

This Time a Spectator:
Philadelphia's Printers Come to Terms with the French Revolution (1789-1793)

A thesis

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the evolution of popular American responses to the French Revolution from 1789 to 1793, connecting the emergence of divisions amongst the public to the emergence of the First Party System. Three Philadelphia newspapers—John Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States*, Philip Freneau’s *National Gazette*, and Benjamin Franklin Bache’s *General Advertiser*—are used to understand how the American vision of the French Revolution changed over the course of the era. While Americans unanimously supported the Revolution prior to the year 1792, increased violence in France led to growing uncertainty in some sectors of the American public. Thus, arrival of news of Louis XVI’s death in the spring of 1793 saw the formation of a cohesive anti-French movement. Federalist editors urged their readers to turn away from the French Revolution, while Republicans continued to embrace events in France as an extension of their own nation’s values.

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Introduction

John Fenno's experience as an editor in New York City was off to something of a rough start by mid-September 1789, though business was slowly beginning to pick up. A small-time businessman from a modest Bostonian family, Fenno had tried careers as a soldier, schoolteacher, innkeeper, and shopkeeper before taking up the practice of printer following the American Revolution for Benjamin Russell's Boston *Massachusetts Centinel*. As it turned out, Fenno was a capable editor: during the arguments over the Federal Constitution two years previously, his effective defense of the document had impressed members of the Bostonian Federalist elite including Christopher Gore.¹ With the financial backing of Gore and his Federalist friends, Fenno moved to New York in early 1789 to set up his own newspaper, the *Gazette of the United States*. As the title suggests, Fenno's goals for his paper were lofty. In an era where localized newspapers were the norm, Fenno hoped to establish his *Gazette* along the British model: it was to be a newspaper that would aggressively defend the newly-established American federal government, shaping public opinion about domestic and international affairs in a government-friendly way. To achieve this end, the editor began selling subscriptions to his papers in all of the state capitals and kept advertising to a minimum. Profits were slow to come in, but by the time his first edition came out on April 15, 1789, he was rapidly gaining subscribers and, several months later, had begun to receive commissions from federal offices to run government announcements in his paper. Fenno ultimately hoped to circulate the paper by the tens of thousands, drawing together America into a unified nation by offering its people a

¹ John Fenno was born in Boston on August 12, 1751 to a family of limited means. His father, Ephraim, was a leather-dresser and innkeeper who died in a Boston almshouse. John was educated at a free public school in Boston Common and married Mary Curtis in May 1777. Throughout his life he strongly identified with the Bostonian elites whose class he wished to join, believing strongly in the importance of letting the most capable men lead the nation. Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of the Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 51; Marcus Daniel, *Scandal & Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 25-26

sphere in which they could follow the involvements of their national government and leaders. While he ultimately failed to create a truly national newspaper, his *Gazette of the United States* was nevertheless groundbreaking. Its coverage of domestic affairs and, most centrally to this paper, of the French Revolution, heralded the beginnings of American newspaper politics.²

Fenno's nationally-minded goal in establishing the *Gazette of the United States* was a sign of how far American newspapers had come since Samuel Green printed the first American "newspaper" in 1689. Titled *The Present State of New-English Affairs*, Green's broadside was simple in appearance. A one-page document modeled off of the front page of London newspapers, it was ordered by the Massachusetts Bay colony as a means of calming the people in the wake of the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689). Indeed, the first newspaper to last more than one edition did not appear until April 1704, when John Campbell began publishing his *Boston - News-Letter*. Like Green, Campbell modeled his publication off of European models, style- and content-wise. The newspaper focused almost entirely on European affairs copied from London newspapers, though it also began the practice of printing notices about local ships, deaths, storms, and advertisements. Unlike later editors such as Fenno, who targeted a wide audience, Campbell created his paper for the American elite: through it, he hoped to forge a closer connection between wealthy Americans and metropolitan Europe.³

It was not until the 1730s and 1740s that newspaper production in America picked up speed. By this point, newspapers had become synonymous with culture: the presence of a press in a town was a sign of the town's significance. Indeed, by 1750, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York all boasted multiple periodicals. These newspapers contained materials on a wide array of topics, while also providing a forum for debate and discussion which ultimately served to

² Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 51-53, 56-58.

³ Ibid., 29-30.

heighten community interests in local and regional affairs.⁴ The emerging political role of newspapers became particularly important during the American Revolution: throughout the 1760s and 1770s, patriot leaders used newspapers as vehicles to gain public support against the royal government and claim the support of “the people.” As a result of this increased interest in journalism, the number of newspapers in the American colonies doubled from 1760 to 1775 and expanded their audience to the middle class. While contributors during this era were most often members of the patriot colonial elite writing under pseudonyms, by the American Revolution printers had nevertheless become key participants in the political and intellectual spheres of the colonies, playing important roles as suppliers and moderators of news.⁵

Following the American Revolution, the printers of the 1780s returned to the commercialism and neutrality that characterized their pre-revolutionary operations. That being said, this new generation of printers tended to more openly express their opinions, increasingly taking on a politically active role. Though they lacked gentility, these printer-editors were fairly well-educated, a quality which was virtually mandatory for printers by Fenno’s era. As Fenno’s goal in establishing the *Gazette of the United States* also suggests, ideology, not patronage, tended to drive this new generation; they believed strongly in their ability to influence and shape their readership through their presses.⁶ Political debate continued throughout the 1780s in areas where the results of the American Revolution remained divided, though there was a temporary decline in the numbers of newspapers in the United States immediately following the American Revolution. This drop off, however, was temporary: with the meeting of the Constitutional

⁴ Pasley, “*Tyranny of the Printers*,” 24-25, 31-32; David Copeland, “America, 1750-1820,” in *Press, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820*, ed. Hannah Barker & Simon Burrows, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 143.

⁵ Pasley, “*Tyranny of the Printers*,” 24, 32-35; Beatrice F. Hyslop, “The American Press and the French Revolution of 1789,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 104, no. 1 (February 1960), 54.

⁶ Pasley, “*Tyranny of the Printers*,” 19-20, 45-46; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 30.

Convention in 1787, the creation of the United States Constitution, and the Federalist-Antifederalist struggle, a second newspaper boom took place in the late 1780s. Thus, by the year 1790, there were ninety-one newspapers in America: seventy weeklies, ten semi-weeklies, three tri-weeklies, and eight dailies, averaging a cost of four cents a copy and possessing a total circulation of approximately 50,000 subscribers.⁷

One of the characteristics of eighteenth-century newspapers which made Fenno's vision of a truly national newspaper so daunting was the challenge of the production process itself. Printing was a physically demanding task and a major time investment. While newspapers were typically no more than four folio sheets in length and often contained more advertisements than articles, the type-setting process took as many as sixteen hours, while printing added several more hours of labor to production.⁸ Atlantic seaboard towns in the mid-Atlantic and New England boasted the largest concentrations of eighteenth-century print shops, and newspapers could have as many as several thousand subscribers; however, the majority of the population could not afford the subscription price, so subscription numbers were limited. That being said, newspapers were frequently read by more than a single individual. Neighbors often shared papers, with several houses pooling their resources for a subscription. In addition, public gathering places such as taverns, coffeehouses, and hotels often housed newspapers, while individual articles, editions, and ideas from newspapers were passed on in letters, through clippings, and by word of mouth.⁹ In this way, eighteenth-century newspapers frequently reached an audience size exponentially larger than subscription numbers indicated at first glance.

⁷ Pasley, *"Tyranny of the Printers,"* 41; Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution of 1789," 55-56; Copeland, "America, 1750-1820," 149; Donald J. Stewart, *The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1969), 15.

⁸ Pasley, *"Tyranny of the Printers,"* 25, 31-32; Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution of 1789," 57.

⁹ Literacy rates in America were also quite high, particularly in urban areas. For example, David Copeland writes that by 1800 over 90% of citizens in some regions of the country were literate, and that this number often included

During the 1790s, American newspapers increasingly featured national news, such as Congressional coverage; however, information about European affairs was always in high demand. Since it took five to six weeks for news from Europe to reach the northeastern cities of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, foreign coverage was always about two months behind the present. News arrived in America gradually: the first boats brought fragments of information which American editors gradually pieced together, added on to, and corrected as they received more materials, interspersing reports from abroad with American opinions and reactions. The intermittent nature of news-flow from abroad was a second factor which complicated European news coverage: the arrival of news depended on merchant ships, which came and went less frequently in the winter months and during times of war.¹⁰ When it came to the reports themselves, news from Britain tended to dominate because of the commonality of language and the strong economic ties, though information about events throughout Europe was available. Indeed, some American editors purposely chose to include news from continental newspapers in their papers: when they did, they either translated the articles themselves or sought the aid of friends. While editors most frequently relied on European newspapers as their primary source for knowledge of Europe, letters and oral reports were other common mediums of news transmission.¹¹

These news reporting trends had a strong impact on American newspaper coverage of the French Revolution. Taking Fenno's coverage of the fall of the Bastille (July 14, 1789) in September and October 1789 as an example, it is possible to see the way in which American editors added onto and corrected their understanding of events in France as news arrived,

women and minorities. Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 16; Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 7; Copeland, "America, 1750-1820," 141.

¹⁰ Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution," 59, 60, 66.

¹¹ Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution," 58; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 24.

ultimately combining British and continental European reports with their own opinions to offer their readers a comprehensive perspective on the French Revolution. Fenno's first reference to the fall of the Bastille appeared in the September 16 edition of his paper, drawn from the reports of a ship that had come into Philadelphia on September 12: "By the ship Young Eagle, Capt. Kerr, arrived in this port [Philadelphia] the last evening in 35 days from St. Sebastian in Spain, we learn, that the great patriot and friend to America, Lewis the 16th, had joined with the Commons of France against the Nobles—that a battle ensued in which 7000 were killed on the spot—and that the Bastille was totally demolished."¹² As this example demonstrates, the earliest reports of an event from Europe often featured misinformation: rumor and hearsay were part of the corpus upon which editors such as John Fenno were forced to draw in order to quickly get news out, and it took time for the full story to unfold.

Over the course of the next several weeks, however, Fenno amassed a greater understanding of the events of the Bastille, which ultimately allowed him to begin putting forth his own interpretation of the riot's significance. In the next edition of his *Gazette*, published September 19, Fenno published a longer, somewhat more accurate account of July 14, provided by "a French nobleman of high rank" and originally published in Britain:

They [the French guards], with the populace, attacked the bastille; many of them entered, when Mons. De Lannoy, the Governor, drew up the bridge, enclosed those who had entered, and cut them to pieces. The troops and people without, finding their companions detained, attacked the place, and forced it open—and finding what had happened to their party, took the Governor out, led him through the streets, obliged him to make the *amende honourable* to the people, and then cut off his hands and his head. . . . The Queen and the Count d'Artois, are both fled, and a reward is offered for their heads. Many of the principal nobility, who side with the King, are likewise proscribed, and gone off. In short, it appears that the King is at the mercy of the *Tiers Etat*, and must submit wholly to their terms.

¹² I have chosen to adhere as much as possible to the original spellings, syntax, and emphases within the eighteenth-century texts. Since spelling had yet to be standardized in the 1790s, it was often creative, particularly when it came to French locations and names. John Fenno, *The Gazette of the United States (GUS)*, I.45.179 (September 16, 1789), in *America's Historical Newspapers*, <http://www.newsbank.com/redex/?content=96>.

Such are the effects of Popular commotions when they get a head in despotic countries.... Many people have been killed in the affrays and skirmishes which have happened.¹³

Since the source of this information was an early French *émigré*, the article provided a rather negative take on the events at the Bastille: there is a great deal of emphasis on the anarchy of the mob, the victimization of the King and the French nobility, and the death and destruction of the day. In this way, it demonstrates how strongly American reports could be influenced by their European sources, particularly when information from abroad was just starting to filter into the newspapers.

As subsequent editions of Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* revealed, with the arrival of further intelligence, July 14 became a day worthy of American praise. By September 23, news was increasingly positive, and the violence was discovered to be less severe than the first two articles had suggested. Thus, despite early pessimism, Fenno became an ardent champion of the efforts of the French: they were emerging as a free people, and their rebellion at the Bastille was a testament to this process. As Beatrice F. Hyslop and Marcus Daniel observed in their analyses of American newspaper coverage of the event, Americans quickly came to recognize the importance of the event, embracing it.¹⁴ On September 23, for example, Fenno published an updated account, now drawing from numerous reports, which spoke glowingly of the orderliness observed during the siege: "During all these commotions, the National Assembly continued sitting, and preserved the greatest moderation, dignity and firmness.—The citizens were armed, and formed into regular corps under proper officers: And such arrangements made as restored peace and tranquility, and gave the happiest prospect of establishing a free government.... Tis

¹³ Ibid., I.46.182 (September 19, 1789).

¹⁴ Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution," 65-66; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 47.

said not more than thirty persons have lost their lives, on the part of the people.”¹⁵ Thus, Fenno portrayed the events at the Bastille as the work of an enlightened populace, carefully, yet authoritatively moving their nation towards a state of greater freedom. Furthermore, Fenno portrayed the movement as one condoned by King Louis XVI as well: “A motion was made in the Town hall, to erect on the spot where the Bastile stood, a Statue, to be dedicated to Louis XVI—inscribed to the *Father of his people*, and the *Restorer of Liberty!*”¹⁶ Thanks to his support of American independence, eighteenth-century Americans considered Louis XVI “a great champion of liberty.”¹⁷ As a result, he was considered a key part of the revolutionary process in 1789 in America as well as in France, depicted by Fenno as ushering in the freedom of his people in the role of a benevolent father.

To further drive home his point that the actions of the French people were in the name of liberty, Fenno ran a series of articles in early October 1789 which highlighted the Bastille’s role as a symbol of Old Regime despotism. On October 7, for example, Fenno published a lengthy extract from John Howard’s *State of the Prisons in England and Wales* which described the Bastille’s fearsome appearance, giving particular attention to the vile living conditions and suffering of its prisoners.¹⁸ Similarly, on October 14, he ran a poem which further underlined the tyrannical nature of the Bastille—“Here the poor captive, torn from child and wife, / From youth to age groan’d out detested life”—also getting in a dig at Louis XV’s unmanly submission to his mistresses and usage of *lettres de cachet*: “To soothe a mistress, wanton LOUIS gave / To one

¹⁵ Fenno, *GUS*, I.47.187 (September 23, 1789).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I.50.198 (October 3, 1789).

¹⁷ Forrest McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton: A Biography*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), 270.

¹⁸ John Howard was a British criminologist and penal system reformer who published a book discussing European prisons in 1777. His account of the Bastille was taken largely from an anonymous French pamphlet published in 1774, which Howard claimed was written by a former prisoner of the fortress, and which became a central element of “anti-Bastille journalism” in pre-Revolutionary France, as well as in Europe and America more broadly. Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom*, trans. Norbert Schürer, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 18-19; Fenno, *GUS*, I.51.203 (October 7, 1789).

who dar'd be just, this lingering grave! / To one who dar'd a prostitute pourtray, / And bring his honest satire into day.”¹⁹ In addition to poetry and historical accounts, Fenno also made use of fables and current events to vilify the Bastille. Twice in the fall of 1789, for example, he brought up the widely circulated story of the “Man in the Iron Mask,” while his September 30 edition of the *Gazette of the United States* included a fanciful biography of the man who supposedly led the French charge into the Bastille, claiming that his intended father-in-law had been a victim of an unjust *lettre de cachet* many years previously.²⁰ In this way, Fenno presented the Bastille as a powerful symbol of Old Regime despotism to his readers, suggesting through these articles that its fall was a physical sign of France’s movement from tyranny to a state of liberty.

Through his coverage of the fall of the Bastille, Fenno ultimately argued that the event was a sign of the growth of enlightenment and liberalism in France, which he closely connected to the American influence. As many historians have observed, Americans were thrilled by the idea that “a great and ancient kingdom” was following their example, recognizing the meeting of the Estates-General, the fall of the Bastille, and the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen as American-inspired.²¹ Indeed, Fenno articulated this perspective in several editions of his paper, such as on September 26: “Europe from America has caught the sacred flame of Freedom: It has kindled it to a blaze—it has illuminated their darkness, and where tyranny erected her throne, and bigotry, ignorance, and superstition supported her infernal reign, the sun of a glorious day has arisen—and Liberty rejoices in the divine light and resplendent

¹⁹ Fenno, *GUS*, I.53.212 (October 14, 1789).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I.49.194 (September 30, 1789), I.52.207 (October 10, 1789). The “Man in the Iron Mask” was a well-known figure in the French public sphere by the 1750s thanks largely to Voltaire’s *Age of Louis XIV* (1751). An anonymous prisoner at the Bastille, his name came from the iron mask he wore to conceal his identity, spurring rumors that he may have been either an illegitimate brother or rival of Louis XIV. Thus, the prisoner stood as a symbol of the despotism and secrecy of the Bastille, adding to its infamy. Lüsebrink & Reichardt, *Bastille*, 13, 15.

²¹ Stanley Elkins & Erick McKittrick, *The Age of Federalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 309-310; Hyslop, “American Press and the French Revolution,” 55; Richard Buel Jr., *Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), 38; Charles Downer Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), 140-142.

beams.”²² As Fenno’s analysis of the fall of the Bastille suggests, the advent of the French Revolution validated the principles, ideas, and purpose of the American Revolution, suggesting that the victory against Britain was not a fluke, but instead part of a larger trend towards global change.²³ Moreover, Fenno urged his readers to consider the French Revolution to be not only following their nation’s values, but also actively working to spread them through Europe. On October 10, for example, he spoke of his desire for the principles behind the American and French Revolutions to spur change throughout the European continent, specifically hoping that they would “meliorate the condition of the lower orders of people in England, Scotland, and Ireland,” while a second article published a week later stated “that even in the chilly regions of Nova-Scotia, the ideas of liberty are beginning to be entertained.”²⁴ Through his analysis of the early days of the French Revolution, particularly in light of July 14, Fenno encouraged his readers to embrace the principles and process of the French Revolution as an extension of American progress beyond the new nation’s geographic borders.

The purpose of this thesis is thus to investigate whether this early vision of the French Revolution as a continuation of the American Revolution remained steadfast in American popular culture through the course of major moments of crisis in France: the flight to Varennes (June 20, 1791), the Champ de Mars Massacre (July 17, 1791), the Revolution of August 10 (1792), the September Massacres (1792), the French victory at Valmy (September 20, 1792), the proclamation of the French Republic (September 22, 1792), and the execution of Louis XVI (January 21, 1793). Gauging popular opinion in eighteenth-century America can be a challenge;

²² Fenno, *GUS*, I.48.191 (September 26, 1789). Also see I.50.199 (October 3, 1789) for a similar example, as well as I.54.214-215 (October 17, 1789) for Fenno’s discussion of the role he believed the Marquis de Lafayette, familiar with the principles of liberty and equality from his sojourn in America, would play in introducing them to France.

²³ Philipp Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots: American in Paris in the Age of Revolution*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 6-7.

²⁴ Fenno, *GUS*, I.52.207 (October 10, 1789), I.54.215 (October 17, 1789).

however, newspapers offer a great deal of insight into the public sphere. By the 1790s, newspaper editors took on leading roles in expanding and shaping American public opinions.²⁵ As a result, newspapers from this era provide historians with a sense of what, when, and how Americans learned of news from France and, through letters to the editor and local reports, how they reacted to the events of the Revolution.

Three major American papers are primarily relied upon within this thesis: Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*, Philip Freneau's *National Gazette*, and Benjamin Franklin Bache's *General Advertiser*.²⁶ Based in Philadelphia, the capital of the United States beginning in late 1790, Fenno's, Freneau's, and Bache's papers were commonly distributed throughout the nation, particularly because other newspaper editors copied them in search of the most recent news from Congress. Thus, their relatively modest subscription numbers were significantly expanded. In addition, Fenno's and Freneau's papers in particular were some of the earliest newspapers to attach themselves to the American political parties which arose in the early 1790s. Fenno allied himself with Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists, while Freneau was actually recruited to found his paper by Thomas Jefferson, serving as the major mouthpiece for Republican rhetoric in 1792.²⁷ By virtue of their national visibility and the prominent politicians attached to them, the *National Gazette* and *Gazette of the United States* emerged as two of the most influential and controversial papers in the nation by the year 1792.²⁸ As such, they are particularly useful as

²⁵ Pasley, "The Tyranny of the Printers," 22-23; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 6.

²⁶ Fenno moved his *Gazette of the United States* to Philadelphia in November 1790 after the city became the new capital, while Bache and Freneau both founded their papers in the city. Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution," 64-65.

²⁷ Bache, while not as directly connected to Jefferson and the Republicans as Freneau during the era that this paper covers, also turned his *General Advertiser* into a partisan Republican offering. After Freneau closed up shop in late 1793, Bache's newspaper replaced the *National Gazette* as the leading voice for the Jeffersonian Republicans in Philadelphia. Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 128-129.

²⁸ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 25; Culver Haygood Smith, *The Press, Politics, and Patronage: The American Government's Use of Newspapers 1789-1875*, (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1977), 13-16.

sources on variations in popular political opinion during this era. Through an analysis of Freneau's and Fenno's coverage of the events of the French Revolution, it is possible to discern the process by which American party ideology crept into the American public sphere by the death of Louis XVI, leading to a growing division amongst Americans about not only the fate of the French Revolution, but about the values and future of their own country.

In seeking to understand American reactions to the French Revolution, the majority of scholars have focused their efforts on looking at the way in which the politicians of the 1790s handled events in France. Scholars generally agree that the division over the French Revolution, and foreign affairs more broadly, emerged as a feature of the First Party System. Federalists such as Alexander Hamilton believed that the United States would be strongest through a greater alliance with Britain, while Republicans such as Thomas Jefferson supported a continued alignment with France, following the tradition of the American Revolution and the Franco-American alliance of 1777. There is, however, debate in the historiography over what exactly caused this division over foreign affairs: some scholars have pointed to economic concerns driving the split, while others suggest that the divide was more ideological in nature.

In considering the economic motives for the Federalist-Republican split over the French Revolution, scholars such as Richard Buel Jr., Forrest McDonald, and Stuart Gerry Brown emphasize the contrast between the Federalist desire to forge ties with Britain and Republican hopes to loosen these ties. Considering the case of Alexander Hamilton, Buel and McDonald both argue that Hamilton's concerns for the American economy led him to endorse neutrality with France and a greater alliance with Britain, since the former mother country remained America's largest trading partner.²⁹ Similarly, in his consideration of Thomas Jefferson's pro-French perspective, Brown emphasizes the Secretary of State's economic motives: he believed

²⁹ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 31-33; McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton*, 265, 269.

that the French Revolution would usher in a new European system of trade, so a close alliance with the country would strongly benefit the United States.³⁰ While Buel, McDonald, and Brown all recognize Federalist fears of French radicalism as a secondary cause of their desire to avoid too close an association with France, they thus put the strongest emphasis on economic concerns as a cause of foreign policy divisions.

On the other hand, other scholars assert that this Federalist fear of “excessive democracy” was the driving factor in the Federalist-Republic split over France. In considering Hamilton’s position, for example, biographer Richard Brookhiser suggests that the American Treasury Secretary’s Burkean perspective strongly shaped his concerns about the French Revolution.³¹ According to Brookhiser, Hamilton feared that either anarchy or a military dictatorship would emerge out of the disagreements between the French revolutionaries, the passion of the French character, the resistance of the French nobility to the Revolution, and the influence of overly idealistic Enlightenment ideology.³² Thus, Brookhiser offers a somewhat different perspective to the economic arguments of Buel, McDonald, and Brown, suggesting that Federalist hesitancy to embrace France was first and foremost a matter of ideology.

Scholars who have focused more strongly on Jefferson’s relationship with the French Revolution concur with Brookhiser in identifying ideology as the core of United States foreign policy divisions, though they disagree with one another about the Secretary of State’s perspective on France. Several Jefferson biographers, for example, have suggested that the Virginian’s trust

³⁰ Stuart Gerry Brown, *Alexander Hamilton*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), 85-86.

³¹ James Tagg also discusses the centrality of the Burke-Paine dichotomy to American political culture in the 1790s, arguing that their contrasting perspectives on government came “to define many of the broad, apparently perennial outlines of American conservatism and liberalism.” Paine embraced the idea of “universal republican liberty” while Burke supported “natural aristocracy, mixed government, the protection of property, and a modicum of civil rights, including right to life, liberty in a very reserved and docile sense, and the fruits of one’s labors.” Thus, Paine’s vision tended to align during this era with Jeffersonian Republicans, while Burke attracted Hamiltonian Federalists. James Tagg, *Benjamin Franklin Bache and the Philadelphia Aurora*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 118-121.

³² Richard Brookhiser, *Alexander Hamilton: American*, (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 112-113.

in the French Revolution was unwavering and somewhat blind. Confident that the French Revolution was “inherently impeccable” because of his infatuation with the country and his close friendships with early leaders such as Lafayette, Condorcet, and La Rochefoucauld, these scholars argue that Jefferson neglected to seriously consider the Revolution’s excesses.³³ On the other hand, biographers such as Lawrence S. Kaplan suggest that Jefferson’s understanding of the French Revolution was more nuanced than this first perspective allows. To Kaplan, Jefferson’s endorsement of the French Revolution was distinctly political: like Hamilton, the Secretary of State was skeptical about the feasibility of French self-government, but championed the Revolution in 1789 to combat Hamilton’s own love affair with Britain. While Kaplan admits that Jefferson’s enthusiasm for France grew with the proclamation of the French Republic in 1792, he nevertheless asserts that the Secretary of State was never completely confident that the Revolution’s future was secure. Thus, Kaplan concludes that the major difference between the Jeffersonian Republicans and Hamiltonian Federalists was that the former regarded any pro-Republican regime in France as a boon for the United States, while the latter more strongly feared the threat of instability and doubted that the coalition of European monarchs at war with France beginning in 1792 would ever threaten American independence.³⁴

Questions certainly remain regarding the divisions between Hamilton and Jefferson over the French Revolution, however the most uncertain point in the historiography is when this party split emerged amongst the American people. As historians who have worked on American

³³ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 152-153, 258-259, 273-274; Elkins & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 210; Conor Cruise O’Brien, *The Long Affair: Thomas Jefferson and the French Revolution, 1785-1800*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 81, 119; McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton*, 265.

³⁴ Lawrence S. Kaplan, *Jefferson and France: An Essay on Politics and Political Ideas*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 33-34, 38-41, 48-51. Other scholars who have concurred with Kaplan on this point include Andrew Burstein, Nancy Isenberg, R.R. Bernstein, and Philipp Ziesche. Andrew Burstein & Nancy Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson*, (New York: Random House, 2010), 195; R.R. Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 2, 7-8, 47-50.

newspaper culture in the 1790s have suggested, the party ideology of the Federalists and the Republicans filtered down to the American public through avenues including print sources.³⁵ The trajectory of popular American opinions on the French Revolution, however, has varied from scholar to scholar. Working primarily on the American reaction to the French Revolution in the year 1789, for example, Hyslop argues that party divisions were evident as early as September 1790 in American newspaper coverage of the French Revolution, citing criticisms of the National Assembly's inability to control the Parisian mob during the October Days and the decision to abolish noble titles as evidence.³⁶

In contrast with Hyslop's assertion, most other scholars have suggested that popular opinion remained strongly in favor of the French Revolution until the year 1793. While Buel admits that critics of the French Revolution existed by the time news of the September Massacres reached America in November 1792, he argues that they remained "an increasingly isolated minority." Thus, Buel follows Daniel, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Stanley Elkins, and Eric McKittrick in asserting that the concerns about the violence of August and September 1792 were overshadowed by the excitement of the proclamation of the French Republic and the victory at Valmy.³⁷ Charles Downer Hazen, Stanley Elkins, and Eric McKittrick, however, assert that this enthusiasm was relatively short-lived: according to this trio of historians, Louis XVI's execution was the catalyst which precipitated a gradual decline in enthusiasm in some circles. News of the King's death "injected public and private feeling with a strain of ambiguities and afterthoughts," and a less optimistic understanding of the French Revolution emerged, particularly when coupled with the previous rioting in Paris, the September Massacres, the fate of Lafayette, and the

³⁵ Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 22-23; Smith, *Press, Politics, and Patronage*, 14-15; Daniel, *Scandal and Civility*.

³⁶ Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution," 55, 74-75.

³⁷ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 38-40; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 95-96; O'Brien, *Long Affair*, 143; Elkins & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 310.

outrageous behavior of France's minister to America, Citizen Gênet over the course of the summer of 1793.³⁸

That being said, other scholars have challenged this stance as well, suggesting that Federalist criticisms did not really permeate the perception of the American public until later in the Revolution's course. Brookhiser, Buel, and Donald J. Stewart for example, suggest that it was not until the summer of 1793 that a significant number of Americans began to lose their optimism about the French Revolution, though they differ slightly in considering which events had the strongest influence on this shift. Brookhiser and Buel, for example, tend to give more weight to the influence of American foreign policy on the opinions of the people. Brookhiser argues that the Neutrality Proclamation of 1793 and the revelation that Citizen Gênet had insulted George Washington through his increasingly heavy-handed messages to the federal government spurred divisions amongst the people, while Buel cites Jay's Treaty (1794) as the catalyst which forced Americans to choose sides between France and Britain. On the other hand, Stewart argues that it was news of the Terror itself which ultimately alienated a significant number of the American people from the French Revolution, an event which Buel also cites as a secondary cause of the proliferation of anti-French rhetoric through the United States.³⁹

Based on my analysis of Philadelphia newspaper coverage of the French Revolution, it is clear that Americans were well-acquainted with Hamilton's anti-French perspective long before the summer of 1793 and the advent of the Terror. At the time of the King's flight and the Champ de Mars Massacre, American public opinion remained united in favor of the French Revolution: the belief in the abilities of the National Assembly which first emerged during the coverage of

³⁸ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 255; Elkins & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 311, 356-357.

³⁹ Brookhiser, *Alexander Hamilton*, 116; Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 38, 51-52; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 119-120.

the Estates General and the fall of the Bastille in 1789 remained strong through 1791. While it is certainly true that this optimism was also present when news of Valmy and the proclamation of the French Republic arrived the following year, it was accompanied by a growing sense of doubt about France's fate, articulated most forcefully by Fenno in his *Gazette of the United States*. The violence of August and September 1792 seriously frightened some members of the American public, priming them to more strongly turn against the French Revolution when news of Louis XVI's execution reached American shores in late March 1793.

Chapter One. “Well He is Gone, Good Bye”: The Flight of the King and Its Aftermath (1791)

The sheer number of articles printed in Philadelphia newspapers about the King’s flight to Varennes (June 21, 1791) and the events which followed attest to American interest in the affair between August and November 1791. In addition, John Fenno’s decision to publish the French Constitution in its entirety in his *Gazette of the United States* between October 12 and October 26 reveals that America’s fascination with the French Revolution’s course remained high through the fall. That being said, the reaction of Philadelphia newspapers to the events of this period was surprisingly muted given the excitement of 1789 and later reactions to the proclamation of the French Republic and execution of Louis XVI. Unlike these other revolutionary transition points, the flight to Varennes, the Champ de Mars massacre, and the French Constitution saw few personal responses from Americans. Instead, coverage consisted primarily of reprints of oral news and articles from abroad, with surprisingly limited articulations of American opinions on what was going on in France.

There were several reasons for this dearth of discussion. The first was that the flight of the King was shocking to Frenchmen and Americans alike with implications which the public sphere took time to fully grasp. In the days and weeks following news of Louis XVI’s disappearance and capture, Americans were trying to determine exactly what happened: events in France unfolded rapidly, and separating rumor from fact was no easy feat. In addition, October and November 1791 saw coverage of the publication of the French Constitution compete head-to-head with debates and rumors about the heated ratification process of the United States Bill of Rights. While news from Europe was strongly desired during these months, political discussion in the newspapers tended to focus on events taking place at home, suggesting that events in France took something of a back burner to those occurring in America.

The coverage and interpretations which events in France received in Philadelphia newspapers during the fall of 1791 varied little from paper to paper. Divisions emerging on Washington's cabinet and within Congress had yet to filter into the public sphere, so the Federalist and Republican ideologies which later characterized publications such as John Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* and Benjamin Franklin Bache's *General Advertiser* were not yet apparent.⁴⁰ In their coverage of the flight to Varennes, the Champ de Mars massacre, and the French Constitution over the course of the later summer and early fall of 1791, these editors presented a moderate interpretation to their readers. While hints occasionally surfaced that France could become a republic, Fenno and Bache strongly backed the National Assembly in these months, casting both the *émigrés* and the Parisian mob as potential threats to the Revolution, and not overtly calling for any dramatic changes to the nation's political regime. Having just established regular government themselves, Americans hoped to see France follow suit, and they feared that the formation of republicanism in France was perhaps too dramatic a step for the nation. They believed their own experiences transmittable to other countries; however, they also followed Montesquieu's argument that nations needed to develop according to their particular histories.⁴¹ In the fall of 1791, it was not yet clear to Americans that France was ready for a republic. That being said, Fenno's and Bache's confidence in the National

⁴⁰ Like Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*, Bache's *General Advertiser* began as a non-partisan paper: his goal was to create a "respectable" periodical for the Philadelphia elite, and the first edition of the paper, which appeared October 2, 1790, focused on providing readers with advertising, mercantile information, and coverage of foreign affairs. Bache himself was born on August 12, 1769 to Richard Bache and Sarah Franklin, the daughter of Benjamin Franklin. Under his grandfather's guidance, he was educated in France as a child, an experience which later spurred his support for a continued Franco-American alliance, and earned a degree from the University of Pennsylvania before studying printing under the tutelage of master printer François Didot. While Fenno allied himself with the Federalists in 1792, Bache became a support of the Republicans, though his style was less zealous than that of fellow Republican printer Philip Freneau until post-1793, when he took up Freneau's mantle as the most radical Republican journalist in 1790s Philadelphia. Pasley, "*Tyranny of the Printers*," 80-83; Daniel, *Scandal and Civility*, 114-118, 128-129. For a full biography of Bache, see Tagg, *Benjamin Franklin Bache and the Philadelphia Aurora*.

⁴¹ Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriotism*, 7-8.

Assembly and growing doubts about Louis XVI's trustworthiness certainly began to push the American people towards the possibility of a French republic during this era.

In this light, the fallout of Louis XVI's flight was a cause of some concern: while editors expressed confidence during this period that the National Assembly had everything under control, the careful coverage given to events taking place in the Assembly in the weeks after the flight and the presence of a number of articles on the *émigrés* and unrest in Paris reveal a degree of uneasiness about France's future. Within the public sphere, these concerns had yet to translate into any sort of serious opposition to the continuation of the Revolution more broadly. However, amongst American politicians, it fueled the spread of the foreign policy divisions which had first emerged between Hamilton and Jefferson. By the fall of 1791, criticisms of the French Revolution were emerging within some spheres of the federal government. The power of the Parisian people and uncertainty of what would happen in the wake of Louis XVI's flight led politicians of a Federalist persuasion to increasingly question the Revolution, while Jeffersonian Republicans leapt to its defense. Thus, Varennes and its aftermath further fueled the rise of the Federalist-Republican split in America, encouraging the development of pro- and anti-French ideological platforms which would soon begin drifting down to the American people with the rise of partisan newspapers.

The news of the King's flight was not only a surprise to the Americans: in France as well, it was completely unanticipated and spurred a growing division over how the future of the Revolution ought to look. While rumors of plots to kidnap the King abounded in early 1791, Louis XVI's flight the night of June 20/21 was a complete shock which threw the entire system which the National Assembly had been crafting since the spring of 1789 into doubt. The National Assembly, Paris city council, National Guard, and Parisian sections managed to mostly keep the

peace in the days immediately following the flight. However, the King's disappearance ultimately served to heighten the divide between radicals and moderates by establishing, for the first time in France, the feasibility of republicanism.⁴²

The vision of a French republic was not unanimously embraced by the French: a schism took place in the political clubs following Louis XVI's flight, in turn impacting the political dynamic of the National Assembly. It began in early June when the Cordeliers Club delivered petitions to the National Assembly in favor of the King's deposition, ushering in the emergence of republicanism as a "serious political" force in France.⁴³ As the treachery of the King sank in for the Parisian people, they questioned, for the first time, the fate of the monarch and monarchy, wondering "if the monarchy itself was truly inevitable, if it was not time for the French to live independently in a republic without a king."⁴⁴ However, the National Assembly, under the influence of its largely moderate members, rejected these petitions, opting to declare that the royal family had been kidnapped by counterrevolutionaries. Having dedicated themselves for the past two years to the construction of a constitutional monarchy, moderates hoped to maintain it in spite of the events at Varennes and the opposition of radicalized Parisians. Through his flight, Louis XVI threw the conclusion of the French Revolution into doubt, seriously undermining the appeal of the constitutional monarchy to the French people.⁴⁵

Despite growing French ambivalence, the vast majority of the American people continued to regard the French Revolution in a positive light in 1791: they believed that the French were dedicated to the principles for which the American Revolution stood. America

⁴² Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 97-98; Munro Price, *The Road from Versailles: Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and the Fall of the French Monarchy*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 177

⁴³ Price, *Road from Versailles*, 206-207.

⁴⁴ Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 108-109.

⁴⁵ Price, *Road from Versailles*, 207; Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 120-122, 131-132.

watched “with almost paternal pride” as the French Revolution spread the principles, ideas, and institutions upon which their nation had been founded through Europe, hoping that the changes taking place would usher in a new age.⁴⁶ As such, Americans regarded the French Revolution as a major step forward for the world, expressing confidence that excesses would work themselves out. While critics of the Revolution existed in the summer of 1791, they were still few in number, coming mainly from the American elite and consisting primarily of politicians such as Alexander Hamilton, whose views had yet to filter down to the populace. Thus, during this time, Americans regarded the French Revolution as a vindication of America, blaming missteps on outsider groups such as the *émigrés*, on the incompetency of the King’s ministers, and, by the time of his flight on June 20, 1791, on the French monarch himself.⁴⁷

In newspaper coverage from the time of the King’s flight, Bache and Fenno both played up this idea in their respective newspapers, urging Americans to feel a strong connection with the French. As the first reports of the flight arrived in America in late August 1791, Fenno, for example, ran a letter written by Jean Sylvain Bailly, mayor of Paris. Reprinted from an earlier edition of Bache’s *General Advertiser*, Fenno introduced the letter by asserting that its contents captured a certain “American” spirit: “Our Readers will be pleased with the following Letter of the Mayor of Paris, translated from a Paris Paper: independent of the light it throws upon the situation of Paris, at the time our latest accounts left that city, it contains such just principles of rational liberty, and such warm effusions of genuine patriotism, as must interest the feelings of every American.” Following this introduction came the letter itself, which touched on a number of themes which would have hit close to home for Americans: the establishment of freedom of religion in Paris, the centrality of citizen-soldiers to the National Guard, the government’s

⁴⁶ Beatrice F. Hyslop, “American Press and the French Revolution of 1789,” 55; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 116; Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 142.

⁴⁷ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 37-39.

responsibility to protect the rights of the people, and the idea that citizens “can only be happy and free by... submission to the laws.”⁴⁸ While the degree to which the French Revolution was actually influenced by America has been debated by scholars, to contemporaries the line between the two revolutions was clear.⁴⁹ Thus, through letters such as Bailly’s, editors demonstrated that the French Revolutionary leadership was following in America’s footsteps, reaffirming for Americans on the eve of a crisis where their sympathies ought to lie.

In addition to highlighting the ideological connections between the French and American Revolutions in the late summer of 1791, Bache and Fenno were also quick to reprint articles and letters in which the French revolutionaries actively showed their appreciation for America as a further means of highlighting the connections between the two countries. In the early days of the French Revolution, the French did little to reach out to Americans—the new economic treaties for which Americans hoped were slow to materialize, despite the Franco-American alliance of 1778 and the respect revolutionary leaders held for Americans such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. As the Revolution proceeded and France grew increasingly isolated within Europe, however, the revolutionaries began to speak of Americans as their “confidential friends.”⁵⁰ Editors in early-1790s America played up this connection as a reassurance to their readership that the French regarded them well and were continuing to follow the American

⁴⁸ John Fenno, *Gazette of the United States*, III.34.133 (August 24, 1791).

⁴⁹ Scholars such as Bernard Fäy and Charles Downer Hazen asserted that the link between France and America was direct; however, others have questioned the connection. Louis Martin Sears, for example, argued that France differed from America in that its goal was to completely overthrow a way of life, while America’s restructuring was predominantly political. More contemporary scholars have continued the debate: Philipp Ziesche points to certain ideological commonalities between the two revolutions regarding the process of nation-building, while Jonathan Israel suggests that the “radical Enlightenment” behind the French Revolution, while present in eighteenth-century America, did not ultimately see its principles fully realized through the American Revolution. Bernard Fäy, *The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America: A Study of Moral and Intellectual Relations between France and the United States at the End of the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Ramon Guthrie, (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1966), 257; Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 141; Louis Martin Sears, *George Washington & the French Revolution*, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1960), 5; Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 2; Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 40-41, 45.

⁵⁰ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 36.

example, even in moments of crisis.⁵¹ During their coverage of the flight of the King, for example, Fenno and Bache both ran a letter from the National Assembly to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives discussing the connection between the two nations:

In the midst of the perplexing silence of those surrounding nations, who are blinded by prejudice or awed by despotism, it was grateful to the National Assembly, and affords a happy presage, to hear, resounding from afar, prompted by fraternal affection, the congratulatory voice of America. We too are establishing (under the constitutional authority of a king) that liberty which you have been able to secure under governments of a republican form.... France is fully sensible of the benefits she has derived from the influence of your example.... May the citizens of that glorious and happy country discover in the Decree of the National Assembly, the sentiments by which the first friends of their independence continue to be animated.⁵²

Similarly, Fenno published additional articles in the fall of 1791 describing the French reception of a letter from Thomas Jefferson and the honors shown to Benjamin Franklin in the National Assembly.⁵³ Through such articles, the editors demonstrated that the delegates of the National Assembly were consciously aware of their debt to the American example and committed to carrying out their Revolution in the American spirit. The accounts therefore served to further the sense that the National Assembly was a firm friend of the United States, deserving the trust and support of the American people and founded upon firm, tried-and-true principles.

As their emphasis on the links between the National Assembly and American ideology suggests, Bache and Fenno were strong supporters of the Assembly in light of Louis XVI's flight, praising the body's reaction to the crisis. For example, the first report of the King's flight and capture in the *Gazette of the United States*, published on August 24, emphasized the way in which the National Assembly managed to maintain order following the shocking news: "The National Assembly conducted with great calmness, dignity and propriety, on the occasion. Many

⁵¹ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 128.

⁵² Benjamin Franklin Bache, *General Advertiser*, 285.3 (August 29, 1791); Fenno, *GUS*, III.36.143 (August 31, 1791), in *America's Historical Newspapers*, <http://www.newsbank.com/redex/?content=96>.

⁵³ Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.139 (August, 27, 1791), III.46.182 (October 5, 1791)

important Decrees, providing for the immediate security of the kingdom from external and internal attacks were passed with great promptitude and decision.”⁵⁴ As details of the event emerged through August and September 1791, this trend continued. Both editors published transcripts from the National Assembly’s proceedings, the flurry of activity illustrating the focus of the body and its ability to govern in the absence of the monarchy.⁵⁵ They highlighted, for example, the way in which the delegates banded together in the face of the crisis, pointing to the cohesion of the body at a time when party politics was considered an unforgivable sin: “The flight of the French king has had this good effect upon the patriots, that it has united those who had before some little differences. When M. de la Fayette was first suspected of being concerned in the escape, M. [Antoine] Barnave, his opponent in the assembly, rose and said, that he would answer for the integrity of M. de la Fayette.”⁵⁶ In addition to pulling articles from Parisian and British papers, Fenno and Bache also offered their own interpretations of the National Assembly’s behavior. On August 27, Fenno praised the dedication of the National Assembly in declaring themselves in constant session the morning of June 21: “After the flight of the King of France was known, the National Assembly sat ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN HOURS, without intermission; the members relieving each other for rest and refreshment by turns—an evidence of their firmness and heroism in the moment of danger.”⁵⁷ Similarly, in his September 14 edition of the *General Advertiser*, Bache celebrated the National Assembly’s “moderation” in dealing with Louis XVI, writing that “by the generosity of such behavior they

⁵⁴ Ibid., III.34.135 (August 24, 1791).

⁵⁵ For examples, see Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.138 (August 27, 1791), III.36.141-142 (August 31, 1791); Bache, *GA*, 281.2 (August 24, 1791); 282.3 (August 25, 1791).

⁵⁶ Fenno, *GUS*, III.39.154 (September 10, 1791). Bache also observed the cohesion of the National Assembly, including the transcript of Barnave’s speech in support of Lafayette in an edition of his paper. Bache, *GA*, 281.2 (August 24, 1791). Thanks to his role as the head of the National Guard and his known support for the constitutional monarchy, the Parisian people immediately suspected Lafayette of aiding the royal family’s flight the morning of June 21. He was almost lynched by the crowd on his way to the city hall, along with Bailly, but was ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing. Price, *Road from Versailles*, 177; Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 98.

⁵⁷ Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.139 (August 27, 1791).

have proved to the Universe that they are entitled to the free, unrestrained enjoyment of the cup of liberty, since they can taste its sweets with the temperance of Philosophers.”⁵⁸ For Bache and Fenno, the delegates were capable, trustworthy men, driven by admirable principles and able to act effectively and rationally under duress. Thus, they offered a decidedly rosy vision of the National Assembly’s comportment following the King’s flight, seeking to instill American confidence in the Assembly’s ability to operate.

In addition to arguing that the National Assemblymen possessed the ability and mentality for government through their coverage of the fallout of Varennes, Bache and Fenno also demonstrated through their newspapers that the delegates possessed popular support. Both editors published articles detailing the oaths of loyalty taken at the National Assembly following Louis’s disappearance and recapture. Bache, for example, published a report of the oaths taken by members of the French National Guard, while Fenno’s paper included the news that “various bodies of citizens renewed their oaths to support the constitution this day [July 2]; among others a deputation from the *Hôtel des Invalides*, also 800 students from the university of Paris with their preceptors at their head.”⁵⁹ In addition to oaths, the National Assembly received numerous letters from throughout France swearing loyalty to the Revolution and its government, as Fenno further noted: “‘We [the National Assembly] have been effectually seconded by the dispositions of the citizens. The sentiments of the people are every where the same as at Paris; their deportment is magnanimous, yet tranquil. We have every where experienced testimonies of respect and confidence in the National Assembly.’ Letters from different departments were then read, all breathing an entire devotion to the decrees of the National Assembly.”⁶⁰ To an American audience, accustomed to a republic in which the right to govern came from the people,

⁵⁸ Bache, *GA*, 299.3 (September 14, 1791).

⁵⁹ Bache, *GA*, 283.3 (August 26, 1791); Fenno, *GUS*, III.39.155 (September 10, 1791).

⁶⁰ Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.138 (August 27, 1791).

the fact that the National Assembly received so many displays of popular support in the wake of the King's flight was a further source of legitimacy for it. By highlighting these oaths of loyalty, editors such as Bache and Fenno demonstrated that the National Assembly was not only founded upon American principles, but also that its right to rule was backed by the French people.

In endorsing the National Assembly's efforts so strongly, Bache and Fenno undoubtedly moved Americans towards French republicanism, even if they did not explicitly call for the formation of a French republic during the fall of 1791. This was further achieved through articles demonstrating that the French had lost their attachment to their monarchy, discussing the possibility of republicanism in France, vilifying despotism, and criticizing Louis XVI. As the other piece to the articles highlighting the loyalty of the French people toward the National Assembly, Fenno and Bache ran a number of articles emphasizing Louis's loss of popular support during this period of time. For example, to explain the lack of rioting in Paris the morning the King's disappearance was discovered, Bache published a letter which suggested that the French people were largely indifferent to it: "At first the consternation was general, and every body expected universal uproar and confusion in this immense and populous capital: But upon further consideration every individual on the side of the good cause, said, 'well he is gone, good bye.'⁶¹ While accounts that Fenno chose to publish suggested that popular reaction to the King's flight was stronger than Bache's letter-writer presented it, the message in it was the same: "Since the King has abandoned what he owed to his high situation, let us trample upon the ensigns of royalty!"⁶² In both Fenno's and Bache's papers, readers discovered that news of the royal family's disappearance immediately led the Parisian people to a strong anti-monarchical

⁶¹ Bache, *GA*, 282.3 (August 25, 1791).

⁶² Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.137-138 (August 27, 1791).

position. Whatever respect Louis XVI had commanded prior to the morning of June 21 had disappeared with him.

Moreover, Fenno and Bache make it clear that this growing anti-monarchism remained strong amongst the Parisian people following the capture of the King. As an article reprinted by Bache from a London paper revealed, the reception of the royal family when they returned to Paris on June 25 was cool:

The National Guards, who escorted them, preserved a silent and sullen respect, while many of the people, who flocked to see the procession, reviled them from a distance, in terms loud enough to be heard. When they entered Paris, the Commissioners who preceded them, were received with acclamations; but the King and Queen were suffered to pass along in solemn and melancholy stillness uncheered even by looks of reverence or affection.⁶³

No longer were Louis XVI and his family figures deserving of respect, at least in Paris.

Criticisms, previously confined to radical newspapers, were voiced out loud and the pageantry which traditionally accompanied royal processions evaporated. In subsequent weeks, this anti-monarchism drifted towards republicanism, at least in some French circles. On September 7, for example, Fenno reported that the Jacobin Club and its allies were spreading petitions, “the object of which is, without any disguise, to demand the abolishment of monarchy, and the establishment of a republican government.”⁶⁴ Similarly, a report from Paris published a month after news of the flight first arrived declared that the Parisian newspapers “now openly plead the cause of republicanism,” revealing that the idea was quickly spreading through the city.⁶⁵ While Beatrice F. Hyslop asserts that the flight of the King was the moment when Americans first called for the proclamation of the French Republic and Marcus Daniel argues that Fenno took

⁶³ Bache, *GA*, 284.3 (August 27, 1791). A letter published by Fenno offered a similar vision of the royal family’s return to Paris, referencing the fact that “no one pulled off his hat to the King” and that “the soldiers too did not appear under recovered arms, but, on the contrary, with their muskets shouldered, thus shewing that they were not there to do honor to, but to ascertain the surety of, the Royal Family.” Fenno, *GUS*, III.36.142-143 (August 31, 1791).

⁶⁴ Fenno, *GUS*, III.38.149 (September 7, 1791).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, III.44.173-174 (September 28, 1791).

this perspective privately, neither Bache nor Fenno explicitly did so in their newspapers in the fall of 1791.⁶⁶ That being said, by chronicling the development of anti-monarchism and republicanism in France, American editors presented the French Republic as a distinct possibility to their readership.

In addition to demonstrating that anti-monarchism and republicanism were blossoming in France in the summer of 1791, Fenno and Bache published occasional criticisms Louis XVI's decision to flee. While these attacks were certainly not on the same scale as those appearing in Revolutionary France, they nevertheless alienated American readers from the French monarch, placing him squarely in the wrong. By reprinting an article from a British paper, both editors, for example, highlighted the weakness of the French monarch during the flight, suggesting that his infamous appetite caused his family to be captured: "The King's escape was conducted with great art and management. He had sufficient law given him, but he preferred good eating and drinking upon the road tho' at the hazard of being overtaken."⁶⁷ The editors also published numerous articles criticizing monarchy as a form of governance more broadly, likely tapping into American Revolutionary traditions of anti-monarchism. A series of articles highlighted the evils of monarchy, suggesting that it led to the suffering of generations of French people through its oppressive nature. An article reprinted by Bache from an English paper, for example, contrasted the sympathy which conservative European papers showed Louis XVI with their coldness towards the masses:

Since their [the Royal family's] flight and capture, their misfortunes are the theme of every ministerial printer in England.... The disappointment and mortification

⁶⁶ While Daniel argues that John Fenno came to endorse republicanism as a result of the flight, he states that Bache backed the idea of a constitutional monarchy until the proclamation of the French Republic in August 1792. Hyslop, "The American Press and the French Revolution of 1789," 85; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 47-48, 119.

⁶⁷ Bache, *GA*, 298.3 (September 13, 1791). For more examples of critiques of Louis XVI's appetite reprinted in American papers, see Bache, *GA*, 284.3 (August 27, 1791); Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.138 (August 27, 1791), III.39.154 (September 10, 1791), III.47.186 (October 8, 1791).

of one man and his wife so sensibly affect these tender-hearted gentlemen, as to make them shed tears by the gallon; whereas they cannot spare a single sigh or tear for the unspeakable miseries, under which 25,000,000 of Frenchmen groaned, during the existence of despotism!⁶⁸

Thus, Bache tied compassion for Louis with the despots and aristocrats of Europe, implicitly suggesting that true republicans would side instead with the National Assembly and the French people. In this way, he, and other American editors, pushed their readers to see Louis XVI as a traitor and enemy of the liberty and happiness of the French people, depicting his flight as the latest in a long line of deceptions.

Through such articles, Fenno and Bache connected Louis XVI's flight to events worldwide, depicting it as part of a larger struggle between the forces of despotism and liberty. Reacting to the monarch's flight, for example, Fenno observed that "at the present moment a principle of enthusiasm in the cause of liberty appears to have taken possession of the minds of the great body of the people—and actuated by one impulse, in whatever shape or form the ancient tyranny appears, it is instantaneously resisted."⁶⁹ Through this language, Fenno lifted the struggle of the French Revolution beyond the borders of the nation, relating it to the worldwide "cause of liberty" and contrasting it with not only the "tyranny" of Old Regime France, but also of Europe more broadly. This trend became a central feature of American reports on Louis XVI's flight, as a second article reprinted from London revealed: "We seem to have at length reached the happy aera, when all the Gothic governments throughout Europe, are to vanish, and make room for governments founded on justice and reason, and conformable to the grand objects, for which societies were originally instituted. Despotism and Feudality are now at their last gasp.

⁶⁸ Bache, *GA*, 291.3 (September 5, 1791). For further examples, see Fenno, *GUS*, III.36.141-142 (August 31, 1791); Bache, *GA*, 290.3 (September 3, 1791).

⁶⁹ Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.139 (August 27, 1791).

Mankind are determined to be no longer led like a herd of brutes.”⁷⁰ Thus, American editors encouraged their readers to view events in France on a much larger scale, connecting the actions of the National Assembly to American Revolution-inspired principles and Louis XVI to the corruption and despotism of the European past. In this struggle, there was no question where American sympathies ought to lie.

While a push towards a French Republic certainly emerged in both Fenno’s and Bache’s papers following Louis XVI’s flight, their confidence in the French people was limited. When it came to the reaction of the French people to the royal family’s disappearance, the portrait American editors created were mixed. Some of the articles published extended the admirable response of the National Assembly to the people, concluding that Parisians were actually quite restrained in their reaction: “The greatest order has been observed and even the mob, without being positively ordered, has taken up arms and patrolled day and night in conjunction with the national guard, in order to keep peace and quiet; so that not the least mischief has been done.”⁷¹ That being said, the majority of articles discussing the situation of Paris on the morning of June 21 suggested that the people would have committed acts of violence had they not been restrained by the actions of the National Guard. A London article from August 27, for example, described the crowd’s readiness to execute those they suspected of aiding Louis XVI in his flight: “It was at first suspected that M. de la Fayette was privy to the design, for no sooner was the King’s escape known, than he and Mons. Cazales were seized and held in confinement, until a deputation from the National Assembly rescued them. The people talked of no less than hanging

⁷⁰ Ibid., III.36.142 (August 31, 1791).

⁷¹ Bache, *GA*, 282.3 (August 25, 1791). For a second example see Bache, *GA*, 284.3 (August 27, 1791).

them, and would have kept their resolution, had not the presence of the troop protected them.”⁷²

Through such articles, Fenno and Bache questioned the motives and instincts of the Parisian people, suggesting that anarchy would have been the result of Louis XVI’s flight had bodies such as the National Assembly and National Guard not quickly stepped in to maintain order.

The “mobbishness” of the people was further emphasized in American newspapers through their treatment of the Champ de Mars massacre. When news of the massacre broke in late September 1791, American editors sympathized not with the French people, but with the National Guard and the two men executed by the mob. Fenno’s coverage, for example, declared the two murdered men to be “two unlucky creatures the mob first tried to hang, and then decapitated.... sacrificed to their merciless judges.”⁷³ Similarly, the Jacobin and Cordeliers Clubs were criticized for riling up the Parisian people as articles made a distinction between the orderly members of the club who fled when it radicalized and the mass of the “deluded” people. Feared as potential “tyrants over the Assembly,” the series of articles declared radical Assemblymen such as Maximilien Robespierre to be “Bankrupts” who reveled in the “den of anarchy and mischief.”⁷⁴ On the other hand, the National Guard and their leader, Lafayette, were the upholders of order and reason: “The Marquis de la Fayette, at the desire of the municipality, immediately marched a body of national guards (who to a man are true to the constitution) and, after some opposition from the mob, about a dozen of whom were killed and wounded, dispersed them; and that since the most perfect order has been preserved.”⁷⁵ The line drawn between the moderates of the National Assembly and National Guard and radical Parisian people in

⁷² Fenno, *GUS*, III.35.137-138 (August 27, 1791). Fenno’s newspaper also included an account of a “mock parade of the King’s Arms” in which the people angrily trampled them, while Bache described the Parisians’ desire to lynch soldiers responsible for guarding the King. Bache, *GA*, 281.2 (August 24, 1791).

⁷³ Fenno, *GUS*, III.43.169 (September 24, 1791).

⁷⁴ Fenno, *GUS*, III.44.174-175 (September 28, 1791); Bache, *GA*, 308.3 (September 24, 1791).

⁷⁵ Fenno, *GUS*, III.44.175 (September 28, 1791).

American newspapers reveals that Americans followed a relatively moderate course in their support of the French Revolution. In the fall of 1791, editors rejected behaviors they deemed too “radical,” such as the involvement of the Parisian masses in calling for the King’s resignation, and upheld the work of more “establishment” bodies. This perspective was likely furthered by the presence of Lafayette, a hero in the United States thanks to his involvement in the American Revolution and friendship with George Washington, on the side of the National Guard. For Americans, the idea that Lafayette could be on the wrong side of the French Revolutionary struggle was inconceivable in the fall of 1791.

In addition to the role that shock played in limiting the reaction of the American public to the French King’s flight and its fallout, the lack of discussion in the newspapers is also attributable to the complex political situation of 1791-America. With the rise of the First Party System, Americans had plenty to digest in the sphere of domestic politics. The first session of Congress, which ended March 1791, had had an impressive seven months, organizing the executive and judicial branches, establishing national revenue, and pushing forward the creation of the Bill of Rights.⁷⁶ Despite facing a host of challenges, the First Congress had managed to avoid the threat of political parties, against which an article written for Fenno’s paper warned in October 1791: “Party is the engine by which the worst characters often work themselves into popular favor.... The maxim of party is, that the *end* justifies the *means*—hence a sacrifice of honor and honesty are the almost universal result of bandying with a party.... It is almost impossible that a party man should be dispassionate, disinterested or sincere. The collision of parties is destructive of the public happiness.”⁷⁷ Thus, Americans of the 1790s believed that

⁷⁶ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 1.

⁷⁷ Fenno, *GUS*, III.45.179 (October 1, 1791); Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 5.

parties led to antagonism, extremism, and the rise of demagogues, destroying the virtues necessary for good governance.

Despite American fears of political parties, they developed over the course of 1791 and were rooted in the divisions amongst the men who had pushed to adopt state conventions in the 1780s and participated in the First Congress in 1789. The divisions began on the Washington cabinet, where Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson faced off against Vice President John Adams and Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, and soon traveled to the House of Representatives, where James Madison backed Jefferson, while men such as Fisher Ames (Massachusetts), Theodore Sedgwick (Massachusetts), and William Loughton Smith (South Carolina) espoused Hamiltonian ideology. At its heart, the debate between the parties was not over money matters, politics, or foreign policy, but rather over conflicting visions of how to stabilize the republic and secure the achievements of the American Revolution.⁷⁸ As historian Philipp Ziesche explains, supporters of Jefferson envisioned “the popular repudiation of all forms of coercive governmental power” embodied by the principles of 1776, while Federalists were children of the Revolution of 1787, backing “the peaceful redistribution and centralization of state power until the guidance of a national elite.”⁷⁹

The Federalists were headed by Hamilton, Adams, and John Jay and appealed to those who supported an “energetic” government to further America’s commercial interests and provide the nation with stability. As Treasury Secretary, Hamilton envisioned an economy in which agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing worked together to support one another and were further backed by the existence of federal infrastructure including a National Bank.⁸⁰ In addition, the Federalists envisioned a powerful federal government dominated by a strong executive. At

⁷⁸ Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson*, 93; Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 1, 8.

⁷⁹ Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 23.

⁸⁰ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 5-6; Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson*, 90-91.

the start of Washington's presidency, Hamilton's greatest political concern was to ensure the permanence of the federal system. To the Treasury Secretary, a strong central government was the only means of defending America's interests: he doubted the ability of individual states to respond to national issues and questioned the wisdom of the people.⁸¹

On the other hand, Republicans such as Madison, Jefferson, Albert Gallatin, Aaron Burr, and William Branch Giles favored simplicity, frugality, and equality in government, opposing government action to encourage economic development and trusting more strongly in the ability of the people to actively participate.⁸² While ideological differences had previously separated Jefferson and Madison, they were largely smoothed over by mid-1791 as both men endorsed Thomas Paine's recent arguments in favor of social equality and rejected Hamilton's fiscal policies. Andrew Burstein and Nancy Isenberg explain: "A new militancy in the political world served to deemphasize the remaining differences between Madison and Jefferson, as the methods of Alexander Hamilton rankled both of them equally."⁸³ Madison began his attacks on Hamilton by questioning the constitutionality of the Bank, developing the Republican perspective that the Constitution ought to be strictly followed. In addition, the Republicans took issue with the "excessive" power with which Hamilton invested the federal government and executive. Considering the ease with which America had just transitioned from a monarchy to a republic, Jefferson and Madison feared that their nation's government could easily regress if an overly strengthened federal government was allowed to grow unchecked.⁸⁴ Indeed, on returning to America in the spring of 1790, Jefferson believed that he already detected British behaviors in the American people and in the government's emergence as the guardian of order and property

⁸¹ Brookhiser, *Alexander Hamilton*, 77; Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson*, 90-91.

⁸² Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 6-7.

⁸³ Burstein & Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson*, 225.

⁸⁴ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 17-18, 20.

rather than of revolutionary ideals. The number of parallels between the British model and Hamilton's vision of governance led the Secretary of State to worry that the corruption and decay of Europe would soon be established in America.⁸⁵

Unsurprisingly, divisions over politicians' political and economic visions for the future of America also tended to align with differences over foreign policy. The debate dated back to the First Congress, where Madison sought to push through pro-French trading policies only to have them defeated in the Hamiltonian-aligned Senate, which backed the idea of a closer American alliance with Britain. Placing the recent history of the American Revolution in the past, Federalists recognized that American trade, one of the backbones of Hamilton's fiscal plan, was heavily dependent on Britain and were skeptical about their country's ability to survive without British commerce. Thus, their ultimate foreign-policy goal was to heal the breach between Britain and the United States so as to encourage the demilitarization of the Canadian border and the removal of trade barriers between the two countries.⁸⁶

On the other hand, as Madison's actions at the First Congress suggested, Republicans sought a closer alliance with France. It was impossible to deny that Britain was America's key trading partner in the early 1790s; however, Republicans believed that the situation did not need to remain so. Considering their nation's relationship with its former mother country, they concluded that Britain would suffer more than America if the United States declared a commercial war: Britain provided mostly luxuries to America, and the essentials it did provide could easily be acquired through trade with another nation. Ending the British trade monopoly would also free American debtors from British creditors and allow Americans to engage more

⁸⁵ Such parallels included Hamilton's treatment of the debt, his creation of a centralized national bank, the existence of nationally-subsidized manufacturers, and Federal plans for a standing army. Kaplan, *Jefferson and France*, 37-38; Elkins & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 19.

⁸⁶ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 29-31; McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton*, 269.

with the French, amongst whom American exports were actually more profitable. Furthermore, given Britain history as America's main political enemy and France's role as their close friend and ally, a reshuffling of America's trade partnerships seemed a natural thing to do.⁸⁷

The Republican push to trade with France only increased with the outbreak of the French Revolution and the growth of republican spirit in the nation following the flight of the King. To Jefferson and his followers, the French Revolution was a "humanitarian struggle," founded on the same goals of liberty and the pursuit of happiness which drove the American Republic. Describing the Secretary of State's perspective on the Revolution from 1789 to 1793, biographer Conor Cruise O'Brien explains that Jefferson considered it "inherently impeccable," placing it on the same sacred level as the Declaration of Independence as part of "the holy cause of freedom."⁸⁸ For Jefferson in particular, this connection with the French Revolution was just as much personal as political: the Virginian was strongly influenced in the 1790s by the friendships he had formed while minister in Paris with men including Lafayette, Condorcet, La Rouchefoucauld, and DuPont de Nemours. The pro-Americanism and liberal desires of these men, some of the leading figures of the constitutional monarchy-phase of the French Revolution, led Jefferson to bestow a great deal of trust in the French Revolution, a sentiment which he never fully let go, even following the execution of Louis XVI and the violence of the Terror.⁸⁹

While the vast majority of the American public adopted Jefferson's idyllic vision of the French Revolution in its first three years, early skeptics of the Revolution existed amongst the Federalist leadership. Vice President John Adams, for example, questioned the revolutionaries' goals of leveling all aristocratic distinctions in his controversial *Discourses on Davila* (1790).

⁸⁷ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 29-30; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 131, Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson*, 91.

⁸⁸ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 6-7; O'Brien, *Long Affair*, 81.

⁸⁹ Elkins & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 210.

Published in stages in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* and reprinted by Federalist-leaning editors such as Fenno, Adams predicted in his *Discourses* that the French emphasis on equality would lead to “anarchy and chaos,” while the eradication of the nobility would leave the country defenseless against despotism. To back this negative take on events in France, Adams argued that only some nations were truly suited for self-government, contrasting America’s two-centuries of experience with it to France’s history of absolutism. As R.R. Bernstein explains, Adams believed that the French “lacked the knowledge and habits to make a republic work.”⁹⁰

Adams was joined in his skepticism by Alexander Hamilton, whose uneasiness about the French Revolution was evident as early as October 1789. In a letter written to Lafayette, Hamilton spoke of his ambiguous sentiments towards events in France: “I have seen, with a mixture of pleasure and apprehension, the progress of the events which have lately taken place in your country. As a friend to mankind and to liberty, I rejoice in the efforts which you are making to establish it, while I fear much for the final success of the attempts.” Seeking to explain himself to Lafayette, the Treasury Secretary described his fears of disagreements amongst National Assemblymen, “the vehement character” of the French people, “the interested refractoriness” of the nobility, and “the reveries of your philosophic politicians,” accustomed to intellectual exercises but unused to the demands of practical governance.⁹¹ As the French Revolution progressed and circumstances in France confirmed these early fears, Hamilton’s opposition to the Revolution grew. He actively pushed to end the Franco-American alliance, questioning whether the United States could truly rely on France if war with Britain broke out. As the Revolution radicalized in the wake of the King’s flight, Hamilton increasingly dreaded the

⁹⁰ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 36; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 49; Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson*, 92-93.

⁹¹ Alexander Hamilton to Lafayette, 6 October 1789, in *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, vol. IX, ed. Henry Cabot Lodge, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 459-460.

impact that war in Europe would have on his fiscal plan, particularly in light of America's alliance with the increasingly unstable French nation.⁹²

Thus the French Revolution exacerbated the divisions amongst American leaders, with Republicans embracing the Revolution and Federalists wishing to distance their nation from it. These party lines were not yet evident in the fall of 1791 amongst the American public: as the coverage of Louis XVI's flight in American newspapers reveals, the people remained largely united in their vision of the French Revolution. Editors such as Fenno and Bache backed the moderates in the National Assembly during this era, moving the reading public towards the idea of a French Republic, while still expressing doubts about the excesses of the French mob. Through the course of 1792, however, the divisions between the Republicans and the Federalists over foreign policy gradually drifted down to the American people as these newspaper editors became increasingly politicized through their ties with national politicians. While this was yet to happen in the fall of 1791, the foundations for future arguments over the nature and meaning of the French Revolution in America were being laid during this period on the Washington cabinet and in Congress. For Hamiltonians, the King's flight seriously compromised French stability by drawing into question the entire idea of a constitutional monarchy, while the violence and radicalization of the Parisian populace confirmed fears about the predisposition of the people towards anarchy. On the other hand, politicians with a Jeffersonian outlook regarded the flight as a reason for greater optimism about France's future: it ushered in the final fall of one of Europe's ancient despotisms and demonstrated the ability of the National Assembly to govern.

⁹² Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 33, 37.

Chapter Two. “Between Republicanism and Anti-Republicanism”:
August 10, the September Massacres, the Proclamation of the French Republic, & Valmy (1792)

In comparing Philip Freneau’s *National Gazette* and John Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States* from the fall of 1792, two major points of difference emerge: the growth of a “party” perspective and the divergence in the types of sources on which the two editors relied for international news. During this period, John Fenno increasingly aligned with Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists in political orientation and, when seeking foreign news, drew most heavily on British sources. On the other hand, Philip Freneau stayed true to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson’s vision for his newspaper, defending the Republican perspective domestically and running as many French sources as he could find, a process streamlined by virtue of the fact that Jefferson shared materials from his office with Freneau’s paper.⁹³ Both of these factors strongly influenced the way in which the editors presented events in France to Americans such as the flight of Lafayette, the uprising of August 10, and the September Massacres.

Fenno, following the lead of British sources and the Federalist conservatism regarding popular involvement in government, offered a perspective on the French Revolution which was increasingly pessimistic. His criticism of the activities of the Parisian “mob” was sharp, and he included numerous accounts of their violence. Moreover, the Federalist editor increasingly sympathized with victims of the Revolution: during the fall of 1792, the *Gazette of the United States* contained kind words for the refractory clergy, the Swiss Guard, noble victims of the September Massacres, and even the French king and royal family. Ultimately, the violence of August and September 1792 increased Fenno’s doubts about the abilities of the National Assembly delegates to lead their country. The positive perspective of the Assembly’s work,

⁹³ O’Brien, *Long Affair*, 83; Pasley, “*Tyranny of the Printers*,” 60-62; Smith, *Press, Politics, and Patronage*, 14-15, 18.

which he had previously put forth during the flight of Louis XVI, was replaced in the fall of 1792 by an increasingly ambiguous vision of the Revolution's future.

On the other hand, Freneau's take on the Revolution during this time remained generally optimistic. Freneau by no means endorsed the violence of August 10 and early September 1792; however, his *National Gazette* offered numerous excuses for the behavior of the mob. The Republican was much more vocal in highlighting the idea that news reports were likely sensationalized and strongly influenced by their source of origin. Furthermore, he articulated arguments which excused some of the violence in France as an inherent feature of revolution. While never fully condoning the attacks on the Swiss Guard at the Tuileries and the prison massacres several weeks later, Freneau suggested that the overreactions were understandable in light of pressures put upon the French by the treachery of Louis XVI and the march of the Duke of Brunswick and his allies towards Paris.

Ultimately, both editors still believed in the principles at the heart of the French Revolution, as their shared excitement at news of the French victory at Valmy revealed. The proclamation of the French Republic and its military success reminded Fenno and Freneau that the cause of the French Revolution was a universal movement with clear connections to the "American experiment." That being said, a distinct split was evident between these two editors by the fall of 1792. Freneau depicted more of a willingness to embrace the people and the Jacobins, in testament to his strongly Jeffersonian orientation, while Fenno, who shared the Federalists' fears of an overactive people and too much democracy, presented his readers with an increasingly uncertain vision of the French Revolution.

The political divisions between the Federalists and the Republicans in the federal government in 1790-1791 led to a growing interest amongst politicians in the sphere of print,

giving rise in turn to the “Newspaper Wars.” Hamilton, for example, developed an active interest in the *Gazette of the United States*, recognizing the platform that a newspaper under his pay would provide for his Federalist views. He provided Fenno with printing business through the United States Treasury and covering Fenno’s expenses at least twice in 1790 and 1791.⁹⁴ Despite his connections with Hamilton, Fenno maintained cordial relations with Jefferson and Madison for the first two years of the French Revolution, and the Secretary of State actually arranged for Fenno to print extracts from the *Gazette de Leyde* in his paper so as to combat the reliance of most American newspapers on British sources.⁹⁵ Jefferson, however, grew frustrated with Fenno’s increasing unwillingness to print excerpts from the materials he provided. Furthermore, the Republican was alienated by Fenno’s willingness to publish pro-Federalist materials, such as John Adams’s anti-revolutionary “Discourses on Davila.” The goal of Fenno’s *Gazette* was to aggressively defend the American federal government and shape public opinion to support it so as to draw the nation together and cultivate a truly national identity.⁹⁶ With the rise of Federalism within the Washington administration by 1791, Jefferson and Madison were alarmed by Fenno’s mission, questioning whether the people were being misled.

Faced with the combined forces of Hamilton and Fenno, Jefferson and Madison concluded by 1791 that more active steps needed to be taken to ensure that Americans were properly informed about domestic and international affairs. In the early 1790s, the majority of American newspaper editors followed Fenno in holding pro-Washingtonian, Federalist sympathies.⁹⁷ In particular, Madison and Jefferson were concerned that such newspapers lacked

⁹⁴ Smith, *Press, Politics, and Patronage*, 13-14; Pasley, “*Tyranny of the Printers*,” 58.

⁹⁵ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 7.

⁹⁶ Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Long Affair*, 83; Pasley, “*Tyranny of the Printers*,” 51-52, 60-62; Daniel, *Scandal and Civility*, 28-30.

⁹⁷ William Nesbit Chambers, *Political Parties in a New Nation: The American Experience 1776-1809*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 42.

the critical lens necessary for keeping the government in check: free government required active scrutiny of the state through public opinion, and it was the job of newspapers to inspire this popular engagement.⁹⁸ The deciding moment came in April 1791, when Jefferson ruffled the feathers of Hamilton and Adams through an endorsement of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, declaring it an "ideological litmus test" to separate republicans from aristocrats, and labeling the two Federalists—Adams directly and Hamilton indirectly—sources of "political heresies."⁹⁹ Many Americans were absolutely horrified by Jefferson's pointed attack as the intent behind it seemed to be the rabble-rousing "danger of disturbing the public tranquility, by interesting too strongly the public passions" which James Madison had warned against in "Number 49" of his *Federalist Papers*.¹⁰⁰ In testament to American discomfort with such overt politicking, Bache ran a reprint from the Boston-based *Independent Chronicle* in September 1791 which criticized Jefferson for his *Rights of Man* endorsement: "The enlightened citizens of the United States, feel an indignation on reading the abusive publications against the Vice-President.... I feel for my country, and resent the scandalous abuse thrown out against one of its first citizens and benefactors."¹⁰¹ Through this article, "An American" highlighted the fact that American readers had already grown frustrated with political attacks, believing that they had no place in American politics.

⁹⁸ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 95-96; Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 41, 62-63.

⁹⁹ The publication of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* in America in May 1791 was a major turning point in the nation's political climate: it was the first time that Washington was accused of a lack of republican spirit. Prior to this point, John Adams was the only member of the administration accused of "aristocracy." Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 39-40; Brookhiser, *Alexander Hamilton*, 105; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 72-73.

¹⁰⁰ James Madison, "Number 49," in *The Federalist Papers*, by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, & James Madison, edited by George W. Carey & James McClellan, (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund Inc., 2001), 262.

¹⁰¹ While Bache emerged as an editor with strong Republican sympathies in 1792, when this particular article was published in 1791 he was not yet politicized. His condemnation of Jefferson was not a personal attack on the Secretary of States, but rather a criticism of his party-politicking measures more broadly, in line with the anti-party spirit of eighteenth-century America. Bache, *GA*, 294.3 (September 8, 1791). For a second example of American criticism of Thomas Jefferson's *Rights of Man* letter see Fenno, *GUS*, IV.39.153 (October 13, 1792).

Nevertheless, newspaper party divisions continued to deepen, particularly with the emergence of Philip Freneau's *National Gazette* as the first truly Republican newspaper in the nation. Jefferson had initially approached Bache in April 1791 about the possibility of developing his paper into an opponent of Fenno's, however, the daily format of his *General Advertiser* made it a poor fit for Jefferson's vision, so the Secretary of State and Madison began a search for an editor outside the print trade with a strong intellect and good reputation.¹⁰² After a several-month search, the Virginian duo ultimately hired Philip Freneau for the position, with the first edition of his controversial *National Gazette* appearing October 31, 1791.¹⁰³ Freneau's rise as an editor ushered in a new era of newspaper partisanship and mud-slinging, as his paper soon emerged as a mouthpiece through which Madison and Jefferson could attack Adams, Hamilton, and Federalist ideology more generally. Freneau and his contributors, who included Madison, House of Representatives clerk John Beckley, Attorney General Edmund Randolph, and Virginia Senator James Monroe, sought to encourage the development of a "coherent opposition party," around which critics of Washington's administration's policies could rally. Through the *National Gazette*, the editor developed concise ideological points for the party platform, including anti-aristocratic rhetoric from the American Revolution era, and claimed the title of "republican," which suggested that only men of a Jeffersonian persuasion truly cared about the good of the American people.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the headquarters of the *National Gazette* actually became

¹⁰² Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 63; Smith, *Press, Politics, and Patronage*, 14-15.

¹⁰³ Philip Freneau was an old acquaintance of James Madison: he had been Madison's college roommate at the College of New Jersey. Prior to entering the service of the Republicans, Freneau had worked as a poet and sea captain. During the American Revolution, he served as an editor at the Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal* under Francis Bailey (1781), endorsing the Americans during the latter days of the American Revolution and the Pennsylvania radicals in the debate over the state Constitution. After several years in Jamaica, Freneau reentered the field of publishing under Francis Childs in 1790 as an editor for the New York *Daily Advertiser*, inspired by the writings of Thomas Paine. In addition to his work on the *National Gazette*, Jefferson employed Freneau as a translator for the State Department. Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 63-66; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 66, 70-72, 76.

¹⁰⁴ Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 67-68; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 64; Brookhiser, *Alexander Hamilton*, 108.

Philadelphia's center for French Revolution activity in 1792-1793: Freneau's office served as a meeting place for French sympathizers and he collected funds to send to France as an agent for the French Society of Patriots of America.¹⁰⁵ In this way, Freneau's newspaper played a central role in providing a foothold in America not only for Jeffersonian Republican ideology, but for the French Revolution itself.

Much of the party cohesion which the *National Gazette* provided in 1792 took the form of harsh criticisms against Alexander Hamilton and his Federalist agenda. In the first month of his paper's existence, Freneau was not particularly political in his news coverage; however, the tone began to change in December 1791, when he launched a series of attacks on the opening of the American courts to British creditors of American debtors.¹⁰⁶ The politicization of the *National Gazette* picked up dramatically in 1792, though the editor initially faced a challenge of appealing to Americans when his anti-establishment rhetoric had much in common with that of the hated Anti-Federalists of the late 1780s. A financial crisis in March 1792 gave Freneau's newspaper the opportunity to circumvent this association: for the first time, the newspaper began to distinguish clearly between "advocates of aristocracy" and "loyal republicans," casting Hamilton as the former and Jefferson as the latter. Thus through James Madison's "Brutus" letters, the first of which appeared on March 15, 1792, Freneau's newspaper declared Hamilton's funding system a sign of his greater plans to create an aristocracy in America.¹⁰⁷ During the fall of 1792, this rhetoric continued, repeating the points made by "Brutus" in the spring, but also rebutting anti-Jeffersonian points articulated in Federalist newspapers such as Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*. An article published in December, for example, declared the division in American politics as one over republican spirit:

¹⁰⁵ O'Brien, *Long Affair*, 123.

¹⁰⁶ McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton*, 240-241.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 85-86, 88; Elkins, & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 283.

The question in America is no longer between federalist and anti-federalism, but between republicanism and anti-republicanism.... It is now sufficiently clear, also, that some who have passed under the name of federalists, have views far beyond those of the friends to the constitution in its present form. They have embraced it, because they looked on it as a promising essay towards a system of anti-republican orders... A language in praise of monarchical and aristocratical institutions, and in derogation of our republican systems, which would not have been whispered a few years past, is becoming so familiar in certain scenes as scarcely to call forth observation. In this posture and prospect of things, all true friends to liberty ought to be on their constant guard against insidious attempts to divide them by an abuse of names, and to unite firmly in checking the career of monarchy, by bearing testimony against its advocates, keeping continually in mind that it is not a question now between federalism and anti-federalism, but between republicanism and anti-republicanism.¹⁰⁸

Thus, the author of this passage highlighted the fact that the American political scene was divided between two new parties, distinct from the debate over the United States Constitution: the true “Republican” party of the people, and the aristocratic Federalists who assumed a front of republicanism to hide their true endeavors. In this way, the rhetoric of republicanism served as a central feature which Freneau and his contributors used to attack Hamilton and his allies during this era.¹⁰⁹

For his part, Alexander Hamilton did not sit idly by: in the summer of 1792 he launched his counteroffensive against the Jeffersonian Republicans, relying on Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States* as his primary weapon. In what became known as the “Newspaper War” of 1792, Hamilton penned a series of letters and newspaper articles criticizing elements of Republican ideology, as well as individuals associated with the party. Hamilton began by sparring with Philip Freneau as “T.L.” in July 1792, but soon shifted his sights to Jefferson in August 4, targeting the Secretary of State for his controversial sponsorship of Freneau, his half-hearted

¹⁰⁸ Philip Freneau, *National Gazette*, II.10.39 (December 1, 1792), in America’s Historical Newspapers, <http://www.newsbank.com/redex/?content=96>. This article was originally published in the *American Daily Advertiser* (New York).

¹⁰⁹ While the French Revolution reinvigorated the “republican” versus “aristocrat” dichotomy in American political rhetoric in the 1790s, it was actually deeply rooted in Anglo-American culture. In the 1760s and 1770s, for example, revolutionaries had used anti-aristocratic language to justify their rebellion, and the term “aristocrat” continued to be used in the 1780s as a means of targeting political elitism. Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 63-65.

support for the Constitution, and his willingness to sacrifice “his country’s financial honor” through shady financial dealings as minister to France.¹¹⁰ Writing as “Catullus” on September 29, 1792 in the *Gazette of the United States*, for example, Hamilton unleashed an onslaught of vitriol against the Republicans. Through his connection with the *National Gazette*, “Catullus” accused Jefferson of rabble-rousing, suggesting that his behavior was undermining American progress: “Yet his [Jefferson’s] Gazette (which may fairly be regarded as the mirror of his views)... has at length told us in plain and triumphant terms that ‘the funding system has had its day;’ and very clearly, if not expressly, that it is the object of the party to overthrow it. The American, then, has justly, and from sufficient data, inferred, that Mr. Jefferson’s politics, whatever may be the motives of them, *tend* to national disunion, insignificance, disorder and discredit.”¹¹¹ Through such articles, Hamilton added to the strife present in Philadelphia newspapers of the summer and fall of 1792, further politicizing the public sphere by providing a counter to the Republican ideology of the *National Gazette*. In this way, the “Newspaper War” exposed readers to the rapidly sharpening divisions taking place at the heart of the Federal government and encouraged Fenno’s and Freneau’s evolution into partisan journalists.

In addition to the obvious presence of political partisanship in Philadelphia newspapers of 1792, the varying points of origin for Fenno’s and Freneau’s news sources was a second factor which shaped their presentations and interpretations of events in France during this era. The legacy of colonial printing practices meant that editors in the late eighteenth century tended to rely most heavily on Britain for foreign news reports. In addition to the obvious linguistic

¹¹⁰ Brookhiser, *Alexander Hamilton*, 108; Burstein & Isenberg, *Madison and Jefferson*, 239; Elkins & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 284-285.

¹¹¹ In a nod to classical Greco-Roman republicanism, anonymous American authors were fond of using Roman monikers. Hamilton’s “Catullus,” for example, was a reference to a Roman poet of the first century BCE, while John Adams went by “Brutus.” Fenno, *GUS* IV.35.138 (September 29, 1792); Hyslop, “American Press and the French Revolution of 1789,” 81.

commonality, British sources tended to be more plentiful because Britain dominated trade with America. Continental European papers such as the *Révolutions de Paris*, the *Journal de Paris*, and the *Gazette de Leyde* were occasionally cited by American printers of this era; however, the most popular newspaper sources were based in London: the *London Evening Post*, the *World*, the *London Oracle*, the *Morning Herald*, the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *London Gazette*. Although editors also relied on letters and oral reports from Europe, these British newspapers tended to be the first sources they received about the events of the French Revolution. Thus, British coverage of and opinions on the French Revolution tended to dominate American papers, and were often integrated into the opinions of the American printers themselves.¹¹²

This reliance on British sources for news of the French Revolution was deeply troubling to Philip Freneau and his Republican sponsors. Indeed, Jefferson was originally motivated to push for the creation of a Republican paper out of concern that pro-French newspapers were not receiving enough coverage in America. Great Britain was home to numerous supporters of the French Revolution, particularly prior to the fall of 1792. However the growing presence of émigrés in England and the articulations of Edmund Burke's arguments against Thomas Paine and the French Revolution in the British press meant that it also contained voices critical of events in France.¹¹³ Thus, as part of his support for the *National Gazette*, Jefferson provided Freneau with regular doses of foreign newspapers and news from the State Office, though he never required the editor to write or include any specific content within his paper.¹¹⁴ For his part, Freneau took Jefferson's plans to heart and tended to rely more heavily than most other 1790s-American editors on French news sources for all of his coverage of the Revolution. As a result,

¹¹² Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution of 1789," 58; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 24.

¹¹³ Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution," 81-82.

¹¹⁴ Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 60-62; Smith, *Press, Politics, and Patronage*, 14-15, 18.

he largely abstained from publishing the most anti-French versions and interpretations of the violence of August and September 1792.

Both Fenno and Freneau were well aware that the information they received from Europe had a distinct spin to it, depending on its point of origin. For this reason, the two editors went to pains in their respective newspapers to justify the veracity of their reports. Freneau, for example, ran occasional articles criticizing the use of British sources for coverage of the French Revolution. In a piece published October 13, for example, he contrasted reports from Britain with oral accounts from France: “Many persons lately arrived from France, cannot help expressing their astonishment to find the accounts of French affairs, copied from British prints, so generally credited as they are; particularly those narratives of the horrid barbarities said to have been committed in France, and of the powerful opposition to the national proceedings.”¹¹⁵ Through such articles, Freneau challenged the validity of the news present in the papers of other American editors, emphasizing his place as a premier authority because he relied primarily on French sources. Moreover, the article permitted him to excuse at least some of the violence of August and September 1792 as a figment of anti-republican, British biases.

On the other hand, Fenno, who relied more heavily on British sources by this period, sought to defend his newspaper against Freneau’s accusations. He claimed, for example, to successfully avoid reports from Britain which were obviously anti-French in nature. On October 10, Fenno reprinted an article from a Boston-based Federalist editor which demonstrated the care he used in selecting reports of the insurrection of August 10: “In detailing the late intelligence from France, we have avoided, as much as possible the republication of the falshoods and absurdities of the English papers. Though we have not a favorable opinion of the Paris mob, we yet think them incapable of *drinking the bottled blood of the Swiss*—of *publicly eating the hearts*

¹¹⁵ Freneau, *NG*, I.100.399 (October 13, 1792).

plucked from the bosoms of the slaughtered guards,—or of other enormities with which they are charged.”¹¹⁶ By acknowledging the presence of these grotesque reports in British news briefs from the era and highlighting their unwillingness to run them, such editors sought to vindicate themselves from claims that they reproduced slander. What is more, they actually questioned whether other editors, such as Freneau, who relied heavily on French sources in their coverage of foreign affairs, actually received truthful reports. In early November, for example, Fenno ran a letter from “a gentleman at Dover” written August 25 which emphasized the fact that the French press was by no means free following the violence of August 10: “I speak to nothing but what was presented to my own eyes. Do not believe a word of any thing you see in the French paper; they dare publish nothing but what is calculated to support the present measures. Three editors, of what are called *aristocratic prints*, were massacred, and their presses destroyed, the day after *the day* [August 10].”¹¹⁷ Through this article, Fenno urged his readers to question the more mild reports of the violence of August 10 present in Freneau’s paper by emphasizing that the French press was not in fact free. In addition, the letter from Dover revealed the lack of republican spirit in revolutionary France, challenging the idea that the nation was moving towards a state of greater enlightenment and liberty.

In Fenno’s coverage of French events of August and September 1792, there is a growing sense of ambiguity about the progress and fate of the French Revolution absent from Freneau’s *National Gazette*. While this was in part a product of his reliance on British sources, it also reflected his growing connection with Federalist ideology and desire to introduce it to his readers. Variations in coverage regarding General Lafayette’s fate are one point where the differences between these two editors emerged. Lafayette was beloved in America thanks to his

¹¹⁶ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.41.162 (October 20, 1792).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.45.178 (November 3, 1792).

close friendship with George Washington and heroic service in the American Revolution: at the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, there were hopes that Lafayette would play an integral part in it. Furthermore, American editors generally championed the General as the Revolution unfolded, taking pains in 1791 to continue celebrating him, even in light of the King's flight and the Champ de Mars Massacre.¹¹⁸ As a result, when rumors that Lafayette's fate was uncertain emerged in America in mid-October 1792, Americans were deeply concerned about their beloved General. Charles Downer Hazen asserts that they largely ignored the contradiction between toasting the French Republic and praying for Lafayette, who was regarded in France as a traitor for defecting from the National Guard.¹¹⁹ This perspective is clear, to an extent, in both Fenno's and Freneau's coverage of the fate of Lafayette, particularly in their initial report of Lafayette's desertion on October 10, 1792, which also ran in Benjamin Franklin Bache's *General Advertiser*. The account went to great lengths to explain why Lafayette had abandoned the French, suggesting that he must only have done so under great duress:

That M. de La Fayette should desert the cause at the moment it most needed his support, is more incredible.... M. La Fayette, it is probable, receiving information of this decree [an accusation of treason by the National Assembly], before the arm of the Jacobin party could reach him, may have taken the resolution to escape their fury. The breach of the constitution by the Jacobins would not have been sufficient to have led him to abandon his country; but the command being taken from him by the ruling party, put it out of his power to be any longer serviceable, especially as his arrest was decreed, which might be followed by a summary trial, condemnation and perhaps death. An attempt to fly to this country as an asylum, would be extremely natural in such circumstances, and not unworthy of himself.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Fenno, *GUS*, I.54.214-215 (October 17, 1789), III.39.154 (September 10, 1791), III.44.175 (September 28, 1791); Bache, *GA*, 281.2 (August 24, 1791).

¹¹⁹ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 262-263.

¹²⁰ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.38.151 (October 10, 1792); Freneau, *NG*, I.99.395 (October 10, 1792).

Consulting their memories of Lafayette as a friend of liberty, Bache, Freneau, and Fenno all demonstrated a distinct willingness to make excuses for the General upon learning that he had deserted the cause of the French Revolution.

Throughout his coverage of the French Revolution in the fall of 1792, Fenno continued to excuse Lafayette's desertion, suggesting through his newspaper that it might be taken as a sign that the French Revolution's course had faltered. Shortly after initial news of the General's flight from France, for example, Fenno republished an article from the Boston-based *Columbian Centinel* which cautioned Americans not to judge Lafayette too quickly:

We wait in the momentary expectation of receiving a declaration from him, explaining his motives therein; and from the known Patriotism Integrity and love of Liberty, which have marked his character, since his first introduction to public life, there cannot be a doubt entertained, that it will give satisfaction to every mind not immoveably fixed by prejudice. As yet we have only seen his last transaction through the distorted medium of his inveterate enemies the Jacobines of Paris—and common justice requires we should wait his defence. As his conduct heretofore has been not only wholly irreproachable, but highly meritorious—we feel a degree of confidence, that in the issue of the investigation, his last proceedings will also be found not to merit censure.¹²¹

Through this article, Fenno reminded readers of Lafayette's goodness and dedication to liberty, setting him up against the Jacobins in a criticism of their behavior in dismissing the General and, less directly, as a potential attack on their trustworthiness. As news filtered in over the course of the fall, Fenno continued to come back to this perspective of Lafayette as an unfairly charged innocent. An article from November 3, for example, declared that Lafayette's "conduct was firm in the line of his political faith," while a later report from December 12 praised Lafayette as a moderate and opponent of aristocracy: "M. de la Fayette appears to be equally the aversion of the Aristocrats and Levellers, both of the old world and the new—It is well known that the French Aristocrats in America, as well as in Europe have always considered him as the enemy of every

¹²¹ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.43.171 (October 27, 1792).

species of tyranny—whether of the one, the few or the many.”¹²² In this way, reports in Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States* continued to praise Lafayette despite his flight from France, while at the same time begging the question of what the National Assembly’s accusation meant regarding its political stance. If the noble, liberty-minded Lafayette was truly an enemy of the French Revolution, what did that say about the men now leading the movement?

On the other hand, Freneau’s *National Gazette* offered a less rosy interpretation of Lafayette’s betrayal, which painted a more uncertain picture of the General. Unlike Fenno, whose discussion of Lafayette relied strongly on American responses to the General’s flight, Freneau published numerous articles detailing how the French regarded Lafayette. On October 13, for example, he published a report that “a number of the soldiers of M. de la Fayette’s army appeared at the bar of the national assembly, informing, that the general and chiefs had endeavoured to seduce them from their duty to the nation.”¹²³ Freneau continued with this theme of Lafayette as traitor, at least according to the French perspective. In November and December 1792, for example, he ran articles from France expressing the hatred of the French people towards Lafayette and accusing him of seeking to establish a military dictatorship: “Cloaking his ambition under an appearance of moderation, he found means to impose upon a number of citizens, and by every cunning art retarded the progress of the revolution.... He had the arrogance to dictate laws to the assembly, and sketch out the track in which they were to go.... A man whose ardent wish was to become Lord Protector of France, as Cromwell was of England...!”¹²⁴ Freneau walked a fine line here. Over the course of the fall of 1792, he repeatedly ran articles from France which presented Lafayette as a traitor, while never actually making the statement himself. Indeed, the most critical comments voiced by Americans in

¹²² Fenno, *GUS*, IV.45.179 (November 3, 1792), IV.56.223 (December 12, 1792).

¹²³ Freneau, *NG*, I.100.399 (October 13, 1792).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, II.10.39 (December 1, 1792), II.3.10 (November 7, 1792).

Freneau's paper presented the General as woefully misled, with his attachment to Louis XVI as his Achilles heel: "For Fayette is certainly an honest patriot; but his present attachment to royalty is not of a corrupt nature. He has been deceived by those, whose excessive and improper exaltation, gave them power over almost every person within their reach, when they chose to condescend."¹²⁵ Thus, Freneau sought to avoid the vitriol he would have likely received by condemning an American hero, while managing to also dodge the contradiction observed by Hazen of praising the French Revolution's progress but continuing to support Lafayette. Through a more ambiguous portrayal of Lafayette's behavior, the Republican editor also stood in contrast to Fenno, refusing to follow the Federalist editor's lead in praising Lafayette at the expense of the National Assembly.

As his support of Lafayette revealed, Fenno grew increasingly critical of the course of the French Revolution over the fall of 1792. This was particularly the case when it came to the violence of August 10 and early September. Through reports of the violence and American reactions, Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* expressed total horror at the executions which transpired. The first account of the massacre of the Swiss Guards at the Tuileries, published October 3, captured these initial sentiments. Included in the edition of the paper as a "postscript," the piece was brief, yet brought out themes which characterized later reports on the violence: "The Swiss Guards cut to pieces, and that the Queen and Dauphin had thrown themselves on the mercy of the National Assembly—This happened on the 10th August. The statues of all the Kings were thrown down, and every vestige of Royalty destroyed.... The National Assembly declares that the King is *suspended*; and that both himself and his family remain as hostages; and that the Assembly proceed to replace them."¹²⁶ Through this article, Fenno offered to his readers a first

¹²⁵ Ibid., II.2.7 (November 3, 1792).

¹²⁶ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.36.143 (October 3, 1792).

glimpse at the violence, emphasizing the butchering of the Swiss Guard, with no reference to the fact that French civilians also died in the struggle. Moreover, the language describing the fate of the King and royal family included a subtle degree of sympathy: they were refugees at “the mercy” of the revolutionary government. In this way, the initial article set up later presentations of the events of both August 10 and early September 1792.

In his characterization of the attack on the Tuileries and the September Massacres, Fenno was particularly preoccupied with the violence of the Parisian people. As a follow-up to the first account of August 10, Fenno offered increasingly detailed portrayals of the behavior of the people in October 1792, such as this account from Paris: “The mirrors, and part of the furniture in the Palace were destroyed.... Many of the citizens, by way of triumph, carried the bloody clothes of the Swiss on the points of their lances. Amidst these scenes of horror, the women shewed no signs of that sensibility natural to their sex, and many of them mixed boldly among the mob.”¹²⁷ Here, Fenno offered his readers the first of many portrayals of the manner in which the French people desecrated the bodies of their adversaries. Later editions of the newspaper described individuals mutilating and dragging the body of the Princess de Lamballe throughout Paris—“Previous to her death, the mob offered her every insult. Her thighs were cut across, and her bowels and heart torn from her, and for two days her mangled body was dragged through the streets”—and the mockery of Swiss Guardsmen’s corpses: “It was not uncommon to see men and women, after their own draught, put the bottles to the mouth of the dead lying in mangled heaps, with that spirit of furious sport which they have all along exhibited, crying—‘Here, take your last drink!—F—! Drink to the nation!’”¹²⁸ Through these attacks on the bodies of alleged

¹²⁷ Ibid., IV.37.146 (October 6, 1792).

¹²⁸ Ibid., IV.48.189 (November 14, 1792), IV.38.150 (October 10, 1792).

counterrevolutionaries, Fenno depicted the way in which the people of Paris completely lost control, failing to respect death itself.

Moreover, the use of gendered imagery in the characterization of the female members of the August 10 mob and the description of the suffering of the Princess de Lamballe highlighted the unnaturalness and sheer brutality of the Parisian mob on these two dates.¹²⁹ Through the *Gazette of the United States*, Fenno offered a vision of the mob as fundamentally unnatural and anarchic. As a gentleman in Dover observed to a friend in London: “Paris exhibits a scene of nothing but incoherency, confusion, and horror:--No money—no credit—no law—no order—no religion—no justice—no virtue!!! The executive power is, to all intents and purposes, lodged in the hands of a ferocious mob. The assembly no more dare to decree any thing, though ever so wise and necessary, which the mob disapprove.”¹³⁰ The Parisian mob was in complete control and the National Assembly followed its lead, unable to assert itself.

As his horror at the treatment of the Swiss Guard and the Princess de Lamballe both suggest, Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States* expressed a great deal of sympathy towards the victims of the French mob. In his detailed accounts of August 10, for example, Fenno squarely identified the Parisians as the aggressors, suggesting that the Swiss had acted in self-defense:

The detachments of the national guards—citizens armed with pikes—the Marseillaise and federates attacked the palace, which was guarded by a body of Swiss; these hard pressed by those who came against them were at length compelled to fire in their own defence, and at first put the mob to flight.... the Swiss defending themselves with great bravery, and the attack on them being continued with fury—the Swiss were at length obliged to yield to superior force, and almost to a man were butchered—they however sold their lives dear, killing several hundreds of their opponents.¹³¹

¹²⁹ The Princess de Lamballe was a close friend of Marie-Antoinette who was a part of her inner circle from the 1770s onward. Indeed, her relationship with the Queen was so intimate that de Lamballe was occasionally depicted as her lesbian lover in underground pornography of the 1780s. Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 303, 308.

¹³⁰ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.45.178 (November 3, 1792).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, IV.37.146 (October 6, 1792).

Through this article, Fenno clearly took the side of the Swiss, highlighting their valor in the face of certain death and presenting them as the force of reason and order against a “furious,” “butchering” mob. His sympathies were not, however, limited to the Swiss Guard: in the fall of 1792, Fenno also ran several articles describing the suffering of French clergymen. As part of his reporting on the August 10 massacres, for example, Fenno highlighted “a shocking massacre of three Clergymen, who had spent upwards of fourscore years in the exercise of the duties of their functions, [which] recently took place in a village adjacent to Bourdeaux, in France. They were seized by the populace and put to death, with circumstances of barbarity, which outrage every feeling of civilization.”¹³² Again, Fenno used language of unnaturalness here to make it clear to his readers who was in the wrong. Such portrayals thus served to further bring out the atrocious nature of the violence of August and September by depicting the victims of the acts as defenseless individuals who had done absolutely nothing to deserve their fate.

In the wake of these two massacres, Fenno demonstrated an increased amount of sympathy for Louis XVI and his family, contrasting with his critical treatment of the monarch in his coverage of the flight to Varennes in 1791. Articles on the August 10 massacre, for example, suggested that the royal family bore the trial well, displaying a nobility which foreshadowed the execution of the King in January 1793: “The King and Queen behaved themselves with great fortitude. The King’s countenance throughout shewed signs of the most perfect composure. The Queen looked with an air of magnanimity and disdain on her enemies.... The King, Queen and family bore their condition with great equanimity.”¹³³ Other reports reflected further on the personal feelings of the King and Queen. An article from London, for example, stated that “the Queen is inconsolable” at the death of the Princess Lamballe, while an account of Louis XVI’s

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., IV.38.150 (October 10, 1792).

transfer to the Temple observed that “Louis seemed afraid.”¹³⁴ In this way, Fenno began a process of humanizing Louis XVI and his family, transforming them from figures of derision to individuals deserving of sympathy. Indeed, some of Fenno’s articles, such as this reprint from London, went so far as to question the monarch’s guilt, a perspective which would have been inconceivable in June 1791:

It cannot be denied, that the unhappy Monarch of France has fallen a victim to the vices of his Ministers and Minions. By weak and violent measures they disseminated the seeds of the sedition; but all the odium was thrown upon the sovereign. The best of Kings, under the management of bad ministers, loses, never to be recalled, the esteem of his subjects.... Thus Louis was precipitated from his greatness.¹³⁵

Thus, Fenno began the process of questioning the National Assembly’s treatment of Louis XVI more broadly. While this sentiment that Louis ought not be blamed for the chaos of the Revolution was by no means universal at this point, it is clear that, by the fall of 1792, editors such as Fenno were planting increasingly sympathetic seeds towards Louis in America.

If sympathy for Louis XVI and less Revolution-inclined Frenchmen was on the rise in Fenno’s paper as a result of August 10 and September Massacres, so too was the Federalist editor’s doubts about the National Assembly. In a significant shift from the time of Louis XVI’s flight, Fenno’s enthusiasm for the work of the Assembly’s delegates by the fall of 1792 was ambiguous, if not downright critical. The *Gazette of the United States* focused much of its criticisms on the Jacobins, following the Federalist vision of the Jacobins as a party of dangerous radicals. Relying on sources from London, for example, Fenno published several articles which depicted the Jacobins as rabble-rousers, suggesting that they were seeking the death of the royal family through manipulative, underhanded means: “Every stratagem has been employed to excite the fury of the rabble against the Royal Family, and to bring them to the scaffold. For this

¹³⁴ Ibid., IV.48.189 (November 14, 1792), IV.38.150 (October 10, 1792).

¹³⁵ Ibid., IV.48.189 (November 14, 1792).

purpose, not only hand-bills are in daily circulation, but the licentious editors of the Jacobin Journals invent the most gross calumnies; which they know must remain uncontradicted, as the Gazettes in the oppose interest have been prohibited to be published.”¹³⁶ In this way, articles presented the Jacobin regime as a quasi-despotism. According to Fenno, the Jacobins controlled the power of speech through their hold on the French press, and undertook other tyrannical measures, such as imprisoning innocents.¹³⁷ Other articles run by Fenno during this era sought to lay the blame for the violence of the September Massacres on the Jacobins, suggesting that the party’s bloodthirstiness went beyond the monarchy: “We have the omen of new massacres in Paris. The hellish Faction of Robespierre, Marat, Chabot, and others, have actually been insinuating, that the prisons are again loaded with suspected persons.”¹³⁸ Through such attacks on the Jacobin Party, Fenno drew into question the future of the French Revolution, suggesting that the men now in charge of it were violent, tyrannical individuals, not at all comparable to the liberty-minded Founding Fathers who had led the United States to republicanism.

Fenno was by no means alone in his criticisms of the violence of August and September 1792: despite their continued optimism about the course of the French Revolution, Republicans were also alarmed by some of the excesses. Indeed, Jefferson himself admitted that his confidence in the French Revolution was temporarily shaken by the news of August 10 and early September.¹³⁹ Freneau followed the Republican Party’s lead in the *National Gazette*, including a number of articles in his paper which, like Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States*, criticized the

¹³⁶ Ibid., IV.39.154 (October 13, 1792).

¹³⁷ For examples of Fenno’s critiques on the National Assembly’s imprisonment policies see Fenno, *GUS*, IV.44.174 (October 31, 1792). Articles within the *Gazette of the United States* cited other abuses of liberty in France during this period, including the Assembly’s supposed moderation of correspondence in and out of the country. Fenno, *GUS*, IV.45.178 (November 3, 1792)

¹³⁸ Ibid., IV.49.193 (November 17, 1792).

¹³⁹ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 37-38.

violence of the events.¹⁴⁰ Early reports from English papers, for example, expressed concerns that Louis XVI was about to lose his life as a result of the animosity built up against him: “The royal family, stripped of their guards, must fall an easy sacrifice to the violence of the Jacobins.”¹⁴¹ The first accounts of the August 10 massacre also tended to be anti-French in their orientation, as the following British report on the extreme violence of the attack on the Tuileries reveals: “The capital was in a state of the utmost distraction and confusion—the king has been before the national assembly, and by them DEPOSED!—The Swiss guards cut to pieces for their loyalty in making a last attempt to rescue their sovereign from such indignities.... Several of the king’s friends have been taken; of whom five or six were murdered.”¹⁴² As the presence of these articles in the *National Gazette* reveal, even strongly Republican editors such as Freneau were not immune to shock and dismay at the violence taking place in France, particularly when the first accounts, usually from England, reached Philadelphia.

Ultimately, however, the majority of Freneau’s coverage of the violence on August 10 and during the September Massacres lacked the consistent negativity apparent in Fenno’s accounts. Freneau once again followed Jeffersonian ideology, which said that any pro-Republican regime in France was preferable and safer for America than the coalition of monarchs under the Duke of Brunswick, and which accepted violence as an aspect of revolution and of the emergence of “popular political consciousness.”¹⁴³ As a result, the *National Gazette* sought to understand the events, suggesting to readers that the mob’s actions, while certainly extreme, were rooted in reasonable motives. In characterizing the violence of August 10, for

¹⁴⁰ Indeed, Freneau and Fenno occasionally used the same reports of the events of August and September in the newspapers. See, as an example of this, Fenno, *GUS*, IV.38.150 (October 10, 1792); Freneau, *NG*, I.99.394 (October 10, 1792).

¹⁴¹ Freneau, *NG*, I.98.389 (October 6, 1792).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Kaplan, *Jefferson and France*, 50-51; Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 16-17, 58.

example, Freneau suggested that the conflict was more of a battle than the one-sided vision

Fenno offered his readers:

The cry of 'To arms! To arms! We are betrayed! The Swiss fire upon the citizens! They have already mowed down a hundred of the men of Marseilles!' It was but too true.... Many citizens, especially women and children, could only avoid the balls by dropping from the parapets into the river. At the same time they fired on the garden side, the city side of the palace, and from the roofs and vent holes. It appeared as if the word was given to react the massacre of St. Bartholomew: though in reality the 10th of August 1792, was more dreadful than the 25th of August 1572.¹⁴⁴

In this way, articles in Freneau's papers presented the Swiss as the aggressors: they were the ones systematically firing on the crowd from their heavily fortified hideout. Furthermore, Freneau's accounts emphasized more strongly than Fenno's that many members of the crowd died in the struggle, The references to the women and children and the comparison to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572 presented the Parisian people as victims rather than instigators, fighting in self-defense and displaying little of the crazed bloodthirstiness of which Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* accused them.

In addition to presenting a vision of the August 10 conflict with the Swiss Guards in more ambiguous terms, Freneau also challenged Fenno's sympathy for the murdered refractory clergy and nobles by emphasizing French fears of counterrevolution. In his announcement of the execution of three French priests by an angry crowd at Cauderan, for example, Freneau made a point of stating that the men were "suspected of holding a treasonable correspondence with the enemies of the revolution."¹⁴⁵ His articles regarding the experiences of French nobles during the August 10 uprising and the September Massacres tended to be even more damning. In an article describing the state of Paris in late August 1792, for example, Freneau revealed that the violence at the Tuileries had had a decidedly positive impact upon the city: "This great capital is perfectly

¹⁴⁴ Freneau, *NG*, II.4.13 (November 10, 1792).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I.99.395 (October 10, 1792).

calm, tho' patriotism was never known to be so much alive; it is the welcome guest of every honest heart; there is no, not even the smallest, appearance of the late crisis; all is harmony, concord and peace....The aristocrats and loyalists are alone in a state of anxious solicitude; some of them tremble; many of them are machinating plots."¹⁴⁶ Through this article, Freneau suggested to his readers that the violence of August 10, while undeniably harsh, had actually benefited the city by invigorating its citizens and frightening its enemies. In this way, he sought to excuse the violence, at least to an extent, by suggesting that its final result was positive.

The majority of Freneau's efforts to excuse the behavior of the French people in August and September 1792, however, focused on vilifying the French king, his family, and his court as active counterrevolutionaries. Rather than present Louis XVI and his family as a victim of the mob, Freneau's newspaper contained numerous articles pointing to evidence that he was working against the French Revolution. In the wake of the revolution of August 10, for example, a report from Paris emphasized the fact that Louis XVI could only blame himself and his friends for his fall:

Several causes have concurred towards the dethroning of Louis XVI, and completely estranging the affections of the nation from the monarch. Time, that sooner or later unfolds every thing will probably discover that the king has acted completely the political hypocrite. There is no doubt but himself, the queen, and some others of the royal family had contrived to hold a steady correspondence with the combined enemies of France, and the national spirit was in consequence roused to dethrone him, and endeavor to unite upon some solid plan of resistance to the combined despotic forces, before it became too late. The main charge against the king was, that he had interested himself in preventing supplies being sent to the army, by which means he expected they would fall an easy prey to the invaders, who were to replace him on the throne.¹⁴⁷

As the American press digested the fallout of August 10, Freneau continued to publish such accounts, making a point of highlighting pieces of evidence which supported this early

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., I.104.414 (October 27, 1792).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., I.99.394 (October 10, 1792).

hypothesis regarding Louis's guilt. On October 13 and 17 and November 14 and 21, for example, the Republican editor published news from France which referenced "papers indicative of a counter-revolution" found at the Tuileries, while an article published October 27 stated that the King had been caught borrowing "immense sums of money to support his rebel brothers and their criminal adherents."¹⁴⁸ Other articles highlighted the role that Louis's friends and family played in these supposed counterrevolutionary plots, suggesting that the imprisonment of the royal family had failed to stop them. Further reports from Paris accused "several of the ladies of the court... [of] conveying notes, libels, and other treasonable effusions against liberty, to the king and queen since their confinement in the tower of the temple," while others singled out the role of Marie-Antoinette and Louis's sister, Madame Elisabeth, in the counterrevolution.¹⁴⁹ Through such articles, Freneau sought to present his readers with clear proof of Louis XVI's treachery, combatting Fenno's growing sympathy for the French monarchy by pointing to the King's duplicity. In this way, he suggested that the Parisian people and the National Assembly remained in the right: the violence of the late summer of 1792 was a necessary feature of the French Revolution in light of the threats posed by counterrevolutionary plots.

While the differences between Fenno's and Freneau's coverage of the revolution of August 10 and the September Massacres are clear in the October and November editions of their newspapers, the alignment of their reports of the proclamation of the French Republic and the victory at Valmy in December reveal that the two papers had not fully diverged in their larger understanding of the French Revolution, at least in 1792.¹⁵⁰ Despite his distaste for the violence

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., I.100.398 (October 13, 1792), I.101.402 (October 17, 1792), II.5.18 (November 14, 1792), II.7.26 (November 21, 1792), I.104.415 (October 27, 1792).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., II.1.2 (October 31, 1792), II.4.14 (November 10, 1792).

¹⁵⁰ In France, the republic was proclaimed and the victory of Valmy won only two weeks after the September Massacres of September 2-5. However, in the American press, the timing of these events was stretched out considerably by the travel time of news across the Atlantic. For example, while the September Massacres were first mentioned in the *Gazette of the United States* in the first week of November, Fenno's first reference Valmy was not

of the time and his growing skepticism about the National Assembly, Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* retained a central hope that the French experiment would succeed. As historians such as Hazen, Stanley Elkins, Eric McKittrick, and Forrest McDonald have observed, news of Valmy and the birth of the French Republic represented a high point for American support of the French cause. While staunch Federalists such as Hamilton doubted that France could maintain these gains, even President Washington, who was usually cautious about entering into foreign alliances and somewhat skeptical of the French Revolution more broadly, expressed his desire for a greater connection between America and France in light of this news.¹⁵¹ Indeed, as Richard Buel observed, the majority of Americans felt increasingly connected to France with the rise of the French Republic, and the victory at Valmy was hailed as the promise of a future in which all nations would possess republican governments.¹⁵²

Excitement in America in light of these new horizons was high, as Freneau's and Fenno's papers both revealed beginning in late November 1792. Suggestions were made to create a volunteer military force of Americans to provide aid to the French cause. In addition, analogies were drawn between the American war for independence and the French war of 1792—some Americans compared the German retreat to the British retreat from Lexington—and the victory was celebrated with feasts, parades, and other festivities.¹⁵³ Throughout the United States, Americans celebrated the news. Fenno reported, for example, that in Carlisle, Pennsylvania:

The bells rung in this town with short intervals from three o'clock until nine in the evening.—At night the Court-House was elegantly illuminated. Two beautiful

made until December 5. Moreover, December 15 was the first edition of the *Gazette of the United States* which dedicated more attention to the victory and its implications. Similarly, in his *National Gazette*, Freneau first referenced the September Massacres on October 31, while Valmy and the proclamation of the French Republic went unobserved until December 1. Fenno, *GUS*, IV.45.178 (November 3, 1792), IV.54.213 (December 5, 1792); IV.57.226 (December 15, 1792); Freneau *NG*, II.1.3 (October 31, 1792), II.10.39 (December 1, 1792).

¹⁵¹ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 164; Elkins & McKittrick, *Age of Federalism*, 310; McDonald, *Alexander Hamilton*, 271-272.

¹⁵² Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 38-39.

¹⁵³ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 117-118.

transparencies were displayed from the upper windows of the Court-House, with the following inscription: in large letters legible at a great distance—The one to the east significant of the Event then celebrated, being to that quarter—LET MAN BE FREE.—The other was to the South, intimating that despotism prevails most in that unfortunate hemisphere—TYRANNY IS ABOUT TO CEASE. Bonfires accompanied the illuminations; and the evening was passed by the citizens in convivial meetings expressive of their satisfaction.

Through such imagery, the people of Carlisle embraced the French cause as a universal struggle, while also expressing optimism, despite having “deplored many recent transactions in France” that the French republic would soon usher in “the general fall of tyranny.”¹⁵⁴ The major port cities of America also participated in such revelry. A report from Boston dated December 6, for example, stressed the excitement and gratitude of the town’s residents upon hearing of the victory, while the arrival of the news in Philadelphia meant that “the bells of this city were set a ringing in testimony of the sincere and heart-felt joy of the citizens on this grand occasion.”¹⁵⁵ Similarly, New York City witnessed celebrations similar to those of Carlisle on New Years’ Day 1793: “The morning was ushered in by the ringing of bells. At 4 o’clock, a Federal salute was fired from the battery.... In the evening, the Tammany Society, or Columbian Order, met at their Wigwam to celebrate the day, and a number of toasts were drank.”¹⁵⁶ January 1, 1793 was also the selected date for French celebrations in Philadelphia, where “a splendid entertainment” took place at Oeller’s hotel “in commemoration of the intelligence lately received of the success of the Gallic arms against those of despotism” and “a number of persons have been decorated with the tri-coloured ribbon at their button holes.”¹⁵⁷ By publishing such accounts, Fenno and Freneau revealed that their core belief in the progress and purpose of the French Revolution remained unshaken, despite the uncertainties spurred by the events of August and September 1792.

¹⁵⁴ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.62.24 (January 2, 1793).

¹⁵⁵ Freneau, *NG*, II.15.58 (December 19, 1792), II.15.59 (December 19, 1792).

¹⁵⁶ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.62.247 (January 2, 1793).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, *GUS*, IV.63.251 (January 4, 1793).

For Americans, the violence of the August 10 uprising at the Tuileries and the September Massacres of 1792 represented the first major test to their faith in the French Revolution. For Philip Freneau and his *National Gazette*, these events were little more than small bumps in the Revolution's greater trajectory. Relying largely on news from France and following the pro-French perspective of the Republicans, Freneau's criticisms of the violence was limited in scope as he ultimately focused more of his efforts on vindicating the French people through discussions of the counterrevolutionary pressures they faced. On the other hand, Federalist John Fenno was much more alarmed by the extent of the mob violence described in his primarily British news sources. News of August 10 and the September Massacres led to an increasingly ambiguous perspective of the French Revolution in the *Gazette of the United States*. Fenno continued to express optimism about the ultimate goals of the Revolution, as his excitement at hearing of the proclamation of the French republic and the victory at Valmy both revealed. That being said, the activities of the Parisian mob in the late summer of 1792 and the rise of the radical Jacobins to preeminence encouraged Fenno's movement towards a more pessimistic view of the French Revolution. The Federalist editor's hope for a successful conclusion to the Revolution remained at the start of the year 1793; however, doubts about the dangers posed by potentially anarchic bodies led Fenno to increasingly question this idyllic vision.

Chapter Three. “Much to Admire, and Little to Condemn”: The Execution of Louis XVI (1793)

When news of Louis XVI’s death arrived in mid-March 1793, Americans were forced to come to grips with the French Revolution more closely: previously, the vast majority of the population had unanimously and fervently embraced it as an extension of the American Revolution. Criticisms had, for the most part, been limited and specific in nature, questioning the violence of specific moments of the Revolution and the activities of the mob, while continuing to express optimism about France’s future more generally, particularly following Valmy and the proclamation of the Republic in mid-September 1792. Republican politicians, along with most of the American people, believed that France’s republicanism could only strengthen the nation’s allegiance with America. In addition, individuals who had expressed skepticism of the Revolution, such as John Adams and Alexander Hamilton, saw their reputations suffer as a result of their widely unpopular views.¹⁵⁸ With Louis’s death and the closely following news that France had declared war on England, however, Americans were forced to confront their perspective on events in France more directly than ever before, leading to growing divisiveness.

As historians such as Richard Buel and Donald Stewart observed, for America’s political leaders, England’s entrance into France’s European wars was a watershed moment in the nation’s dealings with France. Economic and foreign policy considerations continued to fuel the growing division between Federalists and Republicans in the spring of 1793.¹⁵⁹ While all major American politicians believed neutrality was necessary for the development of their new nation, they differed on whether they ought to pursue closer relations with Britain or with France.¹⁶⁰ Federalists such as Alexander Hamilton came to the conclusion that siding too strongly with

¹⁵⁸ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 36-37.

¹⁵⁹ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 29; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 119-120.

¹⁶⁰ Charles Marion Thomas, *American Neutrality in 1793: A Study in Cabinet Government*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 14.

France would harm America's already existing relations with Britain: they believed that America was heavily dependent upon British trade and doubted their nation's ability to survive without the support of British commerce.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, France's volatility suggested that an alliance with the fledgling Republic would be more likely to draw America into the European war than alignment with Britain.¹⁶² On the other hand, Republicans such as James Madison supported a stronger connection with France so as to end America's economic dependence on her former mother country.¹⁶³

While France's declaration of war on England created a major source of conflict in the federal government, amongst the American people, Louis XVI's emotion-triggering death played an equally contentious role. This division was particularly evident in two of the most strongly partisan newspapers of the era: Fenno's Federalist *Gazette of the United States* and Freneau's Republican *National Gazette*. As news of the King's execution arrived in late-March 1793, the reports of these two editors continued to diverge in their interpretations of the French Revolution. For Fenno, following the perspective of Federalist politicians, the execution of the King was a confirmation of the dangerous radicalism of the Jacobins, spurring him to articulate broader criticisms of the Revolution and to begin to distance America from France in his understanding of the two countries' revolutions, regimes, and futures. On the other hand, the Republican Freneau sought to reassure his readers that the goals of the French Revolution remained pure, arguing that France was still America's "sister republic" and that the death of the King was, at most, an unfortunate side effect of a fundamentally well-intentioned movement. Thus, the news of Louis XVI's death represented a continuation and intensification of the divisions present in Fenno's and Freneau's newspapers in the latter half of 1792.

¹⁶¹ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 29.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶³ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 29-30; Kaplan, *Jefferson and France*, 43.

Continuing tactics he had first used in the fall of 1792 during his coverage of the August 10 Revolution and the September Massacres, Freneau limited his use of British news sources in his reports of the execution of Louis XVI. As a result, he largely abstained from publishing the most anti-French versions and interpretations of the King's death and tended to deemphasize its importance to the Revolution. In addition, Freneau actively criticized American editors for overusing excerpts from England in their coverage of the execution of Louis XVI. A "correspondent" of his wrote, for example, on April 10, 1793:

British habits, British affections, ideas, attachments, prejudices, and even resentments have vegetated rapidly in this country since the late war. No better evidence of this truth is wanting than the torrent of abuse daily poured forth from many of the American presses by the vile tools of British ministerialism and British king-worshippers against the republicans and patriots of France, and the cause, which America, at least, from her own recent sufferings, ought to esteem the cause of human nature.¹⁶⁴

Freneau and his Republican readers feared the growing influence of British ideology in America and held newspapers partly responsible for this trend. For them, the unwillingness of many Americans to embrace the French Republic in light of Louis XVI's execution was a sign of the British influence. Why else would a nation which had only succeeded in overthrowing its own monarch slightly over a decade ago articulate such ambiguity about the French Revolution?

In addition to directly pointing out the American reliance on British sources for news about the French Revolution, Freneau cast further doubt on the trustworthiness of news from Britain by running a series of articles in late March and early April 1793 which highlighted injustices in England. A reprinted letter from a resident of London to a friend in Massachusetts, for example, suggested that the British government sought to root out all political dissension in the country: "Numbers of associations have been formed by persons of various descriptions, to obtain a parliamentary reform, which persons in power represent as inimical to the

¹⁶⁴ Freneau, *NG*, II.48.191 (April 13, 1793).

government.... If this spirit increases, where shall we flee to, but to the land of liberty, where you have arrived.”¹⁶⁵ Freneau reaffirmed this point on April 10, writing: “Letters from England give a deplorable picture of the state of freedom of opinion in that country. The Portuguese inquisition does not exceed it. Every thing is a libel, and a man can scarcely venture to put pen to paper, on any political subject, without the risk of, at least, standing on the pillory, and being pelted to death by the creatures of the court, of the king, and his *royal sons*.”¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, a series of articles described ritualized acts against Thomas Paine in Britain, including the burning of effigies.¹⁶⁷ By the 1790s, Paine was recognized in both the United States and France as a symbol of republican spirit, so such accounts served to highlight the anti-republicanism of not only British members of government, but of the country’s population more broadly. Thus, Freneau’s characterizations of the British in his *National Gazette* sowed further doubt about the accuracy of news from Britain by suggesting that the country’s values had little in common with American republicanism. Such a position also indirectly pushed for a stronger American alliance with France by presenting the alternative, Britain, as an opponent of liberty and collaborator with the despots of continental Europe already at war with France.

In attacking American newspapers which relied heavily on British sources, Freneau set himself up against numerous periodicals of the era, including Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States*. Despite having published excerpts from the *Gazette de Leyde* under the advice of Thomas Jefferson earlier in the course of the French Revolution, by the spring of 1793, Fenno expressed a growing sense of doubt about events in France through his paper. This was particularly the case when it came to Fenno’s analysis of the execution of Louis XVI, which received sizeable coverage in the *Gazette of the United States* from late March 1793, when news of the execution

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., II.44.174-175 (March 30, 1793).

¹⁶⁶ Emphasis is in original. Ibid., II.47.187 (April 10, 1793).

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., II.46.183 (April 6, 1793).

first broke, to the first week in May. Much of this news coverage centered on Louis XVI's personal character: he was portrayed in the *Gazette of the United States* as a true Christian and sensitive individual who nobly met his death under somewhat questionable circumstances. Furthermore, other articles defended the King's record, demonstrating that Louis was an enlightened ruler who did much good for his nation and for America. Indeed, Fenno's paper presented him as an individual who embodied numerous Federalist values reminiscent of American leaders such as George Washington: spirituality, respect for his family, dignity, and a desire to work for the benefit of his people.

Louis's nobility in his final moments was a theme articulated in the earliest briefs from France detailing the scene of the execution. The first account of the King's death published by Fenno on March 27, for example, stated that Louis "ascended the scaffold with firmness, made a sign he had something to say: little, however, was heard, on account of the noise [of drums and trumpets], except, 'I die innocent! I forgive you all!'"¹⁶⁸ This first description was brief and not particularly skewed in its portrayal: it actually appeared in both the *Gazette of the United States* and the *National Gazette*. Nevertheless, its references to the King's demeanor on the scaffold steps and final words paved the way for future articles in Fenno's paper which further highlighted Louis's strength and humility. On March 30, for example, he was hailed as expressing the "most dignified fortitude" in his last moments, while a further excerpt from April 6 similarly described Louis's "firmness and dignity."¹⁶⁹ By portraying Louis as an unbowed figure in his last moments, such articles combatted less flattering character sketches of the monarch and presented him as a more relatable individual, deserving of sympathy and possessing admirable qualities of character.

¹⁶⁸ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.86.343 (March 27, 1793).

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, IV.87.347 (March 30, 1793); *Ibid.*, IV.89.354-355 (April 6, 1793).

As Fenno's coverage expanded into the month of April, his portrayal of Louis XVI took on an increasingly religious tone. An account from April 10, for example, imagined Louis as a martyr on the scaffold: his hair was said to be "rolled up as the Abbess wear theirs," and his final words were reported to be "I commit my soul to God."¹⁷⁰ Two weeks later, a reprint of an article from a British paper declared Louis "a model of Private, a model of public virtue" who "expired as a Martyr, his thoughts were beyond himself."¹⁷¹ Louis's devoutness became a common trope in the *Gazette of the United States*, and was only furthered by the publication of his last will and testament. Here, in addition to advising his son not to avenge his death, the King spoke of his strong Catholic faith, while also expressing the same willingness to forgive his executioners that he had showed the day of his execution. A London article reprinted by Fenno stated, for example, that Louis's testament and actions in his final days "breathe the soul of magnanimity... a mind enlightened with the finest ideas of human virtue. He appears not to be the man which his enemies repeated."¹⁷² By the spring of 1793, many religious Americans and Federalists were concerned about the movement of the Revolution towards what appeared to be atheism, and France's attacks on the Church were criticized in some circles as blasphemies.¹⁷³ Fenno's attention to religious imagery and the monarch's personal faith thus stood in stark contrast to the movement of the French Revolution away from Christianity. By praising Louis's Catholicism, Fenno suggested an American understanding of the place of faith in the lives of individuals which differed from that of republican France.

In addition to emphasizing Louis's virtues as a strong, religious individual, Fenno's characterization highlighted the monarch's personal relationships with his family. Numerous

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., IV.90.358 (April 10, 1793).

¹⁷¹ Ibid., IV.94.375 (April 24, 1793).

¹⁷² Ibid., IV.91.362 (April 13, 1793).

¹⁷³ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 266; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 122.

articles detailed the monarch's relationship with his wife, Marie-Antoinette, and children, presenting him as a family man and increasing the tragic nature of his execution. On April 6, for example, Fenno published a personal account of the supposed behavior of Louis's son on hearing that his father was to be executed: the dauphin attempted to run from the Temple into the streets to beg Parisians "not to kill my dear Papa." On hearing of his son's behavior, Louis XVI reportedly wept, while Marie-Antoinette, a figure of much scorn and hatred in the French press, was said to be beside herself with grief, "in a raving delirium."¹⁷⁴ Indeed, Louis's devotion to his wife was another element which was praised following his death. An anecdote from France reported, for example, that the monarch "was not only the tenderest of fathers, but the most constant of husbands," remarking on his unwillingness to take up a mistress.¹⁷⁵ Through such depictions, Fenno presented Louis XVI as a distinctly human monarch and "family man" for whom the American readership could feel sympathy. Dwelling on his family magnified the injustice of the situation and sparked questions about the justness of his execution.

Other articles in Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* mourning the death of Louis XVI emphasized his good works as a king, suggesting that he was a true friend of liberty. Many Americans believed that Louis was devoted to his people and desirous of improving their lives, an idea spread by Fenno following the King's death.¹⁷⁶ An article originally published in London, for example, declared Louis "the first King that humanely interposed, and released his subjects from abject slavery." It went on to outline his "enlightened" policies in France: he abolished torture, gave criminals access to legal advisors, and limited the death penalty. Thus,

¹⁷⁴ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.89.354 (April 6, 1793).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, IV.93.372 (April 20, 1793).

¹⁷⁶ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 172.

Fenno presented Louis as a capable, caring monarch “whose first and principal care was restoring the freedom, encreasing the wealth, and easing the burthens of his subjects.”¹⁷⁷

Similarly, several articles from Fenno’s paper highlighted Louis’s willingness to support the American Revolution, in further testament to his goodness. The French monarch was quite popular in 1790s America thanks to the aid France had provided America during her own Revolution. While this fervor faded amongst some Republicans prior to the King’s flight to Varennes in June 1791, it remained strong enough that he was toasted in Philadelphia on July 4, 1792 in recognition of his contributions to America’s struggle against Britain.¹⁷⁸ John Fenno emphasized this feeling of gratitude by reprinting an article from the *Delaware Gazette* which quoted Congress’s reaction to the Franco-American alliance in August 1778: “‘The treaties between his most Christian Majesty and the United States of America, so fully demonstrate his wisdom and magnanimity, as to command the reverence of all nations. The virtuous citizens of America in particular *can never forget his beneficent attention* to their violated rights.’”¹⁷⁹ Portraying the King in such a light cast further doubt on the judgment of the National Convention. If Louis XVI was truly the tyrant the revolutionaries believed him to be, would he have supported such reforms and would America’s Founding Fathers have thought so highly of him? The emphasis on Louis’s involvement in the American Revolution also served to help justify the American reaction to his death by highlighting the need to express gratitude.¹⁸⁰

Between March and April 1793, Philip Freneau developed a very different portrait of Louis XVI: in the *National Gazette*, Louis was a despot whose involvement in America was self-

¹⁷⁷ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.93.370 (April 20, 1793).

¹⁷⁸ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 172.

¹⁷⁹ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.95.380 (April 27, 1793).

¹⁸⁰ For a further discussion of the importance of American gratitude and its connection with republicanism into the nineteenth century, see Fred Somkin, *Unquiet Eagle: Memory and Desire in the Idea of American Freedom 1815-1860*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 134, 137.

serving. Like John Fenno, Freneau looked to Louis's record as king of France to evaluate his reign; however, the interpretation in his *National Gazette*, written by "Scevola" and published on April 17, emphasized elements which presented Louis as an archetypal tyrant. Scevola began his analysis in the late 1780s, accusing Louis XVI of failing to cut his spending habits in the wake of France's economic crisis: "It is well known that the expenses of his luxurious court were so extravagantly enormous, that all the taxes, intolerable as they were, and which were still increasing, were insufficient to supply the follies of the royal family.... If Louis sincerely desired to relieve his people, why did he not reduce the expenses of the court?" With the start of the Revolution in 1789, Louis repeatedly demonstrated his hostility to the movement. The rise of the "flame of liberty" amongst the Parisian people in June 1789, for example, encouraged Louis to call in the military, "who were immediately collected round Paris with an intention to compel the people to submit to a tyrant's will." Even after the people were victorious and the Bastille fell, Louis continued to work against their interests, subverting the cause of the Revolution as the figurehead of the constitutional monarchy. Amongst other atrocities, Scevola cited Louis's role as instigator of the Champ de Mars massacre, his decision to "invite all the tyrants of Europe" to declare war on the French people, and his maintenance of the Swiss Guard.¹⁸¹ In this way, Freneau's correspondent contradicted those who claimed Louis's interests were benevolent by demonstrating how he systematically undermined the efforts of the revolutionaries. Through Scevola, Freneau sought to show his American readership that Louis deserved his fate.

In damning Louis XVI, Scevola brought up issues in France, such as unequal taxation and the use of mercenaries, which would have struck particularly close to home for Americans in light of their own Revolution. "No taxation without representation" had been an often-repeated slogan in the American Revolution, and Americans remembered with distaste the British use of

¹⁸¹ Freneau, *NG*, (April 17, 1793) II.49.194-195.

Hessian mercenaries.¹⁸² Comparisons to the American Revolution became a popular means of vilifying Louis XVI: as historian Beatrice Hyslop explains, editors frequently interpreted French news through an American lens.¹⁸³ In a further testament to this observation, the “Scevola” article, and other correspondence published in the *National Gazette*, made a point of comparing the French monarch to American Revolutionary traitors such as Benedict Arnold, suggesting that the American people needed to consider the facts of the situation: “But is it possible that prejudice can so far mislead the sympathy of republicans [used here to mean “Americans” broadly, not the Jeffersonian Party], who in the time of their own struggle for liberty were perhaps less inclined to pardon crimes of treason than the French, especially in the instances of Major Andre, Carlisle, and Roberts.”¹⁸⁴ Such articles sought to capture the emotions of Americans by challenging popular views of Louis as a benevolent monarch left over from the Franco-American Alliance of 1777. At the same time, they closed the gap between the American and French experiences, suggesting that the two Revolutions ought to be understood together.

In addition to comparing Louis’s behaviors in France during the Revolution to infamous American turncoats such as Benedict Arnold, Freneau’s *National Gazette* also directly challenged the argument that the King had been a loyal friend of the United States. An article published in the *National Gazette* on March 30 discussed Louis XVI’s motives for deciding to back the Americans against Britain: “It is well known that the aid furnished by France to this country, under her old government, originated in the jealousy of *one* despot towards *another*: England and France were inveterate foes... to weaken England by every possible means was then the leading system of policy with the French court.”¹⁸⁵ Thus, Freneau negated claims that

¹⁸² Hyslop, “American Press and the French Revolution of 1789,” 71-73.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

¹⁸⁴ Freneau, *NG*, II.41.163 (March 20, 1793).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, II.44.175 (March 30, 1793).

France's role in the American Revolution was proof of Louis XVI's enlightened republican sympathies by demonstrating that the monarch had political motives for his involvement.¹⁸⁶ The article continued with this theme by reflecting on France's relations with America once peace with Britain was negotiated: "When the war was ended, the same policy manifested a jealous of our prosperity, and edict upon edict shewed a strong inclination to clip the wings of the 'new republic.'¹⁸⁷ Over the course of the 1780s, Louis's regime did little to promote positive relations with America: in fact, at the peace negotiations of Paris in 1782, France had been surprisingly willing to sacrifice American independence.¹⁸⁸ Thus, Freneau's article countered Fenno's portrayal of Louis XVI as a friend of America by illustrating that, like all other despots, his involvement in American affairs was calculated and self-serving.

Freneau furthered his rebuttal of the *Gazette of the United States*' character sketch of Louis XVI by questioning whether the monarch's religiosity, apparent in such documents as his Last Will and Testament, was a commendable attribute. Aside from reprinting Louis's will, Freneau never directly discussed the King's faith in his coverage of the execution; however, he generally downplayed the importance of religious values in his paper, questioning their worth in government. An article commenting on the reported atheism of a National Convention member, for example, declared that the personal beliefs of delegates ought not to matter:

Some Philadelphia papers assert that Mr. Dupont had avowed himself a Deist, others, an Atheist.... What does it prove, except that an aristocrat is a more dangerous animal than either a Deist or an Atheist? The Aristocrat oppresses the moral and physical faculties of man, the Deist or Atheist, oppress no body.—His opinions are his own, and ask not the aid of rich and cruel priests; he erects no

¹⁸⁶ Freneau's assertion that France's decision to join the American Revolution in 1777 was driven, at least in part, by the nation's own agenda is actually quite astute. French foreign minister Vergennes, whose influence over the young King was key to the formation of the Franco-American Alliance, regarded America's declaration of war on Britain as a unique opportunity to restore France's national and dynastic prestige following its losses to Britain in the Seven Years' War. Sears, *George Washington & the French Revolution*, 9-10.

¹⁸⁷ Freneau, *NG*, II.44.175 (March 30, 1793).

¹⁸⁸ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 40.

piles, stakes, nor fires, nor kindles the destructive animosity of religious warfare.¹⁸⁹

Considering the centuries of abuses that took place under the purview of Christianity, Freneau's correspondent questioned why Fenno, and other Federalist sympathizers, believed Christian orthodoxy, or even a belief in God, was such a desirable quality in one's rulers. As Donald Stewart suggests, there was likely an element of anti-Catholicism to this particular writer's perspective: over the course of the French Revolution, Republicans tended to question why Federalists expressed such horror at the French rejection of Catholicism by tapping into traditions of religious bigotry.¹⁹⁰ Thus, the correspondent's dismissal of the reverence shown for Louis's dedication to his faith in Federalist papers such as the *Gazette of the United States* was a natural extension of Anglo-American prejudices against Catholics, as well as a call for a greater separation of Church and state.

This particular correspondent's defense of a member of the National Convention was typical of Freneau's coverage of the French Revolution in the spring of 1793: during this period, the *National Gazette* continued to insist through its articles that the Revolution's aims were pure and that its goals would better the world. While early rumors of Louis XVI's death swirled through Philadelphia in mid-March 1793, Freneau chose to continue publishing articles praising activities in France. In the March 16 issue, for example, the *National Gazette* contained a reprint from the *American Daily Advertiser* which strongly embraced the French Revolution. It began by highlighting the large numbers of Americans celebrating the achievements of the French, declaring that "the French revolution is, confessedly, one of the most momentous and interesting to the human race, as well as one of the most splendid events which adorn and dignify the records of time." To justify this claim, the writer presented the French as engaged in a struggle of

¹⁸⁹ Freneau, *NG* II.43.170-171 (March 27, 1793).

¹⁹⁰ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 122.

enlightenment against oppression and contrasted the “galling and oppressive yoke of civil and religious tyranny” present under the Old Regime with the revolutionaries, who “have rushed out of slavery, claimed and recovered ‘*the Rights of Man,*’ and have pronounced ‘*We will be free.* Domestic despotism has expired under the nervous strokes of *Liberty.*”¹⁹¹ Freneau’s paper also expressed optimism that this republican spirit was spreading. On March 30, for example, he published a pair of articles describing the growth of republican principles and societies in Canada and Geneva and connecting them back to the influence of the French and American Revolutions.¹⁹² In this way, the editor emphasized that the Revolution and France’s European war were more than national struggles. Both efforts were part of a larger battle between republican liberty and monarchical tyranny which would have lasting implications for the world.

Considering that these events in France were part of a revolution, Freneau insisted that some violence had to be expected. On March 16, when the earliest reports of Louis XVI’s death were arriving in Philadelphia, Freneau reprinted an article from the *American Daily Advertiser* which stressed the importance of not judging the French Revolution too quickly: “The crimes and excesses, inseparable from great commotions and popular fermentations are undoubtedly greatly to be lamented, and... they may call forth the sigh and teary of pity.” Nevertheless, the writer urged readers to forgive these excesses as unfortunate, yet unavoidable side effects of revolution, arguing that “the general tenor and spirit” of the French Revolution demonstrated “much to admire, and little to condemn.”¹⁹³ Freneau continued pushing this perspective in the next issue of his paper, suggesting that Louis’s death was justified in the context of the Revolution: “[His] blood is probably considered as an atonement for the safety of many guilty thousands that are still suffered to remain in the bosom of France. Who but must execrate the

¹⁹¹ Emphases are from original. Freneau, *NG* II.40.158 (March 16, 1793).

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, II.44.174-175 (March 30, 1793).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, II.40.158 (March 16, 1793).

vices inseparable from a throne... when he recollects what was to have been the fate of the republicans of Paris, had the Duke of Brunswick reached the capital with his army in full force?" The article goes on to describe how the powers allied against France would have killed thousands of revolutionaries and destroyed their property, suggesting that Louis's death was, in fact, necessary if the Revolution were to survive.¹⁹⁴ Treason and other moments of crisis demanded "desperate remedies," and Louis's death was certainly preferable to the deaths of eleven-thousand revolutionaries.¹⁹⁵

In making such claims, writers for the *National Gazette* followed ideology of the eighteenth century and the American experience, both of which said violence was a necessary ingredient of revolution. Condorcet and Jefferson, for example, asserted following the September Massacres in 1792 that the French people could only be expected to overshoot the mark in reforming their country since centuries of oppression had slowed their moral development.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, this position was common amongst Americans prior to 1793: the violence associated with events such as the fall of the Bastille, the Great Fear, and the October Days was considered a result of "natural friction."¹⁹⁷ The question about Louis XVI's death was thus whether or not it was too extreme an act, and Republicans insisted that the execution was understandable, if regrettable, in light of the monumental changes taking place in France.¹⁹⁸

On the other hand, John Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* presented Louis's death as an unnecessary murder caused by the combined forces of a dangerous mob and a cadre of inexperienced leaders careening towards either anarchy or despotism. Depictions of the Parisian populace within Fenno's paper were not flattering. A satire of the Revolution published soon

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., II.41.162-163 (March 20, 1793).

¹⁹⁵ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 120-121.

¹⁹⁶ Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 58.

¹⁹⁷ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 253-254.

¹⁹⁸ Hyslop, "American Press and the French Revolution of 1789," 84.

after news of Louis's death reached America branded revolutionaries "Mother Carey's Chickens" and described their "caterwauling" as a bloodthirsty drone, lacking in sense and characterized by a jumble of revolutionary buzzwords: "As they approached nearer, we were astonished to hear a variety of articular sounds.... Amidst all the confusion, we could distinguish the words—'Aristocrat! Aristocrat! Hell of Monarchy! Sash and Ribband! Apollyon son of Belial! Treasure Blood-sucker! Light out of Chaos! Poor Soldier! Liberty and Equality! Down with the President! Down with the Aristocrats!'"¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, at Louis's execution, the people of Paris were presented as decidedly "mobbish" in character. Some accounts stated that the crowd drowned out Louis's last words, verbally censoring their monarch, while others emphasized the chaos that reigned following the execution.²⁰⁰ An excerpt reprinted from the *Oracle of Dauphin*, for example, stated that the pageantry of Louis's execution was "insulting him in the moment of death, while yet his soul hovered over the verge of eternity, with the sound of drums and trumpets... an instance of contempt never exhibited before."²⁰¹ Furthermore, individuals within the crowd seeking souvenirs soaked their handkerchiefs in the blood, while others jostled for items, including the ribbon that had tied the King's hair. While an initial article stated that this action was undertaken by men "who had not the air of attaching a political superstition to it," by April 6 it was condemned: "Several persons... [were] so inhuman as to dip their handkerchiefs in his blood, which they afterwards carried about, crying—'Behold the blood of a tyrant!'"²⁰² Such accounts vilified the behavior of the French people, presenting them as bloodthirsty foreigners rather than fellow republicans to whom the Americans could relate.

¹⁹⁹ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.91.363 (April 13, 1793).

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, IV.88.351 (April 3, 1793), IV.87.347 (March 30, 1793).

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, IV.92.365 (April 17, 1793).

²⁰² *Ibid.*, IV.88.351 (April 3, 1793), IV.89.354-355 (April 6, 1793).

In addition to his scathing characterizations of the Parisian people, John Fenno further questioned the nature of French republicanism by cultivating a sense that the French Republic was in peril. In the month following Louis's execution, several of the National Convention reports in Fenno's paper dealt with delegates' concerns that their lives were in danger. Early reports of Louis's death from British sources emphasized this idea: the murder of the delegate Pelletier was first noted on March 27 and, on March 30, an account of the King's execution ended with a statement that numerous National Convention delegates had been killed by mob activity.²⁰³ While this assertion proved false, the fears expressed by National Convention delegates suggested to Fenno's American readers that the French Revolution was in peril. Two articles discussing the Convention's January 21 session, for example, saw individual delegates such as Mangeot, Thuriot, and Breard address Pelletier's murder and claim that they themselves had been threatened. Thuriot, for example, stated that "there exists a conspiracy against the purest patriots," arguing in favor of the persecution, arrest, and execution of "all traitors and conspirators."²⁰⁴ Such statements did little to dissuade Americans that the National Convention had everything in France under control. Instead, the Jacobin obsession with conspiracy and the madness of the masses reawakened old concerns amongst Americans that republics were inherently flawed, while also alienating them from French republicanism.²⁰⁵ After all, the methods for which Thuriot called seemed antithetical to the republicanism the Americans knew.

Other articles drew into question the capabilities and morality of individual delegates. Philippe Égalité was a particularly popular target, likely thanks to his royal background and decision to turn against his cousin. He was subjected to a scathing character sketch in the April 24 edition of the *Gazette of the United States*, which began with a general description of his

²⁰³ Ibid., IV.86.343 (March 27, 1793), IV.87.347 (March 30, 1793).

²⁰⁴ Ibid., IV.89.354 (April 6, 1793), IV.90.357-358 (April 10, 1793).

²⁰⁵ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 38.

personality, declaring him “the scandal of his age, a swindler and debauchee in his youth.... He carries in his bosom the pestilential germe of corruption.” From here, the article moved on to recounting Égalité’s alleged lack of taste for art, cowardice in battle, friendship with rogues including “La Clos, the author of the immoral romance, called *Les Laisons Dangereuses*,” and connection to “the crimes of the 5th of October, the 10th of August, the 2^d of September, and the 21st of January.”²⁰⁶ A letter from a resident of London published by Fenno on May 1 expressed similar concerns about the Jacobins, labeling them the “execrable faction of Robespierre & Marat” and declaring “a fear, that the really virtuous men among them, are too few and too weak to carry their upright intentions into effect.”²⁰⁷ These portrayals questioned the morality of the revolutionaries who had most strongly pushed for Louis’s execution, begging the question of whether such men were fit to govern France and lead a revolution. The sketches also stood as stark contrasts to the largely glowing portrayals of Louis XVI and his family, complicating readers’ understandings of which party was in the right.

In light of his sympathetic presentation of Louis XVI and critiques of the revolutionaries, John Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States* encouraged Americans to mourn the French monarch’s death. Throughout the month of April 1793, Fenno ran numerous letters expressing the sorrow of American citizens upon hearing of Louis’s death and describing the ritualistic behaviors by which individuals and communities expressed this grief. In Providence, Rhode Island, for example, the citizenry mourned Louis’s “murder” and the town bells were rung throughout the evening.²⁰⁸ Philadelphians called for official actions of mourning for Louis, quoting Thomas Paine’s statement to the National Convention “that the free Americans consider themselves greatly indebted to LOUIS for their Liberty—and that the news of his execution has

²⁰⁶ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.94.374 (April 24, 1793).

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.96.383 (May 1, 1793).

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.89.355 (April 6, 1793).

given them great pain.”²⁰⁹ In mourning Louis, Americans thought back to the aid he had showed them in their own struggle for independence, often speaking of their gratitude. Similarly, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, Louis’s death was condemned as a “cruel and unjust assassination” which would “stamp indelible infamy” on the leaders of the French Republic. This Stockbridge resident went on in his letter to condemn those Americans who “echo the huzzas of the ‘cutthroats’ of Paris,” accusing them of being duped by false characterizations, provided by Republican editors such as Freneau, of Louis as a despot and tyrant.²¹⁰ The justness of the National Convention was further questioned by a citizen of Baltimore, who remarked: “There will be found in all countries, and at all periods, to the disgrace of humanity, men, who will be ready to do the duties of the executioner, let the condemned be guilty or innocent.”²¹¹ Such Americans questioned the legitimacy of the National Convention’s ruling, speculating that the delegates were no better than the bloodthirsty masses in Paris who had celebrated Louis’s death. Indeed, a lamentation reprinted from the *Oracle of Dauphin* broached this question weeks after news of Louis’s death reached America: “Is it reasonable to suppose, that Louis was, by nature, a greater enemy to the freedom of mankind, than the members of the National Convention?”²¹²

In expressing their horror at the execution of Louis XVI, these Americans revealed a conception of monarchy that was not automatically equated with tyranny, and a belief that monarchs could be the devoted friend of a republic. Frequently, Americans emphasized their commitment to republicanism while expressing regret for Louis’s death. In a letter reprinted from the *North-Carolina Journal*, for example, a Mr. Hodge identified himself as “no friend of Kings” but a “friend of human life.” In this context, Hodge mourned the death of Louis: “In

²⁰⁹ Ibid., IV.91.363 (April 13, 1793).

²¹⁰ Emphasis is in original. Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., IV.92.366 (April 17, 1793).

common also with the philosopher, the philanthropist, and the politician, he declares his indignation and his sorrow are equally awakened, that the progress of Liberty should be disgraced with the blood of a King, whose errors have arisen more from the situation than from principle.” Hodge recognized that America was “under obligations of the last King of the French,” but was even more moved by his sense that the French Republic’s treatment of Louis was un-republican.²¹³

Such thinking challenged the supposition that America and France would become steadfast allies now that France had declared herself a republic. Instead, readers advocated, like the Washington administration, a path of neutrality: “While ‘the cloud-cap-d Towers and gorgeous Palaces’ of transatlantic countries are hastening to ruin, we shall be advancing in universal estimation, and enjoy those blessings which a free constitution and extensive population is best calculated to promote.”²¹⁴ By April 1793, many Americans, following the lead of Federalist ideology, clearly differentiated between their Revolution and that of France, with the ultimate conclusion that the two events were not as closely entwined as had been previously thought. They regarded the French intolerance of aristocracy and religion, the violence associated with the declaration of the republic, and the execution of Louis XVI in the same light as the English Civil War, not their own revolution. The scale of the violence and passion expressed through the French Revolution were qualities absent from America.²¹⁵ As a Delaware resident wrote to a friend in Philadelphia, the behavior of the French, though couched in the language of republicanism, had little to do with American values: “Refinements in cruelty, barbarity and profligacy, instead of yielding to the light of reason, appear to keep pace with its progress, and the same enthusiasm which for ages has desolated the earth, is as active as ever in

²¹³ Ibid., IV.91.363 (April 13, 1793).

²¹⁴ Ibid., IV.91.362-363 (April 13, 1793).

²¹⁵ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 38, 47-48.

the work of death and ruin, though cloathed in the plausible garments of *Freedom and Equality*.”²¹⁶ The French revolutionaries may have claimed to have been following the principles upon which Americans founded their own nation; however, Louis’s death, and other acts of violence, served to alienate Americans such as the Delaware writer.

At the same time, Federalists considered these tendencies towards violence and societal leveling potentially dangerous influences on America. In addition to their horror at the brutality of Louis’s execution, men such as Alexander Hamilton and John Adams feared the democratic spirit behind the act. They believed in equality before the law, but not equality in all spheres and interpreted such acts as the King’s execution and the abolition of all privileges as symptoms of a desire for absolute homogeneity.²¹⁷ Furthermore, they followed Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) in believing that the radicalism of the French Revolution could spread to other countries, including America, if such influences were allowed to permeate the country unchecked.²¹⁸ Shocked by what they perceived as a growing self-interestedness amongst the American citizenry and a French-inspired tendency of politicians to cater to the people’s desires instead of earning their respect, Federalists clung to a more British model government, defined by governmental centralization under a strong executive, hierarchy, and respect.²¹⁹ In this light, the efforts of Fenno and others in speaking out against the French Revolution took on added importance. By condemning actions in France and strictly differentiating between French and American forms of republicanism, newspapers such as the *Gazette of the United States*

²¹⁶ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.92.366 (April 17, 1793).

²¹⁷ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 273-274.

²¹⁸ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 38.

²¹⁹ In discussing the potential influence of the French Revolution upon the rest of Europe, Burke wrote: “France has always more or less influenced manners in England; and when your fountain is choaked up and polluted, the stream will not run long, or not run clear with us, or perhaps with any nation. This gives all Europe, in my opinion, but too close and connected a concern in what is done in France.” Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O’Brien, (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 174; Robert E. Shalhope, *The Roots of Democracy: American Thoughts and Culture, 1760-1800*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 149, 151.

sought to not only shift popular American perspectives on foreign politics, but to also preserve admiration for the moderate nature of the American socio-political climate threatened by the French Revolution's influence and cultivated by the Jeffersonian Republicans.

While Federalist papers thus sought to demonstrate that the histories and values of the French and American Revolutions strongly differed, Republican editors such as Philip Freneau emphasized their similarities. As a result, he took issue with the expressions of grief regarding Louis XVI's death, declaring them ill-befitting a nation of republicans and a sign that the United States remained tainted by aristocracy and monarchical values a decade after its own Revolution. A piece published by Freneau on April 10, for example, described and condemned effusions of sympathy including the tolling of the bells in Providence, Rhode Island and a Bostonian woman's intent to wear "for the period of one month, *a black rose*, near the left breast." To make his point that such Americans were not behaving like the republicans they were, Freneau juxtaposed their acts with similar expressions of grief evident at the British court, declaring that "*follies* of this kind might be forgiven to the prejudices of the European, but that the silly American, just emancipated from a tyrant, should join in the whine of condolence, is indeed lamentably absurd and wholly 'out of order.'"²²⁰ In this way, he challenged Fenno's assertions that grief for Louis XVI was an appropriate response to his execution by suggesting that such behavior contradicted the principles of the American Revolution. Using gendered language reminiscent of French calls for fraternity, he suggested that Americans had regressed since 1776:

If the enlightened citizens of American know how to venerate the French, and would not be considered in Europe and by every consistent character here as degenerate from the manly principles of 1776, they will turn with abhorrence from the men, who by the aid of the press are endeavoring to prejudice the community against France, and to excite the sympathy of the public in favor of

²²⁰ Emphases are in original. Freneau, *NG* II.47.187 (April 10, 1793).

royalty, eternally extirpated as it is from this country, and from the hearts of all true Americans.²²¹

In this way, Freneau interpreted the behavior of individual Americans such as the woman with the black rose and the bell-ringers of Providence as a sign that many citizens lacked the republican spirit championed by both their own Founding Fathers and the French revolutionaries. As historian Marcus Daniel observes, the French Revolution had become “a litmus test of both republican politics *and* American patriotism” which Republican journalists used to discredit the “monarchical” spirit of the Federalists.²²²

To combat the “aristocratic” sympathies articulated by numerous Americans over the course of April 1793 in light of Louis XVI’s execution, Freneau’s *National Gazette* encouraged readers to support the French as fellow republicans. Again, Freneau recalled the history of the United States: “Are the citizens of America disposed to promote such abuse of a nation to whom America, as a nation, is obliged, and that too when she is struggling for her precious liberties against the inveterate enmity of all the despotism of Europe? Can there be a single citizen, faithful to this lovely country [America] and to his own honor, who is disposed to injure the French nation?”²²³ Thus, Freneau suggested that the proper display of gratitude towards France was not mourning the death of a tyrant, but aiding the French people in their struggle against monarchy. As fellow republicans, Americans had a responsibility to join France in a war centered on political principles and ideology. Indeed, Freneau was not alone in his call: throughout the 1790s many Americans celebrated French victories through feasts and parades, utilized terms from the revolutionary corpus such as “citizen,” wore the cockade of the Revolution, and sung the “Marseillaise” and “Ça Ira,” while individual Americans proposed the

²²¹ Ibid., II.48.191 (April 17, 1793).

²²² Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 64-65, 97.

²²³ Freneau, *NG*, II.43.172 (March 27, 1793).

creation of volunteer forces to aid France in her European wars.²²⁴ Although all the members of Washington's cabinet opposed this last suggestion, the spirit behind it, and the other displays of solidarity, emphasized the continued conviction of many Americans that the French Revolution was a cause with which they felt themselves personally connected, even after the death of the monarch.²²⁵

At the heart of this belief was a sense, trumpeted by Republican journalists such as Freneau throughout the period of the French Revolution, that France and America shared the same values. In 1789, this perspective was virtually unanimous across America. The American Revolution had strongly attached Americans of the late-eighteenth century to universal principles such as republicanism, popular sovereignty, and liberty, and they believed that the French Revolution would serve to spread these principles throughout Europe.²²⁶ While Louis XVI's death alienated Federalist-leaning Americans, others followed the lead of Republican politicians and journalists in continuing to regard the two revolutions as inextricably linked to one another. While this spirit expressed itself positively through assertions that France would lead Europe to a future of continent-wide republicanism, it had a less optimistic side to it as well. Republicans such as Freneau feared that if France were to be defeated by the allied monarchs of Europe or overtaken by counterrevolution, America, as the last remaining republic in the world, would fall next.²²⁷ As a result, Freneau urged readers to resist corruptive rhetoric against the French Revolution—such as arguments that Louis XVI's death was unjust—and defend it against slanderous charges of anarchy and “leveling.” An article reprinted from the *American Daily Advertiser*, for example, warned Americans against being duped by such slurs and reaffirmed the

²²⁴ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 117-118.

²²⁵ Thomas, *American Neutrality in 1793*, 14.

²²⁶ Ziesche *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 6-7; Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 142.

²²⁷ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 45; Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 119.

cohesiveness of French and American republican ideology: “We are all friends of *equal political rights*, but *not the levelers of property*, as is insidiously represented.... The suggestion is a vile trick played by the minions of the kings of Europe upon the unsuspecting citizens of the nations of the world. The French and American principles on this subject coincide.”²²⁸ Thus, in the wake of the execution, Freneau sought to reassure his readers that French values remained aligned with those of America.

Not only did Freneau continue to present France as following America’s footsteps in the spring of 1793, but he actually went so far as to suggest that Americans could learn something from French republicanism by using France as a model for combatting aristocracy in their own country. On the issue of primogeniture, for example, Freneau urged Americans to examine the French model: “Let us then follow the example of France, who although when subjected to the despotic sway of tyrannizing monarchy she raised the eldest son a step above his brethren, yet as soon as she was enlightened by the rays of true republicanism, abolished the odious distinction.”²²⁹ In addition to praising French inheritance laws, Republican newspapers also declared the French constitutions of 1793 and 1795 superior to the American Constitution and more generally expressed hope that the strength of the French democratic spirit would serve as a tonic for the ceremonial style of the Washington administration.²³⁰ Even at the time of Louis XVI’s death, Republican editors such as Freneau proffered hope that the French model would offer Americans a chance at renewal by inspiring them to act against the Federalist forces of aristocracy permeating the country.²³¹ Thus, Republicans such as Philip Freneau continued to endorse the idea that the French and American Revolutions were closely linked while Federalist

²²⁸ Freneau, *NG*, II.44.175 (March 30, 1793).

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, II.41.163 (March 20, 1793).

²³⁰ Stewart, *Opposition Press of the Federalist Period*, 119; Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 143.

²³¹ Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 99.

journalists such as John Fenno warned Americans against French radicalism in light of the events of January 21, 1793, beginning a trend towards an increasingly national understanding of republicanism.

While Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* and Freneau's *National Gazette* offered starkly different interpretations of Louis XVI's execution, the variations in their reports of the events were subtle. Generally speaking, Freneau's coverage of the execution was briefer than Fenno's. The articles in the *National Gazette* describing Louis's last moments were fewer in number and trailed off noticeably by early April, while Fenno included numerous discussions of the execution into the month of May. That being said, the two editors frequently pulled news from the same sources and even published the same articles. This was common practice amongst late-eighteenth-century editors. A lack of copyright laws meant that publishers were able to freely reprint articles from other publications: the ultimate goal of printed works was the rapid spread of ideas and information, not proper attribution.²³² When this tendency is coupled with the fact that American printers relied on the same limited sources for news from Europe, it becomes clear that overlap between Fenno's and Freneau's newspapers ought to be expected. Articles which both of the editors chose to publish tended to be primary news accounts, with little repeated when it came to analysis of Louis XVI's death and the reaction of Americans to the execution. Two of the overlapping articles, for example, were relatively brief descriptions of Louis's last moments, and the third document found in both newspapers in the months of March and April 1793 was a transcript of Louis XVI's Last Will and Testament.²³³ All three of the

²³² Pasley, "Tyranny of the Printers," 8-9.

²³³ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.86.343 (March 27, 1793); Freneau, *NG*, II.43.171 (March 27, 1793); Fenno, *GUS*, IV.89.354-355 (April 6, 1793); Freneau, *NG*, II.46.182.183 (April 6, 1793); Fenno, *GUS*, IV.90.359 (April 10, 1793); Freneau, *NG*, II.48.192 (April 13, 1793).

copied articles were largely neutral news reports, offering little direct interpretation of the execution.

In addition to these duplicate articles, there were three occasions between March 23 and May 8, 1793 when John Fenno published more critical material from Freneau's *National Gazette* and directly cited it as his source. On March 30, for example, Fenno published an old account of the Champ de Mars massacre (July 17, 1791) which vilified Lafayette for declaring martial law and firing on "an immense number of peaceable and unarmed citizens." This excerpt was immediately followed by a longer piece, originally published in the New York-based *Loudon's Diary*, which defended Lafayette for keeping the violence to a minimum and corrected Freneau's claim that "between twelve and fifteen hundred were killed."²³⁴ The almost two-year gap between the massacre and Fenno's publication of these articles is odd: by this point, the events at the Champ de Mars would have been very old news to the American readership, even with the delayed arrival of news from Europe. Thus, it seems likely that Fenno's decision to run the excerpts was meant as a more general statement on Freneau's *National Gazette* and the revolution in France. By juxtaposing these two articles, Fenno suggested that reports of the excesses and evils of Louis XVI's regime published in Freneau's paper were exaggerated, discrediting the newspaper's veracity and encouraging readers to recognize its strongly pro-French spin.

Fenno employed similar tactics by reprinting two other staunchly pro-French articles from the *National Gazette* during the spring of 1793. The first was a brief, originally taken by Freneau from the *Patriote Francais*, which presented a modified "Chain of Being" in which "a tyrant killer" was listed between an "angel" and a "philanthropist" in terms of goodness, while groups reviled by the French Revolution such as "a monk—a saint—a hero—a king" were

²³⁴ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.87.347 (March 30, 1793).

placed low on the chart between “a slothful cowardly citizen” and “the devil.”²³⁵ The republican spirit driving Freneau’s paper made this excerpt a logical inclusion: it captured the anti-monarchical sentiments he wished to introduce to his readers. On the other hand, Fenno likely included this excerpt, as well as a second article from the *National Gazette* which criticized British influences in America, as a means of highlighting Freneau’s radicalism and pro-French bias.²³⁶ By highlighting the presence of these articles in the *National Gazette*, Fenno questioned the trustworthiness of Freneau’s coverage of the French Revolution, thereby encouraging readers to view the paper skeptically. The accusation of partisanship was also particularly damaging in the late-eighteenth century, when political parties were still considered dangerous factions and newspapers were just starting to move away from older traditions of strict neutrality on contentious issues.²³⁷

In his coverage of Louis XVI’s execution and the reaction of Americans to it, Fenno emphasized Louis XVI’s goodness, largely highlighting his admirable qualities as an individual. Articles, for example, detailed qualities which Federalists, in particular, would have admired, such as Louis’s noble demeanor on the scaffold, his religiosity, and his sensitivity and loyalty as a family man. At the same time, Fenno gave attention to Louis’s “enlightened” reign, highlighting his accomplishments in pre-revolutionary France, as well as his willingness to come to the aid of the Americans during their own Revolution. Fenno then contrasted this venerable profile of Louis XVI with a decidedly ambivalent characterization of the revolutionaries, describing the “mobbishness” of the masses and questioning the fitness of the revolutionary leadership to lead.

²³⁵ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.87.347 (March 30, 1793); Freneau, *NG*, II.41.163 (March 20, 1793).

²³⁶ Fenno, *GUS*, IV.92.365 (April 17, 1793).

²³⁷ Buel, *Securing the Revolution*, 5; Pasley, “*Tyranny of the Printers*,” 22-23.

On the other hand, Philip Freneau's coverage of the execution of Louis XVI in his *National Gazette* downplayed the King's positive personal qualities, ignoring his piety and his roles as a husband and father. Articles discussing Louis's death were fewer in number than in Fenno's paper and reports were pulled more frequently from French sources, which presented the French Revolution in a much more positive light than most British reports. Freneau also included articles that more broadly praised the French Revolution as a source of enlightenment in his March and April 1793 issues of his *National Gazette*. Such articles further deemphasized Louis's death and suggested to readers that they should ultimately focus on the greater goals of the Revolution, rather than particular moments in time. Thus, Freneau spread an understanding of events in France articulated by Republicans: the end result of the Revolution was the key, and moments of violence and excess were part of Revolution.²³⁸

In addition to news articles, both Fenno and Freneau incorporated coverage of the American reaction to Louis XVI's death into their papers. The reactions published by Fenno suggested that the nation as a whole regretted the execution. A series of letters, reports, and articles described and defended commemoration exercises undertaken throughout the country, suggesting that American republicans did not align with French republicans on the question of Louis XVI's fate. For Federalist sympathizers, the execution encouraged them to focus on "their nation's exceptional destiny" and turn away from the earlier theory that America and France were "sister republics" united by "the universal principles of natural rights and the 'science of government.'"²³⁹ Meanwhile, Freneau's paper questioned this quasi-national mourning period for Louis XVI, drawing into question the republicanism of the men and women who viewed the French monarch so benevolently. Freneau and his respondents argued that this grief was

²³⁸ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 253-254; Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 58.

²³⁹ Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, 2.

indicative of the aristocracy still present in America, which Republicans in the government traced to the Federalists and the Washington administration.²⁴⁰ Thus, the *National Gazette* urged Americans to continue to support the French and to learn from the French emphasis on equality and fraternity. Through their contrasting discussions of the execution of Louis XVI, Fenno and Freneau offered two starkly different understandings of American republicanism and the relationship of their country with republican France.

²⁴⁰ Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, 143; Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 64-65, 98-99, 112.

Conclusion

By providing readers with intelligence of events in both France and the United States, opinions on the events, and a forum for public debates, newspaper editors such as Benjamin Franklin Bache, John Fenno, and Philip Freneau played central roles in the process of popular politicization in 1790s America. Through these newspapers, the public was introduced to the idea and ideology of political partisanship: readers gradually learned of the domestic debates taking place between the Federalists and the Republicans, as well as about conflicting opinions over foreign affairs. Thus, during the early 1790s, a Federalist-Republican division began to emerge within the public sphere. Some readers found themselves pulled towards the Federalist ideology presented in papers such as the *Gazette of the United States* of a strong, centralized government, responsible for providing the country with solid leadership and stability, while others sympathized with the Jeffersonian Republican arguments, in favor of greater localization and popular participation in government and found in the *National Gazette* and the *General Advertiser*.

In addition to an exposure to the domestic party divisions forming within the federal government, newspapers of the 1790s also provided their audience with news of foreign affairs. From the beginning, the French Revolution was a fascinating subject to Americans: the coming together of the Estates-General, the actions at the Bastille, and documents such as the Declaration on the Rights of Man and Citizen reminded Americans of their own history, encouraging them to view the French Revolution as a product of their intellectual legacy. However, through the course of the 1790s, this perspective gradually changed. As many historians have observed, by the time of the Terror, Federalist-oriented groups within the American public were increasingly disenchanted with the French Revolution, questioning

whether it really was an outgrowth of the American Revolution's legacy and postulating that the violence in France was a sign that the Revolution had gone off the rails. Uncomfortable with the disorder, chaos, and societal leveling of the radical Jacobins and the Parisian mob, they sought to disassociate the United States from France. While scholars are certainly correct in their claim that this perspective had emerged alongside the earlier optimism about the French Revolution by the time of the Terror, it can actually be traced back to the 1792-1793 era. As the contrasting coverage of the French Revolution in Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* and Freneau's *National Gazette* reveals, the violence of August 10, the events of the September Massacres, and the execution of Louis XVI laid the groundwork for the acceptance of the Jay Treaty with Britain in 1794, the dissolution of the Franco-American alliance, and the vision of the French and American Revolutions as movements with separate values, drives, and destinies.

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