing towards the future. Imitation in art, whether intentional or not, is intrinsic to the revolutionary motion, for, as Norman Bryson has claimed, art history's method is 'vigilantly retrospective', pointing 'backwards from a given work to its predecessors', but its interpretation is 'insistently forward-looking, or proleptic'. Art history, he continues,

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[75]See *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp.188-9.
[76] See for example David's ' fils ingrats et fanatiques', 'des hommes égarés par le fanatisme', etc. in his speech on a civic festival held on 23 June 1793 on the Champs Elysées, quoted by Anita Brookner, p.107-8.

expands considerable effort on the discovery of sources, and when it has located a source it will probably go on to examine the ways in which the source is adapted to later use; but its temporal perspective is committed primarily to ideas of fulfilment or entelechy: it is for the predecessor to sow the seed, and for his successor to reap the harvest.[78]

Indeed, the question of tradition in art is multifaceted. By definition, tradition is monologic, although by drawing dialogically on ready-made patterns and by approaching tradition critically, great artists have created innovative styles. In his impressive analysis of the everlasting opposition between the power of tradition and the desire for innovation, Bryson pointed out that

[t]he myth of the peaceful transmission of the schema [the inherited formula] through time may open up consoling vistas of tradition and its continuities, yet in practice a schema may be dislodged and made to function in a new way only by transgression of the earlier work.[79]

Thus, the breaking of tradition is, in Bryson's terms, a battle between the artist and the past: it is 'both *around* and *within* himself', a 'necessary iconoclasm' and 'an intrinsic condition of the forward movement'.[80]

Norman Bryson offers a fascinating exploration of the burden of tradition and the fight to overcome it in the work of David. Yet it appears that there was much more in David's revolutionary paintings than a simple rupture or deviation from his previous creation, which resulted in taking a 'populist vision as their context'.[81] David indeed departed from neoclassicism[82] when he created his realist and politically committed

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[77] For a full list of the new words and concepts, born in the revolutionary turmoil, see Jacques Cellard, *Ah, ça ira, ça ira.*

[78] See Norman Bryson, *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, pp.1-2.

[79] Ibid., p.19

[80] Ibid., pp. 15, 19.

[81] Ibid., p.96. See for example the following lines: 'During the Revolution things had been otherwise : painting had been guided by events. In the case of David himself tradition has ceased to be an obvious preoccupation. The *Tennis Court Oath*, *Lepelletier*, *Bara* and the *Marat assassiné* had taken populist vision as their context, through alliance with the print and the Revolutionary pageant. We know from the historians, and from the documents themselves, that the period from *Lepelletier* (spring 1793) to *Marat* (summer 1794) had been one of a generalised visual paranoia in Paris; material life is saturated with dangerous significance.'

[82] See Bryson's commentary on neo-classicism: 'A style which defines itself by restoration, Neo-classicism perceives acutely its late coming in time: "We come after, the era of the titans is past, and to absolve ourselves from our late arrival we will move back in time, so that the past is made contemporary with ourselves, and again we may begin." Yet the solution to belatedness offered in the restorationist project places the painter in a double-bind: to begin, he must turn back into the past, yet in turning back he has yielded to the expropriative force that will take away all beginnings. Neo-classical style constantly risks the loss of inaugural power, and from the first its productions reveal the invasion of the ancestors, not as superego, but as id: in taking away the right to censor or mask the predecessors' work through creative deformation, Neo-classicism erases the boundary between the classical impersonality it seeks and the automatism of serial or repeated forms which in practice it sets in motion.' Ibid., p.29.

portraits of revolutionary martyrs, and modernity is discernible mainly through a transgression of the schema of his earlier work. Yet in those portraits, emptied of all remembered contents, and where he has risen above his usual neo-classical representations inspired by Antiquity, the real innovation lies mainly in the artist's political commitment, in his pedagogic task to transmit new perceptions to the viewer and to educate them in the new republican ideals.

So strong was this commitment to impose the new revolutionary epic that David, as one of its main architects, was anxious to avoid any undesirable ambiguities in the audiences' response. I already discussed in Chapter Two David's project to label different parts of his giant statue of Hercules, in order to facilitate the decoding of his idea. Thus, the inscription of *Light* would adorn the colossus' forehead, *Nature* and *Truth* its breast, and *Strength* its hands. Similarly, when presenting his painting of the dead revolutionary martyr Michel Lepelletier de Saint-Fargeau to the Convention on 29 March 1793, David was very specific about how his work should be interpreted, so that it could achieve its pedagogical aims. He gave the example of an old father explaining the painting to his children[83] and advised that special attention should be drawn to the serene features of a hero who has died for his country, to the suspended sword, to his wound and to the crown, which could be explained as the immortality with which the fatherland gratifies its children.[84]

Whether the paintings in question were really successful at the time when they were produced is another question. Their legacy resides in their stylistic novelty. But even in David's early neo-classical works, which are heavily dependent on sources and recall the works of his precursors, those sources and the styles related to them are, as Norman Bryson has pointed out, retraced, juxtaposed and refashioned, beyond what is easily recognizable by the viewer from previous knowledge in mythology, history and history of art, in an ingenious 'ironic contextualisation'. Thus, tradition is not simply followed or continued by being accepted uncritically. In a complex and playful dialogical interaction with his precursors' works, and beneath 'the guise of restoration', David imperceptibly voids tradition. Moreover, by an ironical 'subduing of the force of the past', David shows

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[83] This immediately calls to mind Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Un père de famille qui lit la Bible à ses enfants*. See Michael Fried's analysis of this canvas as an illustration for 'absorption' in *Absorption and Theatricality*, pp. 8-13.

[84] ' Voyez-vous cette plaie profonde? Vous pleurez, mes enfans, vous détournez les yeux! Mais aussi, faites attention à cette couronne ; c'est celle de l'immortalité ; la patrie la tient prête pour chacun de ses enfants ; sachez la mériter ; les occasions ne manquent point aux grandes âmes'. For a fuller version of this quotation and a detailed analysis of David's original painting, later destroyed by Lepelletier's daughter, see Anita Brookner, *Jacques-Louis David*, pp.110-112. See also James Leath, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda,* p.107.

a 'genius for rationalisation and subterfuge'. Indeed, he dialogically creates the term *rococo* by distancing himself from it and by 'watching the condensation of a vernacular idiom into a historical style, discovering a discursive boundary', before his artistic evolution reaches a 'stylistic revolution' in the powerful *The Oath of the Horatii,* whose irruptive force has purged the antique style and returned the live model.[85] In *The Oath of the Tennis Court,* David recreates the revolutionary founding moment, the mythic present, in a truly public canvas. Yet it is the juxtaposition of public and private in his political paintings, the 'elision of the boundaries' separating the sacred from the profane, which is thought to be his real innovation, 'one of the most fascinating stylistic accomplishments of the Revolution'.[86] In *Marat* and *Lepelletier,* David has invented the civic icon and loaded it with political content. His portraits of revolutionary martyrs are charged with the idea that the ultimate sacrifice is to give one's life for the Republic. As Anita Brookner wrote, in David's tributes to the dead Marat and Lepelletier, there is

> no intimation of palm and crown, of saintly attributes and otherworldly recompense. Death is perceived as an existential experience, unexpected, improvised, unrehearsed; there are no signs of the world to come. The dechristianization of France, decreed by the National Convention, may have added a new dimension to man's perception of his least manageable act. Gone too is the control that operated in the pseudo-Stoic deaths of Seneca and Socrates. As David understood, in 1793, dying is a bewildering and profound experience. If it seems barely within man's own competence, nevertheless this is how it must be.[87]

From a rhetorical point of view, the 'revolutionary martyrs' canvasses (*Marat, Lepelletier, Bara* and *Viala*) are highly monological, as David espouses tradition even in the sense that they are 'overtly religious', 'instinctively read as an icon, an Ecce Homo, a Pietà, or Deposition'.[88] These works are pure propaganda as they are filled with political content. They are all tributes to the secular hero who has died for his fatherland, a model for the new citizen. Yet again from a rhetorical or discursive point of view, the manner in which David has presented his 'martyrs' canvasses reveals them as highly dialogical in the sense that they establish a relationship with the observer, by allowing them to participate. Indeed they open a dialogue between the painting and the viewer. Encompassing the real and the transcendental, they are in themselves highly rhetorical structures of narrative, depicting the sublimity of four republican heroes, as if absorbed in

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[85] See Bryson, pp.31, 33, and especially his discussion of David's *Mars and Minerva* and *Antiochus and Stratonice,* pp.35-40, as well as his comments on the 'stylistic revolution' in *The Oath of the Horatii,* pp.63-82.
[86] Anita Brookner, p.112
[87] Ibid.

their eternal sleep, and thus participating in the creation of the new revolutionary epic for generations to follow. There is nothing heroic or grandly pathetic in these paintings. The theme of the martyr is taken up with the aim of conveying the feeling of an immense and irreparable loss. I am referring here to what Michael Fried has described as 'absorption' in French eighteenth-century tradition in painting, a method, which was also used by David in his work.[89] Thus, tradition and innovation appear once again as inextricably linked in an intricate interplay of monologue and dialogue.

To conclude, despite the radicals' desire to break with the past and to create a new and unique rhetoric by subordinating every aspect of it to the republican epic, and by obliterating the past, the weight of the past interfered with their project. In other words, the monologic forces of the new order were weakened by the voices of habit and tradition, which participated in the creation of new meaning.[90] As Bakhtin also wrote, '[t]he text lives only by coming into contact with another text (with context). Only at the point of this contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to dialogue'.[91] Still, the failure of the revolutionaries' enterprise to overcome the past does not represent a failure in the elusive task of creating a new rhetoric. For, however ambivalent the new symbols, however ridiculed and criticised the new rhetoric in its uniqueness, they have indeed become the hallmark of the French Revolution. Tradition might be present in radical revolutionary rhetoric, yet it is inextricably linked with innovation. In the years of radical rule tradition in rhetoric was, so to speak, revolutionized, conceptualized and perpetuated through the new forms.

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[88] The young Joseph Bara was killed in 1793 in Vendée, as a soldier in the Republican army; Joseph Agricola Viala, another young hero, was killed in a battle against the Royalists on the Durance, in 1793.
[89] See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality*. On the concern with absorption in French painting in the eighteenth century, and especially with the theme of sleep 'as an absorptive condition' in its own right, as well as 'sleep-related states and activities', see pp.7–70. On *Marat*, see p.240n. On David's experimentation in 'absorption', especially in *Antiochus and Stratonice* and in *St Roch*, see Norman Bryson, pp.50-54.
[90] See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 188-9.
[91] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, pp.159-172 (p.162).

Conclusion

There is neither a first word nor a last word. The contexts of dialogue are without limit.
They extend into the deepest past and the most distant future.
Even meanings born in dialogues of the remotest past will never be finally grasped once and for all,
for they will always be renewed in later dialogue.
At any present moment of the dialogue there are great masses of forgotten meanings, but these will be
recalled again at a given moment in the dialogue's later course when it will be given new life.
For nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will some day have its homecoming festival.

Mikhail Bakhtin,[92]

Despite the weight of hundreds of volumes of debate on the French Revolution, scholarly dialogue on the revolutionary legacy is still open. As Keith Baker and Steven Kaplan wrote in an overview of the new approaches and concerns in revolutionary historiography that consider the changing political realities in our modern world, 'the field of enquiry is now more open, more fluid, more exciting than it has been for many decades'.[93] Indeed, this reflects the tensions and contradictions surrounding the long years of passionate debates over the Revolution's political significance and its bicentennial commemoration, affected, among other events, by the decline of Marxism and communism in France and on a global scale, by the emergence of the new Cultural history, and not least by the new ideological, gendered and discursive approaches, which have come to replace the social ones. Thus, a number of fundamental assumptions about the Revolution itself and its interpretation have changed.[94]

Historical interpretation itself, I have argued, is rhetorical as it depends on the point of view, which, in the case of the Revolution, is often related to the different waves of political thought in France or on a world-wide scale, and furthermore spans over more than two hundred turbulent years. As Bakhtin himself wrote, when discussing the 'chronotopicity of artistic thinking', 'a point of view is chronotopic, that is, it includes both the spatial and temporal aspects', as well as 'the chronotope of the depicted event,

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[92] Quoted in Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, p.350. I have chosen this translation, as I believe that it gives a more faithful reflection of Bakhtin's ideas than Vern W. McGee's. This was probably the last thing Bakhtin wrote before his death. See *Speech Genres*, p.170. See also the 'Introduction', pp.ix-xxiii, esp. p.xi.
[93] See 'Editors Introduction' to Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, pp. xi-xix (p.xvii).
[94] Ibid., pp.xiii-xix.

the chronotope of the narrator and the chronotope of the author (the ultimate authorial instance)'.[95]

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to explore examples of the revolutionary rhetorical production from yet another angle: the complex monologic and dialogic interrelations that governed radical rhetoric in the first five years of the French Revolution. The monologic principle was brought about by the revolutionaries' desire to construct a completely new world and to introduce single truths which were, to their beliefs, the only principles that would ensure a universal well being. Yet in teaching and preaching their ideals, thus operating the monologic centripetal forces in discourse which tend to unify and to control, the radicals also activated the coexisting centrifugal forces and, in reality, practised dialogue.

Radical rhetoric was monologic by intent. The revolutionaries aimed at destroying the recent past and building a radiant future. In order to do that, they invented themselves a new founding moment, and constructed a new, revolutionary epic. They practiced verbal, visual and physical violence. Within their powerful propaganda, they mobilised parliamentary eloquence, the civic festivals, theatrical representation and the fine arts. They even institutionalised public punishment with the guillotine. In other words, they attempted to 'monologize' the audiences' consciousness.[96]

By contrast, in the way it worked, radical rhetoric was dialogic by content. Even at the height of the Terror, dialogue was ever present. For, as Bakhtin wrote, true monologue is impossible.

Dialogue worked through the potentially unlimited opposition between the 'aristocratic plot' and the 'regenerated people'; it was contained in the transgression of monarchical power in the ritual of the scaffold, in the political concepts of Death and Rebirth, and the symbolic transfer of sacrality from the beheaded King to the Nation. But dialogue was also manifest in the creation of new, revolutionary meaning through the intertextual relationships in symbolic production; through satire and parody in the visual arts and in revolutionary songs; through the menippea of radical theatrical representation; through the carnivalistic practices in the parallel festival, which was itself dialogically echoing the Parisian model in the provinces in often unexpected ways; through the audience's response to the spectacle of the guillotine, as well as the cultural re-enactment of the monarch's execution. Ultimately, dialogue lived through the interaction of the

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[95] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'From Notes made in 1970-71', in *Speech Genres*, pp.132-158 (p.134).
[96] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences', in *Speech Genres*, p.163.

present and the past in the creation of the new revolutionary symbols, but also in the entire revolutionary project, for the revolutionaries sought inspiration in the distant past of Classical antiquity yet constructed their epic story for the generations to come. In other words, dialogue was embedded in the interplay of the desire for transformation and historical permanence. Thus, in their attempt to unify and control the people, the revolutionaries triggered dialogue.

They banished the past, but the past was embedded in the present. They invented a new time, but tradition was stronger and eventually won the battle. We have seen how, in a monologic frame, multifaceted dialogic relationships were activated on different levels of radical rhetoric. And the meaning of the symbols of the Revolution, which have survived to the present day, is self-perpetuating within the frame of 'great time', one of the concepts that had preoccupied Bakhtin since his youth and to which he returned again in the last years before his death. By 'great time', Bakhtin meant that 'mutual understanding of centuries and millennia, of peoples, nations, and cultures', which 'provides a complex unity of all humanity, all human cultures' and on the level of which 'each image must be understood and evaluated'.[97] For him, this is where 'all utterances are linked to all others, both those of the primordial past and those of the furthest reach of the future'.[98]

This brings us back to the 'semantic depths' that hold the key to endless new interpretations. Just as 'antiquity itself did not know the antiquity that we know now',[99] the revolutionaries could not have the wisdom of hindsight. Yet they were consciously creating their monologic story, in an effort to impose their example on posterity. In writing their new epic, they indeed achieved this goal: just as they were rediscovering the Ancients in their quest of a new polity, the 'semantic depths that lie embedded'[100] in the culture of the Revolution give us, from the temporal distance of our modern perspective, endless opportunities for new dialogic interpretations.

Probably remaining as the Revolution's greatest legacy are the three timeless ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. How do we interpret them in the 'small time' of our present globalised world, against 'great time', that 'mutual understanding of centuries and milennia, of peoples, nations, and cultures [which] provides a complex unity of all

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[97] Ibid., pp.159-170 (p.167).
[98] See 'Introduction' to *Speech Genres*, p.xxi.
[99] See the excerpt at the beginning of Chapter 1.
[100] Ibid.

humanity, all human cultures'?[101] Despite the masses of meanings, which these three ideals have accumulated over the centuries, humankind will always reinvent them and always be in their pursuit; they evolve through the ages, but are ultimately unattainable, forever locked in the struggle between monologue and dialogue.

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[101] See Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences', in *Speech Genres*, pp.167-9.

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