

Introduction

ROMAN INFLUENCES IN FRENCH CULTURE DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY AND NAPOLEONIC PERIODS

At the end of the eighteenth century, French life and culture were permeated with classical influences. France's 'political thought, her symbols and institutions were mainly Roman'.¹ The list of classical symbols in Revolutionary France is fascinating: laurel wreaths, the fasces, the eagles of the army, and names of institutions such as the Consulate and Tribunate, not to mention the veneration of classical heroes of liberty such as Camillus, Cincinnatus, Fabius, the Gracchi and Brutus. Revolutionary oratory was wholly modelled on that of Cicero.²

Roman influence was seen in more tangible ways. In architecture, Napoleon's attitudes were notorious: 'Une architecture grandiose symétrique devait chercher ses modèles chez les anciens: lorsqu'on lui proposait d'élever des monuments commémoratifs, colonnes, arcs de triomphe, trirème ou même éléphants, il les voulait toujours à la manière des Romains. Son empire devait être le continuateur de cet empire qui s'était étendu de l'Égypte aux îles Britanniques.'³

The two leading architects of the time, Pierre Fontaine (1762–1853) and Charles Percier (1764–1838), were deeply imbued with a passion for Rome, where they both had been students for many years, although many of their contemporaries were more influenced by Greek styles.⁴ There was indeed a whole school of architects who drew their inspiration from 'the simplicity of the Greeks and the grandeur of the Romans': Poyet, Duforny, Vaudoyer, Clavareau, Beaumont, Gisors the Younger and others.⁵

The Column of Trajan was the inspiration for all French commemorative columns – there had even been talk of buying it – but especially for that of the Place Vendôme.⁶ The archetypal dome was that of the Pantheon. As for triumphal arches, imitations of the characteristic Roman form had been standard for city gates in France since the eighteenth century, but the Arch of the Carrousel by Percier and Fontaine (1808) was consciously

modelled on that of Severus in the Forum.⁷ The Pyramid of Cestius was regarded as the archetypal funerary monument.⁸

As examples of classically inspired work we may mention the transformation of the church of Ste G enevi e into the Panth on, begun by Soufflot and Rondelet in 1791 and completed only under the Restoration;⁹ Vignon's Madeleine (1806-), Roman Corinthian, octostyle peripteral; and even grander, Brogniart's Bourse (1808-), a gigantic Corinthian peristyle, with fourteen columns across the front and twenty on each side in the style of an enormous unpedimented Roman temple.¹⁰

In art, the most famous painter of the Revolution and Empire was Jacques Louis David (1748–1825), who first made his name and marked a turning-point with his *Horaces*, 1784, followed by *J. Brutus, premier consul, de retour   sa maison apr s avoir condamn  ses deux fils*, 1789, *B lisaire*, 1791, and *Les Sabines*, 1799. His work has been described as responsible for a change in art fashions from Homeric mythology to the 'melodramas' of Livy.¹¹ Jean Drouais in the 1780s painted *Le gladiateur mourant*, 1785, *Marius   Minturnes*, 1786, and *C. Gracchus partant de sa maison*.

The dramatic presentations in Paris between 1800 and 1804 under the Consulate are known. They included Porta's *Les Horaces*, Voltaire's *La mort de C sar*, d'Arnault's *Marius   Minturnes*, Legouve's *Epicharis et N ron*, and Hoffmann's opera *Adrien*.¹²

Perhaps, however, the most stunning classical manifestation in Napoleonic France was women's clothing. 'The essential of women's costume, which was no longer made only in light stuffs, was a very high-waisted sheath, generally with a square, low-cut neckline covering the shoulders, girdled below the bust with a narrow belt. It fell in straight folds to the knees for the tunic, to the feet for the skirt . . .' Hair was cut short, '  la Titus' or '  la Caracalla'.¹³

What had stimulated all this interest in the classical world, and Rome in particular? It is customary to mention the discovery of Pompeii (1748) and Herculaneum (1738). The excitement caused by the uncovering of the two buried cities with the art and other treasures discovered there was enormous. These discoveries were not, however, at all necessary to explain this phenomenon.¹⁴ There had always been interest in Rome among the French since the Renaissance: collections of antiquities and excavations were important. The remains of the cities of Magna Graecia had been known much earlier and it must be remembered that the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum were intermittent and the discoveries kept notoriously secret.¹⁵

There had long been famous guidebooks such as Fran ois Misson, *Voyage d'Italie*, 1691 (6th edn, 1743), Fran ois Deseine, *L'ancienne Rome*, 1713, *Rome moderne*, 1713, and Charles Cochin, *Voyage d'Italie*, 1758. And the wonders of Rome, in particular, had long been familiar through the works of artists. Besides the engravings of Giambattista Piranesi, *Le vedute di Roma*, c. 1748–

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78, there were the views of his predecessor, Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691–1765),¹⁶ of his friend, Hubert Robert (1733–1808), ‘Robert des Ruines’,¹⁷ and of his contemporary, Giuseppe Vasi, *Le magnificenze di Roma*, 10 vols, 1747–61. The Académie de France in Rome, moreover, had been founded for artists by Louis XIV as long ago as 1666.

In architecture, as early as the 1750s the defenders of the ancients had reacted against the ‘Jesuit style’ of Borromini and Bernini and demanded a return to Vitruvius and Palladio. The leaders in France were Jean-François Blondel (*Architecture française*, 1752), Marc-Antoine Laugier (*Essai sur l’architecture*, 1753) and Jacques Antoine (*Traité d’architecture*, 1768). In art, similarly, there had been a return to the antique as models in the Académie Royale, among other European academies, from the mid eighteenth century, under the influence of Winckelmann and others.¹⁸ This antiquarian inspiration for painters was derived from the Renaissance, Pompeian frescoes, Roman reliefs and Greek vases, although it was not so much particularly Roman as Greek. Joseph-Marie Vien¹⁹ copied a Herculaneum wall-painting in his famous *Cupid-seller*, 1763. Jean-Baptiste Greuze showed *L’Empereur Sévère reprochant à son fils Caracalle*, 1769, and Nicholas Lépicier painted *Le dévouement de Porcia*, 1777, *Le départ de Régulus*, 1779 and *La piété de Fabius*, 1781.

It is even more notorious that classical influences had triumphed in French literature even from the seventeenth century, after the famous ‘Battle of the Books’, providing not only many of the most common stories but even the literary forms in which they were presented. Corneille (1606–84) had produced *Cinna*, *Horace*, *La mort de Pompée*, *Sertorius*, *Othon*, and *Titus et Bérénice*. Greek-inspired drama, on the other hand, dominated Racine (1639–99), but much in Molière’s comedies (1622–73) was derived from Terence.²⁰

Fascination with the classical world, and Rome in particular, had been a feature of French life and culture even before the Revolution. The political concerns of that Revolution and the succeeding Consulate and Empire and France’s expansion in Europe were, however, to give that interest a new, heightened meaning.

THE PAPAL STATES DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY
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From 1780 all eyes, including French, were on Rome, the capital of the Arts. Travellers contemplated the ruins and meditated on mortality. There was a great increase in guidebooks, hotels improved, and tourists – from England and Germany as well as France – poured in. The number of French from the higher classes vastly increased on the outbreak of the Revolution, but then the situation was reversed in 1793 with the murder of the French agent, Hugo de Bassville, and the French had to flee.

Revenge came in 1797 with Napoleon's declaration of war on the Papal States. On 19 February, to avert invasion, the Peace of Tolentino was signed. The conditions were the surrender of Bologna, Ferrara and the Romagna, a huge increase in indemnities, and the handing over of one hundred major works of art and five hundred manuscripts.²¹ Disaster had been only postponed. On 27 December, the French emissary, General Duphot, was shot in Rome. The city was occupied by the French army under General Berthier, on 10 February 1798 the Pope was deposed, and a Republic proclaimed. Pius VI left Rome, to die in exile in France. The French were, however, forced out of Rome by the Neapolitans, first briefly and then on 30 September, 1799, not to return for almost a decade. Pius VII, elected in Venice in March 1800, entered Rome in July.

Rome was simply one of the Italian states radically affected by the Napoleonic wars. As early as the campaign of 1796–7, the north came under French control: the Lombard Republic was established in May 1796 and the Cisalpine Republic in June 1797. The kingdom of Piedmont was conquered by 9 December 1798. It was then the turn of Naples, whence Ferdinand fled and where the Parthenopean Republic was set up on 23 January 1799. Florence was occupied on 25 March. A series of French reverses, however, overthrew these Republics, as at Rome, in 1799.

Napoleon himself was occupied in Egypt in 1798–9, but by the new constitution of December 1799 was appointed Consul. The capture of Milan on 2 June 1800 ensured the restoration of the Cisalpine Republic. French attention then turned to Austria, but among the terms of the Treaty of Lunéville was the conversion of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany into the Kingdom of Etruria. In 1801, a Concordat was made with the new Pope, Pius VII, recognising him in the Papal States. In 1804, however, Napoleon was crowned Emperor²² and named next year King of Italy. Although the French lost control of the seas at Trafalgar (21 October 1805), the Russians and Austrians were defeated at Austerlitz on 2 December, after which the latter gave up all her Italian territories to France, and the Bourbons of Naples were deposed. Joseph Bonaparte became King of Naples. After victories at Jena (1806) and Friedland (1807) over Prussia and Russia, Napoleon's attention turned to the Iberian peninsula. With the occupation of Spain in March 1808, Joseph Bonaparte was transferred to become king there and was replaced in Naples by Napoleon's brother-in-law, Joachim Murat.

The above brief outline of Napoleon's victories makes abundantly clear that, within a decade, the Papal States were hemmed in by French-occupied territories on all sides. Pius VII, supported by his Secretary of State, Cardinal Consalvi,²³ one of the ablest diplomats of the period, stoutly refused to enter the 'Napoleonic system', or break neutrality by closing his ports to the English, or to recognise the King of Naples. On 2 February 1808, French troops under General Miollis occupied Rome.

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The classic study of this period of Rome's history remains Louis Madelin's *La Rome de Napoléon*, 1906. This work is based on a vast array of documents in archives in Paris and Rome. Madelin was certainly a Frenchman, but gave credit where it was due and drew the character of the main actors in the drama with convincing complexity. This is not to say that he did not have his heroes (Napoleon, Tournon and Miollis) and his villains (notably Joachim Murat, and most of the Roman aristocracy).

The parlous state of Rome in the early nineteenth century could hardly be denied by any historian. The population was about 130,000, of whom Madelin estimated one quarter lived off the state.²⁴ The same historian calculated that six-tenths of the wealth was owned by the church and another three-tenths by the nobility. A total of 1,463 monks and 1,131 nuns lived in some 145 monasteries and convents, although the monks' income was less than one million francs a year. There is little to be said in favour of any aspect of the administration. Madelin singled out 'justice' for its corruption, incompetence, chaos and laziness. On the other hand, it was admitted that the hospital system was excellent and indeed that the religious with their charity supported the entire poor population. The city of Rome was notoriously violent and dangerous²⁵ while the countryside was infested with a banditry infamous throughout Europe. To top everything off, the state was bankrupt. Reforms had been attempted, especially by Cardinal Consalvi, but had run into immovable opposition.

The French ruled Rome for six years. There may have been some who expected widespread improvement and modernisation. The administration was characterised, however, by many mistakes. First was the long period of indecision after the military occupation when the Romans were left uncertain of their future, which only hardened their resistance to the annexation when it came. There was a bizarre interregnum of sixteen months during which the Papal government continued to function under a French military occupation. This ended in June 1809 when the Papal States were incorporated into France and a Consulta Straordinaria was set up. The very name of this 'comité de démolition' shows that it was only an interim arrangement. When the Consulta came to an end in 1810, the effective administration was really only a continuation of the same. Despite its grandiose title as 'second city of the Empire', it must be remembered that Rome never had a governor. Napoleon on 3 June 1810 named to the post of all people Fouché, Duc d'Otranto, only to rescind the order on 1 July. General Miollis remained therefore for four years as military ruler, although technically only Lieutenant-Governor, second to a non-existent governor. The civil head was a Prefect, Camille de Tournon, who arrived in November 1809.

The second and most fatal mistake of all was the kidnapping and deportation of the Pope. This outrageous and brutal action on the night of 6 July, 1809 shocked Europe and turned a frail man aged sixty-seven into a martyr

and saint, making him invincible to Napoleon and removing any last shred of hope that the population of Rome could be won over to the occupiers. The Romans spent the next five years longing for his return. The French administration, admittedly, had been impossible while he remained; it was even more so after his removal.

The third mistake was connected with the second, a continuation of Napoleon's religious 'policies', although his contradictory attitudes to the Church hardly merit that term. By decree of 17 April 1810 religious corporations were declared dissolved. The 13,000 religious in the Papal States were thus made homeless, and the convents and monasteries confiscated to the state. Italy was filled with an army of dispossessed and embittered monks, and the poor lost their sustenance. A brutal blow destroyed a fragile system of cooperation, fundamental to the social fabric. The French were to find to their cost what economic and social disruption they had caused.²⁶

Along with this went the usual device of despotic regimes: an oath of loyalty. It was first applied to all the clergy. Of the twelve bishops left in Rome, ten signed (there is a famous story of Tournon's subterfuge to help them),²⁷ but most canons and more than two hundred priests refused. They were deported. The oath was then extended to all secular officials. Fifty mayors resigned. The whole administration was put to needless anxiety, and people of integrity, it should be noted, were most likely to be the ones to suffer. The last and most vicious application of this obsession with 'loyalty' was the decree of 4 May 1812 that all officials who had refused to take the oath were to be exiled and have their property confiscated.

To ensure that the French administration was hated by almost everyone, conscription was imposed, after the union with France in 1810. Not even the pleading of Tournon could fill the required lists. The few boys who could be torn away from their mothers mostly deserted as soon as they marched out of Rome and joined the brigands. And from 1811, Napoleon had the idea of summoning the sons of the nobility to Paris for their 'education'.

By 1813 the government was a fiction. Napoleon's reputation had been destroyed in Russia in 1812 and then at Leipzig on 18 October 1813. By late summer, the English fleet began to raid the coastal forts and even burned Anzio. The man who thought he might turn the situation to his own advantage, albeit at the cost of high treason, was none other than the Emperor's brother-in-law, the King of Naples. On the pretext of marching north to defend the Po, he began to occupy Rome in November. On 19 January, 1814 his agent, General le Vauguyon, took possession of the city. Most of the administrators had to leave within a few days, for fear of their lives, but General Miollis rose to the occasion and solemnly occupied Castel Sant'Angelo, where he held out until allowed to leave with all honours on

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10 March. Within a month Napoleon had abdicated, and on 24 May Pius VII returned from exile in France.

From the above narrative, it is hard to imagine that any Roman supported the French government. The aristocrats were in the forefront of the collaborators, seemingly influenced by the example of Duca Braschi, Pius VI's nephew and mayor, because they were rewarded with office and attracted by the European links now open to them. The upper bourgeoisie followed suit, especially the commercial classes, for obvious reasons. The main opposition came from the mass of the population: the lower bourgeoisie, which had benefited from clientship or was faithful to the Church, and the poorest.²⁸

What did the French achieve? The perspectives of historians vary: how else can it be? At the beginning of this century, the Frenchman Madelin spoke of the 'astonishing and edifying' list of projects which his countrymen mostly realised and in such a short time. He asked us to imagine twenty or thirty French administrators in the middle of a people who, he admitted, did *not* love them, served badly by their subordinates, and facing constant political resistance on all sides. They set up the whole complicated new administration. They attempted to improve agriculture and create industry and commerce. Grain cultivation increased by 50%, and there was some redistribution of land, by satisfying creditors with Church lands. On the other hand, drainage of swamps, and the introduction of cotton and soda were not successful. Bad seasons in 1811 and 1812 were a heavy blow. Attempts to establish new industries, such as the great cotton factory in the Baths of Diocletian (!), failed, mainly because of attachment to old-fashioned methods of production, despite sending people abroad to learn and the setting up of a Società Romana di Agricoltura, Arti e Manifatture in 1810. In addition there was a general economic collapse in 1811, ruining the petite bourgeoisie, caused by a vast scaling down of public debts and enormous increases in taxation.²⁹ There was to be 'no Eldorado on the banks of the Tiber'.

On the other hand, the French cultivated the Arts, organised schools, refounded academies, created art galleries, cleared the ancient monuments, restored palaces, made streets, built cemeteries and gardens, and banked rivers.³⁰

The Italian historian, Fiorella Bartoccini, instead of Madelin's materialist categories, acknowledges a revolution in attitudes, the beginning of, or stimulus to, ideas which were to come to fruition fifty years later. She contrasts the Napoleonic period, naturally, with the earlier Jacobin Republic.

Ugualmente non incise in profondità qualche anno dopo il dominio napoleonico, maggiormente ricco di propaganda e di sollecitazione, di coinvolgimento e di cooptazione, con premesse e basi più sicure, con tendenze conciliatrici, con aperture di sviluppo sul terreno sociale e di miglioramento su quello materiale, con anni più lunghi di impegno . . . Sembra più nel giusto Stendhal quando dice che i Romani

avevano 'intravisto' la civiltà: significava, per essi, l'insolito apprendimento, attraverso inoltre un contatto diretto, del fatto che esisteva un 'mondo esterno', una 'diversità' e una 'alternativa', una 'novità' di condizioni e di leggi che rendevano più facile e organizzata la vita collettiva, una 'possibilità' di maggiore partecipazione e presenza nella gestione del potere. L'apprendimento non significava comunque accettazione, limitata a quegli elementi che si vedevano nuovamente sbarrata la strada della fortuna economica e della ascesa sociale dal mondo pontificio della Restaurazione, o che avevano maturato consapevolezze e programmi politici. Molto più importante, e irreversibile, la trasformazione materiale dei costumi e delle abitudini ai più alti livelli della popolazione.³¹

Of all the transformations, there is one as important as any other, unmentioned in the above summary: the classical and archaeological aspect of Rome. The present study is devoted to the French contribution to the history of Roman archaeology. It cannot be understood except in the context of the political and social background outlined above. Nor can it be understood without narrative and analysis of the preceding treatment of Rome's classical monuments.

1

*The protection and destruction of classical
Rome before 1809*

BARBARIAN INVASIONS AND NATURAL DISASTERS

There can never be a simple, definitive answer to the question how well or how ill treated the Roman monuments had been before the nineteenth century, because the evidence is held in an enormous mass of archival sources and because the historian cannot work outside an incubus of prejudice regarding institutions such as the Papacy and concepts such as the Renaissance. For the purposes of this introductory chapter, necessary to put the French work into context, we may rely on two fundamental and famous works of very different approach. One is the essay on the ruins of Rome, by the young Carlo Fea in 1784 which served as an appendix to the Italian translation of Johann Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Althertums*;¹ Fea, sixteen years later, was to become Papal Commissioner for Antiquities. The second work is one of many by the most famous archaeological historian of his time, Rodolfo Lanciani: *The destruction of ancient Rome*, 1899. These will naturally be supplemented by standard works. How could one overlook the Catholic Ludwig Pastor, or the Protestant and Ghibelline Ferdinand Gregorovius?

One begins inevitably with the barbarian sacks of Rome by the Goths in AD 410 and the Vandals in 455. Fea played down Alaric's damage, but relied too much on Christian sources (Augustine, *City of God* 1.7; Orosius 7.39), who were themselves anxious to compare the three days' sack favourably with earlier disasters. Lanciani detailed the widespread evidence for destruction of wealthy houses on the Aventine. Gaiseric's fourteen days' plunder was similarly discounted by Fea by reference to praise of Rome's monuments by Cassiodorus (for example, *Variae* 7.15, comparing Rome with the seven wonders of the world). Lanciani, following Procopios (3.5.3–4), tended to agree with Fea that Rome was plundered rather than destroyed. Both placed considerable emphasis on Procopios' description (8.21) of the Forum of Peace and the many statues of Phidias and Lysippos still existing in this quarter. This, however, does not give due weight to the context:

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an omen occasioned by the transit of a herd of cattle through this forum – shades of Campo Vaccino rather than the glories of old Rome.²

In his preface to the discussion of Christian treatment of the pagan monuments, Fea rightly stressed the importance of natural causes of ruin. Fire had been an eternal enemy of the monuments. Tiber flooding, sometimes up to 12 feet deep and strong enough to sweep away buildings, was another scourge: Fea listed the floods of 589, 685, 725, 791 and 797. Even more devastating were earthquakes. To these must be added political considerations: the move of the emperors to Constantinople, and neglect of Rome. There may have been as well civil disturbances, as referred to in the restoration of Constantine's baths in the fifth century (*ILS* 5703: 'civilis vel potius feralis cladis vastatione vehementer adflictas') and the restoration of the statue of Minerva damaged by fire in a 'tumultus civilis' in the same century (*ILS* 3132).³

What Fea treated summarily was the effect of the establishment of Christianity on attitudes to the monuments of paganism. Constantine and his successors protected ancient monuments. The cult was to cease, but the buildings were not to be destroyed.⁴ It is Gregorovius who drew our attention to the edict of Majorian in AD 458, however, in which it was admitted that public buildings *were* being destroyed at the instigation of the Urban Prefect. Building materials were being taken from 'beautiful ancient structures' to repair others, even private ones. Majorian therefore explicitly banned the destruction of ancient temples and other monuments (*Nov. Maj.* 4). 'The state of barbarism to which this edict bears witness had set in under Constantine, since whose days the populace had continued to wage destruction to the monuments of antiquity . . . The building of Christian churches since the time of Constantine had given an irresistible impulse to the pillage of ancient monuments.'⁵

Theodoric (493–526) is admitted by Fea to have found Rome in ruins, but he also undertook important repairs: to the theatre of Pompey (Cassiodorus, *Variae* 4.51), the Colosseum (*ILS* 5635), and officials were appointed to care for aqueducts, sewers, baths and harbours.⁶ Yet Fea suggested that by the seventh century only the strongest buildings were surviving, because of the natural disasters he had listed.

That century saw a major innovation in Christian attitudes towards the pagan monuments. As far as we know, for the first time a temple was converted into a church. The Pantheon became S. Maria ad Martyres under Boniface IV in 609 by permission of the emperor Phocas. This set a precedent for many other such 'conversions'.⁷ Otherwise the seventh century was marked by two major depredations: Honorius I in 629 removed the gilt-bronze roof-tiles of the Temple of Venus and Rome.⁸ Better known is the similar removal by the emperor Constans II in 663 of the bronze tiles of the Pantheon – despite its recent conversion into a church.⁹