Bara and Viala, or Virtue Rewarded: The Memorialization of Two Child Martyrs of the French Revolution

This article explores the commemoration of republican child martyrs Joseph Bara and Joseph-Agricol Viala, in Year II (1793–94), during the French Revolution. It compares the official interpretation of their deaths with the subsequent appropriation of this narrative in wider culture. I argue that the revolutionaries—notably Robespierre, Barère and David—utilized the heroic deaths of children specifically for their associations with natural virtue and innocence, setting the tone for a new model of republican morality. I then demonstrate that the state's narrative was widely circulated, yet appropriated and commodified, using popular prints and theatre as case studies. This article thus demonstrates the limits of official control over French Revolutionary culture and traces the fragmented roots of what would become a revived memory cult in the Third Republic.

I

In 1793, two young boys were killed by counter-revolutionary and federalist rebels in Revolutionary France. One died defending horses from royalists, the other to stop federalists crossing a river. The first was a hussar—or perhaps a drummer. The second commanded a local youth battalion, or was he just a child meant to be at a wedding that day? With their last breath, both swore loyalty to the Republic—alternatively, did one swear violently at his killers? They were the epitome of virtue; they were innocent martyrs for liberty. They were somebody's children. Joseph Bara and Joseph-Agricol Viala led obscure lives, and the circumstances of their deaths were uncertain. Yet both were reimagined, in countless ways, in political propaganda and artistic imagination. For Maximilien Robespierre, their youth made them a poignant and powerful symbol that could fill a void in sacrality and regenerate society's morals; subsequent regimes would draw on the myth he instigated well into the twentieth century.

The story began when thirteen-year-old Joseph Bara was killed in the Vendée on 7 December 1793, after refusing to surrender army horses to royalists.[1] He was first mentioned

nationally when a letter from his commanding general, recounting his heroics and death, was recited in the Convention. Officially too young to enrol, yet 'burning to serve [the Republic]', Bara had attached himself to General Desmarres, armed as a hussar, and accompanied the general's troops to the insurrectionary Vendée.[2] Desmarres initially sought only compensation for the boy's family, which the deputies granted: military pensions for the family of deceased soldiers were far from unusual in 1793. Subsequently, on 28 December, Robespierre successfully proposed Bara's pantheonization—which was more unusual. He fabricated a story of the youth refusing to shout 'vive le roi' (long live the king) and instead dying with the words 'vive la république!' (long live the Republic) on his lips.[3] Not only was Bara to be pantheonized, but the decorations for the ceremony were commissioned from the regime's leading painter, Jacques-Louis David, as was the boy's portrait, which was to be displayed in primary schools.[4]

Joseph-Agricol Viala, meanwhile, had been killed in July 1793, whilst cutting a ferry cable to prevent federalists from crossing the Durance. Also in his early teens, he commanded a local youth battalion in Avignon but was otherwise unknown. He remained obscure until his uncle, the Jacobin Agricol Moureau, sought to improve his own standing whilst incarcerated on a political charge, likely inspired by Bara's impending pantheonization. Seemingly at Moureau's instigation, an account of Viala's death appeared in two national newspapers in February 1794, before Moureau wrote to Robespierre explicitly requesting his nephew's commemoration.[5] Though Moureau remarked that Viala need not be considered equal to Bara, Robespierre outdid his request for a local monument, and in May (18 Floréal) proposed Viala's pantheonization.[6] The ceremony for both boys was scheduled for 28 July 1794 (10 Thermidor). Their deaths were of little military significance in either the civil war in the Vendée or the suppression of provincial cities' insurrection against centralized authority and Jacobin militancy (the so-called federalist revolts). Yet, in both cases, Robespierre surpassed the

expectations of those who informed the Convention of the boys' deaths, and inserted them into national political culture.

The exemplary death was already characteristic of revolutionary political culture. Like the bodies of the well-known figures Antoine de Baecque has explored, Bara's and Viala's corpses became political sites.[7] The political culture of death manifested in the mutilation of the Princesse de Lamballe's body or the pantheonization of *grands hommes* like Voltaire and Mirabeau had developed into a cult of sacrifice by Year II (1793–4). That year, Joseph Chalier (guillotined by insurgents in Lyon), Jean-Paul Marat and Michel Lepeletier (both assassinated) were all hailed as martyrs for liberty: Lepeletier and Marat were publicly interred in the Pantheon. This was a means of consolidating government authority by controlling popular commemoration of their deaths.

Bara and Viala uniquely cut across the different types of revolutionary heroes and martyrs, since they were exalted in death but represented quotidian narratives. Léonard Bourdon's state-commissioned *Récueil des actions héroïques et civiques* (1794) celebrated the deeds of individuals and groups of all ages, regardless of gender or military rank, and although a martyr's death was the ultimate form of heroism, any act of selfless patriotism might merit commemoration.[8] As Joseph Clarke has emphasized, ordinary people's deaths were commemorated as well as those of well-known figures, if they were seen to have died for the Revolution—but these everyday heroes nonetheless remained distinct from the cult of pantheonized martyrs.[9] Bara, meanwhile, was initially included in an early version of Bourdon's collection prior to the decision to pantheonize him, and this account of his death was subsequently edited in line with the development of Robespierre's official narrative—from a death worthy of recognition to one meriting exaltation.[10] He and Viala transcended their obscure origins and relative failure—neither succeeded in thwarting his counter-revolutionary killers—and were intended to be placed among the Republic's highest-ranking dead.

Moreover, unlike in the case of the other martyrs of Year II, Robespierre instigated Bara and Viala's commemoration; it was not a response to popular initiative. Their commemoration thereby differed from Marat's, for instance, which arose from popular agitation and so was inevitably open to the many interpretations that inform Guillaume Mazeau's 2009 study.[11] However, it quickly transcended political instrumentalization, inspiring artists, writers and musicians, as well as numerous local festivals.

This study contributes to scholarship on the development of French national symbols in collective memory by emphasizing that subsequent regimes' appropriation of the Bara and Viala myth drew on a fragmented heritage, not a consensual sequence of events.[12] It explores the ways in which the boys' deaths were interpreted and appropriated by their contemporaries, first in the Convention and then in wider culture. In particular, I discuss the creation and adaptation of different narratives of their deaths, and what those narratives signified to their creators. In section II, I focus on the narrative created by Robespierre and his associates, and the implications of this version of events. I argue that the Jacobins utilized the heroic deaths of children specifically for their associations with innocence, in the quest for social regeneration which paralleled the purging of the Revolution's enemies through Terror. In sections III and IV, I discuss the boys' representation beyond the official narrative. This narrative was widely circulated, but adapted and commodified. By examining Bara and Viala's divergent cultural representation outside the state's immediate sphere of control, I demonstrate that, even at its origin in Year II, theirs was a fractured symbol, open to reinterpretation and appropriation for various purposes.

Visual art and theatre are used here as case studies representing some of the many voices that engaged in Bara and Viala's commemoration. This builds on the work of historians such as Jean-Clément Martin and Raymonde Monnier, who have highlighted the range of popular representations of Bara.[13] Using prints and plays produced primarily in the late spring

and summer of 1794, my study interrogates how such representations interacted with the official version of events in the run-up to the planned pantheonization. I use these sources specifically due to their creative portrayals of the boys beyond the overtly political and civic spheres. In comparing these depictions to the official narrative, I focus in particular on the ways in which Bara and Viala were represented as *children*, as this was arguably what distinguished their deaths from those of other revolutionary victims. Additionally, where historiography and collective memory have shown a marked preference for Bara over Viala, I explore and compare representations of both boys, since their memories were officially interlinked and they were to be pantheonized together.[14]

Most French citizens experienced Bara and Viala through unofficial, ephemeral representations. Although there is a rich literature on David's *Mort de Bara*, there is nothing to suggest this painting was ever displayed, nor that any engraved copies were made. On the other hand, Monnier has emphasized the proliferation of local commemorative festivals inspired by Robespierre's championing of Bara, prior to 18 Floréal.[15] Indeed, most memorials to the boys in Year II were transitory: as well as being honoured in festivals, they were the subject of countless commercial prints, and their characters were beheld and debated by theatre audiences. This was typical of revolutionary cultural production: as Richard Taws has emphasized in his study of visual culture, ephemeral artefacts were fundamental to the circulation of revolutionary culture.[16] In this case, printed images and playscripts demonstrate how Bara and Viala were interpreted and the representations of them that were available to people in 1794, in the absence of permanent monuments. Their commemoration was a combination of popular enthusiasm and state mandate, such that the official narrative, which was to be enshrined permanently by their pantheonization and the dissemination of David's painting, was not necessarily the one people came to know. Despite Monnier's argument that Bara's cult began to lose its popular element as Robespierre asserted more control after 18

Floréal, that control remained limited, and, ultimately, Parisians awoke to a very different dawn on 10 Thermidor: the pantheonization never took place.[17] This is the story, then, of the inception of a cult that never reached its apotheosis, of competing, conflicting and interwoven interpretations that never attained a consensus.

II

The narrative Robespierre had created for Bara—of the boy who had refused to shout 'vive le roi'—was quickly corrected. Desmarres penned a second letter to the Convention, ostensibly to aid David in his painting, but rather testifying to his own intimate relationship with the tragic child victim. Having been condemned for treason on 31 December, he seemingly wrote to save himself. He thus emphasized his grief at losing Bara, and not only elaborated on the circumstances of the boy's death, but also recalled the heroics of another youth in his service.[18]

The letter was presented to the Convention on 21 Nivôse (10 January 1794), but the official story as told in Bourdon's *Recueil* does not appear to have been updated. The only further formal edit was to attribute to Bara the courageous actions of Desmarres' other alleged protégé, a boy named Mosnier.[19] The story of Bara's death remained unchanged: he died, not taunting the 'fucking brigand' after his horses, but steadfastly shouting 'vive la république!'[20]

Indeed, the Jacobins deliberately selected the words they ascribed to both boys as expressions of pure patriotism. In Bara's case, exclaiming 'vive la république' when urged to shout 'vive le roi' was a refusal to deny the Republic and marked a stark contrast with the royalist renegades. Worlds away from the indignant expletives in Desmarres' version, his words invited universal emulation. Meanwhile, Viala allegedly died uttering his own version

of the Republican maxim, 'liberty or death'. His words were not Robespierre's invention, since they featured in early reports of his death, but they were initially reported in Provençal—likely his first language. Whereas the journalist Lavallée deemed the original phrase 'sacred', Robespierre and David reported it in translation: 'I am dying! No matter, it's for liberty'—or, according to the *Journal de Paris*, 'I am dying, but my country is saved'.[21] These words underscored the selflessness of his sacrifice. Moreover, in French, they were not only more universally comprehensible, but they were Republican; in Provençal they could not have been so, given the association of regional languages and dialects with the stratified ancien régime.[22]

By putting the words 'vive la république' into Bara's mouth, Robespierre cast him into a stock narrative, with little regard for fact. This stoic refusal to deny the Republic featured in multiple reported episodes of encounters with counter-revolutionaries before and after Bara's death. For example, Bourdon recorded at least three such incidents, in two of which patriots were killed.[23] Joseph Clarke's research has shown that such stoic sentiments were not always propagandist, since diaries and letters recounted their expression among wounded soldiers.[24] It is plausible, therefore, that the original Provençal phrase was Viala's own, even if Robespierre had dismissed evidence contradicting his account of Bara's heroism. Nevertheless, that there was no standard verbatim account of Viala's words suggests that, here too, sentiment mattered more than factual accuracy. Indeed, Robespierre failed even to mention Viala's name when proposing his pantheonization.[25] Accrediting Mosnier's actions to Bara further demonstrated the Jacobins' lack of concern for commemorating individuals. Bara and Viala were symbolic actors, and could be an aggregate of multiple real people. The official narrative, then, emphasized the selfless martyrdom of two innocent children, casting them as archetypal patriots.

Where historians have typically seen Bara and Viala's pantheonization as a cynical manoeuvre, the situation was arguably more complex. Certainly, there were political reasons

to endorse both boys' sacrifice. As both Helen Weston and Jean-Clément Martin have suggested, portraying republican children as victims of counter-revolutionaries allowed Robespierre to control the narrative of the Vendée insurrection and its suppression.[26] Significantly, it helped to justify repression there, in the wake of Jean-Baptiste Carrier's infamous *noyades* (drownings), news of which had reached Paris, and whose victims included women and children.[27] Indeed, the day Robespierre proposed Bara's pantheonization, a dispatch read in the Convention had emphasized mercy shown to young captives at Angers; its author, the *représentant-en-mission* Francastel, was surely aware of the need to counter Carrier's image of Republican authority.[28] Similarly, though a national phenomenon, Viala's commemoration responded to the local political situation in the Vaucluse, as Michel Vovelle has shown through his analysis of Moureau's role in its instigation.[29]

Nonetheless, in light of scholarship on French Revolutionary symbols and emotions, Bara and Viala's commemoration cannot be dismissed as mere political opportunism. As the cases of Marat and Louis XVI suggest, assigning symbolic meaning to individual deaths was typical of the revolutionaries' attachment to symbolic gestures: symbols and allegories saturated political discourse and visual representation.[30] The revolutionaries consciously created such symbols to legitimize the new regime, as Lynn Hunt has demonstrated, and consciously or not these symbols often drew on existing familial repertoires.[31] More recently, David Andress has discussed what he terms the 'revolutionary melodrama'.[32] According to this thesis, the Jacobins—and Robespierre, in particular—experienced the world as a sentimental play, in which everyone was assigned a role. If killing the king represented the overthrow of the bad father in Hunt's Freudian family romance, what was the role of the child martyr?

Crucially, the revolutionaries repeatedly emphasized the boys' young age, yet neither would automatically have been considered a child. The Académie française, for instance, defined childhood as lasting 'until the age of ten or twelve years'.[33] However, Bara was

thirteen, and Viala, though various sources claimed he was thirteen or even eleven, was fifteen years old when he died.[34] Yet, where Desmarres had first referred to Bara as a child ('enfant')—presumably to strengthen the case for compensation—Robespierre and David continued to do likewise. Thus, having introduced Bara on 28 December as 'a young man … Bara, this young man aged 13 years', Robespierre proposed pantheonizing 'this young child', and in May he asked how 'an even younger hero' could have been overlooked, referring to Viala as 'a child of 13 years'.[35] David likewise stressed the boys' tender age. In his account of Bara's death, he used the rule of three: 'at thirteen years, the young Bara, heroic child'; other epithets included 'young heroes' and 'young republicans'.[36]

Calling them children associated the boys with a specific set of attributes belonging to the eighteenth-century child. Rooted in empiricist and sensationist philosophy, the new, secular concept of the child questioned Original Sin and enabled the belief in children's innate innocence. Largely owing to Rousseau, who, in his *Émile* (1762), presented them as naturally good—although not naturally virtuous—they were increasingly portrayed as the antithesis of adult vice.[37] Thus, sentimental artists and writers increasingly focused on the portrayal of innocent, virtuous and vulnerable children. They were epitomized as such in Greuze's paintings of young children, and in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*, published on the eve of the Revolution, in 1788.[38]

This sentimental discourse on childhood was manifested in the revolutionaries' discussion of Bara and Viala. Barère thus alluded to the Rousseauvian vision of childhood in describing Bara's virtue as 'complete …, as it came from the hands of Nature', evoking the opening premise of Rousseau's *Émile*, that 'Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man.'[39] David echoed this notion of natural virtue, positing not only that 'at that age … everything is virtue', but that this was a

virtue the Republic's enemies could never corrupt—and one which he then ascribed to all Frenchmen.[40]

Conceived of as the natural embodiment of complete virtue ('la vertu toute entière'), the child as hero was the ideal representation of what Marisa Linton has identified as the model of 'natural virtue'.[41] According to this model, developed in the 1740s, virtue resided in self-sacrifice for the communal good, but such altruism was no hardship; motivated by sensibility, the virtuous individual experienced joy in helping others. Against the backdrop of paranoia about false virtue and feigned emotion that would reach crisis point in spring 1794, a child's inherently authentic virtue stood out—especially if that child willingly sacrificed himself for the Republic.[42]

Even in life, Bara was represented as having been a paradigm of altruism: the revolutionaries emphasized that he had devotedly sent his military wages to his indigent mother and siblings. Desmarres first highlighted this in support of his request to the Convention to aid the now helpless mother. Beyond this practical need, the family's poverty further contributed to Bara's naturally virtuous image. Linton has shown how ordinary people, and specifically 'the poor' were increasingly characterized as virtuous in the years preceding 1789, and, as we have seen, the revolutionaries were already celebrating the good deeds of ordinary people before Bara's story came to the fore.[43] Poor, a child, and behaving so selflessly, Bara was virtuous beyond question.

Moreover, the official narrative emphasized the duality of Bara's virtue. In his speech of 18 Floréal, Robespierre exclaimed, 'Bara, heroic child, you provided for [nourrissois] your mother, & you died for the *Patrie*!'; similarly, David introduced him as 'the young Bara, heroic child whose filial hand provided for his mother'.[44] In both instances, Bara's filial piety went hand in hand with his patriotism. Playing with the motif of French citizens as children of the

nation, Robespierre presented a binary of mother and fatherland, suggesting that the boy's devotion to his mother and to the Republic were equally significant. The two virtues were intrinsically linked, too, since Bara's military service to the nation financed his support for his mother.

In serving both his family and the nation, Bara combined private and public virtue, as the eighteenth-century man of virtue—and 'great men'—increasingly did.[45] On a practical level, this allowed him to function as an example to both adults and children. To children, he demonstrated the domestic role expected of them, combined with patriotism.[46] To adults, he and Viala were a call to arms and a source of inspiration. Thus, in his speech composed for the pantheonization ceremony, David appealed to each social category to emulate the boys' patriotism in distinct ways, be they fathers, mothers, the elderly, or young women.[47]

On a discursive level, meanwhile, the combination of filial piety with unwavering patriotism demonstrated a distinct alternative to the tragic tensions found within the classical republican model of heroism. This was not Brutus's reluctant filicide; there was no tension between family and state. Instead, Bara's martyrdom for the Republic was an extension of his private morality, the two having always been interlinked. Classical republican ideals certainly persisted; in fact, Robespierre invoked Brutus directly in his speech of 18 Floréal.[48] Yet, in the same speech, he declared, 'Oh Bara, you did not find models in antiquity, but you have found among us emulators of your virtue'.[49]

Indeed, Robespierre and Barère implicitly challenged Plato's classical model of virtue, by describing Bara's virtue as complete ('toute entière') and claiming he embodied 'all virtues'.[50] The platonic concept of virtue as an aggregate of justice, wisdom, temperance and strength (or courage) was thus reframed: virtue was 'heroism, … courage, … filial love [and]

patriotism.'[51] In combining heroism with natural virtue, Bara thus represented a new vision of virtue and an alternative kind of hero, without classical precedent.

On the other hand, filial piety was not integral to official accounts of Viala's death. Moureau and the early journal accounts did mention his mother's reaction, combining sentiment and stoicism. 'His mother,' wrote Moureau, 'on learning of his death, cried out; but, they told her, *he has died for the patrie.* Ah! It's true, she said, and her tears dried.'[52] Here, Viala's mother was recast as Cornelia, the Roman matron who willingly sacrificed her sons for the Republic, and maternal sentiment was subordinated to duty. This contrasts with the revolutionaries' image of Bara uniting filial devotion and patriotic duty, and conforms more closely to classical republican ideals. Indeed, this episode was not raised in the Convention, where Viala's mother was mentioned only in a footnote to David's report—unlike Bara's mother, who was scheduled to participate in the pantheonization ceremony and even seated, with two of her surviving children, beside the president of the Convention on 10 Prairial (29 May).[53] Besides the impracticality for Viala's mother to travel to Paris from the Vaucluse, the deputies were seemingly uninterested in emphasizing Viala's family. Arguably Moureau's account did not fit the desired model of heroism. More importantly, any mention of his relationship with his family may have associated Viala with Moureau, whose Jacobinism might undermine Viala's pure, apolitical virtue.

So what purpose did this model of virtue serve? In representing Bara and Viala as perfectly virtuous, yet slaughtered by brutal rebels, the Jacobins presented the world in Manichean terms, conflating federalist and royalist insurrection as equally representative of vice. By spring 1794, both uprisings had been suppressed and, more recently, the Hébertist and Dantonist factions purged. Meanwhile, the infamous Law of 22 Prairial stipulated only one punishment for counter-revolution: death. In this vision of society, there was no ambiguity,

and no middle ground. Opposed, then, to the irredeemable counter-revolutionary was the perfect child, defender of the Republic and the very incarnate of virtue.

This may have rationalized the Terror—or even justified it, as Thomas Crow argues by highlighting the concomitance of Bara's commemoration with its intensification.[54] Yet Robespierre's ultimate goal was not Terror, but social regeneration—and his own martyrdom for the revolutionary cause. He was vehemently opposed to atheism, as Jonathan Smyth demonstrates in his recent work on the Festival of the Supreme Being.[55] Bara and Viala's pantheonization worked in tandem with this festival to re-moralize society without restoring the primacy of the Church, and to combat dechristianization. In the context of spring 1794, it offered an alternative to the fervent anticlericalism of the Hébertists, guillotined in March, and a model of virtue to emulate. Thus Robespierre announced Viala's pantheonization in the same speech that inaugurated the cult of the Supreme Being; alongside the festival scheduled for 20 Prairial, he presented a programme of smaller festivals celebrating numerous virtues, including those Bara and Viala had demonstrated.

They were, nonetheless, secular martyrs. There is no evidence of a metaphysical element to their commemoration, and in this they and the other martyrs for liberty remained distinct from Catholic saintly martyrs—both those of the conventional canon and the new Revolutionary 'holy patriots' venerated in Brittany and the Vendée.[56] Even so, they offered a model of virtue and patriotism that would contribute to the formation of a new, moral society.

The very act of mourning the boys contributed to social regeneration. As William Reddy has demonstrated, the Jacobins viewed sensibility as a catalyst to virtuous political action.[57] Innocent and naturally virtuous, children were exceptionally well equipped to evoke pathos and identification. Thus, on 18 Floréal, Robespierre urged his audience to 'water' Viala's ashes 'with bitter tears', only to exclaim immediately, 'No, let us not weep for him; let

us imitate him, let us avenge him …'[58] Though rejecting tears, he framed them as natural precursors of emulation and as a call to arms. This was not straightforward stoicism, but an attempt to channel emotion into virtuous imitation.

David's *Mort de Bara*, commissioned the day Bara's pantheonization was agreed, represents the pure virtue to be imitated and memorialized. The canvas is stripped of all adornment, with the focus on Bara, yet there is no attempt at a genuine likeness. David ignored Desmarres' description and did not depict Bara in his hussar uniform. As in Robespierre's narrative, this is therefore an archetypal figure, not a portrait of a real person. Régis Michel even interprets it as allegorical and goes further to suggest that this nude figure is an emblem of 'primitive purity'.[59] Nude and androgynous, this Bara is not a classical hero, but a pure, unblemished figure, disconnected from society and the vice motivating his killers. His expression is ambiguous: is he in pain, or is it a sigh of fulfilment in dying for the Republic—that inherent joy the natural hero feels upon doing good?

Whether we go so far as to label it 'erotic', David's painting presents Bara as ethereally beautiful in the moment of his death.[60] That moment, indeed, is the subject of the painting: neither fighting nor dead, Bara is immortalized in the act of dying for liberty. As he clutches a note and a faded tricolour cockade to his chest, his curls tumbling onto his shoulder, he makes a sacrifice that is beautiful and natural. Bara's steadfast patriotism and flawless virtue signified the new Republican values—formulated by Robespierre and painted by David—and a new direction for the cult of martyrs.

III

David's commission shows that the Convention intended images to play a central role in circulating the boys' stories from the outset. Prints of the painting were to be displayed in

primary schools, and the Comité d'instruction publique subsequently ordered the purchase of prints of Bara and of Fabre de l'Hérault—a *représentant-en-mission* killed in battle in December 1793—for distribution among the Convention deputies.[61] Marie-Pierre Foissy-Aufrère suggests, however, that the majority of prints depicting Bara and Viala were not created until the Convention's decision to pantheonize Viala, in May 1794.[62] There is no evidence that they were directly commissioned, but they were produced in response to developments in the Convention. As Rolf Reichardt and Hubertus Kohle have emphasized, 'the Revolution was the bestseller' of the French print market in the 1790s: political prints demonstrate popular sentiment and interpretation of events.[63] Prints, moreover, were ubiquitous and inexpensive in the capital.[64] The many prints depicting Bara and Viala were, therefore, likely viewed and purchased by large numbers of Parisians, even if it is not always easy to trace the circulation of an individual image. They demonstrate how commercial printmakers represented the boys for a popular audience, drawing as they did on the official commemoration. In this section, I analyse a selection of these printed depictions, exploring the various ways in which Bara and Vialawere interpreted, and comparing these to the official cult.

The majority were portraits—mostly of the boys individually, but sometimes group portraits with other republican martyrs—and there were also images of their deaths.[65] Unlike David's painting, unofficial prints focusing on Bara's martyrdom depicted the circumstances in which it occurred, rather than creating a romanticized symbol. The narrative varied between Robespierre's and Desmarres', but the latter seems to have been more common—perhaps because it was clearer to depict. Thus, images in two children's schoolbooks, and one by the artist Philibert-Louis Debucourt, show Bara beset by rebels, from whom he tries to keep his horses.

However, such images sometimes conformed more closely to Robespierre's account in the text accompanying them. Although its frontispiece depicted Bara defending horses, Jean-

Baptiste Chemin-Dupontès' *L'Ami des jeunes patriotes* elaborated on Bara's story in the main text [Figure 1]. Here, the author combined both Robespierre's and Desmarres' versions, perhaps after Bourdon: after refusing to denounce the Republic, Bara also refused to surrender his horses. A sanitized version of his words according to Desmarres is transcribed, with the boy taunting the rebels but not swearing at them.[66] More implicitly, the image in the anonymous *Manuel des jeunes républicains* echoes the dichotomy between liberty and counter-revolution implied in the official cult. Its caption reads 'Rather than be a slave, he died a hero'—a binary which suggests no middle-ground.[67] Conversely, Debucourt's caption conforms almost verbatim to Desmarres' account, showing that its inspiration came from the general's letters—reported in national newspapers such as *Le Moniteur*—rather than from Robespierre.[68] All three of these images were thus influenced to varying degrees by Desmarres' second letter. However, another image, an anonymous etching, shows no horses and reports Bara exclaiming 'vive la République' [Figure 2]. If all four prints do indeed date from 1794, there was evidently no agreed narrative, despite Robespierre's earlier efforts.

These prints emphasized the drama of the fight, and through this the boy's vulnerability and courage upon facing his attackers. Thus, the *Manuel des jeunes républicains* image depicts sinister, shadowy figures surrounding Bara as another man bayonets him; Chemin-Dupontès's frontispiece shows him not only unarmed, but outnumbered and attacked by a man twice his size. This was not a feature only of the Desmarres story: the anonymous etching mentioned above is equally pathetic and frightening [Figure 2]. Here, Bara is again surrounded by men aiming their bayonets at him. He has fallen against a tree, his hat and drumsticks discarded; helplessly propped up on his drum, he defends himself with a broken sword. The intended audience of this last print is unclear, but the other three were for children: although not published in a children's book, Debucourt's print was 'dedicated to young French people'. It

seems, therefore, that printers, artists and authors sought to frighten and awe children in order to inspire them—rather different from David's sublime allegory.

Meanwhile, there were no competing versions of Viala's death in the official record. Popular images of this event captured the drama of the episode; the scene was recognizable by the axe-wielding lad chopping through the cable. They often suggested the hero's plebeian origins, whether through attention to the Provençal setting or their representation of Viala himself. For instance, Descourtis' print after Swebach-Desfontaines shows the sweeping Vaucluse Mountains behind the boy. Swebach-Desfontaines was a known landscape painter, so his focus on the environment is unsurprising, but it nevertheless emphasizes Viala's provincial origins, particularly as its caption reports Viala's words in Provençal, for Parisian buyers.[69] Whether or not this was intended as a realistic portrayal, it removes Viala from the urban Parisian environment and contributes to a rural, plebeian image of him. A woodcut letterhead depicted him in similar terms [Figure 3]. With his loose shirt fallen away from one shoulder, and without shoes as he steps into the water, this Viala resembles a peasant at work—perhaps chopping wood. At the same time, his red trousers combined with white shirt and blue river evoke the tricolour, thus linking his action to the Republic. Printers thus inserted him into the revolutionary celebration of the rural, which associated agriculture with republican virtue. A modern Cincinnatus, Viala was a republican and a farmer; rural and a child, he could demonstrate virtue that was doubly natural.[70]

Portraits of the boys both militarized them and played with the concept of their vulnerability and ordinariness. In terms of militarization, both (but Bara, especially) were frequently portrayed in uniform, and with their associated equipment: Viala's axe and Bara's drum.[71] Such symbols were perhaps necessary, since their faces would not be recognizable; indeed, even the artists had not seen them in life. Images with multiple portraits thus distinguished them from each other and other martyrs using these props—as opposed to

Marat’s signature turban. This was the case in an unidentified print combining portraits of both boys with those of Marat, Lepeletier and Chalier, and on a painted fan depicting Bara the ‘drummer’ alongside the triumvirate of adult republican martyrs.[72] Yet, much like the image of Viala as the tricoloured woodsman, these associations also emphasized the notion that all French citizens could contribute.

Viala’s axe thus contrasted with his uniform, since it was not a standard military weapon, but a plebeian tool. This was particularly impactful in an engraving by Jean-Baptise Morret [Figure 4]. Here, though Viala also carries a sword, it is the axe he displays proudly. He stands regally before the Pantheon, leaning on the axe as generations of European kings had leant on their swords or sceptres.[73] Yet he is crowned not by an archbishop, but by Equality, suggesting that anyone could attain this; his ‘crown’ is an oak wreath, a classical symbol of victory. Combining these symbols, Morret demonstrated the importance of ordinary French people—even those too young to be citizens—and exalted the plebeian child to supplant monarchy.

Bara’s drum possibly had a similar effect, yet it is more puzzling since, unlike Viala’s axe, it bore no relation to the real boy or to the official account of his martyrdom. The young drummer became a trope of Revolutionary heroism, beginning with the likes of Darrudder—who shot at the enemy when his father was killed in battle—and resulting in Napoleon awarding the *légion d’honneur* to drummer André Estienne.[74] Aside from being a simple mistake on the part of the artists—understandable, since young boys typically served in this way—Bara’s depiction as a drummer emphasizes the boyish vulnerability and enthusiasm inherent in this motif. This is not a strong soldier, but a child, who, armed only with a drum, nonetheless defied the Republic’s enemies. The official cult’s message is present, but it is portrayed through the addition of a novel element to Bara’s story.

Finally, filial piety was less important than patriotism in visual representations of Bara and Viala, despite its significance in the Convention. It would not have been unusual to portray filial devotion: quotidian virtues were often depicted in revolutionary art.[75] Yet, absent from the images themselves, it was only mentioned in some captions. Debucourt, for instance, included Desmarres' information regarding Bara supporting his family; the anonymous etching of Bara emphasized his self-sacrifice by adding that in so doing he himself had had only bread to eat. More strictly adhering to the official line, Angélique Allais quoted Robespierre in the inscription to her portrait of Bara: 'He provided for his Mother, and died for his *Patrie*.'[76] As for Viala, most images and their captions emphasized only his heroic death, as his family had not featured in the official story. Nevertheless, at least one engraving mentioned his mother's reaction to his death, echoing Moureau and Lavallée, which demonstrates that this account was circulated at the popular level to some extent.[77]

That popular prints differed from David's work may seem unsurprising, since these were not works of high art, and the same can be seen in popular representations of Marat. As in Bara and Viala's case, it was not unusual for popular prints to depict the drama of Marat's assassination: they often featured an enraged, dagger-wielding Charlotte Corday, for instance. Their purpose was to engage public interest and thus to sell, whilst David's *Marat* hung in the Convention chamber as an example to deputies, opening up a dissonance between popular and official forms of memorialization.[78] Since his *Bara* was never displayed in classrooms, the same dissonance occurred: children could only have seen Bara's (and Viala's) image via unofficialprints, so this militarized image was the one they saw. Artists and engravers were responding to the same official story as David, so the differences in their interpretations suggest a gap between popular and official understanding, perhaps partly due to the conflicting early sources. The similarities in the overall message, however, demonstrate that there was some conformity, both with the official cult and among printmakers.

IV

Like printers, playwrights do not seem to have worked in response to direct commissions for representations of Bara and Viala. Certainly, theatre was not free from surveillance: the state suppressed plays it deemed unpatriotic, such as Neufchâteau's *Paméla, ou La Vertu récompensée*, as well as subsidizing certain patriotic performances. Even so, recent scholarship challenges the notion that revolutionary theatre functioned only as political propaganda. Notably, Susan Maslan and Cecilia Feilla have emphasized the connections between political and sentimental plays, as genres blurred together; Mark Darlow has shown that public opinion significantly influenced what was staged.[79] Although the plays concerning Bara and Viala were inherently political, we should therefore consider them not as direct tools of the Convention, but as artistic, popular interpretations of a political affair within the context of late-eighteenth-century literary developments.

Work on French Revolutionary theatre has typically paid scant attention to these plays, yet at least six appeared on the Paris stage in 1794, and others were performed in the provinces.[80] Of the Parisian dramas, three are extant in print: Briois' *Une journée de la Vendée, ou la mort du jeune Barra*, Léger's *L'Apothéose du jeune Barra* and Philipon's *Agricol Viala, ou le jeune héros de la Durance*. Of the remaining three, reviews summarize the plot and reception of Audoin's *Agricole Viala, ou le héros de 13 ans* and Fillette-Loraux's *Viala, ou le héros de la Durance*, though we know very little about Lévrier-Champrion's *Joseph Barra*.[81]

These plays had relatively brief runs, as they appeared in late spring and summer 1794 and were unable to survive the decline in Bara and Viala's popularity into 1795.[82] Nevertheless, they offer insight into the ephemeral popular experience of Bara and Viala's commemoration in 1794, complementing our analysis of prints. Playwrights inserted them into

existing genres, adapting their stories to explore the relationship between family and state and to play out moral dilemmas, for audiences to identify and learn from their cathartic resolution. Such themes echoed and explored the revolutionary politicization of the family and were not unusual in plays of the period. As Suzanne Desan has shown, patriotic and matrimonial love were intimately connected—much like Bara's filial love and patriotism.[83] In theatre, this connection might be manifested in the fusion of civic and family events: for instance, Collot d'Herbois combined a wedding with a civic oath in his *La Famille patriote* (1790).[84]

Thus both surviving plays on Bara focused on patriotic marriage and became part of this wider sentimental–political repertoire. In Léger's *L'Apothéose du jeune Barra*, Bara never even appeared onstage; instead his surviving sister was the protagonist, and his apotheosis provided the backdrop for a sentimental melodrama concerning matrimonial love and patriotic marriage.[85] Meanwhile, Briois' play, first staged on 4 May 1794 at the Théâtre de la Gaîté, shows similar themes, but concerns Bara's last day and concludes with his death.[86] The setting is the house of Bara's friends: Gilbert, his wife Clotilde and their daughter Aimée, with whom Gilbert proposes a match for Bara.[87] Regarding Bara's death, Briois combined both Robespierre's and Desmarres' versions, like Chemin-Dupontès. Thus, according to a soldier onstage, the royalists initially demand horses from Bara and subsequently that he deny the Republic, which he refuses to do, instead shouting 'vive la République!'[88] He then dies onstage at Gilbert's house, repeating these words in his final line.

By containing the action in one setting and one day, Briois adhered to the classical theatrical unities of time and place. The play was in prose rather than the classical Alexandrine verse, but it seems the playwright was committed to these rules, as well as to that of *bienfaisance*, since the attack on Bara occurs offstage.[89] These restrictions influenced his portrayal of Bara's story. Thus Bara's mother could not appear onstage, since she was in

Palaiseau. Her son's letter home serves to inform the audience of Bara's previous heroics, but nevertheless also demonstrates a degree of intimacy, thus alluding to his filial piety.[90]

Indeed, family and domesticity are key themes, and Briois' choice of a domestic setting emphasized that patriotism began at home. The curtain opens initially on a homely scene imbued with political virtue: Gilbert is reading about heroic acts in the newspapers, whilst Clotilde and Aimée are working on sacks and uniforms for the army, each member of the family doing their bit for the cause.[91] Beyond Bara and Viala's commemoration, the *levée en masse* of August 1793 had mandated such contributions. The focus on the marriage match between Bara and Aimée develops this fusion of patriotism and domesticity, through Gilbert's emphasis on republican virtue—rather than physical appearance—as attributes desirable in a wife, and his joy at his daughter's betrothal to 'a military hero'.[92] Indeed, this message is underlined at the play's dénouement, when, immediately before his final 'Vive la République', Bara declares that he dies 'content', having been worthy of both Aimée and his country.[93] In this way private and public virtue are indivisible, as they were in the official cult.

However, Briois' Bara does not embody the qualities of Rousseauvian childhood. He was played by a woman, a Citoyenne Lacroix, which certainly may have emphasized the androgyny associated with youth in accordance with theatrical norms, yet the impact would have differed from that of David's painting, since the character Lacroix played is fundamentally masculine.[94] Confident and courageous from his first entrance, Bara bursts through the door at the start of Scene Two, demanding Gilbert's gun and instructing the women not to fear.[95] This juxtaposition of his bravery with the women's terror emphasizes his martial masculinity.[96] Similarly, his aforementioned letter to his mother details his courageous decision to torch his own home to prevent rebels from using it—one of Mosnier's deeds according to Desmarres. Though seeking his mother's approval, Bara thus demonstrates bravery and stoicism.[97] Moreover, his personal association with domestic virtue is

demonstrated primarily through his commitment to his new fiancée. He is mature, and not childlike.

The staging of Bara's death combines his military heroism with the sentimental poignancy linked to the private sphere. The attack occurs offstage and the audience learns of it simultaneously with Gilbert's family. His final moments then take place in the house, emphasizing the impact of death on the family. Thus the scene appeals to the audience's sensibility through the characters' panic and grief—Aimée inevitably faints—and Bara's feeble attempts to address them, 'in a fading voice'.[98] Before the final curtain, the cast assembles around Bara, creating a tableau reminiscent of sentimental deathbed scenes, such as that of Rousseau's *Julie* (1761), or Greuze's *La Piété filiale* (1763).

Nevertheless, the stage directions indicate that Bara was clearly portrayed as a wounded soldier. He is carried into the room by fellow hussars, followed by a retinue of soldiers, who seemingly remain onstage for the scene's duration. The stage directions dictate that his shirt and the towels wrapping him are heavily bloodstained; blood runs from his bare head.[99] A clear military death, this was a far cry from David's Rousseauvian child, but in this closing tableau, it married sentimental family with martial masculinity. The tableau's power to move and edify through emotional identification with virtue was thus utilized to show that domestic virtue alone was insufficient; Briois advocated military heroism and the sacrifice families must be prepared to make.[100]

The plays concerning Viala demonstrate further theatrical interpretations of the boys and variation within this medium. Paradoxically, they focus more on filial love than those on Bara; all three also concern Viala's heroic death, whereas Léger neglected Bara's. My analysis concentrates on Philipon's *Agricol Viala, ou le jeune héros de la Durance*, with reference to synopses of Audoin's and Fillette-Loraux's works.

Philipon’s *Agricol Viala* debuted at the Théâtre des Amis de la Patrie, on 1 July 1794, when Audoin’s version also premièred at the Opéra-Comique. It follows the official narrative insofar as Viala, known as Agricol, is killed stopping federalists crossing the river; although they are not his final lines, he utters Viala’s official last words: ‘I am dying; no matter: it’s for Liberty’.[101]

Like Briois’ play, those concerning Viala’s death nevertheless invented additional circumstances and characters. Fillette-Loraux created action and intrigue, with Viala overhearing a federalist plot at night and planning the defence. In Philipon’s play, the events surrounding Agricol’s death coincide with the wedding festivities of his cousin, Pétronille. Marriage is not the central theme, as it is in Briois’ and Léger’s work, but its presence underscores the relationship between family and state, which the play explores.

Significantly, Agricol does not participate in the festivities, offering to keep watch instead. This not only demonstrates his commitment to defending the Republic, but also underscores his ultimate decision to prioritize nation over family. The tension between filial and patriotic devotion is central to the play, as Agricol struggles to reconcile his desires to be both a good son and a patriot. Philipon therefore emphasized the boy’s intimate relationship with his mother—as did Fillette-Loraux, whose Viala dies in his mother’s arms.[102] Throughout Philipon’s play, Agricol remains devoted to ‘Pauline’ and, though he yearns to fight, he is reluctant to leave her.[103] Their intimacy is highlighted at the moment of his death through stichomythic lines, until Pauline completes Agricol’s final line, throwing herself onto him.[104] This particular shared line stands apart, as it is decasyllabic, whilst the rest of the song is octosyllabic. The key moment of the hero’s death is thus shared with his mother, and he addresses his final words to her: ‘Farewell, my mother!’ (Bara); ‘O cruel fate!’ (Pauline).[105] Emphasizing their closeness in this way elicits additional pathos when Agricol dies.

Unlike Briois and Léger, who had also dealt with loss, Philipon focused specifically on the death of a child. He recreated childhood innocence more than Briois, and seemingly more than Fillette-Loraux, whose Viala, despite his intimacy with his mother, seems mature and assertive in his actions upon overhearing the federalist plot.[106] In contrast, Philipon's Agricol is repeatedly referred to as an 'enfant', and his naïve patriotism and naturally trusting disposition are contrasted with the duplicity of the federalist spy, who distracts him from his watch, and with Pauline's more cynical suspicion.[107] This portrayal aligns him with David Denby's definition of the sentimental victim, who was characterized by 'powerlessness and innocence', thus further encouraging pathos.[108]

Ultimately, however, Viala is not powerless. Like the state, Philipon emphasized that even children could perform patriotic acts of heroism. Agricol and Pétronille refuse to see the former's youth as an obstacle to his patriotism, despite others urging him to retreat with the women, and, in the final ensemble, following his sacrifice, the chorus repeats twice that 'at thirteen years he was a hero'.[109]

Moreover, the pathos elicited by Agricol's death offers catharsis and resolves the tension between family and state. Throughout the play, Pauline repeatedly tells Agricol to put the nation first, that the Republic is also his mother and more important than she is; yet when he is dying, it is Agricol who—like Briois' Bara—expresses contentment to be dying for his country, and Pauline who must be reminded of her former stoicism.[110] Once thus reminded and informed that her son has died for the nation, Pauline overcomes her grief: echoing Moureau's account of Viala's mother, she dries her tears and is described in the stage directions as resembling 'a new person'.[111] Even as Pauline mourns, patriotic duty thus trumps maternal devotion, and is suggested as a means of accepting the loss of her son.

The audience is likewise encouraged to accept Viala's sacrifice. Validating Pauline's composure, the aide-de-camp uses the first-person plural when he encourages celebrating Viala as an example to other children.[112] He thus seems to invite the audience to join in this, blurring the boundary between stage and audience. Indeed, sentimental theatre sought to inspire virtue through identification with characters' emotions, as mentioned above with regard to tableaux. Philipon likely sought to achieve this through displaying the death of the virtuous, innocent child and the survivors' response. Accepting Viala's death along with the characters onstage was a means for audiences vicariously to overcome their own qualms about sacrifice for the Republic.

Playwrights thus appropriated Bara's and Viala's deaths to create morally didactic plays that were both patriotic and sentimental. Audiences seemingly approved of their patriotic sentiments but nevertheless expected these to be represented aesthetically. Hence Fillette-Loraux's *Viala*, criticized for its 'very careless syle' and its 'implausibilities' ('invraisemblances'), was 'very weakly applauded'; praise for the 'truly patriotic sentiments' expressed in Briois' *Barra* was moderated by its 'sloppy style'.[113] Of the six plays performed in Paris, Léger's *L'Apothéose du jeune Barra* was the most successful, with thirty-three performances, despite debuting a month after Briois' play.[114] Yet Bara himself was not among the roles in Léger's script. It appears, therefore, that fidelity to the official narrative was not a priority for audiences. Overwhelmingly sentimental in tone, the plays emphasized the domestic themes integral to sentimental drama, and focused on the impact of sacrifice on surviving friends and family. Although their use of emotion to stimulate virtuous emulation was much like Robespierre's, they indicate different priorities from the official cult, as well as overlapping ones, and the multiplicity of influences on Bara and Viala's representation.

Thus different artists portrayed the boys according to the conventions and constraints of their media, as well as their individual interpretations. Already Robespierre had created a

myth, but he did not monopolize its telling, even after 18 Floréal. Rather, Bara and Viala quickly became cultural artefacts to be reimagined for varying purposes and audiences. This variegated version is the one ordinary people experienced, whether through prints, plays or the conflicting reports of the official narrative and Desmarres' and Moureau's accounts. Because the pantheonization never occurred and David's painting was never disseminated, the multiple strands did not come together.

V

Rather than participating in the festival planned for Bara and Viala's pantheonization, Parisians saw Robespierre guillotined on 10 Thermidor, along with twenty-one of his supporters. The previous evening, Billaud-Varenne had accused him of planning to use the festival to stage a coup.[115] The impact of these events on Bara and Viala's commemoration outside Paris was not immediate: provincial ceremonies went ahead on 10 Thermidor, with the fourteen-year-old Charles Nodier, the future writer, giving an impassioned eulogy for the boys before the people of Besançon.[116] The arrest and sentencing, a week later, of a family in the Meuse who had shirked their local ceremony, demonstrates municipal authorities' persistence in honouring the Convention's plans, even as popular societies and officials wrote to congratulate the deputies for having toppled the 'new Cromwell'.[117] In Paris, the plays continued to be performed that autumn, with the debut of Fillette-Loraux's *Viala* in October. Nevertheless, the cult had lost its previous allure, and perhaps the political climate contributed to that play's cool reception. Indeed, in February 1795, the Convention received a petition from the Avignon *société populaire* protesting against Viala's prospective pantheonization. The petitioners claimed 'this young scatterbrain' had had no part in stopping the rebels and that Robespierre had spread a lie.[118] In the post-Thermidorean climate, when Robespierre was

widely vilified, Bara and Viala's association with Jacobinism and the Incorruptible ensured their cult's demise.

Yet this study has shown that, even before 9 Thermidor, there was no common understanding of their deaths. The many voices engaging in their commemoration told their stories in various ways, packaging them for diverse audiences and purposes. French Revolutionary culture was not a top-down phenomenon, and Bara and Viala's case demonstrates the ways in which citizens engaged with a single event on numerous levels. Popular representations did not challenge the Convention's narrative, but they appropriated and, to an extent, commodified it.

Nevertheless, both official and unofficial interpretations emphasized the boys' courage and willingness to die for the Republic, and that they were ordinary heroes. Clarke has shown that these Jacobin ideals persisted after the Terror, inspiring the next generation of soldiers and redefining ideal military behaviour over the long term.[119] Contributing to this image of republican heroism, Bara and Viala thus indirectly formed part of the cultural fabric of a generation.

Moreover, the specific image of the child soldier endured, finding its reinvention after the July Revolution, in works such as Jeanron's *Les Petits patriotes* and Delacroix's *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (1830). Eventually Bara and Viala were resurrected as part of the Third Republic's 'statuomanie'. In a nation obsessed with its past, they offered examples for children to emulate and a means of resolving the collective trauma of Terror in the Vendée.[120]

Only in the mid-twentieth century was their commemoration questioned once again, and once again they returned to relative obscurity.[121] Yet, while Bara's statue in Palaiseau holds little meaning for contemporary children, the commune of Tourreilles, in the Aude, now has a thriving commemorative society for its own drummer boy, eleven-year-old Pierre Bayle.[122]

Killed in November 1794 but not recognized nationally—despite General Dugommier writing to the Convention much like Desmarres before him—Bayle was rediscovered in the 1970s. He has since become a source of local pride and communal activity, involving adults and children and joint activities with residents of the Spanish town of Biure, where he was killed.[123] The deputies of the 1790s did not control who would be remembered, or how—and, unlike their predecessors, local historians and residents of Tourreilles have sought to uncover their heritage and commemorate the real boy. Despite these differences, the child as heroic martyr continues to hold emotional currency, to mobilize society and inspire dutiful commemoration.

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[1] J.-B.-M. Desmarres d'Estimauville, letter to the minister for war, 18 Frimaire, Year II (8 December 1793), *Moniteur*, 27 Frimaire, Year II. The Bodleian Library copy of the *Moniteur* dates the letter as 10 Frimaire (30 November), but this appears to be a printing error: both the *Bulletin de la Convention nationale* and the *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur* date it 18 Frimaire. See *Réimpression de l'ancien Moniteur*, vol. 18 (Paris, 1860), 678; *Bulletin de la Convention nationale*, 26 Frimaire, Year II; cf. *Moniteur* (Bod[leian Library, Oxford], N. 2375 a.2), 27 Frimaire, Year II.

[2] Desmarres, letter, 18 Frimaire.

[3] *Moniteur*, 10 Nivôse, Year II.

[4] There is extensive scholarship on this painting; of particular note is M.-P. Foissy-Aufrère et al., *La Mort de Bara : De l'évènement au mythe. Autour du tableau de Jacques-Louis David* (Avignon, 1989).

[5] J. Lavallée in *Journal des hommes libres*, 16 Pluviôse Year II; *Journal universel*, 18 Pluviôse Year II; A. Moureau, letter to Robespierre, 19 Pluviôse, Year II, in E. B. Courtois, *Rapport fait au nom de la commission chargée de l'examen des papiers trouvés chez Robespierre et ses complices* (Paris, 1795), 389–91.

[6] Ibid, 390; M. Robespierre, *Rapport fait au nom du Comité de Salut Public, par M. Robespierre, sur les rapports des idées religieuses et morales avec les principes républicains, et sur les fêtes nationales. Séance du 18 Floréal, l'an second, etc.* (Paris, 1794), B[ritish] L[ibrary] F.854(7), 35–6.

[7] A. de Baecque, *Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths under the French Revolution*, trans. Charlotte Mandall (New York and London, 2001). On commemorating 'great men' in eighteenth-century France and the development of the Panthéon, see also J.-C. Bonnet, *Naissance du Panthéon : essai sur le culte des grands hommes* (Paris, 1988); M. Ozouf, 'Le Panthéon : l'école normale des morts', in *Les Lieux de mémoire*, ed. P. Nora, 3 vols (Paris, 1984), iii. 139–96.

[8] L.-J.-J.-L. Bourdon de la Crosnière, *Recueil des actions héroïques et civiques des républicains français*, 4 vols (Paris, 1794). Pagination varies between copies, so all references are to the Bodleian Library copy, at Vet. E5 f.172. A fifth volume, concerning the armies of the Rhine and of La Moselle, was produced by A.-C. Thibaudeau, also in 1794.

[9] J. Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead in Revolutionary France: Revolution and Remembrance, 1789–1799* (Cambridge, 2007).

[10] L.-J.-J.-L. Bourdon de la Crosnière, *Annales du civisme et de la vertu [...]* (Paris, 1793), 20; idem, *Recueil*, i. 32–3.
[11] Mazeau, *Le Bain de l'histoire*.
[12] Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire*; R. Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven and London, 1994).
[13] J.-C. Martin, 'Bara, de l'imaginaire révolutionnaire à la mémoire nationale' in Foissy-Aufrère et al., *Mort de Bara*, 97–8; R. Monnier, 'Le Culte de Bara en l'an ii', *A[nnales] H[istoriques de la] R[évolution] F[rançaise]*, 241 (1980), 334–6.
[14] Cf. M. Vovelle, 'Agricol Viala ou le héros malheureux', *AHRF*, 241 (1980), 345–64.
[15] Monnier, 'Le Culte de Bara', 328–34.
[16] R. Taws, *The Politics of the Provisional: Art and Ephemera in Revolutionary France* (University Park, PA, 2013), 2–6.
[17] Monnier, 'Le Culte de Bara', 333–4.
[18] Desmarres, letter to Convention, n.d., *Moniteur*, 22 Nivôse, Year II. Desmarres' efforts to associate himself with Bara's heroism were unsuccessful: he was guillotined on 31 January 1794.
[19] Bourdon, *Recueil*, ii. 52.
[20] Desmarres, letter to Convention, n.d., *Moniteur*, 22 Nivôse, Year II; Bourdon, *Recueil*, i. 33 .
[21] Lavallée, *Journal des hommes libres*, 16 Pluviôse, Year II; *Journal universel*, 18 Pluviôse, Year II; J.-L. David, *Rapport sur la fête héroïque pour les honneurs du Panthéon à décerner aux jeunes Barra & Viala [...]* (Paris, 1794), 4; Robespierre, *18 Floréal*, 35; *Journal de Paris*, 20 Floréal, Year II.
[22] Somewhat surprisingly, an original version was attached to the officially–printed version of David's report on the ceremony, but was not in the report itself. David, *Rapport*, 5.
[23] Bourdon, *Recueil*, ii. 49–50; iii. 19–20; iv. 55–6.
[24] J. Clarke, '"Valour Knows Neither Age Nor Sex": The "Recueil des Actions Héroïques" and the representation of courage in Revolutionary France', *War in History*, 20 (2013), 70–71.
[25] Robespierre, *18 Floréal*.
[26] H. Weston, 'Jacques-Louis David's *La Mort de Joseph Bara*: A tale of Revolutionary myths and modern fantasies', *Paragraph: The Journal of Modern Critical Theory*, 19 (1996), 242; Martin, 'Bara', 89–91.
[27] On Carrier, see W. Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1989), 255–8.
[28] Francasiel to Comité de salut public, 5 Nivôse, in *Moniteur*, 10 Nivôse, Year II.
[29] Vovelle, 'Agricol Viala', 358–60.
[30] On symbolic death, see Mazeau, *Le Bain de l'histoire*; J. Goldhammer, *The Headless Republic: Sacrificial Violence in Modern French Thought* (Ithaca and London, 2005), 26–70.
[31] L. Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984), esp. 52–86; idem, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1992).
[32] D. Andress, 'Living the Revolutionary melodrama: Robespierre's sensibility and the construction of political commitment in the French Revolution', *Representations*, 114 (2011), 103–28; D. Andress, 'Jacobinism as Heroic Narrative: Understanding the Terror as the Experience of Melodrama', *French History and Civilisation*, 5 (2014), pp. 6–23.
[33] 'Enfant' in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th edn (1762) and 8th edn (1798), accessed 28 March 2016, at <http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi–bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=enfant>.
[34] Viala was born on 22 February 1778; there is no evidence of a younger sibling with the same name. Baptismal records, 'Actes paroissiaux et d'état civil d'Avignon, Paroisse catholique de Saint-Agricol', *Archives départementales de Vaucluse*, accessed 23 October 2019, at <http://v-earchives.vaucluse.fr/series/etat_civil/diverses_lettres_LC/NS_diverses_lettres_LC2287/>. Moureau nevertheless claimed he was thirteen, possibly to emphasize the connection with Bara, and popular sources frequently claimed he was eleven. See Moureau, letter to Robespierre; and Figure 4..
[35] *Moniteur*, 10 Nivôse, Year II; Robespierre, *18 Floréal*, 35. The *Journal de Paris* (20 Floréal, Year II, Bod. N. 23748 e.16) has him saying '11 years'. Although this appears to be a misprint, it perhaps influenced popular sources.
[36] David, *Rapport*, 4, 1, 8, 12–13.
[37] On the distinction between natural virtue and natural goodness, see C. Heywood, *Childhood in Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2018), 90, and M. Linton, *The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2001), 87–93. Linton highlights the widespread misinterpretation of Rousseau on natural virtue by his contemporaries.
[38] On Greuze, see E. Barker, 'Imaging childhood in eighteenth-century France: Greuze's Little Girl with a Dog', *The Art Bulletin*, 91 (2009), 426–445.
[39] Barère, 8 Nivôse, in *Moniteur,* 10 Nivôse, Year II; J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. A. Bloom (London, 1979), 37.
[40] David, *Rapport*, 6.

[41] Barère, 8 Nivôse; Linton, *The Politics of Virtue*, 67–79, and on natural virtue in pre–Revolutionary politics, see ibid., 173–200.
[42] See W. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001), 195–6; M. Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 2013), 213–350.
[43] Linton, *The Politics of Virtue*, 186–92.
[44] Robespierre, *18 Floréal*, 34–5; David, *Rapport*, 4.
[45] See D. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 116–17.
[46] Barère, 8 Nivôse, in *Moniteur*, 10 Nivôse, Year II.
[47] David, *Rapport*, 8–10.
[48] Robespierre, *18 Floréal*, 2.
[49] Ibid., 35. Of course, Viala had not emulated Bara, having died several months before him.
[50] Barère, 8 Nivôse, in *Moniteur,* 10 Nivôse, Year II; Robespierre, ibid. Barère's exact phrase is found in eighteenth-century French translations of Plato's work, which suggests this was not coincidental. See Platon, *Loix de Platon* (Amsterdam, 1769), vol. 1, 19.
[51] Robespierre, 8 Nivôse.
[52] Letter to Robespierre, 390. See also *Journal universel*, 18 Pluviôse, Year II and *Journal des hommes libres*, 16 Pluviôse, Year II.
[53] David, *Rapport*, 5, 12; *Moniteur*, 12 Prairial. A delegation from Sceaux-de-l'Unité presented Moureau to the Convention, as well as Bara's mother and siblings, but he received no such special treatment from the deputies.
[54] T. Crow, *Emulation: David, Drouais, and Girodet in the Art of Revolutionary France* (New Haven and London, 2006), 175–6, 184–5.
[55] J. Smyth, *Robespierre and the Festival of the Supreme Being: The Search for a Republican Morality* (Manchester, 2016), 10–30.
[56] A. Soboul, 'Sentiment religieux et cultes populaires pendant la Révolution: Saintes patriotes et martyrs de la liberté', *Archives de sociologie des religions*, 2 (1956), 73–87. Cf. Crow, *Emulation*, 178.
[57] Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, 173–99.
[58] Robespierre, *18 Floréal*, 36.
[59] R. Michel, 'Bara : Du Martyr à l'éphèbe', in Foissy-Aufrère et al., *La Mort de Bara*, 68.
[60] On sexualized interpretations of David's *Bara*, see Weston, 'Jacques-Louis David's *Mort de Joseph Bara*', 245–47; Crow, *Emulation*, 179–83.
[61] *Recueil des actes du Comité de salut public [...]*, ed. F. A. Aulard, vol. 11 (Paris, 1897), 82. This decree of 24 Pluviôse Year II (12 February 1794) does not name specific artists.
[62] M.-P. Foissy-Aufrère, 'Bara: ou La Belle mort', in Foissy-Aufrère et al., *Mort de Bara*, 13.
[63] R. Reichardt and H. Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution: Politics and Pictorial Arts in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (London, 2008), 38–41.
[64] Ibid., 35–8.
[65] For a fairly comprehensive index of prints, see Foissy-Aufrère et al., *Mort de Bara*, 136–41.
[66] J.-B. Chemin-Dupontès, *L'Ami des jeunes patriotes, ou Catéchisme républicain dédié aux jeunes martyrs de la liberté* (Paris, 1793–4), 4. Chemin-Dupontès also attributed Mosnier's actions to Bara, which further suggests he was influenced by Bourdon. This book for children included the heroics of two other young soldiers, André Pajot, and Richer (first name unknown), as examples for its readers.
[67] *Le Manuel des jeunes républicains, ou Éléments d'instruction à l'usage des jeunes élèves des écoles primaires* (Paris, 1793–4), iii.
[68] P.-L. Debucourt, *Mort héroïque du jeune Barra* (Paris, 1794), etching and aquatint, B[ibliothèque] n[ationale de] F[rance].
[69] C.-M. Descourtis, after J.-F. Swebach-Desfontaines, *Joseph Agricole Vialla* (1794?), etching, BnF. See also *Agricol Viala : il coupa la corde [...]*, unknown artist (1793–4), etching, BnF.
[70] See V. Mainz, *L'Image du travail et la Révolution française* (Vizille, 1999), 213–17.
[71] See Foissy-Aufrère et al., *La Mort de Bara*, 136–41.
[72] *[Le Peletier, Marat, Chalier, Viala, Bara]* (Paris, 1793–4), engraving, BnF, accessed 31 January 2020, at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b69498987.r=barra?rk=987129;2; *Marat et Lepelletier, Chalier et Barras* (1793–99), painted fan, BnF, accessed 31 January 2020, at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b531918087.r=barra?rk=2145933;2.
[73] Cf. A. Boissier, *Barra couronné par la Liberté* (Paris, 1794), etching, BnF, in which Bara humbly accepts his crown.
[74] See S. Siegfried, 'L'Iconographie militariste sous la Révolution et l'Empire', in *Les Images de la Révolution française*, ed. M. Vovelle (Paris, 1988), 94; C.-A. Sarre, 'Le Petit tambour d'Arcole : André Estienne, enfant de Cadenet en Luberon', in *Héros et héroïnes de la Révolution française*, ed. S. Bianchi (Paris, 2012), 131–7.

[75] J. A. Leith, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750–1799: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Toronto, 1965), 125.
[76] Boissier, *Barra couronné par la Liberté*; A. Allais, *Joseph Barra* (Paris, 1794), etching, BnF.
[77] *Agricola Viala* (Paris, 1794), etching, BnF, accessed 13 June 2016, at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6950624q>.
[78] Reichardt and Kohle, *Visualizing the Revolution*, 165–71.
[79] S. Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy, and the French Revolution* (Baltimore, 2005), 74–124, on Fabre d'Églantine's work; C. Feilla, *Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution* (Farnham, 2013); M. Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution: Cultural Politics and the Paris Opéra, 1789–1794* (New York, 2012).
[80] E.g. Cit. femme Villiers, *Barra, ou La mère républicaine : drame historique en trois actes et en prose* (Dijon, 1794). Cf. P. Bourdin, *Aux origines du théâtre patriotique* (Paris, 2017), 129–32, 279–91; 180–81. Bourdin's monograph is exceptional in its detailed analysis of these plays: Bourdin discusses them with regard to theatrical representations of Revolutionary apotheoses, and analyses Briois' *Barra* in the context of the playwright's career. For analysis of Villiers' work, see M. Ashburn Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789–1794* (Ithaca, 2011), 70–71.
[81] Review of Audoin, *Almanach des muses, pour l'an troisième de la République française* (Paris, 1795), 21–2; Review of Fillette-Loraux, *Journal des spectacles*, 7, 23 Vendémiaire, Year III, 104–106. The musical scores for Audoin's and Fillette-Loraux's plays, by Porta and Berton respectively, are held by the BnF, but there are no extant scripts, to the best of my knowledge.
[82] For performance data, see A. Tissier, *Les Spectacles à Paris pendant la Révolution : Répertoire analytique, chronologique et bibliographique : De la proclamation de la République à la fin de la Convention nationale (21 septembre 1792–26 octobre 1795)*, vol. 2 (Geneva, 2002), pp. 91–2, 104, 177, 209.
[83] S. Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Berkeley, 2004), 47–92.
[84] Feilla, *Sentimental Theater*, 116–17.
[85] F. P. A. Léger, *L'Apothéose du jeune Barra, tableau patriotique, en un acte, mêlé d'arriettes* (Paris, 1794).
[86] Briois, *La Mort du jeune Barra, ou Une journée de la Vendée, drame historique en un acte* (Paris, 1794). Briois' first name unknown.
[87] Bara's name is spelled 'Barra' in the script, but I use the modern spelling for consistency.
[88] Ibid., 35.
[89] Briois rarely wrote in verse. Bourdin, *Aux origines*, 280.
[90] Briois, *Barra*, 28–9.
[91] Ibid., 5.
[92] Ibid., 12, 14.
[93] Ibid., 37.
[94] Ibid., 4; L. R. Berlanstein, 'Breeches and breaches: cross-dress theater and the culture of gender ambiguity in modern France', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 38 (1996), 353-4.
[95] Ibid., 9.
[96] Despite their sensibility, Clotilde and Aimée later shoot and kill brigands who have entered the house; the elderly Gilbert likewise shoots. Again Briois thus emphasized that everyone could contribute. Ibid., 32.
[97] Ibid., 28–9.
[98] Ibid., 36–7.
[99] Ibid., 37.
[100] On tableaux, see Feilla, *Sentimental Theater*, 65–92.
[101] L. Philipon, *Agricol Viala, ou le jeune héros de la Durance, fait historique et patriotique : acte en prose, mêlé de chant* (Paris, 1794), 25; David, *Rapport*, 4.
[102] *Journal des spectacles*, 7, 106.
[103] Philipon, *Viala*., e.g. 6. The real Viala's mother was named Honorée.
[104] Ibid., 26.
[105] Ibid.
[106] *Journal des spectacles*, 7, 105.
[107] Philipon, *Viala*, e.g. 19, 22.
[108] D. Denby, *Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France, 1760–1820* (Cambridge, 1994), 71.
[109] Philipon, *Viala*, 22, 28.
[110] Ibid., 5, 22, 26.
[111] Ibid., 28. Audoin gives a similar message: a reviewer recounts that in his *Viala*, the boy's family and friends are thankful for his death, because it was 'useful to his *patrie*'. *Almanach des muses*, 22.
[112] Philipon, *Viala*, 28.
[113] *Journal des spectacles*, 14 October 1794, 106; ibid., 24 September 1794, 15.
[114] Tissier, *Les Spectacles à Paris pendant la Révolution*, ii. 388, 104.
[115] Clarke, *Commemorating the Dead*, 216–17.

[116] Bibliothèque municipale de Besançon, Ms 1417, fos 76–89.
[117] *Jugement de police correctionnelle. Extrait du registre du greffe du tribunal de paix du canton de Dagonville, séant à Triconville. Du 16 Thermidor […]*, John Rylands Library, European Proclamations and Broadsides, Box 30; B. Baczko, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre*, trans. M. Petheram (Cambridge, 1994), 36–43. Baczko notes the slow pace of communication, so it is possible that the news of the coup had not yet reached the Meuse.
[118] *Moniteur*, 1 Ventôse, Year III.
[119] Clarke, '"Valour Knows Neither Age Nor Sex"', 72–5.
[120] F. Wartelle, 'Bara, Viala: Le Thème de l'enfance héroïque dans les manuels scolaires (IIIe République)' *AHRF*, 241 (1980), 365–89; Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 31.
[121] Wartelle, 'Bara', 388–9.
[122] On Bara's statue today, see R. Jaeglé, 'Bara: un enfant de Palaiseau entré dans l'histoire', in Bianchi (ed.), *Héros et héroïnes*, 342.
[123] *Association Le Chemin du petit tambour*, accessed 30 August 2019, at <https://www.pierre-bayle.fr/433241392>; 'L'Enfant-héros oublié : Pierre Bayle de Tourreilles (Aude), 1783–1794' [special issue], *La Beluga de Limós*, 24 ([c. 1979]).