The making of a revolutionary journalist: Jean-Paul Marat (1770–90)

Nigel Ritchie
Queen Mary, University of London
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Abstract

This thesis provides the first comprehensive account of the philosophical and political formation of Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793) as a revolutionary journalist, drawing from his extensive pre-revolutionary career to provide a framework for understanding his first year as a pamphleteer and editor of the *Ami du peuple*. While the French Revolution may have captivated imaginations for the past two centuries, the same cannot be said of Marat who has traditionally been seen as the epitome of excess. I argue, instead, for a re-evaluation of a neglected Enlightenment figure whose motives, intentions and intellect have often been devalued, and whose significance during the first year of the Revolution has been widely underestimated.

Drawing upon an extensive range of sources, including some new archive material, I demonstrate that a detailed knowledge of the variety of Marat’s pre-revolutionary careers and influences, in particular, his religious, medical and scientific backgrounds, and close connection with the theoretical and practical traditions of English extra-parliamentary politics, is vital for a proper understanding of his revolutionary strategies. I argue for the importance of interpreting Marat’s intellectual output between 1770 and 1790 as a coherent body of work that should be assessed within the context of its production rather than through the distorting lens of his later notoriety, and reveal that his political radicalism was evident long before any setbacks to his scientific career.

Finally, I show how many of the roots of the *légende noire* that has bedevilled critical assessment of Marat can be traced back to the earliest months of his revolutionary involvement, and a smear campaign calculated to neutralize his credibility as an uncompromising critic of the new regime. In this regard, it seeks to move past the reductionist, psychological interpretation of Marat’s behaviour, which has tended to predominate in the scholarship.
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Introduction

Why Marat?

Aristocrates et démagogues, feuillants et patriots, royalistes et républicains... tout le monde a voulu parler de Marat... chacun se l’est figuré d’après soi-même... Il est résulté de cette complication de traits, sous lesquels on cherche Marat, non pas un portrait, mais une défiguration complète; non pas un dessin, mais un barbouillage; non pas Marat, mais une multitude de personnages contradictoires...¹

These opening lines from a pamphlet published by the ex-playwright and deputy Fabré d’Eglantine, five months after the death of the revolutionary journalist-politician Jean-Paul Marat, capture a longstanding problem in Marat’s historiography. Who was he? What did he do? And how has this “barbouillage”, blurred further by his subsequent, generally negative portrayal, affected our understanding of his revolutionary and pre-revolutionary careers? While the wider historiography has moved on in significant ways since the 1989 bicentenary, providing promising grounds for constructing new approaches, the general attitude towards Marat appears to be stuck in a retrospective groove despite the best efforts of biographers and specialists to push the field forwards.² Part of the problem is that most accounts of Marat’s revolutionary participation have focused on his political involvement during 1792–93 – following election to the Convention – at the expense of what came before, thus distorting our understanding of his character, his ideas and his wider significance within the Revolution. Such a top-heavy emphasis on what he became, rather than what he was, has had a detrimental effect on providing a fair account of his pre-revolutionary formation or linking these two periods of his life in a meaningful way.

This is important because when the Revolution began, Marat was forty-six, and therefore one of the older, and more experienced, figures. A closer look at his earlier medical and scientific careers reveals an unusually interesting and well-educated Enlightenment figure with substantial intellectual range, whose self-confessed “amour de la gloire”, or need for recognition, became transformed after 1789 into a highly distinctive form of political journalism. Consideration of his early career is particularly important, for his publications and correspondance often reveal an antagonistic way of participating in debates, embroiling him in controversy. It also highlights someone who

reflected deeply on issues and absorbed the implications of political discourse from late eighteenth-century England, where he lived for ten years, applying many of these ideas to his own critiques: an exposé of the many subtle manifestations of contemporary ‘despotism’, and a progressive plan for legal (and social) reform. While it is fortunate that Marat was a profligate self-publisher, and much of this work is relatively easy to access, there is a marked lack of more personal material, such as correspondence, which makes it hard to establish a synthetic (or even, sympathetic) portrait. What remains, however, including brief biographical notes dotted throughout his texts, cast light on a powerful sense of self-regard, self-promotion and personal destiny, and reveals someone far more complex than the conceited, and slightly unhinged ‘demagogue’ of received wisdom. A better understanding of his early career also helps to explain how readily Marat was able to seize the opportunities provided by the lifting of censorship and consequent proliferation of printed media during 1789–90, which gave him access to the public sphere. Initially, he addressed the elite through pamphleteering, and when that failed to provoke a response, he switched his attention to the wider public through the vehicle of his Ami du peuple newspaper, and associated writings. In fact, a closer reading of Marat’s journalism during this first year reveals significant continuity with his earlier work, as well as new tactical developments in response to the changing political environment.

Divided into two parts – pre-1789 and 1789–90 – the first part (chapters 1-2) highlights the importance of Marat’s pre-revolutionary formation by focusing on his distinctive training as a theological student, physician and experimental scientist, his long stay in England, and the corpus of medical, scientific, political and legal publications that reveal a coherent body of thought underpinned by a keen philosophical and historical sensibility. At the same time, they bear witness to the typical trajectory of an aspiring savant and the frustration behind his fruitless attempts to be accepted by the scientific elite. It will suggest that his political imagination was greatly influenced by this formation, particularly in his pessimistic view of human nature and obsession with tearing off veils and peeling back layers to reveal inner workings and invisible forces.

The second part (chapters 3-6) argues that Marat was far more engaged during the first year of the Revolution than previously acknowledged, and that his carefully constructed persona as “People’s friend” helped position him within the vanguard of the nascent popular movement as a powerful symbol of revolutionary authenticity and opposition. It will demonstrate how his pre-revolutionary influences informed much of his strategy as a polemicist, with particular focus on his attitude to the leading figures of the new regime. It will argue that Marat’s approach was founded on two complementary doctrines, like intertwining strands of revolutionary DNA: one had a theoretical,
rational base, underpinned by his understanding of classical republican theory with an English commonwealth twist, the other had a practical, emotional base, founded on his alter ego, largely inspired by the increasing personalisation of politics he had witnessed in England. By July 1790, the various elements that would coalesce within the infamous Marat of 1793 – who enjoyed the dubious posthumous honour of becoming a cult, a (reviled) “grand homme”, and fifty years later, a criminal offence – were all in place.

Historiography

I. The rise of ‘bad’ Marat

There is little doubt that Marat’s reputation has been systematically blackened over the centuries since his death and that the ubiquity of this légende noire has distorted our understanding of his intellectual abilities. Part of the problem has been an unwillingness for commentators to consider the totality of subjects that Marat engaged with, especially during his philosophical and scientific careers, often relying on the judgements of others. As Norman Hampson dammingly concluded, while assessing Marat’s scientific career, “Common sense would suggest that if Marat had been right, someone would have rehabilitated him by now”. While there have been subsequent attempts to present a more balanced account of his scientific achievements, this has not been matched by a corresponding reassessment of his revolutionary one. To be clear, this thesis is not an attempt at rehabilitation, and besides, neither its expertise nor chronological sweep are broad enough to attempt such a task. Rather, it seeks to establish a more neutral framework for assessing Marat’s significance as a revolutionary figure, during 1789-90, while providing a more holistic understanding of a figure many think they know well, but whose influences, motives and reception are frequently elusive, even to the hardened researcher.

The political right has always been appalled by Marat. While references to Marat’s ‘excesses’ as an irresponsible demagogue were already becoming part of the discourse around him during 1789–1790, they were hammered into place by the posthumous publication of a slew of vindictive Girondin mémoires, written following their expulsion from the Convention on 2 June 1793 after losing their ‘war’ against the radical faction within the Convention known as the “La Montagne”. Many of these helped to set the agenda for the first generation of revolutionary historians, such as

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3 See p.13. He was also the only revolutionary to be permanently removed from the Pantheon.
5 The exception to this being the various online publications of Jacques de Cock. See, for example, Action politique de Marat pendant la Révolution: 1789–1793 and Un journal dans la Révolution: “L’Ami du Peuple” (both online, 2013).
Adolphe Tiers and Alphonse de Lamartine, perpetuating a tradition that has continued into more recent revisionist histories. In his best-selling account, Thiers described Marat as “une effrayante célébrité” whose systematic calls to murder made him “un objet d’horreur.” Another typical accusation, that he sought to promote anarchy, can be traced to the contemporary accounts of both persecutors and opponents, and such representations were perpetuated in a number of hostile revolutionary prints, such as ‘Le Calculateur Patriote’ and ‘L’Anarchie’. The former, which first appeared around August 1789, was originally intended as a generic comment on those who condoned the early lynchings as a necessary evil, before the bewigged character at his desk was ‘identified’ as Marat. The latter, which appeared in two variants after the grocery riots of 25 February 1793, initially portrayed the British Prime Minister William Pitt as the Medusa-headed incarnation of ‘Anarchy’, before a cheaper, cruder version transformed the figure into Marat.

After Marat’s death, repeated petitioning by some Paris Sections and revolutionary clubs persuaded a reluctant Convention into pantheonizing Marat as a model of revolutionary virtue and ensuring the distribution of thousands of busts to every commune across France, as well as the Paris theatres. At the same time, it commissioned David’s portrait of ‘The Death of Marat’ as part of an attempt to align itself with the popular movement. Between 1793-1794, over fifty communes were renamed after Marat, along with hundreds, possibly thousands, of streets, and babies. As one petitioner proudly declared: “Nous avons juré d’éllever autant de Marat que nous avons d’enfants; nous leur donnerons pour Évangile les collections entières des œuvres de ce grand homme”. Given Marat’s early theological formation, such a correlation of his singular political vision with holy writ was less strange that it might appear. However, all this would be reversed in the aftermath of Maximilien Robespierre’s execution on 27 July 1794 (9 Thermidor). As part of the post-Thermidor reaction, gangs of marauding youths, known as Jeunesse Dorée, destroyed Marat’s busts, beat up his supporters and lobbied for his depantheonisation. It was during this period, when Marat’s brief ‘cult’ made him the most prominent Jacobin of all, that his légende noire, whose origins predated this

8 See, for example, ch.6, 182-183.
10 For a detailed account, see T. J. Clark, Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism (New Haven, CT, 1999), 15-50. Also Germani, Jean-Paul Marat, Hero and Anti-Hero of the French Revolution.
event, took off as part of a concerted effort to delegitimize the entire Jacobin movement. These early views, which were expressed in speeches, memoirs, letters, and ‘histories’, and passed judgement on Marat’s various shortcomings, including his bestial appearance, pathological character and unprincipled psyche, still help to shape contemporary perceptions of Marat. WhenFrançois Furet wrote “La Révolution est terminée” in 1978, he was calling for an end to the dominant Marxist interpretation because he was felt that it had been responsible for a “vicious circle of commemorative historiography” that was overshadowing French public life. The evocation of the revolutionary past in the conflicts of the present was equally apparent in historians’ treatment of Marat, with his lurid reputation as an apostle of revolutionary violence finding few apologists beyond the extreme left. From the conservative Thiers and Hippolyte Taine to the republican Lamartine and Jules Michelet, nearly all the leading nineteenth-century historians of the Revolution opted to cast Marat as a pantomime villain of excess whose external deformity mirrored his internal sociopathy.

The founders of 1848’s short-lived Second Republic, who included the novelist Victor Hugo and Lamartine, supported by Michelet, sought to distance it as far as possible from the long shadow cast by the ‘Terror’ of 1793, while seeking to preserve its origins in 1789. Indeed Michelet’s multi-volume Histoire de La Révolution Française (1847-53) – cited by both Furet and the Socialist historian and politician Jean Jaurès as the “cornerstone of all revolutionary historiography” – formed part of a deliberate strategy to present this “profoundly pacific, benevolent Revolution” in a more favourable light, divested of any unpleasant associations with conspiracy, violence or anarchy. Since Marat’s name was widely associated with all three, his character assassination was relentless. After devoting several pages to examining Marat’s political ideas, Michelet concluded that in place of logic, all he could find were vague, disconnected ideas: “L’examen fait, je dois dire: Non. Il n’existe nulle théorie de Marat”. This hostility formed part of a broader coalition of voices attempting to displace regrettable revolutionary violence away from “’le Peuple” and onto individual aberration, devoting a whole chapter to positioning Marat as “Le premier pas de la Terreur”. This, in turn, inspired a similar analysis twenty years later by another republican, the exiled ex-revolutionary Edgar Quinet, as part

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14 See, for example, the assessment of Girondin deputy, Pierre-Louis Roederer – “Point de principes de politique ni de morale, nul respect pour la propriété, nul pour la liberté: nul pour la vie”, Oeuvres du comte P. L. Roederer, 8 vols (Paris, 1854), iii:273.
15 See, for example, the assessment of Girondin deputy, Pierre-Louis Roederer – “Point de principes de politique ni de morale, nul respect pour la propriété, nul pour la liberté: nul pour la vie”, Oeuvres du comte P. L. Roederer, 8 vols (Paris, 1854), iii:273.
19 Michelet, Ibid., ii:120-121.
of a wider attempt to explain the failures of the republican tradition, entitled, ‘A qui appartiendra le règne de la Terreur?’ – “En Marat, ne cherchez ni lacune ni développement. Dès qu’il se montre en 1789, il est tout ce qu’il sera en 1793”. As a result, republican historians, and others on the left, either refused to take Marat’s ideas seriously, or sought to sanitize the revolutionary ideal from its tainting by popular violence, by using Marat as a convenient scapegoat.

Furet also drew an explicit link between Marat and the ‘Terror’, declaring that there was “no difference in kind between the Marat of 1789 and Marat in 1793”, and that the Terror was a deliberate, ideological construct rather than the result of “circumstances”, such as inflation or foreign war and civil war. Although this study does not extend beyond 1790, it argues that a closer look at this first year provides ample grounds for a significant difference, to the extent of Marat alerting readers on numerous occasions to the fact that changing circumstances were forcing him to renounce moderation in order to make them take his warnings more seriously, “quelque bizarre ce rôle paraisse aux yeux du sage”. By taking the most extreme manifestations of what was frequently a performative mode of expression, combining any suggestion of bloodshed with his relentless discourse of denunciation as proof of his demagogy, more contemporary historians, such as Mona Ozouf, Bronislaw Bazcko and Patrice Gueniffey have arrived, via Michelet and Quinet, at teleologically ascribing the origins of the language of Terror to Marat. Bazcko described him as: “a perfect example of an individual who did not predict the Terror, but who indeed might have anticipated it, even prayed for it. He is the incarnation of generalized mistrust... he called for a veritable deluge of blood”. In a biographical outline for A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution (1989), Mona Ozouf wrote: "In the revolutionary portrait gallery, Marat occupies the place of the fanatic", adding, “The Ami du peuple not only disseminated the philosophy of conspiracy that is inseparable from Jacobinism but also invented the language of the Terror". Part of the problem, this thesis argues, has been a tendency to treat Marat’s language too literally, rather than as a discursive mode adapted to the context of its production. Consideration of his earlier works, as

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22 See, for example, Le Junius français #1 (2 June 1790) and Le Publiciste de la République française (19 March 1793), OP, ii:795 & ix:5875-76.
we shall see, consistently reveals a tendency to exaggeration, including criticism of prominent figures, to make a stronger impact on his audience, despite, or perhaps wilfully ignoring, the normal rules of social convention. Branding Marat in this way only distracts from a more comprehensive, contextualized understanding of his role.

Despite a clear programme of reform alongside the denunciations, many historians, even sympathetic ones, have struggled to find a positive role for Marat’s revolutionary programme. His first English biographer, the socialist lawyer and historian Ernest Belfort Bax was more concerned with praising "a moral earnestness and steadfastness of purpose rarely met with" than evaluating Marat's ideas, which he dismissed as, “speculative opinions... arrived at by a false method, which considerably diminishes their value. It is not the thinker so much as the man I honour in the present case”. 26 Jaurès, whose history pioneered the social interpretation of the Revolution, disliked Marat’s “méfiance soupçonneuse” and “haine maladaptive”, but recognized that the stereotyped “L’homme de sang et de massacre... qui réclame constamment des têtes” was actually a politician with a “sens très pénétrant’ [et] ‘tactic de sagesse et de modération’”. 27 It took until the Russian Revolution of 1917 for Marat to receive any formal recognition, with the renaming of a street in Petrograd (formerly Nikolaevskaya ulitsa), a battleship (formerly the Petropavlovsk) following the crushing of the Kronstadt Rebellion of 1921, and a fjord in Severnaya Zemlya in 1931. 28 Several revolutionaries, including Kerensky and Trotsky, either modelled, or were accused of modelling, themselves on his example. 29 Later, Marxist-influenced historians, from Albert Mathiez onwards, took great pains to separate Marat from their idol, Robespierre, who had his own reasons for keeping a safe distance from his Mountain colleague.

Besides having a low opinion of his political thought, many historians have also accused him of being an irresponsible demagogue. The two were closely related, since a ‘demagogue’ was widely understood to denote someone who sought support by appealing to popular prejudices rather than rational argument. However, as Marat’s frequent chastising of feckless Parisians reveals, the last thing he could be fairly accused of, was pandering in this way. Lamartine characterized Marat’s later popularity as his most terrifying feature: “Veritable prophète de la démagogie inspirée par la démence... Séide du peuple”. But, this was not the view of some contemporary observers, such as

the author of a *Dictionnaire national et anecdotique* from 1790, who under the entry for ‘Démagogue’, wrote that, “[Marat] en avait le langage sans en avoir l'adresse ni l'intention ... [il] voulait vendre ses feuilles et voilà ce qui le faisait vociférer”. 30 In 1869, during an address to the electors of Marseilles, the radical republican statesman Léon Gambetta warned against him: “La démocratie sincère, loyale est la seule ennemie de la démagogie... Les démagogues, ils sont de deux sortes; ils s’appellent César ou Marat... c’est par la force qu’ils veulent satisfaire... leurs ambitions ou leurs appétits... je les trouve également haïssables et funestes”. Such misconceptions motivated Auguste Vermorel to publish the first posthumous collection of Marat’s journalism. 31 This fear of Marat’s spectre conjuring up (illegitimate) popular ‘participation’ in the (legitimate) parliamentary process also made it illegal, at various times during the nineteenth century, to promote Marat’s writings or revive his newspaper. Early defenders, such as the physician François-Vincent Raspail in the 1830s, the publisher Constantin Hilbey in the 1840s, and the journalist Alfred Bougeart in the 1860s, all suffered fines and imprisonment for doing so. 32 The publication of Bougeart’s sympathetic biography of Marat led to his imprisonment in 1865 for, “an attempt to damage public order, attacks against the principle of private property, and an offence against public morality”. 33 For similar reasons, France’s Bibliothèque Nationale refused to accept the extensive archive of Marat’s second biographer François Chèvremont in the 1880s, so he donated it to the British Library instead. 34

2. Recent developments

Another reason the historiography has often failed to appreciate Marat’s distinct contribution is because, with notable exceptions, his pre-revolutionary career has rarely been examined for clues to his revolutionary formation. Or else it has been viewed through the prism of what Marat became, and treated accordingly. 35 Sometimes the pendulum has swung the other way,

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33 Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 34.
35 See, for example, the opposing assessments by Carl Gottlob Kühn in 1785 and 1796 in ch.1, 60.
with the example of his failure to be taken seriously as a scientist by the *Académie royale des sciences* [hereafter, *Académie*] cited as proof of his mediocrity, festering resentment, or both, thus hoisting his reputation, as it were, by his own petard. Some have cited these quarrels as evidence of his “charlatanism” and used them to undermine his credibility. Such accusations of intellectual fraud, which were aired during his lifetime, and repeated in early, hostile ‘biographies’ and *Mémoires*, were adopted in turn by Michelet, amongst others, who dismissed “les ouvrages de sa jeunesse” as the hackneyed product of a “faible et flottant éclétisme”, and declared that he would demonstrate how, “le terroriste scientifique qui croyait tuer Newton, Franklin, Voltaire, devint le terroriste politique”. Most of Marat’s biographies have simply skimped on Marat’s pre-revolutionary period, or compressed it, perhaps not surprisingly given the sparse documentation, with the notable exceptions of Doctor Augustin Cabanès’ well-documented study, *Marat inconnu* (1891), and more recent biographies by Coquard and Conner. Historians of science have shown a keener interest in treating Marat’s scientific career, notably Charles Gillispie’s monumental *Science and Polity in France: The End of the Old Regime* (1980), a colloquium, *Marat homme de science?* (1993), and a handful of specialized articles.

Gillispie’s account of Marat’s scientific career began by warning that one had to “try very hard to forget about revolutionary politics” in order not to let one’s feelings cloud judgement of his science, and his close attention to Marat’s “Découvertes” – frequently critical but fair – has been influential in paving the way towards a less biased evaluation of his science. No matter how “far-fetched his theory”, Gillispie judged Marat’s experimental practice to follow universal standards of rigour and demonstrate a mastery of his subject. Gillispie was also the first to point out that Marat’s translation of Isaac Newton’s *Opticks* (1787) – still in print – was “excellent” and “respectful”, and not the distorted one of lore. Moreover, despite dismissing Marat’s optical theories as misguided by modern standards, he acknowledged that the *Académie’s* negative report failed to give some of his...
contentions, “the attentions that others like them have turned out to merit”. While Marat was no Lavoisier or Laplace, Gillispie concluded that he was a serious and legitimate participant in science as practised in late eighteenth-century France.  

Michel Blay, another science historian, reached a similar conclusion: “sa théorie, loin d’être une folle élucubration, s’organise bien autour d’un champ experimental”.  

Other historians, citing a claim originally made in 1927 by Marat’s first serious Anglophone biographer, Louis Gottschalk, have used Marat’s pre-revolutionary experiences to suggest that his radicalism was largely fuelled by embitterment at his rejection by the Académie. This insight led Gottschalk to suggest that Marat’s later reincarnation was an opportunist intervention founded upon this earlier “martyr complex”, which transmuted his “manie persécutrice”, distrust of others’ motives and lust for “gloire” into the “conquest of new worlds” as a revolutionary journalist. The issue of personal frustration also formed the basis of Robert Darnton’s citation of Marat as a contender within his broader “Grub Street” thesis, as someone, “who epitomized the important but generally unappreciated connection between political radicalism and the frustrated ambitions of many would-be Newtons and Voltaires of pre-revolutionary Paris... [since his] desire to revenge himself against the Academy of Sciences provided the main thrust behind his revolutionary career, which was principally a campaign against conspirators”. However, asserting such a causal link between Marat’s academic failure and his later attacks on the political establishment, is, I believe, misleading, and ignores Marat’s prior articulation of powerful radical sentiments in Chains of Slavery (1774) and Plan de Législation criminelle (1777), as well as two unpublished novels, several years earlier.  

In fact, a closer reading of these early publications reveals a more coherent political ‘programme’ based on a particular vision of human nature, than previously credited, rooted in a potent synthesis of classical republican and English commonwealth discourse. That such an argument was becoming a commonplace within the historiography is evident from a review of Gillispie’s book that picked him up for “stopping short of any sustained discussion of the political

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implications of [Marat’s] repudiation by the Académie des Sciences” 46 This is not to deny that there were ubiquitous social hierarchies that blocked ambitious people from advancement into the elite spheres of ancien régime society, or that the resulting resentments contributed to the growing crisis once the forces for change had gathered critical momentum in 1789, but it is problematic, and tenuous, to pinpoint this as the main motivation behind Marat’s revolutionary involvement. Essentially, this issue belongs within a far more interesting debate over whether such institutions were capable of recognizing innovation and ideas that challenged the status quo.47

Following its translation into French in 1929, Gottschalk’s biography of Marat dominated the Anglo- and Francophone fields for over sixty years, and it might appear that much received wisdom on his overall significance can be traced back to it. Having characterized Marat’s pre-revolutionary “dilettantism in politics [as] incidental and almost accidental”, suggesting a man of surface rather than substance, Gottschalk went on to claim that, “If things had gone well during the Revolution, his conservative spirit might still have triumphed”. Any traces of radicalism, or reform, to be found in his earlier works, he argued, should not be viewed as precocious evidence of Marat’s commitment to popular sovereignty or sympathy for the poor, but rather, “the specious arguments” that any reader of Rousseau, Montesquieu, Mably or Morelly might have assimilated.48 Therefore, since Marat, “had borrowed some of the most radical ideas of contemporary thinkers and... his ambition for a career as a man of science had been thwarted... he was dissatisfied and a background for radicalism was set for him”. A radicalism, in other words, that was acquired rather than innate. Explaining that Marat’s “uncompromising sincerity” had produced a “Machiavellian soul” who recognized “no legitimate obstacle” to the cause he championed, Gottschalk concluded that for friend and foe alike, “his devotion to the cause of revolution counted for all, the details of his political theories for naught”. 49 Four years after its appearance in France, a biography by Gérard Walter, veteran of the revolutionary archives, chose to portray Marat even less favourably as both insignificant (“un agité sans importance”) and eccentric (“farfelu”). Neither a man of action nor a leader, Walter argued that he struggled to form any kind of meaningful bond with a public who were more concerned with acquiring their daily bread than digesting his incomprehensible ideas.50

50 Walter, Marat, 5-6 (Avant-propos).
Following the bicentenary, there was a burst of activity with the appearance of an extensively annotated 10-volume edition of Marat’s *Oeuvres politiques* (1989-95), a bilingual presentation of his earliest political work, *Chains of Slavery* (1774/1793), four biographies and an essay collection, with three focusing on Marat’s afterlife. \(^{51}\) Olivier Coquard’s *Marat* (1993) remains the most extensively researched and even-handed biography to date, yet despite covering Marat’s scientific career in some depth, including his dealings with the provincial academies, Coquard devoted far less space to his early political writings. He described *Chains* as an “ouvrage assez maladroitement conçu... [lequel] témoigne de l’état primitif d’une pensée contestatrice”, and characterized the “violence du contenu” of his Plan, as “répondant à une violence de comportement”, suggesting that while its methods (“formules”) might appear radical, its arguments remained faithful to Cesare Beccaria and Montesquieu. \(^{52}\) Where Coquard’s supervisor Michel Vovelle, former holder of the Sorbonne Chair for the French Revolution, regarded *Chains* as an “ouvrage sans pareil au moment où Marat le livre au public”, and an essential step towards his formulation of a theory of insurrection as, “un rouage [cog] essentiel de la machine politique”, Coquard read it as a derivative synthesis of arguments drawn mainly from Rousseau and Montesquieu. \(^{53}\) Marat’s political antecedents have also been addressed in detail by Norman Hampson, and, more positively, by one of his long-standing editors, Jacques de Cock. \(^{54}\) In the last decade, another biography and cultural study of his assassination have appeared. \(^{55}\)

Modern scholarship, while neither endorsing nor fully escaping Marat’s *légende noire*, has tended to focus on the implications of his linguistic strategies and singularity. These interpretations have variously presented Marat as an exemplar of the democratic possibilities of revolutionary journalism; as a precursor to the Terror; a formative voice in the practice of denunciation; as a revolutionary historian; as a proponent of the English commonwealth tradition; or as one of an extreme version of classical republicanism. \(^{56}\) The last of these, by Baker, who has also published a

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\(^{52}\) Coquard, *Marat*, 80 & 106.


study of Marat’s earliest medico-philosophical work, and is currently working on a keenly anticipated intellectual biography, demonstrated the presence in pre-revolutionary France of classical republicanism as an important political idiom, before showing how it mutated into a revolutionary “call for Terror” through the distinctive variants of Marat (metastization), Robespierre (moralization) and Antoine Saint-Just (messianism). In this article, he suggested that the origins for much of Marat’s “vitriolic, hyperbolic and inflammatory” invective – “the more secure the power it attacked, the more extreme its language had to be” – could be found in his earlier Chains, which had deployed this idiom to denounce the many ways in which leaders sought to extend their arbitrary power and deprive their subjects of liberty by destroying the “public spirit”. Understood as an extreme variant of this idiom, with its constant prescriptions for denunciation, purges and popular action against opponents of the new regime, Marat’s language during the Revolution makes more sense. To explain this, Baker suggested that the destabilisation of power that followed the fall of the Bastille had encouraged an increasing radicalization of the classical republican discourse once it lost its oppositional restraints, for “it now projected infinite dangers and unending risks” that could only be countered by extreme vigilance. As a result, “Marat raised political paranoia to a level incompatible with the very possibility of establishing, or even conceiving, a stable political order.” Such radicalisation served to render all National Assembly decisions suspect, since as popular sovereignty was now supposed to inhere in a single, unitary general will, any representation of sovereignty could also be challenged in the name of this sovereignty. In consequence, “Marat was prepared to escalate his denunciations until this impossible condition of unity was realized”, demanding increasing numbers of heads to rescue France from disaster. Citing a petition presented to the Convention in November 1793, four months after Marat’s death, which urged it to, “Never forget the sublime words of the prophet Marat: Sacrifice 200,000 heads, and you will save a million”, Baker concluded that Marat’s version of classical republicanism had metastasized into “a discourse of terror... [which] had become revolutionary gospel”.

Baker’s sophisticated argument is important for three reasons. It was the first to evaluate Marat against the prism of this pre-existing discourse, a theme which Rachel Hammersley has taken

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further by teasing out the crucial English commonwealth connection that informed Marat’s political thought, modifying our understanding of this debt as deriving not so much from Baker’s classical republican discourse, but rather as a distinctively early modern strain. Secondly because it makes a case regarding Marat’s discursive use of language, in particular, the literal interpretation of his phrases. What Baker (and others) read as “terror discourse” – “today it would take 50,000. Perhaps 500,000 will have fallen by the end of the year. France will have been inundated in blood but it will not be free” – may also be interpreted as dramatizing the hopelessness of the situation rather than demanding a literal headcount. It seems that the problem here, as with most discussions of Marat’s promotion of ‘violence’, relates to the conflation of two different kinds of rhetoric. Thirdly, and returning neatly to the first point, Baker’s discussion of the centrality of medical metaphors within the classical republican idiom in measuring the health of the political body, in particular the moment of “crise” – when the existence (or ‘liberty’) of the patient (or ‘body politic’) hung in the balance, provides a useful anchor for the introduction of a more personalized approach to intellectual history, currently enjoying a revival as part of the “biographical turn”. Such an idiom, Baker suggested, offered a diagnosis of political will that viewed, “disorder and vicissitude as the normal state of human existence deriving from the unstable play of the passions”, which could only be contained, “by a political order in which individual interests were identified with the common good through the inculcation of civic virtue”. Since such a political will could either be collective (popular) or singular (despotic), with no middle ground, it encouraged the resulting idiom to preach constant vigilance against both ‘despotic’ encroachments on liberty, and the collective apathy, and self-interest, of its participants. As a result, it promoted “political paranoia” into a positive, or virtuous, attribute. While it was not the dominant idiom of pre-revolutionary political opposition – which was the constitutional-legalistic discourse deployed by the parlementaires – Baker showed that it played an important role in political debates by exposing the stark dichotomization between liberty and despotism, insisting on the importance of political will and critiquing the increasing commercialization of society. Given Marat’s medical training and pessimistic outlook, it seems hardly surprising that he should have embraced such an idiom so eagerly. As a physician-journalist, he felt uniquely qualified to provide both an ongoing diagnosis of the ‘symptoms’ and a prescription for the ‘cure’, promoting civic virtue as the best antidote for regenerating a corrupt political body.

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63 Hammersley, The English republican tradition, 5-6.
64 Baker, “Transformations of Classical Republicanism”, 47.
65 See, for example, Hans Renders, Binne de Haan & Jonne Harmsma, eds., The Biographical Turn: Lives in History (London, 2016).
67 In a passage inserted into the re-edition of Chaînes (1793), 4225, Marat described France as, “un corps malade qu’un poison lent pénètre et consume... et qui n’a plus la force de se relever”. 
However, it was not just Marat’s medical background that enhanced his political insight. Joseph Zizek has highlighted Marat’s unique brand of “pedagogy [as] a distinctive kind of revolutionary historical ‘sensibility’”, which allowed him to reinvent himself as an exemplary patriotic journalist who could offer a privileged interpretation of events, as well as instruction based on his brand of scepticism – “paranoia”, according to some – in order to remedy the public’s lack of historical vision and consequent vulnerability to counter-revolution. While a proposed history of the Revolution entitled *L’Ecole du Citoyen* disappeared after Marat’s death, Zizek suggested that one could use his journalism to sketch out the responsibilities he envisioned for the revolutionary ‘historian’.

From the outset, Marat’s newspaper displayed both traditional and innovative qualities. On the one hand, it demonstrated “the pamphlet style of attack” through the regular appearance of highly editorialized interventions. On the other, unlike most other papers, it diminished the National Assembly’s role by privileging Parisian, and other issues, over reportage of debates and minimized the connection between “private” corruption and public wrongdoing that typified eighteenth-century *libelles*. Zizek went on to suggest that Marat’s acute historical vision throws new light onto its oft-noted hectoring tone, citing Marat’s explanation that freedom could only be guaranteed by the maturity of “l’esprit public”. This would only happen when the efforts of committed “écrivains publics” such as himself, whose role was to make the public aware of its rights and duties, had reached a point, “qu’il a une idée des hommes, des passions qui les font mouvoir, qu’il a l’opinion convenable des agents de l’autorité, qu’il pénètre leurs desseins et qu’il s’aperçoit des pièges qu’ils lui tendent”. For example, he consistently argued that the new government was not independent – as the Assembly asserted on multiple occasions – but the creation of its “commettants”, the people, who could revoke their mandate at any time: “Les députés de la nation savent trop bien qu’ils n’ont droit de siéger aux Etats qu’en vertu des pouvoirs qui leur ont été délégués.” He became increasingly convinced that not only were the people being taken for ‘dupes’, but also that he was being persecuted precisely because of the vital enlightenment he sought to provide in his role as the “People’s friend” and defender of the “bien public.”

Pierre Rétat has also explored the radical new possibilities offered by Marat’s embodiment of his paper’s austere principles, suggesting that these gave him a “sacralité de la voix” and “place absolument original” amongst revolutionary journalists. If Marat viewed the performance of this

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role as vital for liberty, it was also apparent, as we shall see, that such ‘education’ faced many obstacles, hence the increasing urgency, and repetitiveness, of his repeated accusations against many of the Revolution’s leading figures and institutions, such as the Paris municipality, the Châtelet judiciary and the National Assembly. Since the democratic lessons that Marat tried to inculcate in his readers had formed in his mind long before 1789, he was able to find his ‘voice’ almost immediately.

Overview

The paucity of personal materials regarding Marat’s life, has forced this thesis to rely largely upon his published writings, with the usual caveats when assessing autobiographical accounts, for there is little doubt that he frequently exaggerated. This lacuna can be attributed to many reasons, but mainly his frequent moves during the Revolution and a number of police raids and confiscations. After Marat’s death, his remaining letters and documents were placed under seal in the Hotel de Ville, where whatever survived the ravages of ‘collectors’ went up in smoke in May 1871. For Marat’s revolutionary writings during 1789-90, and related materials, including information on his family, I have relied heavily on the annotated Oeuvres Politiques de Marat and Collection Chantiers from the Pole Nord team of Jacques de Cock and Charlotte Goetz, using the former as the definitive source for genuine copies of the Ami du peuple. For what survives of Marat’s correspondence, I have used Charles Vellay’s edited collections. The creation of searchable, interactive technologies, such as the ARTFL Project’s “Les journaux de Marat” has made it possible to track down elusive citations, and find others. Visits to archives and libraries in Neuchâtel and Paris helped to supplement these resources, providing access to the Pole Nord Collection in the Bibliothèque publique et Universitaire de Neuchâtel (BPUN), the annotated collection of Marat’s writings in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), and cartons of documents relating to the actions of the Paris Commune and Châtelet from the Archives Nationales (Pierrefitte and Richelieu), as well as the Archives de la Prefecture de police (Hoche).

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70 See, for example, R. C. H. Catterall, ”The Credibility of Marat”, The American Historical Review 16, no.1 (October, 1910): 24-35 for a sceptical, generalizing view of Marat’s version of events surrounding the publication of Chains. For a more convincing explanation, see Coquard, Marat, 71-75.
71 His lodgings were raided at least twice, in December 1789 and January 1790. Charlotte Goetz, ”Jean-Paul Marat et sa famille: un quart de siècle en pays neuchâtelois”, Nouvelle Revue Neuchâteloise no.39: 40-41.
72 De Cock & Goetz, op.cit. Charlotte Goetz, Marat I-X (Collection Chantiers), 10 vols (Bruxelles, 1990-2006), hereafter Chantiers.
The first two chapters (1770–1788) look at Marat’s pre-revolutionary careers in medicine and science and his early forays into political writing, exploring his theological background and his interactions with various corporate authorities, and peers. His first publication, a medico-philosophical study of Man, set the template for his career, revealing a remarkable capacity for work, experimentation and self-confidence, fuelled by “l’amour de la gloire” that drove him to challenge received wisdom across a number of Enlightenment debates in a typically spiky manner. His pessimistic vision of human nature, dominated by passions over reason, provided an early model for his thoughts on how to sublimate self-interest in favour of the wider public good.

Consideration of the reasons behind the failure of his scientific career, while practising as a society doctor in Paris, reveals another important aspect of his formation, namely an increasing conviction of persecution by a scientific elite whom he believed were trying to block his entry into the ‘Republic of Letters’. While Marat’s ability to exploit alternative channels to propagate his discoveries, including public demonstrations, taught him the value of self-promotion, this study will also contend that many of his experimental experiences, such as his use of dissection, and visual projection to reveal hidden forces, influenced his analytical approach to politics. Many of Marat’s radical ideas, as well as the roots of his “Ami du peuple” persona, are shown to have been inspired by his early experience of an emerging arena of activist politics during his ten-year stay in England, including the striking examples of two personalized models of radical opposition – the journalist-politician, John Wilkes and the anonymous polemicist, Junius. His first political work (Chains) was largely inspired by the English commonwealth tradition – an iteration on classical republicanism – filtered through Machiavelli’s pragmatic realpolitik. Mobilizing a repertory of republican themes, including liberty, slavery, virtue and corruption, it sought to expose, using historical examples, the various ways by which rulers extended power at the expense of their subjects’ liberty. A proposal for penal reform (Plan), triggered by a competition, was an even more radical work that insisted on fundamental social change as the bedrock for lasting legal and political reform.

Chapters three and four (Jan – Sep 1789) look at Marat’s early forays into revolutionary politics as a political writer, firstly as a pamphlétaire then as a publiciste. The relaxed conditions of censorship and political ferment after July 1788, following the recall of the Estates-General, led not only to an explosion of pamphleteering but also helped to resurrect Marat from a long illness. Between January and August 1789, he was inspired to publish four lengthy pamphlets dealing with the forthcoming elections, and prospects for national regeneration offered by the debates over constitutional reform. Borrowing heavily from previously articulated ideas, these interventions revealed a strong emphasis on promoting natural rights and social reform, including adequate state
provision for the poor, at a time when most commentators were solely focused on political reform. The seizure of one of these pamphlets led to an invitation to become directly involved, by joining his district’s electoral assembly. Inspired by the Fall of the Bastille on 14 July, and frustrated at being ignored by deputies within the National Assembly, Marat decided to channel his energies in a new direction away from elite ‘public opinion’ towards a broader popular opinion. The creation of a regular newspaper allowed Marat to contribute to a new kind of transparent ‘public space’ that sought to raise political awareness by mediating between the nation, or “sovereign people”, and the various centres of power – judicial, executive, legislative, municipal and district – that sought to represent, rule or sanction them. Taking the title Ami du peuple, and borrowing the same epigraph from Rousseau that he had previously used for Chains – Vitam impendere vero (“To devote one’s life to the truth”) – Marat sought to teach his readers about popular sovereignty, encroachments on their rights, and how to ‘read’ the hidden meanings of events, emphasizing, in particular, the omnipresent threat of a counter-revolutionary backlash. A partial subscriber list from January 1790 revealed the extent of his paper’s penetration throughout France, as well as the social range of his readership, from comtes to clockmakers.

The final chapters (Oct 1789 – July 1790) explore some of the reasons behind Marat’s distrust of the new regime and how he sought to challenge the new authorities by pushing the boundary of press freedom as far as it would go. Like Wilkes, he defended such perpetual contestation of authority on the grounds that those who held power were prone to abuse it if they were not constrained by fear of losing their position. It was an approach that would bring him his first arrest warrant in less than a month, followed by a brief exile from Paris and the consolidation of his links with the radical Cordeliers district. His criticisms of powerful figures, such as Jacques Necker, France’s finance minister, Sylvain Bailly, Mayor of Paris, and Antoine-Gaspard Boucher d’Argis, the Châtelet’s leading judge, got him into the most trouble because their recipients did not appreciate the distinction he drew between their public and private lives, and viewed these accusations as libels on their honour. The widely reported ‘Marat Affair’, in which he escaped from a large military force sent to arrest him following the succès de scandale of his widely distributed pamphlet denouncing Necker, made his reputation as a rising ‘star’ by bestowing minor celebrity status upon him with the production of many counterfeit versions of his paper and a slew of anti-Marat pamphlets, which marked a turning point in his revolutionary career. During a three-month exile in London, he continued to publish provocative pamphlets, which further increased his notoriety by calling for the sacrifice of a few to save the many in order to avoid prolonged social distress and a potential civil conflict. A coda takes the story up to June 1790 with his return to Paris.
and reinvention as a ‘louder’ version of his earlier self – as the antidote to widespread complacency – with the creation of a second, short-lived paper, *Le Junius français*, telling readers that, “Les leçons de la sagesse et les vues de la prudence ne sont plus faites pour vous”.\(^7^5\) It was the logical application of a philosophy of progress through confrontation, which Marat had lived by ever since his first publication, and subsequent persecutions, which embodied the principles – devoting his life to the truth – emblazoned on the front page of every issue, and which played a large part in increasing his credibility amongst the disenfranchised. Philosophy may have paved the way for Revolution, he wrote, but only firm action could ensure its progress and overcome the inevitable stalemate and polarization. His tactical use of inflammatory language, especially his notorious July pamphlet, *C’en est fait de nous*, which suggested that “five or six hundred heads” would have prevented the threat posed by counter-revolutionary, émigré forces, made his prosecution, for the first time, a national affair, and had a major impact on his subsequent *légende noire*.

In March 1793, Marat told his readers that he had come to the Revolution, “avec des idées faites, et j’étais si familier avec les principes de la haute politique qu’ils étaient devenus pour moi des lieux communs”.\(^7^6\) By framing his writings within their wider philosophical and political context, and using this analysis to re-evaluate his role during the Revolution’s first year, this study seeks to unpack some of these “idées faites”, and counter a widespread perception that Marat was little more than a perpetual voice of denunciation, suspicion and despair, with few, if any, ideas of his own. In this regard, it joins a number of recent studies whose goal has been to provide a clearer understanding of Marat’s journalism.\(^7^7\) This thesis, then, has three principal aims. First, it will contend that Marat’s interventions during the Revolution’s troubled first year owed much to the formative experiences of his varied pre-revolutionary careers. Secondly, it will treat Marat’s intellectual production between 1770 and 1790 as a single body of work to be considered within the context of its creation, rather than through the distorting lens of his final year, in order to provide a welcome re-evaluation of a neglected Enlightenment figure whose motives, intentions and ability have often been devalued. Thirdly, it will show that his radicalism was evident long before his dealings with the *Académie*, while tracing some of the roots of the *légende noire*, which has bedevilled critical assessment, back to this first year of revolutionary activity and the widespread hostility it provoked for his uncompromising criticisms of the new regime and intermittent calls for popular action. In the process of analysing his

\(^{7^5}\) *Le Junius français* #1 (2 June 1790), OP, ii:796.

\(^{7^6}\) *Publiciste de la République française* #147 (19 March 1793), OP, ix:5875.

strategies within their wider revolutionary context, it intends to explore some of the implications behind Furet’s declaration that, “the Revolution [was] the gap that opened up between the language of the Cahiers and that of the Ami du peuple in only the space of a few months”.78 From this, it will suggest that in both his pre-revolutionary and revolutionary careers, Marat’s modus operandi of confrontational opposition rather than constructive criticism did much to undermine the wider acceptance of his ideas amongst his peers.

78 Furet, Interpreting the French Revolution, 46.
Chapter One:
Pre-revolutionary formation – Medical & Scientific

For most of Marat’s early life we have little solid information to go on and our main sources are his own accounts, which were often vague or repressed certain events. We know that Jean-Paul Mara, as he was – only adding the ‘t’ after the award of his medical diploma in 1775 – was born in Boudry in the Prussian principality of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. He was the oldest son of the “proselyte” Giovanni (Jean) Mara, a highly educated Mercedarian prior from Sardinia who sought sanctuary in Geneva after defying a Papal bull demanding funds intended for the local population. His mother, Louise Cabrol – from whom he claimed to owe the development of his character, including “la philanthropie, l’amour de la justice et de la gloire” – was a Huguenot whose family originated from Castres, in southwest France. During Marat’s upbringing, his family’s financial situation was often precarious and Jean Mara had been forced to apply for parish charity in 1751. The exclusionary nature of Swiss society with its social stratification and lack of civil rights for ‘foreigners’ – étrangers and habitants (their children) – forced Marat’s father into a peripatetic existence for the first ten years of his new existence, with court records revealing disputes with local families taking financial advantage of his precarious status. In 1754, with Jean Mara now supporting a family of seven, they were finally ‘tolerated’ to settle in Neuchâtel where they stayed for fourteen years, following the intervention of its Scottish Governor, Milord Maréchal. “Etrangers” could be asked to leave at any time and it took nine years for this “tolérance” to be converted into a right of “habitation”.

After an “education très soignée dans la maison paternelle”, Marat was admitted to Neuchâtel’s prestigious Collège from the age of eleven, where he was exposed to a typical humanities curriculum of classical languages, theology, philosophy, history and geography. Precociously describing himself as, “J-P Mara, étudiant en humanité” on the flyleaf of his Latin primer, he claimed to have been a gifted student, liable to arouse jealousy and incapable of false modesty, “Mon ardeur et mon assiduité à l’étude ont toujours été couronnées d’assez brillants succès; il n’en faillait pas davantage pour éveiller l’envie. Je sais qu’on la désarme avec adresse en

79 Journal de la République française #98 (14 Jan 1793), OP, viii:5498.
80 Charlotte Goetz, Marat en famille: La Saga Des Mara(t, Chantiers 7 & 8 (Bruxelles, 2001), vii:108-109, 131-134, 139-142. The Jacobite George Keith, 10th Earl Marischal, was a friend of Frederick II and had acted as ‘protector’ for Rousseau.
affichant une fausse modestie; La feinte et la ruse ne sont pas dans mon caractère.”

This characteristic bluntness would prove to be a major obstacle to the recognition he craved, and indeed his self-presentation owed much to Rousseau’s example, adopting both his slogan of ‘authenticity’ – “Vitam impendere vero” – and narrative of persecution.

While every biographer has claimed that Marat left Neuchâtel in 1759, the only evidence for this is a single phrase from 1793: “depuis l’âge de seize ans, je suis maître absolu de ma conduite”. In the same autobiographical sketch, he claimed that he had lived two years in Bordeaux, ten in London, one in Dublin and Edinburgh, one in the Hague, Utrecht and Amsterdam, and nineteen in Paris, but not necessarily in that order. However, my discovery of a log for twenty titles from Neuchâtel’s Bibliothèque des Pasteurs, with dated, ex-libris annotations – for example, “Johan Pauli Mara, stae, theologiae stud. [student of holy theology], 1763” – indicating their possession by Marat between 1760 and 1765, suggests that he was still being prepared for entry as a proposant, or theology student, by the Compagnie des Pasteurs up to the age of twenty-two.

Such a position would also have given him access to the Bibliothèque des Pasteurs, a treasure trove of progressive texts, which contained many works on philosophy and science alongside those of

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83 Used on the title-page of Chains/Chaînes. Rousseau’s declaration came from a long footnote in his Lettre à d’Alembert (1758). See also ch.2, 76-77.

84 Publiciste de la République française #147 (19 March 1793). OP, ix:5875. Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 25-28. This ‘autobiographical’ letter, and its associated ‘evidence’ comprising fifty separate letters and reviews, safely archived in Spain, is the main source for much of Marat’s pre-revolutionary correspondence. See also Jeremy Popkin, “Marat en Hollande, aposant une fausse modestie; La feinte et la ruse ne sont pas dans mon caractère.”

85 Twenty books (eighteen have his name ‘ex libris’) from the Bibliothèque des Pasteurs, now belonging to the Bibliothèque Universitaire de Neuchâtel (BPUN), are logged as belonging to, ‘J-P Marat, théologien’ in their catalogue (RERO), https://explore.rero.ch/fr_CH/nj/result?se=M85


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If he was not a candidate for the Church, it seems odd that a training doctor, supposedly now in Paris, should be carrying a large bundle of expensive, vellum-bound theological works around with him. There would have been good reasons for keeping quiet about such a past in his various autobiographical accounts. Yet, despite this discovery, the Compagnie’s register ("Actes de la Classe") failed to reveal any trace of Marat’s admission as a proposant, or his recommendation for preparation at the Geneva Academy.

Equally importantly, two works from the library of Jean-Frédéric Ostervald – an influential theologian, active between 1690 and 1740, whose writings led to him being known as Neuchâtel’s second Reformer, after Guillaume Farel – along with parish records and correspondance between his grandson, the urbane Frédéric-Samuel Ostervald and Jean Mara, reveal a close relationship between the two families. Perhaps we can trace the origins of part of Marat’s singular perspective to his theological preparation, in particular, the kind of robust commentary found in “grand Ostervald’s” polemical writings, especially the widely translated Traité des sources de la corruption qui règne aujourd’hui parmi les Chrétiens (1700). Besides its focus on moral corruption, the most interesting aspect of this Traité was its exploration of the contrast between Christianity’s selfless maxims and the lazy complacency of its followers. The opening pages alone would have exposed Marat to a densely metaphoric vocabulary based around the need for “personnes éclairées” to “dissiper les ténèbres”. While many of its themes would become clichés of Enlightenment thought – the Encyclopédie did not appear until fifty years later – they bore a marked resemblance to many of the dominant motifs of Marat’s later critiques against the apathy of his own revolutionary ‘congregation’, and constant refrain for instruction by enlightened leaders. Other aspects of a typical Calvinist education would have included a focus on the power of the ‘Word’, the equality of

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87 See his letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 23-44. See also ch.1, 53. Any mention of this non-Catholic background in the autobiographical letter intended for the king of Spain’s first minister would surely have hampered his application. There were equally good reasons for a revolutionary journalist espousing the “patriot” cause to downplay the fact that he was both a foreigner and a Calvinist.
89 F-S Ostervald, maître-bourgeois banneret and member of the Petit Conseil, Neuchâtel’s main administrative body, was godfather to Marat’s deceased younger brother, Pierre-Antoine Jean. In 1768, he helped the family after the 15-year-old Pierre got in trouble for his involvement in the 1768 Neuchâtel tax riots. From 1769, he employed Jean as an agent for the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel (STN). Goetz, "Jean-Paul Marat et sa famille": 43-44; and Goetz, Marat en famille, vii:158-159.
90 Jean-Frédéric Ostervald, Traité des Sources de la Corruption qui Règne aujourd’hui parmi les Chrétiens (Neuchâtel, 1700), 2-3. Marat introduced his first work by writing, “I may be at least permitted to indulge the hope… that I have thrown some light on many phenomena, which before were involved in obscurity; removed many difficulties… and opened up a tract by which others may hereafter proceed”, Philosophical Essay, i:xxix-xxx.
all before God, the value of martyrdom, and a polemical, anti-Papal tradition that was a marked feature of published sermons.

While the Compagnie’s curriculum, also set up by Ostervald, surely provided many of the building blocks for Marat’s intellectual development, its behaviour towards his family furnished sharp reminders of the power of authority, here a predominantly theocratic one, to create a barrier of privilege against meritocratic opportunity. Social life in Neuchâtel revolved around the Church, and since the Compagnie shared responsibility for political decision-making with the secular conseil d’État, most important posts went to the families of pastors, or established bourgeois. Breaking into this monopoly was almost impossible as Marat’s father discovered, when, despite formidable credentials, he twice failed to secure a teaching post at the Collège, in 1758 and 1767, which was taken by a less qualified candidate with a letter of recommendation from a local pastor. Clerical approval was vital for gaining such posts, which might explain why the ambitious Marat sought to prolong his studies elsewhere.

The family’s lack of status also had profound consequences for the career chances of one of Marat’s younger brothers. In 1768, following Neuchâtel’s violent tax riots, the family moved to Geneva, where David Mara completed his studies at the Academy between 1773 and 1782. In his final year, he became embroiled in the disturbances rocking Geneva as a representative of the natifs – descendants of habitants – who were demanding greater civil and political rights. After a French-led army entered the city to restore order, sending the ringleaders into exile, David wrote to Ostervald thanking him for a passport enabling his return to Neuchâtel but bemoaning his inability to progress further, “Il sent bien que depuis que je ne suis plus Bourgeois, je ne suis plus rien ici; pas même un habitant, n’étant pas né ici, quoique mon père le soit. Je suis donc étranger, et tout étranger n’a aucun droit aux cures de Genève.” On applying for examination “au pastoraat” in Neuchâtel, the Compagnie turned him down, twice, after he was unable to secure a certificate from the Academy, presumably because of his political involvement. Both examples – of Marat’s father and brother – surely provided early grist to Marat’s mill with regard to the development of his attitudes towards privilege and injustice.

91 Goetz, “Jean-Paul Marat et sa famille”: 34-37 & 14-34.
Whatever happened to Marat between the age of sixteen and his arrival in London via Paris in 1765 – to evade the “dangers de la dissipation... [et] me former aux sciences” – we know that he had already started to practise medicine, building upon whatever his father might have passed on. Records reveal that Jean Mara was treating several distinguished patients, including the chatelaine de Couvet and Milord Keith, although a lack of qualifications also meant that some abused his services and refused to pay their bills. Marat’s own account that he was not afraid to practise his own methods, including electrotherapy, are backed up by the testimony of his London apothecary: “He had an original way of thinking in his professional capacity... and acted against common rules”. There is little documentation tracing Marat’s movements during his eleven-year stay, although an entry in the Warrington Academy’s account book indicates that he may have briefly taught languages in England’s leading ‘dissenting’ establishment. Later writers would exploit this uncertainty over his movements to ascribe criminal behaviour, such as the theft of medals from Oxford’s Ashmolean museum, in order to blacken his reputation. Besides practising medicine, we also know that Marat closely followed public affairs, publishing a work of political theory, Chains of Slavery, in 1774, and submitting a proposal for criminal law reform, Plan de législation criminelle in 1777, soon after leaving England. He socialized with other foreigners, including Antonio Zucchi, a Venetian artist, with whom he often dined, and the Swiss (Royal Academy) artist and musician, Angelica Kauffman, whom Zucchi later married.

For the few physicians prepared to treat sexual diseases – usually considered the business of surgeons – those who specialized in ‘Eyes and Gleets’, like Marat, did so because optical and venereal disorders were thought to be linked through the lymphatic gland. Two short medical tracts on his treatments for gleets and accidental presbyopia – long-sightedness caused by an

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96 See, for example, Mara’s litigation for non-payment of medical bills against the sister of the governor of neighbouring Peseux (1758), and an account of working as a doctor in Geneva in 1769, Goetz, Marat en famille, vii:119-127.
98 William McCarthy, Anna Letitia Barbauld: Voice of the Enlightenment (Baltimore, 2008), 588. It recorded a payment of three guineas on 10 Sept 1771 to “Mr. Mara for journey”.
100 Their relationship – platonic or otherwise – is attested to in Diary of Joseph Farington, i:8 & 23, and Brissot, Mémoires, i:336-337. There is also a caricature of the pair by Robert Dighton, ‘The Paintress: the proper study of Mankind is Man’, (print, 1772), and a dedicated copy of Marat’s Recherches sur le feu (1780) to “mi padrona”, Dorothy Mayer, Angelica Kauffman (London, 1972), 96-98. The identification of the caricature is mine, based on dating, likeness and title.
101 Gleets were the watery discharge from an infected urethra caused by gonorrheal infection.
overuse of mercurial salts – which he presented to the Worshipful Company of Surgeons and Royal Society in November 1775 and January 1776 respectively, described some of Marat’s early treatments, including a pioneering use of electrotherapy to cure the eyesight of an eleven-year-old Parisienne, despite the fact that it had fallen out of fashion in France.\textsuperscript{102} They revealed his clinical approach to be one of pragmatism, modifying his treatment as it progressed, and included a combination of traditional (“moderate bleeding at the foot... once every week”), dietary and advanced (“electrical sparks to be drawn from the canthi of the eyes”) techniques.\textsuperscript{103} These pamphlets, which revealed that Marat went out of his way to avoid harsh treatments, or damaging side-effects, such as the traditional mercury cure for gleets, were published towards the end of his English residency, a few months after he had received his medical diploma from the University of St Andrews on 30 June 1775.\textsuperscript{104} While St Andrews was notorious for handing out qualifications for cash, provoking Dr. Johnson’s quip that it “grows richer by degrees”, Marat’s application was endorsed by two Scottish doctors, Hugh James and William Buchan, an important figure who had moved to London in 1773 following the success of a self-help guide, \textit{Domestic medicine} (1769), which sought to make “medicine more open to mankind”.\textsuperscript{105} On the one hand, these tracts revealed a zeal for social improvement and transparency: “To promote the good of society is the duty of all its members; besides, what an exquisite pleasure it is for a benevolent heart to lessen, as much as possible, the number of those unfortunate victims who, without hope of relief, labour under the many evils to which human nature is subject.”\textsuperscript{106} On the other, this kind of rhetorical formulation, which boasted of finding cures where others had failed, could also be interpreted as the typical exaggeration of a charlatan touting for business, and was frequently associated with negative characteristics, such as dishonesty, ignorance, or the ability to cause harm through lack of proper qualification. Often, the two discourses were indistinguishable, allowing for either interpretation.\textsuperscript{107}

\section*{II}

The trail of published, and unpublished, work, which Marat produced before the Revolution revealed a restless mind keen to tackle fundamental questions about Man and His world. As he later recalled: “A cinq ans, j’aurais voulu être maître d’école; à quinze ans, professeur; auteur

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\textsuperscript{102} François Zanetti, ‘L’Electricité Médicale Dans La France Des Lumières’ (Ph.D, Université Paris Ouest, 2011), 57-68. In 1775, Marat claimed that he had “ten years practice attended with constant success”, \textit{Reprint of Two Tracts}, 17.
\textsuperscript{103} Marat, \textit{Ibid}, especially 35-38 & 20 (fn). He gave his address as Church Street, near Soho Square, a fashionable part of London.
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Ibid}, 44-45 & viii-ix.
\textsuperscript{105} William Buchan, \textit{Domestic Medicine} (Edinburgh, 1769), xxi.
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Reprint of Two Tracts}, 6.
\end{flushleft}
à dix-huit; génie créateur à vingt... J’ai porté dans mon cabinet le désir sincère d’être utile à l’humanité, un saint respect pour la vérité... et une passion dominante de l’amour de la gloire.”

Such words recalled not only the characteristic boastfulness that pervaded so much of his work but also many key traits, such as his sincerity, inclination to pedagogy, and desire for recognition. When Marat (anonymously) published his first work, *Essay on the Human Soul* in 1772, he was almost thirty. While its impact was negligible, its contents laid some of the foundations for his political thought. Setting a methodological template, it revealed a closely observed experimental method, immense capacity for study and an astonishing intellectual self-confidence with its bold challenge to existing knowledge. One observation, in particular, formed a bedrock for much that followed – “O reason! The so much boasted resource of the wise, what can thy feeble voice prevail against the impetuous violence of the passions”. It was followed a year later by an expanded version, with an extra volume on physiology and psychology, attempting to account for the soul’s reciprocal link with the body – *A Philosophical Essay on Man* (1773) – appearing in French in three volumes with Marat’s revised name – *De l’Homme* (1775-76). Over ten years later, he would claim that, “Personne n’a plus observé que moi les effets du moral sur le physique”, and that it was his strongest work to date.

The work appeared to represent Marat’s attempt to refocus attention on what had formerly been considered the religious domain, by psychologizing the soul. If medicine was “divinely created” for Man’s earthly needs, as many believed, and physicians were secular priests whose mission was to heal the body rather than the soul, one can see how Marat came to view politics as the primary vehicle for securing Mankind’s ultimate well-being, or “bonheur”. The link was easily made, since John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) – one of the few works which Marat name-checked approvingly – had theorized such a pursuit as the very foundation of

108 *Journal de la République française* #98 (14 Jan 1793), OP, viii:5498-99 (my italics).
112 Brockliss & Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France*, 118-119. The idea of divinely ordained physicians was found in *Ecclesiasticus* (OT Apocrypha), ch.38, which was frequently quoted in medical texts, especially Protestant ones, Alisha Rankin, *Panacea’s Daughters: Noblewomen as Healers in Early Modern Germany* (Chicago, 2013), 189.
liberty: “As therefore the highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a... pursuit of... happiness; so the care of ourselves, that we mistake not imaginary for real happiness, is the necessary foundation of our liberty... our greatest good.”

As an “ouvrage destiné à combattre le matérialisme”, as he later called it, Marat objected in particular to the argument that all human behaviour could be reduced to physical organization, thus obviating any need for a soul. In the same letter, he also claimed that when he was eighteen, he had rebuffed the advances of “nos prétendus philosophes”, as, “L’aversion que l’on m’avait inspirée pour leurs principes m’éloigna de leurs assemblées et me garantit de leurs funestes leçons”.

Not only was he setting himself against the ‘progressive’ spirit of the times, but he was also following the footsteps of Rousseau, who also made the link in his draft for Du Contrat Social (1762), which compared the action of the soul to the action of the General Will, locating both within the depths of their respective ‘constitutions’: “Comme dans la constitution de l’homme, l’action de l’âme sur le corps est l’abîme de la philosophie, de même l’action de la volonté générale sur la force publique est l’abîme de la politique dans la constitution de l’État.“

Divided into two volumes and three parts, the first part of the Philosophical Essay consisted of a traditional Cartesian presentation of the body as “a hydraulic machine, full of ducts and fluids” based around his own physiological observations. The second part – comprising his Essay – was a presentation of the soul’s manifestations under its five “faculties” of instinct, sensibility, memory, understanding and will. It also provided a vigorous refutation of Claude-Adrien Helvétius’ materialist manifesto, De l’esprit (1758), whose misquoted epigraph, “Unde animi constet natura videndum” (“On the nature of mind”), Marat had copied off its title-page.

In his case, however, he sought to supplant ‘mind’ with ‘spirit’, within which, he argued, resided that, “innate sentiment, prior to all... ideas, to which nature united the preservation of human beings”. He identified this sentiment as “self-love” and the source of all human desires, including “gloire”. The third, and longest, part synthesized the preceding arguments into a series of observations on the reciprocal influence of the soul on the body. Its appearance came within the context of a renewed debate over

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113 John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (London, 1997/1689), 244 (no.51). The “pursuit of happiness”, which would be codified by American revolutionaries in the 1776 Declaration of Independence, was often referred to by Marat. See also p.36 (fn).


115 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, 5 vols (Paris, 1964), iii:296 (Geneva Mss.), cited in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 483. The analogy was less explicit in the final version: “the general will, which serves as a means of communication between the State and the Sovereign, which in a sense does for the public person what the union of soul and body does in man”, Rousseau ‘The Social Contract’ and other later political writings, ed. Victor Gourevich (Cambridge, 1997), 82 [Bk III, ch.1].

116 Lucretius, De Rerum Natura (Cambridge, MA, 1924), 12-13 (Bk I). This didactic poem was an Epicurean attempt to show how everything could be explained by natural laws.

117 Philosophical Essay, i:138-140.
the one-substance (monist) versus two-substance (Cartesian dualism) controversy, triggered by the recent (anonymous) publication of baron d’Holbach’s materialist *Le Système de la nature* (1770), which had provoked several “refutations”.¹¹⁸ Where the monists held that the universe was indivisible, the dualists argued for a fundamental division between mind, or spirit, and matter. However, Marat made no mention of d’Holbach’s work, preferring to attack materialism through *De l’esprit*, which had acquired notoriety fifteen years earlier, on being condemned by both Church and state to be burnt for heresy, becoming, in consequence, a European bestseller, while also causing a temporary suspension of the *Encyclopédie.*¹¹⁹

This debate had started over a century earlier with the posthumous publication of René Descartes’ *Tractatus de homine* (1662), which proposed that while ‘matter’ (*res extensa*) existed in three-dimensional space, ‘spirit’ (*res cogitans*), as manifested in God, and Man’s soul, did not.¹²⁰ This dualist approach produced a deterministic model of Man as a ‘stimulus-response’ machine directed by a reasoning soul, which Descartes located within the brain’s pineal gland. Fifteen years later, Spinoza laid out an alternative vision in his *Ethica* (1677), which described human beings as indivisible entities with no separate soul, helping to set an agenda, which was picked up after 1740 by a coterie of materialist *philosophes*, including Julien Offray de La Mettrie, d’Holbach and Helvétius.¹²¹ La Mettrie argued that the body was like a watch whose functioning could be understood by analysing its constituent parts, and he also introduced the idea of the “pleasure impulse” as its principal mechanism of organization, thus removing any notion of absolute moral standards.¹²² Helvétius developed this idea further by arguing that society should educate people to make their private ‘pleasures’, or interests, coincide with the greater public interest. At the same time, a prevailing belief in Lockean “sensationalism” aimed to remove Cartesian metaphysics from the problem altogether by suggesting that humans derived “empirical” knowledge from experience and the senses, rather than innate ideas and reason.¹²³ Following through on this ‘discovery’ became a guiding concern of the new debate. Marat’s contribution sought to diminish the division between divisibility and indivisibility by promoting the distinct existence of a “sensible” soul – to

¹¹⁹ For a good discussion of these issues, see Wootton, “Helvétius”: 307-336 and David Warner Smith, *Helvétius: A study in persecution* (Oxford, 1965), 172-184. Cowed by the uproar, Helvétius published three humiliating retractions, and his reputation never recovered from the ensuing accusations of cowardice
¹²⁰ René Descartes, *Tractatus de Homine* (Leiden, 1662).
¹²¹ Baruch Spinoza, *Ethica* (Amsterdam, 1677)
¹²³ Locke presented his notion of the ‘tabula rasa’ (blank slate) in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, xxii-xxiv & 120. Etienne Bonnot de Condillac’s *Traité des sensations* (Paris, 1754) did much to help popularize this doctrine in France.
which he allocated traditional properties of the mind, such as the imagination – not separate from, but reciprocally connected to, an “irritable” body.124

Following in the footsteps of a number of distinguished physicians, Marat’s arguments owed much to the holistic approach of Georg Ernst Stahl, a Protestant chemist-physician based in Halle. Stahl’s work influenced the emergence of Vitalism in the medical schools of Montpellier, under Théophile de Bordeu and Paul-Joseph Barthez, and Göttingen, under Albrecht von Haller, in opposition to the iatromechanical approach pioneered in Leiden, under Hermann Boerhaave, which prevailed in most European medical establishments, including Paris.125 Where iatromechanism reduced bodily functions to mechanical principles, Stahl’s holistic system explained them as a combination of mechanical and animistic properties designed to respond to physical threats and needs. His main thesis, that the same immaterial agent controlled physical and mental processes, came from his observation that every living body needed an anima, or soul, to prevent it from decomposing, and the promotion of this ‘vital’ principle did much to reanimate the body-soul debate. Stahl’s vision of an omnipotent ‘soul’ regulating mental and physiological harmony led him to propose a correspondingly totalizing form of medical treatment that dealt with the whole body rather than just the affected part. The surgeon Claude-Nicolas Le Cat provided the final piece of the puzzle by proposing a division of the nervous fluid linking mind and body, between a ‘normal’ fluid that communicated the irritability of basic bodily structures, known as “fibers”, and a more ‘subtle’ one, which communicated its more refined sensibility.126

None of these writers could conceive explaining human behaviour without reference to a soul, but Marat was the only one to suggest that it might also play a key role in the body’s physical organization, locating the mechanism for such interaction within the nervous fluid, and specifically, the protective membrane covering the brain, known as the meninges.127 Moreover, he believed that his background made him uniquely qualified to tackle a subject, “reserved for physicians whose profession qualifies them for making such observations; and who, being called to relieve the

124 For a discussion of context and Marat’s approach, see Baker, “Was Marat a Vitalist?”, 110-124.
125 Georg Ernst Stahl, Theoria medica vera physiologiam et pathologiam, 2 vols (Halle, 1708). Théophile de Bordeu, Recherches anatomiques sur la position des glandes et sur leur action (Paris, 1751). For discussions of Vitalism, see Elizabeth A. Williams, A Cultural History of Medical Vitalism in Enlightenment Montpellier (Burlington, VT, 2003); and Vila, Enlightenment and Pathology.
127 Philosophical Essay, ii: 62-65. Stahl originally identified the meninges as “the organ of all our sensations”, after observing that inflammation could cause delirium, Tristane Connolly & Steve Clark, eds., Liberating Medicine, 1720–1835 (London, 2009), 101.
sufferings of mankind, can contemplate the soul in all its various filiations”. In order to achieve this, Marat’s approach was to establish his credentials by dismissing the achievements of most of his predecessors. In this way, he brushed aside the “failed” attempts of Galen, Descartes, La Mettrie, Helvétius, Haller and Le Cat to understand Man, criticizing Haller for confusing “the faculties of mind with the properties of matter”, and Le Cat for attempting too much “erudition”.

The problem, in his view, was one of too much “esprit de système”, for “no one who has made the attempt [to understand Man] has followed nature”, and they were all guilty of grafting their observations onto pre-existing systems of thought rather than the other way round. Despite his debt to the Vitalists, Marat appeared to dismiss Stahl and the entire Montpellier school by remarking that, “except the small number already mentioned, none are worthy of notice”. He justified this ‘scorched earth’ approach with a memorable gardening metaphor:

As the gardener must first pull up the weeds which overrun the ground, before he attempts to sow or plant it; he must not only establish his own opinion upon evident proofs but likewise destroy the opposite one. This necessity is a clog on his genius, interrupts the order of the subject and makes his work appear languid.

One of the biggest weeds he intended to uproot was Helvétius, and it was his ‘Refutation d’un sophisme d’Helvétius’, which drew Voltaire’s acerbic attention, launching Marat into the Republic of Letters to trompettes of ridicule rather than renommée. In 1775, Marat had secured the services of Rousseau’s Amsterdam publisher Marc-Michel Rey to publish the French edition, whose title was a riposte to Helvétius’ follow-up to De l’esprit: also De l’homme (1773). Marat’s objections were twofold. First, he was indignant at Helvétius’ boast that he had no need for any specialized medical knowledge since his ideas were based on rational speculation. Secondly, he

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128 Ibid, i:x.
129 Ibid, i:vi-vii & viii-ix.
130 The exceptions were François de La Rochefoucauld on the passions, Réflexions, ou sentences et maximes morales (Paris, 1665), Locke on the mind, op.cit., and Jacques-Bénigne Winslow on the body, Exposition anatomique de la structure du corps humain (Paris, 1732). Winslow directed the first school of dissection in Paris.
132 Ibid, i:xxiii.
134 Ibid, i:137.
opposed his crude reductionism of Man to little more than a pleasure-pain machine barely accountable for his actions, which also failed to account for the existence of such sublime sentiments as the love of glory, “whereof great minds are so covetous”.\textsuperscript{136} From this it might appear that his strategy was as much the product of a dialectical belief in progress through conflict, as the arrogant display of iconoclasm claimed by his critics, and it was a tactic he would repeat in subsequent works. For every reader capable of grasping his system from its outline, he continued, there were a thousand more who needed to see the whole chain of reasoning: “They must be, as it were, led by the hand through all the mazes of the labyrinth”.\textsuperscript{137} Such an approach was ill-advised, for it went against all Enlightenment protocols, not only by being unnecessarily rude, but also for failing to recognize the incremental nature of scientific progress.\textsuperscript{138} With Marat, it was often not so much a case of standing on the shoulders of giants as scything them down at the knees.

While the Philosophical Essay was well received in the English press, it earned a lukewarm notice in the influential Journal Encyclopédique, although this did not stop Denis Diderot from possibly considering recruiting Marat in June 1774 as an editor for his thematic Encyclopédie Méthodique (1782–1832).\textsuperscript{139} Diderot’s notes from a lifetime’s interest in medicine and anatomy, which were published posthumously as Eléments de physiologie (1875), revealed an extensive engagement with many of Marat’s observations. This defence of materialism included Marat on an impressive roster of “Auteurs qu’il faut lire”, along with von Haller, Bordeu, Barthez, Robert Whytt, William Cullen, Charles Bonnet, Nicolas Le Camus, La Mettrie and Helvétius.\textsuperscript{140} While Diderot frequently used Marat’s observations as a foil for his own thoughts, especially his criticisms of Stahl’s Vitalism, he also revealed exasperation. For example, when Marat informed readers that anyone who disagreed with his statement that, “Man in common with all animals is composed of two distinct parts, soul and body... may dispense with reading my work; it is not for such I write”, Diderot almost did, noting, “J’ai pensé fermer le livre. Eh! Ridicule écrivain, si j’admet sans faire des deux substances distinctes, tu n’as plus rien à m’apprendre”.\textsuperscript{141} Yet despite this, given its encyclopaedic range of sources, it was Marat (“un habile homme”) whom he drew on most after

\textsuperscript{136} Philosophical Essay, i:xiv-xv
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid, ii:262–263.
\textsuperscript{138} See, for example, Gentleman’s Magazine (April 1773), Westminster Magazine (1773), Medical and Philosophical Commentaries (Edinburgh, 1773), Journal Encyclopédique de Bouillon (1 Aug 1773), 279-385 (t.V, partie III), cited in de Cock, Marat avant 1789, 30-33. Editor’s comment in Georges Roth & Jean Varlout, eds., Correspondance Complète, 16 vols (Paris, 1955-1970), xiv:51 (fn).
\textsuperscript{139} Denis Diderot, Eléments de physiologie, ed. Jean Mayer (Paris, 1964/1875), 342 (Appendice II). For a detailed account of Diderot’s engagement with Marat, see Mayer’s introduction.
\textsuperscript{140} Philosophical Essay, i:33. Ibid, 54.
von Haller, borrowing much of his descriptive material from his volume on the “action du corps sur l’âme”, which he described as clair, ferme, précis”, while dismissing his treatment of the reverse as “vague” and “faible”.

After the appearance of De l’homme, the Journal Encyclopédique followed up its earlier review with a much longer, more critical one in February 1776. Writing to Ostervald three months later, Marat confessed that while he may have been guilty of, “un peu trop de liberté en jugeant les autres, ou plutôt, un peu trop de franchise à dire ce que j’en pense”, he felt he deserved more impartiality. Intimating that his poor review was a vengeful act of “ignorance maligne” by the supporters of those he had criticized, his letter revealed the early outlines of a persecution narrative that would become embellished over the years and form another keystone in his mental development. While the review ended on a positive note, Marat’s objection appeared to focus on its critique of his style of argumentation: “sa manière de définir et de présenter ses idées si peu précise, si peu méthodique, qu’il n’est pas aisé de le suivre; et de saisir ses raisonnements... Il résout peu de questions, en propose beaucoup et donne trop souvent des phrases pour des preuves”.

However, these criticisms were nothing compared to the appearance on 5 May 1777 of a caustic review by Voltaire in the Journal de politique et de littérature, probably triggered by Marat’s attack on his former protégée Helvétius, and dismissal of “l’inconséquent Voltaire” within a list of thinkers characterized by the relationship of their “Esprit” to the “constitution de leur corps”. Voltaire began by expressing irritation at Marat’s claim to have produced “la parfaite connaissance de l’homme”, when he was only repeating what had already been said for thousands of years, before rounding on his lack of courtesy: “Il ne faut sortir à tout moment de sa maison pour s’aller faire des querelles dans la rue... rien ne discrédite plus un système de physique que de s’écarter ainsi de son sujet”. After dismissing Marat for his arrogance, ignorance, banality and lack of style, Voltaire concluded by comparing his boorish manner to an attention-seeking clown: “c’est ainsi qu’on écrit trop souvent de nos jours: on confond tous les genres et tous les styles; on affecte d’être ampoulé dans une dissertation physique et de parler de médecine en épigrammes... On voit partout Arléquin qui fait la cabriole pour égayer le parterre”. Fourteen years later, Voltaire’s review was

142 Ibid, 36, 152 & xli–xliii.
143 Journal Encyclopédique (1 Feb 1776), 379-396 & (15 Feb 1776), 36-45, in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 62-73.
145 Journal Encyclopédique, 45, in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 73.
147 OCV, 80c, 46, 43, 45 & 48. See also Larissa Albina, "De l’Homme: Marat lu par Voltaire", Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France, no.6 (Nov-Dec 1991): 932-936.
considered wounding enough to be worth republishing during Marat’s conflict with the revolutionary authorities.148

Having strayed into the lion’s den of Enlightenment literary politics, Marat had achieved his goal of being noticed, although not quite in the way his precocious younger self had imagined.149 The reviews signalled the beginning of a lifelong conflict between Marat and the philosophes, and by 1783, he was reconfiguring his various troubles as ‘proof’ of a plot against him: “J’ai combattu les principes de la philosophie moderne: voilà l’origine de la haine implacable que ses apôtres m’ont vouée”.150 Marat’s persecution narrative probably owed much to Rousseau’s own account of his persecutions by Voltaire and the other philosophes, which had first appeared in 1780, in Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques.151 A spirited account of Rousseau’s various disputes with the philosophes had also appeared in England in 1767, soon after Marat’s arrival, and seven years after Rousseau had fallen out with Voltaire following attempts to establish a theatre in Geneva, which he opposed.152 Moreover, Voltaire never forgave him for deserting the philosophes’ cause around this time, and the hapless Rousseau became the butt of some of Voltaire’s most vindictive satire, including a description of him as a “circus performer”, clearly a favoured term of abuse.153

The same letter presented this faction as some kind of malevolent kraken, extending its tentacles deep into the leading cultural establishments of the Republic of Letters: “Comme ils ne négligent rien pour étendre leur malheureux empire, ils se multiplient de toutes les formes. Nos Facultés, nos Académies en sont peuplées, et sans pouvoir les éviter, j’ai eu affaire à eux dans toutes mes entreprises”.154 Their perceived control over the levers of public opinion was widely attacked in certain corners of the press, leading to a virulent strain of anti-philosophe discourse, which was often presented within an explanatory conspiratorial framework that Marat’s accounts

148 Opinion de Voltaire sur Marat, en 1775 (sic), lettre d’un ami de Voltaire à Jean-Paul Marat, ci-devant médecin, physicien, maintenant journaliste (Paris, 1791) [via Google Books].

149 See pp.31-32.

150 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 28.

151 Rousseau, Œuvres complètes (1959), i:826.


153 Ibid, 292-296. [Voltaire], Sentiment des Citoyens (c.1764), cited in Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Transparency and Obstruction (Chicago, 1988), 372. Voltaire published several pseudonymous pamphlets attacking Rousseau, including Lettres sur la nouvelle Héloïse, ou Aloisia (1761); Rousseau returned the favour in Lettres écrites de la montagne, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1764).

154 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 28. By the 1770s, the philosophes and their supporters filled most of the seats in the Académie Française and Académie, including the influential post of secretary – Jean le Rond d’Alembert and the marquis de Condorcet, respectively.
appeared to absorb and recycle.\textsuperscript{155} By the time he wrote this letter, such a way of thinking had become so pervasive in his imagination, that he re-presented what was probably a clerical error into a full-blown intrigue, effectively tracing this antagonism back to 1775, two years before Voltaire’s review. Thus the thirteen-month delay of De l’homme’s print-run at Rouen customs, before it was returned to Amsterdam, became an act of sabotage by, "Quelques-uns de nos philosophes... [qui] sentirent le coup que je portais à leurs principes", and had arranged for his book to be impounded as a prohibited title, according to the local representative of the Chambre de la Librairie. When it finally arrived in Paris in 1777, Marat claimed that it sold out multiple editions although there is no evidence to support this.\textsuperscript{156}

III

In April 1776, Marat left London for Geneva to spend time with his family, possibly intending to return in October.\textsuperscript{157} The previous November, his father had proudly informed Ostervald of his son’s medical qualification and asked for his honest opinion on Marat’s new book.\textsuperscript{158} Some time in July Marat moved to Paris, where he was soon introduced to the marquise de Laubespine who had been suffering for many years from an “untreatable” lung condition (“pulmonie”).\textsuperscript{159} Regardless of whether there is any truth in Brissot’s account that Marat became her lover soon after she recovered, he remained close to the family for many years, entertaining visitors at their home on the rue de Bourgogne in the fashionable faubourg Saint-Germain, which doubled up as laboratory space for his demonstrations.\textsuperscript{160} It seems likely that her gratitude and connections – her uncle was the duc de Choiseul, formerly Louis XV’s foreign minister, now adviser to the comte d’Artois, Louis XVI’s youngest brother – facilitated Marat’s subsequent appointment on 24 June 1777 as “Médecin des Gardes” to the comte’s newly formed bodyguard.\textsuperscript{161} It was a specially created, non-venal position, which came “sans pension, sans exercice”. Annotations from a petition for tax exemption to the Prévôt des marchands de Paris’ office in May 1785 also revealed

\textsuperscript{155} For accounts of their influence, see Johan Heilbron, The Rise of Social Theory (Cambridge, 1995) and Darrin M. McMahon, Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity (Oxford, 2002), especially 63-64. See, for example, Elie-Cathérine Fréron’s L’Année Littéraire (1754-76), Simon-Nicolas Linguét’s Annales politiques (1772-92), or abbé de Crillon’s Mémoires philosophiques du baron de *** (Vienna, 1777-78).

\textsuperscript{156} Letter to RSL, Ibid, 27.

\textsuperscript{157} Letter to tradesman (11 April 1776), Correspondance, 1-2.

\textsuperscript{158} Letter to F-S Ostervald (15 Nov 1775), in Goetz, Marat en famille, viii:184-185.

\textsuperscript{159} Most likely, this was pneumonia.

\textsuperscript{160} Brissot, Mémoires, i:199. See, for example, ‘Lettre de M. Le Roy à M. le marquis de Laubespine pour remettre au Représentant [Marat]’, Correspondance, 52-53.

\textsuperscript{161} A.N. (Richelieu) Ancienne série O (1955-56) – Nouvelle côte R1/519*, p.212, in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 86 & Cabanes, Marat inconnu, 62-64. The marquise de Laubespine’s maiden name was Claire Adelaide Antoinette de Choiseul-Beaupré.
that having been “attaché à la Cour”, Marat was no longer “étranger”, having become a naturalized subject of the King.\(^{162}\) Alongside the right to bear a sword, his appointment as a “médecin du roi” gave Marat access to the profitable Parisian market, otherwise ring-fenced for the Paris *Faculté de médecine* [henceforth, PFM] graduates.\(^{163}\)

However, Marat’s outsider status also meant that – borrowing a model introduced by Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones – a lack of proper qualifications placed him firmly within the medical ‘penumbra’, leading to friction with members of the privileged ‘core’, a result, he claimed, of resentment at competing for the same, small pool of wealthy clients.\(^{164}\) According to this more permeable model, which replaced the older “popular/elite” dichotomy, the corporate medical system was already in a process of transformation (before the Revolution), due mainly to the internecine rivalry between practitioners, booming commercialism, and the increasing number of non-Parisians, such as Marat, who were gaining coveted access to the capital’s elite medical practice. Recounting this conflict, he explained that after being persuaded to stay by promises of “bonheur” from his new friends and patients (“malades d’un rang distingué”), he found only “outrages, chagrins, tribulations”.\(^{165}\) Recalling his brother’s achievements to a fellow teacher at the Tsarskoye Selo lycée, David described how Marat’s aversion to profiteering had aroused, “la haine de ses confrères en exigeant la révélation publique de tous les secrets que les médicastres cachaient à l’humanité”.\(^{166}\)

This friction was surely reinforced by Marat’s manner of self-promotion, for his reputation as a successful, foreign doctor travelled fast thanks to the publication of a series of letters in the *Gazette de Santé*, initiated by abbé Jean-Jacques Filassier, a close friend of the Laubespines, devoted Rousseauist and member of various academies.\(^{167}\) He claimed he was writing at the marquise’s request to publicize, “une cure merveilleuse opérée par un médecin anglais [sur] une maladie aussi commune que cruelle”, taking just three weeks to resolve a condition that had stumped a succession of distinguished physicians over five years. Suggesting that it would be “un

\(^{162}\) Letter to Prévôt des marchands (25 May 1785), *Correspondance*, 89-90. The original petition and response were reproduced in *Le Temps* (28 Feb 1914).


\(^{164}\) *Ibid* 14-16 & 230-283.

\(^{165}\) Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), *Correspondance*, 28.


\(^{167}\) See, for example, letter from M. Prévot, trésorier général des ponts et chaussées de France (25 Nov 1777), *Ibid*, 50. Filassier’s works included *Eraste, ou l’amie de la jeunesse* (Paris, 1773), and he would later become one of Marat’s main scientific demonstrators.
service à rendre à l’humanité”, the Gazette’s editors invited this new doctor to give an account of his treatment. The ensuing correspondance revealed it to consist of a shrewd combination of common sense, good ‘bedside manner’ and a mixed pharmacopeia, including infusions, steam treatments, ambergris, and a patent mineral water based on that from Harrowgate. The Gazette then opened its pages to discussion on the matter, the marquise’s ‘miraculous’ recovery having made “beaucoup de bruit à Paris”. One doctor wrote in to contradict Marat’s diagnosis, suggesting that the symptoms pointed to a nervous condition instead of “pulmonie”. An awkward situation was then compounded by the intervention of the marquis who threatened to involve the authorities if the Gazette refused to publish, unaltered, his letter defending the honour of both wife and doctor, re-emphasizing how her case had been considered “sans ressource” by one of the PFM’s leading physicians. The Gazette then invited Marat to clarify his diagnosis, while reminding readers how little sway such dated attitudes had in current times, where reason now trumped privilege. The Gazette published Marat’s indignant response at having his diagnosis challenged with accompanying, sarcastic footnotes before closing its pages to him for good. It is possible that this public questioning of his credentials may have contributed to an incident a few months later when Marat and his valet were violently assaulted by a nobleman (the comte de Zabielo) and his servants for “overcharging”. A separate correspondance, revealing Marat’s innovative treatment for presbyopia with electrotherapy was completely overshadowed as a result of this spiky exchange.

However, the coup de grâce to Marat’s medical reputation came the following January, when the Gazette published an analysis of his patented “Eau minérale factice” by a senior member of the PFM and Société royale de médecine [henceforth SRM], which ‘exposed’ his expensive remedy as precipitated limewater that could be easily replicated. While Marat’s use of such an alkaline formula fell within a therapeutic tradition of astringent anti-expectorants, there were also vested interests at stake, since Marat was not licensed to dispense spa water in France, whose

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168 Gazette de Santé #42 & #46 (16 Oct & 13 Nov 1777), cited in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 79-81 & 81-84. For useful discussions of Marat’s practice, see Coquard, Marat, 93-94 & Lemaire, “Le docteur Jean-Paul Marat”, in Marat homme de science?, 13-34.
169 Gazette de Santé #48 (27 Nov 1777), Ibid, 87-88.
170 Gazette de Santé #49 (4 Dec 1777), Ibid, 88-89.
171 Gazette de Santé #50-51 (11 & 18 Dec 1777), Ibid, 92-95.
173 Gazette de Santé #46-47 & #49 (13, 20 Nov & 4 Dec 1777), in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 83-86 & 91-92. Presbyopia was an avoidable loss of sight commonly confused with “la goutte sereine” (amaurosis).
174 Analyse chimique de l’eau anti-pulmonique de M. Marat”, in Gazette de Santé #1-2 (1-8 Jan 1778), Ibid, 98-104.
monopoly provided a lucrative source of income for practitioners belonging to the SRM.175 This damning judgement would later be repeated in one of the earliest examples of Marat’s post-Thermidor vilification, when an illustrated frontispiece to his ‘biography’ depicted him as a quack, selling bottles of patent water from a stage.176 Marat’s successful treatment of the marquise, and other ‘abandoned’ patients, brought him a flattering nickname from one desperate client, which formed the basis of his later claim that, “Le bruit des cures éclatantes que j’avais faites m’attira une foule prodigieuse de malades... Des succès multipliés me firent appeler ‘le médecin des incurables’”.177 Another letter asked for the address of this keen observer with a “coup d’œil bien lumineux”, who had noticed in a moment what the entire PFM had failed to spot in months.178 With his newfound success enabling him to move easily within high society and command correspondingly high fees, Marat claimed to have upset his fellow physicians who jealously conspired to calumniate him by sending anonymous letters questioning his credentials to his patients.179 These allegations appeared to be borne out in a letter sent a few years later by a visiting Genevan: “Ce physicien extraordinaire... par des cures savantes il s’est attiré un concours étonnant, ensuite de la fortune et avec elle l’envie et la haine des Esculapes de cette ville, qui, dit-on, ne passent pas pour les plus tolérants des hommes”.180

Part of this conflict stemmed from perceptions of Marat’s status as lacking proper formal qualifications. This led to the branding of those, such as Marat, who relied on the ‘evidence’ of their cures rather than academic tradition or the consensus of their professional peers, as “empirics” or “charlatans”. This term of abuse derived from the ancient Empiric school of medical thought, which held that treatment should be based upon experience and careful observation rather than deduced from theoretical principles. While such an approach generally found a receptive welcome within an environment where medicine and sensibility were considered “homologous modes of a general type of diagnostics”, members of the PFM and SRM routinely deployed this smear against practitioners from beyond their corporate world, who appeared to threaten their position or who failed to

176 Anon, Vie criminelle et politique de J.P. Marat, se disant l’Ami du peuple (Paris, 1795).
177 Letter from the marquis de Gouy (21 Aug 1781), and letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 51 & 28. Marat enclosed this letter, and those that follow, as supporting evidence in his application to the Spanish Academy in 1783.
178 Letter from M. du Clusel, intendant de Tours, to the duc de Choiseul (1777), Ibid, 52.
179 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Ibid, 29. Marat charged one louis (24 livres) per consultation and 36 livres a visit, which was higher than average. ‘Reçu d’honoraires’, in de Cock, Marat avant 1789, 124, Cabanès, Marat inconnu (1911), 132-134, Brisot, Mémoires, i.338. One louis is approx €600 today (50 louis was a clerk’s annual salary). For a discussion of Marat’s practice, see Coquard, Marat, 93-94, and Lemaire, ‘Le docteur Jean-Paul Marat’, 13-34.
180 Letter from Marc Théodore Bourrit to Horace Benedict de Saussure (15 Nov 1779), in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 154. See also p.49.
acknowledge their precedence. 181 In other words, the accusation of charlatanism could merely reflect “disdain for someone else’s medicine”, especially if that person was perceived to be socially inferior, or worse, a foreigner. 182 Indeed, as we shall see, Marat’s presentation of a radical new treatment for presbyopia was treated similarly by the Académie royale de chirurgie [henceforth ARC]. While Marat’s promotion of his treatments might have been considered the mark of an “empirique” in 1700, by mid-century, such an entrepreneurial approach to medical provision was far more common, and his long stay in England had provided him with a broader training than he would have received in France, where the division between surgery and medicine was more rigid. 183 A dedication to the College of Surgeons in his tract on the treatment of gleets revealed his opposition towards such a division for practical, holistic reasons: “I cannot conceive what makes it your exclusive province the treating of those diseases, since in most cases the whole frame of the body is affected, and in very few the hand of an operator [surgeon] is wanted.” 184

On this occasion, it seemed that Marat had gone too far by promoting his achievement at the expense of those PFM-trained doctors who had failed the marquise. In what would become a recurring pattern, Marat’s initial success, allied to awkward self-promotion, led to conflict with the medical authorities, comprising both the conservative PFM and the newly formed SRM, whose director, Félix Vicq d’Azyr, was also a senior “médecin-consultant” for the comte d’Artois. 185 The other likely reason for such hostility involved the increasing rivalry between the PFM and the “médecins du roi”. 186 From this perspective, one might see the measures taken against Marat as a ruthless attempt by the medical elite to enforce, and profit from, their monopoly – or more generously – as a case of policing its rights to exclude ‘unqualified’ practitioners. Thus we can trace

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183 See, for example, the definition of ‘Operator’ in Furetière’s Dictionnaire universel (1694): “empirical physician who… announces his dwelling and his science by broadsheets and notes which he distributes”, cited in Ibid, 230. See also 554-555, 228, 14-15, 25-26 & 510-512. Whether Marat had any formal instruction in dissection, or was self-taught, is unclear, for practical training was only offered privately. Reprint of two tracts, 8-10.

184 Ibid, 5. Surgeons, who ranked lower than physicians, were traditionally expected to treat sexually transmitted disease. For a concise definition of the difference, see Roy Porter, The Greatest Benefit to Mankind (London, 1997), 277.

185 The SRM had been created on 20 August 1778 by merging the ‘Commission pour l'examen des remèdes secrets et des eaux minérales’ with a Corresponding society for provincial doctors. Vicq d’Azyr was ranked fourth, with Marat last (eleventh), Almanach Royal (1779), in Cabanès, Marat Inconnu, 63-64.

186 During the century, the number of physicians attached to the court had risen so fast that the PFM became increasingly concerned that it was being used as a shortcut by physicians purchasing such offices in order to access a wealthier clientele. Brockliss & Jones, The Medical World of Early Modern France, 16, 227-229 & 631-633.
the origins of accusations of charlatanism, barely six months after Marat’s arrival in Paris, to a heated exchange in the public sphere with the corporate gatekeepers of medical practice.

A good example of such protectionism can be found in the ARC’s report from 1785 rejecting Marat’s presentation of a novel treatment for restoring eyesight.\(^\text{187}\) Since it relied upon electrotherapy, and his Mémoire sur l’électricité médicale had just been crowned by the Rouen Academy, Marat probably hoped that such “approbation” would give him a degree of leverage and protection from his rivals in a highly competitive world. The reasons for its rejection are quite revealing. First, since Marat’s treatment related to patients considered incurable, and claimed that existing remedies sometimes made the condition worse, his unverified method was of little use.\(^\text{188}\) Secondly, rather than seeking to promote innovation, the ARC – whose members alone were qualified to practise ophthalmology – appeared more concerned in upholding the taught methods of its senior practitioners. Finally, and most significantly, Marat was a foreigner – “comme son travail qui pourra plaire à des curieux seulement, ne présente rien qui puisse enrichir l’art, nous ne voyons pas que l’Académie puisse en tirer avantage et... encore moins permettre que cet étranger fasse paraître cette production sous son privilège”.\(^\text{189}\)

Further evidence of the medical establishment’s hostility to Marat’s foreign status and lack of recognized qualifications comes from a police report from around the same time, which revealed an attempt by the SRM – whose director had acquired a considerable reputation by this time as a medical reformer – to expel Marat from Paris, claiming that he harmed his patients: “MARAT: Hardi charlatan. M. Vicq d’Azir demande, au nom de la Société Royale de Médecine, qu’il soit chassé de Paris. Il est de Neuchâtel en Suisse. Beaucoup de malades sont morts dans ses mains, mais il a un brevet de médecin qu’on lui a acheté”.\(^\text{190}\) It would appear then that within the space of just a few years, Marat’s attempts to succeed as either a savant or a physician had managed to provoke the opposition of Voltaire and all the leading medical bodies, so it seems remarkable that he did not take more care when setting his sights on his next goal: Académie “approbation” for a series of ‘new’

\(^{187}\) He claimed a high success rate, including the mineralogist, Jean-Baptiste Romé de Lisle, letter to RSL (26 Sept 1783), Correspondance, 22.

\(^{188}\) Reprint of Two Tracts, 44-45.


discoveries, “sur le feu, et l’électricité et la lumière, constatées d’une suite d’expériences”, as the well-trailed, thirty-eight page prospectus announced.⁹¹

IV

Over eight years, starting in 1780, Marat published six works of science, including three monographs containing hundreds of experiments: Recherches physiques sur le feu (1780), Découvertes sur la lumière (1781) and Recherches physiques sur l’électricité (1781). This was followed in 1784 by a prize-winning Mémoire sur l’électricité médicale, and in 1785 by an Académie-approved (albeit anonymously submitted) translation of Newton’s Opticks. He also published several smaller volumes, including Mémoires académiques, ou Nouvelles découvertes sur la lumière (1788), a collection of four competition essays challenging Newton’s theory of colours.⁹² By the beginning of 1778, he was ready to submit his prospectus for “approbation”. Such approval was vital if he was to be taken seriously as a scientist and tended to guarantee better sales. Most of his experiments were carried out in a darkened room with a modified solar microscope he called a helioscope – with the pocket microscope removed – which he used to project dynamic images of the “imponderable fluids” that underpinned these natural phenomena, onto a screen, or within a tube.⁹³ Most were designed to visualize the manipulation of these invisible fluids, be reproducible before an audience, and be understood without any prior knowledge. As he noted in a dedication to an astronomer keen to recreate his experiments, “il faut voir avant de croire”.⁹⁴ Their performative qualities made them well-suited to the vogue for public science and meant that Marat could license both literature and technology to other demonstrators.⁹⁵

¹⁹² For a good overview of Marat’s scientific theories see Conner, Jean Paul Marat, 89-108.
¹⁹³ On Marat’s helioscope as a research instrument, see Thomas L. Hankins & Robert J. Silverman, Instruments and the Imagination (Princeton, NJ, 2014), and Heering, "Analyzing unsuccessful experiments": 9-12. For the model used to invoke these fluids, see Tore Frängsmyr & J. L. Heilbron, The Quantifying Spirit in the Eighteenth Century (Berkeley, 1990), 4.
¹⁹⁴ British Library (BL), C.60.i.4, ‘Dedication’ in Mémoires académiques (1788) to Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard Bochart de Saron, honorary académicien and president of the Parlement de Paris.
¹⁹⁵ Jean-Paul Marat, Notions élémentaires d’optique (Paris, 1784), a revised summary of Découvertes for his optics courses, provided detailed descriptions of equipment, including several of his own invention, such as the perméomètre, which could be supplied by the King’s optician in the Palais Royal. Unfortunately, none of these instruments, or their designs, survive, except as illustrations.
His innovation convinced him that he had discovered a new way of doing science, and, initially, his technique was endorsed by the Académie. However, while Marat’s methodology was widely praised by those who witnessed it, including the Académie’s commissioners, it may also have contributed to his failure to be taken seriously. For these experiments differed significantly from more orthodox scientific practice of relying upon methodical analysis of data for theory-building. As Thomas Kuhn, Roger Hahn and Gillispie have all shown, the Académie tended to prioritize older, mathematical sciences over newer, more experimental ones, and was slow to promote innovation, only introducing a separate section for experimental physics in 1785.\(^{196}\) Marat’s empirical reliance on observation over precedent, and demonstration over theory, might also help to explain the contempt of more traditional, mathematically minded scientists, such as the chemist Antoine Lavoisier or physicist Charles-Augustin de Coulomb, whose use of sensitive measuring equipment excluded the possibility of an observing audience.\(^{197}\) Given his background, it is hardly surprising that Marat’s methodology should have differed significantly from the prevailing model, or that his conclusions rarely matched the ingenuity of his experimentation, with Gillispie suggesting that they, “were introduced not so much originally were introduced not so much originally as uncomfortably to the state of theory and understanding”.\(^{198}\) A science historian has drawn attention to the epistemological implications of such differences by juxtaposing Coulomb’s ‘royalist’ approach with Marat’s more ‘democratic’ one, and linking their different experimental styles – opaque versus transparent, private versus public – to different political agendas.\(^{199}\) One of the advantages of Marat’s approach was that his experiments could be easily performed by others, and since the dynamic images produced could be observed in motion, the audience – under guidance – could make up their own mind. However, for scientists such as Coulomb, only sufficiently trained peers could interpret, let alone accept, their static data.

Marat’s anatomical background may also have encouraged this more revelatory approach, since dissection was about displaying something normally invisible. Even in its most extreme iteration of vivisection, if he thought his work was contributing to the greater good, as he told an English friend, then he could square his conscience with the unavoidable suffering. ”Mon coeur est aussi tendre que le vôtre, et je n’aime pas plus que vous à voir souffrir de pauvres creatures”. How

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197 Letter to the marquis de Choiseul (undated), Correspondance, 52.
else could he grasp, “les secrètes, étonnantes et inexplicables merveilles du corps humain sans faire un peu de mal pour beaucoup de bien: c’est seulement ainsi qu’on peut devenir le bienfaiteur de l’humanité.” 200 He expressed similar reservations introducing gruesome descriptions of vivisection in his Mémoire sur l’électricité, such as electrocuting a splayed rat to witness the effect on its exposed heart, for without, “le plus vif désir d’être utile aux hommes, pourrait-on se résoudre à tourmenter les bêtes?” “Lecteurs sensibles”, he appealed, “tirez le rideau sur les cruautés exercées dans les détails qui vont suivre, et n’y voyez que mon zèle pour l’humanité”. 201 Marat used these examples to back up his warnings against the growing vogue in France for electrotherapy as panacea, and while similar experiments could be found in the British literature they were almost unique in the French equivalent. 202 Critics would later pick up on these examples as prior evidence of Marat’s ruthless streak, yet similar sentiments had also been expressed in François Fénélon’s best-selling and highly influential, morally didactic novel, Les Aventures de Télémaque (1699), when Mentor explained to his pupil, prince Telemachus, that the best way to keep law and order was to start with severe punishments, since, “C’est une clémence que de faire d’abord des exemples qui arrêtent le cours de l’iniquité. Par un peu de sang répandu à propos, on en épargne beaucoup”. 203

Marat’s first work, focused around experiments on “fire”, promised to reveal the existence of a previously unseen “igneous fluid” – one of several fluids thought to transmit Nature’s differentiated ‘forces’ – which he claimed to be the active agent of heat. With regard to the contrast between the ingenuity of his experiments and the inconclusivity of his conclusions, a modern scientist has proposed that one of Marat’s demonstrations – a projection of a candle flame surrounded by thermal plumes, which was also one of the illustrated plates – is the earliest example of the “optical flow visualization” technique pioneered in the field of fluid mechanics, a century before its official attribution. 204 After his findings were presented to the Académie, it appointed a commission, including the experimental physicist Jean-Baptiste Le Roy, to prepare a report, which appeared on 17 April 1779. While it passed no judgement on Marat’s conclusions, its overall tone

200 Letter to William Daly (Dec (1782?), Correspondance, 13-14.
201 Mémoire, 71 & 69-70.
202 See, for example, Joseph Priestley, The History and Present State of Electricity (London, 1767, translated into French in 1771) and Tiberius Cavallo, An essay on the theory and practice of medical electricity (London, 1780), Peter Heering, "Jean-Paul Marat: Medical Electricity between Natural Philosophy and Revolutionary Politics", in Paola Bertucci & Giuliano Pancaldi, eds., Electric bodies: episodes in the history of medical electricity (Bologna, 2001), 107-111. See also Zanetti, "L’électricité médicale", 6, 49 & 63. For an overview of vivisection in France, particularly its performative nature, see Anita Guerrini, The Courtiers’ Anatomists: Animals and Humans in Louis XIV’s Paris (Chicago, 2015)
204 Recherches physiques sur le feu, 12-13. Gary Settles, Schieren and Shadowgraph Techniques: Visualizing Phenomena in Transparent Media (Berlin, 2001). It was attributed in 1880 to Ernst Mach’s assistant, Vincenz Dvorak.
was highly positive, finding his “suite d’expériences nouvelles, exactes et bien faites par un moyen également ingénieux et propre”, which could open up, “un vast champ aux recherches des physiciens”\footnote{1}. A letter sent by a visitor to Paris seven months later, hinted at the formidable reputation Marat had already accrued following publication of the earlier prospectus. It is remarkable too, for revealing rumours of his conflict with the Académie long before they became public, as well as suggesting that Marat had contrived to coerce its endorsement: “On parle beaucoup d’un nouveau Newton qui est fils de Mr Marat (sic) de Genève. Ce physicien a inventé une nouvelle manière de voir les secrets de la nature, il a d’abord eu toute l’Académie contre lui, mais il la sut forcer à être elle-même le témoin de ses découvertes et qui plus est, à les signer”\footnote{2}. Besides revealing knowledge of Marat’s earlier problems with the medical establishment, its timing suggested familiarity with a complaint in the Mercure de France from the playwright, Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais protesting at its failure to publicize Marat’s prospectus.\footnote{3} It preceded another letter to the Journal de Paris from 25 October – probably written by Marat – complaining that this groundbreaking work – “si neuf et si frappant” – had not been reviewed in the other papers.\footnote{4}

However, despite this promising start, two incidents did much to hasten the breakdown of Marat’s relations with the Académie – the first, compounded by his characteristic impatience – repeating a familiar pattern of initial promise sabotaged by poor diplomacy. His second monograph, a series of “Découvertes” around light, which he demonstrated to the Académie’s commission towards the end of 1779, challenged some of the ‘flaws’ in Newton’s optical theory. He claimed that there were three not seven basic colours, that they were caused by “deviation” (separation at the edge of the prism, also known as inflexion or diffraction) rather than refraction (differential separation through a prism), and that Newton’s refraction indices were inaccurate. However, endless delays in the issuing of the commission’s report led him to fire off a string of exasperated notes between January and May 1780, first to the commissioners, and then to Condorcet, the Académie’s secretary, urging them to hurry up and publish\footnote{5}. In February, the sympathetic Le Roy, one of the commissioners, tried to warn Marat off this tactic, hinting at an internal political dispute

\footnote{2} Letter from Bourrit to Saussure (15 Nov 1779), in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 154. See also p.43.
\footnote{3} Letter to Panckoucke/the Mercure (18 Oct 1779), cited in L’Intermédiaire des chercheurs et curieux (Paris, 1893), 704, via Gallica.
\footnote{4} Journal de Paris (25 Oct 1779), in Cabanès, Marat Inconnu, 292-294. A glowing review of his prospectus had appeared in the same paper on 4 August.
\footnote{5} Letters to various members of the Académie, Correspondance, 58-64.
and begging him to show some patience: “Il y a un tel esprit de chicane dans l’Académie que cela m’oblige à mettre encore plus d’attention à ce qu’on y lit, mais au nom de Dieu, soyez tranquille et croyez que je suis désolé de ce retard”. 210 When the Académie’s curt report was finally issued on 10 May 1780 after six months gestation, it confirmed all Marat’s worst suspicions. The promised forty pages had been reduced to three, and it refused to endorse his findings or even comment on his experiments, concluding instead that since, “elles ne nous paraissent pas prouver ce que l’Auteur imagine qu’elles établissent, et qu’elles sont contraires en général à ce qu’il y a de plus connu dans l’Optique, nous croyons qu’il serait inutile d’entrer dans le détail pour les faire connaître, ne les regardant pas comme de nature”. 211 Despite, or perhaps because of, the controversy surrounding this report, which Marat reprinted in full with his own commentary, this book sold out two editions and provided the basis for a course on Optics that he was still teaching in 1788, when his students included the future Girondin, Charles Barbaroux. 212 Marat retrospectively dated the breakdown of his relationship with the Académie to ten months earlier, claiming to have turned down an invitation in July 1779 to join it, preferring, as he explained, to keep his independence. 213 While this may be total fantasy, Marat did provide a signed attestation for turning down a similar offer from another national academy in 1781. 214

The second incident happened after the appearance of an advertisement in the Journal de Paris in June 1780 for Marat’s first monograph, Recherches physiques sur le feu, which used the opportunity to promote an associated “Cours” being given by abbé Filassier to demonstrate its findings. By claiming that its experiments rendered the igneous fluid visible, “par une méthode simple et nouvelle qui a mérité l’approbation de l’Académie des Sciences”, the ambiguous wording hinted at the Académie’s endorsement of Marat’s conclusions. Le Roy, who was tasked to counter such claims, explained that, “l’Académie, quoique toujours portée à favoriser et à encourager les Savants dans les expériences qui annoncent des soins et des vues nouvelles, ne peut cependant admettre comme certaines que les choses qui sont suffisament prouvées et établies”. Marat then compounded this awkward situation, which was most likely based on a misunderstanding, by tasking abbé Filassier to reply on his behalf and query why the Académie was disowning its own

210 Letter from Le Roy (13 Feb 1780), in Ibid, 60. The reference to “chicane” would appear to support the division between mathematical and experimental wings mentioned earlier.
212 Notions élémentaires, iii. Charles Barbaroux, Mémoires (Paris, 1822), 57. Brissot also attended at least one of Marat’s courses, and his notes can be found at AN (Pierrefitte) 466 AP/7, dossier 2; see also Mémoires, i:357.
213 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 31.
214 Letter from the chevalier de Champ (29 Nov, 1783), Correspondance, 55-56.
report, which he had published in his Prospectus without complaint.\textsuperscript{215} Being pedantic about semantics was no way to conduct one’s affairs with the Académie, and they now distanced themselves, not even bothering to attend his electrical demonstrations. Visits by Volta and Franklin, however, reveal that his position within the wider scientific community was still reasonably good. Unauthorized claims of official approval, however expressed, were a common promotional tool for unscrupulous, or unknown, authors, so it was hardly surprising that such behaviour might have appeared suspicious, especially following his earlier tête-a-tête with the Gazette and its debunking of his “eau factice”.

Within two years of his first approach, Marat was being perceived as more of a pest than a prospect, while within four, he was being cited as an example of the charlatanism the Académie sought to block. His persona non grata status was confirmed in a letter sent by Condorcet to an unnamed critic in 1782: “Vous me paraissez un peu prévenu contre ces académies, vous les croyez animées d’un esprit de corps qui les porte à se rendre difficiles. Je leur reprocherais plutôt d’être trop faibles. L’affaire de M. Marat en est une preuve”. The Académie had two main roles, he explained. First, to act as a barrier against charlatanism, and secondly, to maintain high standards. His only regret was that they had not acted more forcefully against Marat and rejected as new, experiments whose only claim to novelty was “le jargon systématique dont l’auteur les avaient revêtues”.\textsuperscript{216} Marat’s suspicion at being unfairly singled out might appear to be backed up by an éloge that was given by Condorcet on behalf of the comte de Tressan, a fellow académicien and supporter of Marat’s work.\textsuperscript{217} Condorcet praised him for possessing, “cet esprit philosophique qui lui fait tolérer toutes les hypothèses sans en adopter aucune... et en conservant l’esprit de doute dans les justes bornes que prescrit la sagesse, être... une barrière contre le charlatanisme”.\textsuperscript{218} There is little doubt that Marat’s behaviour not only revealed social maladroitness, but also contributed to his growing perception of being persecuted by the Académie for challenging Newtonianism, which he interpreted as the corrupt behaviour of an institution intent on preserving the status quo rather than patrolling the boundaries of acceptable ‘scholarship’.

\textsuperscript{215} “Annonce” and letters from Le Roy and abbé Filassier to the Journal de Paris (9, 22 & 30 June 1780), in Cabanès, Marat inconnu, 294-298.

\textsuperscript{216} Bibliothèque de l’Institut, M.b, 23x, Ms. 876, fols.95-96, cited in Jean-François Robinet, Condorcet, sa vie, son oeuvre, 1743–1794 (Paris, 1893), 24-25. Its recipient may have been Brissot according to Mandelbaum, "Jean-Paul Marat, the Rebel as Savant”.

\textsuperscript{217} Letter to Marat from the comte de Tressan (24 July, 1780), Correspondance, 67-68.

\textsuperscript{218} Condorcet, “Éloge au comte de Tressan” (Nov 1784) in Eloge des Académiciens de l’Académie Royale des Sciences, tome III (Brunswick, 1799), 453-454.

\textsuperscript{219} Marat made frequent references to his persecution – see, for example, his letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 24-44; the preface to Mémoires académiques (1788), v-vi; and his anti-Académie polemic, Les Charlatans modernes, ou lettres sur le charlatanisme académique (Paris, 1791, but mostly composed 1783-85).
exercise of its privileges accompanied a, “strengthening of [its] authoritarian rule over the scientific life of Old Regime France”. ²²⁰ The irony, as Gillispie has acknowledged, was that while many of Marat’s conclusions were on shaky ground, his intuition that Newton fudged his results to suit his optical theory has subsequently been borne out.²²¹

Marat was not alone in his disgust at the Académie’s refusal to examine what he claimed were new ideas, or in thinking that he had been wronged, for his friend Brissot openly embraced Marat’s iconoclasm, hailing him as someone endowed with, “a genius for observation and an unflagging ardour for research and truth! … who trusts only in experiment and not at all in the authority of great names!” To prove his point, Brissot inserted a dialogue between himself and one of the Académie’s “geometers”, which caricatured their haughty attitude in dismissing those who dared to challenge their idol (idle?) worship of Newton, as imbeciles, without bothering to read their work.²²²

Following his rejection, Marat decided to appeal directly to the public. Naturally, he explained, he would prefer to have the approval of “Savants distingués”, but since the Académie, “ne saurait changer la nature des choses”, he appealed to his readers’ common sense instead, for, “S’il faut être jugé, que ce soit donc par un Public éclairé et impartial: c’est à ton Tribunal que j’en appelle avec confiance, ce Tribunal suprême dont les corps scientifiques eux-mêmes sont forçés de respecter les arrêts”.²²³ A precedent for such appeals had already been set by Rousseau’s publication of his Lettre à d’Alembert (1758).²²⁴ From the 1770s, as Sarah Maza has shown, lawyers frequently used the censorship loophole of mémoires judiciaires during trial proceedings to appeal over the head of the courts to the wider public.²²⁵ Such appeals were made possible by a burgeoning and increasingly autonomous print culture that characterized the emergence during the eighteenth century of what Jürgen Habermas has called “the bourgeois public sphere”.²²⁶ This expanded space

²²¹ Gillispie, Science and Polity in France, 328.
²²² Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, De La Vérité, ou Méditations sur les Moyens de Parvenir à la Vérité dans toutes les Connaissances Humaines (Neuchâtel, 1782), 335, cited in Conner, Jean-Paul Marat, 54. In Rousseau’s Dialogues, the ‘Frenchman’ character also confessed to passing judgement on Rousseau without reading his work, see Intro, 16.
²²³ Découvertes sur la lumière, 6.
²²⁵ Sarah Maza, Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France (Berkeley, 1993), especially 8-17. Mémoires judiciaires were stylized accounts of the legal briefs designed for public consumption.
for democratic debate, based on an equal exchange of ideas without regard for social status, was rooted in the transformation of social relationships facilitated by the rise of capitalism. It also allowed denizens of the medical and scientific ‘penumbra’, of whom Marat was one, to become more daring in their challenges to the ‘core’. Within such a forum for the development of public opinion, the promotion of new ideas and the righting of wrongs was generally welcomed, and in this case, Marat’s appeal owed as much to the injustice he thought had been done to him as to the ideas he wished to publicize. As we shall see through John Wilkes’ example in the next chapter, Marat had already witnessed firsthand the value of building up such alternative channels of support. While it may be significant for marking the moment when he realized he could seek approval from the public rather than the elite, it was a hesitant first step, for in his notes to the (unpublished) third edition of Découvertes, he deleted this passage.227

In June 1783, just when it seemed that all hope for a scientific career had been dashed, Marat received an offer that was too good to refuse, when his friend, Roume de Saint-Laurent, in Madrid to negotiate a settlement treaty for the Spanish colony of Trinidad, put him forward for president of the nascent Spanish Academy of Science.228 At this time, Marat still appeared to enjoy a “bonne réputation”, following the enquiries of the Spanish ambassador, and by September, they were negotiating terms. Marat’s demands, supposedly based on an earlier offer, were considerable: a 24,000 livres salary, halved for his pension.229 In correspondence with the ambassador, he emphasized the business opportunities his optics expertise might bring to Spain, proposing to establish a specialist lens-making factory with part of his salary.230 However, it all proved illusory, for after receiving twenty letters opposing Marat’s appointment “sous les couleurs les plus noires”, the offer was withdrawn in November.231 One of the agents tasked with sounding out the Académie’s opinion told Spain’s chief minister, Floridablanca: “J’insiste sur ce que Marat est un charlatan… si l’affaire se renouvelait, je parlerai clair et je prouverai par A moins B tout ce que j’ai dit à M le comte… nous n’avons pas besoin de médiocre”.232 Testimony from a visiting painter only confirmed

228 Coquard, Marat, 188-189.
229 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 37. By comparison, Condorcet received 6000 livres a year as the Académie’s secretary.
230 Letters to RSL (18 Sept 1783) and the comte d’Aranda, in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 345-346. Letter to Floridablanca (1783), cited in Mandelbaum, “Jean-Paul Marat, the Rebel as Savant”, 374. One of Marat’s unpublished volumes included a treatise on the perfection of achromatic lenses.
231 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 24.
Marat’s talent for rubbing people up the wrong way.\textsuperscript{233} It was clear that his appointment was perceived to jeopardise any chance for the new Academy to become part of the wider Republic of Letters. In a defiant, twenty-page defence of his career, accompanied by forty-seven supporting documents, which he asked his friend to forward to Floridablanca, Marat tried a final, desperate roll of the dice to explain away this opposition by conjuring up the existence of a vast, godless conspiracy of philosophes, amongst whom “la classe des géomètres et des astronomes... forma-t-elle contre moi une terrible cabale”, which aspired to fill key positions throughout Europe with their “apôtres”, and “empoisonnent les sources de toutes les connaissances utiles”.\textsuperscript{234}

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However, despite all these setbacks, Marat had other means of finding public recognition, since his ability to share his experiments with an audience allowed him to license their demonstration to proxies and take on students. From April 1780 onwards, demonstrators, starting with abbé Fillassier, began advertising courses recreating his experiments on fire, highlighting, “la nouveauté du spectacle qu’elles offrent, en rendant visible un être qui joue un si grand rôle dans la nature”.\textsuperscript{235} One satisfied attendee at a demonstration on light sent an effusive letter to the press claiming that thousands had witnessed Marat’s colourful magic from “white cards cut up in a certain manner”, which outshone anything that the Amazon could offer by way of its “most magnificent flowers, butterflies and birds.”\textsuperscript{236} By July 1782, Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier – a charismatic demonstrator who achieved notoriety as the first ballooning fatality – was advertising a “Cours d’Expériences très-intéressantes” at the Musée de Monsieur, which he co-founded in 1781, where, “On fera aussi connaitre toutes les expériences que M. Marat a répétées en presence de MM. de l’Académie”.\textsuperscript{237} He even wrote to Marat of recruiting more “prosélytes”.\textsuperscript{238} Such courses provided the best way of repackaging scientific ‘discoveries’ for an enthusiastic public, and the Musée, a kind of subscription ‘club’, offered lectures, a library and laboratory space.\textsuperscript{239} Eighteen months later,

\textsuperscript{234} Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 31 & 38.
\textsuperscript{235} Journal de Paris (6 April 1780), in Cabanès, Marat inconnu (1911), 176. These advertisements promoted a series of “Cours” twice daily in theHôtel d’Aligre, rue Saint-Honoré.
\textsuperscript{236} Letter from the vicomte de Montigny to the Journal de Littérature, des Sciences et des Arts (1781), cited in Conner, Jean Paul Marat, 104. It referred to Marat’s use of diffraction gratings to demonstrate the inflexion of light.
\textsuperscript{237} Journal de Paris #186 (5 July 1782), 761 [via Gallica].
\textsuperscript{238} Letter from Pilâtre de Rozier (undated), Correspondance, 80-81
\textsuperscript{239} Michael R. Lynn, 'Enlightenment in the Public Sphere: The Musée de Monsieur and Scientific Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Paris', Eighteenth-Century Studies vol.32, no.4 (1999): 463-476. Annual membership fee was three louis.
another future aeronaut, abbé Miollan was advertising courses at the quai de l’Ecole on “les Eléments de la Physique”, which would include a comparison of “le système de Newton sur les Couleurs au nouveau Système de M. Marat”.240 It was no coincidence that many demonstrators doubled up as aeronauts, for besides being familiar with the properties of heat, the spectacle of ballooning marked the final stage in dissolving any boundaries left between elite and popular interest in the latest developments in science and technology, and the ‘heroic’ aeronauts became the era’s first science celebrities.241

While Marat’s work never gained the support of leading members of the Académie, he was quite capable of enlisting the support of useful patrons to promote his discoveries by acting as go-betweens with various Academies and scientific journals. For example, the comte de Maillebois, a former lieutenant-general and honorary académicien, presented Marat’s first work to the Académie; the comte de Tressan, another lieutenant-general and member of both the Académie and Académie française, invited him to perform experiments in his home; the baron de Feldenfeld acted as his link with Rouen Academy; while others acted as go-betweens with Academies in Montpellier, Lyon and Dijon.242 Besides being promoted for the presidency of the Spanish Academy by Roume de Saint-Laurent, who had also introduced him to baron de Feldenfeld and abbé Miollan, he claimed to have turned down a similar post from a “souverain du Nord” earlier the same year through the intervention of a comte Walis.243 Ignoring Marat’s own claims of the prodigious “sensation” his experiments caused across Europe, or the great and good who attended his courses, citations in the works of future Academicins and international scientists, the German translation of his three monographs, and positive reviews in a number of journals, all helped to spread Marat’s reputation.244

240 Journal de Paris #338 (4 Dec 1783), 1388 [via Gallica]. The Hotel d’Aligre, Musée Monsieur (also rue Saint-Honoré) and the quai de l’Ecole were all situated within walking distance on the right bank.
242 Letter from the comte de Tressan (24 July 1780), Correspondance, 67-68. On the duc de Villeroiy, see Jacques De Cock, Oeuvres Complètes: Volume 1 (tomes 1 à 6) (fantasques éditions, online), 1055-1080.
244 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), Correspondance, 30. The German translations by Christian Weigel were published in Leipzig (1782-84). For a list of journals that publicized Marat’s discoveries, see Duval, “Documents pour servir à la bibliographie de Marat”: 106-109, and Cabanès, Marat inconnu, 138. Those who cited him included Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Recherches sur les causes des principaux faits physiques (1781) and the comte de Lacépède, Essai sur l’électricité naturelle et artificielle (1781), and the Dutch physicist Jan Hendrik van Swinden, Recueil de mémoires sur l’analogie de l’électricité et du magnétisme (1784).
Beyond the Académie, competitions offered by provincial academies provided another source of recognition for aspiring savants, and some were able to convert success into a scientific career. Between 1783 and 1787, Marat entered seven competitions sponsored by academies in Dijon, Rouen, Lyon, Bordeaux and Montpellier, and was garlanded three times by the same academy (Rouen) in 1783, 1786 and 1787. This was no coincidence, since success in such competitions often relied on an ability to pull strings. In this case, after submitting his *Mémoire sur l’électricité médicale* via baron de Feldenfeld, he acquired another patron in the form of Dom François-Philippe Gourdin, a Benedictine man of letters and sympathetic member of the judging panel. However, the verdict on Marat’s prize-winning entry contained a notable caveat: “En donnant le prix à ce mémoire, qui le mérite à tant de titres, l’Académie a regretté que l’auteur n’ait pas mis plus d’aménité dans les termes, en réfutant l’opinion d’un homme estimable, adopté par neuf compagnies savants”. In Marat’s view, the fact that he had criticized this “homme estimable” – abbé Bertholon, a scientific rival who was also a member of Rouen Academy – and still won, only demonstrated the strength of his arguments. Moreover, he had done so deliberately, because he felt that the widespread endorsement of Bertholon’s prize-winning and widely translated *De l’électricité du corps humain dans l’état de santé et de maladie* (1780) was a danger to the public, for encouraging the irresponsible promotion of medical electricity as a panacea. Over the next years, Gourdin visited Marat several times in Paris where they concocted a plan to propose a competition for the best essay challenging Newton’s theory of colours, for which he would provide the prize. The ensuing report described Marat’s winning entry as providing, “une doctrine nouvelle [laquelle]... aura contribué à opérer cette révolution”, and Gourdin promoted it in the Norman press, expressing astonishment that only Rouen had rewarded Marat’s discoveries, since it was not necessary to agree with an author’s “système” in order to reward the quality of their work.

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246 Marat was garlanded on 6 August 1783 for his *Mémoire* (published in 1784); on 2 August 1786 for his essay, "Déterminer les vraies causes des couleurs que présentent: les lames de verre, les bulles de savon et d’autres matières extrêmement minces" (published in *Mémoires académiques*, 1788); and on 1 August 1787 for a "Mémoire sur la chaleur latente" (unpublished). Robillard de Beaurepaire, ed., *Extraits d’un manuscrit de Dom Gourdin… contenant le recueil des dissertations lues par lui à l’Académie de Rouen* (Rouen, 1867), 20-32, especially 29.


Gourdin’s reflections on their relationship have survived as annotations on his reports, and while these should be treated with caution, owing to the changed circumstances in which some were written, or altered, after Marat’s death, three aspects of Marat’s character emerge, which correlate with other anecdotes. These regard his casual attitude to scrounging money (”un homme sans moeurs... sans délicatesse”), his inflated self-estimation (“intrigant, jaloux du mérite des autres, se croyant seul un homme de génie”), and a tendency to undermine his observations through their harsh presentation (“ton de jactance et de dureté insupportable”). Despite this, Gourdin who held Marat in high esteem, at least until his death, and had himself described Marat as an “homme de génie”, observed in 1788 that, “Sa manière de procéder par les faits est sans contredit la meilleure. Mais le défaut de modération en parlant des autres, et même de modestie en parlant de lui-même, lui fait autant d’ennemis que la nouveauté de ses systèmes qui contredisent ceux adoptés par les plus grands maîtres”. Here, in a nutshell, was the clearest explanation, from someone with no axe to grind, of some of the root causes for Marat’s lack of pre-revolutionary success.

While Marat’s encounters with the Académie were initially conducted with a degree of politesse, those with his competitors, particularly in the revived field of medical electricity, or electrotherapy, were rather more bruising. Such disputes revealed a vicious rivalry amongst those ‘penumbra’ scientists competing for similar audiences and elite recognition. Here, he found himself drawn into polemics with abbés Bertholon de Saint-Lazare and Sans, accused of plagiarism by Ledru père (Comus) et fils, and the victim of a violent confrontation with another aeronaut, and future académicien, Jacques Charles in March 1783, which ended with Marat’s sword being snapped in half, and an aborted duel. This was Marat’s second violent incident since his arrival in Paris.

The polemics between Bertholon and Marat, which lasted for six years, were notable for Bertholon’s ability to take advantage of the Académie’s hostility against Marat to bolster his own credentials. Their enmity began in 1782, during the Vissery lightning-rod case, when Bertholon, a

251 Ibid, 32, 14. Gourdin alleged that after giving him 80 livres for a Dollond telescope, he received a microscope of lower value. Marat also borrowed £500 from Zucchi during his stay in England, and a large sum from Antoine Boucher de Saint-Sauveur in January 1790.
252 Ibid, 14 & 30.
253 See also Coquard, Marat, 155-179.
255 See ch.1, 42.
well-connected member of the science establishment, fervent advocate for lightning rods, and arguably the most prominent advocate of electrical cures in Europe, explained in a letter to Vissery’s lawyer that he thought it best to simply ignore Marat’s evidence against the efficacy of lightning rods by dismissing him as a, “fou... qui a cru viser à la célébrité en attaquant beaucoup de grands hommes... Ce qui enrage cet homme, c’est que personne n’en parle ni ne le réfute; il voulait à toute force qu’une personne d’un nom connu le réfutâ€”. The two men were like chalk and cheese, with Bertholon, an armchair savant turned demonstrator, stuffing his books – mainly focused on the relationship between electricity and organic matter – with citations from members of Europe’s leading Academies. The ad hominem nature of his hostility appears to have been fuelled by Marat’s mockery of his proposal to drive enormous “earthquake-conductors” into the ground to negate the effects of volcanoes and earthquakes, on the basis that they correlated with thunder and lightning as ‘des phénomènes électriques’.

Two years later they clashed again, following the publication of Marat’s prize-winning Mémoire. During the 1780s, electrotherapy had emerged from the doldrums after a twenty-year hiatus, following the SRM’s appointment of Pierre-Jean-Etienne Mauduyt de la Varenne to evaluate its efficacy, which led to a plethora of texts eulogizing the “wonderful virtues” of electrical medicine. One science historian, who highlighted the lack of serious theory behind these texts, cited Marat and the well-respected English scientist Tiberius Cavallo – who was also critical of Bertholon – as rare examples of critical spirits willing to temper such blind enthusiasm. Yet the official response to Marat’s carefully argued Mémoire was one of total indifference at a time when the medical authorities were handing out sinecures to far less experienced practitioners, albeit ones who had not yet been branded “charlatans”.


261 In 1783, Le Dru (Comus) was awarded a royal warrant by the PFM to run Paris’ first “hospice médico-electrique” for paralytics, although it was subsequently revoked in 1784. One (positive) review did eventually appear in the Journal de médecine, chirurgie, pharmacie etc. (June 1785), cited in De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 400-407.
“un authentique savant des Lumières”, by noting how his ingenious experiments were often let down by banal conclusions, lauded Marat’s Mémoire as his most rigorous and balanced work. Setting the tone with its epigraph, “Everything in moderation”, Marat, who was highly sceptical about the increasing use of electrotherapy, set out to establish what exactly medical electricity was good for, how it should be applied and its relative efficacy for different illnesses. In particular, he challenged Bertholon’s argument that illness was caused by an imbalance of electrical fluid, and that if electrotherapy failed, it must be due to the shoddiness of the method employed or the impatience of the practitioner. Bertholon’s work had received a glowing review in the Académie’s house journal, where veteran chemist Pierre-Joseph Macquer had praised it for citing over two hundred “Sçavans ou Médecins”, amongst whom, “M. Mauduyt tient un des premiers rangs”. Macquer, Mauduyt and Bertholon were all members of the SRM, while the first two were also graduates of the PFM, suggesting a degree of corporate solidarity in their mutual endorsement. It might appear from this that its judgement was based as much upon the therapist’s social standing as their therapy’s empirical status.

All these experiences only strengthened Marat’s conviction that elite bodies tended to protect their own, monopolistic interests over any other considerations, while revealing the existence of a strong “esprit de corps”, which could easily dismiss outsider challenges with little need for justification. Following the Académie’s rejection of what he considered to be groundbreaking discoveries in the field of Optics in 1780, Marat became increasingly immoderate in his language, and these disagreements would eventually lead to his intemperate dismissal of virtually the entire scientific establishment as, “peu doués de l’esprit d’observation, méconnaissant l’art des expériences et s’essayant sans cesse sur des sujets rebattus”, and thus incapable of promoting innovation.

Generally speaking, historians have either paid scant attention to Marat’s pre-revolutionary career or retrospectively used his extreme political reputation to discredit it. One

VI

262 Coquard, Marat, 127.
263 Horace, Satires (Cambridge, MA, 1989), 106 – “Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines”.
265 Journal des Sçavans (May 1781), 293-294 [via Gallica].
267 Les Charlatans modernes, 14-15. For a modern assessment of the uniquely visual logic of his experimentation, see Blay, “Sur quelques enjeux des théories de la lumière”, 135-150.
example that illustrates this phenomenon comes from a German physicist who could describe Marat in 1785 as a, “man whose name is most praiseworthy among electrical researchers and natural philosophers”, and then change his mind completely in 1796, by writing, “I am far from counting among these explanations – by which science has gained – the ideas which were originated by this monster in human society, Marat”.

In his detailed assessment of Marat’s science, Gillispie positioned him in a chapter on ‘Scientists and Charlatans’ alongside the controversial pioneer of animal magnetism, Franz Mesmer, leading to a degree of confusion about the nature of their affinity, but went on to demonstrate how, overall, Marat’s work revealed considerable competence – certainly no less than other, more successful practitioners – and that he was taken seriously enough to be visited by Benjamin Franklin, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg and Volta, amongst others.

From a historical perspective, given the profusion of enthusiasts seeking to cash in on the eighteenth-century vogue for scientific novelty during this time, it was hardly surprising that the Académie should have considered one of its main roles as policing their professional boundaries in a bid to draw a clear line between science and pseudoscience. Marat was unfortunate to start publishing soon after Mesmer’s arrival in Paris in 1778, which coincided not only with the rapid spread of mesmerism across France but also an unprecedented boom in scientific publication. The Académie’s response was to redouble its efforts to reinforce the legitimacy of their control over scientific knowledge, including the formation in 1784 of several official commissions into mesmerism, which concluded that it was a sham. It also led, ultimately, to a more closed, and professionalized, environment. Somehow, Marat became muddled in with the mesmerists, despite repeatedly expressing his reservations: “La science du Magnétisme est à peine au berceau; si toutefois on peut appeler de ce nom une théorie sans principes et sans loix; une branche de physique dont l’objet échappe aux sens... où tout est prodige”. The problem, as Marat explained

271 Jean-Paul Marat, Mémoire sur l’électricité médicale (Paris, 1784), 110, hereafter Mémoire. Marat also pronounced against mesmerism in Les Charlatans modernes, 6-7. See also Gillispie, Science and Polity in France, 257-258; and Darnton, Mesmerism, 164. While neither Gillispie nor Darnton claimed that Marat supported mesmerism, their close association of both men, and Darnton’s further association of Marat with the Mesmerist supporters, Jean-Pierre Brisot and Jean-Louis Carra, regarding their mutual antagonism towards the Académie, have contributed to this confusion. This led Jessica Riskin, for example, to link Marat’s desire for revenge with his keen interest in Mesmerism as a “vehicle” for political progress, Science in the Age of Sensibility, 194-195.
in a letter promoting his own expertise in the related field of electrotherapy, was that physicians rarely understood physics and vice versa, making him the only person able to, “porter à son point de perfection cette belle branche de l’art de guérir”.\textsuperscript{272} This may appear like typical Marat \textit{braggadocio} but it carries two important truths. First, his broad medical training – with extensive, hands-on physiological experience – gave him a more holistic approach than was usual, and secondly, his resistance against a tendency to prioritize book knowledge over experience. Marat’s prioritization of visual evidence over theory proved to be another source of disagreement, one which revealed not just the socio-cultural construction of acceptable knowledge but also the overriding influence of his medical formation.\textsuperscript{273} Ironically, it was Marat’s strident opposition to the prevailing “esprit de système” – supposedly shared by Enlightenment ‘orthodoxy’ but frequently honoured in the breach – which condemned any vision of the physical world based upon mental constructs over information gathered by the senses that appeared to underpin much of this conflict.\textsuperscript{274} Whether tackling philosophy, medicine or science, Marat’s approach was often the same. He would read voraciously and then begin by dismissing most existing knowledge as confused or inept before attempting to replace it with his own explanation. As he wrote in the preface to his earliest publication on the ‘enigma’ of Man, highlighting the shortcomings of dividing such a study into separate fields for physicians and philosophers: “The spirit of system afterwards spread its dark veil over this dawn of knowledge and the philosophers of that age fell into the same errors with their predecessors (sic)... they built systems, and instead of deducing them from their observations, they wrested their observations to quadrate with their systems”.\textsuperscript{275}

In seeking to understand the causes of Marat’s various disagreements, one cannot help asking why he created so many problems for himself by confronting various vested interests so forcefully, rather than in a more subtle manner. The discovery of the small theological library lent out to Marat may provide part of the answer, for it suggests that part of the reason may be traced to his exposure to the typical polemical discourse that framed much of his early Calvinist education. No doubt his well-attested intellectual arrogance and irritable personality, which frequently led him to display intemperance or impatience where restraint was required, played another part. He also suffered from a chronic illness that may have contributed to his abrasiveness. After working in an electrified environment for fifteen hours a day for three years, Marat claimed that it had made no difference to either his “tempérament fort irritable” – a rare admission – or his chronic spasms and

\textsuperscript{272} Letter to RSL (20 Sept 1783), in De Cock, \textit{Marat avant 1789}, 346-348.

\textsuperscript{273} For a discussion of Marat’s visual logic, see Blay, "Sur quelques enjeux des théories de la lumière", 135-150.

\textsuperscript{274} See also Sutton, "Electric Medicine and Mesmerism": 376.

\textsuperscript{275} \textit{Philosophical Essay}, i-x-xl.
skin condition. While he was perfectly capable of nurturing social relationships, it is clear that he lacked essential diplomatic skills for succeeding in ancien régime society. Driven by a powerful desire for recognition, which he referenced frequently during his lifetime, later confessing that, “le désir sincère d’être utile à l’humanité”, along with his “passion dominante de l’amour de la gloire” had determined his choice of study, making him avoid any subject, “sur lequel je ne pouvais pas me promettre d’arriver au vrai, à de grands résultats, et d’être original”. This was not so much ‘glory' as conceit, but rather as a nobler, more classical ambition to be recognized as a “bienfaiteur de l’humanité”.

This drive played a vital role in Marat’s formation for two main reasons. First, it could only be nourished by publication, a point he made in his earliest work, where after contrasting military and academic “glory”, he identified the advancement of knowledge as the highest source of recognition, for the greatest men aspired to the “glory... of authors”, which they sought in “science”. Secondly, because it was a virtuous, rather than selfish, product of self-love – Mankind’s principal and unconscious driving force, which usually manifested itself in a desire for survival, sex or silver. Such beliefs would later play a vital role in his political thought, when, for example, in a draft version for a ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man’, published in August 1789, he denied, contrary to most other contributions, that human beings were naturally benevolent. Attributing “self-love” as the guiding force behind all human behaviour, and by extension, history itself, meant that society’s survival depended on its ability to regulate this disruptive drive by meeting the basic needs of all its members: “Chaque homme apporte au monde en naissant... un amour sans bornes pour lui-même, sentiment impérieux, auquel est attachée la conservation du genre humain, mais source féconde des querelles, des combats, des violences.”

So what conclusions can we draw from these early encounters with the intellectual, medical and scientific establishments and do they bring us any closer to Baker’s “compelling intellectual challenge” of trying to make sense of Marat? His first work had ambitiously attempted to establish a new science of Man by explaining how an indivisible soul might act upon a divisible body, but its poor reception set a pattern by which Marat would measure future failure, as

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276 Mémoire, 34. Cabanès thinks this painful condition, which Marat treated with medicinal baths, was probably chronic pruritus, Marat inconnu, 196-206. See also, letter to Brissot (1782), Correspondance, 9-10.
277 Journal de la République française #98 (14 Jan 1793), OP, viii:5499.
278 An Essay on the Human Soul, 40.
280 La Constitution, ou Projet de Declaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen (Aug 1789) [hereafter, La Constitution], OP, i:73 (my italics)
he came to perceive each setback as part of a wider scheme to preserve the status quo against the challenge he posed. It was no coincidence that a compulsive need to “dissiper les ténèbres” would manifest itself in many guises, ranging from his treatment of impaired sight to investigations into optics, and the title of his first newspaper, *Le Moniteur Patriote* (1789), not to mention its omnipresence within his rhetoric. It was not hard for Marat to transfer his highly attuned “esprit d’observateur” from medicine to science, giving him an almost unique background amongst the experimentalists. In each field of study, Marat promised to take subjects “shrouded in confusion” and cut through the undergrowth to lead the reader down a carefully cleared path, and “tut montrer au doigt”. 282 He would then ‘reveal’ the presence of an invisible fluid, responsible for transmitting the differentiated, but interrelated, forces – nervous, igneous, luminous or electrical – that underpinned the natural world. As he explained, “Je me renferme dans ma chambre obscure, j’ai recours à ma méthode d’observer, je rends visible le fluide… plus d’hypothèses, plus de conjectures, plus de probabilités: tout devient intuitif, la science se forme”. 283

Marat’s style of argumentation, which tended to heap acrimony on those who opposed his views rather than tackle them head-on, and alternate between logical reasoning and lacerating polemic was not science by any normal definition, appearing to bear a closer resemblance to the hellfire preaching of Calvinist pastors than any recognizable model of scientific discourse. As Gillispie put it, he would “leap on a hobby horse and ride it through a whole science laying waste to everything else”, before erecting his own “gimmicks” (theories) in their place. 284 Marat’s tendency to turn measured, critical comment into an onslaught only served to undermine what followed making it hard for people to take him seriously. 285 Moreover, his rudeness not only failed to meet the basic requirements of academic intercourse, but also lost him the support of potential allies, such as Le Roy. Yet Marat knew how to behave when required, as his production of a commercially successful and carefully annotated translation of Newton’s *Opticks*, which is still in print, proved. 286 Despite this, Marat was still able to operate within a lively public sphere of patronage, publication, demonstration and competition, as a respected member of the wider scientific community.

Whether there was any truth in Marat’s accounts of his various conflicts is less important than his perception that his contributions were being systematically ignored. One way to view Marat’s approach is to grasp his understanding of how new ideas came into being. Since he believed that

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282 *De l’homme* ii:379. See also p.36.
281 Letter to RSL (20 Nov 1783), *Correspondance*, 42.
285 Ibid, 314; see also Gillispie’s ‘Intervention’ in *Marat homme de science?*, 151–154. For an alternate interpretation of Marat’s unorthodox approach, see Peter Heering, “Public Experiments and Their Analysis with the Replication Method”, *Science & Education* 16, no.6 (Sept 2014): 637-645.
strong passions propelled human endeavour and these could only be opposed by equally strong passions, then conflict was an inevitable by-product of progress. In the refined world of Enlightenment sociability, what others perceived as excesses were often the logical consequence of sticking rigidly to such beliefs.

A useful model for exploring some of the reasons behind this failure to be taken seriously can be found in Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer’s account of the construction, promotion and legitimation of scientific knowledge within the seventeenth-century English scientific community.287 Their explanation of the reasons behind the poor reception of Boyle’s experimental air-pump relied on their analysis of the deployment of three related technologies: material, literary and social. The “material technology”, referred to the ability of other scientists to construct and operate equipment that would replicate Boyle’s experiments, the “literary technology” referred to the means used to transmit the results of these experiments to those unable to attend, while the “social technology” referred to the conventions used by scientists in validating each other’s “knowledge claims”. The crucial element shared by each was trust, and since the technologies were closely intertwined, failure in one sphere could lead to failure in all, since any suspicions over a colleague’s integrity could cast doubt over their work, especially when it challenged prevailing models. Similarly, if Marat could not be trusted to behave like a ‘gentleman’, then the Académie, and leading journals, would remain closed to his discoveries. While many – including perhaps, most importantly, Voltaire – objected to Marat’s abuse of the second ‘technology’, his seeming inability to participate in the third would prove another factor that helped to scupper his chances of success. Moreover, since Marat lacked “mondanité” and did not belong to Voltaire’s well-defined society of ‘Gens de lettres’ – “l’esprit du siècle les a rendus pour la plupart aussi propres pour le monde que pour le cabinet” – his findings were ignored.288 In other words, it would seem that a large part of his pre-revolutionary failure as an aspiring savant had less to do with any lack of “savoir” and far more to do with a lack of “savoir-faire”.289

When Marat’s first scientific monograph appeared, he regretfully explained that, “avant de batîr il faut détruire. Triste nécessité, dont personne ne sent plus le désagrément que moi”.290 Eight years of such bruising encounters brought a natural evolution to this credo in the epigraph of

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290 Recherches physiques sur le feu, 3.
his final work – “Elles surnageront malgré vent et marée” [“They will survive against the odds”] – while a footnote referring to “les sourdes menées de mes adversaires”, foreshadowing his future troubles, pointedly remarked, “On n’est pas fait pour être l’apôtre de la vérité quand on n’a pas le courage d’en être le martyr”.\footnote{Mémoires académiques, vi (fn).} It might appear that Marat was processing rejection through a Christian filter in order to reassure himself that in order to set the truth free, personal sacrifice was the price to be paid. All these conflicts can only have hardened him for future ones, while helping to consolidate his thinking on the relationship between knowledge, progress and the innate conservatism of institutional power. After 1789, this combative stance would provide the backbone behind his uncompromising Ami du peuple persona, but under the Ancien Régime, it was the wrong attitude, at the wrong time, in the wrong setting. Given these circumstances, it is hard to imagine another revolutionary figure who was quite so well prepared to cope with the turbulence ahead. Marat’s pre-revolutionary failure has led some historians towards a \textit{reductio ad absurdum} of ascribing the primary motivation behind his radicalism as one of vengeance against those he held responsible, trying to damn him with his own words: “Vers l’époque de la révolution, excédé des persécutions que j’éprouvais depuis si longtemps de la part de l’Académie des Sciences, j’embrassai avec ardeur l’occasion qui se présentait de repousser mes oppresseurs et de me mettre à ma place”.\footnote{Publiciste de la République française #147 (19 March 1793), \textit{OP} ix:5875; Darnton, \textit{Mesmerism}, 93–95. As previously noted, Darnton followed a position originally promoted by Gottschalk (see Intro, 15).} However, as we shall see in the next chapter, it fails to take into account the fact that such radicalism was almost fully formed before he had even begun to tilt at the Académie’s windmills.
Chapter Two:
Pre-revolutionary formation – Political

On 19 March 1793, while defending himself against accusations of fomenting unrest, Marat told his readers, “J’arriva à la révolution avec des idées faites, et j’étais si familier avec les principes de la haute politique qu’ils étaient devenus pour moi des lieux communs.” 293 He was proud enough of this fact to take time out from his frenetic career as a journalist-politician to oversee re-editions of his two main pre-revolutionary works of political thought – Plan de législation criminelle (1782/1790, but written in 1777) and Chains of Slavery (1774/1793). Together with his earlier Philosophical Essay, these texts constituted the basis for Marat’s moral philosophy and main political principles – “All human institutions are grounded on human passions and supported by them only” – so any understanding of his revolutionary role must start here. 294

This chapter will explore some of these “idées faites”, and their influences, by suggesting that Marat’s grasp of the possibilities of political action came about through a combination of two principles: a theoretical one, based on his adaptation of classical republican ideology filtered through an English commonwealth paradigm, and a practical one, based on his experience of activist politics during a ten-year stay in England between 1765 and 1776. This period also provided him with the example of two highly personalized and successful models of political opposition: the extraparliamentary agitation of journalist-politician, John Wilkes, and the scathing polemic of the anonymous ‘Junius’. As noted earlier, the documentation for this phase of Marat’s life is very sparse, reliant largely upon his own accounts, and, as a result, historians and biographers have tended to skirt over his English residency, and certainly his lesser known Plan, rather than viewing them as key stages in his political development. 295 Hammersley, who studied the English background to Chains in some detail, has suggested that this lack of interest reflects a widely held view that since the Revolution effectively ‘made’ Marat, what preceded it held little importance. However, a slew of recent studies, including her own, have shown how many of the revolutionaries, including Marat, drew much from the seventeenth-century English commonwealth tradition and its afterlife. 296

293 Publiciste de la Révolution française #147 (19 March 1793), OP, ix:5875.
294 Chains (1774), 4420.
296 Rachel Hammersley, “Jean-Paul Marat’s The Chains of Slavery in Britain and France, 1774–1833”, The Historical Journal vol.48, no.3 (2005): 641. For the most detailed treatment to date of the influence of the English political tradition on Marat, see Hammersley, The English republican tradition, 137-152. For a broader overview of the English influence on
Besides exploring these influences, this chapter also traces the origins of Marat’s “Ami du peuple” persona, and many of his most radical ideas, such as the individual right to steal from necessity, and the collective right to resist tyranny, back to this period. Indeed, both these rights had their origins in longstanding religious debates over poverty and tyranny that Marat appeared to be familiar with. The emerging arena of popular politics in late eighteenth-century England provided an ideal test-bed for Marat to reflect upon notions of liberty, popular sovereignty, the freedom of the press, and its ability to influence the public sphere. In particular, the chapter will uncover the roots of Marat’s obsession with the language of vigilance, corruption, virtue and despotism along with his long-standing concern for social reform. If the Revolution played little role in forming Marat’s political ideas, it opened an unprecedented window of opportunity by giving him the ideal platform for putting many of these ideas into practice.

In a letter sent to the president of the National Assembly on 23 August 1789 in the context of the debate around the new constitution, Marat expressed his admiration at how “l’esprit public” in England had resisted the ministry’s attacks on Wilkes by forming “une barrière nouvelle autour du temple de la liberté”.297 He did not explain who Wilkes was or why his example mattered, suggesting that he assumed that most deputies would have known him by reputation, one which he had first gained in 1763, following the controversy surrounding his unprecedented attack on King George III in The North Briton, which mocked the Scottish influence over the King, particularly his mentor, Lord Bute.298 In what was considered an unforgivable breach of convention, issue 45 (23 April), which was penned by Wilkes, denounced the King’s speech to Parliament as sanctioning “the most odious measures”, and skirted close to treason by appealing to “the English subject’s prerogative”.299 After the use of a general warrant to authorize the arrest of all those involved in the paper’s production (49 in total), Wilkes was discharged as the result of parliamentary privilege, but in a rousing speech

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298 Collections of Wilkes’ speeches were reviewed in the French press. See, for example, a review of The Speeches of John Wilkes (1777), in L’Esprit des journaux, français et étrangers, Tome III (s.l., March 1778), 374-375. Google Ngram reveals mentions of Wilkes in numerous journals after 1770, including Louis Bachaumont, Mémoires secrets (27 July 1764), 229 & (12 Jan 1774), 269, Journal encyclopédique, vol 8 (1770), 142, Journal historique et littéraire, vol 3 (1776), 205, Journal politique de Bruxelles (1780), 48, and Veillées d’un français (1789), 324 [all via Google Books].
Before the Court of Common Pleas, which was widely reported, he argued that, like his fellow citizens, he was protected against the warrant’s illegality by the great English common-law tradition of liberty, provoking widespread indignation and the coining of the popular slogan, “Wilkes and Liberty!” When the printers brought an unprecedented joint suit against the Crown for false arrest and trespass, the jury, in defiance of the Crown, found in their favour, in a landmark case that eventually led to the abolition of general warrants, the last vestige of absolute monarchical power.³⁰⁰ What the monarch lost, the (middle-class) people “firm to the cause of liberty” gained, as they discovered a new power to check government.³⁰¹ Wilkes’ freedom was short-lived, for he was soon declared an outlaw following a conviction for seditious libel and blasphemy – not covered by his parliamentary immunity – causing him to flee to France, where he remained between 1763 and 1768, meeting leading literary figures and supporters, such as Diderot and d’Holbach.³⁰²

Upon his return to England four years later, Wilkes stood for the London seat of Middlesex, which he won on 28 March 1768 on a wave of anti-government sentiment, before surrendering himself to the authorities to face trial against his outstanding charges.³⁰³ Parliament’s repeated quashing of his election – on three separate occasions – provoked a nationwide, petitioning campaign to oppose this decision, as well as considerable unrest. Wilkes’s mobilization of extra-parliamentary forces through the press and other media, in order to capture public opinion – the so-called “Wilkite phenomenon” – played a key role in introducing an alternative political culture within England thanks to the spread of newspapers beyond London.³⁰⁴ What Marat would have noted above all during this campaign was that the effectiveness of oppositional politics channeled through a critical press – whose rising circulation revealed an insatiable appetite for news – was not enough.³⁰⁵ Wilkes also needed a strategy to grab the public’s attention, and his tribulations provided the ideal model. Through a willingness to challenge the authorities, he was able to cultivate a large following that accepted the identification of his cause with the far greater one of English rights and freedoms, leading one paper to comment that, “His popularity increased in proportion to his

³⁰⁰ See also Marat’s strong promotion of the idea of juries in his Plan, p.94. Ibid, 123 & 161-162.
³⁰¹ Letter from Wilkes to Lord Temple, in Ibid, 162.
³⁰² See Ibid, 96-164 for a good account of the case’s aftermath.
³⁰⁵ By 1750, over a million people were reading a paper every week. O’Gorman, The Long Eighteenth Century, 137-129.
difficulties and his persecution raised him new friends in every quarter”. Wilkes kept his supporters informed by tailoring his ongoing narrative – via pamphlet, handbill, cartoon, ballad or print – to different audiences, so that it could be passed around, pasted on walls or published. No longer confined to Parliament, political discussion seeped into taverns, clubs and debating societies across Hanoverian England.

The crisis came at a volatile time, coinciding with a postwar period of economic depression and following a succession of short-lived ministries during the early years of George III’s reign. Large numbers would meet outside Wilkes’ prison to chant anti-government slogans in his support, but when a restless crowd gathered on 10 May 1768 intending to ‘return’ him for the opening of Parliament, the residing magistrate read the Riot Act twice before ordering soldiers to disperse it, killing seven and wounding fourteen, in what became known as the ‘St Georges’ Fields Massacre’. Marat later claimed to have been present, along with “20,000” others, at this riot, and referred directly to the lessons to be learnt from the “fameuse affaire de Wilkes” and proscription of general warrants. We know that Marat followed these events closely, because aside from references to Wilkes and his supporters in his writings, he was described by someone who knew him as, “a Wilkte [who] was very eager in defending in conversation all opposition to Government”. After Wilkes’ release in 1770, he too up his seat and was also elected Alderman, Sheriff, and finally, Lord Mayor of London in 1774, while his status as a living symbol of liberty spread as far as America.

It was against this backdrop of continuing conflict with the ministry over the repeated quashing of Wilkes’ election that a fragmented Whig opposition found an important constitutional issue around which they could rally. One of its key elements was a gifted writer called Junius, who sent almost seventy letters to the Public Advertiser between November 1768 and January 1772, and whose sustained campaign against leading government figures helped to focus public attention on the ensuing crisis. While Junius was not directly attached to the Wilkite cause, his withering exposure of ministerial abuses would eventually force the resignation of both the ministry and its leader, the Duke of Grafton, on 28 January 1770. The forceful, omniscient style of Junius’ letters, ...
which concealed polished invective and aphorisms within artfully arranged clauses – for example, “There is a holy mistaken zeal in politics as well as in religion. By persuading others, we convince ourselves” – was widely admired, gaining them a wide readership and considerable notoriety, which lasted well into the nineteenth century.312 While their authorship has never been proven, a likely candidate has been identified, and while there is no consensus on the origins of his pseudonym, it seems most likely that it derived from Juvenal (Decimus Junius Juvenalis), given that his Satires denounced political corruption – the substitution of private interest for the public good – and were lauded as a model of style.313 Besides providing a knowing reference to readers, it also ensured the author’s protection from prosecution. Their importance derived from their presentation of a cumulative sense of political crisis, which took indirect aim at the King through a blistering array of attacks on his government – “A man more hostile to the ministry than I am, would not so often remind them of their duty.”314

Junius opened his campaign in January 1769 with a sustained attack upon the Duke of Grafton’s ministry for venality and incompetence, provoking an ill-judged defence of one of its members, the Marquess of Granby, by a supporter, which gave Junius an early opportunity to showcase his wit.315 These early exchanges cemented Junius’ reputation as someone who could deftly deflate pomposity, bringing him not just a large audience but also the awareness that he could use this platform to influence public opinion. He proceeded to expose a perceived rottenness at the heart of the administration in a series of letters attacking the practice of dispensing government posts through patronage rather than ability. One appointment that particularly vexed him was the government’s enforced replacement of Wilkes by a Colonel Luttrell for his Middlesex seat, and Junius attacked its young and inexperienced leader as unsuited for high office.316

312 Letter XXXV (19 Dec 1769), in Cannon, The Letters of Junius, 163-164. McCracken suggested a circulation of 2800 rising to 4800 with his notorious letter to the King (35), but a much higher total circulation due to their serialization across a variety of journals, Junius and Philip Francis, 18-19.
313 Linguistic analysis has pointed to Sir Philip Francis, a War Office clerk, who later became a member of the ruling India council, MP, and co-founder of the reforming ‘Friends of the People’ Society, Alvar Ellegård, Who was Junius? (Stockholm, 1962). See also John Cannon, “Philip Francis”, in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 2004).
316 Letter XXXII (15 Nov 1769), Ibid, 152.
Junius’ most notorious letter, which appeared towards the end of the year, was addressed to the King, triggering the prosecution of one of his publishers for seditious libel.\textsuperscript{317} It questioned the King’s judgement in surrounding himself with “placemen” (his own appointments) whose dismissal of freeholders’ electoral rights threatened the constitution.\textsuperscript{318} Striking at the heart of the matter, he urged the monarch to, “distinguish between the conduct which becomes the permanent dignity of a King and that which serves only to promote the temporary interest and miserable ambition of a minister”, encouraging him to annul Wilkes’ persecution, which had taken up so much government business.\textsuperscript{319} The only way to solve this crisis, he concluded, was to dissolve parliament and call fresh elections, in order to give, “The English nation... an opportunity of recalling a trust which they find has been scandalously abused”.\textsuperscript{320} This appeal to the nation’s most fundamental rights came just a few years after the publication of Sir William Blackstone’s influential \textit{Commentaries on the Laws of England} (1765), which set the benchmark for discussions on the relationship between the constitution and the laws. For Junius, the English constitution served to preserve an ideal balance between king, lords and commoners in conformity with natural law, and the purpose of politics was to safeguard these ancient liberties so that the law could defend all citizens equally.\textsuperscript{321}

Where Wilkes’s example provided Marat with the idea of political metamorphosis through his identification with the cause of liberty, that of Junius demonstrated the potency of well-aimed polemic, and the importance of the freedom of the press, and it was this example that Marat latched onto when he later named a short-lived paper after him.\textsuperscript{322} However, it was their methods rather than their politics that provided Marat’s main inspiration, for Junius privately resisted parliamentary reform, while Wilkes’ own agenda was also less ‘radical’ than it appeared, for the movement that took his name was initially mobilized to support his disputes with successive governments rather than pursue any programme of reform.\textsuperscript{323} A disagreement over the future direction of the Bill of Rights Society, which had been set up by his supporters in 1769 as a pressure group to pay off Wilkes’ debts and campaign for electors’ rights, led to its split in 1771, and consequent decline of the popular

\textsuperscript{317} Horace Almon, whom Marat would later use as one of his publisher-booksellers for \textit{Chains}, was the only one of six publishers prosecuted, following the letter’s republication in \textit{The London Museum}.

\textsuperscript{318} \textit{Ibid}, 171.

\textsuperscript{319} \textit{Ibid}, 161 & 163-164.

\textsuperscript{320} \textit{Ibid}, 170. This letter was the final straw in the collapse of the Duke of Grafton’s ministry the following month, and his replacement by Lord North. The parallels with Marat’s later invocation of the right to recall corrupt, or incompetent, deputies from the National Assembly are striking. See, for example, \textit{Ami du peuple} \#28 (8 Oct 1789), \textit{OP}, i:255.

\textsuperscript{321} O’Gorman, \textit{The Long Eighteenth Century}, 127 & 288.

\textsuperscript{322} \textit{Le Junius français} \#1-13 (2-24 June 1790). He referred to this “exemple Anglais” in \textit{Ami du peuple} \#102 (19 Jan 1790), \textit{OP}, i:621. For more detail, see de Cock, \textit{Oeuvres complètes}, Vol.1, ch.11 [via Google Books].

\textsuperscript{323} Letter LXVII to John Wilkes (7 Sept 1771), \textit{Ibid}, 404-413.
Indeed, the patriotic allusions in Wilkes’ writings, and at supporters’ meetings, suggested an agenda that tended more towards ‘Little Englander’ than political reform. However, there is little doubt that these issues, and the manner in which Wilkes raised them, greatly helped to promote the idea of the public accountability of executive power. In this respect, the construction and popularization of a radical tradition derived in large part from the constitutional arrangements of the Glorious Revolution (1688), in particular the Bill of Rights (1689), was one of the more positive, if indirect, aspects of the Wilkite phenomenon. Junius’ fierce hostility against the corrupting effects of the influence of the Crown over the legislature through its use of placemen and pensions – “the depravity of modern times” – and instinctive distrust of both executive and judiciary power was one that Marat would also channel through his political work. Above all, what Marat took from both men’s defiant examples, was that the price of liberty was one of perpetual vigilance, and that the freedom of the press (and juries) formed, as Junius put it, the, “Palladium of all the civil, political and religious rights of an Englishman”.

The need for a systematic and perpetual ‘opposition’ – which became known as the ‘Country Party’ – to counteract the worst effects of the ‘Court Party’, was first articulated by the Tory philosopher-politician, Viscount Bolingbroke, who published a series of important pamphlets intended to promote the ideal of the ‘public good’ (‘res publica’), including On the Spirit of Patriotism (1736). His vision of a Patriot King (1738) who could unify the nation under his rule was a utopian yardstick as much as a practical book of advice, but its idealistic discourse on ‘patriotism’ became a mainstay of English political rhetoric. Bolingbroke’s ideas were important not just for their influence on the Wilkite movement, but also because they were the main conduit of English commonwealth ideas into French political discourse due to his long exile in France, and their translation, along with a slew of related works.

This commonwealth tradition came out of the writings produced during the Interregnum – the post-Civil War period between the King’s execution (Charles I) and the Restoration (Charles II) –

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324 Its more radical members favoured constitutional reform, including shorter Parliaments, the exclusion of placemen, and fairer representation for the growing cities.
326 Letter XLV to the Public Advertiser (12 April 1771), Canon, The Letters of Junius, 231.
329 David Armitage, “A patriot for whom? The after-lives of Bolingbroke’s Patriot King”, Journal of British Studies 36 (October 1997): 397-418, 404. Rachel Hammersley, French Revolutionaries and English Republicans: The Cordeliers Club, 1790–1794 (Woodbridge, 2011), 10-13. In 1789, Bolingbroke’s Patriot King was one of several important English political works from this period to be reissued.
when Oliver Cromwell ruled as Lord Protector, of which the most influential were Marchamont Nedham’s *The Excellencie of a Free-State* (1656) and James Harrington’s *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656). In fact, with its proposal for an ideal republican constitution based upon land ownership, *The Commonwealth* marked a breakthrough in English political theory by offering a marked contrast to Thomas Hobbes’ vision of a constitution based upon a social contract with the monarch in *Leviathan* (1651). Harrington’s main achievement here was to substitute the idea of “public and active virtue” for “private and voluntary subjection”.330 Since it was largely concerned with reforming the English parliamentary system, in particular the corrupting effect of royal patronage on the independence of its representatives, both individually and as a body, it provoked much debate, although its influence was far greater abroad.331

Recent work by intellectual historians has shown the Italian theorist Niccolò Machiavelli to be the most influential exponent of the classical republican ideal in early modern political discourse, particularly through his *Discorsi* (*Discourses on Livy*, 1531).332 Inspired by classical history and writings, it focused on such concepts as civic virtue – broadly summarized as a selfless dedication to the welfare of the citizen’s community, even at the cost of their own interests – political liberty and mixed government. However, while Harrington’s work helped to rethink English politics through the prism of Machiavelli’s vision of active citizenship, it relocated the focus on the moral corruption of civic virtue from the individual to the group charged with administration, as the main threat to liberty and cause of government decay.333 Many of the solutions Harrington advocated were intended as preventative measures against the tyranny of an overly powerful king, including the creation of opposition parties, despite his warning against the dangers of faction. During the early eighteenth century, a neo-Harringtonian movement known as The Commonwealthmen, a group of outspoken reformers active in the Country Party, helped to revive republican ideas that had flourished during the English Civil War, promoting, in particular, natural rights, the separation of powers, religious freedom and resistance to tyranny.334 The most notable of these were Algernon Sidney’s *Discourses concerning Government* (1698), John Toland’s *The Art of Governing by Parties* (1701), Joseph Addison’s play, *Cato, a Tragedy* (1712), John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’s *Cato’s


332 The link to Machiavelli’s *Discorsi* is made explicit in the opening of *Oceana*. See Quentin Skinner, “Machiavelli on virtù and the maintenance of liberty”, in *Visions of Politics II*, 160-185. For more on this topic, see the chapters by Skinner and Viroli in Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner & Maurizio Viroli, eds., *Machiavelli and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 1993).


Letters (1723) and Thomas Gordon’s Discourses on Tacitus (1731). All warned against the corrosive effect of corruption on parliament, and condemned a lack of morality in political life, suggesting that only the widespread adoption of civic virtue could prevent the country from sliding into despotism. Cato’s Letters, in particular, were influential in reasserting the right, even duty, to oppose tyranny under certain circumstances, “The Essence of Right and Wrong... does not depend upon a Code or a Statute-Book... but upon Reason and the Nature of Things, antecedent to all Laws”. In a well-run republic, civil law should coincide with natural law, but if the gap became too wide, it could be bridged by enforcing the people’s collective will.

While their influence was far greater in the United States than back home, their republican themes also filtered into French political discourse, and Henri de Boulainvilliers, Montesquieu, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably and Rousseau all owed much to this tradition. In his Essai sur la noblesse de France (1732), Boulainvilliers blamed the corruption of French society on the replacement of virtue and merit with wealth and ambition. In his Esprit des Lois (1748), Montesquieu demonstrated that republican virtue was only possible in a democratic, non-monarchical regime and advocated a clear separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers. In his Des Droits et des devoirs du citoyen (1758 but not published until 1789), Mably proposed re-establishing the ancient system of representation by estates. While in his Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne (1782), which cited the Wilkes affair as a striking example of corruption in action, many of Rousseau’s criticisms bore a close resemblance to those of the commonwealth tradition.

II

It was against this lively backdrop that Marat anonymously published his only work of political theory, The Chains of Slavery (1774), timed to coincide with a general election. As its subtitle explained, it was, ‘A work wherein the clandestine and villainous attempts of princes to ruin liberty are

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335 Addison’s play was staged in 1749 by Frederick, Prince of Wales to promote support for English liberty against the ‘tyranny’ of his father, George II.
pointed out and the dreadful scenes of despotism disclosed’, which it did by mobilizing a repertory of classical republican themes, including liberty, slavery, virtue and corruption, supported by a wide array of historical examples. By Marat’s own account, written much later, it took three months to write, copying extracts from thirty large volumes of history, working twenty-one-hour days and relying on such an excessive consumption of caffeine, “qu’il faillit me coûter la vie, plus encore que l’excès du travail”. On its completion, he fell into a stupor, only recovering, after thirteen days, with the aid of music. \(^{339}\) Like much of his self-marketing from the revolutionary period, it sold the image of a man driven by hard work, consumed by his passions, and boasting a keen sensibility. Its striking title may have drawn inspiration from several sources, ranging from the English translation of Téléméaque (1699) – “My dear Mentor, I will wear the chains of slavery with thee” – to Helvétius’ De l’esprit (1758), the focus of his previous work – “Quiconque, sous prétexte de maintenir l’autorité du Prince, veut la porter jusqu’au pouvoir arbitraire, est, à la fois... mauvais Citoyen, parce qu’il charge sa Patrie et sa posterité des chaînes de l’esclavage” – or even, the opening lines of Rousseau’s Du Contrat Social (1762) – “L’homme est né libre et partout il est dans les fers”. \(^{340}\) For Rousseau, as for Marat, the existing social contract traded true personal liberty for collective security, whereas legitimate political authority could only come from one agreed upon by all citizens for their mutual preservation. \(^{341}\)

Soon after its publication, Marat wrote anonymously (in French) to Wilkes, as one patriot – who had chosen England for his “patrie” – to another, asking for advice on how to foil government attempts to suppress its distribution and condemn it to oblivion: “Étrange voie d’oppression... qui ne va à rien moins qu’à anéantir sans bruit la liberté de la presse... M’aider de vos bons avis, c’est continuer servir la nation”. As an avid “Ami de la liberté”, he had followed Wilkes’ tangles with “le ministère et ses créatures”, and, outraged by this violation of the Nation’s most sacred rights, had wished to expose, “l’injuste exercice de la puissance, dans un ouvrage destiné à dévoiler les noires trames des tyrans”. \(^{342}\) While there is no record of any reply, it may have been down to Wilkes that copies of Chains were sent to Newcastle and used by local Wilkites in their campaign against the sitting MPs. \(^{343}\)

Most of Chains was an analysis of the various kinds of despotism, but it was prefaced by an ‘Address to the electors of Great Britain’, intending, “to draw their timely attention to the choice of

\(^{339}\) Chaînes (1793), 4167-4169.


\(^{342}\) BL, Add. MS, 30876, f.174, Letter to John Wilkes (May 1774), cited in Chains (1774), XXXI-XXXII.

\(^{343}\) One of these copies included a translation of a passage from this letter, and notices announced its appearance in the Newcastle Chronicle (28 May 1774), Hammersley, ‘Jean-Paul Marat’s The Chains of Slavery’: 651.
proper representatives in the next Parliament”, by urging them to throw out the placemen and choose, “men distinguished by their ability, integrity and love for their country... whom an independent fortune secures from the temptations of poverty”.

Borrowing many of its tropes from the commonwealth tradition, it went on to warn electors of the corrosive effect of corruption on their representatives: “When honour and virtue are wanting in the senate, the balance [between crown and citizens] is destroyed [and] the parliament... becomes a profligate faction, which, partaking of the minister’s bounty, joins those at the helm in their criminal designs.” Some historians have commented on a disparity between these texts, suggesting they were the work of different writers, while Michelet questioned Marat’s authorship of the entire book. Although Marat was addressing an English debate as a kind of ‘honorary’ Englishman – in his letter to Wilkes, Marat had explained that, “J’ai choisi l’Angleterre pour ma patrie, et dès lors, je me suis regardé comme un de ses enfants” – a careful comparison with the later 1793 edition suggest there were few issues of ‘translation’. He even retained this ‘Address’, noting, “Ce discours peut très bien s’appliquer aux électeurs français”. He also added new material, reflecting the language of more radical variants of the Parlementaire discourse of national sovereignty deployed during the Maupeou coup of 1771-74. In an unpublished paper, Popkin has suggested that these later inserts were probably written before 1774 and had been replaced with more England-focused material in the original publication.

As Marat had explained to Wilkes, it was his burning desire to, “pouvoir allumer dans l’âme de mes lecteurs la flamme sacrée qui dévorait la mienne”, which had prompted him to write it in the first place.

Its epigraph, “Vitam impendere vero”, provided an umbilical cord to his second great political influence – “le plus grand homme qu’aurait produit le siècle, si Montesquieu n’eût pas existé” – for it was lifted directly from Rousseau’s Lettre à d’Alembert sur les spectacles (1758). Rousseau had composed this open letter, warning against the moral threat posed by the establishment of a theatre, in rebuttal to d’Alembert’s Encyclopédie article on ‘Geneva’. As Rousseau later recalled, “Cette devise m’obligeait plus que tout autre homme à une profession plus étroite de la vérité... il

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344 Chains (1774), 4180.
345 Ibid, 4176.
347 Chaînes (1793), XXXI & 4177 (fn).
348 Jeremy Popkin, “Jean-Paul Marat’s critique of the National Assembly and the political thought of the Old Regime”, AHA presentation (unpublished, 6 December 1989).
349 Letter to Wilkes (May 1774) Chains, XXXI.
351 Heinrich Meier, On the Happiness of the Philosphic Life: Reflections on Rousseau’s Reveries (Chicago, 2016), 21-25. See also ch.1, 39, for the fall-out from this debate and the start of his persecutions.
fallait avoir le courage et la force d’être vrai toujours en toute occasion”. 352 While Rousseau, and Marat, wrote of dedicking themselves to the truth in a quest for ‘authenticity’, they were not prepared to sacrifice themselves for it, as many commentators have unwittingly suggested by mistakenly attributing this phrase to Juvenal’s “vitam inpendere vero” [“to risk one’s life for the truth”], a reference to the kind of patriot who was not prepared to risk his life by freely expressing his thoughts. 353 Part of the confusion may stem from the presence of numerous editions of Juvenal’s Satires, which incorrectly printed “impendere” instead of “inpendere”. 354 The significance of this homage cannot be overstated, for Marat would also use this motto for one of his most significant revolutionary pamphlets, as well as his newspaper, L’Ami du peuple. 355

In exposing the numerous ways in which princes sought to deprive their “subjects” of their liberties and covertly extend their own power, Chains mobilized the entire repertory of classical republican themes – such as corruption, virtue and liberty – filtered through the commonwealth tradition, in particular the process by which freedom gave way to servitude. 356 His introduction set the tone: “From attentively considering the establishment of despotism, it is evident that Slavery is only the effect of time, and the necessary consequence of the defects of political constitutions… let us follow their dark projects, their crafty proceedings, their secret plots…” 357 Divided into sixty-five chapters of varying length, it began by reiterating some of the main themes from Rousseau’s Discours sur les sciences et les arts (1750) concerning the corrupting effects of luxury and other ‘benefits’ of modern society. Headings such as, ‘Of procuring opulence’, ‘Of corrupting the people’, ‘Of rooting out the love of glory’, ‘Of disuniting the people’, and ‘Of encouraging servility’ give some idea of its pessimistic contents. It went on to describe the various ways in which a “despotic” prince could corrupt public life through entertainments, distractions and ‘rewards’, financial or otherwise. Another section focused on how the ‘Confederacy between Princes and Priests’ encouraged “ignorance” and “superstition” amongst their subjects. The lengthy, final section examined in detail

354 See, for example, Les Satyres de Juvenal et de Perse (Paris, 1681, via Google Books), 51. For a typical misquote, see François de Chevrier, Je m’y attendais bien (Paris, 1762), 64. Braund’s text is backed up by Susanna Morton Braund & Josiah Osgood, eds., A Companion to Persius and Juvenal (Hoboken, NJ, 2012), 298.
356 Hammersley emphasized this distinction against Baker, who proposed that the evolution of Marat’s political thought after 1789 was an extreme modification of classical republicanism rather than its British variant, The English republican tradition, 5-6.
357 Chains (1774), 4186.
the defects of the English constitution, showing how a lack of genuine popular sovereignty and proper representation enabled an ambitious prince to corrupt the legislature through the use of ‘rotten boroughs’ and favours, suppress power-sharing, deploy a standing army against its citizens, and generally engage in “usury, extractions and extortions”.

If there was one tradition that overshadowed all others in Chains, it was the Anglicized neo-Harringtonian republicanism, which added a systematic concern with the balance of powers to the historical vision of a democratic republic laid out by Machiavelli in his Discorsi. Many of its themes are present, such as the argument that where corruption prevails, men gain power by “private ways” and distance themselves from the populace, or that the people can be, “easily led back into a good way ... by a good man”. To underline the connection, he used a footnote to cite, in Italian, the notorious maxim from Il Principe (1532) that, “in order to subdue easily their subjects, Princes ought to be perfect masters of the art of deceiving.” While some of his contemporaries, such as fellow deputies Philippe Fabré d’Eglantine and Pierre-Louis Roederer, noted the connection, it has been overlooked by most historians, probably because it forms such an intrinsic part of the commonwealth tradition, and because Marat makes no mention of his debt. That said, Michel Vovelle described Chains as a kind of anti-Prince manual in which Machiavelli’s recommendations for how rulers should maintain their authority were exposed for the benefit of their ‘oppressed’ subjects, while Soviet historians viewed it as a pioneering attempt to formulate a viable theory of insurrection. In a passage towards the end, Marat echoed Harrington’s focus on the ruler’s potential to corrupt those charged with public administration, and thus liberty, by emphasizing that only a truly independent legislature could act as a check upon the crown, “For as soon as selfish interested views prevail among its members, the parliament... under the name of guardians, traffic away the national interest and the rights of a free-born people”. He also emphasized the need for constant vigilance over a Prince’s hidden “designs”, which often claimed to promote the public good while doing the opposite. By the

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360 Ibid, 4620-4658. Before the Reform Act (1832) removed them, a rotten, or pocket, borough was a constituency with a very small electorate that could be used by a patron to gain influence within the House of Commons.


363 Ibid, 4288 (‘Of secret practices’). In the footnotes, Marat made four references to Il Principe (1532) but none to the Discorsi (1531). Chains (1774), XL & 4288-4290.

364 See, for example, Coquard, Marat, Hammersley, The English republican tradition, or Baker, “Transformations of Classical Republicanism”.


366 Chains (1774), 4648.
second half of the eighteenth century, this strain of thought had become the dominant mode of oppositional discourse in England, so it is hardly surprising that Marat should have absorbed it during his residency.365

Given that *Chains* was intended as a contribution to the English political debate, it seems odd that Marat failed to either acknowledge the tradition within which he had positioned it, or any of the distinguished writers who warned against the dangers of corrupting a nation’s ‘virtue’. There were no references to Cicero’s *De Officiis* – a principal source for Bolingbroke’s *Patriot King*, as well as *The Prince* – nor Harrington, Sidney, Bolingbroke, Gordon, Trenchard, Junius, Locke, Montesquieu or Rousseau.366 Since Marat rarely acknowledged his intellectual debts, it is often a case of reading between the lines, and Hammersley, in particular, has convincingly demonstrated his debt to Harrington and the Commonwealthmen.367 The long list of authors he did cite, including Tacitus, Livy, Plutarch, Machiavelli, Grotius, Hobbes, Hume and Macaulay, suggested someone extremely well-read.368 Like Machiavelli and Harrington, but unlike Hobbes and many others, Marat believed that a close study of contemporary, as well as classical, history was important for a thorough understanding of political behaviour, so he illustrated his argument not just with examples from ancient Greece and Rome, but also from England, Spain, France, the United Provinces, Naples, Venice and Genoa.369

Marat argued that ignorance made it easy for princes to corrupt their subjects, since, “It must be confessed, that this crafty wile succeeds but too well with the multitude – a stupid animal whose affection largesses ever secure”.370 This reference to the easy manipulation of the people was a common Enlightenment trope – although many, such as Voltaire, were far more disparaging – and it would provide a constant refrain in his revolutionary journalism, where he would frequently chastise the “peuple insensé” for their ignorance.371 In Rousseau’s analysis of this problem in his *First Discourse*, such servility – a corruption of human nature – was encouraged by the promotion of the

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365 Hammersley, “Jean-Paul Marat’s The Chains of Slavery’: 644-648 & 646.
366 For a complete list of sources, see *Chains* (1774), XXXVII-XLII. Cicero was a contested figure within this debate, cited either as a model of civic self-sacrifice or as a trimming hypocrite, Armitage, “A patriot for whom?”: 404.
367 See, for example, his lack of accreditation to the Vitalists in *Philosophical Essay* in ch.1, 36. According to Dan Edelstein, authors from the same century were rarely acknowledged, *Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago, 2010), 49-51 & 95.
368 See also *Diary of Joseph Farington*, i:24 – “Being a man of extensive classical reading, Marat continually proposed subjects which he had selected for Zucchi to design”.
369 For insight on Marat’s historical approach, see Zizek, “Marat: Historian of the French Revolution?”.
370 *Chains* (1774), 4230 (fn).
Sciences and Arts, which helped to distract the people and, “spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains with which they are laden, throttle in them the sentiment of that original freedom for which they seemed born, make them love their slavery”. Marat would repeatedly emphasize this theme of complicity, for it was not just the Prince’s “villainous attempts” they should beware, but also “the inconsideration and folly of the people [which] prepare the way to tyranny”. In other words, if slavery was bad, servility was worse, and he spelled out the consequences of such an abnegation of responsibility:

In a free government when care is not taken… the people lose sight of their rights [and] consider themselves as mere cyphers… inclined to look upon the Prince’s authority alone, as being sacred; they never believe themselves authorized to oppose by force his arbitrary mandates… and are ever ready to submit to the most grievous oppression, rather than punish the Lord’s anointed.

Marat titled one of his final chapters, ‘The Subjects forge their own Chains’, and historians, including Coquard, have spotted a strong connection with a neglected Renaissance work of political theory, Discours de la servitude volontaire, ostensibly by Etienne de La Boétie, a close friend of Montaigne and counsellor in the Bordeaux Parlement. Originally published clandestinely after the St. Bartholomew massacre by Huguenot publicists as Le Contr’un (1574-78), after 1727 it would have been familiar to anyone owning a copy of Montaigne’s Essais (1580), when it was bound in as an endpiece. The similarity in their arguments that citizens lost their desire for liberty as the result of moral corruption has led to accusations of plagiarism. It was probably no coincidence that Rousseau was also accused of dipping into the same well for his Du Contrat Social (1762). However, Marat’s original accuser failed to notice that he reached quite a different conclusion, for where La Boétie proposed an antidote of virtuous civic behaviour based on a classical conception of ‘friendship’ based on democratic sociability, Marat offered one of vigilance based on perpetual


373 Chains (1774), 4522-4524 (italics in original). “Lord’s anointed” was an ironic reference to the title given to the kings descended from David in the Old Testament.

374 Ibid, 155 & 162-163. Chains (1774), 4564. Recent scholarship has suggested that Montaigne might be its author, Michael Platt, “Montaigne, of Friendship, and on Tyranny”, in David Schaefer, ed., Freedom over Servitude (Westport, CT, 1998), 1 & 31-86.

375 Coquard, Marat, 344. See also Olivier Remaud, “Une idée vraie de la servitude volontaire est-elle pensable? Le débat Marat-La Boétie”, in André & Luc Touron, eds., Discours de la servitude volontaire (Paris, 2002), 131-146. See, for example, Pierre Coste, ed., Essais de Michel Seigneur de Montaigne, 5 vols (La Haye, 1727).


suspicion, and, in extremis, violent resistance.\footnote{\cit{chaines1774}{4354} (‘Of unconcernedness’).} These mutually exclusive models of transparency and surveillance were based on radically different notions of ‘trust’.\footnote{\cit{sparling2013}{485}.} Starting from a position of the primacy of natural bonds of family and friendship in opposition to the unnatural bonds of political domination, La Boétie sought to explain how this pathological submission to power displaced the natural desire for liberty. The philosopher Michel Foucault explored similar themes of “docile bodies” in his own work on the relationship between institutional power and consent, albeit from a different position – “The crucial problem of power is not that of voluntary servitude (how could we seek to be slaves?)” – yet only made one, non-political, reference to La Boétie. Unlike both Marat and La Boétie, he did not think that power was something from which one could ever escape.\footnote{\cit{foucault1982}{241-259}.}

Marat arrived at a different explanation for the paradox of this ‘blind spot’ in human nature, which desires freedom yet allows such servitude to happen. Instead of presenting it as a distortion of Man’s natural sociability, he portrayed it as a combination of “l’amour de la domination” – the title of a new section in the 1793 edition of \textit{Chaînes} – and ignorance: “In proportion as knowledge disappears, despotism makes its progress. If the want of a true idea of liberty be a cause of slavery, the want of a true idea of tyranny is likewise a cause of it”.\footnote{\cit{chaines1793}{4191} & \cit{chaines1774}{4402} (‘False idea of tyranny’).} During the Revolution, one of Marat’s self-confessed roles was to use his newspaper to counter such ignorance. Either way, the charge of plagiarism was irrelevant, not just because of their differing conclusions, but also because the original idea had its origins in antiquity.\footnote{\cit{schachter2008}.} We can only speculate on its filiation to Marat, since he cited neither La Boétie nor Rousseau, although the similarities of expression with the former are striking.

Attempting to solve the problem of how people had come to lose their sense of solidarity with the community (or civic virtue) by choosing to collaborate in their own servitude, La Boétie diagnosed the infection of the body politic in two ways. Collectively, its virtue was corrupted through exposure to spectacles, festivals and other such “drogueries”, harking back to a longstanding tradition encapsulated in the cynical formula, \textit{panem et circenses} (“bread and circuses”) with which Roman emperors kept their subjects entertained. Individually, and more damagingly, it was...
corrupted through a pyramid of interlocking patronage – “le ressort et le secret de la domination, le soutien et fondement de la tyrannie”, in which each layer of the hierarchy, from the Prince’s ministers downwards, collaborated in abusing “le bien public” – the principal symptom of a rotten regime – while recruiting their own “satellites” in turn with the promise of further favours – “le prix de leur liberté”. Since it was voluntary, all the Prince’s subjects had to do to regain their freedom was terminate their cooperation:

Pauvres et misérables peuples insensés… Celui qui vous maîtrise tant n’a que deux yeux, n’a que deux mains, n’a qu’un corps… D’où a-t-il pris tant des yeux, dont il vous épie, si vous ne les lui baîllez? Comment a-t-il tant de mains pour vous frapper, s’il ne les prend de vous? … Comment a-t-il aucun pouvoir sur vous, que par vous?… Soyez résolus de ne servir plus et vous voilà libres.383

Having exposed the various means by which princes ‘enslaved’ their subjects, Marat then outlined how such “attempts to ruin liberty” might be foiled. The first rather unrealistic one involved a return to a more primitive version of society where liberty could be secured through its citizens’ collective ‘virtue’. The second was violent revolt, since – appearing to adopt one of Montesquieu’s lines from Lettres Persanes (1721) – “All is undone, when the people are unconcerned for public affairs; on the contrary, liberty constantly springs up out of the fires of sedition”.384 While these were strong words from a disillusioned, ex-theology student, Marat had explored similar incendiary ideas in an earlier, unpublished novel, Les aventures du jeune comte Potowski (probably written after 1770) whose epistolary form, and device of using foreign customs to pass judgement on contemporary France bore a marked resemblance to Montesquieu’s novel.385 However, as Marat pointed out, such sedition rarely succeeded since liberty depended on a love of patrie, and princes used the Church to divert patriotic feelings towards heaven instead: “How then can a people, longing for things above, be concerned for things below?” Moreover, the Christian doctrine of deference meant that citizens were deprived of independent thought – their most powerful weapon against tyranny – so overthrowing despotism effectively meant renouncing one’s faith first:

To maintain themselves free, the people must have an eye ever upon government… How can men, whom religion prohibits being suspicious, be thus watchful; how can they put a stop to the secret

practices of the enemies to liberty...? Without suspicion, without cunning, without wrath, without resentment, a true Christian is at the discretion of the first who forms an attempt upon him.386

While such talk of kings and priests leading people astray was classic Enlightenment stuff – as Diderot almost said, “Men will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest” – Marat’s direct link between rebellion and renunciation strikes a distinctive chord, considering he might have become a priest himself.387

Chains also dealt perceptively with the importance of controlling public opinion, writing that while the Prince controlled access to the levers of opinion – “How great its influence in the human mind!” – his rule was safe.388 He highlighted the abuse of language by despotic governments and their minions in shaping such opinion, especially the “pensioned sophists... ever ready to vindicate tyranny” and represent popular government as “stormy and unsettled”. They habituated citizens to accept the status quo by distorting the relationship between words and things: “They term the art of governing, that of spreading everywhere terror and desolation... they cover usurpations under the fair names of extension of power, additions of privileges [etc.]... Thus they succeed in destroying that impression of horror, which the bare sight of those actions ever excites in the spectator”.389 In order to counter this, Marat highlighted the need for “some men” to pave the ground for liberty by devoting themselves to shaping this opinion within the public sphere, proposing, in effect, a kind of ‘Vanguardism avant la lettre in a role he would consciously adopt after 1789:

But as a continual attention to public affairs is above the reach of the multitude; in state jealous of its liberty, there never should be wanting some men to watch the transactions of the ministers, unveil their ambitious projects... rouse the people from their lethargy... and point out those on whom public indignation should fall.390

Introducing the French version nineteen years later, in a ‘Notice’ written before the fall of the monarchy in August 1792, Marat reframed its relevance by claiming that its subversive message had made him a target for government spies who had intercepted his post, dogged his steps and bribed his printers with 8000 guineas to delay publication until after the election, leading him to

386 Chains (1774), 4420 (‘Of superstition’).
387 Diderot, ‘Les Eleuthéromanes’ (1772), in Poésies Diverses (Paris, 1875), 16, adapting a prior sentiment attributed to Jean Meslier. Voltaire attacked the Church hierarchy as cruel, oppressive and often irrational, most strikingly in Candide (1759).
388 Chains (1774), 4416.
389 Ibid, 4408-4410. ‘False idea of tyranny’ (italics in original).
390 Ibid, 4354. It was a formula he frequently repeated – for example, L’Ami du peuple #102 (19 Jan 1790), OP, i:620.
sleep with two pistols under his pillow.\textsuperscript{391} While this claim seems pretty far-fetched, he did cite a source – a civil servant and former patient – although he was describing events long after they had happened. Moreover, it was in his interest to explain why no one had heard of this ‘important’ work, and to present himself as a long-standing victim of political persecution.\textsuperscript{392} As with his claim for almost succumbing to a surfeit of caffeine, Marat frequently resorted to such self-fashioning in his revolutionary journalism as he endeavoured to promote the idea of fearless self-sacrifice in challenging authority and bringing his radical ideas before the public. Furthermore, the letter sent to Wilkes, asking for advice on how to counteract the government’s nefarious efforts “en le condemnant à l’oubli”, would suggest there was no problem with its publication.\textsuperscript{393} Not only did it appear six months before the election, but it also received positive notices in several journals, including the London Magazine and The Critical Review – “This task [exposing the art of government] the intelligent author... has executed in a manner that will reflect credit on his abilities”.\textsuperscript{394} By contrast, The Monthly Review expressed a more critical response: “There are many important observations in this work... intended as an alarm-bell, to rouse and terrify us... In plain language, the Author, though he possesses a considerable fund of knowledge... writes with too much intemperance and too little regard to decency to effect any good by publication”.\textsuperscript{395}

Marat’s account appeared to reinterpret the lack of interest around its publication as an act of repression.\textsuperscript{396} No doubt, he was over-dramatizing the situation to grab Wilkes’ attention, so by the time he retold this story, it was this interpretation that prevailed. What seems beyond doubt, however, is Marat’s increasing tendency, whenever events appeared to conspire against him, as we saw earlier, to seize upon any evidence, no matter how flimsy, in order to buttress an increasingly Marat-centric worldview that always placed him centre-stage. In order to elude the government’s attentions – and to sign an agreement in Amsterdam with Rousseau’s publisher Rey to publish De l’homme – he claimed that he left England to visit Holland, before re-entering via the northeast, where he spent a month promoting Chains in Carlisle, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Newcastle, donating copies to patriotic societies and guilds.\textsuperscript{397} In Amsterdam, he also visited a masonic lodge before travelling on to Utrecht and The Hague where he met leading Dutch intellectuals, including

\textsuperscript{391} Chaînes (1793), 4169-4171 & 4173 (fn).
\textsuperscript{392} Ibid, 4173 (fn). See also Publiciste de la République française #217 (15 June 1793), OP, x:6513.
\textsuperscript{393} See p.75.
\textsuperscript{394} The Critical Review, vol. 37 (May 1774), 366 [via Google Books]. See also notices in the Public Advertiser, Gentleman’s Magazine and Scot’s Magazine (all May 1774); and a review in London Magazine, no.434 (June 1774).
\textsuperscript{395} The Monthly Review, vol. 50 (June 1774), in Chains, XXX.
\textsuperscript{396} Surviving copies are extremely rare, with a London edition and second Newcastle edition published under his name in 1775, for which notices appeared in the Newcastle Chronicle in Oct and Nov 1775. Chaînes (1793), 4167-4175 (Notice) & XXVIII. Hammersley, “Jean-Paul Marat’s The Chains of Slavery”, 651 (fn) & 654.
\textsuperscript{397} Rey was also responsible for printing many of the philosophes’ more controversial works.
the anti-materialist philosopher and banker Isaac de Pinto, and the writer Rijklof Michael van Goens, both of whom would become leading propagandists for the royal stadtholder, the Prince of Orange, during the civil war against the Dutch Patriots (1781–1787).\textsuperscript{398} Three years later, following his move to Paris in 1776, a prize competition inviting suggestions for penal reform provided Marat with the opportunity to compose an even more radical work, \emph{Plan de législation en matière criminelle} (1782/90), whose contents revealed him to be advocating fundamental social reform as the foundation for any meaningful legal reform.\textsuperscript{399}

III

On 15 February 1777, the \textit{Gazette de Berne} announced a competition organized by the Berne economic society for the best essay on improving criminal law in Europe.\textsuperscript{400} It asked for a detailed outline of a new criminal code from three perspectives: proportionality of punishments, proofs, and the best way of acquiring these through due process, so that, “la société civile trouve la plus grande sûreté possible”.\textsuperscript{401} In a letter to Voltaire, who had anonymously doubled the prize money to attract more entries and who had also published his own proposals in \textit{Prix de la justice et de l’humanité} (1777) to publicize the competition, d’Alembert suggested that the questions should be separated since the task was too great for one person, observing that the first was more suitable for a \textit{philosophe} than a jurist.\textsuperscript{402} It came within the context of a growing debate over penal reform in France inspired by the appearance in 1766 of André Morellet’s translation of Cesare Beccaria’s \emph{Dei delitti e delle pene} (1764).\textsuperscript{403} Beccaria’s influential treatise argued for a more deterrent and less retributive attitude to criminality based around proportionate punishment, while calling for the abolition of torture and capital punishment. He developed his position by appealing to utilitarian theories, arguing that punishment was only justified when it motivated people to honour the social contract, and that laws should be created for “the greatest happiness shared among the greater

\textsuperscript{398} Marat was admitted to La Bien Aimée lodge in Amsterdam on 12 October 1774 having been earlier admitted to the Kings Head Lodge in Soho on 15 July, Georges de Froidcourt, “Glanes”, \textit{AHRF} no.72 (Nov-Dec 1935): 545-546. Jeremy Popkin pinpointed this meeting to explain Marat’s later criticisms of French support for the Dutch Patriots as a betrayal of the true popular cause, “Marat en Hollande. Un témoignage inconnu”: 291-293.


\textsuperscript{400} \textit{Gazette de Berne}, 15 Feb 1777, in \textit{Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire}, 80B, 3-32.

\textsuperscript{401} \textit{Ibid}, 9.


\textsuperscript{403} \textit{Traité des délits et des peines... par abbé Morellet} (Lausanne, 1766).
Towards the end of 1777, Marat was ready to submit his 160-page entry, *Plan de législation en matière criminelle*, marking his first entry into the arena of prize competitions and giving him the ideal opportunity, in the event of winning, to share his ideas with a wider public. While some biographers have acknowledged its importance, with Walter opining that it occupied “une place de tout premier plan dans l’œuvre de Marat”, most commentators, with the notable exception of two nineteenth-century jurists, have not paid it the attention it deserves.  

Competitions like this were an important means for enabling intellectual exchange between academies and the wider public. Between 1770 and 1789, over 800 such contests were announced throughout France, drawing around 10,000 participants. After the overnight sensation of Rousseau’s *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* in 1750, every aspiring writer sought to launch their career off the back of a prize-winning entry, and the roll-call of names who entered such competitions was impressive, including Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, Jacques Necker, abbé Grégoire and Jean-Sylvain Bailly. Beccaria’s appeal inspired contributions to the legal debate from Mably, Brissot, Simon-Nicolas Linguet, Guillaume-François Le Trosne and André-Jean Boucher d’Argis, amongst others. With the exception of Rousseau, Mably and Marat, all had some kind of legal background. After extending the deadline, and receiving forty entries from across Europe, the prize was finally awarded to two German jurists in April 1782.  

All these reforming discourses sought to rationalize the act of punishment by removing its arbitrary nature and making it fit the crime, so, for example, those who abused liberty would be deprived of theirs, those who stole would have their assets confiscated and those who killed would be punished by death. Beccaria compared the ideal lawgiver to “a skilled architect, who raises his building [i.e. the social contract] on the foundation of self-love”, where the interests of all should derive from the interests of each, and while more radical reformers, such as Mably, thought that the best way to achieve this was to go straight to “la source du mal” and rebuild society’s foundations, and while more radical reformers, such as Mably, thought that the best way to achieve this was to go straight to “la source du mal” and rebuild society’s foundations,  

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408 Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire, 80B, 30.  
409 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 89-93.
starting with natural rights, most chose to sidestep this fundamental question.\textsuperscript{410} Besides the different emphasis between these approaches, there was a further demarcation between those who followed Montesquieu in emphasizing the rule of law – most jurists – and those who followed Rousseau by emphasizing the rule of virtue, making Marat’s loyalty to both men all the more unusual.\textsuperscript{411} Rousseau had skirted the whole issue of natural rights by arguing that greater civic responsibility would lead to better morals and fewer laws.\textsuperscript{412} Montesquieu’s landmark work, which influenced Beccaria, redefined a new approach to ethics by revealing the principles of human nature from which the “lois” took their “esprit” (or character), helping to inspire a new form of humanist jurisprudence.\textsuperscript{413} It certainly struck a chord with Marat who appropriated many of its arguments for his own contribution, especially those from Book XII, ‘On the laws that form political liberty in relation to the citizen’.\textsuperscript{414}

Marat’s Plan, which was more interested in engaging with wider political issues than worrying over legal minutiae, sought to answer three main questions: what is justice, who is it for, and when can natural law override civil law? Its epigraph, taken from one of Cicero’s most famous speeches in Pro Sexto Roscio Amerino, was suitably cautionary: “Nolite, quirites, hanc saevitiam diutius pati; qua non modo tot cives atrocissime sustelit…” [“Judges! Do not tolerate such cruelty any more, which has not only destroyed many citizens but also lessened their mercy through familiarity”].\textsuperscript{415} These misquoted lines revealed Marat’s ongoing engagement with English politics, for they appear to have been lifted from a parliamentary speech by Sir William Meredith, arguing against the use of capital punishment for minor offences, which the House of Commons official history described as, “almost unique... a reasoned plea against an evil which hardly touched the conscience of his day”.\textsuperscript{416} It also suggests that Marat was in the habit of hoarding citations that might prove useful later.

The Plan was divided into four parts, of which the most original and radical were the first

\textsuperscript{410} Mably, De la législation, 246. See also Keith Michael Baker, Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge, 1990), 86-106. For natural rights, see Dan Edelstein, The Terror of Natural Right (Chicago, 2011), 71-75.

\textsuperscript{411} For the division of followers between Montesquieu and Rousseau, see Emmanuelle de Champs, Enlightenment and Utility (Cambridge, 2015), 83-84. For a discussion of the two distinct vocabularies of political thought “conducted in the republican and juristic modes”, see J. G. A. Pocock, Virtue, Commerce and History (Cambridge, 1985), 37-50.

\textsuperscript{412} Rousseau, The Social Contract, 41, 66-68, 113-114, 121-122. Diderot, Supplément au voyage de Bougainville (Paris, 1796), ii:241

\textsuperscript{413} Pocock, Virtue, Commerce and History, 49-50.


\textsuperscript{415} Cicero, Vol. 6 (Cambridge, MA, 1967), vi: 262-263. It was a reference to the dictator Sulla’s policy of arbitrarily declaring someone “enemy of the state” when he wished to confiscate their property.

two. Part one dealt with the relationship between legislation and the social order, part two, with the classification of crimes and punishments, part three, with a consideration of proofs, and part four, with their abuse, and different kinds of legal procedure. The second and longest part was subdivided into sections on crimes against the state, authority, personal security, property, morality, honour, public order, and religion. While the French contributions to the debate tended to limit themselves to improving the justice system, and reducing recidivism, rather than broader calls for reform – frequently repeating the same arguments – the English and Italian ones were generally more innovative, as was the case with Marat’s contribution. His uncompromising message, evident from his opening page, argued that there could be no effective penal reform without fundamental social reform. Pointing out that the very idea of justice was often overlooked in most discussions of criminal procedure, he braced readers for what would follow by challenging the prejudices of his peers and appealing to wiser heads: “En travaillant à détruire de funestes préjugés, j’aurai souvent occasion de choquer les opinions vulgaires, que d’ignorants vont s’élérer contre moi! Qu’importe, c’est à des sages que j’ai à parler, et c’est de leur approbation uniquement dont je suis jaloux”. This kind of appeal over the heads of imagined critics to a more enlightened reader was one he often adopted. Where most reformers, including Brissot, argued that improvements in the law would see a gradual reduction in criminal behaviour, Marat took a far broader view, suggesting that punitive laws were only required in the first place to redress a corruption of morals, since – echoing Du Contrat Social – “les moeurs seules pourraient maintenir le bon ordre de la société”.

He began by outlining some core ideas. Existing laws were inadequate since they only reflected deep economic divisions within society, and as rates of delinquency were closely tied to economic health, inequality was the most urgent problem to resolve. Attempts to define when a citizen should be obliged to obey society’s laws led him to make a number of radical suggestions based on a strict demarcation of natural and civil law. If the destitute gained no material advantage from society, he argued, they could not be expected to respect its laws, and if they had to use force to satisfy their most basic needs, then any authority used against them was ‘despotic’ for violating the original social contract. To prevent this from happening, society should guarantee all its members adequate subsistence, clothing, shelter and medical care. Baldly put, too much property in too few hands caused too much poverty and acted against this natural right, since: “Le droit de posséder

418 Plan, 12. All quotes are from the 1782 edition apart from where later text has been added, indicated by (1790). De Cock provides a useful parallel edition in Marat avant 1789, 1182-1376 [via Google Books].
419 Ibid, 9-10.
420 See, for example, similar appeals he made in Découvertes sur la Lumière (ch.1, 52), Dénonciation faite au tribunal du public…contre M. Necker, OP, i:617 (fn); and the first page of Junius français #1 (2 June 1790), OP, ii:795-796.
découle de celui de vivre: ainsi tout ce qui est indispensable à notre existence est à nous, et rien de superflu ne saurait nous appartenir légitimement, tandis que d’autres manquent du nécessaire”. Here in a nutshell was “le fondement légitime de toute propriété” under both civil and natural law, since no one would willingly alienate their natural rights if society could not offer them a better deal, and society could only punish those who violated its laws once it had fulfilled its end of the bargain. 422

Here, Marat was echoing a long religious tradition, dating back to the early Church, which he likely absorbed during his religious training, that the poor could not be punished for theft if the alternative was death by starvation. Given his family’s humiliating experience of parish-based charity in Neuchâtel, it is noteworthy that Marat insisted on making this a social rather than a religious responsibility. 423 Indeed, the government had recently begun to tackle the social problem, especially “mendicité” (begging), by passing a series of administrative reforms under the finance ministers Jacques Necker and Jacques Turgot, which sought to transfer responsibility for charitable provision from Church to state. 424

Continuing the argument he had made in Chains about the government’s distortion of language, Marat questioned the very idea of a crime, pointing out that laws codified by the dominant group always reflected their interests: “Qu’est-ce qu’un crime? La violation des loix... Ce qu’on appelle de ce nom, qu’est-ce autre chose que les volontés d’un seul maître, ou du plus petit nombre”. In a leitmotif, which ran through all his political writing, Marat argued that in order to be just, civil laws should never contradict ‘Nature’, the fount of all law, adding that a lack of empathy was responsible for many of society’s problems: “Partout le pauvre n’y est compté pour rien; il semble même que les législateurs aient perdu pour lui tout sentiment d’humanité”. 425 Furthermore, since the original social compact had been founded on force, and there was not, “un seul gouvernement au monde que l’on puisse regarder comme légitime, l’obéissance aux loix n’est-elle pas plutôt une affaire de calcul que de devoir?” It was hardly unsurprising that such daring sentiments found little favour with the jury, although Marat did add the proviso that, “les maux de l’anarchie seraient pires encore que ceux du despotisme”, so citizens should only break the “faibles liens” that bound them to each other as a last resort. Therefore, all reform should be geared towards increasing overall wellbeing, since, “Le seul fondement légitime de la société est le bonheur de ceux qui la composent”. 426

422 Plan, 19.
423 See ch.1, 26.
425 Plan, 15 & fn.
426 Ibid, 16. Tellingly, Rousseau never endorsed this right in Du Contrat Social.
Returning to the thorny problem of property rights, Marat pointed out that without them there would be no theft, tracing their origins to the inherent violence of power: “L’usurpateur le fonde sur celui du plus fort, comme si la violence pouvait établir un titre sacré”. 427 To reinforce his point, he borrowed a sentimental literary device from Beccaria of a thief’s speech before the tribunal. 428 His thief began by asking the judges if it was his fault that he had had been forced to steal, since, “Le soin de sa propre conservation est le premier des devoirs de l’homme”, borrowing an argument that came from a long theological tradition of debate on property rights. 429 Thomas Aquinas had argued that taking from another, in extremis, was not theft, since, “whatever a man has in superabundance is owed, of natural right, to the poor for their sustenance”. 430 Those who demanded obedience to the law, the thief continued, benefitted most, since society was weighted in their favour: “Hé, que m’importe cet ordre prétendu... ne me dites pas que tous ses membres, jouissant des mêmes prérogatives, puissent en tirer les mêmes avantages”. Moreover, without capital, there was no opportunity for others to participate in the lucrative enterprises reserved for the rich, such as, “la gestion des revenus publics... l’établissement des manufactures, l’armement des vaisseaux, les spéculations de commerce”. For the poor there were only low-paid, often dangerous, jobs and little chance of escaping their fate. His own misfortunes had begun when a more powerful neighbour had ruined him, making him homeless, unemployable through sickness, reduced to begging, and finally, after his pleas for charity were ignored, compelled by hunger to steal: “Juges iniques! souvenez-vous que l’humanité est la première des vertus et la justice la première des lois”. Marat could not resist ending this prosopopeia without a final emotional appeal: “Hommes justes, je vois couler vos larmes, et je vous entends crier d’une commune voix: QU’IL SOIT ABSOUS (sic)” 431 While the term “absous” was being used in a legal rather than religious sense, its ambiguity only highlights the Christian filiation of much of Marat’s thought.

Having framed the terms of his argument, Marat moved on to a comprehensive account of the various crimes and punishments, beginning with a detailed discussion of “Des crimes contre l’état”,

427 Ibid, 18.
429 Plan, 19. This right would resurface many times in his journalism – see, for example, La Constitution (Aug 1789) OP, i:74, or Ami du peuple #328 (2 Jan 1791), OP, iv:2006 & fn.
431 Plan, 20-21. Massin suggested that Beccaria’s use of this device appeared insipid by comparison, Marat, 52. Such recourses to sentimentality drew from a common trope shared by many reformers, Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 91-92.
inspired by Montesquieu’s line – cited in a footnote – that “Vagueness in the crime of high treason is enough to make government degenerate into despotism”. Developing ideas he had introduced in *Chains*, Marat sought to sever the concept of kingship from that of state authority (another form of sovereignty) by arguing that since capital offences against the King of *lèse-majesté* – including disobeying orders, public criticism and counterfeiting – were not technically against the state, they could not be treason, while those committed against the state, and its representatives, could. By the same token, since the king’s role was executive rather than legislative, his murder should be treated the same as any other “assassinat” committed against a high-ranking administrator, and if he was ‘bad’, his tyranny dissolved the social contract and justified regicide. This was in opposition to theorists, such as Hobbes, who described it as a crime against nature. While Marat’s argument that “dans tout gouvernement légitime” the king was only the nation’s “premier magistrat” was not unprecedented – the ‘enlightened despot’ Frederick II expressed a similar sentiment in his *Essay on Forms of Government* (1777), which compared a good prince to, “a man, like the least of his subjects [and] only the first servant of the state” – it was still a daring thing to say barely twenty years after the horrifying execution of Damiens for his failed assassination on Louis XV, whose after-effects still reverberated within these debates. The *Encyclopédie*’s article on ‘lèse-majesté’ also revealed signs of a mental transition towards the notion of *lèse-nation* within the political discourse.

In developing his arguments against the sanctification of the king, Marat reintroduced the right to resist a second time. In the first part, he had justified individual ‘resistance’ in order to fulfil a citizen’s basic needs. Now he made a case for mass resistance by expanding on similar suggestions in *Chains* and his unpublished novels: namely whether civil disobedience could be justified against “maîtres absolu” who abused their power with impunity behind the shield of “crime d’état”, which criminalized “le refus d’obéir à leurs ordres injustes”. What made this truly incendiary was that it was not articulated through an avatar, but his own voice. Where “le flambeau de la philosophie” had paved the way by dispersing “les ténèbres épaisses où ils avaient plongé les peuples”, enlightened men must follow by approaching, “l’enceinte sacrée où se retranche le pouvoir arbitraire”, in order to tear down “le sombre voile” behind which despots concealed their offences. While he recognized that such language might frighten “stupides esclaves”, it would not offend “l’oreille des hommes libres”.

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433 *Plan*, 46.
434 Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (London, 1651), chs. III & XII.
437 *Plan*, 41. See, for example, *Les Aventures*, 135-136; *Chains* (1774), 4428-4446.
When public criticism failed, more drastic means were available, since for too long, “ces tyrans odieux ont désolé la terre: leur règne va finir”.

Marat’s position on one of political philosophy’s most controversial questions traced its roots back to antiquity via John Locke – whose Second Treatise of Government (1608) provided the clearest statement of this right – Machiavelli, the Huguenot Monarchomachs, Calvin and Aquinas, who had all argued, in different ways that those who exercised their ‘Right to resist tyrannical government’ (Aquinas) should not be punished when the ruler no longer reigned for “le bonheur des peuples”. Marat would later make the divine aspect of this natural right explicit in one of his early pamphlets, when he wrote: “Pour se soustraire à l’oppression... pour assurer son bonheur, il est en droit de tout entreprendre et, quelque outrage qu’il fasse aux autres... il ne fait que céder à un penchant irrésistible, implanté dans son âme par l’auteur de son être”. The more challenging, upbeat tone of Marat’s Plan, compared to Chains, surely owed much to the changing political environment in which he wrote it, stimulated by the ongoing American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) and the July 1776 Declaration of Independence, which many saw as heralding a new dawn for liberty. Encyclopédie articles also endorsed this right, which would eventually become embedded in the National Assembly’s Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen of August 1789, albeit in a crucially modified form.

Marat devoted the rest of the second part to arguing for more humane and reciprocal punishments to match the crime. As a result, what followed – with two exceptions: his attitudes towards women and prostitution in ‘Des crimes contre les moeurs’, and towards calumny in ‘Des crimes contre l’honneur’ – was considerably less original. Like Rousseau, he believed that moral regeneration would help restore virtue to civil society, but unlike Rousseau, he did not believe a woman’s place was in the home, and he began by denouncing the general unfairness of Woman’s condition. For Marat, the surest way to restoring social harmony was to repress libertinism by locking up those who corrupted the young, and forcing “séducteurs” to marry. If society resolved

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438 Ibid, 42.
441 Articles on ‘Pouvoir’ and ‘Sédition’ by the chevalier de Jaucourt in L’Encyclopédie, Vol XIV (Dec 1765), Lough, The Encyclopédie, 299. The Assembly only promoted the constitutional (and collective) right to resist against an unjust monarch via itself (representing the general will) and not the people, as per article 3, which stated that, “Le prince de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la nation. Nul corps, nul individu ne peut exercer d’autorité qui n’en émane expressément”. See Dan Edelstein, On the Spirit of Rights (Chicago, 2019), 90, 182, 186 & 293 (fn).
442 Plan, 82 & 75. During the Revolution, Marat was one of the few radicals to encourage the establishment of women’s political clubs.
the problem of destitution, he argued, then the main motivation for prostitution would disappear, and it would reap the benefits of less crime, more happiness and greater productivity. Once again, it was a question of subordinating a moral problem to a social one.

Marat’s treatment of libel began by distinguishing between “médisance” (slander) and “calomnie” (defamation), arguing that while the former spread “faussetés infamantes”, the latter might contain “vérités humiliantes” which could act as “le frein des méchants”, so the law should be careful not to confuse them. Deploying a narrow definition of ‘honour’, he argued that while attacks on a person’s public life were acceptable, those on their private life were not, going against the grain of the more widely held ancien régime view, which made little distinction between them: “One commits calumny when one imputes to someone faults or vices [i.e. not only crimes] that the person does not have”. In the view of one jurist, calumny constituted, “a kind of murder, to attack the honour and reputation of someone, which are held to be dearer than one’s life”. Yet, at the same time, such views were countered by others – sometimes expressed by the same author – that it exposed faults, that its victims were often its perpetrators, that it was a fact of life, and these arguments would all resurface after 1789 in the debates on press freedom. In a world where influence, advancement and respect depended on reputation, calumny could also threaten a person’s economic interests, and according to Parisian legal records, injurious speech was the most frequently treated crime after petty theft. There was a second aspect to this that would prove equally important later, with regard to Marat’s encounters with the law as a result of his own particular brand of personalized ‘denunciation’, and that was the associated notion of vengeance – wounded honour was compared to a deep scar that never fully recovered – which could also sometimes lead to physical violence. Furthermore, the expansion of the public sphere aided by the medium of publishing, raised the stakes considerably by enabling such “calomnies” to be more widely broadcast, which, of course, played a major role in many of Marat’s legal entanglements during the Revolution.

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444 Ibid, 110-111.
448 Ibid, 43. Apart from the violence against Marat already noted in ch.1, 42, Voltaire’s beating by the chevalier de Rohan-Chabot is possibly the most famous example of such an ‘honour’ beating, Pearson, Voltaire Almighty, 65.
449 See chs. 4-6.
Here, Marat appeared to be repeating an argument on the essential relationship between free expression and liberty, which owed far more to Junius than jurists. Introducing the collected edition of his letters, Junius defended himself against the accusation of libel by arguing that while “private men” could, and indeed should, seek recourse through the law if they were defamed, “public men” did not enjoy the same right, since, “Our ministers and magistrates have in reality little punishment to fear… beyond the censure of the press, and the spirit of resistance which it excites among the people”. As a result, “considerable latitude must be allowed in the discussion of public affairs, or else the liberty of the press will be of no benefit to society.” By making this notion the cornerstone of his later journalistic strategy, Marat would inevitably find himself in conflict with those he accused, along with their supporters: “Dans tout pays où la loi ne réprime pas les méchants constitués en dignité… il ne reste pour les contenir un peu dans le devoir, que la crainte de l’indignation publique... C’en est fait de la liberté, si la peur parvient à fermer toutes les bouches”.451

In the final part, Marat appealed for greater transparency in a legal system where inexplicable decisions were often reached by unscrupulous, or pedantic, judges in, “l’obscurité des cachots... loin des yeux du peuple”.452 Earlier, he had asked how it was still possible that during a time when, “l’esprit philosophique paraît avoir tout réduit en préceptes, la justice seule est encore abandonnée aux caprices de l’opinion”, and called for clarification of these codes so that all could respect their authority.453 In an attempt to make the law fairer, he also proposed the creation of independent, twelve-man tribunals (or juries) – a cornerstone of the English legal system – and an “Avocat des pauvres” for every town.454 Marat would surely have known of the English jury’s defiance of the Crown in 1763 over the use of general warrants, which would have provided even more reason for promoting its introduction, and his suggestions were notably progressive at a time when few reformers were proposing either.455 One notable exception was the senior parlementaire President Dupaty, who published an influential mémoire nearly ten years after Marat’s Plan, which appealed directly to public opinion over an alleged miscarriage of justice against three convicted thieves sent to the galleys, and called for wholesale reform of a legal system that allowed such

452 Ibid, 143.
453 Ibid, 27.
454 Ibid, 149 & 152. At this time, ‘avocats des pauvres’ were commonplace in Geneva and many Germanic states. François Briegel, Négocier la défense. Plaider pour les criminels au siècle des Lumières à Genève (Geneva, 2013). Marat was one of the first to (unsuccessfully) propose the formation of an independent tribunal to defuse the popular violence that marred the early months of the Revolution – see ch.3, 114 & ch.4, 137.
455 Roche, France in the Enlightenment, 316. See p.68.
travesties to happen. The reforms presented before the Parlement in May 1788 by Chrétien-François de Lamoignon de Bâville, the new Keeper of the Seals, stopped short of either universal legal representation or trial by jury – which would not be introduced until 1791 – due largely to the resistance of the magistrate corps. Marat used the Berne competition as an opportunity to articulate ideas on how society tended to oppress the poor in favour of the rich, and his Plan represented an important step towards a more socially conscious agenda from which he would repeatedly draw. What it emphasized above all, was that natural rights should be woven into “les lois fondamentales de l’Etat”, in order to provide the soundest foundations, for otherwise it was like building a house from the roof down. This tension between the conflicting demands of natural and civil rights would underpin much of his subsequent journalism.

Just a few years after the Berne prize was awarded, Immanuel Kant told readers to “Sapere aude!”, but Marat had been encouraging his not only to ‘dare to think’, but also to “réclamer justice contr’eux” [their rulers], so it is hardly surprising that his Plan failed to sway the jury. He had to wait until 1782 for the chance of wider exposure when Brissot published his entry in volume five of a proposed ten-volume collection of essays on penal reform, Bibliothèque philosophique, where it appeared anonymously, sandwiched between Voltaire’s offering and another Berne entry. In his introduction, Brissot speculated on the reasons why Marat’s Plan had not won: “Peut-être les principes de liberté qui en sont la base, auront effrayé quelques-uns de ces censeurs timides... qui craignent que trop de lumière n’éclaire le peuple: comme si le peuple plus éclairé n’est pas plus tranquille et plus heureux”. He appeared so concerned by its potentially seditious nature that he felt the need to add several caveats, pretending that its author was a ‘Pennsylvanian’ native, “nourri longtemps dans les principes de la constitution Anglaise”, so readers should forgive, “quelques opinions hardies reçues dans les républiques [mais] rejetées avec raison dans les monarchies.” Either way it made no difference, since hardly anyone had the chance to read it due to a series of mishaps that befell this volume after its appearance in Paris in June 1783 and subsequent

456 (Dupaty), Mémoire justicatif pour trois hommes condamnés à la roue (Paris, 1786).
457 Sarah Maza provides a good summary of this case, and its implications for government policy, in Private Lives and Public Affairs (Berkeley, 1993), 242-255, especially 254-55. See also James M. Donovan, Juries and the Transformation of Criminal Justice in France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Chapel Hill, 2010), 181
458 See, for example, Offrande à la Patrie (Jan 1789), Supplément à l’Offrande (Feb 1789), La Constitution (Aug 1789) & Le Publiciste Parisien #4 (14 Sept 1789), OP, i:16-24, 29-42, 69-105 & 134 (fn).
459 See, for example, OP, i:16-24 (Offrande) & i:175-177.
462 Ibid, v:111-112 (‘Avis de l’Editeur’), cited in Les Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire, 80B, 31 (fn). In his own writings, Brissot often cast himself as a revolutionary Philadelphian. After their relations had terminally soured, he claimed that Marat’s wish to retain his anonymity was a cowardly act that had endangered him instead, Mémoires, i:360-361.
impounding by the Censor – it finally went on sale in July 1786 (and outside Paris, after September 1788).\textsuperscript{463} The non-appearance of Marat’s contribution to the great penal reform debate – by now, an entire sub-branch of philosophic activity – removed his last opportunity for recognition in “le monde des lettres” following his prior disappointments with the Académie. He would later console himself with the conviction that it was the Plan’s provocative contents that had caused the volume’s seizure rather than Brissot’s reckless ambition in inserting a last-minute (unapproved) prospectus for his next offering.\textsuperscript{464}

It was not until July 1790 that Marat finally got the chance to publish his Plan, announcing it as possibly, “le moins imparfait de tous ceux qui sont sortis de ma plume”, and “très important dans ce moment-ci”. It appeared at a time when the National Assembly was debating penal reform and he hoped that its “comité de constitution” might profit from it, since, “il a grand besoin de lumières, et plus encore de vertus”.\textsuperscript{465} A new footnote reinforced his moral argument, arguing that, “Grace au retour de la liberté, la révolution opérée dans nos idées” must now be followed by one “dans nos sentiments; et lorsque nous serons libres, nous aurons des moeurs”.\textsuperscript{466} He did not hold back either in according its author – “célèbre dans la république des lettres” – the recognition he felt was long overdue, informing readers in a flight of fantasy, how, despite being “peu connu en France”, his Plan had sold well in Switzerland and Germany, and “un prince puissant” [Joseph II] had adopted some of his recommendations on blasphemy and regicide.\textsuperscript{467}

\textbf{IV}

That the three major works from his pre-revolutionary career – Philosophical Essay, Chains and Plan – played a vital role in allowing Marat to arrive at his “principes de la haute politique” before the Revolution, is shown by his frequent recycling of these ideas after 1789. Indeed, Marat would boast to fellow journalist Camille Desmoulins that he had long played the role of revolutionary midwife, citing the publication of Chains as proof of his devotion to “l’humanité, la justice et la liberté”, as well as being the cause of prior persecution.\textsuperscript{468}

\textsuperscript{463} For a full account of the affair, see Robert Darnton, “Article on J.P. Brissot” (www.robertdarnton.org), 1-27, especially 17-18 & 24 [accessed 7/4/2016].
\textsuperscript{464} Coquard, Marat, 104. Daniel Mornet, Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française (Paris, 1933), 249-250. See, for example, Ami du peuple #170 (23 July 1790), \textit{OP}, ii:1096 (fn).
\textsuperscript{465} Ami du peuple #162 & #182 (15 July & 5 Aug 1790), \textit{OP}, ii:1061-62 & 1162 (fn). For background on its republication, see \textit{OP}, ii:313-322*.
\textsuperscript{466} Plan (1790), 86 (fn).
\textsuperscript{467} Ibid, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{468} Letter to Camille Desmoulins (May 1791), \textit{OP} iv:2822-2823.
Rather than place too much weight on a single text (*Chains*), these chapters have sought to demonstrate how much Marat owed to the totality of his pre-revolutionary experiences, training and publications, for he would draw from all within his political imaginary, as he sought to impose his narrative on unprecedented events, and represent his political understanding to an increasingly appreciative readership.\(^\text{469}\) The same view of human nature as fundamentally selfish and prone to corruption, which underpinned his revolutionary rhetoric, can be traced back through his *Plan* and *Chains* to the *Philosophical Essay*, and then further back through the abstract idealism of Rousseau, the practical theorizing of Montesquieu, the radical republicanism of the Commonwealthmen and, perhaps even, the stirring polemic of Protestant theologians. All suggested, one way or another, that some form of change was needed, and that people would only act once their passions were stirred, and they had become convinced that such action was in their collective self-interest. What they needed, above all, was guidance, since, “The greatest misfortune... which can attend a free country... is that no party... agitate the minds of the subjects”.\(^\text{470}\) For Marat, this meant taking it upon himself not only to explain the various “imponderable” forces at work behind the political scenes, but also how to meld their individual interests into a wider “bien public”. In this respect, the striking, and successful, examples of Junius and Wilkes, which Marat had witnessed in England, would provide him with ways and means to ensure that his ideas did not fall upon barren ground.

Looking ahead, the biggest hurdle for Marat was that the same zeal for “gloire” that propelled him inexorably forwards, was also largely responsible for his failure to be taken seriously, which he misinterpreted as jealousy rather than scorn. His inability to conceal a lack of humility, or acknowledge others’ work, could make him appear unbearably conceited compared with those who were more adept at concealing their ambitions. As he later conceded: “j’ai peut-être le malheur d’attacher trop d’importance au bien que je fais, à celui que je voudrais faire. Voilà la clé de toute ma conduite”.\(^\text{471}\) The degree to which Marat managed to overcome this handicap by taking advantage of the sudden change of circumstances, which followed Louis XVI’s convocation of the Estates-General on 8 August 1788, is the subject of the chapters that follow.


\(^{470}\) *Chains* (1774), 4354.

\(^{471}\) *Publiciste de la République française* #147 (19 March 1793), *OP*, ix:5874.
Chapter Three:

Becoming a public writer – Pamphleteering and reform (Jan – Aug 1789)

In June 1788, soon after the publication of his last, most belligerent, scientific work, *Mémoires académiques*, Marat became very ill, and made a Will with his friend, the horologist Abraham-Louis Breguet as his executor.\(^{472}\) In the event of his death, Breguet would donate all his scientific instruments and papers to his former nemesis, the *Académie*.\(^{473}\) He would later claim that on hearing the news in July of the King’s convocation of the Estates-General for the following year, he had been revived by, “l’espoir de voir enfin l’humanité vengée, de concourir à rompre ses fers et de me mettre à ma place”. Seeing where events were heading, he was inspired to compose his first political pamphlet, “une maladie cruelle me menaçait d’aller l’achever dans la tombe... Rendu à la vie, je ne m’occupai plus que des moyens de servir la cause de la liberté”, although he still continued to engage with the scientific world until the middle of 1790.\(^{474}\)

Looking back from the charged, and much changed, political landscape of 1793, Marat was doubtless exaggerating, but nevertheless, the King’s decision gave him a perfect opportunity to put into practice what until now had merely been theoretical, by offering a series of warnings and proposing a number of reforms that the delegates should adopt. With a nation on the brink of bankruptcy, France’s finance minister, Charles-Alexandre de Calonne had summoned the Assembly of Notables in February 1787 to discuss a programme of vital financial reforms, including new taxes, but they balked at his plans to suppress some of their privileges and contrived his resignation. Its president, Archbishop Etienne-Charles de Loménie de Brienne, who had attacked Calonne’s fiscal policy, became his replacement, and persuaded the Assembly to bypass the *Parlement* – which usually registered the King’s edicts as law but were refusing to cooperate on this occasion – by reviving the archaic institution of the Estates-General.\(^{475}\) He was replaced in turn by the Genevan banker and former finance minister, Jacques Necker, who irritated by *Parlement’s* conservatism towards the forms the Estates-General should take, decided to convene a second Assembly in November 1788 to give him greater authority in negotiating with the King, although this backfired after it issued declarations reinforcing privilege and tradition with constitutional justifications.\(^{476}\)

The Estates-General represented the three estates of the realm: clergy (first), nobility (second) and the rest (third). While the King’s Edict of 24 January 1789, which set out the election regulations, agreed to

\(^{472}\) See ch.1, 62.

\(^{473}\) Letter to... (Dec 1788), *Correspondance*, 96-97.


double the number of Third Estate representatives to reflect its numerical superiority, it left the question of voting procedure open, refusing to decree whether the three Orders should meet and vote separately by order, which meant that the Third Estate could always be outvoted if the other two combined, or as a single body, by head. This was accompanied by a request for “notable persons” across the nation to publish their thoughts on precedents for convening this ancient body, to take account of the many changes since it had last met in 1614, and “to confer and record remonstrances, complaints and grievances”. This edict—designed to bypass any claims made by the *parlements* for defining correct constitutional practice—was unprecedented in its appeal for participation, and the resulting *cahiers des doléances* provided a snapshot of the nation’s hopes and fears. The nineteenth-century political theorist, Alexis de Tocqueville compared this appeal to treating the constitution, “like an academic problem to be solved by an essay competition”, although this was a little unfair given the need for the Crown to create an “ideological arsenal” against the *parlements* founded upon historical facts, as the government propagandist Jacob-Nicolas Moreau put it.  

At the same time, the temporary suspension of censorship opened up a Pandora’s Box of bourgeois resentment against the ‘privileged’ orders, as a plethora of pamphleteers appealed to public opinion, helping to fuel a spiralling demand for reform. Poor harvests from the previous summers, alongside a bitter winter, also contributed to a growing sense of crisis. Between May 1788 and January 1789, over 1500 new titles appeared, with 2000 more between February and May 1789, adding up to perhaps “four million pieces of political commentary”, although these figures may be exaggerated. Items up for debate included voting by head, the revocation of clerical and noble privileges, sorting out the public debt, and most importantly, a strong desire to give France a new constitution. Despite the cacophony of competing voices, a consensus emerged that change was inevitable. The novel range of strategies used in these pamphlets helped lay the groundwork for much of the rhetoric that followed, and some, such as abbé Sieyès’ *Qu’est-ce que le Tiers-Etat?*, which appeared in January 1789, sold hundreds of thousands of copies. Thus, a simple request for information rapidly metamorphosed into an avalanche of scripts rejecting the existing arrangement of an absolute monarchy supported on corporate foundations. De Tocqueville traced much revolutionary ideology back to these pamphlets, arguing that their promotion of democratic ideas and reform marked a clear break with the past. For example, two pamphlets by the Calvinist lawyer Jean-Paul

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Rabaut Saint-Etienne defined the Third Estate as the nation minus the nobility and clergy, and urged the Estates-General to adopt the title of ‘National Assembly’ and enter into open dialogue with the nation by harnessing “la force de l’opinion publique, cette déité du siècle moderne” to publicize its deliberations.\textsuperscript{484}

\textbf{I}

Marat’s first intervention, \textit{Offrande à la patrie}, was an unsigned, octavo – the preferred, smaller format for most pamphlets, and journals after 1789 – 62-page pamphlet, published ‘Au Temple de la Liberté’ in January 1789. Its epigraph declared that the people were paying the price for their rulers’ folly – “Quidquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi” [“The kings err, the Greeks are punished”], and it blamed most of France’s problems on the King’s entourage: “son coeur paternel a été ému de compassion… il vole à ton secours. Indigne de l’abus que des serviteurs infidèles ont fait de sa puissance”.\textsuperscript{485} Fearing attempts by the first two estates to maintain the status quo, it urged the third to hold firm in renegotiating the nation’s new social compact within what he referred to as “l’Assemblée Nationale”:

\begin{quote}
O mes concitoyens! L’excès de vos maux a fait sentir la nécessité du remède. Une occasion unique se présente de rentrer dans vos droits. Connaissez une fois le prix de la liberté, connaissez une fois le prix d’un instant… c’est dans l’Assemblée Nationale, ou vous devez… les consacrer sans retour.\textsuperscript{486}
\end{quote}

While the pamphlet’s demands for liberty, popular sovereignty, judicial reform and a graduated income tax were unremarkable, repeated references to “despotisme”, “tyrannie”, “opprimés” and “fers” revealed glimpses of Marat’s truer sympathies, pointing towards a livelier role.\textsuperscript{487} Repeated references to the need for the upcoming Estates-General to prioritize reform of the criminal laws by calling on “les hommes instruits” – “s’oubliant lui-même pour n’être plus que citoyen” – to volunteer their expertise for no other reward than, “la douce satisfaction de travailler au bonheur de l’humanité et à la gloire de servir la patrie!”, suggest that Marat was also using the occasion to promote his \textit{Plan} and resurrect his former ambitions of “gloire”.\textsuperscript{488}

\textsuperscript{484} Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Etienne, \textit{Considérations sur les intérêts du tiers état} (1788) and \textit{Question de droit public} (1789), in Birn, “The pamphlet press and the Estates-General of 1789”, 66-68.
\textsuperscript{486} \textit{Ibid}, i:5. The power of this line lay in the \textit{double entendre} of ‘prix’ (price/price).
\textsuperscript{487} \textit{Ibid}, i: 5, 13, 16, 18, 19, 22 (despotisme), 3, 6, 13, 18, 25 (tyrannie), 15 (opprimés), 4, 11, 23, 25, 28 (fers). Variants of “despotisme” and its more forceful cousin “tyrannie” occur 17 times in \textit{Offrande}.
\textsuperscript{488} \textit{Ibid}, i:24.
Divided into five discours, the Offrande opened with the provocative suggestion that the spell surrounding royal government had been broken – “C’en est fait, le prestige est détruit” – while castigating ministerial incompetence for pushing the country to the brink in the first place:

Les voilà donc enfin, ces ministres audacieux, décriés par leur ineptie, avilis par leurs déprédations, abhorrés par leurs excès et proscrits par l’indignation publique! Traîtres à leur maître, traîtres à leurs pays, ils ont, à force de forfaits, compromis l’autorité, et poussé l’État sur le bord de l’abîme.489

Recycling the idea of national sovereignty from his Plan, Marat declared that, “Grâce aux lumières de la philosophie, le temps est passé où l’homme abruti se croyait esclave”, and went on, “De toutes parts les sages élèvent la voix, ils répètent aux monarques qu’en tout État, la souveraine puissance réside dans le corps de la nation, que de lui émane toute autorité légitime, que les princes... ne règnent que par la justice et qu’ils la doivent au dernier de leurs sujets”.490 Despite evoking a harrowing image of a carrion nation being picked apart by vultures – “O ma patrie! Des vautours insatiables ont dévoré ta substance... je te vois encore couverte de blessures et baignée dans ton sang” – he reminded his audience that their troubles could end the moment they decided they had had enough – “vous êtes libres, si vous avez le courage de l’être”, echoing the dominant theme from Chains of the voluntary nature of their servitude.491

The Offrande expanded upon Marat’s earlier critique of despotism, by deploying a vivid, extended imaginary of national degeneration, which drew freely on religious, classical, medical and moral imagery, as well as the vocabulary – for example, “despotisme ministériel” – of previous political conflicts.492 In Marat’s “tableau déchirante”, he describes the national ‘body’ as succumbing to an insidious “poison” infecting it from within, while suffering terrible “maux”, “blessures” and “tourments”. The decline was as much moral as it was physical, thriving off the current climate of “confusion et trouble”, “ignorance” and “corruption”, as leeches (“sangsues”) sucked the national fortune dry, and “projets désastreux” appeared to be leading the Patrie to the edge of “l’abîme”. The singularity of Marat’s vision in this pamphlet lay not in his use of such images, but rather in his synthetic deployment of so many hostile descriptions and metaphors against the powerful threat posed by the henchmen (“suppôts”) of despotism to the nation’s “bonheur”, continually

489 The contemporary meaning of ‘status’ or distinction came later, see entries in Dictionnaire de l’Académie française (1762) and Dictionnaire de la langue française (1873) in ‘ARTL Dictionnaires d’autrefois’ [accessed online 1/10/2017].

490 Ibid, i:1. Marat would later recycle his opening phrase “C’en est fait” as the title of one of his most explosive pamphlets – see ch.7.

491 Ibid, i:2.

reminding his audience that, “C’est vous qui faites la force et la richesse de l’Etat”. His blanket condemnation of the “escroqueries” of nearly all the King’s ministers revealed his early adoption of the need for vigilance over executive power, a (civic) function that would become his constant principle throughout the Revolution.

One of Marat’s main aims appeared to be an attempt to promote the Third Estate at the expense of Parlement as the true voice of opposition, which he defined expansively, from the bottom – “la classe des serviteurs, des manoeuvres, des ouvriers” – up to, and including, those “princes généreux et magnanimes qui... se contentent d’être de simples citoyens”. During 1787-88, the parlements had picked up public support following their opposition to Maupeou’s constitutional reforms, which they had presented as a glaring example of the Court’s “tyrannie”, cloaking their case in patriotic language and generally acting as a mouthpiece for popular grievance. However, by the end of 1788, it had lost much credibility following its pronouncement that the Estates-General should meet and vote by order as it had done in 1614. Marat revealed his deep suspicion by articulating a list of “reproches” towards, “ces sénateurs trop longtemps exaltés, qui prétendent être les pères du peuple et les dépositaires des lois”, repeatedly criticizing their “esprit de corps insoutenable” and “odieuse partialité”.

The second discours continued the theme of the Third Estate’s new oppositional role by urging it to present a united front against ministerial corruption, warning them to resist attempts to detach their most useful members – the financial, legal and educated elites – from the popular cause through bribes and titles. The third discours echoed his earlier address in Chains, “To the Electors of Great Britain’, by telling readers to choose their representatives wisely to ensure their safety (“salut”) and happiness (“bonheur”). He warned them against opting for, “la jeunesse imprudente et fougueuse”, or “les hommes affichés par leur... dissipation”, urging them, instead, to choose men recognizable by their wisdom, probity and proven ability – in short, “des hommes zélés pour le bien public”.

The final discours took up many of the themes from the opening section of Marat’s Plan by proposing six “lois fondamentales” to underpin the proposed Constitution. Up to then, France’s rule rested upon a dual system of “lois du Roi” consecrated by customs and procedures, whose observance by the monarch was, in theory, monitored by the Parlement de Paris. However, since they were unwritten, there

494 Ibid, i:10-16.
495 Ibid, i:6-7, 7-9, 15 (fn), 21-22. See also De Cock, Action politique de Marat, 23-25.
was no consensus over which laws were fundamental, and a determined king could override them.\textsuperscript{500} Marat suggested that in order to guarantee its independence from “toute autorité”, the Estates-General should assemble every three years and elect a permanent committee to safeguard these “lois fondamentales” between meetings. At the same time, it should constitute itself as the only legitimate sovereign body, with the power to monitor government, sack corrupt ministers and resolve grievances; it should be composed of devoted, incorruptible representatives; it should guarantee a free press; it should abolish royal abuses, such as \textit{lettres de cachet}; it should make sweeping legal reforms by adopting “la jurisprudence criminelle des Anglais”; and finally, it should implement a fairer, more proportional system of taxation.\textsuperscript{501}

Despite its relative moderation, the \textit{Offrande} ended with an ominous warning if the government refused to ratify these proposed new laws – which he later described as his first successful prediction – then the people would have recourse to “un moyen décisif pour le ramener à la raison”, and should withdraw all cooperation, including the collection of taxes and will to fight, even though this might, “allumer une guerre civile et renverser le trône”.\textsuperscript{502} In Marat’s diagnosis, the main threat did not come from the current ministry – composed of “hommes sages et vertueux”, with special praise for the recently recalled finance minister and “l’ami du peuple”, Necker – but rather, from the first two estates, who were joined by ties of blood and common interest into a single body ever ready to, “s’élever contre le peuple ou le monarque”. He warned that those who “jouissent paisiblement de tous les avantages de la société”, should think carefully before pushing to breaking point, “un peuple immense et courageux, qui ne demande encore qu’un soulagement à ses maux, qui ne veut encore que le règne de la justice”. Patience had its limits and “les cris de la liberté sont toujours prêts à sortir des feux de la sédition”.\textsuperscript{503} Counterbalancing his fierce pragmatism with a sentimental streak, Marat fantasized about, “ce jour si désiré où la nation, livrée aux transports de sa joie, pourra s’écrier: Je suis libre”, anticipating the “émotion délicieuse” that would course through his veins when the moment finally arrived. He imagined “mille sources fécondes” spurring from the temple of liberty, to provide “aisance” and “bien-être” for all. Whatever happens, he added, do not falter, or this vision will surely vanish “comme un songe et un affreux réveil vous retrouvera dans la misère et dans les fers”.\textsuperscript{504} Echoing the lines from \textit{Chains}, with which he had introduced himself to Wilkes fourteen years earlier, he concluded with a striking vision of a contagious conflagration of patriotic hearts beating as one: “Puisse le feu divin de la liberté, qui toujours brûla dans mon sein, enflammer le vôtre”.\textsuperscript{505}

\textsuperscript{501} \textit{Offrande, OP}, i:16-23. The fifth of these echoed a similar appeal in his \textit{Plan} for the establishment of independent juries, see ch.2, 94.
\textsuperscript{502} \textit{Ibid}, 25. \textit{Ami du peuple} #10 (20 Sept 1789), \textit{OP}, i:167 (fn).
\textsuperscript{503} \textit{Ibid}, i:25, 22 (fn), 15 (fn) & 2.
\textsuperscript{504} \textit{Ibid}, i:28.
According to Marat, his *Offrande* had an immediate impact, and its ‘coronation’ by a patriotic club in the café du Caveau in the Palais Royal restored his spirits and inspired him to continue.\(^{506}\) It was also mentioned in the ex-finance minister Calonne’s open letter to the King, as one of many “écrits incendiaires” flooding the market, which, “semblent tous s’être concertés pour amener la nation aux prétentions les plus démesurées”.\(^{507}\)

II

Over a month later, towards the end of February, Marat published a follow-up, *Supplément de l’Offrande à la Patrie*. This time its tone was less optimistic and marked a hardening of his position. In particular, like many others, he was disappointed by the royal edict of 24 January, which had failed to resolve the issue of voting procedure.\(^{508}\) Instead of hearing the King’s concern for the crisis troubling his nation, he had only found the banal language of a “prince impérieux” who would only consider his subjects’ grievances if they handed him “les moyens de sortir d’embarrass”, and wondered if this was this really “le langage d’un Prince juste”?\(^{509}\) Could the King and his advisers really be trusted to do the right thing for the country, he asked, posing the unanswered question of whether, “le bien est-il donc si difficile à faire, qu’on le veut sincèrement?”\(^{510}\)

He began by repeating a warning he had made in *Chains* about how the current “déluge d’écrits futilès” could only confuse the public, causing more harm than good, despite their authors’ best intentions. While he recognized that such an accusation could also be levelled at him, the favourable response towards his first offering had resolved him to carry on. Besides, most of these writings seemed content with outlining proposals for administrative reform, as if the government could be trusted with the great task ahead. Such complacency was hopelessly naïve: “Remède bien faible contre de si grands maux ou, pour mieux dire, vues bien fausses aux yeux du penseur qui a observé de près les ressorts du gouvernement et le jeu de la politique”.\(^{511}\) Several passages in the *Supplément* were lifted directly from *Chains*, including a long footnote explaining the need to take back prerogatives formerly attributed to the King, such as the right to make war,

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\(^{506}\) Supplément de l’Offrande à la patrie, ou discours au tiers état sur le plan d’opérations que ses députés aux Etats-généraux doivent se proposer sur les vices du gouvernement, d’où résulte le malheur public (Feb 1789), OP, i:29 (‘Avertissement’); Journal de la République française #98 (14 Jan 1793), OP, viii:5500. Marat proudly featured the *Offrande* on his paper’s masthead until August 1792. The Caveau club also received numerous mentions as a haven for patriotic sympathisers, such as the *Ami du peuple* or *Catéchisme du citoyen*, or *Éléments du droit public français* (1788) and Rabaut Saint-Etienne, *A la Nation française, sur les vices de son gouvernement…* (Nov 1788).

\(^{507}\) Ibid, i:38.

\(^{508}\) Ibid, i:39.

\(^{509}\) Ibid, i:30.
and restore them to a “Conseil national”, and historical examples used to back up his main points. He also used the opportunity to promote the republication of *Chains* – although it would not appear until June 1793 – by declaring that “ce tableau” had been taken from an “ouvrage anglais… également remarquable par son énergie et par sa profondeur”, which would soon be translated by “une société patriotique… pour mettre la nation en état de profiter des grandes leçons qu’il contient”.  

Since the nation’s interests were incompatible with those of existing “compagnies… corps… [et] ordres privilégiés”, there would inevitably be conflict, as had already been demonstrated by the strong reaction his *Offrande* had provoked from, “ces hommes apathiques qu’on appelle des hommes raisonnables”. Such men, who disapproved of, “la chaleur avec laquelle j’ai plaidé la cause de la nation” appeared incapable of preaching anything but patience and moderation, which only made him more determined not to compromise those ideals he felt obliged to promote. Right now, the nation needed wise and generous men ready to sacrifice themselves without hesitation, not heartless men, “insensibles à la vue des calamités publiques”. Moreover, with the stakes so high, there was no room for false modesty, “Chercher à ramener les esprits est toujours une tentative louable, mais se flatter de réussir est souvent le rêve d’un homme de bien. Comment se le dissimuler…?” Marat would later describe how his friends had reacted badly to this latest change of career, calling him a hopeless case (“animal indécrottable”) and begging him to desist from squandering his meagre savings on his journalism, but he had ignored their pleas. As its subtitle indicated, Marat’s *Supplément* sought to inform the Third Estate on, “le plan d’opérations que ses députés… doivent se proposer, sur les vices du gouvernement, d’où résulte le malheur public”.

Divided into four *discours*, it began by declaring that the King urgently needed to establish a new constitution as soon as possible, and to replace his ministries with councils similar to those used in “toutes les républiques”, as there was little point in piecemeal reform, and that, “elle va plus sûrement au bien général, qui doit être le but de tout bon gouvernement”. He also criticized those who were proposing England’s bicameral system as a suitable model for France to adopt, suggesting it would be open to similar corruption through the use of royal ‘placemen’, and so on. In the third *discours*, Marat took up one of the themes triggered by the royal edict by warning the new representatives against placing too much confidence

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512 See, for example, *Ibid*, i:51-52 (fn), 30 (fn), 37-38 (fn).


514 ‘Nation’ and ‘people’ were interchangeable for Marat.

515 *Ibid*, i:31-32. By 1791, this phrase (“homme de bien”) had become a mocking label for those claiming to be non-partisan.


517 *Supplément, OP*, i:35.
in the King’s intentions and decrying the attempt – “ce mode gothique que la raison réprouve” – to make the Three Estates vote separately, en bloc, according to feudal practice. It was clear, he argued, that the Estates-General must deliberate as a single, united assembly, and it must not dissolve until it had decided upon “les LOIS FONDAMENTALES DU ROYAUME” (sic) – a doctrine that would effectively became the Third Estate’s modus operandi following the ‘Tennis Court Oath’ of 20 June.\footnote{Ibid, i:46-47.}

The final discours began with a solemn declaration, which repeated a mantra he had previously expressed in both Chains and Plan: “Ne cessons de le répéter, le seul but légitime de tout gouvernement est le bonheur des peuples qui y sont soumis, but qu’il atteindrait toujours sans le défaut de capacité, d’intégrité et de désintéressement de ceux qui sont à la tête des affaires”.\footnote{Ibid, i:48.} The only way to achieve this, he continued would be to adopt Montesquieu’s separation of powers into their constitution so that no single interest would prevail, and by having the Estates-General sit in permanent session. As well as encouraging “Les ministres surveillés” to focus on “le bien public”, it would also serve to prevent the King from abusing his position. Such a transfer of power from a ruling monarch to a new “Conseil national” would put him in a position of “l’heureuse impuissance”, prevent him from sullying his reign with theft, violence or murder, and guarantee his good rule.\footnote{Ibid, i:52-53.}

On 12 March, the lieutenant-général of police (M. de Crosne) ordered the seizure of twenty “libelles” from the Palais Royal booksellers, including the Supplément and its moulds (“matrices”).\footnote{AN (Richelieu). Y/13319, in Coquard, Marat, 216-217. It is unclear whether this seizure was related to the publication of Calonne’s letter. The Palais Royal was the home of the King’s cousin, the Duke of Orléans, who turned part of it into a lively hub of Parisian social life with shopping arcades, casinos, popular cafés and booksellers.} Pamphlets by Mirabeau and Brissot were also swept up in this vain attempt to control the outpouring of “écrits séditieux”, and the reaction only confirmed Marat’s suspicions of the regime’s true intentions – that it was less interested in caring for its people than in restoring their ‘chains’. More importantly, this action cemented Marat’s credentials as a patriot within his Carmes-Déchaussés district – one of sixty created for the purpose of choosing Electors to vote for Paris’ Third Estate representatives – securing his appointment to its electoral committee.\footnote{See David Garrioch, The Making of Revolutionary Paris (Berkeley, 2002), 233, 292-293 & 299-300. At the time, Marat was living at 47 rue du Vieux-Colombier, OP, i:544. After 24 July, these Electors would constitute the Commune, or new municipal government of Paris, and on 31 July each district was invited to elect five Représentants to its Assemblée.} This relatively affluent district in what is now the 6th arrondissement, counted only 5% registered poor as opposed to 20% in the neighbouring Cordeliers district, which bordered its
eastern side, and which formed the heart of the printing quarter where Marat would later seek protection.523

The issue of voting en bloc continued to create tension after the Estates-General convened on 5 May, and the deadlock was only resolved on 17 June, after the Third Estate deputies invited the other orders to join them and unilaterally proclaimed themselves the National Assembly, declaring that only they had the right to interpret “la volonté générale de la nation” while promising “des grands travaux qui doivent procurer la régénération de la France”.524 To emphasize that it was now the supreme power in the land, it passed a resolution guaranteeing the national debt and taking control of taxes, thus effectively displacing national sovereignty from the body of the King to their own collective body. Three days later, after finding themselves locked out of their hall, they reconvened in a nearby Tennis Court where they pledged never to disband until they had secured a new constitution. Realizing he had lost this battle, the King recognized the new Assembly on 27 June and ordered the other two Estates to join them, freeing all deputies from their electoral mandates. The effect of this action on radicals, such as the journalist and president of Marat’s district, Nicolas Bonneville, was profound: “We have just witnessed the first national, public and popular activity after fourteen centuries of servitude… today, I begin to live!” One of the first to recognize the event’s significance, he urged his fellow Paris Electors to transform themselves into a new municipal assembly and act as an intermediary between the districts and the National Assembly. Invoking a radical democratic interpretation of popular sovereignty, he argued that its displacement from Crown to Assembly was not enough, and that it should be placed in the hands of citizens so that the deputies answered directly to their Electors, for, “otherwise you will have substituted a despotism of the many in place of the despotism of one”.525 This thorny question of the representation of national sovereignty was one to which radicals, such as Bonneville and Marat, would repeatedly return.

III

With the capital in ferment following the National Assembly’s defiant declaration, allied with food shortages, unemployment and wild rumours of every kind following a military redeployment around Paris, it did not take much to trigger the events leading to the fall of the Bastille on 14 July. It began three days

523 Ibid, 217 & 461 (fn.27). The district, which lay between the Jardin du Luxembourg and the Pont Neuf, encompassed Saint-Sulpice and Odéon-Théâtre.
earlier when news of the King’s dismissal of his popular finance minister Necker reached the capital, and events moved rapidly after a demonstration in Necker’s support degenerated into a ‘massacre’, accompanied by a general breakdown of order, leading to the establishment of a bourgeois militia to protect the peace. ⁵²⁶ On 14 July, a large, armed crowd set off to seize gunpowder from the prison-fortress known as the Bastille, which, after numerous misunderstandings, was stormed and its governor and several defenders lynched. Following this event and the failure of the army to re-impose royal authority, traditional ancien régime power structures broke down following the mass resignation of royal intendants and personnel, leaving an administrative political vacuum, which was filled in Paris by the Electors who formed a new municipal government known as the Commune, electing the Académicien Sylvain Bailly as Mayor and the marquis de Lafayette as commander of the National Guard. ⁵²⁷

It was a decisive moment and Marat inserted himself into its narrative by claiming to have played a key role in preventing a plot to retake the capital later that evening. After stumbling across a large cavalry detachment on the Pont Neuf and hearing their commander inform a gullible crowd (“trop confiante”) of the imminent arrival of more to restore order on their behalf, he became suspicious. Forcing his way in front of the troop to halt its “marche triomphale”, he insisted they hand over their arms to the Town Hall, and when their officer refused, he asked the commandant of their National Guard escort to take action. He responded by dismissing Marat as a fantasist (“visionnaire”), and in return, Marat called him a cretin (“imbécile”), denouncing the troops as, “des traitres qui venaient pour nous égorger dans la nuit”. As the crowd became more agitated, the commandant finally agreed to escort the soldiers back to their barracks. While there are no corroborating accounts of this ‘intervention’, Marat named one of his district Electors (Grey) as a witness, and he never denied the incident, even after Marat attacked his integrity. ⁵²⁸ The first account of this intervention was published by Brissot nearly two months later, suggesting that there may also have been a degree of retrospective mythmaking involved. ⁵²⁹

Over the next three days, Marat worked flat out for his district committee, which had been sitting in permanent session like all the other districts, as they grappled with the immediate ramifications of these events, including the threat of a military reaction and municipal reorganization. After his proposal to produce a paper for the district, which would serve the patrie by recounting “l’historique de la révolution”,
was turned down, he resigned, claiming an inability to perform any other kind of useful role, such as “commissaire”. Setting up a newspaper operation at his own expense, his first article was a sceptical response to the extraordinary events of 4 August, although for censorship reasons, it did not appear until 21 September.

During this febrile, overnight session, which had been called in response to the widespread rural violence that became known as “Le Grand Peur”, the Assembly agreed to abolish most feudal privileges, voting a series of decrees over the following week. It marked the most radical moment of the Revolution to date and won widespread acclaim from virtually the entire press, apart from Marat and Desmoulins. While most heralded this landmark moment as the dawning of a new era, Marat rightly anticipated that the widely reported frenzy of competitive generosity would soon be ignored. When the first two orders began to thrash out the compensation details for the state’s “rachat” of many of these privileges in subsequent debates, the patriotic press remained largely mute. Marat warned his readers not to be taken in by this dramatic show of altruism, suggesting that its sponsors had been far more motivated by fear than beneficence, only noticing the injustice of their “privilèges” after the flames had engulfed their châteaux: “Quoi! C’est à la lueur des flammes de leurs châteaux incendiés qu’ils ont la grandeur d’âme de renoncer au privilège de tenir dans les fers des hommes qui ont recouvré leur liberté les armes à la main!”

Furthermore, he continued, it was not just the threat of rural arson that was focusing their minds on not taking any more from “des malheureux qui ont à peine de quoi vivre!”, but also the fear of popular justice, which had already been meted out against, “des déprédateurs, des concussionaires, des satellites du despotisme”. These concessions were just a smokescreen, he warned, and their main proponent, the vicomte de Noailles – depicted by the rest of the press as an incarnation of patriotism – was “l’homme du monde le mieux fait pour les intrigues politiques”. Besides, Marat argued, once the new constitution came into effect most of these privileges would have been discarded anyway. What was most important for

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530 Dénonciation, OP, i:617 (fn).
533 For Desmoulins’ response, see Discours de la lanterne (15 Sept 1789), in Oeuvres, ed. Jules Claretie, 2 vols (Paris, 1874), i:143-144.
534 Freddi, “La presse parisienne”: 53. While not all abolished privileges, such as the corvée, were compensated, most were.
535 “Projet dévoilé de leurrer le peuple” (6 Aug 1789), OP, i:63.
536 Probably a reference to the lynching on 22 July of the royal officials, Bertier de Sauvigny, the Paris Intendant, and his father-in-law, Foulon, who were accused of speculating in grain. This violence was a factor in persuading many deputies to move away from the more democratic vision of the new regime that prevailed in June.
537 Ami du peuple #12 (22 Sept 1789), OP, i:176-177.
people to understand, he continued, was that the true cause of the troubles ravaging France and the main threat to social order, had little to do with the perpetuation of feudal privilege, and everything to do with far more fundamental problems of food scarcity (“la disette des grains”), public negligence (“l’incurie du gouvernement”), corruption (“la rapacité des monopoleurs... administrateurs publics etc.”), counter-revolutionary threat (“les noirs complots des ennemis de la patrie”), and above all, a general attitude of indifference towards the nation’s plight. In particular, he lamented the thoughtlessness of “le corps législatif” in not considering the consequences of its actions in tearing down the old order before constructing a “nouvel édifice” in its place. How would the state cover its expenses now? More importantly, why was it not looking after “des choses les plus urgentes” and providing bread to a starving population? Indeed, what exactly were this body’s main priorities? — “Ne nous y fions pas, on cherche à en reculer l’époque, jusqu’à ce qu’on ait trouvé quelque moyen de s’y opposer, on cherche à nous endormir, on cherche à nous leurrer”.

Marat’s assumption that the nobles would insist on compensation was partly borne out by events, although he did acknowledge that the destruction of seigneurialism was a considerable achievement. The resulting legislation, however, provoked intense dissatisfaction, including open rebellion in southwest France, as many peasants became indebted to their former seigneurs through the loans required to buy out their ‘emancipation’.

Originally intended for publication in Marat’s first newspaper, the Moniteur patriot, this article was not actually published until mid-September, thanks to the “pusillanimité” of his printers, as he put it, when confronted with the Commune’s recent Arrêt against all, “imprimés calomnieux, propres à produire une fermentation dangereuse sans aucun nom d’auteur ou d’imprimeur”, also making any hawkers (“colporteurs”) and printers of such writings liable for their contents, “en attendant le Règlement qui doit être fait par l’Assemblée nationale sur la liberté de la presse”. The Commune’s immediate clampdown on press freedom, which derived from their responsibility for keeping public order in Paris, contrasted with the more ambivalent attitude of the National Assembly, then preoccupied with debating a ‘Declaration of Rights’, in which freedom of speech, amongst others, was guaranteed. It was also the cause of Marat’s first altercation with the authorities, following efforts to secure a special “autorisation” from the Commune’s police committee, in order to reassure all future printers. The committee had initially been reluctant to provide such a

538 “Projet dévoilé”, OP, i:64-65, 65 (fn).
539 Peter M. Jones, Peasantry in the French Revolution (Cambridge, 1988), 85. Their debts were finally voided by the Convention on 17 July 1793.
document lest it be misinterpreted as an official seal of approval, and besides, there was no need for one, it pointed out, since press freedom would be guaranteed – in theory, at least – by the National Assembly’s imminent Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme.\textsuperscript{541} Marat’s verbal outburst on being told that such permission already existed “dans le fait”, provoked his arrest on 13 August.\textsuperscript{542} Questioned by the president of the Commune Assembly, Marat replied that he only wished to spread, “le sentiment de patriotisme et de la liberté dont il était animé”. The manner in which the president proceeded to ‘correct’ Marat’s excessive enthusiasm for “le bien public” was most revealing:

nous ne pouvons pas nous empêcher de condamner au moins comme indiscrète la prétention d’un citoyen qui entreprendrait de faire prévaloir son opinion et sa volonté contre celle d’une assemblée que la patrie a spécialement honorée de sa confiance... Cette indiscretion deviendrait un crime s’il se permettait des dénonciations qui exposeraient aux violences des personnes peu éclairées, des citoyens consacrés... au maintien des lois et du bonheur de la patrie.\textsuperscript{543}

He concluded by urging Marat to remember that, “le bonheur public repose sur les bases de la sagesse, toujours modérée, et sur la subordination de tout particulier à la volonté générale qui est la seule loi de tous les lieux et tous les temps”. The nod to Rousseau was a neat philosophical flourish that promoted the dominance of collective wisdom over dissenting, individual opinions, as manifested in the law.\textsuperscript{544} This, of course, did not address the problem of how that law was made or interpreted, and here, in a nutshell, lay the essence of much of Marat’s subsequent conflict with both local and national authorities. By denouncing the National Assembly’s ‘revolutionary’ decrees from 4 August for their hypocritical sleight of hand, Marat’s provocative analysis was undermining the new regime whose decisions now represented the general will. Herein lay one of the Revolution’s central paradoxes, namely whether the National Assembly should prevail over the popular sovereignty it represented, and whether it was the only legitimate channel for expressing the national interest. What seemed beyond doubt was that reality inevitably fell short of Rousseau’s ingenious solution to the main dilemma posed by his ‘social contract’, namely that the common interest would always prevail in any conflict, since, “the agreement between all interests is formed by opposition to each other’s interest”. Without different interests, no common interest could exist, “since it would never encounter obstacles: everything would run by itself, and politics would cease to be an art”.\textsuperscript{545}

\textsuperscript{541} Ratified on 26 August 1789, Article XI stated that, “La libre communication des pensées et des opinions est un des droits les plus précieux de l’Homme: tout Citoyen peut donc parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l’abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la Loi”.

\textsuperscript{542} On 8 September, Marat was granted a “permis à la poste de faire circular le journal rédigé par M. Marat”, which he printed on every back page until 7 October, and then intermittently until 23 December.

\textsuperscript{543} Lacroix, \emph{Actes de la Commune, Série 1}, i:206, cited in OP, i:20-21 (‘Guide de lecture’, hereafter marked ‘).\textsuperscript{544}

\textsuperscript{544} Article VI of the ‘Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen’ – “La loi est l’expression de la volonté générale”.

\textsuperscript{545} Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, 60 (fn) (Book II, Ch.3). See also Roger Masters & Christopher Kelly, “Rousseau’s Social Contract: the common good and the guilty”, \emph{Pensée Libre no.2} (Ottawa, 1989): 107-122, especially 115.
Frequently, during discussions of the general will, as was the case here, the fact that Rousseau only intended to provide theoretical “principles of political right” for an idealized community tended to be forgotten, so theory and practice were often confused. Moreover, those who advocated such inviolability of the general will conveniently ignored Rousseau’s further injunction that, “Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated and...The deputies of the people therefore are not and cannot be its representatives, they are merely its agents; they cannot conclude anything definitively”. To follow the progress of Marat’s various interventions on this matter is also to follow the continuing stress on this particular Gordian knot, which would not be finally cut until 1800.  

IV

After the fall of the Bastille, irregular pamphlets found themselves competing with a marked increase in periodicals to cater for the insatiable public demand for political news. On 11 August – the same day that the decree ending feudalism was finalized – Marat made his first, tentative foray into journalism with the anonymous Le Moniteur patriote. Although stillborn – there was no second issue – it marked an important transition between his one-off pamphlets and the creation of a more regular vehicle for conveying his views: “lorsque j’ai vu l’Assemblée poursuivre avec opiniâtreté un plan d’opérations funeste, j’ai fait l’acquit de ma conscience en lui adressant publiquement mes observations.” Marat’s pedagogically minded Moniteur (literally “informers”) followed on the heels of the Moniteur universel de Paris (May) but predated Charles-Joseph Panckoucke’s popular journal of record, Le Moniteur (November), which became essential reading for anyone wishing to keep up with the National Assembly debates. It may also have indicated a subtle nod to Wilkes, who, in 1762, had written a number of critical articles against the government for The Monitor, or the British freeholder. While the English word carried a slightly different

547 The date of the referendum that converted Napoleon’s role as First Consul into a mandate for direct rule, bypassing any need for representative democracy.
548 Le Moniteur patriote #1 (11 Aug 1789), OP, i:56-60. Another journal with the same name was more concerned with affairs in Brabant (modern Belgium), Pierre Rétat, Les journaux de 1789: bibliographie critique (Paris, 1988), 179-180.
meaning, closer to observation than instruction, the combination of both neatly encapsulated Marat’s new agenda.

Adopting the epigraph he had used for *Chains* ["Vitam impendere vero"], Marat’s main intention in this pamphlet-paper was to pour cold water over the Assembly’s proposals for the new constitution – ongoing since 1 August, and debated between 28 August and 11 September – which he characterized as mainly favouring the privileged few over the dispossessed many. His intervention came at a time when the National Assembly appeared to be leaning towards a bicameral English model of parliament (separate houses for the Commons and the Lords) with an absolute royal veto, an arrangement that was being promoted by a grouping of constitutional monarchists known as “monarchiens”, focused around the comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, then president of the Assembly and a founding member of its Constitutional Committee. It was mainly opposed by another grouping known as “patriotes”, who grouped themselves around the leadership of Adrien Duport, Antoine Barnave and the Lameth brothers. Marat was scathing of all the committee’s proposals, effortlessly deploying the same polemical voice he had once turned against *philosophes* and scientists, onto leading deputies, such as Jean-Joseph Mounier, a *monarchien*, who he claimed had mixed up his maxims on rights and duties in such a way that, “comme rien n’est raisonné dans ces projets, on n’y trouve la raison de rien”. For Marat, Abbé Sieyès was the only one to get close, and he might have succeeded if he had been able to, “descendre de la hauteur des spéculations métaphysiques” and replace excessive erudition with clearer explanation. However, the main shortcoming of all these proposals was that none proposed anything solid enough to “donner une base à la société”, so it was left to him to demand “les droits de l’humanité” in favour of that neglected mass, “que l’on dédaigne, repousse, maîtrise et opprime en tous lieux, que l’on a toujours comptée pour rien dans tous les gouvernements de la terre”. Judging by this feeble excuse for a constitution, he went on, one might easily confuse France’s new legislators with its former ministers for consolidating so many of the despotic policies from the old regime that they were supposed to be replacing, which he had previously dissected in *Chains*:

O Français! Nation trop confiante, auriez-vous imaginé qu’au moment même où la victoire vient de couronner votre généreuse audace et où le sang des traîtres à la patrie fume encore, ces dignes députés donneraient à votre

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King’s favourite and first minister, Lord Bute, to counterbalance the Monitor’s “incendiary and libellous” articles against King George III and his government.

552 When the Assembly rejected their proposals on 11 September, Mounier resigned from the committee along with Clermont-Tonnerre and Pierre-Victoire Malouet, forming the core of the “monarchien” party.

chef le droit de disposer de vous comme d’un vil troupeau, et qu’eux-mêmes vous chargeraient de fers, en paraissant ne travailler qu’à vous rendre libres?… et ce sont… vos mandataires, vos défenseurs!554

Already we find much of the rhetorical vocabulary that would give Marat’s newspaper such a distinctive identity, with its warnings of duplicity (“faux patriotes”) and complacency, its striking imagery (“le sang des traîtres… fume encore”, “vil troupeau”), its harangues, and its appeals to sentimental tropes (“frémisse d’horreur”). As long as the “salut de la patrie” hung in the balance, he would continue to publish his pessimistic reflections however much it grieved him to do so. Soon, he would be arguing that the French had been lucky in winning their liberty on 14 July and that the real problem lay in securing this new liberty.

Between May and August, Marat claimed to have sent over twenty letters to prominent members of the Estates-General, offering advice on how to proceed, and there is no record of any reply. Only two of these have survived, printed within Marat’s own publications, suggesting that they may have been fictitious. The first, dating from 27 July, pushed for the creation of an independent legal tribunal so that, “Aux scènes atroces qu’a fait éclôre la vengeance de la populace doivent succéder des jugements réguliers”.555 The second, addressed “Au président des Etats Généraux” on 23 August, which warned against adopting the English constitution, considered for so long “comme le chef-d’oeuvre de la sagesse humaine”, was reproduced at the back of his reprint of Chaînes in 1793.556 Marat’s deliberate retention of the National Assembly’s old title revealed a questioning of its claim to national sovereignty. Given the relative lack of detailed knowledge of English government amongst the French, he felt obliged to highlight its “vices nombreux”. Having spent ten years in England closely following, “les démêlés de Wilkes et du cabinet de St. James”, as a staunch “ennemi du despotisme jusqu’à l’horreur”, his “goût naturel pour la politique” had led him to, “observer le jeu de très près, d’en suivre la marche, d’en saisir les avantages et les défauts”. Furthermore, “eighteen years” earlier – it would have actually been fifteen, reinforcing the notion that the letter may have been written after the event – he had presented a similar analysis to the English in a work intended to draw attention to the King’s corruption of Parliament and arouse “les sentiments de leurs droits”, incurring the repressive attention of the authorities in the process. Such a constitution, he informed the Assembly, would only serve to keep them in hock to the malign influence of executive power, since it incorporated, “une foule de vices qui laissaient la carrière toujours ouverte aux prévarications ministerielles et qui exposaient la sûreté publique aux atteintes du cabinet, lors même qu’il ne se permettait aucun coup d’autorité”. He concluded by telling the president that immediately after its publication, “la fermentation

554 Ibid, i:59-60.
555 Le Publiciste Parisien #2 (13 Sept 1789), OP, i:125 (fn).
556 “Tableau des vices de la constitution anglaise, présenté en août 1789 aux Etats Généraux, comme une série d’écueils à éviter dans le Gouvernement qu’ils voulaient donner à la France’. Chaînes (1793), 4613-4619. Despite Marat’s best efforts at drumming up interest in its republication from February 1789 onwards, Chaînes was not finally published until June 1793.
devint générale”, and the desire for reform so strong – “surtout une plus égale représentation du peuple” (Marat’s italics) – that it became a favourite toast of the popular societies. In another fit of fantasy, he claimed that having proposed four bills for remediing these “vices”, the third – exclusion of placemen – had been successfully adopted by the British Parliament.\textsuperscript{557}

As someone steeped in the commonwealth tradition and with direct experience of the English government in action, as seen through the prism of Wilkes and Junius, such a conclusion, on England’s constitutional shortcomings, was no surprise and the ongoing debate gave Marat an ideal platform for showcasing his credentials as a political expert to the wider public, which he now did by publishing, towards the end of August, a long and detailed plan for a new constitution, signed by “l’auteur de l’Offrande à la Patrie” – called La Constitution, ou Projet de Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen – which carried the same epigraph as his Moniteur Patriote, thus creating continuity, without, as yet, revealing his identity.\textsuperscript{558} Blending political moderation with social radicalism, it set out a drastic redefinition of civil rights, which went far beyond mere equality before the law, while declaring that monarchical government was the form best suited to France: “Dans un grand Etat, la multiplication des affaires exige l’expédition la plus prompte, le soin de sa propre défense exige aussi la plus grand célérité dans l’exécution des ordres: la forme du gouvernement doit donc être monarchique. C’est la seule qui convienne à France”.\textsuperscript{559} It hardly needs pointing out that this was also the default position of most journalists, and virtually every supporter of the Revolution was a constitutional monarch at this stage.\textsuperscript{560}

Intended as a timely contribution to the Committee’s deliberations, it appeared towards the end of August – one of over forty such offerings published on this subject – and thus too late to have any impact on the debate. As Marat explained, it should have appeared three weeks earlier but had suffered the same fate as his “Projet dévoilé”, thanks to the “craintes pusillanimes” of his printers and “les longueurs éternelles de l’impression”.\textsuperscript{561} For on 26 August, the National Assembly passed its Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme, which sought to enshrine all the Revolution’s great liberal principles, such as freedom of the press (art.11), freedom of belief (art.10) and freedom from arbitrary arrest (art.7) within a single document. In addition to these basic democratic rights, which included the right to resist tyranny (art.2), the Déclaration affirmed the

\textsuperscript{557} Chaînes (1793), 4619.

\textsuperscript{558} La Constitution, OP, i:69-105.

\textsuperscript{559} Ibid, i:79.

\textsuperscript{560} Ironically, this stance, and accusations of being a provocateur, would later serve as one of the main reasons for Marat’s depantheisation on 26 February 1795, when he was denounced as an agent of the Ancien Régime. It also provoked one of the earliest progenitors of his légende noire, the royalist lawyer Pierre-Anne-Louis de Maton de la Varenne, to describe him as “Le Protée Marat, alors royaliste* (*En voici la preuve dans… son Projet de constitution)”, in Les crimes de Marat et des autres égorgeurs, ou Ma résurrection (Paris, 1795), 12 [via Gallica].

\textsuperscript{561} La Constitution, OP, i:71-105. Coquard, Marat, 461 (fn).
inviolability of property rights (art.17). Whatever else it intended to promote – “liberté, égalité, fraternité” appeared as an official slogan much later – social, as opposed to political and legal, equality was low on its agenda, since, for most revolutionaries, equality merely denoted the elimination of legal and economic “privilèges”.562 Beginning in a manner that was hardly likely to win over those whom he was trying to influence – an unavoidable problem when addressing two different audiences with different agendas – he damned the deputies with faint praise, eulogizing their diverse qualities, before declaring that the majority were lacking the most important one of all, statesmanship: “on y compte peu d’hommes d’État, peu d’hommes assez versés dans l’étude de la haute politique pour déterminer la meilleure organization d’une monarchie... régler la diffusion des différents pouvoirs de l’empire et donner au gouvernement une marche réglée”.563

For Marat, politics was a science with laws and principles that required sustained study. If only Montesquieu and Rousseau were still alive, he continued, they would have given France the most perfect constitution founded upon “génie... sagesse... vertu”. Instead, he would sketch out a basis for one founded on the ideal blend of their main principles – safeguarding the rule of popular sovereignty through the separation of powers.564 In a telling footnote, he defended Montesquieu against, “Des esprits superficiels et légers [qui] lui reprochent d’avoir favorisé l’aristocratie”, and continued to do so throughout the Revolution, at a time when many patriots associated him negatively with the ‘conservative’ faction within the Assembly: “Montesquieu? Oui, Montesquieu, le plus grand homme qu’ait produit le siècle et qui ait illustré la France... son amour pour l’humanité dont il fut toujours le vengeur, sa haine contre le despotisme qu’il chercha toujours à enchaîner... son zèle pour le bien public... méritait d’être mieux connus”.565

As for those who unfavourably opposed Montesquieu to Rousseau, there was no comparison.566 While Rousseau may have been fearless, he had little to lose, and his “ gloire” had only increased with each persecution, while Montesquieu, who had a family, estates and reputation, never feared to attack, “l’autorité arbitraire, les vices du gouvernement, les prodigalités du prince”. Indeed, he was the first who had dared to, “désarmer la superstition, arracher le poignard au fanatisme, reclamer les droits de l’homme

562 For a good account of the ideology behind the Déclaration, see Edelstein, On the Spirit of Rights.
563 Ibid, i:71. Marat would later use the term “hommes d’état” as an ironic label for the Girondin political grouping.
564 On 28 March 1785, Marat had submitted an Eloge on Montesquieu to a concours organised by the Bordeaux Academy. Despite extending the deadline to 1788, none of the entries were deemed worthy of a prize. Eloge de Montesquieu (Paris, 1883).
565 Ibid, i:71-72 (fn). For a useful analysis of Marat’s debt to both men, see de Cock, “Marat, Rousseau et leur projet politique”, 51-78, especially 60-63.
[et] attaquer la tyrannie”. 567 With this rare homage out of the way, Marat proceeded to frame his ideal constitution by summarizing the essence of his earlier Plan. In a state of nature, people had no obligations apart from self-preservation. Therefore, any social compact, or political association, had to guarantee its members’ natural rights if it expected a return obligation of obedience to the state’s laws. While Marat did not challenge the right to property per se, he repeated his claim that a person faced with starvation had the right to “arracher le nécessaire” from the rich, by force if necessary, in a passage intended to grab attention:

Que dis-je? …plutôt que de périr de faim, il a droit de l’égorger et de dévorer ses chairs palpitantes. Tirons le rideau sur cette horrible image, faisons taire un moment la voix du préjugé… Pour assurer son bonheur, il est en droit de tout entreprendre et, quelque outrage qu’il fasse aux autres, en rapportant tout à lui, il ne fait que céder à un penchant irrésistible, implanté dans son âme par l’auteur de son être. 568

This vivid image, intended to illustrate the fact that political freedom meant little to a starving person, presaged the kind of stark imagery that would appear more frequently in Marat’s journalism once the threat of counter-Revolution displaced the more immediate one of starvation. But there was more to it than this, as the last line made clear, for Man was ultimately answerable to his Creator who had made Him this way. The long pedigree of this “droit” in Church teachings – albeit not to cannibalism (!) – as noted, suggests that Marat was more likely to have derived his concern for society’s downtrodden from early immersion in those strains of Christian doctrine, and “le développement de mon caractère” that he later credited to his mother – “C’est par mes mains qu’elle faisait passer les secours qu’elle donnait aux indigents, et le ton d’intérêt qu’elle mettait en leur parlant m’inspira celui dont elle était animée” – than any abstract notions of social duty. He made the link between his love of justice and his fellow Man explicit when he added that, “L’amour des hommes est la base de l’amour de la justice, car l’idée du juste ne se développe pas moins par le sentiment que par la raison.” 569

He went on to suggest that the new constitution could factor this right into its “lois fondamentales” in two ways. It could either forbid excessive inequality, or guarantee subsistence for all. In a well-regulated society, such extremes would not exist, but since large fortunes were often, “le fruit de l’intrigue… des malversations, des vexations, des rapines”, then those who “regorgent de superflu”, should be obliged to provide for those who “manquent du nécessaire”. 570 In a long footnote, Marat appeared to acknowledge some confusion over the best course of action to take in addressing the suffering of this voiceless, indigent mass:

567 La Constitution, OP, i:72 (fn).
568 Ibid, i:74.
569 Journal de la République française #98 (14 Jan 1793), OP, viii:5498. For a modern theological analysis of this link, see Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics (NY, 1932), 2.
570 La Constitution, OP, i:77-78.
J’abhorre la licence, le désordre, les violences, le dérèglement, mais quand je pense qu’il y a actuellement, dans le royaume, quinze millions d’hommes qui languissent de misère, qui sont prêts à périr de faim… que le gouvernement les abandonne sans pitié… qu’aucune voix ne s’est élevée en leur faveur… mon cœur se serre de douleur et se révolte d’indignation.  

In all these interventions, Marat sought to channel his strong emotions into heartfelt prose, frequently contrasting the need for righteous indignation against the indifference of his contemporaries: “J’ignore pas que ces hommes apathiques, qu’on appelle des hommes raisonnables, désapprouvent la chaleur avec laquelle j’ai plaidé la cause de la nation. Mais est-ce ma faute s’ils n’ont pas d’âme.”

At the same time, sentiments of ‘sacrifice’ and ‘martyrdom’ were being introduced into his political vocabulary, having already made an appearance in his final scientific work, leading to the presence of a religiously infused lexicon alongside his political one. For this pamphlet ended with a pledge to continue serving his “patrie” until the very last drop of his blood had been shed: “Je connais tous les dangers auxquels je m’expose en plaidant avec feu la cause de ces infortunés, mais la crainte ne’arrêtera pas ma plume. J’ai renoncé plus d’une fois au soin de mes jours pour servir la patrie. Pour venger l’humanité, je verserai, s’il le faut, jusqu’à la dernière goutte de mon sang”. Here we see his prophet-martyr persona, ready to set an example, if necessary, of his devotion to the cause he is preaching, starting to form. Like his letters to leading deputies, this pamphlet had little impact, appearing too late to have any influence on the debate, assuming that any deputy would have bought a copy. On 11 September, support for the English model was finally dropped, and the Constitutional Act of 1 October formalized the establishment of a constitutional monarchy with a separation of powers – only one legislative chamber – and, after much debate, a suspensive veto for the King.

Years later, Marat described how he had felt let down by the collective foolishness of the Assembly’s ‘patriots’ during these debates, and how this had prompted his move into journalism: “j’eus bientôt lieu de reconnaître que leur nullité apparente tenait à toute autre cause qu’à un défaut de lumières, et je sentis qu’il fallait bien plus travailler à combattre les vices que les erreurs. Cela ne pouvait se faire qu’au moyen d’une feuille journalière où l’on ferait entendre le langage de l’austère vérité.” Unable to influence

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571 Ibid, i:102 (fn).
572 Supplément, OP, i:31.
573 See ch.1, 65.
574 La Constitution, OP, i:102 (fn).
575 This meant he could delay any legislation he disapproved of for up to three parliamentary terms of office.
576 Journal de la République française #98 (14 Jan 1793), OP, viii:5500 – “je publiai mon Plan de constitution, après avoir été pendant six semaines en relation avec ceux qui passaient alors pour les plus chauds patriotes, Chapelier, Sieyès, Rabaut, Barnave, Duport, etc.”
the elite opinion-makers, he now switched his energies to a wider public forum, and, after securing the services of a printer and distributor, the first issues of *Le Publiciste Parisien* were rolling off the press two weeks later. This time, the impact was almost immediate, but derived not from the reaction of its readers, but rather of the new regime, whose representatives very soon perceived him as a threat to public order.

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Years later, Marat would claim that having been on the verge of death in 1788, he had risen, Lazarus-like, on hearing the news of the convocation of the Estates-General, in order to do “quelque chose pour la liberté”. Here was an opportunity to achieve the recognition that had eluded him for so long, and it was a task for which he was well prepared, having, one way or another, laid down its theoretical and practical foundations over the last twenty years. From his very first publication, Marat had denied that human beings were naturally sociable, and he pursued these implications further in *La Constitution*, by declaring that, from birth, every Man brought into the world their own needs, including: “la faculté d’y pourvoir, celle de se réproduire, le désir constant d’être heureux et un amour sans bornes pour lui-même… source féconde… de tous les désordres qui paraissent troubler l’ordre de la nature et qui troublent, en effet, l’ordre de la société”. Since he believed that society was the product of this powerful, instinctive force for self-preservation, its chances of survival depended on being able to continually meet the basic needs of all its members. Without such a guarantee, the dependence of those without on those with, who provided the means to live, would generate endless cycles of violence.

Ten years earlier Marat had used a competition for legal reform as a vehicle for promoting such advanced ideas by proposing that the best way of reforming the penal system was to prioritize essential social reform in order to eliminate destitution, and encourage better moral behaviour, thereby creating a more harmonious society whose members’ ‘rights’ were carefully counterbalanced. While his proposals had fallen on barren ground then, he now found them competing against a deafening clamour for more abstract political freedoms. For him, it was self-evident that society could only flourish once its members’ most basic needs had been provided for, since, “le but légitime de toute association politique est le bonheur de ses membres”. Moreover, the lessons of history had taught him two important facts. First, that political ignorance was usually the result of “despotism”, rather than any lack of knowledge, since, as he explained in

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580 *La Constitution*, OP, i:75.
Chains, “It is ignorance, which by obstructing the sight of the people, prevents them from being acquainted with their own rights, and vindicating them”.\textsuperscript{581} A newspaper would greatly help to remove this ‘obstruction’ and educate readers in the ‘long view’ of events. Secondly, that those in power would only implement reforms under the constant constraint of external pressure: “il faudrait peu connaître les hommes pour attendre de la réforme du ministère du salut de l’état et abandonner au gouvernement les destinées de la nation”.\textsuperscript{582} To be instructed about the future, people needed to look to the past, and, in Marat’s view, it was a failure of historical vision, which made the French so vulnerable to the threat of counter-revolution, and which motivated him to take up the role of privileged interpreter of these events.

In this respect, the pamphlets that Marat published during 1789 were more important for their content than their impact, which was negligible, notwithstanding the ramifications of the seizure of his Supplément.\textsuperscript{583} While he wrote about political affairs and constitutional reform, he was no pamphleteer in the mould of, say, an abbé Sieyès, for he was more concerned with restricting power than in devising original means of exercising it. For Marat, any form of government that was too powerful should be avoided, as it would simply end up ‘enslaving’ its people. As a result, the role he fashioned for himself was not one of creating governments, but of critically monitoring them. It seems a little ironic that Marat repeatedly presented himself as a political scientist rather than as a polemicist, since there is little doubt that it was the emotional pull of his prose, rather than the rational appeal of his analysis, which ultimately helped to mark him out from the journalist pack, for his loyal readers.

\textsuperscript{581} Chains (1774), 4394-96.
\textsuperscript{582} Supplément, OP, i:30.
\textsuperscript{583} Neither Marat’s Offrande, nor its follow-up, were included in the “Notice des écrits politiques les plus influents qui ont précédé l’ouverture des Etats-généraux”. Révolution française, i:17-19.
Chapter Four:
Becoming L’Ami du peuple – Pedagogy and popular sovereignty (Sept 1789)

Besides marking a wholesale politicization of the public sphere during the run-up to the convocation of the Estates-General, 1789 also marked Marat’s transformation from philosophe to polemicist. Taking their cue from Habermas, many historians have analyzed the significance of the increased transmission of public opinion as an important feature of late Ancien Régime society.\(^{584}\) Unlike the polite discourse of elite Enlightenment culture, the rapidly evolving post-1789 world of political change, catalyzed by the explosion of printed media and the creation of political clubs and new national, municipal and district assemblies, encouraged a more argumentative mode of discourse. Following the suspension of censorship, over 500 new papers would appear between 1789-1792 (180 alone by the end of 1789), but the rupture was not just quantitative. It was qualitative too, affecting, “the types of speech, the mission that journalists assign to themselves, the personas they adopt, and the position they occupy in the political struggle... an indissoluble part of the revolutionary process”.\(^{585}\) Where pre-revolutionary debate veered, at least in theory, towards a free exchange of ideas, aiming for consensus, the revolutionary press tended to articulate a more confrontational discourse, while simultaneously trying to avoid the serious accusation of factionalism in a world where the principle of “la volonté générale” was now king. As the earlier chapters have suggested, it was a world in which Marat had little problem in finding his feet.

During the Revolution’s opening stages, a struggle arose within the public sphere between two competing models on how to manage “le bien public”. One focused on the cultivation of democratic sociability, or trust, while the other focused around continuous surveillance, or mistrust, partly mirroring the division between Marat and La Boétie highlighted in chapter two.\(^{586}\) Since victory was only possible by aligning public opinion on one’s side, this became, to borrow Furet’s formula, “the object of the most meticulous attention, the core, indeed the stake, of the entire political struggle”.\(^{587}\) Marat, who became a cheerleader for the second model, used his paper to ‘police’ the new public sphere by examining and reporting back on the conduct of their new

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\(^{586}\) See ch.2, 81.

\(^{587}\) Furet, Interpreting the French Revolution, 48.
representatives, and took it upon himself, on the public’s behalf, to mediate between the sovereign nation and the various centres of power – judicial, executive and legislative, at national and municipal level – that sought to sanction, rule and represent them. Against what some historians, most prominently Lynn Hunt, have asserted – that “the large number of newspapers and clubs... did not make the politics of the Revolution revolutionary” – others have forcefully argued the opposite, claiming a strong influence for a press that lay at the heart of this new political culture of publicity, ensuring the legitimacy of political decision-making by reporting it thoroughly. As Bailly proclaimed in August 1789, “La publicité de la vie politique est la sauvegarde du peuple”, and by implication, secrecy was inherently counter-revolutionary. While it is hard to establish any direct causal link, there seems little doubt that the press greatly contributed to the evolving, and fractious, mentalité against which revolutionary events took place.

In her account of the careers of various “revolutionary tribunes”, Elizabeth Eisenstein suggested that a “new politics” based around the ability to mobilize support through the expansion of “printed media” had allowed a new “demagogic species” to flourish, able to circumvent the more traditional institutions of power. Arguing that such an approach was present in Anglo-American affairs long before its appearance in France, she suggested that, “some of the implications of the Wilkite movement for later developments still remain to be explored”. These next chapters will argue that the evolution of Marat’s revolutionary career marks a strong case for one of those “implications”. But while his style owed much to the examples of Junius and Wilkes, whose lessons he successfully translocated across the Channel, it also drew, as we shall see, on French models of opposition, such as Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairóbert and the journalist-lawyer, Simon-Nicolas Henri Linguet. Over the course of 1789–90, his increasing self-identification with his Ami du peuple paper, and his Rousseauist mission of devoting his life to the truth, as stated on its front page, also found echoes in Wilkes’ astute use of the English press to promote his identification with “English liberty”. While many have characterized Marat’s paper as a vehicle for blood-curdling invective and little else, what follows intends to demonstrate that such a judgement tends to simplify, and thus distort, both his aims and wider impact.


589 Jean-Sylvain Bailly (13 Aug 1789), cited in Rétat, Les journaux de 1789: Bibliographie critique, 195. The phrase was engraved on the medallions carried by the Commune’s bailiffs (“huissiers”).

The unmistakable difference in tone, for example, between, say, the government-sponsored *Gazette de France* and Marat’s *Ami du peuple*, might suggest that the revolutionary press, like the political culture that nourished it, signified a dramatic break with the past. However, this would be misleading, since many of its roots stretched back into the *Ancien Régime*, while the printing technology and methods of distribution, barely changed. On a practical level, the widespread adoption of the smaller, cheaper octavo format, and increase in the number of *colporteurs* hawking copies on the streets, made the new offerings affordable – often selling for a few sous – and accessible. Initially, readers considered periodicals and pamphlets as complementary, overlapping genres. While one could sustain an ongoing narrative, guaranteeing regularity via a reliable subscription base, the other – often anonymous – usually appeared in response to specific events. However, one of the effects of the lifting of censorship, now enshrined in the *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme*, was to favour production of the former over the latter, especially after the dramatic events surrounding the Fall of the Bastille encouraged proprietors to expand their operations, and aspiring journalists, such as Marat, to set up on their own in order to cater for the increasingly insatiable demand for news. During this period, periodicals represented the most dynamic sector of French publishing, as, “Political newspapers could support themselves financially; clandestine pamphlets could not.” One of the most popular periodicals, Louis-Marie Prudhomme’s *Révolutions de Paris* – with an average print-run of 20,000 per issue – had begun as a series of pamphlets narrating July’s events.

While few periodicals that appeared before the Revolution were wholly independent of state-imposed controls, neither were they constrained like the *Gazette de France*, which could only report on contentious issues outside France. During the failed “Maupeou coup” of 1771-74, the culmination of a power struggle between royal authority and the *parlements* over their prerogative to remonstrate against royal edicts – in this case, Chancellor Maupeou’s fiscal reforms – many

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underwent a rapid transformation into a proto-‘patriot’ press. While the parlementaires presented themselves as popular defenders of constitutional rectitude, they still acted like a venal caste concerned with protecting their own interests, such as exemption from taxation. Coverage of their opposition by ‘tolerated’ periodicals published outside France, such as the Gazette de Leyde and Courrier d’Avignon, accustomed readers to think politically. The ensuing crisis upset the traditional balance of power so much, that both sides felt compelled to present their case to the public, thus promoting the manipulation of public opinion as an important political tool. Since a number of future revolutionary journalists had worked for the pre-revolutionary press, many of their techniques were carried over. After 1789, many of the leading titles, such as the Moniteur, Logographe and Gazette Universelle imitated their ‘neutral’ style, while habituating readers to a conception of time, where political events were presented as part of an ongoing narrative that linked diverse events in a coherent manner, rather than as self-contained, and readers were compelled to discover what happened next.

Innovative techniques pioneered by two masters of the genre, Pidansat de Mairobert and Linguet, were also widely adopted, in particular, the structuring of time, the personalization of politics and the use of a clearly identifiable voice, or persona. Pidansat de Mairobert, who was closely involved with the parlementaire opposition to Maupeou’s coup, created something resembling France’s first political newspaper, emphasizing the constitutional basis of the parlements’ ancient origins as the most effective check against royal despotism, and providing a detailed, if partisan, history of this period. His accounts introduced three important new techniques to the genre: they were openly critical of public figures, they repeated memorable slogans to emphasize the most salient points, and they were structured around an omniscient narrative that promoted the illusion of an insider’s view on the corridors of power. The information Pidansat de Mairobert presented was not the usual scurrilous gossip of libelle pamphleteers, but a plausible analysis of

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597 Baker, Inventing the French Revolution, 167-199. For example, Jacques-Pierre Brissot & Thévenau de Morande (Courrier de l’Europe) and Antoine Cérisier & Pascal Boyer (Gazette de Leyde).
598 Ibid, "The Prerevolutionary Origins of Political Journalism", 204-205 & 210-211.
599 Ibid, 204 & 212-220.
600 Mathieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert, Journal Historique de la Révolution Opérée dans la Constitution de la Monarchie Française, 7 vols (London [Amsterdam], 1774-76) & L’Observateur Anglais, Ou Correspondance Secrète, 10 vols (London [Amsterdam], 1777-84). Pidansat de Mairobert referred to these events in his most popular work, Anecdotes sur Mme la Comtesse du Barry (London, 1775), one of the Ancien Régime’s top five (illegal) bestsellers, Robert Darnton, The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France (New York, 1996), 93 & 137.
601 Popkin, "The Prerevolutionary Origins of Political Journalism", 212-216. However, since they were published several years after the events described (between 1774 and 1784), they may never have appeared as actual news-sheets.
motives, depicting Maupeou, in particular, as an archetypal villain whose goal was to concentrate power within his ‘despotic’ ministry, after abolishing all the intermediary bodies.

Most importantly, perhaps, Pidansat de Mairobert anticipated the trend for factional reporting. He repeatedly proclaimed Parlement as the nation’s last defence against arbitrary power, asserting the imprescriptibility of the people’s rights, while presenting Maupeou’s actions as a mask for boundless ambition. His greatest contribution was to transform abstract ideological battles into personality conflicts, realizing that such an approach was more likely to provoke, and win over, public opinion. David Bell described the campaign against Maupeou and the government’s counter-reaction – drafting in Voltaire on their side – as “one of the greatest pamphlet wars ever seen in France”, and there seems little doubt that this medium, suited to a politics of constant change, helped to undermine stability and sap the legitimacy of leading institutions and figures. While press freedom would become a rallying cry for many during 1789, it had already proved to be a doubled-edged sword by encouraging political destabilization, while also posing a fundamental obstacle to the consensus needed for something more stable to replace it. Whether Marat derived many of these techniques from Pidansat de Mairobert, or his imitators, is hard to say, and while Pidansat de Mairobert viewed his “nouvellisme” (news production) as part of a wider scheme to satisfy his literary pretentions, Marat’s goals were set considerably higher at far-reaching social and political reforms. During the Revolution, the reduction of politics to personality, and associated ad hominem attacks, would become a dominant pattern of behaviour involving all parties despite the implausible denials of nearly all those involved in this process.

If Pidansat de Mairobert’s contribution represented one trajectory, then Linguet’s approach, disseminated in the form of an irregular journal, as well as a number of scandalous pamphlets, represented another. His widely read Annales politiques, civiles et littéraires was a forum for long essays barely related to the news, which inspired admirers and imitators across Europe, and many of his ‘acolytes’, such as Brissot and Jacques Mallet du Pan, went on to become successful journalists themselves. While Marat only mentioned Linguet once – ridiculing the rumour that Linguet was the author of his most notorious pamphlet, C’en est fait de nous (1790) – it was no

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603 For example, Marat would refer to deputies as, “père-conscrits”, ministers and ‘right-wing’ deputies as “noirs”, Necker as “le ministre favori”, Girondins as “Homes d’Etat” etc. See also Popkin, Revolutionary News, 149-150.
605 Darline Guy Levy, The Ideas and Careers of Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet: A Study in Eighteenth Century French Politics (Urbana, 1980), 217 (fn). It sold over 20,000 copies per issue, far more than the international gazettes.
coincidence that several pamphlets accused Linguet of being responsible for Marat’s paper. In his memoirs, Brissot characterized Linguet as someone capable of defending the indefensible, describing him as, “un Ami du peuple… à la manière de Marat, dont il serait digne d’être le lieutenant, dont il est bien capable d’avoir été le secrétaire, puisqu’il n’a pas hésité à se faire l’apologiste de Néron”. Having made this false link, Brissot went on to accuse Linguet, and by implication, Marat, of corruption, by selling his pen to the highest bidder. Jeremy Popkin has described Linguet as “the single most important forerunner of the revolutionary press”, attributing his influence not so much to his message – which was radical enough – but rather to his medium, or the manner of its delivery. This was largely down to the construction of an agitated voice, openly inspired by Rousseau and the Ciceronian tradition of persuasion, which sought to forge a direct relationship with its readers by appealing to the emotions and moving hearts as much as minds. Such rhetoric had already begun to trickle down into the entries for the pre-revolutionary academic concours, but in a more political context it became a powerful instrument of indignation. Linguet had honed this technique during his earlier incarnation as a successful lawyer who had revolutionized courtroom presentation in a series of sensational cases. His masterful deployment of sentimental tropes both at the bar, and before the wider ‘public tribunal’ via his strategic use of pamphlets, was designed to appeal directly to public opinion over the heads of judges, while his intuitive grasp of language gave his words an explosive charge capable of demolishing their targets.

After being suspended from the Bar for violating his (Barrister) Order’s unwritten code of conduct, he repeatedly presented himself during the ensuing dispute as a victim of persecution, crafting a persona that bore an increasing resemblance to Rousseau, and inviting public identification with his predicament, arguing that since avocats were public figures, only the public had the right to judge him. The emergence of the ‘public tribunal’ as an infallible, sovereign

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606 Ami du peuple #183 (6 Aug 1790), OP, ii:1166. See, for example, Confession générale de L’avocat Linguet, Auteur de l’Ami Du Peuple (1790), cited in Brissot, Mémoires (Montrol), i:375-376. Another accused Linguet of being responsible for issue #100, in Qu’est-ce que Linguet? (Jan 1790), 16 [via Google Books].
610 For Linguet’s influence on legal practice, see Bell, “Lawyers into Demagogues”: 124-129. For a broader discussion on the political implications and the use of “sentimental argument as a form of forensic argument”, see Maza, Private Lives and Public Affairs, especially, 45-50.
authority, with the power to right wrongs and avenge the virtuous, was only made possible by the continuing erosion of royal authority. As the leading *parlementaire* and royal minister, Guillaume-Chrétien de Lamomignon de Malesherbes declared, it was open to anyone with a talent for persuasion: “Le public... s’est élevé un tribunal indépendant de toutes les puissances, et que toutes les puissances respectent... dans un siècle où chaque citoyen put parler à la nation entière par la voie de l’impression”. 612 From the 1780s, popular imagery frequently portrayed public opinion perched on a throne handing out laurels, helping to reinforce its substitutive function for royal authority. 613 Where public opinion had formerly been construed by the *philosophes*, after July 1789, it would be conceptualized as the driving force behind the new politics of “régénération” and popular sovereignty, as well as the expression of the nation’s “forces” and “voeux”. Many Third Estate deputies, along with much of the press, came to view it as “la declaration inaltérable de la volonté générale”. 614 The question of who would define this ‘general will’ thus came to acquire immense importance.

Linguet blamed many of his troubles on an unholy alliance of his legal ‘foes’ with the *philosophes*, declaring that this faction, “avait tout envahi... disposait de tout, et des réputations même: elle seule ouvrait l’entrée de la gloire et de la fortune”. 615 Marat, as we have seen, would echo these observations four years later, by characterizing his own predicament in losing the Spanish Academy presidency as the consequence of the unlimited power of this “malheureux empire [lequel] se multiplient sous toutes les formes”. 616 Such discourse echoed the striking conspiratorial rhetoric of Elie-Catherine Fréron’s widely read critical review, *L’Année littéraire*: “La République des Lettres comme les Etats Politiques [a] ses revolutions, ses conjurations, ses sujets ambitieux qui aspirent à la tyrannie”. 617 Marat’s familiarity with this strong current of *anti-*philosophe thought may also help to explain how he attracted rumours of being a hired provocateur soon after starting his journalistic career. But while Fréron and his acolytes presented themselves as standard-bearers for a radical, counter-Enlightenment tradition, critics, such as

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616 See ch.1.54.
Linguet, Rousseau, and of course Marat, had more personal reasons for ruining the philosophes’ dominance of the public sphere. However, it was not just the philosophes who provoked such conspiratorial thinking, for convincing arguments have been made to suggest that eighteenth-century Anglo-American elites had a strong tendency to view political culture through such a prism, sharing a widespread assumption that dissembling practices were standard behaviour, so that, “everywhere people sensed designs within designs, cabals within cabals”.  

While no attempt to understand the development of revolutionary journalism based around this figure of an author posing as an “énonciateur personnalisé” can succeed without reference to Linguet, in Marat’s case, he also had the examples of Wilkes and Junius to draw on. The rise of the avocat as political celebrity and self-proclaimed “voix de la nation”, defending the public against injustice, had been an important consequence of the fallout from the Maupeou coup, and mémoires judiciaires played an essential role in this process: “Qu’est-ce que l’avocat? La voix de la nation”. So when Marat referred to himself as “avocat”, or was addressed as one, he was exploiting this resonance. In her wide-ranging study of the impact of these judicial mémoires on public opinion during the decades preceding the Revolution, Maza revealed how they had gripped the reading public – many had substantial print-runs, frequently outstripping other kinds of printed matter – often concealing coded appeals for political reform.

When Marat launched himself into his new career, he was considerably older (46) than most of his fellow journalists, with Camille Desmoulins (29) and Georges Danton (30) at the lower end of the age spectrum. As a result, his relative seniority encouraged him to occasionally flaunt his experience of


619 Réetat, Les journaux de 1789, 219-220. See also Louis Eugène Hatin, Histoire Politique et Littéraire de La Presse Française, 8 vols (Paris, 1859), iii:338.


621 See, for example, numerous references to Marat in Ami du peuple #18, #20, #22, #26, #30, #88 etc. as “avocat de la nation”, “avocat du peuple”, “avocat des opprimés etc. A letter from Desfontaines, a former provisioning agent for Paris (29 Dec 1789) addressed him as “avocat et rédacteur”, BB30/162/d3/liasse1/p.21.

622 Maza, Private Lives and Public Affairs, especially 1-17.
“les principes de la haute politique” at their expense. During the constitutional debates, he used his English experience to appeal to an older democratic tradition, referencing the extra-parliamentary activities of John Wilkes, while ten months later, he attempted to channel the spirit of Junius in his short-lived paper, Le Junius français. Marat’s strong belief that constant censure was the only source of restraint upon public men was largely drawn from Junius’ example, and his promotion of such censure – which others considered to be “calomnie” – as a political weapon went against the public mood at a time when freedom of the press simply meant an absence of censorship rather than anything more provocative, such as the right to denounce, or to ‘mobilize’. What seems clear is that Marat’s personalized approach stemmed from a strong idea of the role a free press should play, and he was largely responsible for pioneering such a “quasi-libertarian” approach to the limits of free speech during 1789-90, at a time when most contemporaries wobbled between a desire for greater toleration – invoking Article 11 of the Déclaration – or greater punishment, depending on the context. While Marat’s political position was broadly supported by the far more popular Révolutions de Paris, it drew a clear distinction between attacks on executive authority (which it supported) and those on the legislature (of which it disapproved).

Many of the themes that permeated Marat’s journalism, such as the mutually reinforcing qualities of liberty and virtue, the tendency for power to corrupt those in public office, the importance of press freedom, and the need for a balanced constitution, had already been developed in Chains. Above all, he had anticipated the vital need for his own role, since, as he put it, “continual attention to public affairs is above the reach of the multitude”, and there was a need for dedicated men to, “watch the transaction of the ministers, unveil their ambitious projects, give an alarm at the approach of the storm, rouse the people from their lethargy, disclose the abyss open before them, and point out those on whom the public indignation ought to fall”. Following the failure of Marat’s pamphlets and letters to have much impact on the Third Estate deputies whom he had singled out as worthy of cultivating, he decided to engage with a wider public by moving into journalism, with the aim of courting popular as well as public opinion. In the first week of September, after finally securing a formal police permission to publish, he issued a prospectus for Le Publiciste Parisien, Journal Politique,

623 See, for example, his letter to Desmoulins (Aug 1790), Correspondance, 162-166.
624 See ch.3, 105, 113 & 115. See, for example, Ami du peuple #125 (6 June 1790), OP, ii:825–826.
625 Walton, Policing public opinion, 98-99. See also Labrosse & Rétat, Naissance du journal révolutionnaire 1789, 239-240.
626 Chains (1774), 4354.
627 For an explanation of the difference, see Ozouf, “Public Opinion’ at the End of the Old Regime”: 8-9.
libre et impartial, par une Société de Patriotes, to be edited by M. Marat, auteur de l’Offrande à la Patrie, du Moniteur et du plan de Constitution, etc. To this end, he informed potential subscribers:

C’est aux sages de préparer le triomphe des grandes vérités qui doivent amener le règne de la justice et de la liberté et affermir les bases de la félicité publique. Ainsi… le seul écrit dont elle [la nation] ait besoin, serait une feuille périodique… où l’on rappellerait sans cesse les bons principes, où l’on vengerait les droits de l’homme, où l’on établirait les droits du citoyen [et]… où l’on développerait les moyens de tarir la source des malheurs de l’État, d’y ramener l’union, l’abondance et la paix.

He did not miss the opportunity of reminding potential readers that its editor’s name would soon be “inscrit parmi ceux de ses libérateurs”, having foiled a plot to take Paris by surprise on the night of 14 July. He was, in effect, offering readers a complete course in politics, and while, “Le lecteur sera souvent surpris de la hardiesse des idées… il y trouvera toujours liberté sans licence, énergie sans violence, et sagesse sans écarts”. The eight-page (occasionally bumped up to twelve) octavo newspaper – a ‘revolutionary’ format that was cheaper to produce and easier to carry than the larger quarto – would cost twelve livres per quarter, or forty-eight for the year, postage included.

The first issue appeared on 12 September, and while its average print run varied between two and three thousand and, as we shall see, his subscription base was typically bourgeois, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence, and correspondance, to suggest that his paper was read by a much wider public. His initial choice of title, Le Publiciste Parisien, was unusual, for at the time it denoted someone who wrote about law rather than its later meaning of political writer, and it may have been an attempt to signpost his credentials as someone qualified to subject public affairs to

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628 The initial formulation bore a close resemblance to that used by Brissot for his Le Patriote français, which first appeared on 28 July 1789. After October, when his first arrest warrant had forced him to flee Paris, Marat would delete "libre" and "par une société de patriotes" from the title, to avoid implicating anyone else in any future prosecutions.

629 ‘Prospectus’ for Le Publiciste Parisien (8 Sept 1789), OP, i:113-114.

630 See ch.3, 108.

631 Ibid, OP, i:113-115. At some point, “liberté sans licence” became a slogan found inscribed on church walls (1792) and ceramic plates (1790-92), John Moore, A View of the causes and progress of the French Revolution (1795), in The Works of John Moore M.D., with Memoirs of his Life and Writings, 7 vols (Edinburgh, 1820), iv:299. For a broader discussion of such pedagogic tendencies within revolutionary journalism, see Popkin, Revolutionary News, 28–29; and papers by Antoine de Baecque and Melvin Edelstein in Chisick et al., The Press in the French Revolution.

632 These guesstimates derive from a maximum print-run of 3000 copies per press – sometimes Marat had two running at the same time. A sale of 400 was sufficient to cover costs, Popkin, Revolutionary News, 82 & 84. Michel Vovelle estimated 2000 copies per issue, Les mots de la Révolution (Toulouse, 2004); while Lise Andries suggested a broader outreach by referencing numerous police reports of Marat’s paper being read aloud and commented on in cafés and limonadier stalls, “Les imprimeurs libraires parisiens”: 249 & 260. On the importance of limonadiers in propagating news, see Raymonde Monnier, “La lecture en milieu populaire dans le département de Paris”, Dix-Huitième Siècle, no.21 (1989): 227.
expert scrutiny. It may also have indicated his wish to be seen as a new breed of public ‘avocat’, representing the patrié’s interest before the tribunal of public opinion. Given the multiple meanings coalescing around the word “publicité” during this period, it may also have been a sign that he would not publish what everyone could already see, but would ‘publicize’ what had hitherto remained concealed, reflecting a preoccupation with ‘revelation’ that dated back to his earliest investigations. Whatever his original intentions, he replaced this title after five issues in favour of the more familiar, and populist, Ami du peuple.

While, for Marat, Montesquieu may have been the greatest man the century had produced, it was Rousseau that appeared to provide his pole star as a public writer. Both were Calvinists, – in Du contrat social, Rousseau had emphasized Calvin’s contribution to the Genevan constitution, pointing out that he was more than just a theologian – both were sceptical of the idea of political representation, and both drew heavily from Machiavelli’s Discorsi on Livy, which had given Rousseau the initial idea for the vital role of lawgiver as someone detached from normal existence, standing beyond the general will. This mythological man of destiny may also have provided a suitable figure for emulation, for while Marat never claimed such a role, he sought instead to provide readers with lessons – instead of laws – in civic duty, social contract theory and popular sovereignty in order to build up a new political community. To do this, he needed to present himself as an omniscient being, who could explain what was happening, and guide their actions towards creating an ideal political community. The main problem for Rousseau, as for Marat, was one of effective communication:

The wise who would speak to the vulgar in their own, rather than in the vulgar, language will not be understood by them. Yet there are a thousand kinds of ideas, which it is impossible to translate into the language of the people… to be capable of appreciating sound maxims of politics and of following the fundamental rules of reason of State, the effect would have to become the cause, the social spirit which is to be the work of the institution [i.e. the government] would have to preside over the institution itself. According to the 1798 and 1835 editions of Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française [via ARTFL Dictionnaires d’autrefois], this definition still held during the Revolution, appearing to contradict Keith Baker’s sources in, “French Political Thought at the Accession of Louis XVI”, JMH vol.50, no.2 (June 1978): 290. Dictionnaire de Trévoux (1771), cited in Ozouf, “‘Public Opinion’ at the End of the Old Regime”: 2. See Google Ngram for more detailed instances between 1750-1790. See Lionel A. McKenzie, “Rousseau’s debate with Machiavelli in the Social Contract”, Journal of the History of Ideas, vol.43, no.2 (June 1982): 209-228, especially 224-228; and Ritter & Bondanella, Rousseau’s Political Writing, 108-109 (fn). For Rousseau’s thoughts on representation, see Ibid, 113-116 (Bk III, ch.7); Rousseau, “The Social Contract”, 68-72 (Bk II, ch.7). Rousseau had attempted a version of this (lawgiver) role with his draft constitutions for Poland and Corsica.
In Rousseau’s utopian blueprint, government and religion had to become subordinate to the general will for harmony to reign, melting the political and the spiritual into a single “burning necessity”. While the transposition of the fervent emotion of religious life into the civil fabric of political life would later play a major role in the Revolution, especially amongst the Jacobin leaders, such an idea was never promoted by Marat who chose the more realistic ambition of forging civic spirit out of a collective self-interest. As with earlier publications, Marat signposted his lineage by adopting Rousseau’s epigraph, “Vitam impendere vero” [“To devote one’s life to the truth”] once again, for his paper’s title page. While Marat was hardly the first journalist to promote their own authenticity, his uniqueness lay in practising what he preached regardless of the consequences. It was a theme to which Rousseau had often returned, describing his overwhelming need to tell the truth as a compunction he could not shirk even when it threatened his own interests:

Jamais vue particulière ne souille le désir d’être utile aux autres qui m’a mis la plume à la main, et j’ai presque toujours écrit contre mon propre intérêt… L’amour du bien public est la seule passion qui me fait parler au public… Justice et vérité; voilà les premiers devoirs de l’homme. Humanité, patrie, voilà ses premières affections.

This could easily be Marat speaking here, and it is worth noting that despite Rousseau’s popularity, he was the only journalist who openly adopted his “devise.” He rarely lost an opportunity to bind himself to its agenda, telling readers that the truth must be told whatever the consequences, for to speak otherwise was to use the language of a slave, or an ignoramus, who failed to grasp that only, “le plus affreux scandale” would force “les ennemis du bien public à fuir ou à rentrer dans le devoir”. Nothing upsets them more, he wrote, than the glare of truth: “La vérité, la vérité, tout nue; j’ose la montrer à mes concitoyens.”

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639 See ch.2, 76-77. Rousseau also deployed this epigraph in Emile (La Haye, 1762), 206, and on the title page of Lettres écrites de la Montagne.
640 Rousseau, Politics and the Arts, 132 (fn) & 3 [French via Gallica]. Five years earlier he had written, “I would rather be the butt of their ridicule than a party to their errors [ie humankind]… [my duty] is to tell them the truth”, Letter to Frederic Bordes (1753), cited in Rousseau, ‘The Discourses’, 108 & 348 (fn).
642 Ami du peuple #35 (11 Nov 1789), OP, i:287 (fn).
When the first issue of Marat’s new paper, *Le Publiciste Parisien* appeared, it picked up where his *Moniteur patriote* had left off, by commenting on the ongoing constitutional debate. After summarizing the Assembly’s deliberations over whether France should have one or two chambers, and what kind of veto the King should have, it ended with a short poem entitled, ‘*Commandements de la patrie*’, a kind of paraphrasing of the Ten Commandments. Within a series of cross-rhyming tetrameters, he outlined a political programme for the deputies to follow, while manifesting his hostility towards holy orders, lawyers and bankers. Although it was Marat’s only attempt at political verse, its succinctness and originality was applauded by other ‘patriotic’ journalists, including Brissot, who reproduced it, with variations, in their own papers:

\[
\begin{align*}
Du \text{ clergé tu supprimeras} \\
La moitié nécessairement… \\
Et de leurs mains tu reprendras \\
Les biens volé anciennement. \\
Aux gens de lois tu couperas \\
Les ongles radicalement. \\
Aux financiers tu donneras \\
Congé définitivement… \\
Tout estime tu garderas \\
Pour les vertus et non l’argent… \\
Ainsi faisant tu détruiras \\
Tous les abus absolument \\
Et d’esclave tu deviendras \\
Heureux et libre assurément.\end{align*}
\]

III

When Marat changed the name of his paper on 16 September, after just five issues, to *L’Ami du peuple ou le Publiciste Parisien*, the most likely reason is that he wanted to present himself as speaking for everyone, not just Parisians, and maybe equally, he saw his role as transcending that of a mere journalist. At a time when the prevailing mood was one of euphoria, his paper promoted a contrarian suspicion towards most aspects of the new regime, as well as many of the Revolution’s popular ‘heroes’, including Necker, Lafayette and the maverick Third Estate deputy, the

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644 *Ami du peuple* #6 (16 Sept 1789), *OP*, i:147. Marat only dropped the *Publiciste* part of the title after #626 (15 Dec 1791).
comte de Mirabeau. Indeed, its title would soon become synonymous with its author, following a series of police raids and prosecutions between October 1789 and January 1790, which allowed Marat to publicize his commitment to the revolutionary cause as someone embodying the virtues of an ideal patriot. After less than a month of his new paper’s existence, he started referring to himself in the third person as “l’Ami du peuple”. By the end of the year, 180 new periodicals had appeared, of which Marat’s paper remained one of the longest-running, lasting – despite several interruptions – for four years and 914 issues, until his death on 14 July 1793. During this time, it changed its title twice more, first to Journal de la République française from September 1792, and then to Publiciste de la République française from March 1793, following the passage of a law forbidding deputies from doubling as journalists.

While over forty revolutionary papers adopted the title, ‘Ami de...’, including the royalist Ami du Roi, Marat’s Ami du peuple was the first. The phrase itself was widely used as a term of endearment for prominent figures identified with the public interest – Marat had already used it to describe Necker, while others had applied it to the finance minister Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, another leading reformer, as well as the “benevolent” monarchs, Joseph II and Louis XVI. Before May 1789, a number of pamphlets had adopted this title, including two by Elysée Loustallot, who would become political editor of the Révolutions de Paris after October. One such pamphlet claiming to represent the ‘little man’, expressed its hope that the forthcoming Estates-General would take the opportunity to protect the Comtadin community from the abuses of agents acting for absent Seigneurs. A more likely origin for Marat’s name change may have derived from its earlier usage in the context of various disputes between the British government and Wilkes and his supporters. For example, in 1771, following the Lord Mayor’s (Brass Crosby) arrest for allowing the illegal printing of parliamentary proceedings within the City precincts – a move promoted by Wilkes – he was hailed by the crowd as the “People’s friend” while his carriage made its way to Parliament. Junius described a rift within Wilkes’ supporters as, “unhappy differences which have

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646 Others included: Ami des honnêtes gens ou l’optimiste (Oct 1789); Ami du Roi (Montjoie & Royou, June & Sept 1790); Ami des Citoyens (Tallien, Sept 1791); Ami de la Loi, au Peuple (Verrières, 1791); Ami des Patriotes (Duquesnoy & St Jean d’Angély, 1791). For a comprehensive list, see André Martin & Gérard Walter, ed., Catalogue de l’histoire de l’histoire de la Révolution française. Tome V: Journaux et Almanachs, 10 vols (Paris, 1936).
647 Offrande, OP, i:22 (fn).
648 See, for example, Elysée Loustallot, Le véritable ami du peuple (Paris, 1788 & 1789) and L’ami du peuple: lettre sur les affaires présentes, Salus populi suprema lex esto (Aug 1788) [via Google Books].
649 BnF. (Rés) Lk24650, Boyer de Mormoiron, L’Ami du Peuple Comtadin, in Révolution du Comté-Venaissin et d’Avignon, 2 vols (1789), i:10. The Comtat-Venaissin was a papal enclave centred around Avignon, which was incorporated within France in 1791.
650 The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1771 (London, 1772), 68 & 83 [via Google Books].
arisen among the friends of the people”, while Wilkes, as Sheriff of London, had published a defence of his conduct in which he promised to be, “le défenseur des Lois et l’ami du Peuple”.\(^\text{651}\)

Like a good portion of the revolutionary press, the *Ami du peuple* was not a newspaper in the conventional sense, but more like a regular editorial, or modern-day blog. As he later explained, “les nouvelles n’entrent jamais dans mon plan que pour servir de texte à mes réflexions, lorsque les événements annoncent quelque piège, quelque malversation, quelque complot, ou qu’ils servent de preuve aux vices de la constitution, à l’impéritie ou à la vénalité de nos législateurs”.\(^\text{652}\) Marat usually began each issue with a summary of the previous day’s debates in the National Assembly, before adding his commentary, and, occasionally, a call to action. A summary of its contents on the cover page, intended to be shouted out by the *colporteurs*, was often strongly phrased to draw attention.\(^\text{653}\) From the outset, Marat’s paper was innovative in its promotion of denunciation and shock tactics to provoke reader and authorities alike. Sensationalism was not just a tactic to sell papers, but also a device to drive his message home. As he would later write in defence of his methods: “Tout est licite pour réveiller le peuple de sa funeste léthargie, le ramener au sentiment de ses droits, lui inspirer le courage de les défendre… on ne saurait être factieux quand on ne crie que pour les intérêts de la nation” (Marat’s italics).\(^\text{654}\) It was a strategy that assumed that most people did not know, or could not articulate, their rights and interests. He may have put the people at the heart of the revolutionary debate but his impractical programme of political participation, in the form of encouraging continual suspicion and denunciation, left it to others to elaborate a more practical model for constructive, democratic participation.\(^\text{655}\)

Having secured a network of printers, Marat needed to find readers and initially went into partnership with a distributor (Dufour). As his operations became more clandestine, he hired a young woman (Nayait) as a go-between, to coordinate orders between printers, type-makers and booksellers. Despite a general lack of information on his day-to-day business operations, documents confiscated from two raids in January 1790 provide an invaluable snapshot of the kind of reader that Marat was attracting.\(^\text{656}\) These subscriber letters, often relating to missing issues, provide the

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\(^{652}\) *Ami du peuple* #283 (17 Nov 1790), *OP*, iii:1775.

\(^{653}\) For example, just before the March on Versailles, the headings for *Ami du peuple* #26 (6 Oct 1789), *OP*, i: 240, read: ‘Trame odieuse contre la nation – Moyens de faire face aux besoins de l’Etat – Dénonciations de plusieurs membres indignes de divers comités de l’Hôtel de Ville’.

\(^{654}\) *Ami du peuple* #183 (6 Aug 1790), *OP*, ii:1167.

\(^{655}\) See also Popkin, *Revolutionary News*, 146-151.

only extant clues about his readership, apart from the correspondance he published, and reveal a remarkable breadth of subscribers. These ranged to all points of the compass within the Hexagon, from the Loire valley in the centre, to Brittany in the northwest, Alsace-Lorraine in the northeast, Aquitaine in the southwest and Provence in the southeast. Their professions, where indicated, are a little surprising for such an outspoken paper, ranging from members of the aristocracy, representatives of the crown and military officers, to religious and legal personnel, bankers, doctors and forge masters. Multiple subscriptions from booksellers in the major towns of Marseille, Strasbourg, Rennes and Nantes disclose further penetration into the provinces.

Many of the letters showed appreciation for Marat’s efforts, with one encouraging him to stand firm and carry on despite the dangers – “Toute notre appréhension était que vous ne fussiez inquiété de nouveau par les aristocrates qui ne veulent point qu’on mette à la découverte leurs infâmes manoeuvres” – while another praised his sincerity and foresight – “Ce n’est point le prix que je mets à la somme mais celui d’être instruit de ce qui se passe à Paris comme principal moteur de la Révolution”. As his reputation grew, he began to cultivate an increasingly wide-ranging network of informers within the army and other authorities, whose tip-offs or denunciations often appeared in his paper, making him appear well-informed on events across France, and not just in Paris. By January 1790, he was claiming that, “Soir et matin le pauvre Ami du Peuple est assailli par une foule d’infortunés et d’opprimés qui implorent son secours”, as well as being bombarded by a daily “foule d’écrits” from publicity-seekers.

Generally speaking, Marat’s paper, especially during the first year of its existence, tended to cover four main themes: popular sovereignty and the problem of representation; law and constitutional change; denunciation, usually against the threat of counter-revolution, or those abusing their position; and to a lesser extent, the importance of well-timed popular action, or the ‘right of insurrection’ as a last resort. On the question of representation, he became especially

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657 AN (Pierrefitte), D/xxix/63/d.170 and BB30/162/d.3/liasse 1-3. These seizures, an assortment of proofs, letters, notes and accounts, provides most of our information regarding the logistics of Marat’s paper. Drawing from 51 confiscated letters, the four largest regions beyond Paris subscribing to L’Ami du peuple were: Centre-Val de Loire (10) and Burgundy in the centre (4), Aquitaine in the southwest (7), Picardy in the northeast (6). Other subscribers came from across France, especially the north, with very few from the west.

658 Subscribers included a comte, a chevalier de St Louis, a bailli (royal officer), a notaire royal, a lieutenant-civil, a Controleur des fermes, a Parlement commissaire d’approvisionnement, two canons, three surgeons, three postmasters, a mother superior and a watchmaker.

659 Ibid. 1.1, p.23 & p.26. M. Manelire, Bourgeois de Laon (3 Jan 1790) and Capitaine Dusaut, commanding the “troupe nationale du marquisat de Fay” (15 Jan 1790).

660 The I.H.R.F. library (Panthéon-Sorbonne) has two Maitrises on this subject by Martine Abdallah-Preteille (1973) and Olivier Coquard (1985).

661 Ami du peuple #88 (5 Jan 1790), OP, i:521.
critical of the National Assembly after October when they voted to divide the population into active and passive citizens by income and property, restricting suffrage as well as the right to membership of the National Guard, or public office, from the latter. Marat fiercely opposed this distinction, arguing that political rights should not be based on a tiered property franchise, but on “les bonnes moeurs”, discriminating instead between those who were worthy and unworthy of holding office.\textsuperscript{662} Marat was not the only one to object to this discrimination, with many other radicals, such as Desmoulins, seeing it as contradicting the basic democratic rights enshrined in the \textit{Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme}, replacing one aristocracy, based on birth, with another, based on wealth: “Mais que voulez-vous dire avec ce mot de ‘citoyen actif’ tant répété? Les citoyens actifs, ce sont ceux qui ont pris la Bastille, ce sont ceux qui défrichent les champs, tandis que les fainéants du clergé et de la cour, malgré l’immensité de leurs domaines, ne sont que des plantes végétatives.”\textsuperscript{663}

When it came to constitutional change, Marat favoured direct over representative democracy as the ideal expression of popular sovereignty at a local level while acknowledging, pace Rousseau, its limitations within a large state. He also promoted the importance of separate powers in facilitating good government through the “metamorphosis” of the ‘selfish’ behaviour of the parts into a “virtuous whole” – a Harringtonian theme he had first proposed in \textit{Chains}, and repeated in his pamphlet on the constitution.\textsuperscript{664} He also argued for the prioritization of judicial over executive and legislative authority, claiming that the creation of independent, elected tribunals would provide vital stability for the nascent state in a bid to avoid further bloodshed by bypassing the \textit{corps d’esprit} mentality of existing legal institutions: “ainsi les tribunaux sont la clé de la voûte qui doit lier toutes les parties de l’édifice et en assurer la stabilité. Ce qui fait assez sentir que les lumières et l’intégrité sont des qualités indispensables aux juges dont le choix ne peut appartenir qu’au peuple, seul véritablement intéressé au maintien de leur vertu”. If the nation could not expect justice from existing courts, he declaimed, it would be left with no choice but to take the law into its own

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{662} See, for example, \textit{Ami du peuple} #40 (27 Oct 1789), \textit{OP}, i:359. Following National Assembly debates on 22 and 29 October 1789, only those owning property and paying taxes equivalent to three days labour were allowed to vote. Anyone who aspired to be a deputy had to own land and pay taxes of at least one marc d’argent, or the equivalent of five hundred days labour. This distinction was formalized in the 1791 constitution, which awarded civic, but not full political, rights to ‘passive’ citizens, creating approximately 2.7 million passive and 4.3 million active citizens. Colin Jones, \textit{The Longman Companion to the French Revolution} (London, 1989), 67-68. See also Georges Lefebvre, \textit{The French Revolution: From its Origins to 1793} (London, 1962/1951), 151-152. For the last point, see Anne Simonin, \textit{Le déshonneur dans la République: une histoire de l’indignité} (Paris, 2008), ch.3.


\textsuperscript{664} Harrington, \textit{The Commonwealth of Oceana}, 70. Despite being uncredited, Harrington’s influence on Montesquieu and Marat is clear, even if they differed on detail, with Harrington promoted a bicameral vision of republican government, where balance was achieved by one house making law and another passing it, Hammersley, \textit{The English republican tradition}, 74-76.
\end{footnotesize}
hands. 665 Indeed, Montesquieu provided much of Marat’s analytical framework, especially regarding the creeping tendency of executive power towards despotism, a factor behind Marat’s criticism of proposals to grant a royal veto, suspensive or otherwise, putting him in the same minority camp as Sieyès and Robespierre. 666

On the third theme, Marat’s determination to expose secret forces at work within the new administration, through his regular denunciations of treachery and corruption, and frequent appeals to readers for more information, appeared, in some respects, to represent a logical extension of his pre-revolutionary mentalité. 667 Adopting Junius’ mantra that, “When the safety of a nation is at stake, appearances justify suspicion... [and] suspicion is a just ground of enquiry”, he seemed to revel in revealing the invisible forces at play behind political events. 668 However, unlike the typical eighteenth-century ‘Vie privée’ genre, which had witnessed a burst of popularity at the start of the Revolution, Marat’s denunciations claimed to be informed by a historical sensibility that minimized the equation of private corruption with public malfeasance. 669 By contrast, the Vie privée tended to merge private and public life into one amorphous identity, drawing heavily on the underground libelle tradition that associated immorality, especially sexual vice, with abuse of power, which in the past had usually meant Court politics. 670

As a result, they helped to set the tone for a degradation of political discourse, so that while the libelles produced during the Revolution kept the basic defamatory techniques, they changed the substance, reducing political complexity to a simple narrative centred around personality clashes and personal foibles. The royalist press regularly used this technique to smear patriot deputies, such as the marquis de Villette, for being effeminate or homosexual, or prominent women, such as Théroigne de Mérincourt, for being a whore. 671 It made commercial sense too, for this format had provided the substance of many of the Ancien Régime’s bestselling titles. 672 Marat’s use of shame as a political tool led one historian to label him, “le

665 Ami du peuple #269 (2 Nov 1790), OP, iii: 1699. He first articulated this position in Ami du peuple #5 (15 Sept 1789), OP, i:140-142.
667 For example, Ami du peuple #248 (12 Oct 1790), OP, iii: 1590, which appealed for information against General Lafayette – “l’âme de toutes les conspirations contre la patrie”.
670 Around 40 libelles were published between 1772-1788, and then half that number again (23) in the following year, Sopchik, “Deadly Speech”, 68-69.
672 See p.124 (fn).
premier théoricien d’une infamie de droit radicale, l’indignité politique, une sanction nouvelle dont il invente, à la fois, le nom et la procédure”.  

However, it was Marat’s promotion of the right to insurrection, which provided his most contested contribution. Having established in his *Supplément* – building on ideas first developed in *Chains* – that the interests of the wealthy were irreconcilable with those of the nation, since “son élévation, sa gloire et son bonheur” were founded upon, “l’abaissement, l’oppression, l’avilissement et le malheur de la multitude”, such popular action became unavoidable. In Marat’s view, it was the only effective way to persuade those in power to implement lasting political and social reforms. While “la philosophie” may have “préparé, commencé, favorisé la révolution actuelle... des écrits ne suffisent pas, il faut des actions. Or, à quoi devons-nous la liberté qu’aux émeutes populaires”.

IV

One of Marat’s first actions on becoming a journalist was to redefine the public writer’s role by using his paper to encourage a more transparent public sphere through critical examination of the actions of the National Assembly, and other centres of power.  

Part of the process of teaching readers about popular sovereignty involved highlighting any encroachments on their rights by these bodies, and setting himself up, “En qualité de censeur publique, d’avocat du peuple, fonctions honorables qui appartiennent à tout citoyen qui a le courage de les exercer”, to recommend the occasional purging of unworthy members from these bodies. On being summoned at the end of September by the Commune’s Assembly to explain the reason for his “écrits incendiaires”, he informed them that such a vital role required complete independence, and had already involved considerable personal sacrifice, devoting what remained of his “petite fortune” towards his exorbitant printing costs while he lived off bread and water. What other motive apart from “le zèle patriotique” could possibly motivate him, he asked, since only, “le plus pur amour de l’humanité pouvait engager un homme de jugement, sans intrigue, sans parti, sans ambition... à

673 Simonin, *Le déshonneur dans la République.*
674 *Supplément, OP.* i:49.
676 *Ami du peuple #55 (23 Nov 1789), OP,* i:411.
677 *Ami du peuple #20 (30 Sept 1789), OP,* i:211. In Ancient Rome, the prestigious role of Public Censor, which supervised the government census and finances, as well as public morality, was revered as a sacred magistracy, accountable to its own sense of duty, rather than any higher power.
s'exposer aux coups de la vengeance des méchants qu'il poursuit, à sacrifier son existence, à se
dévouer à la mort?"  

A week earlier, after just thirteen issues, Marat had issued a ‘Profession de foi du rédacteur’
to underscore his mission of ‘devoting’ his life to the truth, by pledging that he would always speak
with the frankness of someone unable to lie, since, “La vérité et la justice sont mes seules divinités
sur la terre.” While such commitment would inevitably come with consequences, he assured his
readers that, “Quelque sévère que soit ma plume, elle ne sera redoutable qu’aux vices et, à l’égard
même des scélérats, elle respectera la vérité”. As he put it, his paper was already causing
“beaucoup de scandale” by attacking not just the Revolution’s obvious opponents, but also by
alienating its more moderate supporters – “les ennemis de la patrie crient au blasphème et les
citoyens timides… pâlissent à sa lecture” – and he likened their pleas to temper his tone, to
disarming a soldier about to set off for war. He had no time for rank or distinction, he wrote, since
such positions were often the lucky result of “les fruits du crime ou les jeux de la fortune”, so he
would only judge people by their merits: “j’admire les talents, je respecte la sagesse, j’adore les
vertus”. Any public figure lacking in these qualities, “n’est pas à mes yeux qu’un objet de dédain”,
and he would not hesitate to continue to denounce them whenever they fell short of their public
obligations. While he recognized that such a stance would put him at risk, he was unafraid to
sacrifice himself for his country if necessary: “Je sais ce que je dois attendre de la foule des
méchants que je vais soulever contre moi, mais la crainte ne peut rien sur mon âme, je me dévoue à
la patrie, et suis prêt à verser pour elle tout mon sang”.  

While it was not the first time Marat had invoked grandiose notions of martyrdom in his
career, repeated references from September onwards suggested a shift in register from someone
prepared to devote his life, to someone prepared to risk it, for the truth, as Juvenal had originally
intended when describing the kind of patriot who was not prepared to speak freely. It also
suggested a considerable raising of the stakes from an early stage, transforming his version of

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678 Ibid, i:210-213.
679 For an analysis of Marat’s ‘Profession’, and an account of how other radical journalists viewed their role, see Gilles
vol.333 no.1 (2003): 21-44. Note the parallel with Rousseau’s ‘Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard’ in Emile (1762),
which tried to reconcile the Church with the philosophes.
681 Ibid, i:181.
682 See ch.2, 76-77. See also Julia V. Douthwaite, “Martyrdom, Terrorism and the Rhetoric of Sacrifice: The Cases of
Marat, Robespierre and Loiserolles”, in Dominic Janes & Alex Houen, eds., Martyrdom and Terrorism (Oxford, 2014),
109-130, especially 118.
journalism into a tense game of Bouillotte, the eighteenth-century equivalent of poker. For someone who placed such emphasis on trying to find a way of regulating the instinctive human drive for self-preservation to enable peaceful coexistence, it seems noteworthy that he should appear to place so little value on his own life. While there was obviously a rhetorical element to these declarations of devotion to a classical-Christian hybrid of dutiful self-sacrifice, they surely also reflected a determination to make something of himself in relation to his own sense of mortality. In an open letter to his colleague Desmoulins ten months later, he compared himself, tongue only half in cheek, to “le vrai philosophe”, on the verge of being elevated “au rang des dieux!” With no personal commitments, he had little to lose and everything to gain by fully committing himself to those he claimed to represent: “O mon ami, quel sort plus brillant pour un faible mortel… Peu d’hommes, je le sais, seraient d’humeur à s’immoler au salut de la patrie… de courir quelques dangers pour sauver une grand nation”.

While such rhetoric, which drew heavily on eighteenth-century ideas of political virtue, would later become a commonplace of Jacobin discourse, its early appearance here was relatively rare. Whoever sought to win over the public must first dispose it favourably to receiving their ‘teaching’, and the most effective way of doing this was to lead by example. Together with Wilkes’ successful model of personalized politics in action, it made a potent combination, and historians, such as Popkin and Massin, have touched on other Christian parallels in Marat’s journalism, highlighting his frequent use of Old Testament imagery and prophetic self-presentation. While Rousseau provided many of the signposts for this kind of behaviour, it was Montesquieu who provided the core, defining political virtue in De l’Esprit des Lois as, “love of the homeland… love of equality… the spring that makes republican government move.” Unlike Machiavelli’s “virtù”, Montesquieu’s “vertu” represented the highest form of morality, since it needed to be consciously cultivated, and involved putting others before oneself. In a study of opposing Enlightenment ideas of the “self”, Charly Coleman argued that a chain of affinities linked theological and philosophical radicalism, suggesting that the anti-individualism (or “dispossession”) shared by mystics and radical republicans in thrall to greater forces than themselves, was a reaction against the self-ownership (or “possession”) of spiritual and material goods practised by nearly everyone

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684 See ch.3, 98.
688 *Ibid*, 25 (fn) & 35 (book IV) — “political virtue… is moral virtue in the sense that it points towards the general good”.

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In particular, he showed how the active displays of patriotism later demanded by the Jacobins – and prefigured in Marat’s early journalism – derived from classical ideals whereby the patriot who sacrificed himself for the *patrie* would be amply compensated by posterity.\(^\text{690}\)

V

Having set out the background against which the new revolutionary journalism developed, this chapter has indicated a number of important antecedents for Marat’s approach in alternative English models, such as Wilkes and Junius and pre-revolutionary French writers, such as Pidansat de Mairobert and Linguet. Where Rousseau furnished the core idea of the authentic patriot, prepared to stand by their conscience, Marat’s religious formation made him highly receptive to ideas of self-sacrifice. While the explosion of printed materials that accompanied the ferment surrounding the recall of the Estates-General greatly contributed to creating a new kind of public space for thinking about, and participating in, politics, Marat’s interventions actively sought to promote civic virtue as a patriotic ideal from the start. While none of these ideas was unique to Marat, the sheer diversity of influences on his political strategy undoubtedly contributed to his singularity.

Marat’s move into journalism also brought a dramatic change to his rhythm of production with inevitable consequences. Whereas before, he could afford to sit in his study and devote months to reading and experimentation before publication, he now had to produce engaging copy to a punishing schedule. While the anonymous *Chains* had been too long and freighted with historical examples to have much impact, a daily eight-page editorial pegged to specific events helped to integrate his political ideas into a coherent framework for popular consumption. While much of the thematic content and tone of Marat’s journalism can be traced back to *Chains*, the crucial difference was that the collapse of the *Ancien Régime* replaced a pessimistic attitude about the possibility of change with a more optimistic one by removing most of the “institutional and intellectual restraints” on what had been a “theoretical discourse of opposition”, allowing, as Baker put it, for Marat’s projection of his fear of corrupt government and popular indifference into an endless future of denunciation.\(^\text{691}\) Where many Enlightenment thinkers characterized ignorance as an absence of knowledge, Marat presented it as a symptom of despotism cultivated by unscrupulous rulers to

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\(^{690}\) For example, Livy, Plutarch and Fénelon, see *Ibid*, 17, 262, 75 & 81-84. It did not quite work out that way for Marat after his own death, despite a brief and intense period of mourning and commemoration.

conceal their “ambitious designs [and] secret practices”, so part of his new role involved taking responsibility for the nation’s political education.692

At the same time, taking his cue from Wilkes (again), Marat used his paper as a vehicle for transforming the twists and turns of his life into a kind of ‘exemplary’ narrative. In a later, idealized portrait of the “Dénonciateur patriote ou censeur populaire”, he explained that true patriots could counter any slanderous accusations by a proven “dévouement sans bornes à la patrie”. Such a person needed to be morally virtuous, exemplary in conduct, and prepared to renounce the pleasures of life, in order to devote long days to tirelessly exposing the injustices, plots and treason that threatened the regeneration of the new patrie. Besides needing great courage to ignore all the calumnies that would be heaped upon him, he should also, “porter l’abnégation de lui-même jusqu’à l’héroïsme, pour immoler son être tout entier au bonheur public”.693 Amidst the fierce competition for the public’s attention, one of Marat’s main tactics for getting noticed, was to personalize his conflict with the authorities by pushing freedom of speech as far as it would go, in order to cast himself as a victim of injustice while holding the new regime to account. Over the next two chapters we will explore some of the strategies used by Marat to play this role during the first five months of his paper’s existence.

692 Ibid, 4394-4396.
693 Journal de la République française #46 (15 Nov 1792), OP, viii:5088.
Chapter Five:
Towards a theory of denunciation (Sept 1789 – Jan 1790)

“The freest of nations is never sure enough of its liberty, which is a fortress constantly under siege: the ramparts must be manned even when the firing has stopped.” These sentiments were addressed by John Wilkes to the journalist Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard during his French exile (1764-68) to explain the endless conflicts generated by political opposition in England. They reveal that Marat’s main journalistic strategy of denunciation did not arise in a vacuum but built upon a prior tradition with which he was already familiar. Such defensive tactics were needed, Wilkes explained, since they compelled governments to act more rationally by having to account for their actions. Like both Wilkes and Junius, Marat justified his own hostility to government on the grounds that those in power were less likely to abuse their position if constrained by fear of exposure. It was a sentiment shared by the Révolutions de Paris in an article entitled ‘Affaire de M. Marat. Phénomène politique’, which had been provoked by the Commune’s first legal action against Marat for accusations made against two government officials:

Il faut, pour le bonheur des individus, pour le maintien de la constitution et de la liberté qu’il y ait guerre irréconciliable entre les écrivains et les agents du pouvoir exécutif; dès l’instant que le pouvoir judiciaire se jette du côté du pouvoir exécutif contre la presse, la balance est rompue et le peuple est esclave… Les hommes vertueux qui exercent des fonctions publiques ne craignent pas la calomnie, elle ne perd que les fripons.

For Marat as for Loustallot, the author of this defence, press freedom formed one of three, interdependent sides of a tripod, along with popular sovereignty and public opinion. Once power, or national sovereignty, had passed to the National Assembly, these provided the fundamental foundation for the new revolutionary politics, so removing any one from the equation would delegitimize the new nation. With the King’s authority irreparably undermined, the key issue centred around who would now speak for the people: its representatives within the Assembly, or those without. Public opinion needed press freedom to ‘express’ itself, and the endless disputes over how far legislative power needed monitoring, following this sudden weakening of executive power, became one of the main causes of the instability of revolutionary politics over the next few years. For Marat, the Assembly’s power could only be legitimized by allowing total transparency in the coverage of national affairs, a right ostensibly protected in article 11 of August’s Déclaration, which

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694 Reported conversation between Wilkes and Suard, cited in Baker, Inventing the French Revolution, 197.
guaranteed the free expression of ideas, and explained the Assembly’s reluctance in defining its limits.  

Following the fall of the Bastille, the early months of the Revolution marked a period of acute uncertainty, set against a backdrop of rising food prices, while the new Commune took responsibility for the capital, including its provisioning. As the economic crisis lurched into October with worsening unemployment following the mass emigration of the aristocracy, and the closure of charity workshops, the first political clubs appeared. A few days after the establishment of a constitutional monarchy on 1 October, which formalized the separation of powers, a banquet was held for the Royal Flanders Regiment during which the national cockade was reported to have been trampled in an "orgie contre-révolutionnaire". The effect of this news was enough to inflame a volatile situation, and the ensuing demonstrations against both this act of disloyalty, and high bread prices, led to the second great revolutionary Journée, when a large crowd of around six thousand, mostly women, reluctantly accompanied by the National Guard, marched to Versailles on 5 October to petition the king. During the night, the palace was invaded and the Queen narrowly avoided being lynched, provoking Edmund Burke’s influential anti-revolutionary broadside, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790). To prevent further violence, the King agreed to return to Paris, accompanied by grain wagons, followed soon after by the National Assembly.

A considerable part of Marat’s revolutionary reputation, and thus the foundation of his later political career, was forged against this backdrop of unrest. His reputation as a fierce critic of the new government was notable enough for Furet to reference in his characterization of the Revolution’s early months as a period when “history was set adrift” and a chasm suddenly “opened up between the language of the Cahiers and that of the Ami du peuple”, marking a fundamental shift in tone away from measured grievances towards more challenging demands for new rights. Marat’s language was raw, direct and confrontational, marking a rupture in the revolutionary discourse that the next two chapters will explore, focusing, in particular, on his use of denunciation as a device for holding powerful public figures to account. Because Marat’s approach often relied on instinct over fact, it drew widespread condemnation, even when, as we shall see, the official reason given for

696 The values laid out in the Déclaration, broadly based upon the American Declaration of Independence, formed the basis of the new Constitution, which was ratified by Louis XVI on 13 September 1791. See also Edelstein, On the Spirit of Rights.

697 The daily cost of bread – about 8 sous for a four-pound loaf – was about half a labourer’s daily wage, so any rise above 10 sous could lead to disturbances.

698 The Assembly decamped temporarily into the Archbishop’s palace on 19 October before establishing itself in the Salle du Manège by the Tuileries Gardens on 9 November, where it stayed until March 1793.

many of the charges against him, such as posing a threat to public order, differed from the initial impulse to prosecute, which stemmed from calumny, an offence against personal honour with its roots firmly planted in the old regime.⁷⁰⁰

From his earliest issues, Marat seized upon denunciation as a means of defining a new revolutionary practice in his image, appropriating along the way the language and role of “avocat” and “censeur” before the “tribunal public”.⁷⁰¹ While many other writers poured into the breach that had been opened by the fall of the Bastille, few were as rigorous in their pursuit of a defined political and social programme.⁷⁰² Marat positioned himself at the vanguard of the extra-parliamentary movement as ‘denouncer-in-chief’ – just as Wilkes and Junius had done twenty years earlier with their challenges to the government’s undemocratic behaviour – aware of the political capital to be accrued from publicizing his personal involvement as part of a broader struggle against ‘despotism’.⁷⁰³ Indeed, it was the legal action taken against Marat soon after he began publishing, which probably had the most impact on helping him to stand out, by authenticating his dedication to the revolutionary cause as something that went beyond mere rhetoric and helping to boost his ‘patriotic’ profile.⁷⁰⁴ During four years as a journalist, Marat spent an incredible thirty-five months under threat of arrest, with less than a month of liberty – between 12 September and 8 October – in his first year as a journalist. How he managed to keep publishing during this period is little short of a miracle.

Some historians have characterized Marat’s frequent use of denunciation as typical of a particular outlook, characterized as “paranoid”, but I think it fairer to follow those who argue that the elevation of suspicion into a “political principle” should not be treated as evidence of paranoid thinking, but rather as belonging to a pattern of thought built into the structure of eighteenth-century political culture in Britain and America.⁷⁰⁵ According to this argument, such a worldview

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⁷⁰⁰ Walton, Policing public opinion, 39-50.
⁷⁰¹ See also ch.4, 128 (fn), 141, 139. See, for example, Ami du peuple #14, #18, #20-22, #26 & #30-31 (24, 28, 30 Sept, 1-2, 6 Oct & 6-7 Nov 1789).
⁷⁰² For a detailed discussion of denunciation, especially in the ephemeral press, see Sopchik, “Deadly Speech”, 20-66, especially 56-60.
⁷⁰⁴ See, for example, AN (Pierrefitte), BB30/162/d3/liasse1/p.25, Letter from Fontanel (18 Nov 1789): “Il y a bien des gens à qui ce journal ne plait pas, mais ce n’est pas aux patriotes légitimes”.
⁷⁰⁵ See also ch.4, 127-128. For Marat’s “paranoia”, see C.C. Gillispie, Science and Polity in France: the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Years (Princeton, NJ, 2004), 190; and Baker, “Transformation of classical republicanism”: 43. For conspiratorial thinking, see, for example, Bernard Bailyn’s explanation for how American revolutionaries and the British government viewed each other’s actions, in The Origins of American Politics (NY, 1968), 13, cited in Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style”: 403. Those who have applied this model to France include Timothy Tackett, “Conspiracy
evolved within the Enlightenment shift towards ‘rationalism’ that followed the displacement of God from the centre of the Universe during the earlier Scientific Revolution. Seeking a logical equivalent for explaining human affairs, people came to correlate a person’s actions with moral virtue, replacing earlier notions of contingency. Since political elites were considered masters at disguising their intentions, contemporary discourse placed much emphasis on uncovering such attempts at deception, providing conspiratorial explanations for complex events. As a result, ‘sincerity’ became an increasingly important form of political currency closely associated with republican ideals, and widely viewed as the main foundation of social trust. This contrast between appearance and reality also found expression in many stock themes of eighteenth-century literature, which tended to focus on the manipulation of innocence and virtue, habituating readers to a pervasive sense of duplicity in human affairs. In a political context, this meant that the actions of those in power were seen to have two parts: one open to the public gaze, the other concealed behind a ‘veil’. Even the most reputable thinkers subscribed to this explanatory framework. For example, in his bestselling History of England (1754-61) – one of Marat’s sources for Chains – David Hume could explain, without any evidence, that, “the utter impossibility of accounting by any other hypothesis, for those strange measures... [adopted by] the dark counsels of the Cabal of Charles II [meant that] ... a formal plan was laid for changing the religion and subverting the constitution of England, and that the King and the ministry were in reality conspirators against the people.” Similar ideas infused Edmund Burke’s celebrated pamphlet, Causes of the Present Discontents (1770), which posited that the only plausible explanation for the current political situation must be the existence of a secret “double cabinet” plotting behind the scenes against the nation’s best interests, and characterized the early years of George III’s reign as a “great deception”.

However, while politicians, such as Burke, believed that the scrutiny of those in power should be left to a nation’s elected representatives, Marat argued that such an important role was best exercised by those outside, since representatives, by definition, could not be trusted to avoid a tendency to corruption, or to act against the public’s best interest. If dissembling made human actions harder to follow, then the seductive, explanatory power of conspiracy helped to simplify events and make sense of an increasingly complex world of shifting cause and effect, where, “political consequences... appeared more and more contrary to the rulers’ avowed aims [and] only deception on

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Note: The original text appears to contain citations, which are not fully transcribed here. For a complete citation, please refer to the original source.
a grand scale appeared capable of resolving the mysterious discrepancies”. The resulting imagery of shadowy figures behind curtains was the consequence of a political world changing too fast for existing explanatory models.

It was inevitable that a political system in transition would be caught between the new gospel of national sovereignty on the one hand, and its reliance on the old regime’s legal bodies on the other. One of the immediate consequences was the replacement of the former offence of lèse-majesté (crimes against the majesty of the sovereign ruler) with that of lèse-nation (crimes against the dignity of the nation) as part of a conscious attempt to convert the National Assembly’s de facto declaration of national sovereignty into a de jure one, placing the rule of law at the heart of the new regime. Once the deputies had consolidated their status by declaring themselves ‘inviolable’, this made anyone who harmed them, either through actions or words, guilty of lèse-nation. Ironically, while none of Marat’s named targets during 1789 were deputies, which may have been deliberate, he was pursued as if they were.

Following the violent public disorder of 22 July – the lynching of Berthier and Foulon – and 6 October (around the March on Versailles), the Assembly, at the Commune’s request, placed temporary responsibility for all lèse-nation cases with the Châtelet on 14 October, in a bid to contain such violence in the future, by substituting due process for popular vengeance, although the first charge brought against Marat on 8 October was under its capacity as a criminal, rather than lèse-nation, court. After 14 July, the seven hundred year-old Châtelet, the main royal court for the Paris area, which had previously answered to the Parlement de Paris, was subordinated to the Commune, and continued to function until 6 September 1790, when all the former Ancien Régime courts, including the parlements, were formally suppressed.

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709 Ibid: 429.
While the offence of lèse-nation was originally intended to inoculate revolutionary politics against popular violence, the Commune was responsible for extending its scope to cover abuses of free speech and subsistence (including hoarding), as well as those relating to counter-revolution and offences against the nation.\textsuperscript{714} This way, it could also cover provocation to disorder, as well as protect the honour of the nation’s representatives and other prominent figures. In theory, this was supposed to cover both royalist and radical writers, but, as we shall see, it was applied much less consistently against the former than the latter. As a result, two distinct notions of old regime libel and new regime lèse-nation became merged into a single offence, with insults and charges of abuse of office lumped together, with little attempt to distinguish between attacks on public and private lives. While virtually all Marat’s denunciations fell into the former category, such boundaries were rarely clear-cut, and the distinction made by Junius in the context of English affairs was not readily transferable across the Channel, as a result of the Ancien Régime fixation on personal honour.\textsuperscript{715} More importantly, Marat’s contemporaries struggled to perceive the difference too, including those who had previously called for the two to be treated separately by arguing that press freedom should, “empower the public to censure and monitor the authorities”.\textsuperscript{716} After 1789, many, such as Condorcet, would condemn Marat for doing just that.

Despite being intended to put a lid on public disorder, the offence of lèse-nation was still grounded upon a prevailing preoccupation with complex Ancien Régime protocols, and became closely linked to the large number of denunciations being received by the Commune’s newly established Comité des recherches – set up after the October Days to mirror its National Assembly counterpart but with broader powers.\textsuperscript{717} As a result, it was characterized by tension between an imperative to defend the dignity of the new institutions and a more liberal instinct to protect individual rights, such as free speech.\textsuperscript{718} Charles Walton has pushed this conflict over press freedom – a precondition for the dissemination of public opinion – centre-stage in a bid to explain the Revolution’s inexorable march towards the Terror. Part of the problem, he suggested, was that alongside the continuing influence of Ancien Régime notions of honour, the National Assembly refused to define these limits as part of its adoption of a broader “quasi-libertarian” outlook.\textsuperscript{719} In consequence, the survival of pre-revolutionary mechanisms of social deference and privilege were

\textsuperscript{714} Walton, Policing public opinion, 178.
\textsuperscript{715} See ch.2, 93-94. For a good account of this confusion, see Ibid, 97-136.
\textsuperscript{716} Nicolas de Condorcet, Fragments sur la liberté de la presse (1776), cited in Ibid, 57-60. See also ch.4, 139-140.
\textsuperscript{717} Shapiro, Revolutionary justice, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{718} Gaven, Le crime de lèse-nation, 237. The National Assembly’s Comité des recherches was set up in July to investigate counter-revolutionary activity, including subsistence riots.
\textsuperscript{719} Walton, Policing public opinion, 99. For example, removing the restrictions on the grain trade on 29 August, against the advice of many of those officials responsible for provisioning.
never fully reconciled with more republican notions of social equality and transparency. This contradiction is illustrated by the remarkable fact that between 1789 and 1791, forty-three lèse-nation trials only produced one capital sentence. That was against the marquis de Favras, who was sentenced to be hung on 18 February 1790 for conspiring to abduct the King, so that his master, the comte de Provence, might become regent. According to Jean-Christophe Gaven, the Châtelet judges played a major role in this outcome, for in the absence of any clear proofs, they could challenge the existence of such conspiracies, and so preserve, “le mythe de l’union du roi et de la nation nécessaire au succès de la monarchie constitutionelle”.720 While such “modération” was intended to dampen a volatile public and forge a spirit of national unity through amnesty, many patriots viewed the sluggish progress of these tribunals differently, perceiving it instead as a result of bias towards the social standing of the suspected ‘counter-revolutionaries’.721

Marat’s innate suspicion towards “des bonnes dispositions des fonctionnaires publics” had, as we have seen, a long gestation, stretching back to reservations he first expressed in Chains. While the practice of denunciation would gradually become more ubiquitous, Marat was not alone in promoting such an attitude so early, and many new papers, especially the more ephemeral kind – which were often far more extreme than the Ami du peuple – reflected this new sensibility in titles such as the Censeur national (27 September – 4 October 1789), the Furet Parisien (Snooper) (Sept 1789 –January 1790) and the Fouet (Scourge) (22 September 1789 – May 1790). The trend was so pronounced, it was even satirized in one paper, the Dénonciateur national (1 August – October 1789), with its repeated use of, “je dénonce...” against people, institutions, events, and even objects.722 Part of the reason for this hardening attitude derived from a widespread feeling of insecurity since July, when many, including most deputies, believed they had narrowly escaped a conspiracy to dissolve the Assembly, and were in fear of further plots, following the collapse of bureaucracy across France, and widespread reports of rural violence.723 This right of denunciation also had a long history, dating back to the delatores and censores (a more positive role model) of the mythical ‘virtuous’ Republic of Classical Rome, via Renaissance Venice, where a ‘Lion’s mouth’ post-box was located outside the Doge’s Palace for anonymous denunciations.724 A progressive revolutionary club known as The Cercle Social, set up a similar post-box just outside their headquarters in the Cordeliers district, inviting

720 Gaven, Le crime de lèse-nation, 257.
721 The hostile attitudes of several districts mirrored the anti-amnesty protests of 30 July, Shapiro, Revolutionary justice, 29-30 & 148-174.
722 Sopchik, “Deadly Speech”, 27-45. Its opportunistic editor, abbé de la Reynie, would also be responsible for the spoof Criminelle Neckero-Logie and Livre rouge (1790), amongst others – see ch.6, 199.
723 See, for example, Tackett’s survey of deputies’ letters in, “Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution”: 700-702.
public contributions, including denunciations, for their *Bouche-de-Fer* journal, which appeared after January 1790.725

Initially, there was some concern over the difference between informing ("délation") – a word with historically negative connotations as something that *mouchards* (police spies) did – and denouncing ("dénonciation"), which was viewed more positively, as revealed in a number of debates during 1789-90.726 For example, in October 1789, against a volatile backdrop of instability, one deputy, the comte de Mirabeau published an open letter in which he claimed that “délation” should now be seen as, “la plus important des nouvelles vertus, et comme le palladium de notre liberté naissante”, adding that it was every citizen’s duty to inform, even where proof was lacking, if it helped to save the patrie. The moderate *Chronique de Paris* expressed its qualified approval, but disagreed on the question of proof.727 Another journalist, Louis-Sébastien Mercier, characterized délation as one of the “vertus héroïques [des] peuples libres et anciens”, while Desmoulins tried to rehabilitate the word by associating it with the ancient Roman right of accusation.728 He would later preface a denunciation of grain speculators with this adaptation from Cicero: “Il est bon qu’il y ait dans un état beaucoup d’accusateurs... Comme l’accusateur se présente avec une apparence de griefs et qu’il articule des faits, on ne peut pas absolument le condamner comme un calomniateur”. In other words, even half-proofs were sufficient since, “dans la nuit, il doit être permis aux chiens fidèles d’aboyer les passants, à cause des voleurs.”729

This question of proof raised by the *Chronique de Paris* touched upon an issue that referred back to the 1670 Criminal Ordinance, which had reformed many of the harsher Ancien Régime punishments, so that circumstantial evidence could be used as an alternative to confessions obtained under torture, thus allowing judges to pass non-capital sentences.730 However, since plaintiffs could also give evidence, it was open to abuse, making it one of several items on Beccaria’s legal reform

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727 *Lettre du Comte de Mirabeau au Comité de recherches* (Oct 1789) and *Chronique de Paris* #75 (6 Nov 1789) cited in Labrosse & Réat, *Naissance du journal révolutionnaire*, 201. The author was probably Condorcet.
agenda. In their different ways, Marat and Mirabeau both pushed for more elastic notions of ‘proof’, while Desmoulins, who was initially highly critical of Marat’s cavalier attitude to facts, later conceded that such an approach was more pragmatic given the circumstances: “On ne peut pas exiger d’un écrivain périodique, surtout dans la partie de sa feuille, qui n’est pas purement historique mais conjecturale, qu’il rencontre toujours la vérité. Tout ce qu’on doit à la rigueur lui demander, c’est la bonne-foi, qu’on peut appeler la vérité relative”.

Many historians have paid attention to the growing revolutionary obsession with transparency and fear of secrecy, or the “conspiracy of appearances”, which led to everything becoming more public, including political decision-making and legal verdicts. Through his paper, Marat played an important role in this process from early on by defining the political principles that underpinned the civic “right of denunciation” and setting it within a historic lineage. Updating Cicero’s maxim that “Salus populi suprema lex esto”, he explained that:

Le salut de l’Etat étant la loi suprême, et l’obligation d’y veiller le premier des devoirs du citoyen, dénoncer à la patrie comme traîtres tous ceux qui attaquent les droits du peuple et mettent en danger la liberté publique est non-seulement le droit des habitants de chaque village… bourg … ville… province, mais le droit de chaque individu.

Two weeks later, the “droit” had become a “devoir sacré” whose importance could not be underestimated: “Je nommerai tout haut ceux qui lui ont manqué de foi… je les poursuivrai sans relâche jusqu’à ce que l’opinion publique les ait couvert d’opprobre, forcé de s’éloigner du maniement des affaires publiques, et réduit à la honte de cacher leurs noms”. It was not a duty that Marat sought to keep for himself either, telling readers a few days later that anyone could be a “censeur politique” or “avocat du peuple”, for these were, “fonctions honorables qui appartiennent à tout citoyen qui a le courage de les exercer”, even more so when their exercise involved personal risk. At the same time, he took care to define the parameters for his targets, explaining that, “tant que les méchants restent hommes privés, je gémis tout bas des suites de leur corruption et je laisse à la justice le soin de les corriger”. But the moment such men took office, “lorsque leurs menées peuvent faire le malheur de tout un peuple, lorsque leurs simples suffrages peuvent entrainer des

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731 See ch.2, 85-86.  
733 See ch.4, 127-128. See, for example, de Bacque, The Body Politic, 217-233; Guilhamou, "Fragments of a Discourse of Denunciation", 139-155.  
734 Publiciste Parisien #5 (15 Sept 1789), OP, i:142. This phrase, from Cicero’s De Legibus, was adopted by John Locke as the epigraph for his Second Treatise on Government (1689).  
735 Ami du peuple #17 (27 Sept 1789), OP, i:198.
résolutions funestes au bien public et perdre l’Etat, l’amour de l’humanité me presse d’élever ma voix contre eux et… devenir leur dénonciateur. 736

Marat’s frequent use of legal terminology, especially when denouncing prominent figures, such as Necker, before the ‘public tribunal’, led at least one subscriber to mistake him for a real lawyer. 737 While many contemporaries agreed with such sentiments, they only considered aristocrats as suitable targets. 738 For example, the lawyer and leading member of the Commune’s Comité des recherches, Pierre-Louis Agier, declared that it was not only a citizen’s duty to denounce under the new “Empire de la Liberté”, but that it was a crime not to, reassuring accusers that if their victim was innocent they would be immune from any libel prosecution:

Aujourd’hui tout a changé. Ce ne sont plus… des démarches indifférentes qu’il s’agit de dénoncer, mais des complot funestes à la patrie… Cessons donc d’appliquer, par une fatale prévention, au temps actuel ce qui n’appartenait qu’à l’ancien régime, et ne déshonorons pas le règne de la liberté par les flétrissures de l’esclavage. Le silence, en matière de délation… c’est un crime, oui. 739

One consequence of this promotion of denunciation was to fix a perception of counter-revolutionary bogeymen as a powerful explanatory force for much of the chaos, and to reinforce a logic that those who failed to support the new regime must be against it – an accusation that would be levelled at Marat by some of his contemporaries. This may help to explain how Marat became so quickly tarred with accusations of being an agent provocateur, in league with aristocratic, or even foreign, forces, ‘hired’ to undermine the nascent revolutionary regime from within. 740 Since this accusation was potentially highly damaging, Marat devoted considerable time to rebutting it, but the charge would stick to him, like mud. 741

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736 Ami du peuple #20 (30 Sept 1789), OP, i:211 & 211 (fn). On legal documents “Dénonceur” indicated the plaintiff.
737 See ch.4, 128 (fn).
740 One of the earliest instances of this kind of accusation was made by Antoine Gorsas in Courrier de Versailles et Paris (8 & 10 Oct 1789), in Shapiro, Revolutionary Justice, 92. Since Gorsas had been one of the most inflammatory journalists in the build-up to the October Days, he may just have been trying to deflect attention from himself. However, after January 1790, such accusations were widely disseminated in the anti-Marat literature, and even some patriot journals, such as Pierre Audouin’s Journal universel (24 Jan 1790). See ch.6, 182-183.
741 Amongst historians, Olivier Blanc has been the most persistent offender, drawing upon the memoirs of conspiracy theorist Jean-Louis Giraud-Soulavie, the Jacobin representative in Geneva during the Terror. See for example, Les Espions de la Révolution et de l’Empire (Paris, 1995), 91-92.
As we shall see, the reaction towards Marat’s interventions revealed a growing trend towards an increasingly penal regulation of expression, which contributed, in one historian’s opinion, to the “ruination” of any meaningful engagement in participatory democracy.\(^{742}\) It also helped to illuminate another factor behind the action taken against him, namely a problem of categories, for during the confusion of this early transitional period, the contest over press freedom appeared to form part of a wider power struggle between the two regimes, in which denunciation of members of the old regime was actively encouraged. By refusing to discriminate in this way between old and new, and formulating his own distinction between public and private based upon the English model, Marat subverted this unwritten rule, drawing accusations of \textit{lèse-nation} upon himself. He justified his approach by promoting the notion of a vigilant press providing a vital counterweight against a tendency for the growing concentration of legislative and executive powers within the new revolutionary bodies. He was not alone either, gaining the support, to varying degrees, of several important patriotic writers, including Loustallot in \textit{Les Révolutions de Paris} (after 12 October), Desmoulins in \textit{Les Révolutions de France et Brabant}, and, initially, at least, Brissot in \textit{Le Patriote français}.\(^{743}\)

### II

Marat’s second summons before the Commune Assembly came on 25 September, barely two weeks after his paper’s launch, following the denunciation of issue 15 by the Filles-Saint-Thomas district, for bringing the Commune into disrepute.\(^{744}\) Despite the summer’s good harvest, Paris was still suffering from acute food shortages, and Marat was questioning what the various committees of the reorganized Commune were doing to tackle the crisis: “A la vue de cette multitude de comités… toujours en activité pour faire si peu de chose, on croit voir la massue d’Hercule mise en jeu pour tuer une mouche”.\(^{745}\) In the next (offending) issue, he accused the Mayor of gross negligence and several members of the \textit{Comité des subsistances} responsible for provisioning Paris, of colluding with the capital’s main supplier, “Croira-t-on que dans celui des subsistances siégeaient, il y a quelques


\(^{743}\) Walton, \textit{Policing Public Opinion}, 101 & 105. Brissot’s position became complicated by the fact that he was ‘playing’ both sides, following his election to the \textit{Comité des recherches}, responsible, amongst other duties, for taking action against “écrits incendiaires”, in Shapiro, \textit{Revolutionary justice}, 11-12 & 19-21.


\(^{745}\) Ami du peuple #14 (24 Sept 1789), \textit{OP}, i:183.
jours, deux accapareurs de grains, dénoncés publiquement comme tels!" He then appealed to the districts to nominate a trusted patriot to monitor its dealings and bring the guilty to account: “Il nous faut des exemples éclatants de justice... Si les coupables nous échappent toujours, c’en est fait de liberté. L’abîme est ouvert sous nos pas; bientôt, bientôt, nous y serons précipités.” This image, of a nation teetering on the brink, was a favourite one that he would often deploy in his writings to create a sense of looming crisis, and justify his proposals for more direct (extra-legal) action.

After his summons, Marat was made to wait two consecutive nights without being seen. Instead of returning on the third night, he published an open letter, which expressed his disappointment at not being able to appear before its Assembly to explain his role. Describing himself as “l’œil du peuple”, while dismissing them as “le petit doigt” at most, he demanded “Au nom de la patrie dont je suis le avocat”, that they purge themselves and their committees of all corrupt members, which he estimated at nearly half their total, or 145 out of 300. Most of these, he suggested, belonged to the Ancien Régime’s legal corps – mainly from the Parlement de Paris and Châtelet – who were too steeped in their innate prejudices (“préjugés de leur état”) to set aside their self-interest for the public good. With a few exceptions, they were sympathetic “pour le despotisme”, and, “animés d’un esprit de corps qui les porte à maintenir les anciens abus”. The all-seeing ‘eye’, which Marat invoked in his defence – and which would later be appropriated as a symbol by many revolutionary clubs – differed fundamentally from the other great symbolic eye, the “œil suprême de la raison”, which adorned the bottom of printed texts, such as the Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen, and criminal legislation. Where the former represented scrutiny over public officials, the latter represented the collective wisdom of these same officials over the people, in order to “dissiper les nuages de l’erreur qui l’obscurcissaient”. The same issue had also called for the dissolution of the National Assembly – “elle ne peut plus rien faire pour la Nation, dont elle a lâchement abandonné les intérêts et sacrifié les droits” – and formation of a new one, free from the malign influence of “la faction des aristocrates”. The following evening, he was summonsed again and this time he was allowed to make his case. Asked to clarify his charges against the subsistence committee, he told them that had reported information given to him in good faith, but could not name anyone. He did, however, read out another accusation (made by his distributor) against one of their Représentants, which was sufficient to cause his resignation. After a heated exchange, Marat

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746 Ibid, i:183–184. He claimed they had already been denounced by several district committees.
748 Ami du peuple, #18 (28 Sept 1789), OP, i:200.
749 Ami du peuple, #18 & #27 (28 Sept & 7 Oct 1789), OP, i:202 (fn) & 251.
750 Ibid, i:197.
751 Ibid, i:197.
was dismissed without charge, which he interpreted as a tacit acknowledgment of his accusations.\textsuperscript{752}

The same day some National Guard patrols seized copies of the \textit{Ami de peuple}, and a detachment, which invaded the Palais-Royal to arrest another journalist, was repulsed leading to the production of a popular print, 'Le patrouillotisme chassant le patriotisme du Palais-Royal'.\textsuperscript{753}

By the beginning of October, Marat’s attacks on the municipal authorities increased in frequency, starting with a sharp criticism of Bailly’s unsuitability as Mayor: “Il a passé sa vie à étudier les sciences exactes, il est peu versé dans les affaires publiques et il tient au gouvernement par des bienfaits dont la délicatesse lui ordonnait le sacrifice dès l’instant qu’il a paru se dévouer au service de la patrie”.\textsuperscript{754} In issues 22 and 23, he denounced Necker, the Commune \textit{Représentants}, and the “aristocrates” infesting the National Assembly.\textsuperscript{755}

Realizing that their verbal warning had had no effect on Marat’s output, the \textit{mairie’s} committee – the Commune’s executive arm, including the Mayor and his lieutenants – turned to more formal means, denouncing these issues to the Châtelet on 3 October, asking its lead prosecutor, the \textit{procureur du roi} Deflandre de Brunville to pursue Marat, “suitant la rigueur des ordinances”.\textsuperscript{756} He found much to be concerned about, notifying the \textit{lieutenant-criminel} that Marat’s paper was seeking to undermine public order:

> Il est evident que l’auteur bien loin d’être l’ami du peuple, ainsi qu’il se qualifie, en est au contraire l’ennemi le plus dangereux puisqu’il abuse ses talents et de la liberté de la presse pour ravir au peuple les seuls soutiens qui lui restent au milieu des maux qui l’accablent, puisqu’il fait tous ses efforts pour soulever ce peuple contre ceux qu’il a choisis lui-même pour veiller à sa conservation, à sa sûreté et à sa prospérité…il est evident encore que le plan de l’auteur de L’Ami du Peuple est de prolonger et d’accroître même les horreurs de l’anarchie dont la capitale a gémi depuis trop longtemps.\textsuperscript{757}

In the aftermath of the October Days disorders, the Châtelet’s actions against Marat took on a greater sense of urgency as the authorities responded to the resulting disorder (and deaths) with a crackdown on those seen as responsible, including, crucially, those accused of incitement.\textsuperscript{758}

With their appeals for the intervention of a “tribun” armed with “la force publique… si le péril...
devenait imminent”, for the districts to arm themselves with canon to protect a defenceless Paris,
for military disobedience if the National Guard was ordered to fire on the people, and for another
fierce personal attack on Necker, issues 25 and 26 of the Ami du peuple were deemed to fall in this
category.⁷⁵⁹ Despite the fact that his newspapers were ‘signed’, in accordance with the Commune’s
arrêté of 24 July, it would appear that the authorities had singled him out as an example to deter
others.⁷⁶⁰ About a month later, Marat would contrast his attitude with the squeamishness of those
“coeurs sensibles”, such as Brissot, who baulked at the violence that had resulted in the deaths of
some royal bodyguards. Their misgivings were fundamentally misplaced; he argued, when weighed
against the longue durée of centuries of abuse already suffered by the French, and evoking a
memorable image, he asked his readers which of the two approaches had more, “de raison,
d’humanité, de patriotisme? Ils s’efforcent d’endormir le peuple; je m’efforce de le réveiller: ils lui
donnent de l’opium; je verse de l’eau forte dans ses blessures, et j’en verserai jusqu’à ce qu’il soit
pleinement rentré dans ses droits, jusqu’à ce qu’il soit libre et heureux”.⁷⁶¹

On 6 October, the Châtelet sub-poenaed Marat’s printer (Jorry) and distributor (Dufour) to
appear before its tribunal, to which Marat responded by asking Deflandre de Brunville in an open
letter how he imagined that the “Ami du peuple” – referring to himself in the third person for the
first time – would recognize their ‘show-trial’ tribunal, telling him that, “il a creusé sa fosse, il y
descendra sans frémir”, as long as there were “braves concitoyens” who shared “le même coeur”,
and that, “il n’a rien à craindre d’un coup d’éclat de la part des ennemis du bien public”.⁷⁶² These
third-person references would become increasingly frequent as continuing clandestinity helped to
crystallize his “People’s friend” persona into a revolutionary symbol of defiance against ‘despotism’
wherever it might lurk.⁷⁶³ Recognizing the danger he was now in, he wrote to the Cordeliers district
on 7 October asking for their protection, which it granted, having issued an earlier proclamation to
defend press freedom within its precincts.⁷⁶⁴ Besides hosting the main publishing area, centred
around the Latin Quarter, the Cordeliers was rapidly gaining a radical reputation at the vanguard of
those districts who wished to exercise their right to local sovereignty against the centralizing

⁷⁵⁹ Ami du peuple #25 & #26 (5-6 Oct 1789), OP, i:237-244, and OP, i:55*.
⁷⁶⁰ See ch.3, 110-111.
⁷⁶¹ Ami du peuple, #35 (11 Nov 1789), OP, i:288. There is some dispute over whether Marat played any part in the journée.
While he mentioned no role, possibly to avoid providing any further evidence to his prosecutors, his ‘participation’ was
suggested by the Révolutions de France et Brabant #47 and Révolutions de Paris #14 [via Gallica].
⁷⁶² Ami du peuple, #27 (7 Oct 1789), OP, i:249-250.
⁷⁶³ The first two were in issues #10 & #15 (20 & 25 Sept 1789), OP: i:167 & 190.
⁷⁶⁴ BnF. Lb/40/p.1. Extrait des registres des deliberations de l’assemblée du district des Cordeliers, du 7 Oct 1789, cited in
OP, i:98-99*. On the Cordeliers’ reputation for defending patriots, see Henry E. Bourne, “Municipal Politics in Paris in
tendencies of the municipality. 765 On 8 October, the Châtelet issued its first arrest warrant against Marat, taking into account the Commune’s wish to, “rendre à la justice son activité et s’opposer aux abus de la licence dont les excès sont aussi dangereux qu’étonnants”. 766 By the time the bailiffs arrived at his home, a forewarned Marat had already fled Paris to seek refuge near Versailles. As a consequence, production of his newspaper was interrupted for nearly a month, beginning a long period of clandestinity, when Marat was forced to live and work ‘underground’. 767 On 8 and 9 October, the National Assembly passed its first criminal law reforms, which, amongst other measures, were designed to safeguard individuals against arbitrary arrest, meaning that such actions would be harder to enact in the future. 768 When the Châtelet reactivated Marat’s dormant warrant in January 1790, they simply ignored these reforms rather than create a new warrant, revealing a surprisingly lax attitude to the law by its own enforcers.

The actions against Marat formed part of a wider campaign of harassment against the press for the reasons already discussed. At the same time, the Commune activated an earlier arrêté from 1 September preventing hawkers from “crier ou colporter des écrits scandaleux ou incendiaires”, effectively restricting them from selling any papers that were not officially authorized. 769 National Guard patrols were increased, and royalist “fishwives” (poissardes) from Les Halles were recruited to enforce the ruling. 770 As a result of these measures, the future president of the Commune’s Comité des recherches, Garran de Coulon, who tried to keep good relations with the popular movement, complained in Brissot’s Patriote français about “very dangerous attacks” against press freedom, while the Révolutions de Paris condemned the new regime’s censorship as a “thousand times more repressive than that of the old police”. 771 Even Brissot, who recognized the incompatibility of supporting such measures while continuing to double as a journalist, criticized the initial action against Marat by suggesting that, “scorn [was] the only weapon needed against libels”, although this

766 Lacroix, Actes de la Commune, série 1, ii: 201-202, cited in OP, i:55*.
767 For Marat’s version, see Ami du peuple, #70 (11 Dec 1789), OP, i:431-433, and his pamphlet, Appel à la Nation (June 1790), OP, ii:663-666. Until August 1792, Marat continued to work clandestinely by day, visiting print shops at night, and frequently changing sleeping locations. Ami du peuple #170 (23 July 1790), OP, ii:1097 & 291*.
768 M.J. Mavidal & M.E. Laurent, eds., Archives parlementaires, de 1787 à 1860. Tome IX: du 16 Sept 1789 au 11 Novembre 1789, 102 vols (Paris, 1877), ix:394-396 [via https://frda.edu/en/ap]. When Lafayette sent the National Guard into the Cordeliers district to arrest Marat on 22 January 1790, it appealed to the National Assembly on this very point of law, but was informed that the legislation could not be retrospectively applied despite the fact that both orders were promulgated on the same day.
770 On the poissardes’ close relationship with the monarchy, see Carla Hesse, The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern (Princeton, 2003), 16-20.
was before he was elected to the Commune’s powerful *Comité des recherches* on 22 October 1789. However, his fellow *Représentants* were less accommodating, noting that “le mépris” in which it held, “le calomniateur et ses calomnies ne suffisait pas pour écarter les soupçons que des personnes peut instruits pourraient concevoir”, and might present an opportunity to accuse, “les Représentants de la Commune d’une coupable indifférence sur l’objet si essential de la tranquilité publique”. Here lay the real source of concern against Marat’s paper, for while “enlightened” men such as themselves could ignore its more *outré* observations, the wider populace was considered dangerously susceptible. Indeed, a fortnight later, officials denounced an “incendiary” libel to the National Assembly for being cheap, and thus aimed at the “inferior classes”, urging it to take all necessary measures against those responsible.773

The legal proceedings against Marat were complicated by a libel action brought by one of the Commune’s secretaries, Etienne Dejoly, against issue 24 on 4 October, several days before this warrant was issued. Marat had falsely accused him of removing a document and falsifying a search warrant, after witnessing the vehement complaint of a National Guard commandant against a Commune official for endangering his life, but published the accusation without confirming the accused’s name.774 After Dejoly defended himself before the Commune Assembly, it authorized him to sue for “calomnie”, agreeing to publish a “placard bleu” across all 60 districts, rebutting Marat’s charge.775 On 14 October, the National Assembly considered a “Requête” from Marat, “arrêté comme auteur d’une diatribe indécente contre l’Assemblée nationale et M. Necker”, asking it to annul the warrant as a violation of his right to ‘free speech’.776 According to the *Moniteur*, their decision not to meddle in the Commune’s business may have been based on a misunderstanding, as they appeared to think he was already imprisoned, making it “inutile de s’occuper de cette requête”.777

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775 *BnF. Lb40/25, Dénonciation de Dejoly contre Marat* (4 Oct 1789), cited in Lacroix, *Actes de la Commune, Série 1*, ii:137-138. Marat’s indignant response is in *Ami du peuple* #26 (6 Oct 1789), *OP*, i:240-241, and the affair was reported in *Journal de Paris* #282 (9 Oct 1789). For a detailed account, see *OP*, i: *47-54. Most likely the original plaintiff confused Dejoly with Joly, one of the Commune’s *commissaires*.
776 Gaultier de Biauzat (14 Oct 1789) in Mavidal & Laurent, *Archives parlementaires*, ix:441. Marat had called for the purging of the Assembly in issue 17, one of nine issues cited in the original warrant (15 to 23). Marat reprinted his "requête" in *Ami du peuple* #95 (12 Jan 1790), *OP*, i:551-552.
Marat was forced to go into hiding a second time, he hired a lawyer to resolve this affair, convinced it was still the cause of his warrant. Letters to Quinquet de Monjour (23 Jan-17 Feb 1790), in Correspondance, 127-134.

781 For National Assembly policy on press freedom, see Walton, Policing public opinion, 97-117; and Godechot, "La presse française sous la Révolution et l'Empire", in Histoire générale de la presse française, 1:432-434.

Marat then posted an open letter – on blue paper in quarto format, for pasting next to Dejoly's *placard bleu* – from his hiding place, apologizing for his error, but taking the opportunity to challenge this unwarranted indignation at his error ("offense involontaire") since, “une calomnie est une fausseté inventée dans le dessein de nuire [et] il n’y a rien de tout cela dans ma dénonciation”. Moreover, where the former was a deliberate attempt to smear, the latter was a civic-minded intervention to prevent abuse of office, “car c’est le droit incontestable des commissaires de surveiller les commis, comme c’est le devoir des citoyens de dénoncer tout prévaricateur, tout député infidèle”.

However, neither Dejoly nor the Commune were in any mood for forgiveness, and one of the reasons for Dejoly’s persistence may have been the unfortunate timing of Marat’s ‘libellous’ accusation on the same week as he won two key promotions, leading to his appointment on 14 October as the last of Bailly’s nine lieutenants, responsible for legal affairs ("Tribunal contentieux"). In his memoirs, Dejoly gave a rather different account of this ‘affair’, presenting himself as a model of forgiving detachment, despite a fractious history of litigation with colleagues. Unbeknown to Marat, he was now being pursued by two separate legal processes: the formal, more proactive one, instigated by the Commune on 8 October, and Dejoly’s personal libel action, issued coincidentally on the same day, and which for a long time, Marat mistakenly believed had triggered the original warrant.

There is little doubt that the existence of a very real fear of popular disturbance trumped any belief in the merits of free speech and led to considerable tension over the efforts of municipal officials tasked with maintaining law and order, to impose meaningful restrictions on the press freedoms enshrined within the *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme*. This tension became more acute in the aftermath of the October Days, when the actions taken against Marat formed part of a wider campaign to control the press. While Barry Shapiro has warned against exaggerating the extent of the Commune’s post-October repression, a trawl through the district cartons within the *Archives de la préfecture de police*, reveal a litany of low-level harassment against unregistered hawkers and
those peddling offensive material. According to Richard Andrews, this sensitivity to public speech by the Revolution’s legislators – including lawyers working for the Commune – and its enforcers, derived in part from their legal training, which involved the use of language to manipulate another person’s thinking. As purveyors of persuasion, their belief that well-articulated sentiments might trigger emulation led them to penalize ‘dangerous’ modes of speech to make an example of those whom they considered harmful to the “bien public” – in a kind of pedagogy by punishment. On a more fundamental level, it helped to reinforce the effective ‘surrender’ of one’s political voice after its delegation by representation, by strongly discouraging, even anathematizing, dissenting discourse from those, such as Marat, who claimed to speak for the people in opposition to the policies and behaviour of their elected representatives.

III

During Marat’s three-week absence from Paris, the first imitation of his paper, or “faux-ami”, appeared on 15 October. Jourdain de Saint-Ferjeux, who published L’Ami du peuple, ou le Vrai Citoyen, did not pretend to be Marat, but adopted his style to attack various targets, including the duc d’Orléans. While it only lasted seven issues, its existence revealed a commercial opportunity for a distinctive, radical voice. What made it remarkable was the fact that Marat had managed to create such a distinct brand within less than a month of launching. The later rash of faux-amis produced during his second, longer exile from January to May 1790 attest to the fact that his writing had touched a raw nerve, which others sought to delegitimize through ‘false flag’ publishing, by promoting extremist views (both conservative and radical) under his name. Marat’s accounts of his movements also suggest a growing public awareness of his paper. After leaving Paris, he found refuge in Versailles with Jean Bassal, curé of Saint-Louis parish, and when, after a week, his presence was denounced to the National Guard, its commandant Laurent Lecointre, who had played a leading role in ‘managing’ the crowd at Versailles on 5 October and sympathized with the renegade journalist, offered to host him in his home.

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785 BnF. LC2/2283, Jourdain de Saint-Ferjeux, L’Ami du peuple, ou le vrai citoyen (15 Oct–Nov 1789).
786 See ch.6, 200 (fn).
787 Ami du peuple #70 & #351 (11 Dec 1789 & 25 Jan 1791), OP, i:431-433 & iv:2134-2136. Bassal and Lecointre were later elected as radical deputies to the Legislative Assembly and National Convention.
Meanwhile, two days after the National Assembly’s move to Paris, following the lynching on 21 October of a baker, Denis François, who had been accused of hiding bread – possibly at the request of certain deputies – the political situation became much tenser. To prevent any further “attroupements”, the Commune demanded an immediate decree of Martial law. The Assembly’s immediate endorsement of this law, which gave municipalities the right to summon armed force and hasten the judicial process, reflected growing misgivings over the increasing frequency of such sudden outbreaks of popular violence. In consequence, two labourers were charged without trial and hanged the following day, in an example of the kind of summary prévôtale justice, which was supposed to have been suppressed by the earlier criminal reform legislation. All the districts, and nearly all the press, with the exception of Marat and the Révolutions de Paris, agreed with these measures, while in the Assembly, only Robespierre voted against the decree. Marat believed that the authorities were using events as a pretext to ‘disarm’ the growing popular movement by sacrificing the nation’s nascent liberty upon an altar of increasing repression: “En ordonnant aux troupes de marcher contre les citoyens assemblés, il [the decree] anéantit la nation, qui n’existe que par la réunion d’individus”. Looking beyond the lynching, he enlarged upon his belief that violence was regrettably sometimes necessary to catalyze meaningful reform, arguing that people only rebelled, “lorsqu’elle est poussé au désespoir par la tyrannie”, that popular vengeance was “toujours juste dans son principe, quoiqu’elle ne soit pas toujours éclairée dans ses effets”, and that there was no comparison between the small number of victims “que le peuple immole à la justice, dans une insurrection, et la foule innombrable de sujets qu’un despote réduit à la misère, ou qu’il sacrifice à sa fureur”.

At the beginning of November, Marat returned to Paris. When the Ami du peuple reappeared on 5 November, the words, “libre journal... par une société de patriotes” had been removed, probably because he wanted to make clear that he alone was responsible for its contents, and that it was being published despite, rather than because of, any guarantees of press freedom. The first thing he did was to repeat his earlier demands for an independent “tribunal d’état destiné à connaître de toutes les dénonciations contre les agents du pouvoir municipal, exécutif et judiciaire, à

788 For more on the implications of this decree, see Shapiro, Revolutionary justice, 105-108 & 108-114.
790 Buchez & Roux, Histoire parlementaire, iii: 428.
791 Ami du peuple #34 (10 Nov 1789), OP, i:282. For press reaction to this law, which was not repealed until August 1791, see Hayakawa, Ibid; and Aurélie Neusy, “Opinions et réflexions sur la loi martiale dans la presse et les pamphlets (1789-1792)”, AHRF no.360 (June 2010): 27-48. Four districts also opposed the law but changed their minds days later. This contradicts Shapiro’s view that its passage prompted a district protest movement that led to a, “judicial offensive against the revolutionary left”. Revolutionary justice, 108-114.
792 Ami du peuple, #34 (10 Nov 1789), OP, i:284-285.
faire rendre compte au ministres et à punir les crimes de lèse-nation”. 793 He had originally aired this proposal back in July, when he argued that since the Ancien Régime’s judicial institutions no longer had the public’s confidence, such a tribunal was necessary to avoid any further violent demonstrations of popular justice. 794 Others who called for such a tribunal, included one of the Assembly’s “advanced patriots”, Jérôme Pétion, supported by his schoolfriend, Brissot. 795 In Marat’s view, the Châtelet was hopelessly corrupted by its attachment to pre-revolutionary values, and he repeatedly demanded its dissolution, citing cases where patriots, such as himself, were hounded by the authorities – “réduit à se cacher comme un scélérat!” – while known counter-revolutionaries remained free. 796

At the same time, he called for all revolutionary committees and assemblies to be purged of “les gens suspects et les citoyens connus pour n’avoir pas fait preuve de patriotisme”, and restocked with “membres intègres et indépendants”, for only then would they function properly and begin to restore public confidence and stability. Otherwise, France would “groan” for another century “dans les convulsions de l’anarchie ou les horreurs des guerres civiles”. Was it not odd, he pointed out, referring to its Civil War, that English liberty had been achieved at the cost of “vingt-cinq batailles rangées et soixante ans de malheurs”, while the French seemed to think they could achieve the same result after a single day, by standing around pontificating about municipal affairs? Did their new leaders really imagine that taking the Bastille had suddenly given their former enemies, “une âme nouvelle”? Once the “Hôtel de Ville” had been purged, he argued that, “le talisman du ministère tombera [et] l’Assemblée nationale marchera comme elle le doit”, by revoking its recent votes on the King’s (suspensive) veto, his right to rule and Martial law. 797 Only then would, “l’abondance renaîtra avec la paix et le bonheur”. 798

A week later, Marat published a series of nine “grandes maximes” to codify the process of bringing denunciations against “agents du pouvoir” before such an independant tribunal, “pour déconcerter tous les ambitieux, les fripons, les traîtres et à dégoûter ceux qui seraient tentés de le devenir”. He began by proposing that every citizen had the right to, “dénoncer les hommes en place, depuis le premier ministre jusqu’au dernier commis, et de les traduire devant le tribunal d’état”. Any

793 Ami du peuple #29 (5 Nov 1789), OP, i:263.
794 See ch.3, 114.
795 Shapiro, Revolutionary justice, 26-27.
796 Here, he referred specifically to the officers involved in the ‘counter-revolutionary’ actions of 12 July, such as d’Autichamp, d’Esterhazy and the prince Lambesc.
797 In this context, “Ministère” denoted the ‘malign’ influence of the ministry rather than the magistracy. The National Assembly had granted the King a suspensive veto, which meant that he could block any legislation for up to five years.
798 Ami du peuple #29 (5 Nov 1789), OP, i:264.
denunciation containing multiple indictments should be considered “bien fondée”, even where the charges were unproven. Any accusation that was proven would merit its author “un titre à l’estime publique”, but any false accusation made in good faith, “par amour de la patrie”, should not expose its author to punishment. Humans were fallible and errors did not make them criminal. Any person wrongly denounced would be “honorablement acquitted”, and his accuser made to “lui donner la main de paix”. As a safeguard against abuse on both sides, Marat insisted that the names of “dénonciateurs calomnieux” and “agents de l’autorité qui ont malversé” be posted on two boards outside the tribunal, to be “flétri par l’opinion publique”. He hoped that such a clear set of guidelines would encourage greater involvement in civic affairs by not punishing “l’honnête homme victime de son zèle pour la patrie”, and that such exposure would deter unworthy men from wanting to serve their country.  

Marat’s stance introduced a new notion to the practice of denunciation by emphasizing the accountability of the accuser, and elevating the Déclaration’s article 15 – “La société a le droit de demander compte à tout agent public de son administration” – into, “an act of sovereignty... made by a member of the sovereign people... addressed to the sovereign people”. For Marat, the fact of publicity, would act as a guarantee against the potential use of calumny to settle private scores: “La procédure doit toujours être fait en public... parce que le public est le premier juge des choses qui le concernent et parce qu’il peut mieux que qui que ce soit juger des moeurs de l’accusé et de l’accusateur et apprécier les motifs de la dénonciation”. While some, such as the grouping based around Le Cercle Social, which encouraged the public to post anonymous denunciations, were more relaxed about such transparency, Marat refused to print unsigned denunciations, describing such accusers as, “des lâches qui n’osent pas se montrer publiquement”. It was a crucial point for Marat, since it helped, in theory at least, the “tribunal de l’opinion” to distinguish between (virtuous) denunciation and (unvirtuous) calumny. In this, he drew on ideas first absorbed in England, where Junius had argued that public figures had a duty to act in the public interest, and if they fell short, it was the public writer’s duty to call them to account and ‘nudge’ them back onto the straight and narrow. Marat’s main purpose in publishing these maxims appeared to be less about justifying his own behaviour, and more about stemming the outbreak of anonymous denunciations, prompted by
the Châtelet’s continuing October Days investigations. In an attempt to galvanize the public into working for the nation, it was the National Assembly’s own Comité des recherches that had originally propagated the idea of an aristocratic plot into the public imagination following the receipt of hundreds of signed, and unsigned, denunciations. Around this same time, Marat’s instinctive distrust of their representatives’ true intentions appeared to harden following the debates at the end of October, which proposed to create a stark division between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ citizens by restricting the right to vote and hold office on the basis of income and property ownership. Marat argued that such rights should not be based on wealth but on virtue, between those who were “digne” and “indigne” to hold public office.

Between 20 November and 10 December, and between 12 and 18 December, publication of his paper was interrupted as Marat struggled to find printers. The reason for this soon became clear, for the Commune’s spies had finally caught up with him, sending an armed force to arrest him on 12 December. In Marat’s account he was questioned that evening by Lafayette in the Commune’s Comité des recherches. He told Lafayette that he had been misinformed about his motives, for he could not imagine how such a great man, who had fought for American liberty, would now wish to forge chains for his countrymen as leader of the National Guard. After Lafayette withdrew, Marat explained to the Comité that his conflict with the municipality had only been, “les petits désagréments du passage de la servitude à la liberté”, for no revolution had ever happened without shedding “quelques gouttes de sang”. Moreover, while he had nothing against them personally, if he had to choose between “le deuil du comité de police et celui de la liberté, mon choix est tout fait”, warning them that if they wished to avoid “la lanterne” they should behave like “bons patriotes”. After his release, he was offered an escort and allowed to retrieve his confiscated papers and presses, a treatment so unexpected that he was almost converted on the spot: “Je sentis l’extrême différence de l’ancien au nouveau régime et une émotion délicieuse pénétra mon âme”. However, his feeling of goodwill did not last long, for he ended on a cryptic note, informing readers that “observateurs judicieux” who sought to “développer l’influence de l’opinion publique sur les démarches des agents de l’autorité”, would find plenty of “matière à réflexion”.

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804 Ami du peuple #22 & #37 (2 Oct and 13 Nov 1789), OP, i:224 & 298. Shapiro, Revolutionary justice, 99-123.
805 Maia Kirby, “The Democratic Sphere: Communications with the French National Assembly’s Committee of Research, 1789–91” (PhD, QMUL, 2016).
806 See ch.4, 136-137.
807 Until this point, Marat had shown support for Lafayette. At the end of September he had praised, “Ce généreux citoyen, dont l’âme n’est ouverte qu’aux sentiments qui élèvent l’humanité”, Ami du peuple #15 (25 Sept 1789), OP, i:188.
808 Ami du peuple, #71 (19 Dec 1789), OP, i:438-439. The events are described in OP, i:73-74*. His presses were not confiscated by the Châtelet but by two districts (St Etienne-du-Mont and St-André-des-Arts).
Upon his release, Marat moved into the protective embrace of the Cordeliers district, taking three rooms in the Hotel Fautrière opposite the café Zoppi (now Procope) on 39 rue de l’Ancienne Comédie. Finding it hard to secure non risk-averse printers, he installed two presses in the basement and became his own printer. However, the uneasy truce did not last long and on 31 December, the Sorbonne district denounced issue 83 to the Commune, highlighting the following passage, which described Necker as liberty’s biggest threat, and Bailly as his puppet:

Le bruit court que la conspiration qui vient d’être découverte… est un tour d’adresse de l’administration habile à tirer parti de tout… je suis intimement convaincu que le maire n’est qu’un automate dans la main du premier ministre des Finances… le plus adroit et le plus dangereux suppôt du pouvoir arbitraire, le plus cruel adversaire de la liberté, le plus ferme appui de l’aristocratie.”

A few days earlier, Marat had proposed the abolition of the mairie for venality and incompetence. Now he went further, painting a pessimistic vision of government as, “l’éternel ennemi des peuples” in thrall to self-serving factions: “Aussi tous les corps… forment-ils des factions dangereuses dès l’instant où ils prétendent l’oreille aux ministres… Presque tout est ruse, piège, trahison de la part de l’administration municipale, de la part de la mairie, de la part des comités de l’Assemblée nationale”. These two issues, plus a later one suggesting that the Commune’s Comité des recherches had been bribed by “ennemis de l’Etat” and should be put under close surveillance, triggered a new impetus for prosecution. When the Châtelet ordered the seizure of Marat’s presses on 8 January, news of the trespass aroused not just Marat’s district, but also many fellow journalists to rally to his defence.

On 11 January, Marat was summonsed before the Commune’s police tribunal for questioning over the “contravention aux ordonnances et règlements” of the offending issues. One charge stated that had had no right to own a press since he was not on the list of the thirty-six registered printers on the Commune’s December arrêté, which had also fixed the number of colporteurs at three hundred. Marat refused to appear, sending a note instead, which pointed out that since his paper had both editor’s and printer’s names clearly marked, it was perfectly legal, and that he viewed this summons as no more than a clumsy trap to lure him away from his district’s

809 Ami du peuple, #83 (31 Dec 1789), OP, i:499 & i:114-115*.
810 Ami du peuple, #79 (27 Dec 1789), OP, i:478-480; Ibid, i:500.
811 Ami du peuple, #87 (4 Jan 1790), OP, i:519-520.
812 The documents for this raid, apart from the seizure order – which Marat claimed was “écrit sur un chiffon de papier non timbré”, and is missing (OP, i:544) – can be found in AN (Pierrefitte), D/XXIX/63 and BnF. BB30/162/d.1-2 & 5-6. See, for example, Arrêté du district des Cordeliers du 11 janvier 1790, cited in OP, i:117-118*.
813 For the Commune’s various arrêtés, see Andries, “La Librairie Parisienne, 1789–1795”: 250.
A day later, Marat complicated things by alleging that Boucher d’Argis, the senior Châtelet official responsible for the raid, had authorized it against his colleagues’ wishes, and went on to castigate him as an “accapareur des fonctions publique”, for doubling up as a National Guard commandant and Commune Représentant, thus conflating military, legislative and judicial roles in one person – a criticism endorsed by the *Révolutions de Paris*. This attack on a conseiller du roi, lead judge in the controversial Besenval trial, and future president of the Châtelet, triggered a new libel action with three separate charges. For Marat, Boucher d’Argis’ overbearing manner appeared to embody many of the Châtelet’s worst attributes – acting like an Ancien Régime body in new regime clothing, and behaving in a ‘despotic’ manner by abusing its powers. His complaint highlighted the division, referred to earlier, between legally trained politicians who considered themselves responsible for preserving social order, and critics who defended their right to publish by invoking article 11 of the Déclaration, which guaranteed, “La libre communication des pensées et des opinions... sauf à répondre de l’abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la Loi”. Since there was, as yet, no clear definition of what this legal determination might be, any printed material could be indicted, and there appeared little room for compromise between these two positions, especially once the criticisms became personalized.

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814 AN (Pierrefitte) BB/30/162, d.1/p.5/12, ‘Police tribunal judgement’ (13 Jan 1790), in *OP*, i:118-123*.
815 *Ibid*, i:120*.
816 *Ami du peuple*, #97 (14 Jan 1790), *OP*, i:562-563. He took over as Châtelet president in June. See *Révolutions de Paris* #30 (30 Jan–6 Feb 1790), 27 & 30 [via Gallica].
817 The baron de Besenval, commander of the King’s troops around Paris during July, was accused of counter-revolutionary activity, and it was the Châtelet’s controversial acquittal of Besenval on 29 Jan 1790 that proved the final straw, leading to its dissolution in November. For a detailed discussion of the trial and its repercussions, see Shapiro, *Revolutionary justice*, 59-83, especially 62-65.
818 See also Walton, *Policing public opinion*, 97 & 101.
Defending himself before the Commune Assembly, Boucher d’Argis accused Marat of dishonouring a magistrate known for his “lumières” and for bringing the Châtelet into disrepute. Most seriously, he denounced Marat’s paper for agitating the population by its repeated attacks on the offices and officers of government, summarized by the Commune’s report as, “manifestant la coupable intention de plonger la capitale dans tous les désordres de l’anarchie, d’appeler sur ses habitants tous les malheurs qui sont la suite nécessaire de la dissolution de la société, qui ne peut subsister que par l’influence des lois, de l’autorité des magistrats”. In response, it declared that, “la liberté salutaire de la presse n’est pas le droit dangereux de calomnier impunément”, that even in England, authors were responsible for their writings, that, “la déclaration des droits de l’homme... est bien loin d’autoriser les écrits qui ne respirent que la sédition, la révolte et la calomnie”, and finally, that they would be failing, “au plus sacré de tous leurs devoirs s’ils ne cherchaient à preserver leurs concitoyens des poisons mortels dont ces sortes d’écrits sont infestés et à les garantir de leur funeste contagion”. In consequence, it instructed its prosecutor to pursue this denunciation “avec toute l’activité possible”, and ordered a blue ‘Adresse au Peuple’, summarizing these judgements, to be posted across the districts, as it had done previously with Dejoly’s complaint. It is unclear whether it was this, or the Sorbonne’s earlier denunciation, which provided the basis for reissuing the original warrant, but it seems likely that Marat’s attack on the judge’s honour acted as the catalyst. Recognizing the imminent danger, Marat moved in with a Cordeliers colleague on 14 January, remaining there until the end of February.

IV

During the first months of his paper’s existence, Marat’s strategy appeared to follow two goals. First, following the English example, he wanted to extend the political debate beyond the National Assembly and into the public consciousness, while ‘educating’ readers in political matters. Secondly, he wanted to promote denunciation into a civic act in defence of the public interest by encouraging involvement in the revolutionary process through readers’ tip-offs, and so on. His attempts at delineating rules to prevent slippage towards “calomnie”, along with his frequent recourse to a legalese vocabulary of “avocats”, “censeurs” and “tribunal publics” all demonstrated a concern to reposition denunciation as a fundamental principle of civic life by removing any tainted...

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819 Boucher d’Argis had burnished his patriotic credentials by joining the Commune’s Assembly on 13 July, along with two other parlementaires, thus committing an act of rebellion.
820 Extrait des délibérations de l’assemblée générale des représentants de la Commune (15 Jan 1790), cited in OP, i:124-125*. See also AN (Pierrefitte), BB30/162/p.3. The ‘Adresse au Peuple’ was abandoned on 21 Jan. OP, i:126*.
821 Mémoire de Madame Boucher de Saint-Sauveur contre Marat (1790), cited in OP, i:129*. The elderly Boucher de Saint-Sauveur was president of the Cordeliers’ charitable committee (comité de bienfaisance).
associations with the old regime. At the same time, the authorities recognized the dangers of allowing a writer, such as Marat, a free platform from which to build up such a parallel notion of popular sovereignty alongside that of the mandated representatives. His refusal to recognize any clear distinction between old and new regimes, preferring to discriminate instead between those who were “digne” or “indigne” to hold public office, appeared to be one of the main reasons why the authorities pursued Marat more vigorously than almost any other journalist, including the inflammatory royalist press. Indeed, Marat was the first journalist to be pursued by both the Commune and the National Assembly, eventually earning seven warrants from four separate bodies. While in theory, “écrits séditieux” were the least serious offence under the new lèse-nation laws, in practice it was far easier to convict writers and rioters than wealthy hoarders and high-ranking officials.

For journalists like Marat, denunciation became a potent ‘weapon’ through which to articulate, and legitimate, popular sovereignty as an extra-parliamentary force in opposition to those who sought to delegate it to committees within the National and municipal assemblies. The sudden invasion of the public sphere by the press during 1789 created two major headaches for the authorities. First, while much of the press set itself up as a watchdog to criticize, satirize or support the Revolution’s fragile achievements, its inquisitorial tone, which was often perceived as inherently disrespectful, more often appeared to divide rather than unite public opinion and thus threaten the hastily erected new civil order that had replaced the former power structures. Since the new authorities did not believe public opinion was capable of making sound judgements on complex political matters, and was too easily swayed, it viewed journalists of Marat’s calibre as irresponsible “generators of fatal discord”, using the catch-all category of “threat to public order” as the subjective basis for their legal pursuit. The second problem was that denunciation – and Marat’s version of it in particular – raised its own dilemma of who, to borrow a classical maxim, would monitor the guardians. This thorny issue was not confined to the press either, as a contributor to the first parliamentary debate on denunciation made clear when arguing against the creation of a Comité des

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822 This notion of “l’indignité politique” would be codified in the decree of 15 June 1791, whereby every official had to swear loyalty, “à la Nation, à la Loi et au Roi”, and to combat plots against the Patrie, under pain of becoming, “un homme infâme”, although the oath was never applied, Simonin, Le déshonneur dans la République, ch.3.
824 See, for example, journal titles such as, Sentinelle, Observateur, Spectateur, Vérités, Secrets dévoilés, Véridique, Ami, Censeur, Dénonciateur, in Labrosse & Réat, Naissance du journal révolutionnaire, 1789, 193-197.
826 Juvenal, “Sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes?”, in Juvenal and Persius, 268-269 (Satire 6). The question was originally posed with reference to marital chaperones in the public baths.
To process these accusations: “Je vous demarde quelles seront les bornes du pouvoir que nous allons exercer? Qui pourra nous juger? Qui pourra nous rappeler à nos principes? Non, il est dangereux de réunir dans nos mains tous les pouvoirs, toute l’autorité”.827 If denunciation was promoted to protect liberty then who would protect liberty against the denouncer, especially when the creation of such committees involved amalgamating rather than separating the fundamental powers upon which government rested?828

It was no coincidence that Marat should target lawyers amongst potentially disloyal public figures, or that they should push back strongly by calling for his prosecution, as we have seen.829 The first National Assembly, in particular, was very active in passing new laws and reinforcing judicial authority, and a core element of their legislative strategy involved the penal regulation of “acts of speech”, which later formed a key element of the 1791 constitution, helping to undermine the protections of free expression in the Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme, which it replaced.830 One major difference, however, between pre-revolutionary and revolutionary criminal law, was that where the former had introduced greater leniency to judicial procedures while discretely classifying offences, a striking feature of the latter was its tendency in the opposite direction, towards greater severity and generality.831 The key point regarding the Châtelet’s attitude towards Marat, whose attitudes found shape within the later Penal Code that attempted to codify the Déclaration’s ambiguity, was that it sought to penalize words as if they were deeds, along with complicity in actions yet to be committed – defined as “statements in public places, placards, pamphlets, or printed works distributed in public” – by assigning to them the gravity of an actual crime.832

One way of viewing the battle over the press, which dominated the first year of the Revolution, might be to understand it as part of a wider struggle between moderates and radicals over how to accommodate ‘denunciation’ within the new regime, as we saw with Duport-Dutertre’s complaint about importing “des fruits si amers” of English attitudes to the press.833 While other writers promoted similar agendas, few were as single-minded as Marat or claimed to represent

828 Marat had raised this very issue with regard to the probity of the Commune’s own Comité.
829 Besides Dejoly and Boucher d’Argis, the lawyer-deputy Malouet cited Marat (and originally, Desmoulins) in his decree of 31 July 1790, as examples for the Châtelet to pursue, in convicting of lèse-nation any writer who incited the people, “to revolt against the law, spill blood, and overthrow the Constitution”, Walton, Policing public opinion, 102-108.
831 Andrews, Law, Magistracy, and Crime in Old Regime Paris, 283. In this respect, Foucault was wrong to follow the revolutionary legislators in characterizing the Ancien Régime judicial system as an repressive instrument of social control characterized by exemplary punishment. See Discipline and Punish, especially 16-24.
833 See p.167.
‘popular’ – via his use of informants and letters – rather than (the more elite) ‘public’ opinion. The Révolutions de Paris found it disturbing that the new regime was using the old regime’s obsession with personal honour to suppress political criticism, citing the ‘English model’ in its support:

Faible France! Enfants enthousiastes! Quand saurez-vous qu’il est de l’essence de la liberté d’écrire impunément tout ce que l’on veut sur les hommes publics. Si l’on supprimait en Angleterre tous les papiers où il y a des calomnies contre les hommes publics, il n’y aurait pas actuellement un seul papier public.

The speeches of Commune officials recorded within the ‘Accusations’ issued against Marat by the Commune provide a good illustration of this point. While they would begin by defending the honour of his targets, claiming that “chez les Peuples les plus libres, la diffamation publique a toujours été considérée comme destructive de l’harmonie sociale”, they would usually conclude by revealing a much harder-to-prosecute anxiety over public disorder. From these indictments, it appeared that Marat’s main crime was less one of defamation, which usually provided the initial impetus for prosecution, than of violating a taboo on denunciations against the fragile, new regime, which might have a deleterious effect on popular opinion. This is borne out by the lack of action taken against far more intemperate, and anonymous, papers – thus marking a double infraction of the new press statutes – such as the Fouet, with its striking imagery of critical flagellation. The most likely reason for this would appear to be that they were far less compelling, and thus perceived as less influential upon public opinion, that crucial thermometer of social stability and goodwill.

Far more telling was the lack of serious legal action against the royalist press, which was generally far more libellous than any patriot paper, especially in their abusive tirades against the National Assembly’s deputies. With a few notable exceptions, such as the pamphlets of Linguet and François-Louis Suleau – a former avocat aux conseils du roi – they barely feature in the police archives, where pornography and blasphemy-themed libelles outnumber political ones by five to one, let alone faced any threat of a prise-de-corps. The treatment of the Actes des Apôtres, a satirical

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834 For example, in September 1789, the playwright Marie-Joseph Chenier published a pamphlet, Denunciation of the Inquisitors of Thought, which not only attacked the censors of his new play, Charles IX, but also promoted denunciation as a natural rights that helped to preserve social harmony, De Baecque, The Body Politic, 223.

835 Révolutions de Paris #14 (10-17 Oct 1789), cited in OP, i:62*.

836 See, for example, OP, i:118-123*.


838 This point is supported by Murray, The Right-wing press, 69.

839 For a comprehensive list of the seized libelles, see APP (Hoche) Archives Historiques, AA/1-145, p.196-203. For Linguet, see AA/178, p.169, which reported the seizure on 16 Jan 1790 of, amongst others, Lettre de M. Linguet à l’Empereur Joseph Second sur la Révolution du Brabant et du Reste des Pays-Bas (Bruxelles, 1790). For Suleau, who later edited his own Journal de M Suleau (after March 1791), see AN (Pierrefitte), BB30/162, p.2, 4 & 22, which included
weekly started in October 1789, enjoying almost double Marat’s circulation, provides a salutary counterweight to that dished out to Marat. Singled out for investigation on five separate occasions between February and August 1790 – the most of any counter-revolutionary paper – the charges were always dropped despite the Commune’s “unanimous disgust” at its contents. Each time, the editor Jean-Gabriel Peltier would appear in person and demand the return of his papers, invoking the freedom of the press enshrined within article 11 of the Déclaration, and despite its open ridicule of deputies and other leading revolutionary figures, which was far more “calomnieux” than any criticisms in Ami du peuple, his easy social relationship with those in power – he was a former financier – appeared to protect him from prosecution. These relationships included Pierre Manuel on the Commune police committee, Deflandre de Brunville at the Châtelet, and monarchien deputies within the Assembly, including Nicolas Bergasse, co-proprietor and contributor to the Actes as well as a fellow National Guardsman. Peltier’s printer even had a signed authorization from Bergasse granting permission to, “imprimer Les Actes des Apôtres comme une contre [partie] à tous les journaux incendiaires”. Desmoulins ironically highlighted his immunity as the greatest sign of the Assembly’s tolerance just as, “les blasphêmes des athées sont le plus bel éloge de la clémence de l’Etre suprême”. In other words, the Commune-Châtelet’s harassment of Marat appeared to be ad hoc, ad hominem and inconsistent with their stated position on defamation. In order to find a convincing answer for why this was so, the next chapter will look closely at Marat’s most detailed accusation, and the one that marked a turning-point in his career: his denunciation of Necker.

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Fidelissimae Picardorum Genti, ou Tu dors, Picard, et Louis est dans les fers (s.l., Dec 1789). On 31 December 1789, Suleau was charged by the Châtelet’s procureur du roi for “écrits incendiaires” with this open call for rebellion, but it was only his involvement in the Favras affair that led to his brief imprisonment.

842 Ibid: 487.
843 Révolutions de France et de Brabant #17 (March 1790), 148, cited in Ibid: 488.
On 18 January 1790, Marat published a long, detailed pamphlet, denouncing Necker. It had been ready since 4 November, but, unable to find a printer prepared to risk publication following the Commune’s October Days crackdown, he had had to wait until he had secured his own presses, and even then, it had been postponed following the police raids on 12 December and 9 January. Its appearance came at the end of a broader campaign, waged by Marat since November, against the corrupting influence of ministers, such as the comte de La Tour du Pin (war) and the comte de Montmorin (foreign affairs), on the King.

Bearing his familiar epigraph, Vitam impendere vero – now being used as a kind of branding – Marat began by framing his denunciation as the first blow in an unequal contest between him, the “simple citoyen”, and Necker, the mighty “agent de la puissance exécutive”. Adopting the role of “avocat”, he used its pages like a mémoire judiciaire, in a bid to try Necker before the “tribunal public”, and expose his ‘true’ attitude towards provisioning and reform. Wielding only courage, righteousness and truth against Necker’s bottomless resources of wealth, intrigue and cunning, aided by his treacherous accomplices (“foule de flatteurs” and “ennemis de la patrie”), his main aim appeared to be a desire to silence “les trompettes de la renommée” that mistakenly bound the nation to the “ministre adoré”, for Necker did not just represent a corrupting influence at the heart of government, but also a false idol that needed to be toppled from his pedestal. At the time of Necker’s return to office in August 1788, and again after July 1789, the public sphere had been inundated with pamphlets and prints comparing Necker (“soutien de la patrie”) to some of France’s greatest heroes, including archbishop Belsunce of Marseille, who had saved the city from the plague, and the duc de Sully, Henri IV’s popular minister, as well as its greatest Kings, such as Louis XII (“le père du peuple”), Henri IV (“le grand”) and Louis XVI (“le bienfaisant”). One print depicted him as the Sun radiating across the globe, with the caption “qui nobis restituit rem” (“who restored the state to us”), while another represented him as God’s hands filling the treasury from the heavens. In others, he was depicted as a bust receiving garlands, an all-

845 He described being turned down by ten printers, OP, i:582 (fn).
847 Dénonciation, OP, i:584-585.
seeing “Oeil de Génie”, or as the King’s equal, directing operations from atop a shield. Similar sentiments were mirrored across the Channel, where he was portrayed on a throne, holding a crown in one hand and liberty cap in the other.

Marat’s Dénonciation appeared within the context of a wider distrust of international capitalism with which Necker was associated, and which appeared to violate many traditional values, including the paternalistic ethos of the state. As Steven Kaplan has noted in his wide-ranging analysis of the mechanisms of famine plots – popular beliefs of collusion between government and grain providers – the state was often hampered in its dealings by poor communication and public relations. In part, this reflected a structural weakness of the Ancien Régime, but it also reflected a lack of transparency in its dealings, which became particularly evident with regard to provision.

Even during the first year of the Revolution when anxieties over the supply of bread, France’s staple food, were the main cause of popular tension, and misinformation, the government never made a serious effort to explain its policies or actions, and early pamphlets blaming the royal princes for causing famine in order to force Necker’s resignation, competed with those blaming Necker himself.

As a rule, the King and his ministers had never considered the government’s workings to be anyone else’s business, unwilling to risk suggesting that the monarchy was accountable in any way to the public. Necker, who had been the first administrator to grasp the importance of enlisting public opinion in support of the royal administration, had undermined this precedent with his publication of the Compte-rendu – a snapshot of the royal finances, which helped to inspire public confidence and safeguard access to credit – following his resignation in 1781. However, on his return to government in 1788, he saw no need to promote an equivalent transparency over grain provision. In consequence, everyone, from local administrators to those being administrated, suffered from a lack of reliable information. Given the underlying insecurity, particularly after 1788’s poor harvest, any rumours were bound to arouse uncertainty and unsettle the public. The most dramatic example of this came during the summer of 1789, when erroneous reports of large-scale movements of beggars and brigands created the widespread rural panic that became known as ‘The Great Fear’. As a result of Necker’s continuing silence on these matters, Marat lost all faith in

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848 For a selection of images, see the BnF and De Vinck collections from the ‘French Revolution Digital Archive’ at https://frda.stanford.edu/en/images. For their importance in promoting eighteenth-century celebrity, see Lilit, Figures publiques, 75-84. For a comprehensive list of pro-Necker pamphlets, see André Martin & Gérard Walter, Catalogue de l’histoire de la Révolution française. Écrits de la période révolutionnaire. VI: Table analytique, 6 vols (Paris, 1969).
849 National Portrait Gallery (NPG) 1240, James Gillray, ‘France freedom, Britain slavery’ (28 July 1789).
him and used his Dénonciation to articulate his strong suspicions of a double game being played by Necker in order to try and appease all sides at once. At the same time, it might appear that Marat was hoping that a high-profile campaign against Necker might make his name in the same way as Wilkes’ campaign against the General Warrants, or Junius’ campaign against the Grafton ministry had made theirs.  

Much had changed since January 1789, when Marat had applauded Necker’s support for the doubling of the Third Estate, describing him in glowing terms as “un sage, l’ami du peuple et l’appui des malheureux”. As he explained at the beginning of his Dénonciation, Necker had then stood alone “contre la cabale des Princes et des courtisans... contre la faction des parlements”. However, his growing disillusionment over Necker’s ambivalence towards political and fiscal reform was confirmed by the appearance in March and July 1789 of two lengthy pamphlets for the Baker’s Guild by Jean-Jacques Rutledge. These Mémoires attacked alleged government collusion with “agioteurs”, such as the Leleu brothers, owners of the capital’s main provisioning facility (the Corbeil mills), for withholding grain in order to resell for a huge profit, while demanding subsidies to stabilize the cost of bread against inflated prices. In particular, they alerted Marat to the brothers’ close relationship with Necker and the Commune. However, within the volatile context of recent events, any questioning of the capital’s provision was now deemed a lèse-nation offence, and several people, including Rutledge, were tried and imprisoned under this category during the final months of 1789.

The ‘Rutledge Affair’ was the most controversial of these cases, for he had directly implicated Necker in the artificial inflation of bread prices. The poor harvests of 1787 and 1788 had caused a scarcity of flour, and Marat became convinced that Necker was doing nothing to

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851 For the creation of John Wilkes as “une figure politique nouvelle”, see Lilti, Figures publiques, 223. Necker is not one of Lilti’s case-studies.
852 See ch.3, 103.
853 Dénonciation, OP, i:586
855 Walton, Policing public opinion, 180-182.
856 For more on this ‘Affair’, see Shapiro, Revolutionary justice, 110-114. According to Peter Jones, there was a 45% increase in the grain price between Sept 1788 and March 1789, Reform and Revolution in France: The Politics of Transition, 1774–1791 (Cambridge, 1995), 170. Such rises meant that the price of a loaf could take as much as 97% of a worker’s wage, George Rudé, The Crowd in the French Revolution (Oxford, 1959), 251 (Appendix VII).
prevent the resulting speculation of financiers and merchants, while taking advantage of their manoeuvres to replenish the empty treasury by his own speculation. Marat’s conviction was reinforced not just by its resonance with earlier “famine plot conspiracies”, but also by the evidence of various ‘experts’, including Françoise Garin of the Baker’s Guild, and Rutledge, its spokesman since March 1789, who had formerly been employed by Necker to supply information on the hoarders’ activities. Rutledge’s two Mémoires caused a minor sensation by exposing much of this information against Necker’s wishes, although neither criticized him directly. By October, Rutledge felt emboldened enough to challenge Necker by letter to either denounce the monopolists or face exposure, only to be invited to run a new government programme providing bakers with interest-free loans. However, following the Commune’s creation of its own Comité des recherches, which had taken over responsibility for provisioning the Paris region, this arrangement was cancelled, and Necker’s aide, Valdec de Lessart, asked Rutledge to suspend negotiations. When Rutledge continued to deal with the bakers, he was arrested on 2 November, charged with false representation as a government official and threatening public order by inciting the bakers. He was convicted and imprisoned for two months, only being released on 3 January 1790 for lack of evidence.

The Commune’s hard-line position came against a backdrop of volatility and provisioning tension, which led to the passing of Martial law on 22 October following the lynching of a baker. Thinking that Marat might be a useful ally in his campaign to be released, Rutledge sent him his trial transcripts, which Marat published over four issues during January 1790. Rutledge’s persecution provided Marat with a valuable, personal angle of “despotisme ministériel” for his dossier against Necker. Moreover, it appeared that a fatal, and avoidable, misunderstanding had caused Rutledge’s imprisonment, yet Necker had remained silent on his dealings, electing instead to send his aide to testify before the Comité, who admitted the commission but insisted he had passed on Necker’s order to cancel the subsidy, which Rutledge denied. Marat was not the only journalist to find the affair highly questionable, with the Révolutions de Paris pointing out that whatever the truth of the matter, it reflected badly on the minister, demonstrating either gross incompetence or dishonourable behaviour.

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857 Shapiro, Revolutionary justice, 110 & 255 (fn 48). Rutledge’s contacts with the bakers and provisioning agents provided Marat’s main source of information for his own accusations. Necker read Rutledge’s ‘Projet d’une législation des subsistences’ to the National Assembly on 14 November 1789.  
859 AN (Pierrefitte), Y/10506, ‘Rutledge dossier’.  
860 See ch.5, 162.  
861 See Ami du peuple #85, #86, #87 & #90 (2–7 Jan 1790), OP, i:510-532.
When Marat started publishing the *Ami du peuple*, he directed his attacks mainly at the municipality and its increasingly powerful *Comité des recherches*. While the *Comité* had originally been set up to coordinate closely with Necker’s finance ministry and enjoyed substantial autonomy in its decision-making, Marat viewed both bodies as intimately linked. He published his first accusation against Necker on 5 October, but it was his more personalized accusations of profiteering and maladministration on 6 and 8 October that initially drew the Commune’s attention. In particular, Marat blamed him for authorizing the export of good French grain and the import of rotten foreign grain, while speculating on the price:

> Les accapareurs comme la plupart des administrateurs des municipalités ne sont que des instruments serviles dans la main du premier ministre de finances, qui lui seul est l’Auteur de la disette que nous avons éprouvée si longtemps, qui lui seul est l’âme de toutes ces speculations désastreuses sur le pain, bien faites pour figurer un jour avec ses belles operations d’agiotage qui ont ruiné la France.

It was a damning accusation that could not be ignored. On 23 October, while in hiding, Marat prepared the ground for his *Dénonciation* by sending a ‘letter’ to Necker, challenging him to respond to his charges, although there is no record of whether it was ever received. It was ‘posted’ in response to responding to Necker’s appearance before the Filles-Saint-Thomas district the day before, where he had asked its assembly to keep him informed of any published criticisms so that he might respond. Expressing delight at Necker’s recognition that “agents de pouvoir” should defend themselves before the “tribunal du public”, Marat presented himself as an “ennemi généreux” and pledged to proclaim Necker’s victory if his accusations were shown to be false: “Je vais descendre dans l’arène; je ne veux ni bouclier ni cuirasse. Je m’interdis toute ruse, toute feinte, je ne vous attaquerez que de front”.

The challenge closely resembled an earlier one laid down by Desmoulins in a pamphlet supporting Rutledge. In it, he imagined himself in a courtroom with Necker, while evoking Achilles’ impassioned cry to Hector, to “l’appeler dans la plaine [et] lui presenter un combat qu’il ne peut pas dédaigner”. Calling upon the public to judge the facts, Desmoulins explained that if his accusations were exposed as false, Necker would thank him for having laid any doubts to rest, prefacing the accusations that followed with Cicero’s remark about the valuable service performed by dogs barking in the night to scare off thieves.

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862 Shapiro, *Revolutionary justice*, 16-17 and passim.
863 *Ami du peuple*, #26 & #28 (6 & 8 Oct 1789), *OP*, i:243-44 & 254-256. Other attacks on Necker, up to January 1790, can be found in issues #25, #30, #32, #37, #40, #51, #55, #56, #57, #83 & #99.
865 *Dénonciation*, *OP*, i:583-584. Marat published it on the fourth page.
Necker’s own pre-revolutionary history of published interventions defending himself before the tribunal of public opinion almost certainly encouraged Marat’s decision to publish his Dénonciation, but on this occasion Necker chose to remain silent, letting others, as we shall see, do his talking, but still giving Marat the vital oxygen of publicity. 868 It is highly likely that some of the anti-Marat responses that appeared were written by Necker’s protégés – so the hypocrisy shown by later attempts to depict his behaviour throughout the Revolution as exemplary, suggest a degree of self-delusion: “Un grand motif cependant fait impression sur moi. Je ne puis, je l’avoue, je ne puis séparer ma cause de celle de la raison et de la vertu… c’est à moi de les respecter, en montrant que je n’y fus infidèle en aucun instant de ma vie et… je secondais par mon indifférence la politique des méchants et le triomphe des ingrats”. 869 It also seems odd that there is no mention of Marat’s damaging attacks in any of the Necker family writings, bar a few general disparaging remarks along the lines of “infâme écrivain hebdomadaire, devenu trop célèbre sous le nom de Marat”. 870 Looking back on his first ministry (1776–1781), Necker would later confess that a thirst for gloire had motivated his courting of public opinion and he saw no reason to apologize for being in thrall to this “most pardonable of passions”. 871 However, after it turned against him during 1790, he became quite disillusioned, dismissing it as a fickle creature, “l’opinion publique n’est plus à mes yeux ce qu’elle était. Le respect que je lui ai religieusement rendu, ce respect s’est affaibli quand je l’ai vue soumise aux artifices des méchants, quand je l’ai vue trembler devant les mêmes hommes qu’autrefois elle eût fait paraître à son tribunal”. 872

Marat’s Dénonciation contained five principal accusations (“inculpations”) against Necker: that he had colluded in the conspiracy to surround Paris with troops; that he had colluded in grain speculation; that he was a covert supporter of the Ancien Régime and preferred to tax the poor over the rich; that he was responsible for the failed plan on 5 October to move the royal family to Metz and dissolve the National Assembly; and that he had compromised the King’s honour by his actions. These accusations, based on Necker’s actions since his return to power in July 1788, were intended

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868 Léonard Burnand, Les Pamphlets contre Necker: Médias et imaginaire politique au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, 2009), 247. For example, two years earlier, Necker had responded, against the advice of friends, to a libel by Mirabeau when he was just a jobbing pamphleteer, Défense de M. Necker contre M. le comte de Mirabeau (Paris, 1787).

869 Jacques Necker, Sur l’Administration de M Necker par lui-même (s.l., 1791), 2-3 [via Google Books]. Similar sentiments of emotional sang-froid were expressed in his other post-1791 writings and reinforced in his daughter’s writings.

870 See Histoire de la Révolution française par M. Necker, 4 vols (Paris, 1796), ii: 218. See also Germaine de Staël, Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution, ed. Aureliam Crajutu (Indianapolis, 2008), 316 (Ch.VII).

871 Jacques Necker, De l’Administration des finances en France (1784), cited in Robert D. Harris, Necker: Reform Statesman of the Ancien Régime (Berkeley, 1979), 51. For Necker’s management of public opinion, see Baker, Inventing the French Revolution, 191; and Harris, Necker and the Revolution of 1789, 341-342, passim.

872 Sur l’Administration de M. Necker, 1. See also Oeuvres complètes de M. Necker. Tome 8: Du Pouvoir Exécutif (1792) (Strasbourg, 1821), viii:244 [via Google Books].
to reveal a cumulative, and damning, pattern of behaviour. Unlike a typical *libelle*, they revealed a historical sensibility that sought to minimize the equation between private corruption and public malfeasance, for by taking this approach Marat could claim to be an impartial observer judging Necker on posterity’s behalf, “Je ne serai ici qu’un historien fidèle qui aura devancé son siècle”..\(^\text{873}\)

In his first charge, Marat accused Necker of knowing about the treacherous Court’s “horrible projet [à] réduire Paris par la flamme, le fer et le feu” during the early weeks of July, and doing nothing to prevent it. At the very least, he charged, Necker, in his role as finance minister, must have authorized the cost of moving 50,000 men into Paris: “Taire une conspiration que le devoir oblige de révéler est s’en rendre complice. Il ne l’a pas dévoilée. Qu’en conclure? Que la Nation doit le punir comme un traître ou le renvoyer comme un imbécile”, echoing Loustallot’s earlier characterization.\(^\text{874}\) Whether Marat believed this or not, it was a skillful swipe at Necker’s pride. Either he was complicit or else he had dithered for fear of losing his position, thus sacrificing the capital’s safety to overweening ambition: “Comment! Des flots de sang … les calamités, les désastres... lui ont paru trop peu de chose pour les prévenir par le sacrifice de son amour-propre? Et c’est là ce père du peuple! Ce bienfaiteur de l’humanité! Ce sauveur de la France!”\(^\text{875}\)

According to the second, and most serious, charge, Necker had deliberately starved Paris and the provinces by speculating on grain with royal funds in order to refill the treasury. Marat also blamed Necker for protecting contracted grain suppliers from the consequences of their miscalculations of the capital’s needs, and for poisoning the people with spoilt flour that made them sick.\(^\text{876}\) As with most things that Marat wrote, ‘facts’ and anecdote, rumours and feelings were all jumbled up in a quest to get at the wider truth. Half-truths were permitted, as Cicero had written, providing they were underpinned with a concern for the greater good, or, following Rousseau, “L’amour du bien public est la seule passion qui me fait parler au public”.\(^\text{877}\) Marat’s reminder of Necker’s history of financial tricks (“tours de baton”) was backed up by references to earlier anti-Necker pamphlets attacking his financial integrity, many of which had been sponsored by Marat’s former master, the (now émigré) comte d’Artois, who came to loathe Necker following his targeting


\(^{875}\) *Dénonciation*, OP, i:590.

\(^{876}\) For background on the Leleu brothers’ contract, and the bakers’ denunciation of its execution, see Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris*, especially 675-676. According to Kaplan, poor quality bread was a regular gripe of Parisians who were spoilt for choice compared to the provinces. Necker was rumoured to have made 12 million livres for the treasury, which he used to pay for imports at a time when the Assembly refused to release further funds until the ratification of the new constitution.

\(^{877}\) *Lettre à d’Alembert*, in *Politics and the Arts*, 132 (fn) [French via Gallica].
of the “incurable vice” of extravagant household expenses. Marat appeared to have absorbed their lessons, since he repeatedly referenced Necker’s background as a well-connected “banquier opulent” who had made his original fortune from insider dealing. He argued that Necker’s affinity with “agioteurs” and knowledge of the mechanisms of speculation derived from his own experience of profiteering thirty years earlier from the 1760s grain crisis – “Fameux magicien... votre coup de maître ... c'est d'avoir rendus nuls, pour nous, les dons de la nature, c'est de nous avoir escamoté nos moissons, c'est de nous faire périr d’inanition au sein de l’abondance”. No matter that this ignored the fact that Necker had revoked the free trade laws on his return to office in July 1788, banning both the purchase of grain outside approved markets and its export, a situation much complicated by the National Assembly’s edict of 29 August, reintroducing internal free trade throughout France. There was little doubt, Marat wrote, that it suited the interests of both financiers and the government to manipulate wheat prices since a starving population was more likely to be pliant. Either the first minister was guilty of such activity, he concluded, or he should denounce those responsible.

In the third charge, Necker’s fiscal politics came under attack. Unable, or unwilling, to challenge royal extravagance and the myriad of venal posts draining the treasury, Necker had proposed instead to refill state coffers by demanding a “contribution patriotique” of a quarter of every citizen’s income. Adopted into law on 6 October, Marat castigated this policy for disproportionately affecting most people, while merely removing a “portion de superflu” from the rich. Necker, he charged, would rather demand sacrifices from the poor than put an end to the scandalous abuses of the Ancien Régime: “Ainsi, toujours fidèle à ses principes de ménager les riches et les grands, il ne laisse échapper aucune occasion... de leur immoler le peuple”. Since the Revolution began, he charged, Necker had had a hundred chances to demonstrate his financial wizardry but had repeatedly failed to do so. The reason was clear – Necker was afraid of being fired again: "Il a donc sacrifié à sa cupidité, à son ambition et à sa gloriole, le rétablissement de l’ordre, la régénération des finances... crime impardonnable à un ministre que la nation a honoré de

878 Dénonciation, OP, i:585 (fn). The pamphlets were by President de Coppons, Théorie et Pratique de M. Necker dans l’administration des Finances (1785), and Roch-Antoine de Pelissery, Erreur et désavantage pour l’état des emprunts du 7 janvier et du 7 février 1777 (1777), which revealed how Necker’s bank had profited from inside information to make a fortune from Canadian bonds and the Compagnie des Indes.
879 Ibid, i:596.
880 Its effects were so disastrous that subsidies for imported grain and flour were restored at the beginning of September, Harris, Necker and the Revolution of 1789, 737 (fn).
881 Ibid, i:594.
882 Ibid, i:591.
883 Ibid, i:598.
By focusing on the tension between Necker’s actions and his words, Marat’s rhetoric aimed to reveal his true qualities and undermine public opinion: “Quand on épluche toutes les operations de M Necker, on trouvera sans cesse le parfait jésuite, l’heureux jongleur, l’ami des grands, l’ennemi du peuple”.

By comparison, the fourth and fifth charges were relatively minor, charging him with involvement in a conspiracy to secure the royal family’s escape to Metz during the October Days, and colluding to dissolve the National Assembly and restore the nation to servitude. Even before this, Marat argued, he had revealed his true colours on the day of his triumphant return to Paris (30 July), when he had tactlessly asked the Commune Assembly to grant a general amnesty of all political prisoners, including the baron de Besenval and other royal officers arrested for conspiracy after the fall of the Bastille. This moment had also marked the start of the erosion of Necker’s popularity by helping to drive a wedge between the municipality and the districts, many of which strongly opposed this measure. Marat’s final charge was that Necker had exerted a harmful influence on the King by turning him from a benevolent Prince into a despot, thus compromising both his honour and that of his subjects.

In conclusion, he warned that Necker’s silence would be interpreted as a tacit admission of guilt: “Je vous traduis devant la nation comme un ennemi public... J’ai fait ma tâche, qu’il fasse la sienne”.

The final pages were dominated by a long footnote, where in a ‘profession de foi’, he explained how his principled stand had already made him many enemies, and took the opportunity to defend himself against the persistent allegations of being a hired provocateur: “Comme ma plume a fait quelque sensation, les ennemis publics qui sont les miens ont répandu dans le monde qu’elle était vendue... Mais il suffit de jeter les yeux sur mes écrits pour s’assurer que je suis peut-être le seul auteur depuis J-J qui dût être à l’abri du soupçon. Et à qui, de grace, serais-je vendu?” He went on to ridicule the idea by listing all his possible sources of sponsorship: the National Assembly, the Crown, the Church, the Ministry, the princes, the nobility, the parlements, the financiers, the municipality, the districts and the National Guard. Since he had attacked all of them at some stage, this only left “le peuple”/“nation” – for him, the terms were interchangeable – whose rights he had constantly defended, and for whom his zeal, “n’a point eu de bornes”. Moreover, he continued, “le
people n’achète personne”, and why would they when “Je lui suis tout acquis”. For a journalist like Marat, operating on his own and in permanent opposition to authority, any popularity he had depended on his integrity. To this end, he defended himself by comparing his motivation with those who were driven by love of gold rather than gloire, echoing an equation he had first articulated fifteen years earlier, and to which he repeatedly returned.

Hé! Pour qui me suis-je fait ces nuées de mortels ennemis? Pour le peuple, ce pauvre peuple épuisé de misère, toujours vexé, toujours foulé, toujours opprimé… Mais je n’éprouve aucun regret… Hommes vils qui ne connaissez d’autre passion dans la vie que l’or, ne me demandez pas quel intérêt me pressait. J’ai vengé l’humanité, je laisserai un nom. Et le vôtre est fait pour périr.

Desmoulins was so moved by the eloquence of Marat’s ‘profession de foi’ that he immediately republished it in his own paper, where it also earned praise from Linguet as “un superbe morceau”. The accusation of being a counter-revolutionary wolf in patriot’s clothing was the most damaging of any flung at him – “la seule qui eût pu porter coup à la cause que je défends” – and, despite his conviction that he had said enough to, “dégoûter les échos de cette calomnie”, it was one that would continue to haunt him for the rest of the Revolution, and long thereafter.

Five days after the Dénonciation appeared, the accusation that Marat was a paid agent for “certain aristocrates” was repeated in the supposedly neutral Moniteur – “Croit-on qu’il se répand dans les meilleures sociétés que l’auteur de l’Ami du peuple est le champion connu de certains aristocrates qui l’emploient à semer partout le trouble.” It was picked up a day later by the radical Journal Universel, which described Marat as one of the “serpents de la discorde qui se sont glissés dans le berceau de la liberté… qui cherchent à vous faire regretter l’ancien régime en calomniant les meilleures intentions de ceux qui élèvent l’édifice de votre constitution nouvelle”. The best way of dealing with such people, it continued, was to make a prison for them in the rubble of the Bastille. This, and similar attacks on Marat, provoked a vigorous defence of his integrity by the Révolutions de Paris the same week, which compared him to “un journaliste anglais” for daring to

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891 Ibid, i:615-618 (fn).
892 Philosophical Essay, ii:138, Chains (1774), 4280-4284; Plan de Constitution, OP, i:84.
893 Dénonciation, OP, i:617 (fn). The reference to “hommes vils” was a jibe at pro-Necker publicists, such as Gorsas.
894 Révolutions de France et Brabant #9 (Feb 1790) & #15 (March 1790), in Révolutions de France et de Brabant, 2 vols (Paris, 1790), i:426-429 & ii:82-83 [via Google Books].
895 Ibid, i:618 (fn). See, for example, Moniteur universel (21 Jan 1790), Journal universel (24 Jan 1790), Maton de la Varenne, Les Crimes de Marat, 12. See also ch.5, 153.
896 Moniteur Universel (23 Jan 1790), cited in OP, i:165-166*.
freely “dire son opinion sur le capacité, sur le coeur, sur l’esprit du ministre adoré”, and described
the actions taken against him as clearly intended to, “affermir l’autorité arbitraire” and muzzle, “les
créateurs patriotes... à la veille des élections, enfin, flatter les impatiens [i.e. monarchiens] de
quelque espoir”. It had taken a similar line back in October after Marat had been forced into
hiding by the first arrest warrant, suggesting that whatever differences in opinion on Necker there
might be between the Révolutions de Paris and Marat, “nous sommes affligés de voir que les
partisans de ce ministre prostituont son nom à la plus lâche persécution, telle que s’il ne la
désavouait pas, il mériterait tout ce que Marat a dit de lui”. Loustallot’s favourable comparison of
Marat’s confrontational approach with the English tradition, showed that Marat was not operating
in a complete vacuum when it came to recognizing the value of a free press as the “Palladium of
all... civil, political and religious rights”, regardless of regime. It might also help to explain the
consistent rumours that he was an agent in the employ of sinister, possibly English, powers.

Such accusations had first surfaced back in October, when the patriot journalist Antoine-
Joseph Gorsas had accused Marat of being in the pocket of aristocrats, as part of an ‘authorized’
interpretation of the October Days. This Commune-inspired spin aimed to discredit the people’s
invasion of the Hôtel de Ville to demand bread and justice, which had preceded the march on
Versailles, as an act fomented by counter-revolutionaries who had created an artificial food
shortage. Unable to find anyone brave enough to murder Bailly and Lafayette, they had paid, “des
lâches écrivains qui les assassinaient moralement”, the worst of whom was, “un sieur Marat,
homme vil et soudoyé, qui n’ayant ni honneur à perdre ni vertus à risquer” had prostituted his
“plume lâche” to the highest bidder. Gorsas, who had been one of the most inflammatory
journalists in the build-up to the October Days, may have been trying to deflect attention from
himself, and Marat would later label him as a “flagorneur aux gages de Necker”. The appearance
of an anonymous pamphlet, accusing Gorsas of “lâches outrages” for smearing “un athlète aussi
redoutable” as Marat, who could no longer defend himself since he had been forced to flee Paris,
led Gorsas to make a grudging public apology, for while Marat might be mistaken, his errors were
no crime. A week later, the notorious libellist, blackmailer and Neckerite, Charles Théveneau de

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895 Révolutions de Paris #29 (23-30 Jan 1790), cited in De Cock, Oeuvres complètes, Tome 5, 1711.
897 Canon, The Letters of Junius, 9 (Dedication).
898 Courrier de Versailles à Paris #96 (12 Oct 1789), 160 [via Gallica]. Similar versions of this failed counter-revolutionary
plot can be found in Brissot’s Patriote française and Jean-Louis Carra’s Annales patriotiques et littéraires, Shapiro,
Revolutionary justice, 91-92.
899 Courrier de Versailles à Paris #94 (10 Oct 1789), 136 [via Gallica].
900 Courrier de Versailles à Paris #96 (12 Oct 1789), 157-158.
Morande repeated similar charges in his *Courrier de Londres*, calling Marat a violent agitator and a thief. It seems no coincidence that both accusations appeared within a fortnight of Marat’s earliest attacks on Necker, nor that they would be widely repeated in the anti-Marat literature triggered by the *Dénonciation*. Marat found a surprising ally in Théveneau de Morande’s Paris correspondent, Francois-Noel (later ‘Gracchus’) Babeuf, a former feudal agent from Picardy, who described the strong impression caused by Marat’s paper, while dismissing these rumours.

The fact that both men had noticed Marat’s *Ami du peuple* during a time when Paris was awash in new titles was all the more remarkable when one considers that it had been in existence for less than a month. By attacking Necker when he was still widely acclaimed, Marat was taking a huge gamble. At the same time, campaigning on this, and other issues brought him into contact with important allies and informants, including Georges Danton, president of the Cordeliers District, and the radical journalists based there, including Desmoulins and Louise

II

The appearance of Marat’s *Dénonciation* on 18 January caused such a sensation that he had to warn readers the next day to buy only from his distributor in order to avoid pirated copies, which might be “déconstruite et méconnaissable... pour me faire dire ce que je ne dis pas”. The response of most of the radical press was to hail Marat’s audacity in challenging the halo of approval enjoyed by this “ministre vertueux”, while providing invaluable publicity. Desmoulins not only took the opportunity to warn readers against the false rumours claiming that Marat was “l'instrument d’aristocrates” paid to spread confusion, but he also reprinted Marat’s eloquent defence of journalistic principles from the end of his *Dénonciation*, exclaiming, “voilà du courage, de

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905 *Courrier de Londres* (17 & 24 Oct 1789), in Simon Burrows, *A King’s Ransom: The Life of Charles Théveneau De Morande, Blackmailer, Scandalmonger and Master-Spy* (London, 2010), 190, 253(fn) & 171-172. This formed the basis for nineteenth-century assertions of Marat’s imprisonment for theft as fact – an accusation that was finally disproved by Robert Darnton in 1966, see ch.1, 30.

906 The *Courrier de Londres*, also known as *Courrier de l’Europe*, shared the same printer, owner and content, Sgard ed., *Dictionnaire des journaux* (1600–1789).


908 *Ami du peuple* #103 (20 Jan 1790), *OP*, i:626.
l’âme, et un grand caractère. The Révolutions de Paris also saluted his courage in daring to speak his mind, “sur l’esprit du ministre adoré”. Continuing the theme in more philosophical vein in his next issue, under the heading ‘Des Idoles’, Loustallot denounced the blind confidence shown towards those, such as Necker, who professed their devotion to the public cause, as contrary to the spirit of liberty. Such uncritical enthusiasm, it argued, could hand such an idol carte blanche to do as they pleased by making them feel untouchable: “tout est possible et semble permis à celui qui est l’objet de la faveur publique; et souvent le délire populaire inspire de coupables desseins à celui qu’une surveillance raisonnable aurait contenu dans de justes bornes.” It is worth nothing that on 13 January, the right-wing deputy Amable-Gilbert Dufraisse-Duchey had denounced the Ami du peuple, along with the Révolutions de Paris, and more surprisingly, the Journal de Paris, as examples of irresponsible “libelles” that should be suppressed. It was a verdict that was partly shared by Lafayette, who later described the Révolutions de Paris as, “un ouvrage aussi calomnieux et aussi incendiaire qu’aucune des feuilles de Marat”.

A day after the appearance of Marat’s Dénonciation, the Commune’s chief lawyer (procureur-syndic), De la Martinière, invited the Châtelet to, “déployer la sévérité de votre ministère pour en imposer à un écrivain qui n’a d’autre objet que de porter le trouble partout où nous nous efforçons d’établir la paix”, reactivating October’s original warrant rather than issuing another one under the new regulations. At the same time, the Cordeliers district began making preparations against an incursion into its territory by passing a series of decrees, including one that required any warrant to be counter-signed by five district commissaires. Some contemporaries suggested that Necker was responsible for Marat’s arrest, while Hammersley has suggested he was also behind Rutledge’s arrest, but there is no trace in the archives of such an intervention. It seems that on this occasion, and similar ones involving potential disorder, especially around the volatile subject of provisioning, the Commune, Châtelet and National Guard instinctively combined their resources in a deliberate show of force. What seems most likely is that the cumulative effect of Marat’s attacks on Boucher d’Argis, the presiding judge over the Favras-Besenval trial, his accusations of collusion in

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909 Révolutions de France et Brabant #9 (25 Jan 1790), 426-429 [via Gallica].
910 Révolutions de Paris #29 (23-30 Jan 1790), 4 [via Gallica].
911 Ibid #30, 30 Jan-6 Feb 1790, 1.
912 Speech by Dufraisse-Duchey (12 Jan 1790), in Buchez & Roux, Histoire parlementaire, ii:302. See also Walton, Policing public opinion, 104-106.
914 AN (Pierrefitte) D/xxix/63 (19 Jan 1790), cited in OP, i:129*. For more detail on the legal confusion, see de Cock, Action politique de Marat pendant la Révolution (1789-91), 117. See also ch.5, 157-158.
915 Extrait des registres des délibérations de l’assemblée du district des Cordeliers (19 Jan 1790), cited in OP, i:127-128*.
916 Hammersley, French Revolutionaries and English Republicans, 94.
917 Similar shows of force followed the October Days, the lynching of baker Robert, and the Champ de Mars massacre.
“agiotage” between the *Comité des recherches* and Necker, and his sustained attacks on the country’s first minister, had hardened the Commune’s resolve in sparing no resource to neutralize this ‘dangerous’ writer. Bailly therefore ordered Lafayette to provide whatever degree of “main-forte” was required to help the Châtelet execute this task.  

Another contributing factor to the timing of the Commune’s response was the palpable public tension from early January onwards surrounding the Favras-Besenval trial, when it appeared that the two ‘counter-revolutionary’ defendants might be pardoned. Rumours of aristocratic plotting had been swirling around Paris since mid-December, so the arrest on Christmas Eve of the marquis de Favras appeared to confirm these rumours. It was also the cause of several days of popular agitation outside the Châtelet courtroom, including a 10,000-strong demonstration on 11 January in the most severe disturbances to public order since the October Days. While Gorsas again attributed a disproportionate influence on the crowd to Marat’s paper, virtually the entire patriot press spoke of “aristocratic” machinations, judicial whitewashing and prison escape plots. Even Marat, right from the start of his paper’s existence, had spoken of, “émissaires… répandus parmi le peuple”, egging the crowds on to violence as part of a plot sponsored by “une puissante faction, cachée au sein même des Etats Généraux”, designed to, “faire manquer le grand oeuvre de la régénération de l’empire”.

Meanwhile, Marat found himself forced to wage a new campaign against a deliberate attempt to smear him. Forged letters signed by ‘Marat’ had been sent to the three districts comprising the faubourg Saint-Antoine in eastern Paris – one of the main bastions of radicalism – denouncing its citizens as “aristocrates”. As a result, one of the districts (Sainte-Marguerite) passed a motion on 20 January, denouncing Marat’s paper for trying to divide citizens and undermine “le bien public”, calling on him to “quitter le titre d’Ami du Peuple”. Since Marat viewed this neighbourhood as the source of his strongest support, he was deeply perturbed by this development and devoted his last two issues, before disappearing from view, to robustly defending himself against these accusations. How could they share their ennemy’s greatest desire, he asked, by wanting to suppress “les seules armes qu’ils redoutent”, since abandoning his paper now would hand them an easy victory. If they had any doubts, they only had to consult “la voix publique”:  

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918 BnF. M.F.F. 11697 (21 Jan 1790), cited in *OP*, i:133-134*.
922 *Ami du peuple* #104 & #105 (21 & 22 Jan 1790), *OP*, i:629-631 & 635-636. Their inhabitants participated in all the Revolution’s main *journées*, providing many of its ‘shock troops’.
En le prenant ce beau titre, je n’ai que consulté mon coeur. Mais j’ai travaillé à le mériter par mon zèle, par mon dévouement à la patrie et je crois avoir fait mes preuves. Consultez la voix publique, voyez la foule d’infortunés, d’opprimés, de persécutés qui, chaque jour, réclament mon appui contre leurs oppresseurs et demandez-leur si je suis l’Ami du Peuple.  

On the evening of 22 January, a large force of around 300 infantry and cavalry, accompanied the Châtelet’s bailiff into the Cordeliers district to facilitate the warrant’s execution. Instead, it had the opposite effect, provoking a mass outpouring of citizens onto the streets to defend their territory. The district’s president, Georges Danton, told the expedition that its warrant was invalid without the countersignatures of the five commissioners, which they would only provide once it was correctly made out, and he threatened to summon a further 20,000 men from the neighbouring faubourg St-Marcel if the National Guard attempted to enforce it. Forced to return to the Palais de Justice, the bailiff could only enter Marat’s apartment early the next day. Besides seizing his presses and paperwork, they also searched his assistant Nayait, who lived in the same building, confiscating her papers too. In its account, the Révolutions de Paris described the raid as “une acte de vengeance, déguisé sous une acte de justice”, and compared its defence of Marat to that of “Les plus célèbres écrivains anglais”, who did not hesitate to defend Wilkes, in the name of justice, despite considering him an inveterate quarreller. This act of defiance would later cement both Danton and the Cordeliers district in Parisian lore by provoking a lèse-nation action in March against both, for threatening “la guerre civile”, and it would be this prosecution, along with the earlier one against Marat, which did most to turn public opinion against the Châtelet.

Reviewing these events six months later, Marat claimed to have witnessed the whole affair from a neighbouring house, before venturing out with a friend to see what was happening while he waited for the next day’s proofs. After spotting some spies (“mouchards”) outside the house the next morning, he donned a disguise and left with a young lady, “marchant à pas comptés”. Finding

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923 Ibid, i:636.  
924 Coquard, Marat, 251-255. Other sources vary wildly in their estimates from 600 in a private letter from Thomas Lindet (22 Jan), in Ibid, 254, to 4000 in Ami du peuple #366 (9 Feb 1791), to 5000 in Rivarol (July), in Petit Dictionnaire, 70, exaggerating for effect.  
925 The expedition was authorized by Gouvion, commandant of the Paris National Guard and Lafayette’s deputy, and it was led by Carle and Plainville, battalion commanders of the two neighbouring districts.  
926 See ch.4, 135.  
927 Révolutions de Paris #28 (16-23 Jan 1790), 30-31.  
928 Walton, Policing public opinion, 182-183. When the affair was referred on to the National Assembly, it became evident that the Châtelet had over-reached its powers by incorrectly recycling an old warrant with new intent, by claiming to act as sovereign power against a subject accused of rebellion – “en dernier ressort”. See the opinion of Anthoine (19 May 1790), in Mavidal & Laurent, Archives parlementaires, xv: 583; and de Cock, Action politique de Marat dans la Révolution, 117.
no one home at his new hiding place, he took a carriage to Boucher de Saint-Sauveur’s home, stopping at the Hotel de Ville to observe what was happening. Marat’s narrative was intended to emphasize his coolness under danger, and to demonstrate that he could cock a snook at the authorities as easily as he could risk his safety for the patrie.929 After moving to Passy, west of Paris, he finally disappeared into exile in London in February, where he stayed for three months. His last gesture before leaving was to refund his paper’s remaining subscriptions.930

The failed military action not only helped to transform Marat into a renegade ‘celebrity’, thus consolidating his radical reputation, but it also drew attention to his Dénonciation, making it an instant bestseller and selling out several editions. While the moderate Observateur opined that, “M. Marat n’est qu’un pauvre fou, mais ce n’en est pas moins un citoyen”, the Révolutions de Paris highlighted his new status as a scapegoat, characterizing these events as a calculated form of intimidation against all patriot writers, “Souvenez-vous que, parmi les écrivains patriotes, celui sur la tête duquel il fallait frapper pour les effrayer tous, était le sieur Marat, parce que son courage allait jusqu’à la rage, et que sa conviction se changeait quelquefois en délire”.931 The following issue carried a letter from a National Guardsman from Saint-Antoine, accusing it of being in the pay of unnamed forces, warning that, “Les gens qui vous payent pour en parler s’en repentiront, et vous aussi, si vous continuez. Je crois que vous voulez faire le petit Marat.932 Croyez-moi, ne continuez pas; Marat n’écrit plus; vous pourriez faire de même... Je n’aime que la vérité.”933 During the Revolution, few figures earned their own eponym, and even fewer, so early on.934 The next issue carried an immediate riposte from a reader urging it to continue to ‘speak truth to power’ (“aux grands comme aux petits”), never to equivocate, and to take over Marat’s mantle if he stopped writing. His absence was also noted by readers outside Paris, with one curé from the Ardèche asking Desmoulins’ Révolutions de France: “Vous ne dites plus rien de l’ami du peuple: n’est-il pas encore remonté dans sa guérite? Tout le monde demande ici de ses nouvelles; je vous en demande à vous, au nom de 300 mille Vivarais.”935

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929 Ami du Peuple #170 (23 July 1790), OP, ii:1097-98. His account came in the context of Malouet’s denunciation in the National Assembly against Marat and Desmoulins for lèse-nation, with Marat contrasting his pride in his struggles against the authorities with Desmoulins’ cowardly proposal to renounce his offending “écrits”.
930 Massin, Marat, 116-117. As well as providing Marat with a safe house, Boucher de Saint-Sauveur lent him 1000 livres.
931 Feydel, L’Observateur, cited in Massin, Marat, 116. Révolutions de Paris #29 (23-30 Jan 1790), 3 [via Gallica].
932 Through its criticisms of Lafayette.
933 Révolutions de Paris #30 (30 Jan–6 Feb 1790) 3 [via Gallica].
934 Napoleon, Lafayette, Robespierre, Danton, Brissot, Hébert and Babeuf were the others.
935 Révolutions de France et Brabant #25 (March 1790), ii:553, cited in Massin, Marat, 117.
There is little doubt that Marat’s pamphlet was intended to provoke the authorities into a strong reaction and create more “sensation”. As such, it proved pivotal in his career, transforming him from the failed savant of 1789 to a recognized symbol of press freedom and resistance in 1790. While many journalists seemed cowed by the vigorous application of Ancien Régime libel laws, Marat appeared to welcome the challenge. Who knows what might have happened, if, as Montjoie, the royalist editor of one of the Ami du Roi papers later reflected, the authorities had simply ignored this scribbling “dwarf”: “Cette guerre est si extraordinaire que si je n’en avais pas été témoin moi-même, je n’y croirais pas. Comment conçoivez en effet que le héros des Deux Mondes déployât des forces si formidable contre un nain qui n’avait pour armes que sa plume?”

III

The pamphlet’s remarkable success demanded a response in kind, and the field was now thrown wide open, not only for Necker’s partisans, but for anyone else who wished to express their disapproval of Marat. Nearly all the pamphlets attacking him were anonymous, and most fulfilled a dual purpose by eulogizing Necker while condemning his denouncer. It seems highly likely that some of the writers from the Necker-founded Journal de Paris, including its editors, Suard and Dominique-Joseph Garat, were involved, along with the pro-Necker pamphleteer, Pierre-Louis de Lacretelle. Lacretelle, a member of the Commune’s Comité des recherches, had been a prominent legal reformer who believed in enlightened authority and opposed public denunciation. The Mercure de France also lent its services to the minister, publishing a ‘Quatrain pour le portrait de M. Necker’, while going on to ponder how anyone in their right mind could view this “Coupeur de têtes” and “monstre aux âmes faibles”, who had denounced the minister as “digne du supplice”, as a “forcené vertueux”. The phrasing is odd, since Marat had not yet begun his deterrent appeals for counter-revolutionary heads to roll, but it did evoke the notion of execution for the privileged. During Marat’s absence, Paris was flooded with around a dozen faux-amis, either competing for a share of his market with varying degrees of success, or attempting to smear his reputation. Only a

939 Mercure de France (30 Jan 1790), 373 & 396 [via babel.hathitrust.org].
940 Joseph-Ignace Guillotin’s reforms for equal opportunity execution were not passed until January 1790, and the machine that came to bear his name was not operational until April 1792, Daniel Arasse, The Guillotine and the Terror (London, 1991), 11-25.
941 See pp.200-201.
few papers, such as the Postillon, Journal du Soir, Père Duchesne and Actes des apôtres attracted this kind of piratical activity, and then for purely commercial reasons.\footnote{BnF. Lc2/278 reveals multiple imitations of the Postillon and Journal du Soir, which competed to bring the news to the provinces, around six to nine months after their first appearance.}

To give an idea of the tone and content of the ten anti-Marat pamphlets that appeared, I will consider some of the most striking.\footnote{The Anti-Marat concept was resurrected in a Lafayette-sponsored newspaper, which lasted 20 issues (Jan-April 1791).} One, from December 1789, was a response to Marat’s earlier attacks on the minister in his paper, while all the others, which appeared between February and March 1790, were triggered by his Dénonciation. \footnote{BL. F.R. 94(26), L’Anti-Marat, ou le véritable ami du peuple; par un seul patriote, et rédigé à la hâte, dans un mouvement d’indignation (Dec 1789, 15pp). For Marat’s attacks on Necker, see p.177 (fn). BnF. Lb30/2822, Le Pacificrate, Lettre d’un ami à son ami, l’ami du peuple (Jan 1790, 24pp); Lb39/2702, Le Rou, L’Anti-Marat, ou défense de M. Necker contre le soi-disant Ami du Peuple (Feb 1790, 30pp); Lb39/8247, L.B.D.B., Adresse d’un véritable ami de la vérité à M. Marat, Médecin ordinaire de comte d’Artois, et se disant l’Ami du Peuple, pour servir de réponse à sa dénonciation au Tribunal du Public contre M. Necker (Feb 1790, 15pp); Lb39/3969 [Pierre-Honoré-Antoine Pain?], Justification de M. Necker, premier ministre des finances, ou réponse à la dénonciation du Sieur Marat, par un citoyen du district de St André-des-Arts (Feb 1790, 29pp).} The first of these was the only one that tried to engage with Marat’s critical approach, by advocating a middle course between censorship and total press freedom, while the rest were strategic attempts to preserve Necker’s reputation at Marat’s expense through a succession of \textit{ad hominem} attacks. While it is hard to gauge their effect, many of their hostile caricatures would resurface as elements within Marat’s \textit{légende noire}. \footnote{A similar process helped to compromise Necker’s posthumous reputation, with historians unwittingly drawing primary evidence for his behaviour from anti-Necker pamphlets, Burnand, \textit{Les Pamphlets contre Necker}, 346-347.} Most promoted the image of a rabid \textit{provocateur} and tedious know-it-all (“une encyclopédie ambulante et beaucoup trop ambulante”). \footnote{Le Rou, L’Anti-Marat, 5 & 13-14. Le Pacificrate, Lettre d’un ami à son ami, 3.} One suggested that that he had prostituted his talents to more sinister forces, blaming his “dépravation” on a lack of friends, patriotism and morals, while also labelling him, “le prédicateur de la rebellion, l’apôtre du mensonge et l’apologiste des conspirations.” \footnote{[Pain?], \textit{Justification de M. Necker, 2, 5 & 7.} Its printer, Pierre-Honoré-Antoine Pain, was also editor of the royalist \textit{Les Sottises de la semaine}, for which he was prosecuted in July 1790, as well as other controversial publications, see BnF. \url{http://data.bnf.fr/fr/atelier/16905563/pierre-honore-antoine_pain}. The author’s district (St André-des-Arts) had already demonstrated its hostility towards Marat by repressing sales of his paper from early October, and confiscating his presses in December.} Another, adopting a similar theme, accused him of being an aristocratic stooge: “Ce prétendu ami du peuple... les gens au fait n’en sont pas dupes et n’ignorent pas les relations secrètes qu’il entretient avec certains aristocrates dont il espère un jour la récompense”. \footnote{Adresse d’un véritable ami de la vérité, 11.}

The first, and most even-handed of these – \textit{L’Anti-Marat, ou le véritable Ami du peuple; par un seul Patriote} – set out to prove three things. First, that Marat was not really a ‘friend’, since, “une véritable ami est une douce chose”, and his paper was anything but – a recurring theme.
Secondly, that while Marat had provided some useful home truths, they were mostly buried under a heap of twisted lies. Thirdly, that while Marat claimed to enlighten his readers, he actually sought to mislead them. While all administrations had their problems, it did not mean that a critic should seek to undermine them by sowing so much distrust. By repeatedly claiming that they were surrounded by traitors, Marat showed himself incapable of offering any constructive advice, behaving more like “un faux Prédicant” – contemptuous term for a Protestant preacher – than a public writer. He also accused Marat of behaving like an “énergumène” (“maniac”) who sought to make his reputation by stirring up public opinion against Necker with baseless slander produced by an overheated imagination. Necker had nothing to answer for, since his writings had already demonstrated his concern for the poor, and for provisioning. He concluded by informing Marat that he could yet prove himself a worthy ‘Friend of the People’ by deploying his skills in the service of the patrie.

After the publication of Marat’s Dénonciation, there were no more attempts at reconciliation, and the tone of these anti-Marat tracts became fiercer and less forgiving. Le Rou prefaced his response (the only signed one) – L’Anti-Marat, ou défense de M. Necker contre le soi-disant Ami du peuple – with this epigraph from Tacitus: “C’est la vertu même que ce frénétique veut poignarder”, and continued in the same vein. Defending his reason for springing to Necker’s defence as one of duty towards the nation’s “bienfaiteur” and “personnage le plus illustre de l’Europe”, he hoped that his example might inspire, “tous les hommes dignes de venger la vertu des attaques de la mauvaise foi... jaloux de la gloire de défendre celui qui nous a sauvés tous”. It was only because Necker was so widely adored, he went on, that a mediocrity like Marat had singled him out in the hope of making his name. Furthermore, it was not just Necker’s reputation he sought to defend, for he also hoped that this refutation would prevent “esprits faibles”, however well-intentioned, from falling under Marat’s spell. While he would have preferred more time, he considered it his duty to administer the antidote to Marat’s poison as swiftly as possible. Similar imagery – of venom, snakes and antidotes – was shared by many of these pamphlets.

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949 Ibid, 5.
950 Ibid, 8 & 11, referring to Necker’s earlier pamphlets on the grain trade (1775) and finance (1784). In his Mémoires, Bailly claimed that Necker’s intelligent handling of the grain supply had saved Paris from famine, Harris, Necker and the Revolution of 1789, 554.
951 Ibid, 15.
952 Le Rou, L’Anti-Marat, 2.
954 Ibid, 5.
955 Ibid, 30. This echoed similar fears about an unsophisticated public encountered in the last chapter. See ch.5, 159.
Another pamphleteer, whose cryptic initials (M.L.B.D.B.) revealed him as the author of an earlier Elége du roi et de M. Necker, picked up the analogy. Beginning his Adresse d’un véritable ami de la vérité à M. Marat with a classical epigraph, “Le serpent est caché dans l’herbe et sous les fleurs”, whose meaning was clear to any educated reader, he warned against the poisoned tongues of “serpents de l’envie” concealed in a thousand disguises, who sought to malign such an honest, generous and resolute Minister. This theme was reinforced by two further epigraphs, including a biblical one, illustrated by a print of a large hound urinating on a pack of smaller dogs: “For dogs have compassed me [and] the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me”. Not even a collapsing universe could destroy such an embodiment of virtue or shake his resolution. Perhaps bored by this exaggerated defence of the minister’s merits, its author went a (meta-) step further by publishing a second pamphlet in order to ‘defend’ himself against the imaginary accusation of Marat’s ‘wife’ that it was dishonourable to attack a man in this way. The author responded that he had not attacked her ‘husband’, only his unfounded allegations against a statesman who merited universal esteem, and he had sought to teach Marat a lesson by taking a similar liberty in libelling him likewise. Referencing Marat’s past as an ophthalmologist, he pointed out that one could not force everyone to see things the same way. However, all this was only building to a smutty punchline, when – making a not-so-veiled reference to Marat’s former patient, the marquise de Laubespine, who was still alive – he explained that while a friend had informed him that Marat was unmarried, he would reply to ‘her’ letter, regardless of whose wife she was.

Besides eulogizing Necker at every opportunity, these pamphlets sought to drown Marat under a hail of abusive epithets, comparing him to a “logicien”, a “pygmée”, a “mouche de coche”, a maniac, a raging bull, and even a werewolf. One such pamphlet, probably by the royalist printer-journalist, Pierre-Honoré-Antoine Pain, made it clear that he was not interested in rebutting any of Marat’s charges since one needed proofs to do so, and there was nothing in this dishonest hack’s incoherent scribblings that merited such an approach. Instead of enlightening readers, they confused them, instead of being the work of an honest citizen devoted to the commonweal, they were the deluded ravings of a lunatic plotting criminal disorder. Despised by public opinion, this so-called “friend of the people” – the

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956 Réflexions patriotiques sur des écrits anti-patriotiques. Elége du roi et de M. Necker ... Par M. le B. de B. (Paris, 1789), 7 [via Google Books]
957 This metaphor for a treacherous person came from the line, “latet anguis in herba”, in Virgil, Eclogues, Book III: 93.
958 Psalms 22:16 (King James Version). From the Psalm that begins, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me…”?
959 BnF. (Collection La Bédoyère), Lettre de Madame Marat à M.L.B.D.B. en faveur de son mari (Feb 1790), 4-12.
960 The comment suggests insider knowledge of Marat’s medical career, or an ex-patient, since his treatment of eye conditions remained unpublished.
961 “Mouche de coche” referred to an annoying busybody who falsely takes credit, Jean de La Fontaine, Selected Fables (Oxford, 2014), 118-119 (VII.8).
diminution of his adopted title was another common theme – belonged to a lineage of scoundrels, including Catiline and Aretino, who outraged, “la sainteté des loix, la majesté de la nation, l’autorité du trône”. Indeed, Marat was little more than an opportunist in troubled waters who sought to satisfy a perverse craving for fame by spreading, “le poison de son âme sur le génie, l’innocence et la vertu”.962 Wondering what kind of person could accuse Necker of treason, when the rest of France bore witness to his selfless patriotism and all Europe paid tribute to his talents, Pain suggested that this impoverished, friendless nobody was actually a “folliculaire stipendié” working for “un homme puissant”. He finished by using Marat’s terrible example to urge readers to support greater press restrictions, for it was only “l’audace [des] libellistes stipendiés”, shamefully abusing the journalist’s mission, that helped to, “perpétuer cet esprit de méfiance et de discorde qui éteint le patriotisme et corrompt les moeurs publiques”.963 Several pamphlets proposed suitable punishments, including permanent exile.964 All based their hostile response around the confusion of categories raised in the last chapter, mixing old regime notions of honour with the new regime’s definition of lèse-nation. The inability of many to perceive any difference in kind between attacks on public and private lives revealed a widening impasse with the new breed of radical journalist spearheaded by Marat, who sought to make the new regime more accountable.965

It was not just Necker loyalists who reacted to the “scandale” of the ‘Marat affair’. Royalist writers also picked up on the disproportionate reaction of the authorities with a mixture of admiration and disdain. One redefined ‘Auteur’ by reference to Marat’s example. Another condensed his accusation, “en vers français plus libres que la Liberté elle-même”:

Necker a de l’esprit, il manque de génie;
de sa funeste erreur nous sommes les victimes;
Jusqu’ici ses calculs n’ont produit que des crimes:
Célèbre agioteur il s’entend en finance,
Mais ne fut jamais fait pour gouverner la France;
C’était pour ce Banquier un trop pesant fardeau.

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962 [Pain?], Justification de M. Necker, 2 & 5. Pietro Aretino (1492-1556) was a blackmailing polemicist, dubbed the “scourge of princes”; Catiline (108-62 BCE) was a Senator whose conspiracy against the Republic was exposed by Cicero.
963 Ibid, 9, 5, 7 & 26. The “homme puissant” was probably duc d’Orléans whose name was often associated with Marat. See Montjoie, Histoire de la conjuration de Louis-Philippe-Joseph d’Orléans, 157, and Simon Burrows, French Exile Journalism and European Politics, 1792–1814 (Suffolk, 2000), 146.
964 Adresse d’un véritable ami, 4.
965 See, for example, Loustallot, Desmoulins, Louis-Marie Stanislas Fréron, Pierre-Jean Audouin and Louise de Kéralio who all became progressively critical to varying degrees, Jack Censer, Prelude to Power: The Parisian Radical Press, 1789–1791 (Baltimore, 1976), 92-123.
Il est faux, dit Marat, quittons notre bandeau…

Perhaps the most sarcastic response came in the form of a mock-heroic poem, *La guerre des districts, ou la fuite de Marat*, which took great delight in mocking the Commune’s incompetence. Its adapted epigraph from Lucan’s *Pharsalia* set the tone: “I should like to state the reasons for such great events...” Acknowledging a tradition of epic poetry dating back to Homer, it began: “Toute l’Europe connait l’aventure du fameux Marat & l’armement qui se fit pour et contre lui”, before setting the scene:

Neckre dit à la Fayette,

“Il faut faire coup de tête.
Marat ce noir écrivain,
Verse sur nous son venin,
C’est un serpent à sonnette,
Il me fait passer pour bête,
Le bruit s’en répand déjà,
Et pour éviter cela,
Il faut enfin qu’on l’arrête…

Harping on Necker’s vanity, it continued:

Il attaque mes écrits
Il me couvre de mépris…
Moi! Ministre potentat
Être vexé par Marat!

The accompanying footnotes acknowledged the growing influence of Marat’s paper as a “journal qui dévore tous les autres comme le serpent d’Aaron”, with a suitably biblical allusion.

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968 Lucan’s *The Civil War (Pharsalia)* (Cambridge, MA, 1928) was also invoked during the Wars of Religion, when its description of events as sacrilegious manifestations of insanity, struck a chord. Given Lucan’s tone of impending crisis, it is telling that Junius derived his motto – “Stat nominis umbra” (“He stands the shadow of a mighty name”) i:135 – from the same source, Canon, *The Letters of Junius*, v.
969 *La guerre des districts*, 6 & 26.
970 Ibid, 13-14. Aaron turned his staff into a serpent in Pharaoh’s court to devour the ‘snake’ staffs of the Egyptian magi.
Marat’s newly acquired notoriety also earned him an entry in Antoine Rivarol’s *Petit Dictionnaire de grands hommes de la Révolution française*, as someone who has successfully defied an “army”. In it, “Marrat” (sic) was described as, ‘L’ami intime du peuple et qui veillait si chauvement à ses intérêts qu’il excita la jalousie de la garde nationale”, whose “petit” expedition of “cinq mille hommes” had been sent to arrest “ce digne ami de la nation”, in order to separate him from it. Rivarol also captured Necker’s declining status: “Cet ancien grand homme est clairement le père de la révolution; mais il la regarde aujourd’hui comme bâtarde et il affecte de ne la pas reconnaître” Marat was not just being spoken of as a calomniateur any more, but as the embodiment of a certain kind of revolutionary stereotype. While he lacked the dedicated ‘fan base’ of a true celebrity, such as Rousseau or Voltaire, he did not lack for public curiosity, or notoriety, which was satisfied in his absence, in both positive and negative senses, by a highly mediated presence of pamphlets, poems, and even the new lexicology.

Perhaps the most interesting trace of burgeoning celebrity was to be found in Pierre-Nicolas Chantreau’s *Dictionnaire national et anecdotique*, which appeared later that year – the first of a number of such *Dictionnaires néologiques* – to capitalize on the satirical possibilities thrown up by the Revolution’s fluid redefinition of language. Marat’s *Chains* had shared a similar concern with linguistic distortion, and he continued after 1789 to warn against such “abus des mots”. While many prominent revolutionaries, such as Necker, Lafayette and Bailly, did not feature at all, Marat appeared in nine entries, including: ‘Démagogue’, ‘Fastes de la Liberté’, ‘Proclamateur’ and ‘Observateur’. Under ‘Ami du peuple’, Chantreau – a grammastrologist by trade – astutely observed that Marat’s paper was the only one that kept its value (two sous) the next day since it was more than just news – “Le fameux ami du peuple que tout le monde veut encore avoir” – and, that if the authorities were serious about the subversive threat posed by “libelles”, they should be hounding the royalist press instead: “L’ami du peuple n’était pas de la meute aboyante de celui qui était le

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971 BnF. Lb39/3899, Antoine Rivarol, Petit dictionnaire des grands hommes de la Révolution, par un Citoyen actif, ci-devant Rien (Aug 1790, 120pp). In 1788, Rivarol had published an *Almanach des grands hommes* (1788), which had featured a similar listing of failed writers in Paris. Most of the journalists the Petit dictionnaire named – Condorcet, Mercier, Carra, Garat, Gorsas, Brissot, Feydel, Prudhomme and Marat – had tried, with varying degrees of success, to earn a living from writing before 1789.

972 *Ibid.*, 70. By April 1790, Marat had massaged this figure up to 12,000 (!), Nouvelle dénonciation contre Necker, Pamphlets, 166 (fn)


974 Lilti, Figures publiques, 16-20.

975 See also Intro, 12-13. Similar dictionaries were published by Louis-Abel Beffroy de Reigny (unfinished,1795-1802), and Mercier (1801).

976 See also ch.2, 83. Chains (1794), 4408-4416. In the 1793 re-edition, this section was expanded and given its own title – ‘Dénaturer les noms des choses’. See also Doyle, The French Revolution, 66-69.

977 Chantreau, *Dictionnaire national*, 81, 57, 17, 59, 87, 128, 26, 93 & 158.
plus à craindre, et c’était à l’auteur des Actes des apôtres que l’huissier qui s’introduit chez M Marat aurait du porter le billet doux dont il était chargé. Chantreau also commented on Marat’s undeserved reputation as the epitome of ‘Démagogue’. Defining such a person as a, “Fourbe qui en impose au peuple et feint d’être son ami pour le tromper avec plus de perfidie”, he explained that while Marat may have had the language, he lacked both the means and motivation, and it was his need to sell papers that made him ‘yell’ (“qui le faisait vociférer”). A true demagogue, by contrast, was “un aristocrate hypocite” who pretended to be a patriot while seeking to, “étouffer son frère le démocrate en le serrant dans ses bras”. Royalist papers, such as the Actes des apôtres were far more libellous than anything Marat published, yet its well-connected editorial team was rarely targeted. Sometimes, such inconsistency created its own form of public disorder, when enraged ‘patriots’ took the law into their own hands by seizing royalist papers and threatening to destroy the booksellers that stocked them.

IV

During the turbulent post-Bastille months, Marat was not the only pamphleteer to target Necker but he was the most trenchant and the first to publish such a detailed charge-sheet. Many factors led to the collapse of Necker’s reputation, but the stir caused by Marat’s Dénonciation, including far more scurrilous pirated editions, and the slew of anti-Necker pamphlets that followed, helped to undermine it further. Following his release on 2 January, after two months imprisonment, a grudgeful Rutledge focused all his efforts on toppling the man he held responsible in a series of increasingly embittered denunciations, one of which also targeted Madam Necker.

Marat followed up his initial denunciation with three further attacks. On 15 February 1790, while still in hiding, prior to relocating to London, he published a long justification of his revolutionary career to date, which summarized his modus operandi as a public writer, explained why the Châtelet’s prise-de-corps warrant against him was wrong, and repeated his accusations against Necker, Bailly and the Châtelet, adding Lafayette to the list. Its full title left little ambiguity over its author or its contents: Appel à la nation par J.P. Marat, l’Ami du Peuple, citoyen du district.

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978 Ibid, 26 & 91. See also ‘Libelle’, 103.
979 Ibid, 61. See also Intro, 12-13.
981 Over five months he published Necker’s original commission; a Dénonciation sommaire addressed to the Assembly’s Comité des recherches, a summary of his trial, and two libelles: BnF. Lb39/4043, L’astuce dévoilée, ou Origine des maux de la France, perdue par les manoeuvres de Ministre Necker (April 1790, 114pp), and Les manoeuvres infâmes de Necker dénoncé par l’Irlandais Rutledge, victime du despotisme ministériel (June 1790).
des Cordeliers et auteur de plusieurs ouvrages patriotiques, contre le ministre des Finances, la municipalité et le Châtelet de Paris; suivi de l’exposé des raisons urgentes de destituer cet administrateur des deniers publics, de purger cette corporation et d’abolir ce tribunal, redoutables suppôts du despotisme. In it, Marat informed his readers that under Lafayette, the National Guard had become an instrument in the service of the wealthy, and that “cet intrigant consommé” now posed a real danger to their hopes of reform: “tant que cet homme sera au timon des affaires... il n’y aura point de terme à nos maux, point de terme aux conspirations.”

A few months later, in April, he published a pamphlet on the legal aspects of his case – Lettre... sur l’ordre judiciaire – that referred back to his Plan, which he was hoping to republish imminently. Once again, he emphasized his important role in spotting danger before anyone else, and in seizing the initiative: “Si je dois m’applaudir de quelque chose dans la guerre que font les écrivains patriotiques, c’est moins de m’être tant de fois mis à la brèche, que d’avoir le premier attaché le grelot”. Enlarging on this theme, he explained that a good criminal code and independent tribunal – “les deux puissants boulevards de la liberté publique” – would never be established on a solid footing until popular sovereignty, including control over the nation’s representatives, was legally enshrined. These cornerstones – the “point capital” of any legitimate constitution – had been set aside by both national and municipal assemblies as if, “les représentants du peuple voulaient usurper ses droits, faire leur affaire de la chose publique, s’ériger en maîtres de leurs commettants, et se dispenser d’être appelés en compte”. In other words, they were not behaving like Rousseau-approved “agents” – “Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason it cannot be alienated... the deputies of the people therefore are not, and cannot be, its representatives, they are merely its agents; they cannot conclude anything definitively.” The Assembly’s proposal to divide the nation into active and passive citizens in order to further reduce the people’s influence, only confirmed these suspicions.

Marat’s third intervention appeared in April, after his return to France, when he published a follow-up denunciation, which backed up the original with more detailed “preuves juridiques” of the mechanisms of Necker’s collusion with the capital’s provisioners, including witness

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982 BnF. Lh39/3967, Appel à la nation (15 Feb 1790, 67pp), in Pamphlets, 121-164.
983 Ibid. 158-159.
984 Lettre de M. Marat, l’amii du peuple, contenant quelques réflexions sur l’ordre judiciaire (8pp, April 1790), OP, ii:686 & 688. (“If I must congratulate myself... it is less for having attacked so much, than having been the first to ring the bell”).
986 See ch.4, 136-137.
The pamphlets from Marat and Rutledge were not the only “écrits incendiaires” to give Necker pause for thought, but their appearance appeared to breach the dam of his public approval. Between February and August, over fifty anti-Necker pamphlets poured into the public sphere on top of another twenty from 1789. Most repeated similar themes – he was a fraud, a foreigner, avaricious and a traitor – in the hope of stripping away his public aura. One included a print depicting Necker caught red-handed by the King helping himself from the Treasury. The giant had become a pygmy, as another pamphlet declared, whose fictive author from a faraway land had fruitlessly searched the capital for France’s great idol – “ce Restaurateur de la France entière” – only to find “un Pygmée” in his place. It was, in effect, a mediatized lynch mob, for not content with reducing Necker to the status of a political dwarf, many also suggested that he should be punished for crimes of lèse-nation. Probably the most damaging of all these anti-Necker publications came from the same printer as the original pirated version of Marat’s Dénonciation. These two pamphlets, entitled Vie privée et ministérielle de M Necker, and its Supplément, which appeared in

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987 BnF. Lb39/3968, Jean-Paul Marat, Nouvelle Dénonciation de M Marat, l’ami du peuple contre M Necker, premier ministre des finances, ou Supplément à la dénonciation d’un citoyen contre un agent de l’autorité (May 1790, 40pp), in Pamphlets, 166-196. Many of these ‘proofs’ were taken from Desmoulins’ earlier pamphlet, and information supplied by François Garin, spokesman for the Baker’s Guild.

988 Ibid, 167 & 187. For the political ramifications of this attack, see Coquard, Jean-Paul Marat, 266.

989 Ibid, 188-192. Marat had asked his lawyer to bring these to him as soon as the seals were lifted on his lodgings. See letters from Marat to Quinquet de Monjour (23, 25, 28 Jan & 17 Feb 1790), Correspondance, 127-134, and Appel à la Nation, in Pamphlets, 148 (fn).

990 Ibid, 195-196.


993 BnF. Lb39/3063, Necker jugé par le tribunal de la lanterne (June 1790, 30pp), 2.

994 De Cock, Marat avant 1789, 1801-1803.
May 1790, lifted whole passages from both Marat’s denunciations and his *Appel à la Nation*, as well as Rutledge’s more libellous *Astuce dévoilée*.\(^996\) The fact that they were signed “par un citoyen”, like Marat’s denunciations, and carried his distinctive epigraph, along with a detailed account of the events of 22 January, meant that many attributed them to Marat. In fact, they were so successful that their Genevan printer Pellet produced another version with a different introduction, *Criminelle Neckero-logie*.\(^997\) By adding Rutledge’s spice to Marat’s sarcasm, he and his opportunist author, La Reynie de la Bruyère, surely hoped to turn a quick profit off the back of this affair while it was still topical. There is little doubt too that these pamphlets did more than anything else to damage Marat’s attempts to create a public perception of an honourable denouncer who avoided people’s private lives, and they are still being misattributed today.\(^998\)

However, it was not just the *libelles* that undermined Necker’s reputation. The Assembly’s hostility to his financial measures in March, his disapproval of the publication of the King’s *Livre rouge* in April, and his opposition to the abolition of noble titles in June, all helped to further sully his reputation. In particular, the *Livre rouge’s* record of royal expenditures on pensions and other venal payments during a time of financial crisis outraged public opinion, as did a bestselling parody, also translated into English, which expressed disappointment at having been stripped of its illusions on Necker by Marat’s *Dénonciation*.\(^999\) By July, Necker’s star had fallen so low that a citizen shouting “Vive Necker!” in his section assembly was booed.\(^1000\) Marat’s prophetic invocation of the end of Necker’s career was finally realized: “Homme petit et vain, vos lauriers sont flétris... Votre règne est fini”\(^1001\). When Necker finally resigned in September 1790, it was to complete indifference, and on hearing the news, Marat told readers that he would keep his word and now leave the poor man alone – “Monsieur, à l’instant que vous n’êtes pas un homme public dangereux, vous redevenez pour moi un particulier sans conséquence”. A week later, he informed Lafayette that he would be next.\(^1002\) Léonard Burnand’s detailed study of anti-Necker pamphleteering has claimed that Necker found Marat’s denunciations hardest of all to deal with, since unlike earlier libellists, he was neither

\(^{996}\) BnF. Lb39/3355 & 3356, *Vie privée et ministérielle de M. Necker, directeur general des finances, par un citoyen* (80pp); *Supplément à la Vie privée et ministérielle* (both Genève, May 1790, 40pp).


\(^{998}\) See, for example, the BnF listing [via Gallica].


\(^{1001}\) Ami du peuple #26 (6 Oct 1789) OP, i:244.

\(^{1002}\) Ami du peuple #214 & #222 (7 & 15 Sept 1790), OP, iii:1377 & 1432.
a Court nor a financial rival, but rather, a popular spokesman against ministerial oppression.\footnote{Burnand, Les Pamphlets contre Necker, ch.5.} One of his most effective tactics in this regard was to repeatedly emphasize the contradiction at the heart of Necker’s twin roles as financier and politician. As a financier, his instincts were pragmatic, interventionist and focused on maintaining public confidence, but as a politician, they were conservative, reactive and focused on preserving social privilege. Ultimately, the effectiveness of Marat’s \textit{Dénonciation} depended less on the proofs it claimed to present, than on introducing serious doubts into the popular perception of what he was describing. In doing so, he hoped to topple one – undeserved, possibly harmful – reputation while promoting another: his own.

V

Apart from his publication of the three pamphlets mentioned above, we know little about Marat’s three-month exile in London. While “L’enragé Marat” – as he had been dubbed by one paper – was trying to keep the revolutionary movement alive from a distance, the National Assembly preoccupied itself with bolstering law and order in order to get on with the vital task of ‘rebuilding’ France.\footnote{Le Fouet national #10 (2 Feb 1790), cited in De Cock, \textit{Marat avant 1789}, 1646. Although the Martial law had been on the statute book since October, many deputies did not think that it went far enough with several calling for the re-imposition of royal authority, and even “une grande terreur… aux brigands”, in De Cock, \textit{Action politique de Marat}, 160-161.} The most significant development during his period was the appearance of over half a dozen different counterfeit editions (“faux-amis”) of his paper between February and June – sometimes, with four competing versions at a time – with most appearing around the same period as the various anti-Marat pamphlets discussed earlier.\footnote{For a complete listing of all the “faux-amis” and their printers, most of which were anonymous, see \textit{Ibid}, 1740-50. Apart from those pretending to be \textit{Ami du peuple}, other titles signed by ‘Marat’, included: Lc2/360, \textit{Le Tribun du peuple}, ou le publiciste national (March 1790) and Lc2/2312, \textit{L’incorruptible}, ou le véritable \textit{Ami du peuple} (Jan 1790).} While some marketed themselves as “continueuteurs” and others posed as Marat himself, in a bid to capture his readership, with varying degrees of commercial success, the more extreme were deliberate attempts to discredit Marat’s image by attributing either more extreme, or, in some cases, reactionary, sentiments to him. Whoever was behind them, they revealed the extent to which Marat’s singular style of vigilante journalism was feared as a destabilizing force by the authorities or by those who feared ‘exposure’.

In early May, just before his return, Marat wrote to several patriotic papers asking them to alert their readers to these imposters, but only one appeared to print his notice. Its editor, Louise-Félicité Kéralio published his letter with this caveat: “je dois à un homme que le zèle du bien public a pu seul égarer, si toutefois il s’est égaré… en convenant… que, lorsqu’on a des vérités utiles à dire,
il faut être assez courageux pour les publier, quelque risque qu’on puisse courir”.\(^{1006}\) At the same time, he resolved upon three courses of action to mitigate the damage to his reputation and – what was clearly becoming – his Ami du peuple ‘brand’. He would track down their producers and force their closure. He would relaunch his paper while amplifying its tone to grab the public’s attention and frighten off “les méchants”. As he had warned back in December, “ce n’est que par la crainte du plus affreux scandale que l’on peut déconcerter les manoeuvres des ennemis publics: ils ne redoutent que la lumière”.\(^{1007}\) Finally, he would launch a second paper, Le Junius français – named after his English inspiration – in order to provide an ‘uncontaminated’ vehicle for his voice, in case his first course of action was unsuccessful, and he needed to distance himself from his “ami du peuple” persona.\(^{1008}\)

On his return to Paris, the first thing Marat did was to send a mémoire protesting the continued existence of the prise-de-corps warrant to the National Assembly’s Comité des rapports, along with an open letter to its president, which he published as a pamphlet, announcing the return of “L’apôtre et le martyr de la liberté”, disowning these “libelles”, justifying his career to date, and requesting a formal investigation into his complaint against the Châtelet.\(^{1009}\) It was preceded by a short note in which he suggested that far-seeing people might consider the shameful merry-go-round (“manège”) of so many faux-amis as a trap to force his return, and they had succeeded, since “M. Marat redoute moins la prison que la déshonneur”. While many might have scoffed at these words, Marat was making an important defence of his carefully constructed revolutionary identity based around a new kind of ‘honour’, which owed more to Rousseau than the Ancien Régime, and where principles and authenticity counted for everything: “il se croirait indigne de soutenir une aussi belle cause, si on pouvait croire capable de la moindre des impostures qu’on s’efforce de lui attribuer”. In a bid to rebuild his reputation as a bold, but respectable, writer, he went on to express his indignation at how many of these faux-amis had spread, “calomnies atroces... contre des citoyens honnêtes, contre des villes entières”. Rather than consider him, “un écrivain qui méritait l’indignation publique”, he asked the Assembly to carefully consider this “justification” from a man whose, “enthousiasme pour le bien public a peut-être égaré quelque fois, mais dont la conduite est intacte et dont le coeur fut toujours pur?”\(^{1010}\) At the same time, he wrote to the Commune’s police committee, asking for its help in tracking down and arresting the publishers of these faux-amis.

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1006 *Mercure national* #5 (16 May 1790), cited in OP, ii:691, also Correspondance, 148.

1007 *Ami du peuple* #83 (31 Dec 1789), *OP*, i:501. He repeated this sentiment in *Appel à la Nation, Pamphlets*, 130.

1008 See ch.2, 71.

1009 Lettre de M. Marat à M. le Président de l’Assemblée nationale (May 1790, 8pp), Correspondance, 140-144. There is no trace of the “mémoire contenant l’exposé de mes griefs”, 143.

Nothing illustrates the complexity of Marat’s relationship with the legal authorities more than the fact that it issued such an order despite the fact that the real *Ami du peuple* was still officially banned.1011

1011 Letter to the Police tribunal (28 May 1790), *Correspondance*, 148-149. Marat’s own accounts of his successful campaign can be found in *Ami du peuple* #110, #125, #127 & #137 (22 May, 6, 8 & 18 June 1790). See *OP*, ii: ‘Guide de lecture’, *passim*, and Conner, *Jean Paul Marat*, 174-175. The identity and location of several *faux-amis* producers were revealed to him by *colporteurs*. 
Conclusion

En vérité, mon cher Marat, vous n’êtes pas un homme de ce siècle.\footnote{BnF. (Rés), Rosebery 1. While the annotated copy of *Ami du peuple*, #226 (20 Sept 1790) revealed Marat’s authorship of this letter, “pour varier le ton de mes dénonciations”, it was not a common occurrence.}

His career was a succession of crises, of instances of victimization at the hands of governments, sometimes goaded beyond endurance… He could thus present himself as the champion of the people and as a martyr of liberty. In doing so… [he] willingly kept the searchlight of publicity on himself, his figure, his life, his cause.\footnote{O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, 224.}

The first quote is Marat describing himself in the context of a denunciation disguised as a ‘reader’s’ letter. The second, which appears to capture Marat’s career up to May 1790, is actually a summary by Frank O’Gorman of Wilkes’ political trajectory. Both were journalists who became politicians and both sought to harness extra-parliamentary support to their agenda. While the similarities end there, for their motivations and ideologies were quite different, superficially at least, the outward symmetry of their political careers is remarkable.

Of the four contributions to existing historiography this thesis sought to make, the most important was to broaden an understanding of Marat’s role during the Revolution’s first, turbulent year, by taking a closer look at the variety and scope of his pre-revolutionary careers and influences, in particular, those of his close English connection, and to argue that much of his early journalistic strategy owed a considerable debt to these formative experiences. The second was to treat Marat’s intellectual production between 1770 and 1790 as a single, coherent body of work to be considered within the context of its creation, rather than through the distorting lens of his final year, in order to provide a re-evaluation of his motives, intentions and intellectual ability. The third was to show that his radicalism was evident long before his difficult dealings with the *Académie*, while tracing some of the roots of the *légende noire*, which has bedevilled critical assessment, back to the hostility provoked by his first year of revolutionary activity, especially his uncompromising criticisms of the new regime, which also acted as a lightning rod for testing the limits of toleration for a free press. A final, broader ambition has been to widen our understanding of the mechanisms of the Enlightenment and revolutionary public spheres by reviewing them through the prism of Marat’s personal interactions. In doing so, it aimed to demonstrate how his evolution into one of the Revolution’s most notorious figures was not the sudden, opportunistic transformation, which has often been portrayed, but rather the realisation of a prolonged period of intellectual development...
propelled by a strong sense of personal destiny and triggered by the exceptional circumstances of 1789. In this regard, it also seeks to reject the reductionist, psychological interpretations of his behaviour, which have hitherto been so widespread in the Marat scholarship.

Where the first part looked at Marat’s formation and publications before 1789, the second showed how his writing became less academic and more journalistic, building on the argument that Marat’s use of printed media, especially the long-form pamphlet, quickly became a form of ‘event journalism’, designed to provoke a response, after his earlier pamphlets failed to have any noticeable effect on the political elites. One of his main techniques in this respect was to pioneer a format of ‘denunciation’, where the accuracy of the various ‘proofs’ produced was less important than their cumulative effect in sowing the sceptical seeds of distrust. It argued that Marat’s two pamphlets against Necker and the fallout from that affair proved to be a turning point in his revolutionary career, and helped to consolidate his transformation into the “Ami du peuple”, a self-appointed spokesman for the “nation” / “people”. Following his successful campaign against Necker, Marat went on to ‘unmask’ a number of other popular ‘idols’ over the following years, including Lafayette (1791), Mirabeau (1791) and General Dumouriez (1793), at a time when popular sentiment was generally facing the other way. By May 1790, Marat’s political strategy had come a long way since the initial, fairly modest aims he had outlined in his initial prospectus. While his writing was frequently repetitive, belligerent, and often overcooked, it was a conceptualized deterrent, a means towards an end, and part of a deliberate strategy aimed at shaking things up in order to secure far-reaching social and political change. His compatriot Desmoulins would come to label him, “celui de tous les journalistes qui a le mieux servi la révolution”.

In a short, flippant essay called “The Hedgehog and the Fox”, Isaiah Berlin attempted to divide famous writers and thinkers, such as Tolstoy and Doystoevsky, into two camps: those who knew many things (foxes) and those who knew one important thing (hedgehogs). In its analysis of Marat’s revolutionary formation, this thesis has suggested that while, at first glance, he appeared to be an archetypal fox, whose insatiable curiosity and interests spilled out in all directions, he was actually a rather single-minded, and prickly, hedgehog. All his ambition for “gloire” pointed in one direction, and his early desire to make a name through new and original discoveries was soon followed by another. Namely, to represent the nation’s interests to the best of his ability, while shining a spotlight into the furthest recesses of their new political machine. His methods may have

1014 See ch.4, 129-130. For a précis of this evolution, see Coquard, Jean-Paul Marat, 322-326.  
1015 Révolutions de France et de Brabant #73 (April 1791), 361 [via Gallica].  
been unorthodox, tactless and, on occasion, misguided, but they strove towards one overriding goal – to be seen by posterity as “le bienfaiteur de l’humanité.”¹⁰¹⁷ The fact that he failed in achieving this is, as one might say, a (whole) nother story.

¹⁰¹⁷ See ch.1. 48.
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Appendix A

_Bibliothèque des Pasteurs_ collection of theology books logged to, ‘J-P Marat, théologien’ in their catalogue (RERO), now with the _Bibliothèque Universitaire de Neuchatel_ (BPUN):

Manasseh, Ben Joseph (from Ostervald’s library)
- *De resurrectione* (1636) – “Nunc vero JP Mara, 1760”
- *De Creatione* (1635) – “Nunc vero JP Mara, 1760”

Fabritius, Stephanus
- *Conciones sacrae in s. prophetam Hoseam* (1623) – “JP Mara, 1763”
- *Conciones sacrae in Decalogum* (1649) – “JP Mara, 1765”

Leydekker, Melchior – “Johan Pauli Mara, stae, theologiae stud., Neocomi Helvetorum, 1763”
- *De Oeconomia trium personarum* (1682)
- *Exercitationes practicae de cognitione peccati* (1681)

Binchius, Johannes
- *Mellificii theologici ad disputandum et concionandum proficui* (1655) – “JP Mara, 1765”

Gerhard, Johann
- *Sacrarum Homiliarum* (1647) – “JP Marat 1765”

Hansken, Fokke
- *Glyky-pikron, sive, Conciones solemnes* (1643) – “JP Mara, 1765”

Laurentius, Jacobus
- *Prodiga Jesuitarum liberalitas in vocibus universalibus* (1618) – “JP Mara, 1765”

Sibelius, Caspar
- *Historia Hiskiae Regis Judae* (1643) – “J Pauli Mara, 1765”
- *Meditationes catecheticae* (1650) – “J Pauli Mara, 1765”

Von Diest, Heinrich
- *Conciones catecheticae* (1670) – “JP Mara, 1765”
- *Conciones paradigmatica* (1675) – “JP Mara, 1765”

Wild, Johan
- *Concionatoris Moguntini doctissimi opuscula varia* (1567) – “JP Mara, 1765”

Zanchi, Girolamo
- *De aperiendis in ecclesia scholis* (1579) – “JP Mara, 1765”
- *In Hoseam primum et difficilimum inter eos, quas minores vocant, prophetam commentarius* (1600) – “JP Mara, 1765”
Robert Dighton, *The Paintress, or the proper study of Mankind is Man* (1772)
Auguste Blanchard, Portrait of Jean-Paul Marat, l’Ami du Peuple from frontispiece of Plan du législation criminelle (1790)
David added Marat, the only journalist present – alongside the deputy Barère – following his notoriety after the ‘Marat affair’ – he can be seen wearing a broad-rimmed hat, writing with his back to the viewer in the public gallery in the top-right part of the picture.