

## Preface

This is a book that I never intended to write, but which, over the last years, more or less imposed itself on me. I came across the documents that form the heart of this study, the subscription lists to the *Ami du Roi*, by mistake. For more than ten years now I have been working on a comparative study of the *Année Littéraire* and *Journal Encyclopédique*. The study of these two journals, as I conceived it, would have three parts. The first would treat the sociology of the journals, the second would be a quantitative analysis of content along the lines laid down by Ehrard and Roger in their pioneering study of the *Journal des Savants* and the *Mémoires de Trévoux*, and the third would proceed in the manner of traditional textual analysis. I had reduced the periods I wished to study to manageable dimensions by concentrating on the years 1762/63, 1773/74 and 1783/84, and had made an analysis of the text of the journals for these years, so that I was ready to write the second and third parts of the study, but I lacked materials for the first part, particularly on readership.

Correspondence with M. de Weissenbruch, who maintains the archives of the *Journal Encyclopédique*, indicated that no subscription lists to that journal have survived. My attempts to discover the same kind of source for the *Année Littéraire* appeared to have ended more happily when I found a reference to several registers of subscribers to Fréron's journal in an inventory of sources for literary history in the Archives Nationales. Though one of the registers did in fact contain a short list of subscribers to the *Année Littéraire*, it soon became clear that the large registers, the most extensive of which did not carry the name of a paper at all, could not belong to the *Année Littéraire*. Two of the registers bore the name of the *Ami du Roi*, and the third, it became apparent, was for the same paper. On the one hand I was distressed that I had made little progress in my attempt to discover who bought

Fréron's journal during the old regime, but on the other, I was now aware how rare documents of this kind were, and I could not help but be impressed by their extent. It seemed worthwhile to leave my pursuit of the publics of the *Année Littéraire* and *Journal Encyclopédique* for what I expected would be a short while, and work through the subscription lists of the *Ami du Roi*. More easily thought than done.

The three registers in the Archives Nationales series T\*546 contained a total of roughly 7,000 names with information on geographical distribution, gender, status and occupations of subscribers, as well as on how subscriptions were made. Moreover, full as these lists were, they were heavily weighted toward the provinces. Writing about the *Ami du Roi* in the first volume of the *Histoire générale de la presse française*, Jacques Godechot asserted that, "It has not been possible to discover the list of provincial subscribers . . ." (p. 485). This led me to believe that he or his source had discovered the lists of Parisian subscribers. I therefore planned a trip to Paris to find and use these lists, and so complete my study of the subscribers to the *Ami du Roi*. After several days examining the series C, D and F in the Archives Nationales I concluded that if the lists in question indeed existed, it would take a more resourceful researcher than I to uncover them. Unexpectedly finding myself with several weeks to use in the archives, I began examining the contents of carton T546 for what it might be able to tell me about the public of the *Ami du Roi*.

The initial result was disappointing. The documents in the carton added little if anything to what could be learned from the registers about subscribers to the paper. Once they were classified and organized, however, they threw a good deal of light on the way the paper was produced, managed and organized. Thus instead of completing my study of the readership of the *Ami du Roi*, I found myself drawn into another area of press history. It soon became obvious that one or two articles could not be made to contain the information on the *Ami du Roi* and its subscribers that by virtue of its intrinsic

value I thought deserved to be made public. There was nothing for it but to do the reading and supplementary research necessary to integrate the *Ami du Roi* into the history of the press and of the Revolution, and then to try to write a monograph that would do justice to a subject that I had not chosen, but that had slowly grown, as if by a logic and will of its own.

In the course of preparing this study I have incurred debts of various sorts that I wish to acknowledge here. The Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Haifa provided a grant which made it possible to hire an assistant to help with the coding of information on subscribers to the *Ami du Roi* and the clerical staff that transcribed this material to machine-readable form. The Research Authority of the university has since generously provided the support services necessary for producing a study of this kind. While this book was begun at Haifa and received its final form here, the second half of it was written and many revisions were carried out during a sabbatical leave in Vancouver, Canada. I wish to express my appreciation to the Department of History of the University of British Columbia for hosting me and making available the resources I needed during the academic years 1986/87 and 1987/88. I would particularly like to thank Al Tully, Dick Unger, Peter Ward, Ed Hundert and Harvey Mitchell for their help and hospitality during this time.

In working on this book I have benefited from the generous and able help of a large number of people. I would like first to acknowledge the assistance of the archivists, librarians and personnel of the Archives Nationales, Bibliothèque Nationale, Minutier Central and the Archives de la Préfecture de Police of Paris where most of the research on which this study is based was carried out. Without their help and cooperation my work would have proceeded more slowly and painfully than it in fact did.

The task of coding the roughly seven thousand cases of

subscribers to the *Ami du Roi* for eleven variables was shared by Yossi Trilnik in the formal capacity of research assistant. In practice, Mr. Trilnik worked with me as a colleague. The curiosity, critical intelligence and capacity for detailed analysis that he brought to our shared task led me to believe that he was capable of carrying out his own projects of comparable scope. His consistent good humor and willingness to help further increased my appreciation of his collaboration.

Having embarked on a project to which computer analysis of quantitative data was essential, but lacking experience with statistical programs, I drew heavily on the abilities and good will of a series of consultants at the Haifa University computer facility. I would particularly like to thank my friend and colleague, Dr. Udi Makov of the Department of Statistics at Haifa University, for having taken the time to write programs and to solve problems that were beyond my limited abilities. The incisiveness and elegance of his solutions were as impressive as they were humbling.

Before the advent of word processing, the preparation of a typescript was arduous, but straightforward. With computers this task should in theory be easier, but in practice often is not. And where mainframes use different languages and are not always compatible with personal computers, the task becomes significantly more complicated. At different stages Heather Kernoff, Angela Greenson and Danielle Friedlander all worked on the manuscript. The final draft was produced efficiently and with inexhaustible good humor by Heather Kernoff. Her willingness to make yet another set of alterations and corrections went well beyond her formal obligations and calls for a special expression of thanks.

The final versions of the graphs and maps were drawn with care and accuracy by Aliza Stokelman of the Geography Laboratory at the University of Haifa. Yossi Trilnik drew the map on which Figure 5.1 is based.

The final form this study has taken owes much to the close and constructive criticisms of John Gilchrist and Peter Paret.

I wish to thank both scholars for the exceptional care they took in reading the manuscript and for the constructive nature of their comments. At the American Philosophical Society, Associate Editor Carole N. Le Faivre guided the manuscript through the process of publication in an admirably efficient and helpful manner. I am also indebted to the copy editor of this book, Tamara Stech, for catching many more errors than I thought it possible to have survived so many revisions and for making innumerable improvements in style.

I would also like to acknowledge the patience and help of friends and colleagues who contributed to the elaboration of this study. Menahem Kellner and Peter Sorek listened with apparent good cheer to more talk about journalism and the readers of newspapers during the French Revolution than nonspecialists should decently be subjected to. Robert Forster, Harvey Mitchell, Mary Lynn Stewart and Jack Censer read the entire manuscript and offered many valuable criticisms and suggestions. In return I wish to express my gratitude, and to accept responsibility for any errors of fact or interpretation that remain.

The editors of *French Historical Studies* have kindly permitted me to use in Chapter IV material that has already appeared in an article published in that journal in 1988. I wish to express my appreciation for their having done so.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support and toleration while I was researching and writing this book. My daughters, Rachel and Michelle, in their frequent and noisy trips into my study introduced an atmosphere of spontaneity, enthusiasm (unrelated to the eighteenth century) and disorder not inappropriate to the period I was writing about. My wife, Tammy, who wondered that my penchant for lost causes should extend to the conservative press in a time of revolution, offered a combination of moral and practical support and ironic toleration. For all of which I am most grateful.

Harvey Chisick

Haifa, September 1989

**ABBREVIATIONS**

AN	Archives Nationales
APP	Archives de la Préfecture de Police
AR	<i>Ami du Roi</i>
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale
FHS	<i>French Historical Studies</i>
MC	Minutier Central
P&P	<i>Past &amp; Present</i>
RH	<i>Revue Historique</i>
RHMC	<i>Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine</i>
VS	<i>Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century</i>