French Revolution
Virtue and Terror

Week 01 – Lecture 02
17 January 2008

I. 1789-1792:
Unlimited Faith in *tabula rasa*

Sacred Moment I:
20 June 1789 -- The Tennis Court Oath

"sacralization" === making sacred what is purely arbitrary / contingent ➔
➔ gives it a sense of seeming "necessary"

Sacred Moment II:
14 July 1789 -- Storming the Bastille

Sacred Moment III:
4 August 1789--- "A holocaust of privileges..."
Rousseau: “Regenerated Man”

100% virtuous

Zero tolerance for vice
[Desires only the General Will; not one’s selfish individual will!]

Mary Shelley: Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus
— Daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft [Vindication of Rights of Woman]
— MW died giving birth to MS

Frankenstein: birthing; giving birth — but what is “natural”?!

ORPHANS: No one has two sets of parents: genealogy? Cultural identity? Cultural dislocation?

Mary Shelley: 3 stillborn children; one dies later; enormous emotional pain around childbirth

1790s: Italian physician Luigi Galvani -- jolts frog muscles with spark from electrostatic machine.
Demonstrates electrical basis of nerve impulses.

By 1810s: word “galvanism” implied the release, through electricity, of mysterious life forces.

Mary Shelley recalled talks with Lord Byron and Percy Shelley” “Perhaps a corpse would be reanimated; galvanism had given token of such things.”

GAUGUIN, Paul: Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? [1897]
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Frankenstein’s creature: “Who was I? Where did I come from?”
Orphan? Lost lineage?? A problem of identity….

II. 1791
Turning point:
No more dream of “constitutional monarchy”
1791: June 20-21: "The Night of Varennes": Royal family tries to escape Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette (of Austria)

"La Nuit de Varennes": O'N Media PN1997 NS2x 1983

Deputy Target gives birth to the constitution of September 1791
NB: A male gives birth! Viktor Frankenstein

"Quel soulagement"
["What relief!"]

Images of “pure” birth / re-birth?
“Pure” genealogy?
“Pure” blood?

• 1791: 27 August, “Declaration of Pillnitz”
  – Emperor Leopold II of Austria (sister is Marie-Antoinette)
  – King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia
  – Threaten to intervene in France if monarchy in danger
Civil Constitution of the Clergy (1791)
Saint-Sulpice

III. 1792: “Radical phase” begins

Unified self v. Other:
External Enemies

1792: 20 April: France declares war against Austria
11 July: National Assembly proclaims: “The fatherland is in danger”

- Dissolve Legislative Assembly
- Radicals invent the “National Convention”
- REAL problems:
  - deepening economic crisis
  - dangerously expanding violence
  - widening factions within radicals

The Need for an Enemy:


invents a community and glues individuals together as an identity

Cf. Bismarck: 1870!!!
“L’ennemi est partout!”
[The enemy is everywhere!]

1) “Domestic”: September Massacres [1792] in Paris
   - V Frankenstein born

2) “Foreign”: French victory at Valmy calms tensions

REPRESENTATION: Enemy is everywhere: in your neighborhood!

“Aux Armes!”
Army conscripts, 1792: Exporting the Revolution

“Republican electricity gives the despots a shock that overthrows their thrones”

German revolution:
Sans-culottes
Phrygian cap

EXPORTING THE REVOLUTION: mission civilisatrice

REPRESENTATION: “A Crusade against Counter-revolutionaries” to liberate all Europe
   - “Crusade”: medieval religion—liberate from Holy Land from Islam
   - War against external enemies “counter-revolutionaries” permits the invention / legitimation of self-identity over and against an “other”

“Crusade”

“Republican electricity gives the despots a shock that overthrows their thrones”

Sans-culottes: “without knickers”
Electricity: PROMETHEAN FIRE!!! symbol for the heavenly energy/shock/creation of liberty/new man cf. Benjamin Franklin !

Aux armes! [To arms!]: Compare w/ Sacralizing the Bastille

• Why important?
  – UNITY: First time they act together, think of themselves as a unit
  – Forms identity: self-consciousness, cultural coherence as a group.
  – SACRED VIOLENCE:
    • Wedding of freedom and violence in modern history
    • sacred / sacrifice
      – BLOOD is price paid for “freedom”

The Marseillaise
Arise you children of our patrie,
Oh now is here our glorious day!
Over us the bloodstained banner
Of tyranny holds sway!

Oh, do you hear there in our fields
The roar of those fierce fighting men?
Who came right here into our midst
To slaughter sons, wives and kin.

To arms (aux armes), oh citizens!
Form up in serried ranks!
March on, march on!
And drench our fields
With their tainted blood!

French National Anthem: La Marseillaise
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Marseillaise
Allons enfants de la Patrie, Arise, children of the fatherland
Le jour de gloire est arrivé! The day of glory has arrived!

Contre nous de la tyrannie, Against us, tyranny's
L'étendard sanglant est levé. Bloody banner is raised. (repeat)
Marchons, marchons ! Let us march, let us march!
Qu’un sang impur / Abreuve nos sillons ! May impure blood / Water our fields!

IV. 1793: Regicide

Disorder at the Center:
Pollution, Purity and Danger

Cf. Earlier examples of anthropological anxieties:
Uccello, Burning of the Jews
Gargoyles: sacred center / dangerous edges
Luther: pope as monster excrement
1793: January 21: Louis Guillotined
Guilty of "crimes against the state"
[NB: "Rights of Man" = rights of state = General Will]
Severing the Head from the Body Politic

Jean-Paul Marat:
Leader of the radical Montagnard faction

1793: July 13
Assassinated in his bath by
- Charlotte Corday, a young Girondin conservative.

Jacques Louis David,
*Marat Assassinated*
[1793]
1793

- October 28: Marie Antoinette guillotined for "promiscuity" [esp. incest]

- QUESTION: Why would you kill your father and mother???

- Illegitimacy: are we "bastards"???

- Who are we? identity...

- orphans????

- Image of "good father" replaced by sexual impotence

- Implications for genealogy / "fatherland" [patrie]??
Corollary: If our father is impotent, who has our mother been with?

• Anthropological boundary markers: crossing gender lines
• “Disorder” at the “center” of where order should be

Imaginary “Center” of the Nation
Cartesian Order --- Sexual Disorder
PURITY --- POLLUTION

Oval Office: Imaginary "Center" of the Nation
Purifying the Body Politic of Pollution // Restoring “Justice” // Killing the “bad mother”

1793: October 28: Marie-Antoinette guillotined
Tabula rasa: Dechristianisation program

The Republican Calendar: Adopted by Convention of Oct. 1793

- 12 Months
- 30 days each
- Three ten-day weeks [décades]
- 5 days left over at end of year: the "sans-culottides"
- Re-naming the months
  - Referents are "natural"
    - [i.e., not mythological / Xtn]
- RATIONALITY:
  - "innocent"; "objective"; not sullied by "civilization" or "culture"

Again: cf. Rousseau: “natural” = “primitive”; “innocent”; "objective"; not sullied by “civilization” or “culture"

No. Name Meaning
1 Vendémiaire vintage month
2 Brumaire fog month
3 Frimaire sleet month
4 Nivôse snow month
5 Pluviose rain month
6 Ventôse wind month
7 Germinal seed month
8 Floréal blossom month
9 Prairial pasture month
10 Messidor harvest month
11 Thermidor heat month
12 Fructidor fruit month
13 Sansculottides additional days

Within a decade the days were given names

No. Name
1 prunidi
2 duodi
3 tridi
4 quartidi
5 quintidi
6 sexidi
7 septidi
8 octidi
9 nonidi
10 décadi

Workers not happy: only one free day out of ten! (instead of one out of 7, i.e., Sunday)

Again: NOT
- “Dimanche” [God - Sunday];
- “Lundi” [moon - Monday];
- “Mercredi” [Mercury - Wednesday];

22 Sept 1792: Proclamation of the First French Republic

How does one convert a Republican date to a Gregorian one?

The following table lists the Gregorian date on which each year of the Republic started:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Republican Date</th>
<th>Gregorian Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Year 1: 22 Sep 1792</td>
<td>Year 8: 23 Sep 1799</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Year 2: 22 Sep 1793</td>
<td>Year 9: 23 Sep 1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Year 3: 22 Sep 1794</td>
<td>Year 10: 23 Sep 1801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Year 4: 23 Sep 1795</td>
<td>Year 11: 23 Sep 1802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Year 5: 22 Sep 1796</td>
<td>Year 12: 24 Sep 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Year 6: 22 Sep 1797</td>
<td>Year 13: 23 Sep 1804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Year 7: 22 Sep 1798</td>
<td>Year 14: 23 Sep 1805</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What's in a name????????????

Proper address: “Citizen X” … [cf. Soviets: “Comrade”]
- NOT based on gender “Monsieur”; “Madame”; “Mademoiselle”
- or “Estate”: “Monsieur” [My Lord]; “Père” [Father]; “Sœur” [Sister]
- Elimination of “de” — signifies aristocracy:
  - “Duc d’Orleans”;
  - “Duc de Loubac”;
  - “Dumontier”;
- Children’s names — no longer saints:
  - “Pierre”;
- Rather, natural referents:
  - “Goldenrod”; “Marigold”; “Seedling”; “Rosebud”;

22 Sept 1792: Proclamation of the First French Republic

NB: NOT “Before Christ” / “Anno Domini” = Xtn referents