

Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination

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The Helvetians as Ancestors and Brutus as a Model: The Classical Past in the Early Modern Swiss Confederation

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The present volume in many respects continues in the research tradition of “classical republicanism” and “civic humanism,” which originated in the thought of Hannah Arendt and Hans Baron, and was popularised by John Pocock and Quentin Skinner in the 1960s and 1970s.¹ In the past two decades the original perspective, which focused on the Italian Renaissance and on the Anglo-American world in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has been considerably broadened.² During this process, it has become clear that an interest in the tradition of the classical past developed in many early modern locales—not least in the few existing republics—and that this interest took many different forms. It also was increasingly realised that it would be a mistake to see references to the Greek *poleis* or the Roman Republic as sufficient proof of an early modern political preference for a particular—republican—constitutional model. On the one hand, interest in the Roman Empire and heroes like Augustus and Hadrian was equally enduring and pervasive as the interest in the Roman Republic; and a fascination for the latter and its protagonists was notable among authors who were not likely to have had any republican sympathies. One example of this is Corneille and his tragedy *Sertorius*, another is constituted by the many references to Sparta during the French Enlightenment, which generally aimed at championing order rather than at establishing a republican constitution.³ On the other hand, in the search for the models

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1 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1979).

2 Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, eds., *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2002); Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, eds., *Freedom and the Construction of Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2013).

3 Chantal Grell, “Le modèle républicain antique à l’âge des Lumières,” *Méditerranées* 1 (1994): 53–64. See also Chapter 7 in this volume by Wessel Krul.

and means to legitimate their rather unusual political constitutions, the early modern republics drew not only on classical antiquity, but also on many alternatives. Indeed, they usually based their independence and lordship over their territory on customary law, which was based on privileges granted by emperors and popes. In the Middle Ages, this formed the legal foundation of the Italian communes, and remained so for the German imperial cities until 1806.

The approach taken in the Swiss Confederation inhabited the considerable space between these two models. The freedom and form of government of each canton were based on privileges granted by the Holy Roman Empire, which were carefully preserved and copied into books.⁴ When a new emperor was crowned, he usually acknowledged these privileges. Indeed, up to the sixteenth century the Swiss cantons regularly asked for this confirmation, and for several of them this remained important into the seventeenth century. Even by the middle of the eighteenth century the two-headed imperial eagle still graced the coins of a few minor Catholic cantons like Schwyz or Appenzell Innerrhoden. It was only after the Westphalian Peace that the Swiss slowly began to adopt the conventions of modern public and international law and its core concept of sovereignty, which gradually replaced traditional imperial law in the Confederation.⁵

It was during this process of transition from an imperial universe to the European state system, and from medieval burghers to early modern citizens, that the confederates began to see themselves as republicans and began to look at contemporary republics such as Venice or the Dutch Republic, as well as at the ancients, for inspiration. In the Catholic city of Lucerne, Johann Carl Balthasar, a member of the Small Council, illustrated this new ambition with a bold and impressive ceiling fresco in his house that was completed around 1690. Twelve panels in the painting depict heroes of the Roman Republic: Scipio, Coriolanus, Mucius Scaevola, Cato Uticensis, Lucretia and Marcus Curtius among them. In the main fresco (see figure 11.1), a personification of Rome sits with Romulus, Remus and their wolf in front of the Senatorial Palace on the Capitoline Hill. In her right hand Rome holds a book, perhaps containing legal or historiographical content, while her left hand rests on a statue of Nike, who spurns the monarchical symbols—a crown and an imperial banner—that lie

4 Regula Schmid, "Bundbücher. Formen, Funktionen und politische Symbolik," *Der Geschichtsfreund. Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins der Fünf Orte Luzern, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden ob und nid dem Wald und Zug* 153 (2000): 243–258.

5 For the gradual detachment from the Holy Roman Empire, see Thomas Maissen, *Die Geburt der Republic: Staatsverständnis und Repräsentation in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft* (Göttingen, 2006).



FIGURE 11.1 *Johann Carl Balthasar, Roma teaching Hollandia, Venetia and Helvetia, c. 1690, Lucerne.*

before her in the dust. To banish any doubt regarding the message, a banderole reads PRAECLARAM ROM[A] REIP[UBLICAE] LIBERTATEM DOCET: “Rome teaches the wonderful liberty of the republic.” And indeed, three curious personifications sit at Rome’s feet following her lessons: Venetia with the lion of St. Mark; Hollandia and her lion, holding the bundle of seven arrows that symbolise the United Provinces; and in the foreground, Helvetia embracing William Tell’s son, who displays the iconic apple on his head.⁶

As this image demonstrates, the classical past played an important role in the transition from imperial membership to republican sovereignty, a shift that also awakened a republican consciousness in the Confederation, albeit

6 Georg Carlen, *Manierismus und Frühbarock—Bilder für Kirche und Staat. Barockmalerei in der Zentralschweiz*, Innerschweizer Schatztruhe, ed. Jost Schumacher, vol. 1 (Lucerne, 2002) 46, fig. 35; Maissen, *Geburt*, 521, fig. 38.

only since the seventeenth century. This chapter presents two examples of this use of the ancients: first, the discovery of the Helvetians as the ancestors of the Swiss; and second, the different uses of Lucius Iunius Brutus as a champion of liberty.⁷

The Helvetians Thesis

The discovery of Helvetian ancestors did not develop from a mere fascination with antiquity, but was the result of a serious struggle over historical legitimacy. The Confederation was a defensive league of—since 1513—thirteen free or imperial cities and rural cantons within the Holy Roman Empire and was in this respect similar to other lasting alliances such as the Swabian League (1488–1534) and the Hansa. When the confederates fought against the German king, a member of the Habsburg dynasty, during the Old Zurich War (1440–1450) and especially during the Swabian War in 1499, notable humanists such as Sebastian Brant, Jakob Wimpfeling and Heinrich Bebel accused them of disloyalty to their legitimate lord.⁸ To delegitimise the Confederate claims these authors dismissed the original legends of the inhabitants of central Switzerland, especially the *Herkommen der Schwyzer und Oberhasler* (The Origins of the peoples from Schwyz and Oberhasli), a tale probably created by Heinrich von Gundelfingen in the later fifteenth century. This legend was similar to the model narrative used elsewhere by noble families, who tended to trace their origins back to the main characters of universal history to legitimise and further ennoble themselves. According to the *Herkommen*, Swedes, under the leadership of *Swytherus*, immigrated to and named the valley of Schwyz. Later in the fifth century, they aided the emperor and the pope in a battle against the

7 For an extended discussion of these issues in German, see Thomas Maissen, “Weshalb die Eidgenossen Helvetier wurden. Die humanistische Definition einer *natio*,” in *Diffusion des Humanismus. Studien zur nationalen Geschichtsschreibung europäischer Humanisten*, ed. Johannes Helmrich et al. (Göttingen, 2002), 210–249; and Thomas Maissen, “‘Mit katonischem Fanatisme den Despotisme daniedergehauen.’ Johann Jacob Bodmers Brutus-Trauerspiele und die republikanische Tradition,” in *Bodmer und Breitinger im Netzwerk der europäischen Aufklärung (Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert. Supplementa)*, ed. Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer (Göttingen, 2009), 350–364.

8 Cf. Claudius Sieber-Lehmann and Thomas Wilhelmi, eds., *In Helvetios—wider die Kuhschweizer. Fremd- und Feindbilder von den Schweizern in antieidgenössischen Texten aus der Zeit von 1386 bis 1532* (Bern, 1998); Peter Ochsenbein, “Jakob Wimpfeling’s literarische Fehde mit den Baslern und Eidgenossen,” *Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde* 79 (1979): 37–65.

pagan lord, Eugen. Gundelfingen's Legend has it that as a reward for this assistance, these so-called *Schwyz* received privileges—liberties (*freyheitten*)—and were freed from subordination to a ruler.⁹

In his *Soliloquium* of 1505, Jakob Wimpfeling (1450–1528), who was from the imperial region of Alsace, mocked this version of events, which was included in the rhyming *Kronigk* on the Swabian War, published in 1500 by Nikolaus Schradin (c. 1470–1531), a scribe from Lucerne, and the first work ever printed on an event in the Confederation's history.¹⁰ Wimpfeling called the pretended *exemtio Suitensium* (the privilege granting them an exemption from their overlords) a "fairy tale" (*fabulae aniles*) and "phantasm" (*phantasticorum somnia*) and thus the opposite of true *hystoria*. He not only asked for the name of the pope, who had allegedly privileged the Swiss, and for the bulla that had instituted this privilege, but also wondered where such a Lord Eugen was mentioned, what could have been his realm, and who could have been his historical enemies. In short, Wimpfeling summarily dismissed the legend as the anachronistic nonsense of an ignorant would-be poet (*historiarum omnium ignarus*).¹¹

Although the confederates won the Swabian War of 1499 and defeated their noble enemies, including, most notably, King Maximilian, they risked losing the propaganda war if they allowed themselves to be cast as ignorant braggarts. The legends of the Schwyz, and by extension of the Swiss origins, no longer held up against humanist critiques. It is in this context that the notion of Helvetia and the Helvetians became a subject of dispute among some members of the same group of scholars. Caesar had written quite favorably about

9 Albert Bruckner, ed., *Das Herkommen der Schwyz und Oberhasler*, Quellenwerk zur Entstehung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, Abt. III: Chroniken und Dichtungen, vol. 2 (Aarau, 1961); Guy P. Marchal, *Die frommen Schweden in Schwyz. Das "Herkommen der Schwyz und Oberhasler" als Quelle zum schwyzzerischen Selbstverständnis im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Basel, 1976).

10 Nikolaus Schradin, *Konigk [sic] diß kiergs [sic] gegen dem allerdurchlüchtigsten hernn Romschen konig als ertzherzogen zu Osterich und dem schwebyschen pund, etc.* (Sursee, 1500), fol. avj–bij.12.

11 For extracts see Sieber-Lehmann and Wilhelmi, *In Helvetios*, 162–217; cf. for polemical remarks against Schradin 164, 172, 192, 196, and Jakob Wimpfeling, *Briefwechsel*, Opera Selecta, eds. Otto Herding and Dieter Mertens, vol. 3 (Munich, 1990), 585. For the *Soliloquium* see Ochsenbein, "Wimpfelings literarische Fehde" and Guy P. Marchal, "Bellum justum contra iudicium belli." Zur Interpretation von Jakob Wimpfelings antieidgenössischer Streitschrift *Soliloquium pro pace Christianorum et pro Helvetiis ut resipiscant ...* (1505)," in *Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften. Festschrift Ulrich Im Hof*, ed. Nicolai Bernard and Quirinus Reichen (Bern, 1982), 114–137.

the *Helvetii* in the *Bellum gallicum*, but the word *Helvetia* was not recorded by him or any other author in antiquity. Enea Silvio Piccolomini, the propagator of humanism north of the Alps, was the first to use the term *Helvecia* in his *De Europa* of 1458; however, this was not a reference to Switzerland but to the Alsace, which according to Piccolomini was once called *Helvecia: in Alsacia cui quondam Helvecia nomen fuit*.¹²

Perhaps inspired by Piccolomini, the Zurich-born scholar Felix Fabri (c. 1441–1502), who later emigrated to Ulm, first used the term *Helvetia* in reference to the country (*terra*) that was confined by the Alps and the Rhine between Constance and Basel—the core of nowadays Switzerland’s German speaking area. This country had allegedly been conquered by the *Svitenses*, a modification of *Svesi*, which suggested a connection to the Swabians (*Svevi*). Hence, according to Fabri, *Helvetia* formed the superior part of the region of Swabia that stretched from Franconia to the Alps. Swabia was thus conceived as an integral part of the *provincia nostra*—namely, Germany—which Fabri referred to in his work as *Germania*, *Alamannia*, *Teutonia*, *Cimbria* and even *Francia*.¹³ He thus invented *Helvetia* as the southern half of Swabia, or rather of the Duchy of Swabia as it had existed in the High Middle Ages until the decline of the Staufer dynasty in 1250. Shortly after Fabri’s writing, the two halves of this historical duchy fell into kind of a civil war, the above-mentioned Swabian War of 1499, which, interestingly, the Swabians, and Germans thereafter, referred to as the Swiss War.

In Fabri’s work, the population of *Helvetia* is correctly referred to as *Suitenses* and not as *Helveti*, despite the fact that the appellation *Helvetus* appeared in some humanists’ contemporary correspondence (albeit rarely).¹⁴ This terminology was possibly inspired by the *editio princeps* of Caesar’s *Bellum gallicum*, which was printed in 1469 and was followed by numerous subsequent editions. After 1477 these editions also contained geographic registers, which allowed for references to contemporary locations. Although Caesar stated in his first book that the *civitas Helvetia* consisted of four districts (*pagi*), he named only two: the *pagum Tigurinum* and *Verbigenum*; in another passage he also mentioned the *Lepontii* as inhabitants of the Alps near the source from

12 Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Cosmographia in Asiae & Europae eleganti descriptione* (Paris, 1509), 124.

13 Felix Fabri (Schmid), *Descriptio Sveviae*, Quellen zur Schweizer Geschichte, ed. Hermann Escher, vol. 6 (Basel, 1884), 128–131; for Germany 109–110 and note 1, 120–124.

14 Wilhelm Oechsli, “Die Benennung der Alten Eidgenossenschaft und ihrer Glieder,” *Jahrbuch für Schweizer Geschichte* 42 (1917): 89–258, 156; Albrecht von Bonstetten, *Briefe und ausgewählte Schriften*, ed. Albert Büchi, Quellen zur Schweizer Geschichte, vol. 13 (Basel 1893), 88 (Ascanio Sforza, 4 April 1478?), 148 (Berchtold von Mainz, 12 July 1498).

where the Rhine springs. Around 1495 a Zurich-born mathematician and doctor, Conrad Türost (c. 1455–1509), drew the first technically detailed map of the Confederation, which by then consisted of ten cantons. Türost took up Caesar's partition and identified the district of Zürich (*pagus Tigurinus*), the Birggöuw of central Switzerland (*pagus Leopontinus*) and the Bernese Aargau, which he called the *pagum Helvetium*. Accordingly, Türost was probably the first to equate the former Helvetians and the modern confederates (*Helvetii sive Confoederati*; in the German version: *Ergöuwern und Eydgrossen*).¹⁵ Around the same time Peter von Neumagen, a chaplain who had received a humanistic education, read Caesar's sentence *omnis civitas elvetia in quattuor partes divisa est* in his copy of *De bello gallico* (an *incunabulum* from 1482). By adding in the margins *Hodie in octo*, Peter von Neumagen interpreted the eight cantons as districts; more importantly, he assumed a territorial continuity from the classical era through to his own time.¹⁶

This was a highly controversial claim around 1500, a time of deep conflict. Again, Wimpfeling, the Alsatian who continued to profess his deep and continued loyalty to the empire, opposed the confederates and declared that the term *Helvetii* should be understood as a reference to the Alsatians. Wimpfeling referred to Piccolomini's above-mentioned sentence and declared that the river *Alsa vel Helva*, today known as the Ill, flowed from the Upper-Alsace (the Sundgau or the *Helvecia*) down to Strasbourg. In order to underscore his position on the issue, Wimpfeling had written *Helvecii, hoc est Alsatici* in his letters since 1498. Accordingly, he referred to himself as *Helvetius*, and in 1502 in *De laudibus sanctae crucis*, he referred to Strasbourg as *urbs Helvetiorum*, the Helvetians' city. In his *Germania* of 1501, Wimpfeling did not only talk about the Alsatians as the *Helvetii*, but called the territory *Helvetiam, id est Alsatiam* as well. As for the *Suitenses*, they should be named (*E-*)*Leuci* or *Leponcii*, in agreement with Caesar. Wimpfeling professed a deep disappointment that in his own time the population of the Alpine backwoods had usurped the name *Helvetii* from the Alsatians.¹⁷

15 Conrad Türost, *De situ confoederatorum descriptio*, Quellen zur Schweizer Geschichte, vol. 6. (Basel, 1884), 1–2, 22; cf. Caesar, *De bello gallico*, 1, 12 (*pagus Tigurinus*); 1, 27 (*pagus Verbigenus*); 4, 10 (*Lepontii*).

16 Gaius Iulius Caesar, *Commentariorum de bello gallico*, ed. Hieronymus Bononius (Venice, 1482), Zentralbibliothek Zürich INK K 283, fol. 3; cf. Guy P. Marchal, "Höllenväter—Heldeväter—Helvetier. Die Helvetier und ihre Nachbarn als Identifikationsfiguren der heutigen Schweizer," *Theorien und Auswirkungen = Archäologie der Schweiz* 14 (1991), 5.

17 Wimpfeling, *Briefwechsel*, vol. 3, 392 (before the 28th of August 1502): "Doleo Helveciorum nomen tribui sylvestribus illis Alpes incolentibus, quos Suitenses vocant, cum revera sit proprium Alsaticorum vocabulum."

It was typical for the day that an Italian humanist finally made the decisive step in this German contest over the true successor to the region's antique ancestors. Between 1500 and 1504, the Milanese humanist Balcus composed a *Descriptio Helvetiae* that to a large extent followed the *Superioris Germaniae confoederationis descriptio* (1479), written by the Swiss humanist Albrecht von Bonstetten (1441/45–1503/05). However, by prepending his topography with a historic account of the *Helvetii* that was based on Caesar and Tacitus, Balcus made an original contribution to the genre. He summarised the wars of the Helvetians against the Romans and concluded that the name of the former had disappeared over time, and that their present descendants (*horum modo posterii*), the *Svitenses*, were named after Schwyz.¹⁸ Although he spoke of *posterii*—descendants—Balcus did not exactly specify the degree to which the contemporary Swiss and the Helvetians were connected. His decision to attach the history of the Helvetians to a monograph on the Confederation, however, was a crucial change in historiography, although it remained in manuscript.

When Erasmus's student, Heinrich Loriti of Glarus (1488–1563), who later adopted the humanist name Glarean, entered the scene, another text predicated on the same assumption became more accessible. Around 1510, in his epos *De pugna confoederatorum Helvetiae commissa in Naefels*, Glarean presented the warriors who had fought against Caesar in the battle of Bibracte as *maiores nostri* to his fellow citizens, thereby very clearly identifying the Helvetians as ancestors of the Swiss.¹⁹ In 1514 Glarean published a didactic poem *Descriptio de situ Helvetiae*, which presented the Confederation topographically and historiographically and was reprinted several times. He was the first to systematically exploit Caesar, Strabo, Ptolemy, Pliny the elder, Tacitus, Pomponius Mela and others to explain his view on Swiss geography.²⁰ Glarean even employed the neologism *Helvetia* in the title of the poem, a choice that the commentator Oswald Myconius still needed to explain to readers in 1519: *Helvetiae vocabulum apud veteres nusquam inveniri, sed Helvetios* ("unlike *Helvetii*, the word *Helvetia* cannot be found in classical texts").²¹ Glarean's aim was to trace out the

18 Balcus, *Descriptio Helvetiae*, Quellen zur Schweizer Geschichte, ed. August Bernoulli, vol. 6. (Basel, 1884), 73–105, 77: "Helvetiorum nomen sicuti caetera fere antiquitate desiit atque immutatum; est [et?] horum modo posterii Svitenses a Svitia, ipsorum oppido, nuncupantur."

19 Heinrich Glarean, "Carmen de pugna confoederatorum Helvetiae commissa in Naefels," *Jahrbuch des historischen Vereins des Kantons Glarus* (1949), 98, v. 614–625.

20 Arthur Dürst, "Glarean als Geograph und Mathematiker," in *Der Humanist Heinrich Loriti, genannt Glarean, 1488–1563. Beiträge zu seinem Leben und Werk* (Mollis, 1983), 119–144, 120.

21 Heinrich Glarean, *Descriptio de situ Helvetiae [...] cum commentarijs Osvaldi Myconij Lucernani* (Basel, 1519), 11 [= *Helvetiae descriptio cum IIII Helvetiorum pagis ac XIII urbium panegyrico & Osvaldi Molitoris Lucerini commentario* (Basel, 1554), 8].

spatial dimensions of his fatherland explicitly, and he implicitly contradicted Piccolomini and Wimpfeling by declaring that it was incorrect to speak of the Alsace as *Helvetia*. Instead, Glarean identified *Helvetia* with his homeland and defined its borders as the Jura, Lake Geneva, the Rhone and the Rhine, as had been the case in *De bello gallico*, which had separated the Roman from the barbarian territories. The authority of the ancients remained uncontested, and Glarean reassessed their geographical descriptions for his own time. Thus, he grouped each of the four districts (*pagi*) found in Caesar—without being able to locate them precisely—around rivers: Thur, Limmat, Reuss and Aare. This loosely corresponded to the structure of the Confederation, which was made up of thirteen cantons by then.²²

In spite of all the difficulties of identification, Glarean's attempt to harmonise the classical tradition with the modern Swiss Confederation promised to be more fruitful than the contested genealogies of *Swytherus* and his ilk. In Glarean's view, the Swiss Confederation was no longer understood as merely a *confederatio*, a relatively young and loose alliance formed to maintain public peace and order (*Landfriede*) within a part of the empire. Instead, the Confederation now had its own people, the *Helvetii*, and a particular territory, *Helvetia*, and both had already existed for over a thousand years. Thus, the Confederates made the same shift as the southwest German humanists around Wimpfeling had done in reference to the *Germani*: they were praised for being *indigenae* or aborigines, as substantiated by antique authorities such as Caesar, and thus replaced the medieval narratives about the origin of the nation in a people of immigrants.²³ Likewise, (mostly Italian) humanists like Bonifacio Simonetta, Paolo Emilio and Alberto Cattaneo had begun to replace the notion of itinerant *Franci* who had immigrated from Troy, with the notion of the aboriginal Gauls.²⁴ The *Germani* and *Franci* had populated the historiography

22 Heinrich Glarean, *Helvetiae Descriptio Panegyricum*, ed. and trans. Werner Näf (St. Gallen, 1948) v. 13–14, 24–25, 56–57, 94–97: “Quisve typus patriae, quae forma quibusque remensa limitibus [...] Idcirco Alsatia non recte a nonnullis Helvetia dicitur quando neque Rhodanum, neque Joram montem qui lacui Lemanno propinquus est, attingat [...] Utque illi scripsere, hodie quoque ita esse probemus.” For the rejection of the Alsatian version cf. the prose version of the *Descriptio* by Otto Fridolin Fritzsche, “Glareana,” *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 5 (1888): 77–91, 81. See also Caesar, *De bello gallico*, 1.2.

23 Herfried Münkler, Kathrin Meyer and Hans Grünberg, *Nationenbildung. Die Nationalisierung Europas im Diskurs humanistischer Intellektueller—Italien und Deutschland* (Berlin, 1998), 235–261; cf., for example, Heinrich Bebel's *Demonstratio Germanos esse indigenas* (ca. 1500), in *Opera sequentia*, Pforzheim 1509, fol. diij v–eij.

24 Cf. Thomas Maissen, *Von der Legende zum Modell. Das Interesse an Frankreichs Vergangenheit während der italienischen Renaissance*, Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 166 (Basel, 1994), 327–350; for the later French debates about the Gaulish ancestors

and ethnography continuously for centuries, however, whereas the notion of *Helvetii* only emerged around 1500. Still, they were most noble, because their origins as recorded in the classical authors reached even farther back than the Roman Empire and Christianisation. For this reason, the *Helvetii* were seen as uncontroversial in the ferocious confessional conflicts that followed between Protestant and Catholic Swiss. Indeed, they granted the Swiss Confederation some legitimacy: with antique roots it could no longer be deprecated as the result of a late medieval rebellion against the rulers of the House of Habsburg whom God had deployed. Thanks to the original Helvetian freedoms, the contested imperial privileges became secondary in the struggle for legitimation. This was a welcome development during a time of ongoing tension with the Habsburg emperor.

The ethnicisation of the Swiss and the territorialisation of the Swiss Confederation in an antique-Helvetian tradition formed the basis for new confederate legitimacy strategies in the sixteenth century. What this ethnicisation actually meant becomes clear from the contrast between Petermann Etterlin (c.1430/40–c.1509) and Aegidius Tschudi (1505–1572). In 1507, Etterlin published the first printed comprehensive history of the Swiss Confederation. In this *Kronica von der loblichen Eydtgnoschaft, jr harkommen und sust seltzam strittenn und geschichten*, he explained that the inhabitants of central Switzerland did not belong to the same nation, a declaration he substantiated with reports on the different and fabulous origins of the peoples of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden.²⁵ In contrast to Etterlin, Tschudi, the most important Swiss historian of his time, constructed the coeval Swiss as a single nation, at least in the humanists' sense of the word "nation."²⁶ In the middle of the sixteenth century, Tschudi was engaged in writing different works on Swiss history: the *Gallia Comata* (printed only in 1758) and the influential *Chronicon Helveticum*, which was not published until 1734/36, but was already influential in its manuscript

Nos ancêtres les Gaulois. Actes du colloque international de Clermont-Ferrand 23–25 juin 1980 (Clermont-Ferrand, 1982); Krzystof Pomian, "Francs et Gaulois," in *Les lieux de mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora, vol. 2 (Paris, 1997), 2245–2300.

25 Petermann Etterlin, *Kronica von der loblichen Eydtgnoschaft, jr harkommen und sust seltzam strittenn und geschichten*, Quellenwerk zur Entstehung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft Abt. III, 3, ed. Eugen Gruber (Aarau, 1965), 79: "das die landlüt in den Lendern nit von einer nacion gewesen"; on fol. 7 in the original from 1507; a facsimile has been published by Guy P. Marchal in the series *Helvetica Rara* (Zurich, 2011).

26 See Caspar Hirschi, *Wettkampf der Nationen. Konstruktionen einer deutschen Ehrgemeinschaft an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 2005) and Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism. An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2012).

version and later became a main source for Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*. While Tschudi conjured up powerful myths in his founding saga about Tell and the Confederates' oath on the Rütli, he heavily criticised the legends that had already been shattered by the foreign humanists. In the margins of his personal copy of the previously mentioned medieval *Herkommen der Schwyzer und Oberhasler*, Tschudi noted that this story could not possibly be a true account of the times, and questioned the very existence of the popes and emperors playing a role in the plot. In his own *Chronicon*, Tschudi replaced the medieval foundational legend with an even nobler ancestry: the people of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden were so ancient that they did not derive from the Swedes or from the East Frisians; they were, by common knowledge and according to Julius Caesar's reports, Helvetians.²⁷

The Urner, Schwyzer and Unterwaldner, who in Etterlin's *Kronika* were not yet one nation, in Tschudi's account had become a single people with classical roots. These roots lay left of the river Rhine, as did *Gallia* in former times, and thus the Helvetians were not a Germanic tribe but actually Gauls. This was the crux of Tschudi's argument in his *Alpisch Rhaetia*, which was printed in 1538 and heavily relied on classical ethnography. Curiously, he also suggested that the Helvetians had "doubtless spoken German," indicating that the Helvetians were German-speaking Gauls!²⁸ In order to make this claim Tschudi relied on Strabo, who had mentioned German-speaking Gauls. The ethnic difference was also linguistically manifest, at least according to Tschudi, because the age-old "*tütsch*" of the Helvetians (and later Swiss) differed from the Germanic "*deutsch*."²⁹ Thus, in a cultural sense, the Swiss belonged to Germany (*Tütschland*), which was composed of many other different—Germanic—peoples or "nations." The Helvetians had originally been free but, after a brave battle against Caesar, they had been integrated into the Roman Empire. During the Barbarian Migration, these German-speaking Gauls were then divided: the

27 Marchal, *Frommen Schweden*, 74–76: "nit wahrhafft [...] nach rechnung der zitt und der jahren, so die selben bēpst und keiſer gelept hand [...] die Urner, Switter und Underwaldner vil ein elter volck sind dann es hierinn meldet und komen nit weder von Swedien noch von Ostfriesen, dann si sind von rechten alt Helvetier, darvon dann Julius Cesar der Römer clarlichen schribt"; cf. Tschudi to Simler, 12 October, 1568 in Jakob Vogel, *Egidius Tschudi als Staatsmann und Geschichtsschreiber. Ein Beitrag zur Schweizergeschichte des 16ten Jahrhunderts* (Zurich, 1856), 254.

28 Aegidius Tschudi, *Grundtliche und warhafft beschreibung der uralten Alpischen Rhetie* (Basel, 1560) (orig. 1538), fol. P iijr/v: "on zweyfel tütscher spraach gewesen"; in Latin: Aegidius Tschudi, *De prisca et vera alpina Rhaetia* (Basel, 1538), 109.

29 Bernhard Stettler, *Tschudi-Vademecum. Annäherungen an Aegidius Tschudi und sein "Chronicon Helveticum"* (Basel, 2001), 22.

three districts of the Burgundian West had become Roman, while the unruly *Tigurini* (around Zurich and including Tschudi's home Glarus) in the East had formed an alliance with the Swabians, to become known as the "*Aleman*i."³⁰ Tschudi asserted that the name *Aleman*i derived from the fact that they were composed of all kinds of men ("*allerley Volcks*"). Hence the *Aleman*i, in contrast to the indigenous Helvetians, had not formed a single nation, but constituted an anti-Roman war alliance. To support this argument, Tschudi studied the antique divide along the Rhine and between the Gauls and Germanic peoples. Swabia had

always been between Lake Constance and the Rhine in *Vindelecia*—Germania—and close to the Black Forest, [...] while Zurich and the Thurgau lay in Gallia and did not belong to the same nation. They had been two different peoples—the Thurgovians in Gallia and the Swabians in Germania—and had joined together with numerous other Germanic peoples into the Alemannic federation. [...] the Zurichers and the Thurgovians are Alemanni, and so are the Swabians, but they are two nations and two territories and not all the same people. Similarly, Picards and Normans are French; but no Picard wants to be a Norman, and no Norman wants to be a Picard.³¹

In the Middle Ages, the historical center of the Duchy of Swabia had been located around Lake Constance and had encompassed the area south and north of the lake. Tschudi's recourse to antique ethnography meant that this area became a historical dividing line, although it actually had been such only since the Swabian War of 1499. Tschudi's new territorial concept of the Confederation was also a reaction to the expansion towards the West after Bern had conquered the French-speaking Vaud in 1536 and brought Calvinist Geneva

30 Tschudi to Simler on 27 July, 1568, in Vogel, *Tschudi*, 249; Aegidius Tschudi, *Beschreibung von dem Ursprung-Landmarchen-Alten Namen-und-Mutter-Sprachen Galliae Comatae, etc.*, ed. Johann Jakob Gallati, (Constance, 1758), 93.

31 Tschudi, *Galliae Comatae*, 93: "ennet dem Bodensee und Rhein in Vindelicia—Germania—und am Schwartzwald, ... hinwider Zürich und das gantz Turgäu in Gallia, seynd gar nicht einer Nation, doch seynd beyde Völcker—die Turgäuer in Gallia und die Schwaben in Germania, und etliche Germanische Völcker mehr im Allamanischen Pundt gewesen. ... die Zürcher und Turgäuer seynd Alamannier, die Schwaben auch, doch zweyerley Nationen und Landen und nicht einerley Volcks. Picardier und Normandier seynd Franzosen; es will aber kein Picard ein Normandier, noch ein Normander ein Picarder seyn." Cf. *Ibidem*, 239–252: "über die Irrtümer, so mit den Namen Alamanni, Suevi und Germani gebraucht worden."

closer. Although he was Catholic, Tschudi explicitly promoted closer ties between the Swiss Confederation and the two Protestant, but strategically important cities of Geneva and Constance; the latter was situated left of the Rhine, as were *Gallia* and *Helvetia*. However, Constance eventually lost its autonomy in the Schmalkaldic War, when the emperor Charles v conquered the imperial city in 1547 and turned it into a Catholic Austrian municipality.

Although Tschudi remained unsuccessful with his claim for Swiss support to Constance, his references to antiquity legitimised the anti-Habsburg and anti-Savoy foreign and territorial policies. He maintained that the Helvetians had lived as one people between Lake Constance and Lake Geneva, but that the separation between Burgundian and Alemanian Switzerland during the Migration Period had produced two different “nations,” and that the names *Helveti* and *Helvetia* had been lost. According to Tschudi, the western regions of Aargau, Üechtland, the Vaud and the Valais, as well as Savoy, all had joined Burgundia, while the Thurgau was Alemanian. Thus the Barbarian Migration had created two distinct nations in former *Helvetia*; but in Tschudi’s own time, and thanks to the grace of God, these regions were reunited and the name *Helvetia* was restored.³² This re-unification occurred when it became clear to the Swiss that the elective kings in the Empire no longer respected or protected their original—that is, Helvetian—freedoms. This transpired around 1300 when the confederates, gathered around William Tell, rose up against the Habsburg reeves. Through the *Rütlichschwur*, the oath on the Rütli allegedly made by the confederates in 1307, the land of the Helvetians, which the confederates now called Switzerland, was restored to its original order and liberty.³³ In light of this, the Bernese conquest of the western, formerly Savoyan, part of Switzerland in the year 1536 could be interpreted as the complete reunification of the Burgundian part of antique *Helvetia*, instead of as an illegitimate expansion.

It is symptomatic that Tschudi also provided the concept for an influential map that was printed in 1538 together with the *Alpisch Rhetia*. Today the map only exists as an etching from the second edition of 1560.³⁴ Its reception, however, started earlier. The publisher of the 1538 *Alpisch Rhetia* was the

32 *Ibidem*, 76: “[...] von deßhin ist Ergäu, Uchtland, die Waat, Wallis, Savoyen etc. allweg des Burgundischen Namens gewesen und das Turgäu Alemannisch—und dardurch zweyerley Nationen worden und von einander gar abgesöndert, diser Zeit aber von Gottes Gnaden alle vier Theil widerum zusammen gefügt und den Namen Helvetiae erneueret.”

33 Aegidius Tschudi, *Chronicon Helveticum*, Quellen zur Schweizer Geschichte N.F., I, 7/3, ed. Bernhard Stettler, vol. 3 (Basel, 1980), 224: “das land Helvetia (jetz Switzerland genant) wider in sin uralten stand und frijheit gebracht worden.”

34 Cf. Walter Blumer, *Bibliographie der Gesamtkarten der Schweiz von Anfang bis 1802*, Bibliographia Helvetica, ed. Schweizer Landesbibliothek Bern, vol. 2 (Bern, 1957), 33–45.

cosmographer Sebastian Münster (1480–1553), who in 1540 also printed his edition of Ptolemy in Basel. In the latter book, the Swiss Central Plateau for the first time appeared as *Helvetia* on a European overview map. It was located between France (*Franckreich*) and Germany (*Tütschlandt*), but in smaller letters; the font size of *Helvetia* corresponded with the circumjacent regions of *Sabaudia*, *Burgundia* and *Suevia*. Münster also produced a small but detailed map of the antique *Helvetia prima*. In doing so, he was explicitly referring to Tschudi and thereby to Caesar, whose authority standardised the borderline Rhine, Rhone and Jura. In one fell swoop he thus saw to it that those who dared call Alsatia *Helvetia* would henceforth be regarded as entirely misguided.³⁵ In Münster's own *Cosmographie*, which was first published in 1544, the map *Eidgnoschafft, Elsass und Brisgow* also contained a symptomatic text describing "*Helvetia*, that is Switzerland or the Confederation" with a detailed historical commentary.³⁶

Tschudi's suggestions, only partially printed in the sixteenth century, were, in addition to Münster's book, also made accessible in the *Gemeiner loblicher Eydtgnoschafft Stetten, Landen und Voelckeren Chronick* (1547/48), a bulky folio publication by the Züricher Johannes Stumpf (1500–c.1578). Stumpf accomplished the ethnicisation and the territorialisation of the Swiss leagues by conflating the original Helvetians and the present-day Swiss, and by referring to them as the same alpine people (*Alpenvolck*); that is, the natural inhabitants of an everlasting and free *Helvetia*, confined by clear geographical boundaries, the existence of which reduced all internal differences to matters of secondary importance.³⁷ Stumpf illustrated this point of view on the maps that accompanied his folios and referred back to Tschudi's map of 1538 (see figure 11.2). Probably for the first time in the history of cartography, dotted borderlines were used to separate the territory of the Confederation (whose borders correspond almost exactly with its contemporary dimensions, with the Valais and Grisons enclosed) from the surrounding countries.

Thus the "national" level of this union was made strikingly clear: in Stumpf's comprehensive map of Europe (see figure 11.3), *HELVETIA* is written in

35 Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Geographia*, ed. Sebastian Münster (Basel, 1540): "Errant ergo qui Alsatiam audent dicere Helvetiam."

36 Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographie* (Basel, 1544), ccv–ccclxvii: "Helvetia, das ist Schweitzerland oder Eidtgnosschafft."

37 For Stumpf, *Gemeiner loblicher Eydtgnoschafft Stetten, Landen und Voelckeren Chronick* (Zürich 1547/48), with the corresponding references, see Thomas Maissen, "Ein helvetisch 'Alpenvolck.' Die Formulierung eines gesamteidgenössischen Selbstverständnisses in der Schweizer Historiographie des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Historiographie in Polen und der Schweiz*, ed. Krzysztof Baczkowski and Christian Simon (Krakow, 1994), 69–86, esp. 79–83.



FIGURE 11.2 Excerpt of Johannes Stumpf, Landtafeln, Zurich, 1548.

Antiqua as a Latin word, like AVERNIA (Auvergne) or APULIA for example; these names correspond to the German names, in Gothic print, of Bavaria (*Beieren*), Swabia (*Schwaben*), Burgundy (*Burgund*) or Savoy (*Saffoyen*). In contrast, the countries *Italia*, *Germania*, *Gallia* and *Francia*, all labeled in Latin, form a different dimension and are presented in large typeface.³⁸ Stumpf, who originated from the German city of Bruchsal, conceived Switzerland as *Helvetia* and placed it on the same level as a German stem duchy that had evolved over time into an imperial state: next to Bavarians and Swabians, there were now also Helvetians, and they all belonged to one all-encompassing *Germania*. At a time when Holstein (1474), Württemberg (1495), Prussia (1525) and other new duchies were constituting themselves politically, the *natio Helvetica*, though it was not ruled by a duke, was historiographically catapulted into that same category. In contrast to the historic stem Duchy of Swabia, *Helvetia* was a purely humanist invention that gave a classical-sounding name to a recently formed defensive alliance made up of citizens and farmers, thereby propelling it to a position of its own on the map of the imperial territories.

38 Johannes Stumpf, *Landtafeln*, ed. Arthur Dürst (Zurich, 1975); for the dotted border, see Uta Lindgren, “Die Grenzen des Alten Reiches auf gedruckten Karten,” in *Bilder des Reiches*, Irseer Schriften, vol. 4, ed. Rainer A. Müller (Sigmaringen, 1997), 34.



FIGURE 11.3 *Excerpt of Johannes Stumpf, Landtaflen, Zurich, 1548.*

This invention of classical roots for a new nation was the achievement of humanists and of humanistically-educated politicians. They distinguished themselves in their own country because they knew how to intellectually oppose what Tschudi had called *aemuli Helvetiorum*, the foreign foes of the Helvetians. Basing themselves on the canonised classical texts that had become available in print, these authors defined their *natio* as clearly and unambiguously as was possible within the confines of a scholarly dialogue. This meant divesting it of any medieval myths of origin. Virtuosi in handling written texts and the recent medium of print, and acting as an intellectual “regulatory force,” the united humanists of all the countries competed externally against one another to gain an internal monopoly on inventing and transmitting narratives that gave a historical sense to their political communities.³⁹ The losers in this process were the clergy and the nobility, which continued by and large to hold on to oral traditions and to the universal institutions represented by the emperor, the pope and the universities. These medieval institutions were confronted with a changing national public sphere which the humanists knew how to exploit to their own advantage. As recognised experts in history and ethnography, and crowned with poets’ laurels, they began to replace the clergy as the educational elite and to declare themselves the new intellectual aristocracy. This new cultural hierarchy was indispensable for the development of a solidly patriotic, integrative self-assurance, a core element of early modern statehood.⁴⁰

Lucius Iunius Brutus as a Freedom Fighter

The greater accessibility of printed works by classical authors not only made possible the development of new views on notions such as people and territory, but also provided numerous *exempla* of heroic personalities. Although not entirely unknown in the Middle Ages, the genre *De viris illustribus* and—more rarely—*De mulieribus illustribus* had experienced a significant boom since the age of Petrarch and Boccaccio. Classical authors such as Cicero, Livy, Plutarch, Suetonius and Valerius Maximus furnished rich material that was often used for discussions of current issues. A well-known example of this was the confrontation between Caesar and Marcus Iunius Brutus: Dante saw the latter as a traitor, whereas Leonardo Bruni praised him as a noble tyrannicide. Lorenzino dei Medici similarly saw himself as a new Brutus when he murdered his relative Alessandro dei Medici, the Duke of Tuscany, in 1537. To justify his deed,

39 Münkler et al., *Nationenbildung*, 25–28.

40 For this whole process, see Hirschi, *Wettkampf*.

Lorenzino employed the same symbols as the murderer of Caesar had done: the dagger and pileus. Michelangelo's bust of Brutus also referred to this event and further justified the action taken.⁴¹

During the Renaissance, Brutus became also a popular figure in the Confederation, although here it was Marcus's alleged ancestor—Lucius Iunius Brutus—who attracted most attention. According to Livy, he cast out the dynasty of the Tarquinii and founded the republic in 509 BC. The theme of Brutus is encountered, probably for the first time in Switzerland, at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the anonymous play *Urner Spiel von Wilhelm Tell* (1512?), which, despite its title, was most likely composed in Zurich. The introductory allegory mentions the debasement of Lucretia's dignity and—in an explicit parallel to the legendary struggle for Swiss liberty—the subsequent indignation of the Romans who banished the king and all his men and became free.⁴² In his already previously mentioned poem *Descriptio de situ Helvetiae*, Glarean in 1515 wrote that history had granted the Confederation its own Brutus in William Tell.⁴³ Likewise, in an adaption of the Tell play in 1545, Jacob Ruf (1505–1558) spoke of Brutus as the first Roman “burgomaster.” As we shall see, this amalgamation of Zurich and the Roman Republic was not unique.⁴⁴

In 1533 Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), who succeeded Ulrich Zwingli as Antistes of Zurich, published a *Nice theatre play about the story of the noble Roman Lucretia [...] and furthermore about the steadfastness of Iunij Bruti*.⁴⁵ The

41 Manfredi Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival. Parricide and Tyrannicide during the Renaissance* (Carbondale, 1991), 65–94; also see Alois Riklin, *Giannotti, Michelangelo und der Tyrannenmord* (Bern, 1996).

42 “Ein hüpsch Spyl gehalten zu Ury in der Eydgnoschafft von dem frommen und ersten Eydgnossen Wilhem Thell genannt,” in *Schweizerische Schauspiele des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Jakob Bächtold, vol. 3 (Zurich, 1893), 13–56, 16: “Veriagtend den Küng und all sin man, Deß sy in fryheit thatend kommen.” A more recent edition is *Das Urner Tellenspiel*, Quellenwerk zur Entstehung der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft, ed. Max Wehrli, vol. 3, 2 (Aarau, 1952).

43 Glarean, *Helvetiae Descriptio*, 88–90, v. 390–402.

44 Jacob Ruf, *Ein hüpsch und lustig Spyl [...] von dem frommen und ersten Eydgnossen Wilhelm Thellen Jrem Landtmann* (Zurich, 1545); on Ruf see Hildegard Keller, ed., *Jakob Ruf: Leben, Werk und Studien* (Zurich, 2006).

45 Heinrich Bullinger, “Ein schön Spil von der geschicht der Edlen Römerin Lucretiae, und wie der Tyrannisch küng Tarquinius Superbus von Rhom vertriben, und sunderlich von der standhafftigkeit Junij Bruti, des Ersten Consuls zu Rhom (Basel, 2. März 1533),” in *Schweizerische Schauspiele des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts*, ed. Jakob Bächtold, vol. 1 (Zurich, 1890), 105–169; Käthe Hirth, “Heinrich Bullingers Spiel von ‘Lucretia und Brutus’ 1533” (Ph.D. diss., University of Marburg, 1919); Rémy Charbon, “Lucretia Tigurina. Heinrich Bullingers Spiel von Lucretia und Brutus (1526),” in *Antiquitates Renatae. Deutsche und französische Beiträge zur Wirkung der Antike in der europäischen Literatur*, ed. Verena

story is not so much about Lucretia, as about the political question “how one could keep the new liberty against all kinds of tyranny and oligarchy (this is against such a force, where only a few are masters).” The answer to this question could be found in the orders of Brutus (“*uß der ordnung Bruti*”).⁴⁶ The play is deliberately set in a Swiss town, where Bullinger introduces the audience to a poor farmer. Such figures did not usually appear in the tragic genre nor—as the Reformer explicitly mentions—in the classical sources. In this case, the poor farmer is used in order to illustrate the fact that he is helpless, since the wealthy Plutus can alter the law under the despotic rule of Tarquinius Superbus. After the banishment of Tarquinius, the great tartar (“*große wueterich*”), the farmers’ rights and law and order in general are restored. It is at this moment in the play that the nobility laments the passing of its life of luxury and idleness. Brutus’ sons, who are described as arrogant and dressed in foreign clothing, are among these noblemen. They are, in another reference to Bullinger’s time, represented as mercenary entrepreneurs. The two brothers, who receive their money from the emigrated king, dislike the new leaders whom they do not consider as free, because they must work all the time. Bullinger’s Brutus juxtaposes his own concept of liberty, which has its roots in law and impartial jurisdiction, with this aristocratic understanding of liberty. Institutionally, the supervision by the pious councils, the participation of the citizens in major public issues and the alternating administration by the two consuls or burgomasters (“*zween Consules, oder Burgermeyster*”)—another similarity between Zurich and Rome—guarantee that rulers are sometimes also subjects, and thus have a strong incentive to act with a certain degree of modesty and restraint.⁴⁷

The central concept for Bullinger in this context was the contrast between law and order on the one hand, and the self-interest and despotism of the nobility on the other. By condemning his own children, without any regard for friendship, family or even for their direct pleas, Brutus becomes the incarnation of a virtuous ruler who does not raise himself above the law and who uses his sword in the service of God’s will. The message of the drama was clearly aimed at Zurich’s masters (“*unsren Herren*”). Indeed, the epilogue states that they must lead the people that God had confided to them with just advice.⁴⁸ In

Ehrich-Haefeli et al. (Würzburg, 1998), 35–47; Emidio Campi, “Brutus Tigurinus. Aspekte des politischen und theologischen Denkens des jungen Bullinger,” in *Geschichten und ihre Geschichte*, ed. Therese Fuhrer (Basel, 2004), 145–174; Anja Buckenberger, “Heinrich Bullingers Rezeption des Lucretia-Stoffes,” *Zwingliana* 33 (2006): 77–91.

46 Bullinger, “Schön Spil,” 107: “wie man die erobert fryheit behalten mög wider alle Tyranny und Oligarchi (das ist wider ein sölchen gwallt, do wenig lüdt herren und meyster sind).”

47 *Ibidem*, 133.

48 *Ibidem*, 147, 167.

other words, the authorities had to abide by the same eternal, God-given rules as everyone else. For Bullinger, as long as political rule was in accordance with God's deontology, its form did not really matter. Since correctives for individual misbehaviour were generally absent in a monarchical government, however, justice was more likely to be found in a republic. Bullinger thus agreed with Zwingli's conviction that Brutus had replaced tyranny with *aequitas futurae democratiae*, or in Leo Jud's translation "the uniform, common and fair rule of the people" (*glychmäßige, gemeyne unnd billiche Regiment des volcks*).⁴⁹

The predominantly and even exclusively political interpretation of the Brutus theme evinced by the Swiss authors of the sixteenth century was far from universal or self-evident and was quite different from, for example, Hans Sachs's contemporaneous *Tragedia von der Lucretia* (1527). This play remained rooted in the ribald tradition of the Shrovetide plays and focused on the erotic motives of the characters highlighted in the literary tradition. The political line of interpretation remained a Swiss peculiarity, more especially a Zurich one. Although it was far from an established tradition, Roman and local constitutional history came to be seen as parallel phenomena.

This development was further fostered in the second half of the seventeenth century, when Zurich and the other Swiss cantons came into contact with a new form of antimonarchical republicanism which had evolved in the Netherlands, and which had adapted the modern doctrine of sovereignty to suit republican needs during the wars first with Spain and then with France.⁵⁰ The confederates gradually adopted these models after the Peace of Westphalia granted them the privilege of exemption that was soon interpreted as sovereignty. It was in this context that Zurich built a new town hall, which was inaugurated on June 22, 1698. A sophisticated programme of figures on the façade and in the interior of the town hall expressed the city's political identity. Among other republican symbols, this decorative programme included window pediments on the ground floor showing twenty-three busts of republican heroes from ancient Greece and Rome and from the eight original cantons of the Confederation. To this day, on the left front-hand corner of the building (see figure 11.4), Lucius Iunius Brutus continues to remind the magistrates that they must place their republican virtue before all other concerns: *LIBERTAS SANGUINE PRAESTAT*—"liberty precedes one's own blood," meaning the blood of Brutus' sons. Like most of the other busts, from Themistocles to the Scipios, and from William Tell to Arnold von Winkelried, Brutus reminds his viewers that the

49 Huldreich Zwingli, "Sermonis de providentia dei anamnema (1530)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 6.3, *Corpus Reformatorum*, vol. 93.3 (Zurich, 1983), 217.

50 Cf. for this process Maissen, *Geburt der Republic*, 345–365 (the Netherlands) and 383–400 (Zurich's town hall).



FIGURE 11.4

*Bust of Lucius Iunius Brutus,
Zurich town hall, 1698.*

salvation of the fatherland depends on the readiness of each individual to make personal sacrifices. *Libertas* took up the idea of sovereignty and interpreted it as the independence of the petty state of Zurich from foreign powers. It was this lesson that spread across Switzerland after the Peace of Westphalia.

The special significance of the elder Brutus for Zurich was also manifest in the parallels drawn between him and Zurich's founding figure, the fourteenth-century mayor Rudolf Brun. In 1679, an *Allusio inter Brutum et Brunium* was submitted to the first society of the early Enlightenment, the *Collegium Insulanum*. It praised the older Brutus and criticised the younger Brutus for murdering Caesar.⁵¹ Such comparisons between Rome and Zurich, neither of which was described as subordinated to any higher authority, would become frequent during the eighteenth century. Sebastian Walch's series of portraits of Zurich's mayors (1756), for example, presented Rudolf Brun as the founder of the city's new constitution ("neues Stadt-Regiment"). This constitution had to be defended against both external and internal enemies (that is, against both the Habsburgs and the nobility), just as Brutus had once protected the Roman

51 Heinrich Werdmüller, *Vom ersten Rider Rathspersodo und damaligen Regierung der Stadt Zürich und dem ersten geschwornen Brief. Allusio inter Brutum et Brunium*, 16. Juli 1679, Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Ms P 6224, 93–96.

Republic simultaneously against the Etruscan ruler Porsenna and the banished tyrant Tarquinius. Mayor Brun was judged to have been courageous and wise in his defence of the city, and to have thus lived up to and even partially surpassed the example provided by Brutus.⁵²

The most relevant Zurich adaptation of the subject was the tragedy *Junius Brutus*, published in 1761 by the council scrivener Salomon Hirzel (1727–1818). He dedicated the play to his teacher Johann Jacob Bodmer (1698–1783), who was the leading proponent of the Swiss Enlightenment. In the same year that he wrote his play, Hirzel became a founding member of the famous *Helvetische Gesellschaft*, the enlightened Helvetian Society. His tragedy began with some thoughts on the transformation of the state and argued that Brutus's actions had laid the foundation for a severe republican virtue and thereby for the prosperity and the magnitude of Rome.⁵³ The strength of Hirzel's tragedy lay in the neo-classical attempt to grant every character a modicum of high-mindedness and thereby to attribute credible and comprehensible motives to all characters—including Brutus's antagonists. For Tiberius, one of Brutus's ill-bred sons, the motive is love for Princess Tarquinia; for the other son, Titus, it is longing for the glory of Rome, which he believes can only be realised in a monarchy and not under plebeian rule.

Titus feels that these sentiments are in conflict with his duty towards his father and his fatherland. Duty is the central theme in Hirzel's drama, and it compels Brutus to sacrifice everything for the welfare of his country, even his sons.⁵⁴ Against Titus's ideal of a heroic monarchy, Hirzel's Brutus sketches the alternative of a free, virtuous and mild regime of brethren who divide political power among one another, and where love of duty and of country live in every heart. Titus's contempt for the plebs is unjustified: "if they [the common citizens] have learned to rule, through willing obedience and love of duty, then what hinders us from confiding sacred authority to them, and where is the harm, if they, fraught with the will to do good, fulfil even the most important duties?"⁵⁵

52 Sebastian Walch, *Portraits aller Herren Burger-Meistern, der vortrefflichen Republique, Stadt und Vor-Orths Zürich* (Kempten, 1756): "Und so hat dieser Burger-Meister Brunn noch manche treffliche Proben seiner Klugheit und Tapfferkeit gegeben, und sich also dem ersten roemischen Burger-Meister Brutus vollkommen aehnlich gemacht, wo Er Ihn nicht gar in vielen Stuecken uebertroffen hat."

53 Salomon Hirzel, *Junius Brutus. Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen* (Zurich, 1761), 5: "zu der strengen Republicanischen Tugend, und also zu dem Wohlstand und der Grösse Roms, den ersten Grund legte."

54 *Ibidem*, 127, 135, 138.

55 *Ibidem*, 111: "Wenn sie vom willigen Gehorsam und der Liebe zur Pflicht herrschen gelernt; was hindert uns denn ihnen die geheiligte Gewalt anzuvertrauen, und wo ist das Unglück, wenn sie, zu jedem Guten gestärkt, auch die wichtigsten Pflichten erfüllen?"

In some respects, Hirzel's version closely followed Voltaire's drama *Brutus* (1730), for instance in the characterisation of Titus as torn between *sentiment* and *devoir*. But the liberal ethos proclaimed by Voltaire's *Brutus* did not sit well with a republican constitution. It was mainly meant and understood as a defence against unbridled, absolutist monarchy, or despotism in Montesquieu's sense; thus, Voltaire's *Brutus* calls out: "*Rome eut ses souverains, mais jamais absolu*."⁵⁶ In contrast to Voltaire's plea for a limited monarchy, Hirzel insisted on the necessity of rigorous virtue in a true republic. Like his teacher Bodmer, he criticised the luxury and venality of Zurich's elite, which he felt undermined the moral foundations of the republic.

Johann Jacob Bodmer not only praised Hirzel's play, but also presented a drama of his own on the same topic in 1762: *Tarquinius Superbus*.⁵⁷ Although the play as a whole was rather dull it was nevertheless saturated with a fiery, egalitarian republicanism: "Man is born free, liberty flows from his nature and is his eldest right."⁵⁸ The tyrant, or rather the despot, opposes this principle, because he claims full control over the property of his subjects. "Leave him your silver as inheritance, your sons as henchmen and your daughters as concubines"—such are the king's demands in *Tarquinius Superbus*.⁵⁹ Bodmer made a traditional distinction (which had recently been refreshed by Montesquieu) between on the one hand the free peoples and civilisations of the West, and on the other hand the barbarians. For the latter, despotism might well be appropriate, but the Romans, Zurich's citizens and, it may be presumed, other Europeans were bound together as a "sociable people" that lived in a situation of law and order, and were unfit for arbitrary rule. Their authorities, and indeed all members of their states, were bound by law, order, conventions and institutional checks.⁶⁰

As he grew older, Bodmer developed an almost obsessive interest in *Brutus*. Although he also occasionally alluded to the elder Brutus, in most of his dramas he focused on the younger.⁶¹ In an unsuccessful attempt to imitate

56 Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), "Brutus," in *Les oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 5 (Oxford, 1998), 192 (1, 2).

57 See Bodmer's letter to Sulzer, 20 December, 1759, quoted in Jakob Baechtold, *Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur in der Schweiz* (Frauenfeld, 1892), 195.

58 Johann Jacob Bodmer, "Tarquinius Superbus," in *Politische Schauspiele* (Zurich, 1768), 147: "Der Mensch ist frey gebohren, die Freyheit fliesst aus seiner Natur, und sie ist sein ältestes Recht."

59 *Ibidem*, 128: "gebet ihm euer Silber zum Erbe, eure Söhne zu Häschern, eure Tochter zu Beyschläferinnen."

60 *Ibidem*, 130: "gesellschaftliches Volk."

61 Cf. Johann Jacob Bodmer, "Marcus Brutus," in *Politische Schauspiele* (Zurich, 1768), 95: "Marcus Brutus verdient eine Bildsaeule, neben des Junius Brutus. Junius Brutus ist auferstanden."

Shakespeare and Voltaire, the Züricher wrote a number of tragedies: *Julius Caesar* (1763), *Marcus Brutus* (1768), and *Brutus und Cassius Tod* (The Death of Brutus and Cassius, 1782), his final opus. In these works Caesar is depicted as a one-dimensional tyrant who despises his fellow citizens and seeks to profit from Rome's crisis in order to become an absolute ruler. In one instance, he even exclaims: "Cursed be the first Brutus, who under the appearance of an august virtue, chased away his rightful and legitimate king, a sacred person, and sowed the first seeds of an inhumane hate against king, crown, diadem and tiara in the people's minds."⁶² As for Marcus Brutus, like his ancestor Lucius Brutus he seeks to belie the "maxim of tyranny," which holds "that on the peak of republican liberty, it is impossible to tame the passions and even more impossible to preserve mutual consent and peace."⁶³ Liberty, according to Bodmer's younger Brutus, can only prevail where customs, virtue, temperance, love of law and order exist together with the Greek love of beauty and goodness. This works much better than laws in protecting states from "lusts, splendour, inequality and any pest."⁶⁴ Indeed, the existence of such a morality is seen as the very condition of political liberty. In the absence of an overpowering monarchical authority, it is only republican and civil virtue that guarantees political order and prevents anarchy.⁶⁵ Thanks to the cultivation of his virtue the insightful citizen is able to voluntarily submit himself to the law. Thus for Bodmer, man-made law is the foundation of the state, and Brutus had been its first and dutiful bailee.

Bodmer's cult of Brutus was not just a literary or academic gimmick. In 1762, one year after the publication of Hirzel's tragedy, the *Grebelhandel* occurred. In this famous affair, Bodmer's teachings mobilised his students Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) and Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825) to act against Felix Grebel, Zurich's corrupt bailiff in the small city of Grüningen. Their manifesto began with a complaint against nepotism that was inspired by Plutarch and

62 *Ibidem*, 22: "Verflucht sey der erste Brutus, der unter dem Schein einer erhabenen Tugend seinen rechtmässigen, erkannten Koenig, eine unverletzliche Person, verjagt, und den ersten Samen zu unmenschlichen Hasse, gegen Koenig, Kron, Diadem und Thiare, in die Gemuether geworfen hat!"

63 *Ibidem*, 9: "Daß es unmoeiglich sey auf dem Gipfel der republicanischen Freyheit die Leidenschaften zu bezaehmen, und dann noch unmoeiglicher die Einigkeit und Ruhe zu erhalten."

64 *Ibidem*, 30.

65 Cf. Johann Jacob Bodmer, "Polytimet," *Politische Schauspiele* (Zurich, 1768), 328–329, where Aristodem answers Polemon's question whether republics and their citizens will be able to cope with their freedom: "O sie müssen zuvor noch um ethliche Grade tugendhafter werden. Ich fürchte, sie haben noch zu wenig von der politischen Tugend, welche die Neigung ist, sein eigenes Bestes in dem allgemeinen Besten zu suchen."

Voltaire: "You, Brutus! And you sleep! Oh, if only you lived!"⁶⁶ The pamphlet called for a "Iunius Brutus among the Christians," who would hand over the "ill-bred sons" to justice and even destroy the godless. The fact that both the elder and the younger Brutus had sacrificed their own blood for the sake of the fatherland and for republican liberty particularly impressed the members of Bodmer's circle. Many rebellious youths saw themselves in a similar situation when confronting the authorities. Even more astonishing was the radical way in which these rebels, who belonged to Zurich's leading families, fought against members of their own circle. They called for tyrannicide, for murdering the "outrageous" Grebel, "whose death I long for."⁶⁷ Similar justifications could be found in the weekly society journal *Der Erinnerer* (The Reminder), which in 1766 printed a *Totengespräch zwischen Brutus und Cäsar*, an imagined conversation between the dead Caesar and Brutus, composed by Antoine Roustan, a follower of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁶⁸ Bodmer and Lavater may even have inspired Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein's painting of Lucius Iunius Brutus judging his sons (1784), which in turn possibly influenced the famous 1789 painting of Brutus by Jacques Louis David.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The afterlife of the two Bruti in Zurich is enlightening in many ways. In the first half of the sixteenth century, Bullinger maintained that God-given rights, perverted by the arbitrary rule of noblemen, should once again receive recognition in a static, hierarchical, corporative society. Ready for sacrifice, the

66 [Johann Heinrich Füssli and Johann Caspar Lavater], *Der ungerechte Landvogt, oder Klagen eines Patrioten, Der von Jo. Caspar Lavater glücklich besiegte Landvogt Felix Grebel* (Arnheim, 1769), 9: "Du, Brutus! und du schläfst? ach, wenn du lebstest!" Cf. William Shakespeare, "Julius Caesar," in *The Complete Works*, ed. W.J. Graig (London, 1957), 826 (II, 1, 48): "Brutus, thou sleep'st: awake!"; Voltaire, "La Mort de César," in *Les oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 8 (Oxford, 1988), 195 (II, 2): "Tu dors, Brutus, et Rome est dans les fers!" For the context, see Rolf Graber, *Bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit und spätabolutistischer Staat. Sozietätenbewegung und Konfliktkonjunktur in Zürich 1746–1780* (Zurich, 1993).

67 [Füssli and Lavater], *Der ungerechte Landvogt*, 15–16: "Vertilgung dieses Bösewichts."

68 Bettina Volz-Tobler, *Rebellion im Namen der Tugend. "Der Erinnerer"—eine Moralische Wochenschrift, Zürich 1765–1767* (Zurich, 1997), 247–250.

69 Hubertus Günther, "'Brutus! und du schläfst? ach, wenn du lebstest!' Das Zürcher Brutus-Bild des Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 31. 7./1. 8. (1993), 49–50; Hubertus Günther, "Das Urteil des Brutus. Vom Paradigma der Gerechtigkeit zur aufrührenden Tragödie," in *Geschichten*, ed. Fuhrer, 89–144, 130–131. Many thanks to Sebastian Bott for the reference to Tischbein.

late seventeenth-century Brutus on the façade of the town hall guaranteed the sovereignty and thus the liberty of the Zurich Republic against outside forces, but did not highlight the internal constitution of the city or the citizens' participation. In the eighteenth century Hirzel, on the other hand, was very preoccupied with Zurich's internal order. In contrast to Bullinger, he assumed the existence of a dynamic and secular society, in which each individual needed to develop a strong sense of duty in order to cope with the continuously changing *imponderabilia* of life. This sense of duty arose, according to Hirzel, as the result of an individual and social process of learning that was fundamentally open to everyone: in other words, whoever emancipated himself to civic virtue through intellectual and moral education could hope for political emancipation. For Bodmer, by contrast, it was not virtue, but the abstract, secular law inspired by Rousseau's *volonté générale* that was the supreme ruler, and all citizens had to subordinate themselves to it equally. With its emphasis on natural equality, liberty and popular sovereignty, Bodmer's radical position, with its nostalgia for an original community of customs among equals, was strongly pre-modern and even anti-modern, if not anti-liberal.

In other Swiss cantons and among allies like Geneva one finds many other references to the classical past in the Enlightenment. In Bern, for example, Johann Rudolf Tschiffeli in 1766 boasted that his city was "clever as Rome, staunch as her citizens and adopted the same measures under the same circumstances."⁷⁰ But Tschiffeli was actually wrong, for the references to the classical past eventually helped the Swiss to become something that neither Rome nor the Confederation ever had been: a democratic nation-state. To take up Georg Jellinek's well-known definition, a *Staatsvolk*, a *Staatsgebiet* and a *Staatsgewalt* are the indispensable prerequisites of the modern state. Although the Confederation was an alliance of cities and rural communities, humanists like Fabri and Glarean invented *Helvetia* as a territory; out of city dwellers and countrymen, historians like Stumpf and Tschudi constructed a Swiss people linked to its imagined ancestors, the Helvetians, through the eternal qualities of an *Alpenvolck*; and the radical Enlightenment of Hirzel and Bodmer turned Bullinger's static concept of collective freedom into the idea of the free-born and emancipated citizen and member of a sovereign people able to exercise sovereign authority over itself.

70 Johann Rudolf Tschiffeli, "Grundsätze der Stadt Bern in ihren ersten Jahrhunderten, zu einiger Erläuterung der Geschichte dieses Freystaates," in *Patriotische Reden, gehalten vor dem hochlöblichen aussern Stande der Stadt Bern* (Bern, 1773), 62–63: "Klug wie Rom, standhaft wie seine Bürger, ergreiffet Bern, bey gleichen Umständen, die gleichen Massregeln"; quoted in Daniel Tröhler, "Kommerz und Patriotismus. Pestalozzis Weg vom politischen zum christlichen Republikanismus (1764–1780)," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 50 (2000): 325–352, 333.