

FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES:
BORROWED AND SHARED NATIONAL SYMBOLS

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Thesis Prepared for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2011

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Crawford, Katlyn Marie. France and the United States: Borrowed and Shared National Symbols, Master of Arts (French), May 2011, 68 pp., 41 titles.

This thesis analyzes and demonstrates the similarities and differences between some of the national symbols of France and the United States. This includes the shared and borrowed aspects of each one and the ways in which each culture is reflected through, and built around them. The flags, national anthems, and several national icons such as France's Marianne and Uncle Sam are discussed. This analysis deals with the historical contexts and cultural meanings of the symbols, showing the changes each has undertaken in form and in national and international importance. Through the study of national symbols, this thesis reveals the similarities along with the differences between the two nations, which are often perceived as being highly dissimilar and even opposing in belief systems, cultures, and histories.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The creation and utilization of symbols to represent ideas and identity are as much a part of being human as the notion of group or personal identity itself. It is as old as the need and implementation of a governing hierarchy. Thus, it stands to reason that every society, ancient or modern, has unique symbols chosen by their peoples to represent themselves and the ideologies they honor. Many such symbols have been primarily utilitarian in purpose, identifying the people groups to whom land and property belong (for example, cattle branding) or as a means of storytelling (for example, cave paintings). In the last few centuries, however, our symbols have become more abstract. Today's national symbols still serve as the same basic form of identification as the symbols of the past, but their role has become quite unique.

They function as modern totems that merge the mythical, sacred substance of the nation with a specified, manifest form, one that is grounded in the everyday experience of sight, sound, or touch. By blending subject and object, national symbols move beyond simple representation of nation. In a very real sense, national symbols become the nation (Cerulo 4).

There is a deep emotional connection between people and the symbolic, both from the perspective of those who identify with the symbols and of those to whom they are foreign. Such emotions can include love, hatred (sometimes even a mix of the two), or indifference, among innumerable others. Symbols can

arouse infinitely shifting thoughts and emotions that are as unique as each individual who feels them.

There are two perspectives to consider when looking at national symbols: the international perspective (how symbols are viewed by outsiders) and the national perspective (how citizens of a country view their own national symbols). Both of these perspectives are multifaceted. Internationally, the symbols can represent the whole of the country, but they often call up the most recent events linked to the country. For instance, one might say that for many of today's international audiences, the image of an American flag conjures up thoughts of America's military activities in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that image results in either disapproval, approval, or a mix of both. A few years from now, when the media is focused on the next big controversy or triumph related to the United States, that same American flag will hold an entirely different meaning both internationally and nationally. No matter how timeless a symbol can seem, perceptions and meanings of it are subjective and based on the ever-changing global political climate. It is from the national perspective, however, that one can discover how the nation views itself, by witnessing how it views its own symbols. "National symbols offer us a powerful case study in the symbolic communication of the collective self—a prototype illustrating the ways in which a collective, in a conscious and intentional way, chooses its voice" (Cerulo 4). Their unique function, demonstrating both the internal and external identity of a nation, makes national symbols an important avenue of studying a people group.

It appears that our modern, abstract national symbols carry more weight of importance and emotion during and just after times of war or political unrest than during times of national peace. This effect is evident if we consider the fact that many of the national symbols in existence today were born out of times of war. People are more invested in their countries when their governments hold the keys to their individual fates than when there is no eminent danger, or the eminent danger is out of the government's hands.

There appear to be marked periods of time when authors in France and the United States seemed drawn to write about national symbols. For France, many such works were written in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. This period directly followed the turbulent decades of several revolutions and changes of governmental power between monarchy, republic, and empire, and concluded just after the First World War. Another reason for this influx of national symbology during that period in France is that before the late 1800s, the national symbols changed as often as the government did, so it was best to wait until the government and its symbols were seemingly set in stone. For the U.S., there are many works (often addressing juvenile audiences) that were written during the Post-World War II years of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, which saw a revival of national pride and the need for maintaining the American way of life in the face of wars in Korea and Vietnam, and the Cold War. Those were days when the American people felt that their children especially needed to be indoctrinated in the patriotic American spirit rather than be caught up in the much-feared

communist sympathies that were believed to be pervading the nation. But when there is seemingly no need for national pride or reverence, citizens generally feel more indifferent toward the symbols that united them in trying times.

But why choose to compare the symbols of France and the United States as opposed to other countries? It might be more interesting to compare America with Great Britain, its symbolic mother country, or to Canada, with which it shares a linked history. It might also be more interesting to compare France with nations that speak other Romance languages, like Spain or Italy, or again, to England, its historic foe. These other comparisons seem more logical, since these nations have so much more in common with each other. What makes the connection between France and the United States so special, if they even have a connection other than having to work together in today's globalized society?

On the surface, modern France and the United States appear to be worlds apart when it comes to their ideologies, their cultures, and their image. In many ways, this perception is correct. Though each country has a similar democratic government, their political cultures are far removed from one another. One might look at their separate histories, seeing the extensive background of France, dating back to its tribal beginnings as Gaul, and the fairly short existence of the United States, even including its colonial past, and think there could be nothing in common between the Old World of Europe and a New World of former European colonies.

These two Western cultures could be likened to siblings who, though they are related through genetics, are completely unlike one another (and often get on each other's nerves). And like two dissimilar siblings, they can easily get away with nagging each other and poking fun, without causing irreparable harm to their relationship: an interplay that has been observed between the countries for centuries. Part of the reason for this relationship is that these two countries have 'grown up' alongside one another. Do not let France's long history fool you. Modern France was not born until after the United States was formed. These two nations, though different in many ways, have similar beginnings and ideologies that are often overshadowed by their glaring differences in modern society.

In what ways are these two nations similar or different? What debts of national identity does each owe to the other? Through each nation's treatment of its symbols, what values can be perceived within each collective mentality? How does each one see itself and how does the other see it? A look at some of their national symbols, their flags, their anthems, and their national icons, will shed some light on the ambiguous relationship between these two countries.

CHAPTER 2

FLAGS

I will begin the journey of symbol exploration in the realm of the visible—the most visible symbol, in fact, and the most recognizable. Flags need virtually no translation in order to identify what nation is being represented. They are considered by historians to be “a universal characteristic of human civilization” (Smith 32). Thus they are internationally understood.

Every two years we see a flurry of flags and national colors across the international media as we witness the Olympic games. Athletes, much in the same manner as soldiers throughout human history, proudly carry and wear their flag as their nation’s emblem and as a symbol of their identities as representatives of that nation. The spectacle of waving banners and colors from (currently) 205 nations, even if watched via telecast from the other side of the world, immediately gives a sense of pride and involvedness at the sight of one’s national colors and flag. It is not just the country that is represented there, but every individual citizen feels personally represented as well (“National Olympic Committees”).

According to Whitney Smith, executive director of the Flag Research Center in Winchester, Massachusetts, “Like other symbols, flags express the unity and identity of one group as against all others; it is a way of asserting the

bonds which link people despite differences in their wealth, social standing, power, or age...The flag is...an externalization of the fears and hopes, the myths, and the magic of those who carry it” (Smith 37). That being said, the flag, as a national symbol, is no small thing and is worth considering and analyzing as a reflection of the ideologies of a people group.

There are a number of things to observe and analyze about a nation’s flag: its colors, any images or words present on the flag, and the history of its evolution over time. The modern flags of the United States and France have no words inscribed upon them and, in fact, share the same national colors. However, though they are very similar in some ways, their backgrounds and meanings are quite detached from one another.

The French flag, though there have been many versions of it and many predecessors in French history, is currently in the same form as it was in the days of Napoleon. The fact that the flag remained the same could perhaps reflect the nation’s desire to cling to its identity and not change itself despite the changes in the world around it. This could be seen positively as stability or negatively as stubbornness. As for the American flag, it was ever changing for many decades after it became an official national symbol, because of the very nature of the flag and the American laws that came to govern its evolution. The flag changed as the nation changed and grew, but the core idea of the flag (and the nation, one might suggest) remained the same. This could equally be perceived as adaptability or as uncertainty of identity.

In order to better understand which interpretations are just, we must first look at how each flag came into being. According to Smith, “what has happened in the past cannot help but give an understanding to possible new phases in the life of any country, for the future can never be entirely divorced from the past and no national flag is ever created entirely without historical links and associations” (Smith 107).

History of The French *Tricolor*

Unlike the history of the United States that is the length of only a few centuries, France, like the rest of Europe, has a rich history that stretches back to ancient days. Thus, it stands to reason that the flags of France have a much longer and more complex history than that of the U.S.

If we look back in history for the first national flag of France, we see “the earliest standard of the French seems to have been the cloak of a fourth-century bishop, St. Martin” (Smith 130). French kings, beginning with the first king, Clovis, carried this relic in victorious battles for centuries, until the defeat of the French at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. During that same time, the red imperial flag of Charlemagne, the *Montjoie*, was also carried in war. Later, two similar flags coexisted: the blue royal flag—the *Banner of France*—and the red war flag—the *Oriflamme* of St. Denis (Smith 130-31). Through these flags we can see that the colors blue and red, when it applies to flags, are a symbolic tradition in France. The color white did not appear as a national color however, until the fifteenth century with the influence of Joan of Arc and the House of Orleans.

Another legendary instance of the use of white was “at the Battle of Ivry in 1590...when Henry IV employed his white scarf as a flag and a symbol of the French national struggle against the Holy League” (Smith 133).

Though these many flags may have the blue, white, and red in common with the modern French flag, historians are clear in stating that these historic flags are not the sources of the combined *Tricolor* (Smith 130). Despite the fact that these three colors had been used in the past by the nation, “it is to the coat of arms of the city of Paris that we must look for the inspiration of the first Tricolor” (Smith 135). The first image of the modern French flag was created with the birth of the First Republic during the Revolution of 1789. The initial appearance of the three colors together was in the City Hall of Paris among figures such as King Louis XVI, the Marquis de Lafayette, and others, after the taking of the Bastille.

[Le] 17 juillet 1789: arrivé à Paris trois jours après la chute de la Bastille, le roi Louis XVI est reçu à l’Hôtel de ville par le maire Bailly en présence de La Fayette; à la demande de Bailly, il accepte, en geste de réconciliation, de placer à son chapeau, aux cotés de la cocarde blanche qui est supposée y avoir été fixée, un ruban bleu et rouge, les couleurs de la ville (Nora 50).¹

The three colors were adopted as the new official colors in the form of a cockade (an important political symbol of the time) on 4 October 1789 (Smith 135). Though this was the origin of the flag’s colors, as they exist today, the

¹ “July 17, 1789: after having arrived in Paris three days after the fall of the Bastille, King Louis XVI is received by Mayor Bailly and La Fayette at City Hall; at the request of Bailly, he agrees, as a gesture of reconciliation, to place a blue and red ribbon, the colors of the city of Paris, on the sides of his white cockade, which is supposed to have been fixed upon his hat” (Author’s transl.).

Tricolor in its current form was not made official until much later after many format changes, governmental rejections, and official adoptions.

It was not until sailors in the French Navy requested a flag of the new national colors that the government made the first law for the new official flag on October 24, 1790. Even then, that flag was very unlike what we know today. Sailors once again requested the flag be altered a few years later, and on February 15, 1794, the flag took its current form. According to the committee that set out to craft this new flag, they created it to be “an ensign formed completely of the three national colors, [a] simple [design] as is appropriate for republican morals, ideas, and principles” (Smith 136). A law was finally passed in 1812 to establish this form of the flag, since, despite its official nature on sea, the rest of the French people still lacked a standardized guideline for it. From 1814 to 1848, years of turbulence during which the country bounced back and forth between revolution, empire, and monarchy, the *Tricolor* was dismissed and reestablished numerous times. Finally, on March 5, 1848, an official decree stated:

The Gallic cock and the three colors were our venerated symbols when we founded the republic of France; they were adopted by the glorious days of July. Do not think, citizens, to suppress or change them: you will repudiate the most beautiful pages of your history, your immortal glory, your courage which has become known in all points of the globe. Keep thus the Gallic cock, the three colors: the Government demands it of your patriotism. (Smith 138)

This “immortal glory” preserved in the flag stands as a testament today of obedience to this decree despite the many changes and trials that have occurred since 1848.

History of The American *Star-Spangled Banner*

As with much of the world, Americans have a long-standing tradition of creating local flags. In the seventeenth century, English colonies in America began debating over the flags that flew over their settlements very early in their existence. Cited as one of the first of these local flags is that of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The official flag included the cross of St. George, an image that had lost its religious symbolism and had long-since been secularized. The use of this secularized religious symbol deeply troubled the Puritan population of the colony, who saw it as “a superstitious badge, a papish abomination, [and] a palpable threat to their own salvation” (Smith 191). After much deliberation and dispute, the local legislation and population finally accepted a red flag with a white canton in the place of the cross. After this admission, other colonies followed suit, officially and unofficially adapting flags for various purposes, thus giving “evidence of another American trait, the love for constant redesigning of flags” (Ibid.).

The ancestor of the modern United States flag was born out of the American Revolutionary War. “The first truly national American flag was decided upon, apparently in December 1775, its design presented no impediment to possible reconciliation between the combatants. The canton of this flag, properly known as the *Continental Colors*, bore the *Union Jack*. The thirteen stripes of its field were symbolic of the colonies united in defense of their liberties” (Smith 192). After the United States declared its sovereignty with the signing of the

Declaration of Independence, the original “Flag Act” was issued on June 14, 1777. The law states that the flag should include “thirteen stripes alternate red and white, that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation” (Taylor 44). Thus the *Union Jack* canton was omitted, leaving only the colors of the flag as a reference to its English roots.

There is much speculation regarding how the flag’s more well-known design came into being, seeing as there is no solid evidence of its source. Folklore tells us that a woman named Betsy Ross was commissioned to sew the first Stars and Stripes for George Washington himself, and though the facts of this story are classified by historians as “weak,” it is an American myth that has not truly come into question for most Americans (Smith 193).

Though there was a law set forth to generally outline the appearance of the flag, countless variations came onto the scene. And, with the admission of each new state, the government deemed that a new star and a new stripe should be added to the flag for each one. Finally, in 1816, Congressman Peter Wendover suggested a solution to the seemingly unruly changes in the flag, since the nation did not appear to be slowing down its growth (which, in fact, continued to grow until 1960 with the admission of Hawaii, the fiftieth and final state) (Smith 195-97). So, according to his suggestion, one final law regarding the American flag was adopted on April 4, 1818: it dictates that flag-makers should “reduce the number of stripes to thirteen, intended to signify the original

thirteen states, while providing that an additional star be added on the admission of each new state” (Taylor 45).

Smith gives one explanation for the characteristic changeability in the American flag: “Each state is distinctly honored and the flag constitutes an embodiment in graphic form of the entire history of the country—rather than a single moment of the past, frozen forever in an unchanging form” (Smith 196).

Colors

National colors, though rooted in the form of a national flag, can be seen as a symbolic entity in and of themselves. Even without being in the form of a banner, these colors can be used as a metonymy invoking not just the flag, but also the nation as a whole, its people, and its ideals. We often, throughout history and even today, see this usage of color in political cartoons, among many other media.

The meanings of the national colors of France and the United States are somewhat vague, at least according to each country’s government. France, though it appears to have outlined practically everything else in its laws (for example, its clear dictation of national emblems in the French Constitution), neglects to clarify the symbolism of its national colors. Most historians simply reiterate how the flag came into being after the taking of the Bastille, the blue and red of Paris and the white of the Bourbons. They also might mention the cultural significance of historical banners such as the *Montjoie*, the *Oriflamme*, the cloak of St. Martin, and the *Banner of France*. For the most part, the French continue to

root their colors' meanings in the history of the country. White represents the old monarchy, the color of the armies of the king or those who exercised their authority in his name (Nora 56) and the idea of the divine right of kings. Red is the color of revolution (Op. Cit. 61). And blue, considered the most important of the three since it is situated next to the flagpole, is more often interpreted as the color of the republic and of the nation in general (Pastoureau 141).

Placement, along with color meaning, can have a lot to do with the signification of a flag. In 1848, a momentary change was made to the French *Tricolor*. Though the colors remained the same, two of them, white and red, were swapped, "placing the two primary colors adjacent to each other as opposed to separating them with a white bar. The new flag took on higher contrast, conveying more activity and movement than its predecessor" in order to "symbolically capture the tenor of the times" (Cerulo 41).

Like France, the United States is fairly unclear when it comes to the significance of its national colors. As previously mentioned, historians have said that the red, white, and blue of the American flag have a direct relationship to the flags of England, which was considered by many to be the mother country as well as an occasional enemy. Some historians believe that the American flag was "probably an 'anti-flag,' with the same colors as the enemy flag but different designs and meanings" (Pastoureau 148). Over the years, however, Americans have ascribed their own symbolic meaning to their national colors. There is "no documentary evidence for the symbolism popularly attributed to the flag colors.

Nonetheless, Americans find meaning in the belief that red stands for valor; white, for liberty or purity; and blue, for justice, loyalty, and perseverance” (Taylor 45).

Michel Pastoureau, historian and director of studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, and at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, has argued that the French choice of national colors (as well as that of myriad other “Old World” countries who sought independence) was strongly influenced by that of the United States, born just a few years before the French Revolution of 1789 (Pastoureau 147). If we view history through this lens, we can see the very close connection between the United States and Republic of France at their inceptions. Had the United States not succeeded in its struggle for independence, the image of France, and perhaps even the future of the nation, may well have been altered.

Many theorists, philosophers, and psychologists have studied the significance of these very important colors. Much of the meaning of any given color relies on the time period in which one views it. For instance, according to Pastoureau’s study, the color blue was very unpopular during ancient times, but has since gained favor in the eyes of artists and the global population. He states, “blue is the color of consensus, while white and red today evoke opinions and ideologies that are more radical and polarizing” (Pastoureau 141). On the other hand, according to Chevalier and Gheerbrant’s *Dictionnaire des symboles*, blue is not of this world, white is the color of the political candidate, that is to say of

someone who promises social change, and red leads, encourages, and provokes (Chevalier 129, 125, 831). These interpretations show a different dimension of the power of these national colors, drawing from the historical roots in religion (blue being other-worldly) as well as the idea of inciting change.

Use of Flags: Past and Present

Part of the reason for the importance of flags as national symbols is their tangibility and portability. Their convenience and visibility makes them much easier to identify and use than other symbols, such as anthems, thus explaining their common uses as markers for explorers and for naval identification, among innumerable other uses. Their ability to be resized without otherwise affecting their appearance makes them “function equally well from the rooftop of an embassy, the antenna of a diplomatic limousine, or the lapel of a diplomat’s jacket” (Cerulo 114).

Flags are used in an official capacity in more ways than many might realize. People grow up seeing these uses and become blind to them. There are many sentiments that can be evoked through the use of a flag. It can be used to conjure up patriotism in its people, as in the case of politicians who wear and carry flags of various sizes, especially on campaign tours. In campaigning, it is almost as if all candidates try to prove they are more patriotic than their opponents, using the flag as evidence of their patriotism. The flag can be used to give honor too, as when a flag is draped over the caskets of deceased public servants of all kinds and are given to their families as a tribute to their service.

Not all uses of the flag are necessarily patriotic, however. Protesters, whether local or international, wave, burn, or manipulate the flag in order to make their messages clear, sometimes to call up the national ideals they feel have been forgotten, and sometimes to show flaws in their nation's ideals.

Both nations have tried to establish laws regarding the use of their flag and the protection of its dignity and sovereignty. For France, recent laws ("Décret N°2010-835 Du 21 Juillet 2010") dictate fines and jail sentences, depending on the offense against the flag or national anthem, for those who disrespect their national symbols. For the United States, though it is offensive and much debated in the political world, it is nevertheless legal to deface or burn the flag or to fly it upside down, because it is considered freedom of speech, which is protected under the First Amendment (Longley).

Separately, these two nations have very different flag traditions. Apart from the political and military uses mentioned above, the flag traditions of France are practically non-existent today compared to those of the United States. The American national anthem was inspired by, and is written about the flag, Americans have made up nicknames for the flag, "such as Old Glory, [which] evolved from stories and incidents, particularly military engagements involving the flag," and schoolchildren pledge allegiance to the flag every morning, thus "building a firm link between the flag and education" (Smith 198). Going as far back as the Civil War, the flag was considered the strongest national symbol: "disrespecting the flag was treason, waving the flag was proof of patriotism,

saving the flag in battle or capturing the enemy's flag was heroism" (Ibid.). In the twentieth century, some might say that Americans' love for their flag bordered on vexillatry, or flag worship (Ibid.).

French philosopher, journalist, activist, and filmmaker Bernard-Henri Lévy explains his first encounter with America and its patriotism in his book, *American Vertigo*, detailing his journey to the United States in the hopes of discovering, in essence, what makes modern America tick. He is almost immediately struck by what he calls "a riot of American flags, at crossroads, on building fronts, on car hoods, on pay phones . . . on beach umbrellas, on parasols, on bicycle saddlebags—everywhere, in every form;" he also calls it "an epidemic of flags that has spread throughout the city" (Lévy 21). Lévy is taken aback by this "obsession with the flag," as he sees it, comparing it to his account of modern French sentiment toward the *Tricolor*.

It's incomprehensible for someone who, like me, comes from a country virtually without a flag—where the flag has, so to speak, disappeared; where you see it flying only in front of official buildings; and where any nostalgia and concern for it, any evocation of it, is a sign of an attachment to the past that has become almost ridiculous (Lévy 22).

From my own American perspective, I would venture to say that such an intense display of patriotism as was seen by Lévy in 2004 was largely a product of the influx of patriotic sentiments in post-9/11 America in addition to the fact that it was an election year. These sentiments have since dissipated to some degree, though in some ways are still thriving throughout America today.

Lévy's testimony of modern French mentalities toward his flag appears to be somewhat accurate. Unlike in the United States, there is no Pledge of

Allegiance to the French flag. The extent of flag use in France is explained by the French Embassy in Washington, D.C.:

Today, the French flag can be seen on all public buildings. It is flown on the occasion of national commemorations, and it is honored according to a very precisely defined ceremony. The French flag frequently serves as a backdrop when the French President addresses the public. Depending on the circumstances, it may be accompanied by the European flag or the flag of another country (“The French Flag”).

We must look back into history to view the strongest feelings toward the French flag. One of the most celebrated images of it is in the painting, “Liberty Leading the People (28 July 1830)” by Delacroix, showing Marianne, the symbolic image of France, the Republic, and freedom, wielding the *Tricolor* in one hand and a bayoneted rifle in the other, leading the people in battle. Another example was documented in 1848, when revolutionaries attempted to dethrone the *Tricolor* and replace it with the red flag of revolution. Alphonse de Lamartine, surrounded by these revolutionaries in the hall of the National Assembly, made a moving speech as a last stand for his flag:

Je repousserai jusqu’à la mort ce drapeau de sang, et vous devez le répudier plus que moi, car le drapeau rouge que vous rapportez n’a jamais fait que le tour du Champ-de-Mars, traîné dans le sang du peuple, en 91 et 93; et le drapeau tricolore a fait le tour du monde, avec le nom, la gloire et la liberté de la patrie . . . La France et le drapeau tricolore, c’est une même pensée, un même prestige, une même terreur au besoin pour nos ennemis (Nora 59).²

² “I will reject this bloody banner to my death, and you must repudiate more than me, for this red flag you exalt has never seen beyond the Champ-de-Mars, drenched in the blood of the people, in 91 and 93; and the tricolor flag has been around the world, with the name, the glory, and the liberty of our country...France and the *Tricolor* are the same thought, the same prestige, the same terror for our enemies” (Author’s transl.)

Perhaps a lack of national threat of war is to blame for today's lack of flag fanfare. It was when the French flag or nation was threatened that the people rallied behind its colors. And it is perhaps for this same reason that Americans' flag sentiments have changed in the wake of 9/11, fizzling out after a few years of heightened patriotism.

So, why is there such a disparity between the two countries? Smith's theory on the intensity of American quasi-vexillatry is that it is "probably to be expected in a country lacking the traditional ruling classes characteristic of most other parts of the world—royalty, nobility, established clergy, a hereditary military class, [and] a land-owning aristocracy" (Smith 198). On the other hand, the seeming lack of flag presence in France could be considered a more controlled usage that is more poignant and respectful of the symbol rather than making it commonplace. We will see more of this same pattern of differing levels of patriotism in the next chapter with a symbol that is often paired with the flag: the national anthem.

CHAPTER 3

ANTHEMS

Moving into the realm of the aural, perhaps the only audible national symbol in existence today, and in importance, second only to the flag, let us take a look at the national anthem. There are two main parts to a national anthem: the music and the lyrics. From the lyrical standpoint, a national anthem can be very difficult to recognize if the audience does not speak that nation's language. From the musical standpoint, national anthems are international: no matter what language one speaks or even what type of music one is accustomed to, one can recognize the melody. Lyrics, similar to images and symbols on a flag, are up for interpretation across cultures. Music, like the colors of a flag, is universal.

Returning to my initial example for flag use, anthems are commonly used in the Olympic games as well. Anthems, however, are not as easily used as flags, which can be waved, worn, or mounted on walls. Instead, the national anthems of the globe serve a more specialized purpose in the various ceremonies that take place throughout the games. Yes, they are used for identification, much like the flag, but their use in the award ceremonies is more poignant in evoking national pride and honor for the champion nations. In fact, the combination of the flood of national colors and the triumphant performance of

one's national anthem brings an added level of emotion that was not present with only the flags in view.

According to Karen A. Cerulo, assistant professor of sociology at Rutgers University, national anthems “unite citizens every time they are performed, bringing citizens together (albeit mentally in many cases) in patriotic communion” (Cerulo 17). She mentions the BBC's WWII radio broadcasts of the Allies' national anthems and their effect on millions of listeners: “a strengthened resolve and increased feelings of camaraderie.” She compares this to a phenomenon that we will look into further in this chapter: the singing of national anthems at sporting events. “By singing the national anthem, a seemingly disconnected crowd is momentarily united as they collectively applaud and celebrate their national identity” (Ibid.). It is true that there is a unity and depth of feeling that emerges when a crowd of people, though they may be complete strangers to one another, join together in song, and even more so if it is their shared national anthem.

The anthems of the United States and France are dissimilar in many ways. Though they were both born out of war, their perspectives of those wars differ greatly. Their messages and sentiments are very different as well: “La Marseillaise” was written as a call to arms and “The Star-Spangled Banner” was written as a song of praise for a miraculous victory. But what defines the message of a national anthem? Does the message of the lyrics take a back seat to the message of patriotism and national pride that a song inherits with its

adoption as a national anthem? In order to decide which message holds more importance, we must, once again, look to the past in order to view each anthem's evolution from the beginning.

History of "La Marseillaise"

The Revolution of 1789 saw the emergence of many popular songs that were written spontaneously about the various situations in which the authors found themselves. Such songs were called "vaudevires" or "vaudevilles," and were considered to be profane, often describing events and social conditions of the time (Dufourg 24). It is from this tradition of spontaneous songwriting that "La Marseillaise" (originally entitled, "Le Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin") was born (Ibid.).

The French national anthem was written during the Revolution, after the fall of the French monarchy, when the European armies (Prussians and Austrians, in particular) came to stamp out the French Revolution.

La guerre a été déclarée par la France révolutionnaire au "Roi de Bohême et de Hongrie" le 20 avril 1792: le "Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin" . . . a été composé à Strasbourg dans la nuit du 25 au 26 avril, par Joseph Rouget de Lisle, capitaine du génie, soit au lendemain ou presque de l'annonce de cette décision dans la ville de garnison: réponse sans équivoque d'un patriotisme ombrageux et militaire à la sollicitation du moment (Nora 108).³

³ "Revolutionary France declared war on the "King of Bohemia and Hungary" on April 20, 1792: the "Chant de Guerre pour l'Armée du Rhin" ...was composed in Strasbourg during the night between April 25th and 26th, by Joseph Rouget de Lisle, Captain of the Corps of Engineers, around a day after this decision was announced in the city: it was an unparalleled response of volatile and military patriotism as was demanded by the moment" (Author's transl.).

After the mayor of Strasbourg commissioned him to compose a song, Rouget de Lisle began his composition, both lyrics and music, at the home of Baron Dietrich. He worked through the night to complete his “Chant de guerre pour l’armée du Rhin,” which would be performed a few days later by the National Guard (Dufourg 30).

The song spread very quickly across France. It appeared in Marseille in the summer, where the local battalion adopted it just before leaving the city. When this battalion arrived in Paris singing the song, Parisians gave it its current name, “La Marseillaise,” because of the soldiers of Marseille who sang it (Fiaux 31). Rouget de Lisle’s song became the official national anthem on July 14, 1795. “La Marseillaise” was repealed and reestablished many times by the temporary governments that came into power over the course of 84 years, much like the *Tricolor*, but it was reestablished in 1879 (“La Marseillaise”).

Since then, there have been several attempts at making the anthem less militaristic, both officially and unofficially. For example, President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing slowed down the rhythm in 1974, but President François Mitterrand restored the original rhythm in the 1980s. Unofficially, artists have made attempts at changing the overall feel of the song as well. One example is Serge Gainsbourg’s reggae version, “Aux armes et caetera,” written and released during the same time period as the aforementioned transformations of the anthem (Dufourg 36). But despite these attempts, the current anthem is more or less, the same as its former self.

For two centuries, “La Marseillaise” has acted as a song of war, of victory, and of French patriotic love. During World War I, more than 100 years after its birth, Louis Fiaux said: “Et une fois de plus, pour combattre, la France invoque sa ‘Marseillaise,’ sa Notre-Dame-de-Bon-Secours à la Patrie! . . . ‘La Marseillaise’ se chante aux départs pour le front” (Fiaux 271).⁴ He continues by praising the song for the universality its the meaning, saying, “Ainsi ‘La Marseillaise’ s’est confirmée en France par la guerre tout ensemble le chant d’une indissoluble union nationale et d’une universelle humanité” (Op. Cit. 310).⁵ Thus, the words of this song are not its only meaning: the emotions that “La Marseillaise” evokes as the symbol of the French nation hold the most importance for the people.

History of “The Star-Spangled Banner”

The American national anthem is unique, in that it is *metasymbolic*; it is a symbol that evokes another symbol, the American flag. We have already seen that, throughout their history, Americans have had an unusually strong connection with their flag. Thus it stands to reason, especially during a time of war, that the American people would popularize a song that featured this beloved symbol.

⁴ “And once more, France invokes its ‘Marseillaise,’ its Our-Lady-of-Good-Help, as it goes to the battle...‘La Marseillaise’ is sung at every departure for the front” (Author’s transl.).

⁵ “Thus, ‘La Marseillaise’ is confirmed in France by the war, being both the song of an indivisible national union and of a universal humanity” (Author’s transl.).

Less than four decades after the United States came into being, the newly liberated nation was swiftly swept back into war with Britain. The War of 1812 was a trying one for young America. It truly brought the country into its own as a force to be reckoned with, like the new kid in school who stood up to the older, bigger, and stronger bullies on the international playground. Though this analogy is perhaps a little simplistic, it is nevertheless a good depiction of the War of 1812: the British Navy was bullying the United States. Here is a run-down of how this war took shape:

The war began because Great Britain, engaged in a life or death struggle with Napoleon's France, tried to prevent American ships from trading with France. British ships hovered outside of American seaports, stopping American ships, confiscating their cargoes, and impressing American sailors among their crews into British service . . . the United States Congress declared war on June 18, 1812 . . . Napoleon's abdication in April 1814 freed the British to intensify military actions against the United States (Taylor 13).

It is after this intensification of British attack that "The Star-Spangled Banner" was born.

The song was inspired by the battle at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland, September 13-14, 1814. The anthem was written on an English ship during the battle by Francis Scott Key, an American lawyer and amateur poet. He was on the ship in order to free a doctor who had been taken prisoner by the British. He was able to accomplish his goal, but was forced to remain on the vessel until the battle's end, so the British plans could not be shared with the Americans. Thus, he helplessly looked on, unable to serve his country. His only hope came when he caught a glance of the American flag, the star-spangled

banner, above the fort. According to the testimony of a friend who had been on the ship with him, Key was greatly moved and began to jot down a few words on an envelope: the first words of the song which would become the national anthem.

The song was published as a poem, with a note to sing it to the melody of the well-known “Anacreon in Heaven” (Taylor 28). This tune, written in 1775 or 1776 by John Stafford Smith, was composed as “the ‘constitutional song’ of a mid- to late-eighteenth-century gentlemen’s musical club called the Anacreonic Society, after the sixth-century BCE Greek poet Anacreon who wrote a number of short verses in praise of wine and women” (Op. Cit. 35). This is similar to many early American folk songs: new, American lyrics were written to melodies that were familiar to the American public, often British tunes (for example, “My Country, Tis of Thee,” an American patriotic song, borrowed the music of the British national Anthem, “God Save the King”). Using pre-existing, recognizable melodies allowed for the general public to easily learn the new songs, in a time when the technology for making and listening to recordings was not yet invented.

This war was very important in the life of the young nation: “The war of 1812 severed the United States’ remaining ties with the nation’s colonial past . . . [and] instilled in Americans a new sense of national pride—pride that would be expressed in symbols such as the flag and Francis Scott Key’s anthem” (Taylor 14). The popularity of the song spread quickly because of this new sentiment of

autonomy and national pride. But despite its popularity in 1814 and afterward, it was not recognized by Congress as the national anthem until 1931.

In the time between 1814 and 1931, there were many American patriotic songs. Just a few decades after the War of 1812, America was at war once again from 1861-65, this time, with itself. The American Civil War produced many patriotic songs, two of which stand out to us as important symbols today: “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” for the Union army, and “Dixie,” for the Confederate army. Also in the period after “The Star-Spangled Banner” was written, several other songs surfaced, which became pretenders to the throne of the U.S. National Anthem. Some of these include the aforementioned “My Country Tis of Thee (1831),” by Samuel Francis Smith, “America the Beautiful (1910),” by Katharine Lee Bates and Samuel A. Ward, and “God Bless America (1918/1938),” by Irving Berlin. In the end, however, Key’s anthem won the title, during yet another trying time for the nation, the Great Depression after the stock market crash of 1929. When the nation needed hope, “The Star-Spangled Banner” delivered.

Lyrics

As mentioned before, when it comes to each song’s lyrics, these two national anthems are completely different in their meanings, sentiments, and even their backgrounds. Though they were both born during times of war, their images of those wars and the mentalities toward them could not be more separate from one another.

The words of the American national anthem are filled with sentiments of victory and hope after the battle. The first, and best-known stanza is full of environmental details of the battle and of images of the flag:

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave ? (NMAH)

One can clearly see the sentiment of the song in the last two lines of this stanza.

In fact, each stanza repeats at least the idea that the Star-Spangled Banner waves "O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave" as an ensign of victory, hope, and liberty with no end. There are also religious nuances. The final stanza speaks of God and of praise for his aid:

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation!
Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto - "In God is our trust,"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave. (Ibid.)

Thus, the American national anthem presents the ideology of victory, with a partial image of the terror of war, but also shows gratitude for the help of God.

The French national anthem, “La Marseillaise,” takes place (with regard to the sentiments and history of the song) *before* the battle rather than after, as with the American anthem. The song is a call to arms, quite literally, seeing as the first words of the refrain are “Aux armes!” (“To arms!”). It is brimming with war-like and violent sentiments, much more so than its American counterpart.

Metaphorically speaking, according to its national anthem, France is always on the brink of a battle and imminently under attack, never in a time of peace. We can see this by looking at the words of the first, again, best-known stanza of the anthem:

Allons, enfan(t)s de la Patrie!
Le jour de gloire est arrivé.
Contre nous de la tyrannie
L'étendard sanglant est levé. (bis)
Entendez-vous dans les campagnes
Mugir ces féroces soldats?
Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras,
Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes!...
Aux armes, citoyens! formez vos bataillons.
Marchons (bis), qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons. (Fiaux 12)⁶

⁶ “Rise up, children of the nation / The day of glory has arrived / Against us is tyranny / The bloody standard has been raised. / Do you hear, in the countryside / The roar of those ferocious soldiers? / They come to our arms, / To slit the throats of your sons and wives! ... / To arms, citizens! Form your battalions. / Let's march, let an impure blood water our land.” (Author's transl.)

This anthem is full of bloody images of war and of ideas of vengeance. One can see these sentiments in the refrain: “Aux armes, citoyens! formez vos bataillons. / Marchons, marchons; qu’un sang impur abreuve nos sillons.” But once again, the song carries more meaning than its lyrics: it also inspires national pride and a love for one’s country. According to Fiaux, the song is at the same time uplifting and somber, magnanimous and terrible, warlike and religious, but of the religion of patriotism (Fiaux 14). Speaking of religion, unlike the anthem of the United States, this song does not focus on God. It does mention Him in the third stanza, but it is more of an exclamation without real meaning: “Grand Dieu! par des mains enchaînées, / Nos fronts sous le joug ployeraient” (Fiaux 13).⁷

Both of these anthems describe the image of war, but in different ways. For the French, the battle involves hand-to-hand combat, with lots of blood and slitting of throats. This could be interpreted by the fact that the Revolution was more of a war of the underequipped common people versus the government, as opposed to the armed forces of one government versus another. It also makes the anthem timeless, by not giving away the technology of warfare of the time period in which it was written.

One interesting thing to note is that the French anthem includes a bloody banner, the “*étandard sanglant*.” Though this is a more literal image in the song itself, a banner that is bloodied during battle, it could be argued that the image

⁷ “Good God, by chained hands, / We would bow ourselves beneath the yoke.” (Author’s transl.)

from this song materialized in the form of the red flag that recurred in France throughout the turmoil of the nineteenth century. Whether we consider this as a literal or figurative image, there still remains this shared element between the French and American anthems: a flag, though it is not the official flag of the French nation.

The American image of war, as presented in the anthem, is not one of close and individual combat as it is for the French. It is more impersonal, though nevertheless frightening (at least for its nineteenth-century audience). It involves explosions, cannon-fire, “bombs,” “rockets,” etc. However, even these threatening images of war are used, in the anthem, as a simple means of seeing the flag during the dark of night. The battle itself is used not as a battle, but as a light source. If we consider the perspective of the author, the reasoning behind this may not be as strange as it seems. Key was not, and in fact could not participate in the battle, but had nothing more to do than to watch for that flag, whether it be taken down as a sign of defeat or whether it remain as a sign of victory. Nevertheless, this detachment from the violence of war is perhaps inherent in American non-military mindsets toward wars in general—idealizing war, hoping for the best, but displaying an overall ignorance of its realities. One can only surmise.

The differences between these two national anthems could be explained by the two types of wars from which each came: a war of defense against attackers and a war of revolution (or, rather, of defense by way of preemptive

attack). But one other reason for these differences could be the perspective of their writers. “The Star-Spangled Banner” was written by a lawyer/poet, but “La Marseillaise” was written by a soldier/poet (Fiaux 26). This would further explain the soldierly French perspective of being actively in battle and on the offensive as opposed to the American civilian’s perspective of standing back and watching for the outcome of the battle.

Use of Anthems: Past and Present

In the past, we can see what strong influence the French anthem has had on an international scale. “La Marseillaise,” almost immediately, spread throughout Europe to other people groups longing for freedom from the old order. The idea behind it was to spread brotherhood and help to all peoples desiring to regain their freedom, according to a statement made by the Assemblée Constituante in 1792 (Dufourg 32-33). Thus “La Marseillaise” became a symbol of freedom, not just for France, but for everyone. In fact, this mentality allowed for an interesting phenomenon: people adopted the symbol as their own to combat whatever tyranny they were against, rewriting the lyrics to fit the situation. Some examples are “La Contre-Marseillaise,” from 1795, the “Marseillaise contre l’Inquisition espagnole,” from 1792, “La Marseillaise des viticulteurs,” and the “Hymne des Riboteurs de l’armée française aux approches du Rhin,” among countless others (Dufourg 59-74).

The French anthem also held a deep importance during the Second World War. “La Marseillaise” represented the French once more, but in a special way: it

represented the Resistance against Nazi occupation. This effect was often apparent, but one famous instance where one can see a depiction of the incredible weight of the song is in the Michael Curtiz' film, *Casablanca*. Set in Morocco during Nazi occupation, we view an American-style nightclub containing a vast spectrum of patrons: primarily multinational refugees, French police, and Nazi officers. When the Germans begin to sing the Nazi anthem, a leader in the Resistance, played by Paul Henreid, begins to lead the crowd in singing "La Marseillaise," thus silencing the Germans. In this scene, so filled with emotion, the song itself and the people joining together in unison metaphorically defeats the Nazis. The scene displays the power of "La Marseillaise" to ignite global resistance and unity. Of course, as we have already seen, national symbols hold much more importance during times of war than in times of peace.

Though they are of utmost importance for national identity, these symbols of France and the United States are transformed by contemporary ideologies and sentiments. Strangely, there is a strong link between the national anthems and sports in both countries. Before "The Star-Spangled Banner" became the national anthem of the United States, it acted as such in the baseball parks of America. In 1918, during the First World War, the announcement of an American victory at a baseball game inspired everyone in the stands to rise and sing Key's anthem. Since that game, "The Star-Spangled Banner" has been sung at every baseball game in the United States ("National Anthem Opening Day").

For the French, “La Marseillaise” is linked to soccer in almost the same way. Recently, however, the political identity of “La Marseillaise” has become a subject of great scandal at soccer games. Several times in the last few years, there have been instances where people have booed the national anthem most notably during games between France and the nations of the Maghreb. “L'hymne national avait déjà été sifflé lors des rencontres amicales France-Algérie, en octobre 2001, et France-Maroc, en novembre 2007, mais aussi lors d'un match Lorient-Bastia en mai 2002” (Pineau).⁸ More recently, the anthem was booed during a match between France and Tunisia on October 14, 2008. French politicians and sociologists read these instances as a social problem: “siffler la Marseillaise, symbole de la République française, est surtout révélateur du malaise d'une partie de la jeunesse issue de l'immigration” (Ibid.).⁹ But the argument against these fears is that these acts are not politically driven, but are simply part of the game.

Unfortunately, the national symbols of these two nations are losing some of their respect today. The youth of the two countries no longer have much knowledge of, or respect for them. Many French school children see “La Marseillaise” as a song written for soccer, and nothing more. In fact, according to

⁸ “The national anthem had already been booed during amicable matches between France and Algeria, in October 2001, and between France and Morocco, in November 2007, but also during a match between Lorient and Bastia in May 2002” (Author’s transl.).

⁹ “the booing of the “Marseillaise,” a symbol of the French Republic, reveals the discontent of a portion of the nation’s youth of immigrant origin” (Author’s transl.).

Frédéric Dufourg, the soccer stadium is the last place that exists where people sing with all their hearts, even until they lose their voices (13). As for Americans, a poll in 2004 showed that almost two thirds of the Americans questioned did not know all the words to their national anthem (“Has America Lost Its Voice?”). Though American attachment to national symbols appears to be stronger than French attachment, these symbols still seem to be in danger of becoming obsolete in the eyes of the modern public.

These symbols of identity that held such great meaning in the past have lost so much of their significance today that French politicians feel the need to create laws to keep them alive, such as the law passed in recent years dictating that children learn the words to the anthem in primary school. A good number of educators do not agree with this law because of the anthem’s aggressive sentiments, its difficult lyrics, and its symbolism, believed to be only suitable for older children (Monicault). Politicians have also had to put in place laws to protect their national symbols from the people:

En 2003, l'Assemblée nationale avait adopté un amendement au projet de loi de Nicolas Sarkozy sur la sécurité intérieure instaurant une peine de six mois de prison et 7 500 euros d'amende pour les outrages au drapeau français et à “La Marseillaise” (Roos).¹⁰

As we have already seen, though American politicians have made attempts to do the same, the United States has its hands tied when it comes to passing laws to protect its national symbols from dishonor because of the First Amendment. But

¹⁰ “In 2003, the National Assembly adopted an amendment to Nicolas Sarkozy’s bill on Homeland Security establishing a penalty of six months in prison and a fine of 7,500 euros for acts against the French flag and “La Marseillaise” (Author’s transl.).

despite the oncoming dangers of extinction for these national treasures, the symbols still hold onto their history and the love of those French and Americans who lived and died for them.

CHAPTER 4

ICONS

Now, let us step into the realm of the abstract: the artistic representations of a country in human form. National icons are personifications of abstract concepts, such as liberty and various other ideologies, and of larger entities, such as the people, the government, or the military. The two main examples of these symbols this chapter will discuss are Marianne and Uncle Sam.

Just like the national anthem and the flag, these personified symbols represent their countries and their national ideals, but it is their form that sets them apart from other symbols. Not only are they unique in that they are characters with specific personalities in the world of national images, but they are variable in their form and characteristics. Flags are tactile and limited to a very small number of shapes and sizes. Even though the designs of the national flags of France and the United States were unstable for a period of time, after laws were put in place to solidify them, the flags became invariable.

National anthems, on the other hand, are somewhat less limited than flags, but nevertheless have a strict set of boundaries: though musical arrangements have infinite possibilities for variation, the melody and words cannot much change without becoming another song. For example, Serge Gainsbourg's adaptation of "La Marseillaise" in reggae form, "Aux armes et

caetera,” though it uses the words of the anthem, is no longer viable as a different arrangement of the original—it became a completely different song (Gainsbourg).

National icons are similar to anthems in this trait of adaptability. The difference between them is that anthems are heard, and national icons are seen. For instance, if we look at Marianne, there are many specific attributes that are linked to her (the Phrygian cap, chains at her feet, etc.), much like the basic melody and words of an anthem. Not all of these attributes are required for an image to be classified as Marianne, at least one or two will do, but other than that, the sky is the limit for variations on her appearance, personality, and actions. As long as she has her words and melody, she is still Marianne, just a different musical arrangement. It is very difficult for images, such as these, to become set in stone, because of their abstractness and the ever-evolving nature of what they represent. Though Uncle Sam now has a fairly standardized image today, he is always at the mercy of a new artist’s personal vision and purposes for recreating him.

It may seem strange that we create such *people* to represent ourselves and our ideals, but this phenomenon is not new. These types of symbols are direct descendants of the ancient creation of gods and goddesses. It is a way for people to grasp abstract concepts in a relatable way, in the form of an ideal human being. In fact, Marianne, in her early days, was often identified as the goddess of France. This connection to global history, however, would tell us that

it is human nature to create and worship (even in the mere form of national pride) abstract, timeless beings who are the epitome of what is important to us as people groups.

The most lasting symbols of this kind, however, do not represent the elite; rather they represent the common citizen. Uncle Sam fulfilled the nation's need for an "earthy, paternal figure," and was "deemed a more accurate signifier of the American collective than the relatively ethereal and virginal Miss Liberty" (Cerulo 14). Marianne, too, was given a name that was common and intended to represent the average citizen (Ibid.).

But what do these icons say about the ideologies of their respective nations? France's icon is a woman who is at times powerful or powerless, at times objectified or revered. The image was born in a highly patriarchal culture, but is now an image of women's rights. Uncle Sam would appear to be a reflection of the patriarchal society in which he was born, and yet, in a world that is moving further and further away from that mindset, one might ask how he survived. The answer to this question might in fact be because of France's Marianne. Let us look at their origins to find out.

History of Marianne

Marianne is a unique and enigmatic figure who has quickly and effectively multiplied throughout the world as a symbol of global liberty. There is something about this woman that drew the first French Revolutionaries and draws many

nations even still. Hers is a long and complex history, full of transformation, praise, and ridicule.

This abstract symbol of liberty was created in 1792 at the birth of the first French Republic. Her job was to represent the nation itself, like the images of the kings had done in the past—this time the nation would be represented by an idea rather than any one person. Once again, this decision to give a human form to an abstract thought or ideology was no new thing. It was “la vieille tradition gréco-latine de l’allégorie, depuis longtemps codifiée à l’usage des artistes: mettre des corps humains pour représenter des choses abstraites ou lointaines” (Agulhon et Bonte 14).¹¹

But why did the new republic choose a female figure, in a time when women had no power or voice, in lieu of a strong, male conqueror? Some scholars believe that the reason behind this feminine choice is simply that the French terms for France, Republic, Liberty, etc. are feminine nouns (Ibid.). However, this may be only part of the reason for the choice of Marianne as an image of republican liberty.

If we look back even further in history, beyond the Bastille and the bloodshed of the Revolution of 1789, we can see that this goddess of liberty dates back as far as the Roman republic, where she was featured in temples and on currency. Not only was she the general idea after which Marianne was patterned, but she even had many of the same accoutrements: “At her feet were

¹¹ “the old Greco-Latin tradition of allegory, codified and used by artists for ages: placing abstract or distant things in the form of the human body” (Author’s transl.).

the broken chains of bondage, or a smashed pitcher that symbolized the end of servitude. Sometimes she was accompanied by a cat, the animal that acknowledged no master. In her hands she offered the wand and pileus” (Fischer 233). A pileus is defined as “a pointed or close-fitting cap worn by ancient Romans” (Merriam-Webster). This sounds very similar to Marianne, who is seen dressed in ancient Greco-Roman attire with her Phrygian cap, often with broken chains at her feet, and occasionally with a cat as well.

The Phrygian cap and the Roman pileus are similar in meaning, though historically different. But they are both a sign of being a freed slave.

[Le bonnet phrygien] était porté par les anciens phrygiens et fut plus tard un des signes de l'affranchissement pour les Romains; on posait symboliquement un bonnet de cette forme sur la tête de l'esclave rendu à la liberté (Maury 335).¹²

The *bonnet phrygien* is a symbol in its own right, used in France on its own whether to evoke the idea of Marianne or simply the abstraction of liberty.

From this historical background, we have Marianne, the eighteenth-century incarnation of the Roman goddess, *Libertas*, who became the image and representation of the Republic of France. The origins of her name are much disagreed upon by various scholars. The French Embassy to the United States has attempted to clarify these origins as best as it can.

According to the story, it appears that in 1797 when seeking a pleasant name of the Republic, Barras, one of the members of the Directoire, during an evening spent at Reubell's, asked his hostess's name; "Marie-Anne," she replied. "Perfect," Barras exclaimed. "It is a short

¹² “The Phrygian cap was worn by the ancient Phrygians and was later one of the signs of liberation for the Romans; the cap was symbolically placed on the head of former slaves” (Author's transl.)

and simple name which befits the Republic just as much as yourself, Madame."

This anecdote contradicts a recent discovery, which established that the first written mention of the name of Marianne to designate the Republic appeared in October...At that time, people used to sing a song in the Provençal dialect by the poet Guillaume Lavabre: "La guérison de Marianne" (Marianne's recovery) ("Marianne").

Regardless of the true origins of the name, much weight of meaning has traditionally been placed on the fact that this name was often used in France at the time. It was a name of the common people, who were the basis for the revolutionary ideals of the Republic.

Throughout her history, she has taken many forms, but each one has been important for the French as an expression of the nation's woes or victories. "Her image never leaves the French indifferent. In the last two wars, certain people worshipped her just like a saint. Others, who were anti-Republican, often dragged her name through the mud" ("Marianne"). Nevertheless, she remains a crucial symbol of France, despite her many faces.

Transformation

After her adoption in 1792, just like her symbolic contemporaries, the *Tricolor* and "La Marseillaise," Marianne was removed from power and reinstated multiple times before 1848. It was this same year that the decision was made to place a bust of her image in the town halls of France (Aguilhon et Bonte 24-30).

Her role as representative of the nation of France is multi-faceted. She is viewed at times as a doting mother, often with one or both breasts exposed to nourish her children, the people of France. She is viewed at other times as a

warrior leading her people, as in Delacroix's painting, "La Liberté guidant le peuple aux barricades," and yet again, she is viewed as a solemn and modern image of political wisdom (op.cit. 23-35). Aside from these varied impressions of Marianne, there have been countless other images of this figure of French society.

As with all symbols, there are good representations and bad ones. Marianne, especially during the third Republic (which saw the Commune, the Dreyfus affair, the separation of Church and State, and World War I), has had many enemies and thus has been portrayed in many negative ways. Generally, we see two versions of Marianne that are *enlaidies*, or made ugly, just as we see two beautiful versions of Marianne, one of with youthful grace and dynamism and one with an air of seriousness and maturity. At the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, the type of ugly Marianne used depended on the source's political party or ideology. If the source were royalist or catholic, it would attempt to show the Republic's subversion and division by presenting a Marianne who was

Maigre, anguleuse, agitée, tenant parfois la torche ou le poignard, et surtout échevelée, avec, échappées du bonnet, des mèches de cheveux éparpillées évoquant plus ou moins un Buisson de serpents: bref, Marianne sous les traits de la discorde, connus de l'iconologie classique (Agulhon et Bonte 71-72).¹³

¹³ "Skinny, sharp-featured, agitated, sometimes holding a torch or a dagger, and often with tousled hair, some escaping from her cap, with scattered locks evoking serpents: in brief, Marianne portraying the traits of discord that are known in classical iconography" (Author's transl.).

If, on the other hand, the source were socialist or anarchist, it would portray a Republic that was rich and bourgeois by showing Marianne as

Vieille, alourdie par l'âge, parfois jusqu'à l'obésité croulante...habillée avec luxe et chargée de bijoux, pour signifier les commodités du pouvoir, ou affublée du tablier de la cuisinière, évocateur des "cuisines" électorales et autres (Agulhon et Bonte 72).¹⁴

For a time, Marianne, emblem of liberty, strength, and courage was somehow placed in the role of the docile wife of the chief of state. A far cry from the powerhouse of a symbol she was for most of her previous existence. However, after the liberation of France during the Second World War, during which images of Marianne were ordered to be taken down, she reemerged with unparalleled beauty and triumph (Op. Cit. 81-83). This victorious reappearance of Marianne encouraged a renewed love and loyalty to the symbol in the hearts of the French people, leading to more and more visions of this goddess of France.

Today, Marianne is younger, livelier, and sexier than ever before. She has borrowed the visages of some of France's most famous stars, singers, and models, giving herself a unique appeal to the public of France. "During the last thirty years she has taken on the features of Brigitte Bardot, Catherine Deneuve and, currently, those of the famous French fashion models, Inès de la Fressange and Laeticia Casta" ("Marianne"). Breaking from this star-studded tradition of Mariannes, "in 2002, a new Marianne was born. She does not have the features of a famous French woman but those of an anonymous "beurette" (young woman

¹⁴ "Old, heavy, sometimes even to the point of obesity...richly dressed and overloaded with jewelry to signify the commodities of power, or seated at a kitchen table, suggestive of electoral and other 'kitchens'" (Author's transl.).

of North African descent).” This new image was meant to “symbolize a modern, multiethnic France” (“Marianne”).

Modern Marianne is by no means sitting around with nothing to do, just waiting for her next model to give her a new pretty face. She is still fighting battles. For instance, the feminist organization, Ni Putes Ni Soumises, has taken her as their forerunner in their fight for equality for women. “Ni Putes Ni Soumises lance un appel à un féminisme d’urgence, à un féminisme laïque, avec Marianne à sa tête, figure de la République Une et Indivisible. ‘Qui mieux que Marianne symbolise le combat que nous menons pour la laïcité?’ (Sihem Habchi [présidente de l’organisation])” (Laloué).¹⁵ In March 2010, a flood of young activists from this group, wearing Phrygian caps, overtook the Place de la République to protest the wearing of the burqa, among other major issues (“Ni Putes Ni Soumises”). Thus we can see that Marianne is constantly and fervently acting on behalf of her people in some way. Her retirement does not appear to be approaching any time soon.

After over two centuries of existence, Marianne is still considered “the most prominent depiction of the French Republic” (“Marianne”). One can see her in town halls, on the official seal of the nation, on stamps, and on currency. She is even the featured image in the fairly new logo of France, which appears on everything that is government ordained (Ibid.). This woman is extremely versatile

¹⁵ “Ni Putes Ni Soumises calls for an urgent feminism, a secular feminism, with Marianne at the forefront, as the figure of the Republic, One and Indivisible. ‘Who better than Marianne to symbolize the combat we carry on for *laïcité*?’ (Sihem Habchi [president of the organization])” (Author’s transl.).

and influential. It is no wonder that she has even captured the hearts of peoples other than the French.

Visions of Liberty: Marianne and others

The United States has honored several figures of this same ancient goddess of liberty as well. One, more recognizable today than the others, is the Statue of Liberty. But instead of being a purely American figure, the *Libertas* that presides over Ellis Island is the image of Marianne of France. A gift from France in 1886, this *Liberty Enlightening the World*, sculpted by Auguste Bartholdi, was quickly adopted and assimilated into American iconography and pop culture. I believe that part of the reason for her unrestricted inclusion as an American symbol, despite her foreign origin, is her role at the front door of the United States. So many immigrants have flooded through Ellis Island, seeing her as the first and biggest representative of the U.S. upon their arrival, that her French ties were quickly forgotten. Though she may not often get the credit, Marianne was and is the most beloved image for those who come to the United States seeking freedom and prosperity.

On the other hand, the United States had a female figure of liberty all its own from the time of the American Revolution, more than ten years before France's Marianne came into being. This Americanized version of the Roman goddess, was named Columbia (the name that was used in the colonial period to represent America). Columbia, in much the same way as Marianne with France, was not only the embodiment of liberty, but also of the nation itself. This younger,

more graceful, modern version of the Roman goddess did not retain many of her former attributes, aside from her white robes, wand and pileus.

Among the first to go were the cat, the shackles, and the broken pitcher. Those changes were symbolic of a new way of thought. After 1776, liberty and freedom were seen not so much as release from bondage but as a condition of natural rights which free people gained at birth and preserved by their own efforts (Fischer 234).

Instead of these former, more traditional accessories, Columbia began to be seen with various American items, such as a bald eagle, an American flag, or Native American feathers (Ibid.). This image of Columbia lasted a while, but modern America does not identify much with her any longer.

If modern America identifies with any female figure of liberty, it is either with the image of Bartholdi's statue or with Miss Liberty: a lighthearted, fashionable depiction of the youth of America. This figure changed with the times, always reflecting the fashions and happenings of the day. During World War II, Miss Liberty put aside her flippant *joie de vivre* and joined the war effort. After the war, of course, she transformed into a more domestic version of her former self (Fischer 241). Miss Liberty continues to pop up in the American media today and is still constantly evolving, though her national importance to the American public is far from the importance Marianne holds in her country.

Overall, America's most significant female image of liberty is French. Marianne's legacy and magnetism has spread across the Atlantic Ocean and created one of many indisputable ties between the nations of France and the United States.

The Origins of Uncle Sam

Despite the popularity of the Statue of Liberty, the most eminent symbol of the United States is Uncle Sam. Before we can delve into his history, however, we must look at his origins—his predecessors in folk figure traditions that paved the way for his arrival in American imagery, and even lent him some of their characteristics.

The United States began early in their colonial days to create folk figures to represent themselves. The colonies chose ordinary people to be their images of liberty and freedom, believing that “ordinary people were the best protectors of everybody’s rights” (Fischer 213-14). This was a new concept for the Western world, which believed that democracy would destroy any semblance of a free society (Op. Cit. 214). Putting the fate of a free country into the hands of its people was unheard of.

These unique images, appearing from 1758 to 1814, were of everyday individuals. Their characteristics were not intended to stand out in any way.

American folk figures were not heroes in the classical sense. None of them was remarkable for great achievements, brave deeds, or immortal words, which was precisely the point. They were meant to be broadly representative of the people. . . [they] represented liberty and freedom as something that belonged to everyone (Fischer 213).

Of those ordinary people emerged the images of Yankee Doodle and Brother Jonathan, both of whom stood more for the people of America than for ideals such as liberty and freedom.

Yankee Doodle

Yankee Doodle is believed to have been invented by Richard Shuckburgh in his song, named after the title character, which held great importance for the colonists before, during, and long after the Revolutionary War. (Even today, the song is highly recognizable). During the American War of Independence, the “Yankee Doodle” song was played by both sides: British troops played it as an “expression of contempt for the colonials,” and for Americans, “in defeat it raised [their] spirits. In victory, it became a march of triumph” (Fischer 217-19). The song, “Yankee Doodle,” became so internationally popular as a symbol of liberty that the Paris guards played it after the taking of the Bastille (Op. Cit. 219). This is yet another example of what we viewed in the last chapter: the lyrics of a song (which, in this case, satirize the manners of the ordinary American figure) do not necessarily dictate meaning (the “idea of freedom and liberty as something that belonged to all ordinary Americans”) (Op. Cit. 220).

Much like most folk figures, Yankee Doodle “was not a corporeal being. . . [he] was a song, a puff of wind, a creature of the air” (Fischer 215). In other words, he was a creation that was not based on any real person—an imagined, American everyman. In the same way as his song, Yankee Doodle was loved by Americans for his down-to-Earth qualities and was despised by enemies for the foolishness of his demeanor. Unlike many other figures of his kind, through the years of his popularity,

Yankee Doodle remained an ordinary American, awkward in movement and clumsy in speech, but high-spirited, good-natured, and

full of life and laughter. Even with a musket in hand he was not a great warrior, but he was fiercely independent and ready to fight for his freedom (Fischer 220).

Fortunately, the image of Yankee Doodle is still intact today, and thanks to his song, his name has not been relegated to American History book exile. Other symbols of his kind were not so lucky as to remain unchanged and unforgotten. One such case is Brother Jonathan.

Brother Jonathan

Most modern Americans have probably never heard of Brother Jonathan, though he was actually more well-known during the early days of the republic than Yankee Doodle (Fischer 221). Brother Jonathan began as a mid-seventeenth century “term of affectionate contempt for a country bumpkin” used by city-dwellers. The name was also used by British Regulars to refer to the New England militia “in a way that implied both kinship and condescension” (Ibid.). The name spread across the colonies with the war, and thus became a common term referring to any and all Americans. “British troops began to speak collectively of Americans as Jonathan, much as American troops in Vietnam called the Viet Cong Charlie and Allied infantry in World War II referred to Germans as Jerry” (Op. Cit. 222).

Brother Jonathan, the figure, started out as being purely regional, a representation of an average New Englander, but became a national icon after 1815. Numerous written works and theatrical productions included him as a character representing America (mostly in a satirical manner). Though he was

used in many of these productions for a laugh, he nevertheless “became a symbol of American liberty and freedom” (Fischer 223). But with growing strife in the United States leading up to the Civil War, Jonathan began to transform: “A folk figure who had possessed many virtues in the early republic became a dark and even villainous character” (Op. Cit. 224). Every bit of corruption that was coming to light in the U.S. began to show itself, augmented, in the image of Jonathan. “By the beginning of the Civil War, Brother Jonathan’s reputation was in tatters at home and abroad. He had become an image of moral decline of the American republic, and the symbol of an idea of liberty that had decayed into license” (Op. Cit. 227). His image never recovered from the turbulent times and his personal changes in the 1800s, and he simply disappeared from the public eye by the end of the nineteenth century. Fortunately, this is the only major figure that underwent such dark transformation ending in oblivion. But his image, along with that of Yankee Doodle, did serve the purpose of setting the stage for the folk figure that came to stay: Uncle Sam.

History of Uncle Sam

Uncle Sam came into being, not out of thin air like his predecessors, but from the existence of a real historical figure, who lived during the late eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century. Samuel Willson was a New England merchant. He and his brother, Ebenezer, are a good example of the American Dream come true. Sons of a poor family of farmers, they became successful business owners through hard work and perseverance: they “went into

commercial farming on a large scale, set themselves up as merchants, operated sloops on the river, built stockyards, and founded a meatpacking business” (Fischer 229). Their success led to the migration of many of their relatives to their town of Troy, New York. It is said that, because so many citizens of the town were somehow related to them, Samuel Willson became known to everyone as Uncle Sam.

By the time the War of 1812 came around, Uncle Sam began to supply provisions for the American troops. It is from this time that Uncle Sam became a household name.

The meat was shipped in barrels branded with the initials U.S. According to local legend, a soldier asked an Irishman what “U.S. stands for,” and was told. “Why, Uncle Sam Willson. It is he who is feeding the army.” New York militia began to speak of their rations as Uncle Sam’s. The name caught on and was soon attached to the government itself...After the war, Americans throughout the country began to call the federal government Uncle Sam, and foreign travelers picked up the expression (Fischer 229).

This idea of the United States government as an “unofficial uncle,” rather than a father or authority figure, was exactly what America needed (“Uncle Sam”).

“Uncle Sam was not primarily a figure of power and authority but an emblem of kinship and affection” (Fischer 230). After being subjects of the overbearing British crown for so long, it would make sense that the people of the young nation would not desire a government similar to the one they had rid themselves of, and were once again fighting.

In the same way as his predecessors, Uncle Sam was, for the most part, beloved at home and despised abroad. He upheld the idea, begun by Yankee

Doodle and Brother Jonathan, of “liberty and freedom as eternally connected to the sovereignty of the people” (Fischer 232). But the most unique aspect about this symbol is the way Americans perceive him. “Uncle Sam was an affectionate symbol of a democratic government. This was a very rare attitude. Other people around the world have great pride of nationality, but few are warmly attached to their national governments” (Ibid.).

Transformation

Aside from the negative portrayals of Uncle Sam, his image has undergone many transformations over the years. This is because of many factors, one of which being the fact that he was created as a product of his specific time period. Initial images of Uncle Sam bore a likeness to Samuel Willson, himself: “stout, round-faced, and clean-shaven.” Earlier images showed him wearing “a dressing gown with stars and stripes and a liberty cap” (Fischer 230). His clothing and appearance changed gradually to fit the time period and fashions of the day, maintaining the stars and stripes of the flag as at least one part of his wardrobe.

Until the Civil War, Uncle Sam had been a national icon, rather than remaining regional. But once the Civil War began, he, like many Americans, had to choose sides. Northern journalists used him, among many other national symbols, and chose to give him a Northern makeover. “He acquired a fashionable beard, a lanky frame, and gaunt features. He became a Lincolnesque figure, a man of the hour, and a symbol of freedom and union in

the northern cause” (Fischer 327). This new, “Lincolnesque” image of Uncle Sam was so strong that, for some Americans, he and President Lincoln were one and the same. This caused the assassination of Lincoln to have even more resonance, as if Uncle Sam, the government, the nation, and liberty had been assassinated as well (Ibid.).

World War I saw the first standardized image of Uncle Sam. The year before the U.S. entered the war, “on July 6, 1916, *Leslie’s Weekly* ran a cover portrait of Uncle Sam. He appeared as an angry and authoritarian leader who fixed the reader with a formidable stare and demanded, ‘What are YOU doing for Preparedness?’” This image, by James Montgomery Flagg, reflected the government’s stance of ordering citizens to join the war effort. This image was inspired by British military recruitment posters, featuring British Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener (Fischer 431). It is interesting to note that the formerly “kindly and well meaning,” unofficial uncle, which opposed an idea of British control, donned a new authoritarian image, inspired by none other than the British government.

The new Uncle Sam lost his avuncular air and became the forceful leader of a world power. He looked strong, stern, righteous and militant... This American icon of liberty and freedom also became an image of national authority, as he had never been before (Op. Cit. 432).

This new image became, and remains to this day, the “standard from which other versions deviate” (“Uncle Sam”).

One final transformation, occurring during the Second World War, seemed to restore some of the lost characteristics of the former, kindlier Uncle Sam.

Once again, Uncle Sam “became a representative of the people—unassuming, down to earth, folksy, no different from anybody else;” he even appeared in roles as an average worker and even a GI (Fischer 521). These images softened the previous, commanding figure, and returned him to the good-hearted uncle that Americans had fallen in love with in the nineteenth century.

Internationally recognized and often altered, Uncle Sam is an original American symbol, created internally by the people of the United States. Though he is often portrayed in a not-so-flattering light, he miraculously remains a representative of the U.S. after close to two centuries.

Today Uncle Sam has entrenched himself in American symbology. His image is permanently intertwined with the concept of the nation that the American public holds in its mass consciousness...Perhaps even more important than the part Sam plays in our own self-identification, is his crucial role in the way the rest of the world relates to us. For all intents and purposes, Uncle Sam is here to stay (“Uncle Sam”).

Returning to the question posed earlier in this chapter: How, in a decreasingly patriarchal society, did Uncle Sam survive and how is he still thriving today as a national symbol? It is probably due to Marianne’s younger sister, Lady Liberty (The Statue of Liberty). It appears that, in American culture, Uncle Sam and Lady Liberty have a unique, iconic balance. For example, at the time when Flagg’s recruitment posters of his authoritarian Uncle Sam were being used, there were similar posters of the Statue of Liberty, commanding citizens to buy war bonds in the same forceful manner (Fischer 433). They also appear together at times in drawings. Given the interplay between the two, it seems that Uncle Sam is the government, the good uncle and protector of freedom, Lady

Liberty. As long as Uncle Sam remains a steadfast protector rather than an authoritative oppressor, the two can live in harmony.

For Marianne and Uncle Sam, survival lies in their adaptability. Marianne has so many variations of herself that there is a version to please almost every ideology. The vehement warrior is useful in times of national distress just as the sage matron soothes the nation when it is hurting. Uncle Sam, so beloved by the American people from the beginning, is easily forgiven for his less lovable phases because of the good-hearted uncle he can be. National icons cannot help but be a true reflection of the people they represent, seeing as each time they are drawn, sculpted, or painted, they are recreated by their people in a new, up-to-date way.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In studying these few national symbols of France and the United States, one can see that the modern perceptions of national differences are only the surface, concealing a long history of complicated closeness between the two nations. Not only were the two republics born within 13 years of each other, they also share national colors (red, white, and blue or *bleu, blanc, rouge*), ideals of liberty (both nations having chosen the Roman goddess, *Libertas*, to represent them), and the basis of their governments.

During the sensitive years between the revolutions of the United States and France, the soon-to-be French Republic found inspiration in the newly developing American government. American national figures were prevalent in France as catalysts toward the new Republic. Among these figures were Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence served as a road map for French leaders, such as Lafayette, who "ordered a copy of the Declaration of Independence to be displayed on a wall in his home with an empty space beside it, 'waiting for the Declaration of Rights in France'" (Fischer 123). Benjamin Franklin, too, strongly influenced French political minds while he served as the American minister to France. The nation perceived him in many unique ways. One of the French images of Franklin even

went so far as to portray him as “a leader of the Revolution” in France (Op. Cit. 186). It is apparent, then, that these two democratic governments were parallel from the beginning. But, though they have remained similar in some ways, their evolution over the centuries has created slight differences that should be noted.

One of the greater similarities between the governments is the *principe*, or government principle of each nation. The *principe* of France, “gouvernement du peuple, par le peuple, et pour le peuple,” is listed under the first title “de la Souveraineté,” second article, of the French Constitution (established in 1958). This statement is considered to be the general definition of democracy. The phrase, however, is a direct translation of a statement from “The Gettysburg Address,” which was delivered by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 during the dedication of the military cemetery in Gettysburg. Lincoln spoke of the United States, saying, “we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation shall have a new birth of freedom; and that this government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth” (Lincoln). This shared mentality, form of government, and phraseology once again reflects the similitude of the two countries.

The *devises*, or mottos of the two nations have shown both similarity and difference over the past two centuries. Though the *devise* of France, “*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*,” has not changed since the late eighteenth century, the United States has officially acknowledged two. The first dates from the birth of the nation and is very similar to the revolutionary mentality of the French. The Latin phrase,

“E Pluribus Unum” (“Out of many, one”), represents the unity of the new country and can be easily compared to the French ideals of *égalité* (equality) and *fraternité* (brotherhood). The more recent American motto, “In God We Trust,” is a product of the religiosity of the American Civil War, but it only became official in 1956 (“U.S. Treasury”). This change to the religious mindset of 1950s Americanism completely contradicts the French political ideology of *laïcité*, or secularism in government, a reflection of the separation between Church and State.

This principle of *laïcité*, intended to secure the rights and liberties of the French nation, has recently been invoked in political controversies that involve religious practices. A 2004 law (“Loi N°2004-228”) prohibiting the wearing of the Muslim hijab (among other ostensible religious signs) in schools was ratified with the intent of protecting this principle. For governmental purposes, this law is just, since it keeps religion out of government-run facilities (such as schools), but in fact, many people argue that it goes against the very ideals of liberty upon which the French Republic was founded, by limiting the freedom of individuals to fully embrace their religion.

The opposite of this has occurred in the United States. Recall the aforementioned American laws to protect the national flag from desecration. None of the attempts at passing these laws to conserve the sovereignty of the flag (or any other national symbol) have succeeded because of their conflict with

the first amendment right of free speech. Because of this, the United States could never pass a law such as the 2004 French law.

These two different mindsets make more sense if one examines the foundational laws of the two countries. In the French Constitution, under the first article, the priority is placed on the *laïcité* of the government. Directly following a statement of *laïque* identity, it explains that there will be no discrimination against religion, not necessarily that there would be freedom for it:

La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l'égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d'origine, de race ou de religion. Elle respecte toutes les croyances ("Constitution de la République Française").¹⁶

Even in the "Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen de 1789," the tenth article addresses religion in a similar fashion, this time stating freedom for religious beliefs, but with a caveat: "Nul ne doit être inquiété pour ses opinions, même religieuses, pourvu que leur manifestation ne trouble pas l'ordre public établi par la Loi" ("Déclaration").¹⁷ This means that one should feel free to think and worship as one sees fit, as long as it does not disturb public order as deemed by the law, "public order" being defined however the law desires it to be.

¹⁶ "France is an indivisible, secular (*laïque*), democratic and social Republic. It assures equality before the law for all citizens regardless of origin, race, or religion. It respects all belief systems" (Author's transl.).

¹⁷ "No one should be concerned for their opinions, even religious, provided that their observance does not disturb public order as established by Law" (Author's transl.).

The wording of these French laws is somewhat less clear in protecting religious rights as in the laws of the United States. The U.S. Constitution's first amendment instead gives priority to personal freedoms:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances ("The United States Constitution").

It should be noted that freedom of religion comes first, seemingly giving it priority. In this case, one might surmise that freedoms are somewhat more valued and protected in the United States than in France, at least according to the way their laws are written. On the other hand, as mentioned before, the *laïcité* of the French government exists, ideally, to maintain the nation's liberty.

Perhaps these different views of liberty can be explained further if we take into account the observation of a noted French historian, Tocqueville. In a conversation in 1850 regarding a future study that never came into fruition, he ruminates over the differences between French liberty and American liberty.

Tocqueville observed a difference between the Old World and the New. In English-speaking America, he believed, the *mœurs* [by which he meant a fabric of inherited customs, traditions, folkways, and *habitudes*] of liberty had always been very strong and kept growing stronger. In Europe, they had been strong in the distant past but had grown weak in the modern era... "In America," Tocqueville wrote, "free *mœurs* have made free political institutions; in France it is for free political institutions to make free *mœurs*" (Fischer 715-16).

This philosophical observation is interesting to consider: that America began with traditions of liberty, then built its government around them and France created a free government, then built up traditions of liberty to accommodate it. Society has much evolved (of course) since 1850, but there is still some grain of truth in

Tocqueville's opinion. In France, the notion of Republic often takes precedence over liberty, and in America, liberty often takes precedence over the notion of government.

As previously mentioned, despite the similarities of the two nations, the differences often cause friction and critique between France and America. Historically, the two have very rarely been enemies in times of war, but ideologically and politically the nations have often been at odds with each other. The ebb and flow of love/hate sentiments between France and the United States has always been unique. In the recent past, there has been friction over the subject of the war in Iraq. In a time when post-9/11 American emotions were running high, France was one of the nations who resisted entering the war (at least in the public opinion of America at the time), thus, many Americans became enraged with the French. This was demonstrated one way in some American restaurants that posted signs that openly denounced France. Emblazoned with the American flag, the signs would read, "We serve Freedom Fries!" But since then, emotions have cooled.

According to polls by the French-American Foundation, despite the anti-Americanism and Francophobia that was prevalent during the years following 9/11, the sentiments between the two nations are growing friendlier as time passes. In their 2010 poll, 48% of Americans and 65% of French say they generally like the other country, and 70% of Americans and 71% of French consider their countries to be "somewhat partners" ("2010 French-American

Opinion Poll”). These numbers, much higher than they were in 2005 and 2007, are very encouraging for the future relationship of France and America, though one must bear in mind the traditionally fluctuating nature of that relationship.

In the end, we can see that France and the United States are strongly interrelated through their shared history and ideologies and the national symbols they chose to represent themselves. In some ways, the two nations have much in common. In other ways, they are completely different. Both nations owe the other a debt of national identity of some kind, whether it is the Statue of Liberty for Americans or a flag of a free republic for the French. Though the value of their national symbols appears to be wavering now, it is still evident that the spirit of the symbols and what they represent are still alive and ready for whenever their nations have need of them. After centuries of evolution, these two nations remain as close as siblings. The statement of President Grover Cleveland during his speech after the unveiling of France’s great gift to the United States, the Statue of Liberty, in 1886, is not at all incorrect, even more than a century later. He called France, “our sister republic” (Burchard 57). Thus, any conflicts or disagreements between the nations should be considered mere sibling rivalry that could never rupture such close, national ties.

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