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Unrespectable Radicals?

Popular Politics in the Age of Reform

Edited by

Michael T. Davis

and

Paul A. Pickering

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Popular Politics in the Age of Reform

Edited by

MICHAEL T. DAVIS
University of Tasmania, Australia

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Jonathan Lamb is the Mellon Professor of the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. He has published on aspects of the South Seas in the eighteenth-century, and is currently working on a book entitled *The Things Things Say*. He is also collaborating with Iain McCalman on a series of volumes dealing with the re-enactment of history.

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David Worrall is Professor of English at Nottingham Trent University. He is the author of *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship and Romantic Period Subcultures, 1773–1832* (2006), *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787–1832: The Road to the Stage* (2007) and *Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment* (2007). His study *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance, 1790–1820* (1992) was largely inspired by Iain McCalman's work.

Foreword

Ian Donaldson
The Australian National University, Australia

Iain McCalman is a phenomenon. His influence has been felt not just within the academic discipline of history, but across the whole spectrum of the humanities, for which he has been – in and beyond Australia – a notable champion. For a decade from the mid-1990s Iain McCalman served as Director of the Australian National University's Humanities Research Centre, which flourished under his sagacious leadership. He helped to create, and also for a time directed, the ANU's Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, the first Australian Research Council Special Research Centre in the humanities to be established in Australia. He inspired the establishment of a further cluster of humanities groups at ANU – the National Europe Centre, the Freilich Foundation for Toleration Studies, the Consortium for Research and Information Outreach – and helped to guide and animate research activity across the entire network. In 2003 he received a coveted ARC Federation Fellowship, the first such award to go to any scholar in the humanities in Australia. He continued to serve as President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, helping to transform that once-genteel academic club into a more dynamic social institution. He was a driving force behind the establishment of the advocacy body, the Council for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (CHASS). He became the first representative from the humanities to be appointed to the Australian Prime Minister's Science, Engineering, and Innovation Council, where he has been a robust spokesman for his sector.

For most academics, such a life of demanding public duty would spell the end of their own scholarly work, or at least slow them down to a normal walking pace. For Iain McCalman, however, the opposite has been true. His writing has somehow flourished despite – one's almost tempted to say, because of – the commitments he has been prepared to make across the academic world, and to a wider public. It's as if his multiple points of contact have enabled him quickly to spot new openings for research, to know at once which opportunities are worth seizing and which are not; and to perfect at the same time a characteristic voice, that speaks with equal clarity and directness to specialists and non-specialists alike.

Research in the humanities is often said to be a solitary business, as in some obvious senses it is. It can involve many lonely hours of rummaging in the archives, of brooding over conflicting evidence, of hesitating at the keyboard, of tinkering with footnotes. Yet for Iain McCalman this has never been the whole activity. He has managed also to make his work a collaborative affair, bringing

colleagues and students to join him in beating more broadly across a whole field of research (radical underworlds, historical re-enactment) where he has already made his own distinctive pathway. The Humanities Research Centre – a place where conferences regularly happen, where visitors constantly arrive from every part of the world, where conversations are always erupting, where new research projects are forever being planned and plotted – has always been a perfect home for him, and he in turn has been its ideal leader. The present volume aims to continue some of the many conversations that Iain has helped to initiate; to say (and to pay) something in return.

Preface

It was a turning point in my career when I first met Iain McCalman some seventeen years ago. At the time, I was an Honours student whose burning interest in British popular politics had been sparked by my supervisor, Malcolm Thomis, and fanned by the pages of Iain's *Radical Underworld*. I recall the excitement of having the opportunity to meet the author of the book that was (and still is) one of the finest exposés of British radicalism, but I had little expectation that the undercooked thoughts of an Honours student would be greeted with any credibility by someone as distinguished as Iain McCalman. Indeed, I remember a degree of nervousness as the moment to shake hands with Iain for the first time approached. Yet, it was not long before he made me feel completely at ease, showing sincere interest in my raw ideas and providing me with insightful and inspiring comments. I walked away from that meeting knowing I had not only met a great mind but also a great man. Since that day, I have followed Iain's work with intellectual devotion. The pages of all his writings are illuminated by a brightness rarely matched by a historian. With a deft touch, Iain brings to life the subject of his work. His meticulous research backed by an almost poetic way with words makes him one of the finest craftsmen of the History discipline.

Iain's skill and achievements were duly rewarded in 2003 when he received a Federation Fellowship from Australia's flagship funding agency, the Australian Research Council. I first conceived this festschrift as an acknowledgement of this tremendous success, and while honouring this and Iain's many other scholarly achievements remains warranted, there is also another reason I wanted to do this collection. Over the years, Iain has displayed to me the most admirable of personal attributes. Despite an incredibly busy schedule that came with his rising professional success, Iain always found time and was always there for support. He was willing to pen a reference when I needed one; he showed me uncommon generosity at a very lean time in my career; and he was just a phone call away when I needed advice. His words are always filled with wisdom, common sense and comfort. Iain is an incredible historian and an even more remarkable human being. He is, in every sense, a gentleman and a scholar.

Mike Davis

When Michael Davis first suggested to me that we should put together a festschrift for Iain McCalman I welcomed the opportunity. I first met Iain about twenty-five years ago. At that time he was completing his PhD at Monash University and I was doing an Honours year at LaTrobe University, campuses twenty kilometres apart in northern Melbourne. Over a long lunch he listened eagerly to my undeveloped ideas, was tremendously encouraging, and made numerous helpful suggestions that I dined on long after the meal had ended. A week or so later a letter arrived in the post (remember when we got letters?) that contained a dozen tightly handwritten pages, a transcription from his own notes of snippets that might interest me. They did. I remember thinking that here was someone special.

The encounter that comes to Iain's mind took place a couple of years later. I have often since heard him tell the story of how I bowled him out during an annual 'friendly' cricket match between the LaTrobe and Melbourne History departments (invariably won by the former). By this stage he was a postdoctoral fellow at Melbourne and I had begun work on a PhD. Iain exaggerates my ability with the ball in order to cover up his shortcomings with the bat. It was the only ball I bowled on the stumps all day – I think I nearly removed his head with the previous delivery – and he was an awful batsman.

In 2001, I joined the staff of the Humanities Research Centre at the ANU where Iain was the Director. Working closely with him since then I have witnessed many, often unsolicited, acts of collegiality, generosity and friendship to staff, students and the countless visiting fellows from Australia and around the world that have given the HRC its enduring international reputation as an oasis for the humanities. At seminars Iain can be easily identified as the person with his head down furiously taking notes, no matter what the subject, a testament to his capacious thirst for intellectual endeavour. In conversation I have seen him gently take up a pedestrian idea, turn it slightly in his hands, and by so doing transform it into something fresh and exciting; and then return it to the student, colleague or visitor as a gift to use as they see fit. Iain McCalman is someone special. The present volume is about saying thank you on behalf of all of us who have received such a gift.

Paul Pickering

Introduction

History as Innovation: The Work of Iain McCalman

Paul A. Pickering
The Australian National University, Australia

'We try to reproduce the reality', laments the tutor in W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, 'but the harder we try, the more we find the pictures that make up the stock-in-trade of the spectacle of history forcing themselves upon us'. Throughout his distinguished career Iain McCalman has proven to be an exception to the tutor's rule. The hallmark of Iain's work as an historian has been innovation. He has continually pushed the boundaries of subject and form: from the ground-breaking, fine-grained research in *Radical Underworld* that revealed London's shadowy network of revolutionaries and pornographers at the end of the long eighteenth century to the magisterial scope and inspirational scholarly leadership that characterised the *Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*. Amongst his extensive writings McCalman's most recent book, *The Seven Ordeals of Count Cagliostro*, is perhaps most revealing of the trajectory of his scholarship and his thinking, and of his aspirations as an historian.

Translated into fifteen languages, *Cagliostro* is, first and foremost, a ripping yarn, a tale of magic, intrigue, deception, lust and revolution that transports the reader from the seedy alleys of Sicily to the grandeur of the Court of Catherine; from the Salons of pre-revolutionary Paris, to the clubs of Georgian England; from Masonic temples to alchemical laboratories. The ability to range so widely and with such surety, with egregious error beckoning at every change of context, is an uncommon and enviable quality. The book provides eloquent testimony of the importance of biography as a lens through which to explore an endlessly complex world. It also underscores the importance of narrative, a tool often neglected by academic historians.

Those who worked alongside Iain during the writing of *Cagliostro* know that it was animated by a sense of mission to demonstrate that a rigorous academic treatment can also appeal to the general public. Iain is a passionate advocate of connecting, or re-connecting, academic history to the mass audience for history that exists within the broader community. *Cagliostro* represents his attempt to meet this challenge. Written as a trade book it is unencumbered by the extended footnotes and historiographical engagement that is *de rigueur* in a volume produced by an academic press. It does not, however, compromise on academic standards or stray, as some commentators have suggested, across the line into

historical fiction. The book is a model for historians within and beyond the academy to emulate.

Unrespectable Radicals is a collection of essays written by scholars who share Iain's aspiration for an academy engaged with a broader audience. The authors have, variously, worked with or been taught by Iain McCalman over the past twenty five years; all have been inspired by him. The essays map the vast terrain of Iain's interests in the long eighteenth century and beyond; from literature to politics; from Britain and Ireland to Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific. The range itself is a tribute to the breadth of his scholarship. Within the extraordinary diversity, however, two interconnected themes are worthy of emphasis by way of introduction.

The first is performance. From his pioneering examination of the rich political counter-theatre of the London Spenceans to his developing interest in historical re-enactment Iain McCalman has been at the forefront of historians with an interest in theatricality. Several authors in this volume explore the importance of theatricality and performance. In a splendid study of the theatricality of the pre-eminent barrister of late-Georgian Britain, Thomas Erskine, Gillian Russell argues that his performance in adultery trials was not extrinsic to politics in the 1790s. On the contrary, attention to the Crim. Con. trials highlights the fragility of the boundaries between public and private, masculine and feminine, familial and social, rulers and ruled, providing a proscenium arch for the 1790s. The connection between theatricality, sympathy and moral sentiment is also explored by Jonathan Lamb. Through a wonderfully evocative examination of 'horrid sympathy', culminating in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, Lamb argues for a direct relationship between sedition and sympathy. It is no accident, Lamb argues, that Godwin became interested in the psychological dimensions of oppression following the sensational Treason Trials of 1793–4. Similarly, by exploring the depiction of Islam on the romantic stage, David Worrall finds a direct link between theatre and radical politics. We should not be surprised, he suggests, that the Royal Coburg Theatre presented plays that directly contradicted East India Company propaganda to a multicultural and radicalised London audience. By recording the depiction of Hyder Ali and Tippoo Saib as victims of tyranny and oppression Worrall allows us to glimpse a nascent radical response to British rule in India and the potential of the stage to act as a site of social protest. In his essay on Robert Merry, the English Della Cruscan poet, Jon Mee argues convincingly that the performance of a play can give a political charge that is not apparent from the script. Tina Parolin, Anna Clark and I also contribute to the discussion of the theatricality of the court room and the hustings.

The second common theme is marginality. Giuseppe Balsamo, the self-styled Count Cagliostro, is the latest in a long line of unrespectable individuals to attract the attention of Iain McCalman. In his essay, Michael Davis explores the use of symbolic and discursive codes to gain control of public language and redefine political deviance in the 1790s. Borrowing a wonderfully apposite phrase from Norbert Elias, Davis draws attention to the ways in which the London Corresponding Society was subjected to a shifting 'threshold of repugnance' designed to stigmatise and disempower, and to how the Society responded by

seeking to locate itself within a radius of civility. Some of those who resided in the dark terrain of the margins are not surprising. Taken together, the essays in this volume contain an extended list of marginal characters: from scribblers and literary hacks from John Mee's Robert Merry to James Epstein's Pierre McCallum; from Mike Durey's oath-takers and Ruan O'Donnell's rebels to my traitors. Merry's brief efflorescence as a political commentator, as Mee shows, owed much to the febrile atmosphere of the early 1790s, and having squandered his inheritance and forsaken the literary celebrity he achieved under the pseudonym Della Crusca, was forced to write against insolvency. In his illuminating chapter, James Epstein shows that McCallum was a man on the make, a self-styled literato, a déclassé intellectual, whose search for political truth and profit was often uncomfortably coterminous. William Griffin and James Cartledge, the anti-heroes of my chapter, lived by the trade of agitation and confounded their marginality by betrayal. As beneficiaries of what would nowadays be called a witness protection program, Griffin and Cartledge saved themselves at the expense of the community that had previously sustained them. Thanks to a convenient form of colonial amnesia, they became pillars of the wider British world.

The marginal characters in Mike Durey's essay, a major revision of the history of Ireland in the 1790s, are the majority of the population, hapless people trapped between the irresistible and irreconcilable forces of colonisation and resistance. Other Irish people featured in this volume would have embraced the description 'unrespectable' from the mouths of the British with alacrity. In another major revision to historical orthodoxy, Ruan O'Donnell examines the military preparations and thinking of the United Irishmen, men who had willingly placed themselves beyond the pale, a liminal world suffused with the hopes of liberation.

Three essays explore the marginal place occupied by women in public life between 1770 and 1830. By exposing the role of Lady Caroline Howe as an intermediary between the British government and Benjamin Franklin (himself rapidly being pushed across a 'threshold of repugnance' into rebellion), Jack Fruchtman provides an important glimpse of the way a woman could participate in eighteenth century politics. In a stimulating essay, Anna Clark also explores the role of women in electoral politics. By looking at a number of elections in the period 1792–1818 Clark finds that women from all parts of the social scale played a range of roles in support of all points of the political spectrum – from exercising influence in the traditional deferential fashion to marching in parades. What they had in common was that their contribution was almost invariably undertaken at considerable risk to reputation: in the heat of an electoral contest the accusation of moral degeneracy came easily to the lips of Tory, Whig and radical alike. In her chapter, Christina Parolin also finds that radical women were frequently condemned as prostitutes simply because they chose to participate in public life. Parolin skilfully liberates Susannah Wright not only from the barbs of the scurrilous ultra-Tory press but also from the shadow of her radical mentor, Richard Carlile. What emerges from this important essay is a vivid portrait of a woman with agency who defiantly stood beyond the threshold of repugnance and wore the epithet of unrespectable as a badge of honour.

During her court appearances Wright asserted her rights under the British constitution. In this respect she spoke the same language as Benjamin Franklin. In a superb chapter, Jack Fruchtman shows how Franklin tenaciously clung to notions of British justice and lingered in Britain in search of a compromise to preserve what he called ‘that fine and noble China vase the British empire’ long after the die of revolution had been cast. This discourse resonated across the empire. As James Epstein shows in his wonderful chapter, McCallum’s *Travels in Trinidad* rehearses the familiar theme of a British subject confronting unlawful power. The question of how far the shield of the British constitution extended (and to whom) was a vexed one; in the broader British world the notion of marginality was a geographical reality as well as a function of class, race, gender and politics. Epstein’s chapter ends with the tantalizing notion that McCallum contributed to a trans-Atlantic radical underworld, a concept that could be extended to other parts of the British world and beyond. This is, we hope, one of many signposts to further research that are contained in these essays.

When this collection was first mooted, Iain was teased by one of the editors that it might send the wrong signal. After all, it was pointed out, festschriften are usually published at the end of a career. But this is not a festschrift in the conventional sense in that it does not mark an ending. On the contrary it serendipitously marks a new beginning: Iain’s relocation from the Humanities Research Centre (HRC) at The Australian National University (ANU) to the University of Sydney. As Ian Donaldson has described in his preface, throughout his time at the ANU Iain has carried a heavy administrative burden. Those of us who work alongside him know how much this has eaten into his time for research and writing. The HRC’s gain has been the academy’s loss. Iain is moving to Sydney as a Research Professor with the promise of freedom to give full reign to his imagination. We wait with interest to see where it takes him that we, and Austerlitz’s tutor, might follow his lead.

Chapter 1

Unrespectable and Reluctant Radical: Benjamin Franklin as a Revolutionary

Jack Fruchtman Jr
Towson University, USA

By 1776 when he signed the Declaration of Independence as a member of the Second Continental Congress, Benjamin Franklin was unquestionably dedicated to the American cause; indeed, several months earlier, in the fall of the previous year, he was one of a small group who helped Thomas Paine edit *Common Sense*, so well-known for its sparkling prose setting forth the most powerful reasons why America must separate from Britain.[1] But was Franklin always so committed? Just when, and under what circumstances, did he become convinced that America must separate from what he was still calling, in July of 1776, 'that fine and noble China Vase the British Empire'?[2] Hardly a 'radical' like Paine or the patriots who styled themselves the Sons of Liberty, Franklin was one of the most highly respected, methodical, and moderately conservative figures in the American eighteenth century. His 'China Vase' remark contains a nostalgic and whimsical desire that even at that very late date, he longed for the time when all Americans delighted in their status as Englishmen with the rights accorded to them as citizens of a great and free empire.

Throughout his long diplomatic career in London as the American agent for several colonies, he thought he could pour soothing diplomatic oil to calm the increasingly roiling waters of distrust and antagonism between Britain and America. The metaphor of the effects of oil on water was certainly not lost on him: as a child with little formal schooling, Franklin read everything he could get his hands on, including a work by Pliny the Elder, the ancient Roman naturalist, who recounted the curious phenomenon about how waves in a storm were stilled when oil was poured on them.[3] Years later, in 1757, on his way to England on his first diplomatic mission as Pennsylvania agent, Franklin observed that among several ships sailing in the ocean, the wakes of only two were very smooth, while all the others were choppy and ruffled. When the captain told him that the ships' cooks spilled their greasy water through the scuppers, Franklin remembered his earlier reading of Pliny. Five years later, again at sea, this time returning to Philadelphia, he observed an oil lamp at night as the water on the bottom was agitated from the swaying of the ship, but the oil on top had a 'wonderful Quietness'.[4] An old sea captain on board told him that he had once seen how Bermuda fishermen poured water on choppy seas to calm them in order to see the fish below the surface. He

also told Franklin that he had once seen Portuguese fishermen pour oil on rough seas when they were coming into port so they could safely pass the breakers.

Franklin later heard other examples of how this phenomenon worked, for example, how divers in the Mediterranean filled their mouths with oil to let out a drop or two when the surface was so rough that it obliterated the light. Once the drops reached the top, the water was calmed, and the light came through. Franklin was so impressed with these stories that he later investigated several scientific works. Because he never found anything about the phenomenon, he performed his own experiments. In one of his first attempts, he was amazed to see that 'not more than a Tea Spoonful' of oil poured on a Clapham pond whose waters were quite rough from the wind 'produced an instant Calm'. It spread so 'amazingly,' it made a quarter 'of the Pond, perhaps half an Acre, as smooth as a Looking Glass'.[5] Years later, he entertained his friends by taking them to a nearby pond where the surface water was churned up by high winds. Hobbling to the edge of the pond with his cane to help him walk, he pronounced some unintelligible incantation, most likely nothing more than gibberish; he then lifted the cane and waved it over the agitated water, which suddenly became calm. Unbeknownst to those in awe at the sight, Franklin had hollowed out his cane and inserted a mere bit of oil, which he released with a small lever at his fingertips.[6]

The calming effect of oil on rough seas offers us an appropriate metaphor for Franklin's way of conducting diplomacy, especially in those crucial last years before the final break between America and Britain. It took him a long time to conclude that the differences between the colonies and Whitehall were irreconcilable and for him to adjust to a new role as reluctant radical. He was a Briton, and proud of the nation's imperial role in the world. He would have tried to do anything to reduce the growing tension between America and England. He concluded only at the very end, after he arrived back in Philadelphia in 1775, that reconciliation was hopeless and war inevitable.

It may seem odd to include an essay on Franklin in light of the themes of this present volume, honouring one of the most admired historians of English radicalism. And yet, Franklin well fits the definitions of both 'unrespectable' and 'radical' when we thoroughly investigate his progression from conservative diplomat to revolutionary sympathiser. The critical question I wish to raise is just when this conversion was complete. Recent historians and commentators mistakenly link the moment to his January 1774 appearance and consequent mistreatment before the Privy Council and the few months that followed. This conclusion is not quite accurate. H. W. Brands writes in his 2000 biography that the 'two hours in the Cockpit erased what thought remained of retiring to England,' because 'indeed, his views hardened with the passing months.' [7] Walter Isaacson, in his 2003 biography, offers the title to his chapter on the affair as 'Rebel: London, 1771–1775'.[8] Gordon Wood says in 2004 that 'by publicly humiliating Franklin in this brutal manner, the British government may have vented some of its rising hostility toward its rebellious colonists, but at the same time it virtually destroyed the affections of the only colonist in England who might have brought reconciliation.'[9] At the end of 2005, Robert Middlekauff writes that 'what finally pushed him [Franklin] over to the American side was his rough handling in the

cockpit by Alexander Wedderburn and the open hostility that came in the months afterward.'[10] Only Carl Van Doren, in his unsurpassed, classic 1938 biography, fully understood Franklin in this respect. Van Doren writes that 'it does not appear that the attack by Wedderburn brought about the dramatic change in Franklin's sentiments that some of his biographers have insisted on. Franklin had only lost another degree of hope in the wisdom of the North ministry. . . . In another month he decided to stay longer, and he spent more than a year in further mediation.'[11]

Now, while I do agree with these commentators that his Privy Council appearance marked the beginning of his transformation, I also argue that his final conversion was not finally complete until eighteen months later after he returned to America in May of 1775. Only then did he realise how radical his countrymen had become; indeed, they had advanced far more towards independence than he had ever imagined. As historians Gary B. Nash and Ray Raphael have recently pointed out in detail, heightened radical activity took place in every colony well before the battles of Lexington and Concord: armed conflict with British authorities and discussions of independence permeated the actions and thinking of artisans, craftsmen, farmers, and even free blacks and Indians in the early 1770s. This is what Franklin discovered on his return from London: by that time, Sons-of-Liberty type associations had sprung up in several major towns and cities; colonists had organised sustained protests on import duties to which they had not explicitly agreed and demanded that Parliament accede to their demand for their 'rights as Englishmen'; the boycott of British goods (or non-importation, as it was called) was well underway throughout the colonies (Franklin supported the boycott as leverage for reconciliation only); and there had been actual combat between British troops and American militiamen with the best known taking place at Lexington and Concord in April 1775.[12] The situation deteriorated so badly by 1774 that radical American patriots throughout the colonies seized several towns from their British overlords and ran them as 'government by committee'.[13] Although Franklin's thinking gradually caught up to those advocating separation, even as a spokesman for independence, he did not do so until sometime around August of 1775, and even then he retained a twinge of longing for a return to the status quo as they had stood in 1763 at the end of Britain's successful Seven Years War against France.

First, we must look afresh at the Privy Council business where the evolution of his thinking toward radicalism and unrespectability slowly began. As the colonial agent for Massachusetts, Franklin was summoned to the Cockpit in January 1774, to explain why the Massachusetts assembly demanded the recall of the current governor and his lieutenant governor, respectively Thomas Hutchinson and Andrew Oliver (who coincidentally was Hutchinson's brother-in-law). Initially billed as a Privy Council inquiry into a legitimate question, the matter quickly developed into lengthy rant by the ambitious Scot, the solicitor general Alexander Wedderburn, whose haranguing behaviour was more conducive to a prosecutor than a hearing officer. Wedderburn, 'one of the most formidable lawyer-orators in Britain,' had made himself such a nuisance to the North ministry that he succeeded in forcing Lord North to appoint him solicitor general.[14]

Shortly after he arrived at the Cockpit (so-called because it had once been the site of Henry VIII's palace reserved for cockfighting), Franklin was shocked to listen to the severe charges that Wedderburn laid against him personally. Franklin expected to be questioned only about Hutchinson and Oliver, because the colonial assembly had demanded their removal after it had received copies of several letters, originally written years earlier, from 1767 through 1769, by Hutchinson, then chief justice and lieutenant governor, and Oliver, at the time secretary of the colony. These letters, which had only recently resurfaced in Boston newspapers, revealed how sternly the two officials intended to deal with the cantankerous Bostonians after they registered so many protests against the Townshend Duties, the first of several 'intolerable' acts the British imposed on the colonies. Massachusetts, a hotbed of anti-British sentiment, led the resistance to the new import duties on glass, paints, paper, lead, and tea. The protests culminated in the unfortunate incident known as the Boston Massacre in 1770, leading Parliament to repeal most of the duties, except one on tea. This one remaining tax stimulated Bostonians to engage in several anti-British acts, ultimately throwing hundreds of crates of tea into the sea in an episode known as the Boston Tea Party in December of 1773, just one month before Franklin's Cockpit appearance.

Just how the letters between two individuals actually became public was a question that was deeply on the minds of the members of the Privy Council, and certainly foremost on Wedderburn's as well. As it turned out, the letters had been purloined, and while no one knows for sure exactly who stole them, one thing is certain: we know that Franklin himself had obtained them either at the end of 1772 or early 1773, and he himself had sent them to Boston to warn those who were steadfastly opposed to British parliamentary policy towards the colonies. In his covering dispatch to the assembly accompanying the letters, Franklin urged the members to avoid 'all tumults and violent measures' by dealing only with the King and his Council, not Parliament, when asserting their rights, because Parliament could not be trusted anymore, given its actions in imposing mean-spirited, unconstitutional taxes on the Americans (this turned out to be a consistent position he would take over the next eighteenth months).[15] He also asked that the letters be kept out of the press because their publication would compromise his position not only as a Massachusetts agent, but also his efforts to reconcile the two sides.[16]

Franklin never revealed how he obtained these letters (he told his son, William, that they simply 'fell into my hands'), and the question has remained open to this day.[17] David Morgan claims John Temple, a former customs agent and a close friend of the recipient Thomas Whately, took the letters, whereas Bernard Bailyn says the culprit was Thomas Pownall, a former Massachusetts governor now residing in London.[18] Nor did Franklin initially admit that he had obtained them and forwarded them to Massachusetts Speaker Thomas Cushing who read them before the House, which then later had them printed in the Boston papers. Franklin reluctantly revealed that he had sent them only after William Whately, the brother of now-deceased recipient, accused Temple of stealing them, and the two actually fought a duel over the issue (both survived, though Temple was wounded). To avoid having them engage in a second duel, Franklin came clean. He first appeared before the Privy Council on 11 January, only to find that because Hutchinson had

sent legal counsel to represent him, Franklin thought he too perhaps should have representation. His request for a continuance was granted, and the Council reconvened on 29 January.

Accompanying Franklin to the Cockpit was William Bollan, the agent for the Massachusetts upper house, who later recalled his horror at Wedderburn's verbal assault on Franklin. 'I had the grievous mortification to hear Mr. Wedderburn, wandring from the proper question before their Lordships, pour forth such a torrent of virulent abuse on Dr Franklin as never before took place within the compass of my knowledge of judicial proceedings, his reproaches appearing to me incompatible with the principles of law, truth, justice, propriety, and humanity.' A reporter for the *Public Advertiser* wrote that Wedderburn let loose 'all the *licensed* Scurrility of the Bar.' So irritated was the reporter that he wished that 'the American *Prometheus* could have call'd Fire from Heaven to blast the unmanner'd Railer.'[19]

Not only was the gallery crowded, because everyone knew that fireworks were due to explode, but it seemed that the entire Privy Council was also in attendance. One of the spectators, Edmund Burke, noted that 'the Council was the fullest in any of our Memory. Thirty-five attended.'[20] These included Earl Gower (its president), the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Marquis of Queensbury, Lord North, and, as it turned out, Franklin's only friend and supporter, the Baron Le Despencer (the libertine Francis Dashwood).[21] Le Despencer, however, could provide no assistance to his friend as Wedderburn unloaded both barrels from his venomous arsenal of insulting abuse.[22]

Joseph Priestley and the young Jeremy Bentham also witnessed the spectacle.[23] When Priestley breakfasted with Franklin the next morning, he noted that Franklin commented that if he had an opportunity to resend the purloined letters to Massachusetts, he would. 'He had never before been so sensible of the power of a good conscience; for that if he had not considered the thing for which he had been so much insulted, as one of the best actions of his life, and what he should certainly do again in the same circumstances.'[24] A few weeks later, Burke termed Wedderburn's performance 'a furious Philippic against poor Dr. Franklin' that went beyond all 'bounds and measures.'[25] Only Bentham seemed somewhat impressed with the solicitor-general's performance, later recalling that 'Franklin stood as the silent and necessarily defenceless butt of his eloquent invectives.' Like the reporter from the *Advertiser*, Bentham played on Franklin's scientific skills and interests when he noted that Franklin was like 'a rock,' as he 'was astonished at the brilliancy of [Wedderburn's] lightning words' as much as he was 'by the thunder that accompanied it.'[26]

Also in the gallery was Edward Bancroft, who, like Franklin, was an accomplished physician, scientist, novelist, and pamphleteer, who became within just a few years Franklin's personal secretary in Passy during the Revolutionary War, while at the same time serving as a spy for the British ministry. Though American born, Bancroft lived in London where he met Franklin who successfully sponsored him in 1773 for membership to the Royal Society of London. A year later, he took his medical degree at Aberdeen. In January of 1775, he hustled himself into the meeting of the Privy Council where he watched as Wedderburn

harshly berated Franklin. He noted that ‘the Doctor was dressed in a full dressed suit of Manchester velvet, and stood *conspicuously erect*, without the smallest movement of any part of his body. The muscles of his face had been previously composed, so as to afford a placid alteration of it to appear during the continuance of the speech in which he was so harshly and improperly treated.’ So rigid was Franklin, Bancroft recalled, that it was ‘as if his features had been made of *wood*.’[27]

So just what went on in the Cockpit that impressed Bancroft, Burke, Priestley, and Bentham? Lashing out at Franklin in the fieriest, most insulting language he could muster, Wedderburn spoke for over an hour. His fuming and blustery speech was full of scorn. Franklin’s scheme of placing Hutchinson, Oliver, and the entire British establishment in an unfavourable light, he said, actually backfired. Not only was Thomas Whately a good man and a fine subject of the King, he was Wedderburn’s close friend. First, he attacked Franklin directly. Franklin, he said, ‘has forfeited all the respect of societies and of men . . . . Men will watch him with a jealous eye; they will hide their papers from him, and lock up their escrutoires [sic]. He will henceforth esteem it a libel to be called *a man of letters; homo trium literatum*.’[28] This last remark caused the entire council and gallery to break into howls of laughter. Because they all possessed a classical education, they immediately recalled their Plautus, who had written in his *Aulularia*, ‘*Tun, trium litteratum homo me vituperas? Fur*’ (‘Do you find fault with me? You, a man of three letters – thief!’).[29]

Wedderburn, obviously unsatisfied with barbs of wit, preferred a direct frontal assault. The solicitor general refuted the claim that these letters deserved to be published because they were ‘public letters, to public persons, on public affairs, and intended to produce public measures.’ Nonsense, exclaimed Franklin’s *bête noire*, these were private letters, and in the English tradition, private letters are sacrosanct, ‘as sacred and as precious to Gentlemen of integrity, as their family plate or jewels are.’

If Wedderburn’s attack was *ad hominum*, it was also contradictory. First, he accused Franklin of disloyalty to the Crown and scheming to wrest Massachusetts Bay from the grasp of the Empire. He then accused Franklin of scheming to have himself replace Hutchinson as royal governor. Most citizens of the colony were loyal, he said, and the Massachusetts House consisted mostly of ‘innocent well-meaning farmers’, whose colonial agent had deceived them. As ‘the first mover and prime conductor’ of conspiracy, Franklin and his half-dozen Boston cronies whom he organised into ‘a Committee of Correspondence’, wanted to undermine the colony’s allegiance to the Crown. ‘My Lords, Dr. Franklin’s mind may have been so possessed with the idea of a Great American Republic, that he may easily slide into the language of a minister of a foreign independent state.’ This ‘true incendiary’ expected the letters to ‘blow up the province into a flame, which from thence was to have been spread over the other provinces.’ His small coterie of New England followers, who were now preparing a general uprising, learned their outrageous lessons well ‘in Dr. Franklin’s school of Politics’. The attack was silly and ignored the central thrust of Franklin’s cover letter to the assembly that warned it to avoid Parliament and address only the King. And then Wedderburn shifted his

position, accusing Franklin of secretly wanting to have 'Mr Hutchinson displaced, in order to make room for Dr Franklin as a successor.' Could the solicitor general have it both ways: that Franklin wanted rebellion and the governor's chair? For Wedderburn, there was no inconsistency. The men of Boston wanted independence, and Franklin wanted the executive office, far from British control.

Franklin's response to Wedderburn is now legendary. He had to have been outraged at the assault on his character, his position, and his very name. He simply said nothing. He chose to pour oil on the boiling sea of Wedderburn's wrath. To the solicitor general's increasing anger and frustration, Franklin, even with the presence of his legal counsel, sat, as he later put it, in 'a cool, sullen Silence, reserving my self to some future Opportunity.'[30] He contemptuously stared at his accuser.[31] Later, Priestley, like Bancroft, noted that Franklin was wearing one of his most expensive suits of spotted Manchester velvet. Four years later, he made a point, with delicious irony, to wear the same suit in Paris in 1778 at the signing of the treaty between the French and Americans, guaranteeing French military and economic assistance. When asked why he wore such an old suit, he replied that it was 'to give a little revenge. I wore this Coat on the day Wetherburn [sic] abused me at Whitehall.'[32]

The logical conclusion one might draw from this affair is that Franklin's reputation as a diplomat was ruined and that he no longer had a role in Anglo-American relations, which were deteriorating as rapidly and rabidly as the words flew from Wedderburn's mouth. Whatever acclaim he had once had as a famous scientist and statesman was now history; he had lost his credibility and, worse, his reputation and respectability. The very next day, he was unceremoniously dismissed as deputy postmaster general of the colonies.

In fact, Franklin did not leave England for another year, spending part of that time wondering whether he ought to answer Wedderburn with anonymous pieces in the British press to salvage his injured reputation. And then, towards the end of August, not on his initiative, covert operatives from the ministry approached him to try to find ways to reconcile Britain and America. By that time, of course, these matters had deteriorated even further with the news of closing of the Boston port (a result of the Tea Party) and the passage of the infamous Coercive or Intolerable Acts. Curiously, Franklin apparently did not initially see that the situation was bleak, because he still believed that these troubled seas could be calmed by oil. He decided to prolong his stay.

In the meantime, during these final months in London, Franklin did not hear once from his American compatriots. In a way, he was flying blind on two counts: first, he did not really know how many Americans were now thinking of independence, not reconciliation; and second, he never received instructions from any of the colonies he formally represented (by then there were four, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Georgia, and New Jersey) nor from the First Continental Congress. His thought about the congress was that it was a good idea, though in English legal theory, any extra-parliamentary institutions were highly suspect and synonymous with treason. In any case, he acted alone to do what he thought was in the best interests of the colonies. Although he deeply desired reconciliation, many of his

American counterparts across the Atlantic were already engaged in what Ray Raphael has called 'the first American Revolution'.[33]

For the next several months, Franklin never made any peace overtures himself. He merely reacted to those that came his way. For example, in late August, William Pitt (Lord Chatham), the venerable old 'empire-builder' himself, contacted Franklin to propose a settlement. Franklin had an extremely high regard for Chatham, referring to him that same year as 'that truly great Man,' and was optimistic that something good would come of his talks with him.[34] Unfortunately, the House of Lords – and the King and North – felt otherwise, and that by January 1775 (just two months before Franklin's departure from London for the last time) the discussion collapsed. A month earlier, when Parliament opened on 30 November 1774, the King announced his reaffirmation of the Coercive Acts and declared he would enforce the authority of Parliament over the colonies.[35]

Then in December 1774, Franklin was approached by two old friends, the Quakers David Barclay, a banker, and Dr John Fothergill, his physician. They were acting as mediators for high, though unnamed, Whitehall officials, perhaps Lord Dartmouth, the secretary of state for the American colonies, and Baron Hyde (Thomas Villiers, the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster), a member of the Privy Council.[36] Barclay and Fothergill asked Franklin to submit to them some ideas about reconciliation, and he immediately did in the form of his 'Hints for Conversation on the Terms of Accommodation.' These included seventeen ideas, the chief of which (and, as it turned out, the major deal breaker) was number seventeen: 'All Powers of Internal Legislation in the Colonies to be disclaim'd by Parliament.'[37] Of course, he also asked for the repeal of the Coercive Acts as well as a number of other demands.[38]

A third attempt began simultaneously with his discussions with Barclay and Fothergill, at a time when Franklin thought the soothing oil of diplomacy, reconciliation, and negotiation might still calm the rough waves and tensions roaring between the colonies and Britain. That he was wrong is not surprising, though he again tried to bring his science of the effects of oil on water to his diplomacy. On the other hand, he might well have been biding his time, thinking that if he prolonged the negotiations long enough, a change in the ministry might bring into power officials who were more favourable to addressing the Americans' complaints. After all, he had noted that he had refused to say anything during the Wedderburn harangue because he wanted to await 'some future Opportunity' when things would be better.[39] The King prorogued Parliament in June of 1774, and the new one did not to take its seats until the end of the following November. At that time, Franklin hoped (and maybe even let out a pious prayer in his own way) a new government would come into being.

Despite recent historical commentary, Franklin's number one goal in the waning days of his London sojourn continued to be reconciliation; separation and independence were not. As he told Chatham in late summer of 1774, 'having more than once travelled almost from one end of the Continent [of America] to the other and kept a great Variety of Company, eating drinking and conversing with them freely, I had never heard in any Conversation from any Person drunk or sober, the least Expression of a wish for a Separation, or Hint that such a Thing would be

advantageous to America.'[40] This is an amazing statement, given that his travel 'from one end of the Continent to the other' had to have been between 1762 and 1764, the only years he was in America before he returned to England (he had previously served in London as the Pennsylvania agent from 1757 until 1762).

In any event, the third negotiation began just after Parliament convened on 29 November 1774. In the early weeks of the next month, an old friend of Franklin's from the Royal Society of London, an astronomer and classical archaeologist by the name of Matthew Raper, told him that 'a certain Lady' not only wanted to meet the great scientist, but she also wanted to challenge him to a game of chess. Franklin would not allow such a challenge to go unanswered, because he was enough of an egotist to take on any such challenge; and he was quite proficient in the game.

In his Autobiography, he proclaimed that in 1734, when he was twenty-eight, he already played quite well.[41] He later wrote a short piece called 'The Morals of Chess,' arguing that playing the game strengthened one's foresight, circumspection, and caution, and gave a person a sense of optimism (no matter how bad things are going – in life and in the game – they might still improve). As he put it, chess left us in 'the habit of hoping for a favourable Change, and that of persevering in the search of resources.'

Chess was, accordingly, a perfect metaphor for what he hoped things would develop as indirect talks continued. Moreover, it might well provide the means to the oil he was looking for to calm the troubled sea. After all, while chess was a game of skill and demanded keen intelligence on the part of the players, it was also a waiting game. It took a lot of controlled time, so that while your adversary was thinking about his next move, you must neither make him hurry nor distract him: 'You should not sing, nor whistle, nor look at your watch, nor take up a book to read, nor make a tapping with your feet on the floor, or with your fingers on the table, nor do any thing that may disturb his attention.' A player might even point out the weaknesses in his adversary's play, and thus endear himself to him by showing him a 'generous civility,' but at the same time winning 'his esteem, his respect, and his affection.'[42] Chess, like diplomatic negotiation, took extraordinary effort, and it was highly time consuming.

At any rate, Franklin's friend Raper, now acting as an intermediary like Chatham, Barclay, and Fothergill, wanted Franklin to meet the 'certain Lady,' who turned out to be Lady Caroline Howe, the sister of Lord Admiral Richard Howe, who soon would be the commander-in-chief of British naval forces fighting against the Americans during the Revolutionary War. Their brother, General William Howe was to take command of British ground forces there as of September 1775. Lady Caroline was the widow of her cousin, John Howe, which was why her married and maiden names were the same. A devotee of Horace Walpole's circle, she was a close friend of Lady Spencer, who in turn was an acquaintance of Franklin.[43] What really motivated her? The fact is we really do not know because we only have Franklin's account. It is clear, however, that something was going on more than her desire to engage him in a game of chess. Although he thought it a bit awkward at first, on 2 December, Franklin went to her home on Grafton Street, which was just four doors away from her brother Richard's house, for their first

games. He found her to be a woman of great character and grace. As he noted, he 'had never conceiv'd a higher Opinion of the discretion and excellent Understanding of any Woman on so short an Acquaintance' – this was of course before he went to France in 1776.[44]

After playing several matches, Franklin and Lady Caroline set up a time to meet again to play two days later. During the second match, she said, apparently in an offhand way, that she wished that the dispute between the American colonies and Britain could be settled, and wondered aloud whether Franklin had the authority to engage in a settlement. He told her that 'it is rather a Matter of Punctilio, which two or three reasonable People might settle in half an Hour.'[45] Both sides must be willing to listen to the other and to give in a little; in any event, he would be delighted to talk to anyone who was willing to listen. Franklin must have been astonished to hear her speak of such things because as he recalled, he 'had not the least Apprehension that any political Business could have any Connection with this new Acquaintance.'[46] He did tell her that perhaps he was not the right person, recalling to himself how Wedderburn had so much abused him before the glowering frowns of the Privy Council the previous January. She responded that the Council's behaviour was shameful and that she had heard that some of them were now embarrassed.

Franklin returned to Lady Caroline's house on Christmas Day. This time, she announced that her brother Admiral Howe wanted to speak to him. When Franklin agreed, a servant was sent to fetch him (again, he lived just four doors away). 'After some extremely polite Compliments,' as Franklin put it, Sir Richard got down to business. He told him that he and his friends thought that if anyone could reconcile America and Britain, it was Franklin. He said he was disappointed at the way the ministry had treated him (referring obliquely to the Privy Council affair) and he was worried about the future of the empire. While he himself were merely a Member of Parliament and not part of the ministry, he would do what he could so that Franklin was offered 'ample Satisfaction'. The only condition was that Franklin must present reasonable settlement terms.[47] Franklin immediately agreed.

So now we have simultaneous discussions going on between Barclay, Fothergill, and Franklin over his 'Hints,' which, as it turned out, have been passed along to either Lords Dartmouth or Hyde, and between Franklin and Lord Howe as a result of several chess matches between Franklin and Lady Caroline. Were the two in any way connected? Did Franklin see that they might be? It is noteworthy that Howe asked him for a new set of proposals, because Franklin had just given his 'Hints' to Barclay and Fothergill. In any case, Franklin told Howe that he had 'a sincere Desire of healing the Breach between the two Countries; that I would cheerfully and heartily do every thing in my small Power to accomplish it.'[48] He also told Howe that he never mixed private feelings with the public good: as he put it, 'in truth private Resentments had no Weight with me in publick Business.'[49] He said he did not much care what government officials said about him (though he apparently really did care about his loss of respect among many ministers). Howe then asked him to draw up a list of items so that the two sides could discuss them, because he believed that there were a few in the ministry who were disposed to

negotiate a deal (though he did not say who – Dartmouth? Hyde? – though the latter was not in the ministry).

As Franklin promised, he returned to Lady Caroline's house a few days later, but without the list that Howe had requested. He told Howe and Lady Caroline that he didn't see the purpose of a new set of propositions, because the Congress had just sent in its petition, which 'demanded large and unilateral' and ultimately non-negotiable 'concessions' from Whitehall.[50] This was the first time Franklin had heard anything from America in months. At any rate, Howe now asked whether it would do any good for a commissioner to go to America to work out matters directly, given that (as he told Franklin for the first time) he thought North himself wanted 'to accommodate the Differences with America and to listen favourably to any Propositions that might have a probable tendency to answer that salutary Purpose.'[51] Of course, Howe did not tell Franklin how he knew anything about North's sentiments or whether it was North himself who asked him to speak to Franklin, or whether Dartmouth or Hyde had. In any case, Franklin thought a British commissioner to America was a good idea, and with that Howe pulled out of his pocket a copy of the 'Hints' that Franklin had given to Barclay and Fothergill in early December.

Written in Barclay's hand, Franklin admitted he had drafted it. Howe responded that he was sorry to see that Franklin had outlined a non-negotiable settlement, and he asked him to tone it down. Franklin thought he would be negotiating with himself if he rewrote it now: 'This is to me is what the French call *Spitting in the Soup*.'[52] Even so, he agreed to resubmit it and soon sent Lady Caroline a new set of proposals that he asked her to rewrite in her own hand to forward to her brother. Howe's response was negative: the terms were still too extreme, containing the same demands, including hint number seventeen from the first draft. Even so, Howe agreed to submit them anyway. Franklin did not hear from Lady Caroline until 17 February.

At that meeting, Howe asked Franklin to accompany him to America as an official commissioner: Franklin would go 'as a friend, an Assistant or Secretary.'[53] He told him that he would be delighted to go alone, but that because Franklin had such an extensive 'Influence ... over the Minds of People in America,' he should consider going with him. He even told him he would be justly rewarded to which Franklin replied that such a factor would compromise him with Americans who would see it 'as so many Bribes to betray the Interest of my Country.'[54] Franklin now asked to see precisely what Howe (and the ministry) had in mind, that is, what propositions did they intend to present to the Americans when and if commissioners arrived. If Franklin could agree to them, he would be ready to leave in one hour. Howe was visibly excited and asked Franklin to speak to Hyde to finalise everything.

When Hyde and Franklin met, they could not agree about anything until the idea of a commissioner arose. As he had already told Howe, Franklin said he thought it was a good idea, but it was to no avail. A few days later, Howe reported that Franklin 'had been a better Prophet than himself, in foreseeing that my Interview with Lord Hyde would be of no great Use.' But, undeterred, Howe still wanted to go to America as the official British commissioner, and as Franklin was

now in the midst of leaving himself (he recently received word of his wife Deborah's death), Howe asked him to help him. 'I assur'd him of my Readiness at all times of co-operating with him in so good a Work,' Franklin replied.

And then it all had collapsed. The oil that Franklin had hoped would still the waters of rebellion had had no effect. The chess game came to a draw. He dejectedly noted that he 'ended the Negociation [sic] with Lord Howe. And I heard no more of that with Messrs. Fothergill and Barclay.'[55] Soon, Howe was to come to America, but not as commissioner: he arrived with the largest armada of warships in the history of warfare. Just before Franklin sailed for home, he went to the House of Lords where he heard nasty and vile words of contempt levelled at him and the Americans. The Americans were 'the lowest of Mankind, and almost of a different Species from the English of Britain; but particularly the American Honesty was abused by some of the Lords, who asserted that we were all Knaves and wanted only this Dispute to avoid paying our Debts.' He left, he said, 'irritated and heated.'[56] He drafted a harsh letter to Dartmouth, which Thomas Walpole advised him not to send, advice he took once he cooled off, understanding, as Walpole told him, that it would probably place him in personal danger.[57]

And so, Franklin sorrowfully returned to America, leaving London on 21 March 1775, and arriving in Philadelphia on 5 May 1775. He spent his last day there with Priestley who noted that as Franklin read the papers, tears dripped down his cheeks.[58] Once in Philadelphia, he learned of the April battles at Lexington and Concord, which had resulted in 273 British and 95 American casualties. On the day after his arrival, the Pennsylvania assembly elected him to the Second Continental Congress, which was to meet just four days later in Philadelphia. There, he encountered many angry and agitated Americans deeply committed to separation: they had endured import duties and they had engaged in non-importation tactics, and several had first-hand knowledge of the shootings that had begun.

Franklin's transformation to an American patriot now at last began in earnest, though even now he still hesitated. He said very little during the summer meetings of the congress, helping organise an American postal system while continuing to work for reconciliation. He served on a committee of five men that drafted a final plea to the King, the Olive Branch Petition, but Dartmouth never presented it to the King. He desperately warned a friend in Kent that 'it now requires great Wisdom on your Side of the Water to prevent a total Separation; I hope it will be found among you. We shall give you one Opportunity more of recovering our Affections and retaining the Connection; and that I fear will be the last.'[59] He then drafted an 'Intended Vindication and Offer from Congress to Parliament, in 1775,' but Congress never acted on it.[60] At the end of July, he presented to the Congress his draft of the first American constitution, the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, which stated that once reconciliation ensued, the confederation would dissolve. Congress ignored him, and the final version did not include this language.[61] Less than a month later, the King proclaimed the colonies to be in rebellion and warned every nation to avoid offering them aid and comfort. The balance had tipped, and he knew it. As he was drawing up plans for the military, Thomas Paine showed him the first draft of *Common Sense* with its clarion call for separation. Franklin, the now unrespectable radical, reluctantly agreed with its

every word. And yet, a year later in mid-summer, 1776, we still find him writing to Lord Howe about the fragility of 'that fine and noble China Vase the British Empire,' which he knew by then had shattered to pieces.

Notes

1 The others were Benjamin Rush, David Rittenhouse, and Samuel Adams. See Jack Fruchtman Jr., *Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom* (New York, 1994), pp. 60–62, and John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life* (Boston, 1995), p. 107. Paine's pamphlet was published on 10 January 1776, five months before the Second Continental Congress declared independence.

2 Franklin to Lord Howe, 20 July 1776, in J.A. Leo LeMay (ed.), *Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (Washington, DC, 1987), p. 993 (hereafter *Writings*).

3 For the science background and its subsequent development, see Charles Tanford, *Ben Franklin Stilled the Waters: An Informal History of Pouring Oil on Water* (Durham, N.C., 1989).

4 Franklin to William Brownrigg, 7 Nov. 1773, in *Writings*, p. 890.

5 Ibid., p. 891.

6 Cited in Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1938), p. 419, who notes that those who witnessed the trick were Lord Shelburne (the pond was on his estate), the Abbé Morellet (visiting from France), David Garrick, John Hawkeworth, and Colonel Isaac Barré. See also Tanford, *Ben Franklin Stilled the Waters*, p. 72, who notes that Franklin probably carried a physician's cane that had a compartment to hold medicine and drugs.

7 See H.W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 2000), p. 481 and p. 488, and also the best account of the whole affair, pp. 1–5, pp. 466–79.

8 Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York, 2003), chapter 11.

9 Gordon Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 2004), p. 147. Only Carl Van Doren fully understood Franklin in this respect. See his classic and, still in many ways, unsurpassed biography, *Benjamin Franklin*, pp. 477–78, when he writes that 'it does not appear that the attack by Wedderburn brought about the dramatic change in Franklin's sentiments that some of his biographers have insisted on. Franklin had only lost another degree of hope in the wisdom of the North ministry. . . . But in another month he decided to stay longer, and he spent more than a year in further mediation.'

10 Robert Middlekauff, review of Wood, *Americanization of Benjamin Franklin*, in the *American Historical Review*, 110 (2005), p. 1527.

11 Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*, pp. 477–8.

12 See Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York, 2005), esp. chapter 4, and Ray Raphael, *The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord* (New York, 2002).

13 The phrase is from David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (Charlottesville, 1974), esp. chapter 8.

14 Editors, in Leonard Labaree, et al. (eds), *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 38 vols. to date (New Haven 1959–), XXI: 20 note (hereafter *Papers*).

15 Franklin to William Franklin, 6 Oct. 1773, in *Papers*, XX: 437.

16 For an analysis of the Cockpit performance as an exercise of Franklin's style, see Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), pp. 91–6. The letters in question, outlining Hutchinson's views that had in fact already been published, appear in *Papers*, XX: 539–80.

17 Franklin to William Franklin, 1 Sept. 1773, in *Papers*, XX: 387.

18 See David T. Morgan, *The Devious Dr. Franklin, Colonial Agent: Benjamin Franklin's Years in London* (Macon, Ga., 1996), pp. 220–26; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 224–38; and *Papers*, XIX: 403–407.

19 Quoted in Editors' Note, in *Papers*, XXI: 40 note 6.

20 Burke to General Charles Lee, 1 Feb. 1774, in Thomas W. Copeland (ed.), *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, 10 vols. (Cambridge, 1958–78), II: 518. The full list of those on the council who attended is in *Papers*, XXI: 38–9, 43 note 4.

21 The list is in Editors' Note, *Papers*, XXI: 38–9, 43 note 4.

22 On Dashwood, see Geoffrey Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: A History of Anti-Morality* (London, 1974), pp. 98–104.

23 He did answer in print later, in both the *London Chronicle* and the *Boston Gazette* (he was perhaps more comfortable in writing than speaking anyway). See the account by Brands, *The First American*, pp. 464–79.

24 Quoted in Editors' Note, *Papers*, XXI: 42 note 1.

25 Burke to Lee, in Copeland (ed.), *Correspondence*, II: 518, 524.

26 Jeremy Bentham, *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, published under the superintendence of his executor, John Bowling, 11 vols. (rpt. Bristol, 1995; 1843), X: 59.

27 Quoted in Brands, *The First American*, pp. 474–5. Bancroft later endeared himself to Franklin when he wrote several articles to the press acclaiming his dignity in refusing to respond to Wedderburn's assault. The editors of the Franklin *Papers* note that Bancroft became 'one of the most successful double agents in the history of espionage.' See *Papers*, XVI: 225 note 4.

28 'Wedderburn's Speech before the Privy Council,' 29 Jan. 1774, may be found in *Papers*, XXI: 48–66.

29 Ibid., XXI: 49 note 4.

30 Franklin to William Franklin, 22 March 1775, in ibid., XXI: 546 (the editors of the Franklin *Papers* say that 'sullen' meant 'alone' and that the 'future Opportunity' meant a change in administration when things would get better, which of course they did not, thus emphasizing his consistent optimism in preserving the empire. (See ibid., XXI: 546 note 6.)

31 On Franklin's use of silence, sometimes even as a form of his devilish humour, see Robert A. Ferguson, '"We Hold These Truths": Strategies of Control in the Literature of the Founders,' in Sacvan Berkovitch (ed.), *Reconstructing American Literary History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), pp. 16–19.

32 Cited in P.M. Zall, (ed.), *Ben Franklin Laughing: Anecdotes from Original Sources By and About Benjamin Franklin* (Berkeley, 1980), p. 117 with the quotation on p. 84 and p. 88. See also Editors' Note, *Papers*, XXI: 41.

33 Raphael, *The First American Revolution*, p. 3, who writes that as early as 1774, 'while a group of renowned lawyers, merchants, and slave-owning planters were meeting as a Continental Congress in Philadelphia to consider whether or not they should challenge British rule, the plain farmers and artisans of Massachusetts, guarding their liberties

jealously and voting at every turn, wrested control from the most powerful empire on earth.'

34 Franklin to William Franklin, 'Journal of the London Negotiations,' 22 Mar. 1775, in *Papers*, XXI: 547 (this remarkable journal is Franklin's summary of his last months in London and was not really addressed to William, but was designed to recount those final diplomatic activities). The phrase 'empire-builder' is from the editors' note, in ibid., XXI: 548 note 3.
35 See editors' note, in ibid., XXI: 567 note 2.
36 See editors' head note to 3 Dec. 1774, correspondence, in ibid., XXI: 360–64.
37 Franklin, also called 'HINTS for *Conversation* upon the Subject of Terms that might probably produce a durable Union between Britain and the Colonies,' 4–6 Dec. 1774, in ibid., XXI: 366–8. The editors give these dates to show that he agreed on the 4th to submit the hints and did so two days later.
38 The editors of the Franklin papers are convinced that the situation was always hopeless and wonder why he even bothered to try. See editors' head note to 22 Mar. 1775, in ibid., XXI: 543–5.
39 Journal of the London Negotiations, ibid., XXI: 546.
40 Ibid., XXI: 549.
41 Franklin, Autobiography, in *Writings*, pp. 1400–401.
42 Franklin, 'The Morals of Chess,' June, 1779, in ibid., pp. 927–31, with the quotations at pp. 929, 930, 931.
43 See Editors' head note, in *Papers*, XXI: 363 note 5.
44 'Journal of the London Negotiations,' ibid., XXI: 566.
45 Ibid., XXI: 552.
46 Ibid., XXI: 550.
47 Ibid., XXI: 565.
48 Ibid., XXI: 566.
49 Ibid., XXI: 596.
50 The words are from the editors' note, in ibid., XXI: 568 note 6.
51 'Journal of Negotiations,' XXI: 571.
52 Ibid., XXI: 572.
53 Ibid., XXI: 589.
54 Ibid., XXI: 590.
55 Ibid., XXI: 597.
56 Ibid., XXI: 598. This is Franklin's summary in that he did not identify whose words these were.
57 See Thomas Walpole to Franklin, 16 Mar. 1775, in ibid., XXI: 529. The draft of his memorial may be found in ibid., XXI: 526–8.
58 Cited in Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*, p. 521.
59 Franklin to John Sargent, 27 June 1775, in *Papers*, XXII: 72 (see also the editorial note, XXII: 98–9.
60 The document with editorial commentary may be found in *Papers*, XXII: 112–20.
61 See Article XIII, in *Papers*, XXII: 125.

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Chapter 2

The Mob Club? The London Corresponding Society and the Politics of Civility in the 1790s

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Iain McCalman concludes his seminal work, *Radical Underworld*, with the suggestion that 'perhaps the most significant legacy' of the prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers that made up the subaltern world of London radicalism between the 1790s and beginnings of Chartism 'was to keep alive a tradition of plebeian unrespectability'.[1] Key players in McCalman's narrative were the English Jacobins, many of them members of the influential reform group known as the London Corresponding Society (LCS).[2] As a society, the LCS sought parliamentary reform and an extension of male suffrage, but among their number were violent working-class insurrectionists like John Bone, a bookseller; Richard Hodgson, a hatter; and John Binns, a soap boiler and plumber. Then there was Dr Thomas Crossfield who Francis Place, a one-time chairman of the LCS, described as a 'drunken harum-scarum',[3] and Colonel Edward Marcus Despard, an Irish-born revolutionary who was hanged in 1803 for his involvement in an elaborate conspiracy to seize the Bank of England and the Tower of London and to assassinate George III.[4] Connecting these various characters was the republican activist of the 1790s, Thomas Evans, who later mingled with extortionists and blackmailers. Yet, despite the doubtable political and social morals of these men, they perform an almost heroic role in *Radical Underworld*, influencing 'the shape of modern England, less perhaps than they hoped, but more than they knew.'[5]

However, such positive reflections on the English Jacobins were not shared by all of their contemporaries. Just nine months after the founding of the LCS, *The Times* referred to the group as admirers 'of the murders and robberies committed in France' and claimed members supported 'the same kind of massacres in England'. It reported on the lamentable situation in which 'Pickpockets are transported, highwaymen and murderers hanged, and petty larceners punished with imprisonment … [but] men who seek to overturn our Constitution, by holding out the doctrines of the French, shall be permitted in safety to roam abroad'. The column went on to make a foreboding asseveration: 'Forbid it Justice – forbid it Humanity! The safety of the Empire requires that such men should be made public examples; and the united voice of the People … call for Executive Vengeance

against those internal Enemies'. By this account, the LCS was a real and present danger, a band of miscreants or, as the article called them, 'The Mob Club'.[6]

This was a compelling and potent polemic. Part of its power was derived from contemporary pertinence and context. It assimilated the aims of the LCS with the increasingly brutal and anarchical acts of the French revolutionaries. One month before *The Times* printed this denunciation of the LCS, segments of London society were feasting on roasted pheasant or devouring pudding while ingesting sanguinary reports of the September Massacres in France. On 12 September 1792, there was news of the Parisian mob roasting men, women and children alive, and priests brought to the same fire where they were compelled to eat flesh cut from their bodies. Monstrous acts of cannibalism included stories of pastry cooks who reputedly prepared pies made from the flesh of the Swiss, emigrants and priests, which were eaten to cries of *Vive la nation*. Even the family unit, the fundamental arena of human social relationships, was not safe from the murderous grip of the Revolution. One member of the Jacobin Club allegedly proclaimed the virtue of patriotism over family ties, 'and to show that he himself had already done what he proposed to others, he … presented to them (horrid to say) the heads of his own father and mother'.[7]

It was grim and gory performances of this sort that were manipulated by conservative commentators in Britain, who traded on representations of barbarous and marauding masses in France to shock and awe the British reading public. For Edmund Burke, France was a monstrous society being overrun by a regicidal and amoral rabble, determined to hang priests from lamp-posts, to flood the streets with blood, and to engage in acts of unrestrained debauchery.[8] Such images were easily and readily superimposed onto English reformers by alarmed reactionaries. All advocates of reform, no matter what their complexion, were stigmatised as levellers, democrats, republicans and, worst of all, as Jacobins. Robert Bisset, a leading anti-radical novelist of the French Revolutionary era, articulated the subjective and malleable use of the term 'Jacobin': 'Whoever is the enemy of Christianity, and natural religion, of monarchy, or order, subordination, property and justice, I call a Jacobin'.[9] As one scholar has noted, 'Jacobinism, in other words, was a gestalt with no set definition, and thus provided the perfect basis for the sense of crisis which developed and perpetuated itself in the 1790s and early 1800s.'[10]

Much of this crisis is based upon a generalised fear of the multitude, and it was precisely this consternation on which the 'mob club' aspersion played. Not only can the 'club' reference be interpreted as an attempt to draw a line of connection between the LCS and Jacobin Club – an 'infernal *Pandemonium*' as described by *The Times*[11] – but 'mob' was an equally damaging analogy. Mob is an abbreviation of the Latin *mobile vulgus*, meaning 'excitable crowd', and by the late eighteenth century the term had become invariably associated with the lower classes and the emerging working class. It encapsulated an apprehension of the mobilised masses and implied their mobilisation was inevitably disorderly and ungovernable. Gustave Le Bon, the nineteenth-century social psychologist, emphasised the anomalous and irrational behaviour of crowd collectives, arguing that activists in groups lose notions of reason and reasonableness and regress to more primitive

behaviour controlled by instinct, impulse and emotion.[12] This degenerative mutation seemed evident to many in the late eighteenth century. When the LCS first appeared, some Londoners would have held vivid memories and lingering fears of the disorderly crowd action in 1780 known as the Gordon Riots,[13] while in the wake of the French Revolution the concept of the mob was irreversibly politicised, as 'tolerant contempt changed to intolerant fear of the mob as a bestial, uncontrollable power.'[14] The beastly character of the mob is captured by Burke in his cant description of the masses as 'a swinish multitude'.[15] Still others, like the then staunch Tory of the 1790s, William Cobbett, could see the mob as nothing more than a hellish manifestation: 'Mobs are *the devil in his worst shape*'.[16]

To make the LCS analogous to the mob was much more than hollow name-calling. It was, in fact, a powerful and useful tool within the discursive constructions of radicalism by conservatives during the 1790s. We can understand the 'mob club' portrait and similar representations of reformers as part of a cathartic process. Political slandering was a way of venting one's sentiments, a form of public expression that served as both tonic and therapy for vocal conservatives. To revile the LCS was also part of a process of censure that had broader implications and can be seen as having played a central and critical role in the construction of conservative political culture. On the one hand, cultural hegemony was at stake. Conservative attacks on the LCS were discursive devices to gain control of language in the so-called 'war of ideas', and in so doing to restrain opposition and to maintain the status quo. However, as Kevin Gilmartin has shown, the counterrevolutionary campaign was not merely an effort to uphold the existing state of affairs.[17] Conservative print culture also aimed at mapping a new and stable society, a moral world that would have its foundations in fresh definitions and notions of respectability and unrespectability.

In this way, slights against the LCS, as a collective critique, were part of a process of transition that attempted to move the subject into a position of deviance in society. Through the use of emotive and potent discourse, such as the 'mob club' aspersion, conservative propagandists were able to intervene in the space of public opinion and social consciousness with a view to driving up the English Jacobin threat on the public hierarchy of the most serious problems facing the country. To validate the charting of a new moral society, it was necessary to delineate the existing society as unsustainable, as infiltrated by amoral agents and fraught with danger. In sociological terms, a moral panic was being raised and sustained, as the crusade against reformers constructed and validated radicalism as a social problem and form of deviance.[18] In this construction, English Jacobins were viewed as folk devils, 'deviant stereotypes identifying the enemy, the source of the threat, selfish, evil wrongdoers who are responsible for the trouble.'[19] As the level of hostility toward reformers increased, groups like the LCS were 'collectively designated as the enemy of respectable, law-abiding society; their behaviour is seen as harmful or threatening to the values, interests, way of life, possibly the very existence, of the society, or a sizeable segment of that society. These deviants are seen as responsible for the threat. A dichotomization between "them" and "us" takes place … in this morality play of evil versus good.'[20]

Sociologists have devoted much attention to social polarisation and the construction of deviance, the forces and processes that divide society into the moral and amoral, the civilised and uncivilised, the respectable and unrespectable.[21] As one scholar states: 'there is no civil discourse that does not conceptualize the world into those who deserve inclusion and those who do not.'[22] In cultivating the LCS as a deviant identity, an enterprise was carried on by so-called 'moral entrepreneurs'[23] in which the English reformers were, as Norbert Elias might say, seen to transgress the social and political threshold of repugnance.[24] Labelling in this way was an exercise in stigmatisation and isolation to depower and denigrate radicals. It aimed to remove political, social and moral legitimacy from members of the LCS, with a view to making them powerless and marginalised.

In fact, marginalisation was one of the compasses used to map out the boundaries of a new moral world. In the dark terrain of the margins resided the vulgar and unworthy members of society. Civility, then, can be defined and identified by reference to its binary opposite. Conservative attacks on the LCS were part of a cultural mechanism that expressed shared social values of the majority, not only to defend but also to define the moral boundaries of society. Identifying radicalism as a form of deviance helped define the core: 'Deviant forms of behaviour, by marking the outer edges of group life, give the inner structure its special character and thus supply the framework within which the people of the group develop an orderly sense of their own cultural identity.'[25]

The mapping of moral boundaries provided the normative outlines of society. Through the process of marginalising the LCS, conservatives surveyed and pegged the perimeter of respectable conduct and convention, developing an ethos of civility within that compass. As one scholar notes: 'A human community can be said to maintain boundaries, then, in the sense that its members tend to confine themselves to a particular radius of activity and to regard any conduct which drifts outside that radius as somehow inappropriate or immoral.'[26] By constructing identities of the respectable and unrespectable, and personas of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin, conservatives were patrolling the gate to social inclusion, where members of society were judged as worthy or unworthy to pass by virtue of their political leanings.

Yet, as the sociologist Jeffrey Alexander says, this 'distinction is not "real". Actors are not intrinsically either worthy or moral: they are determined to be so by being placed in certain positions on the grid of civil culture. When citizens make judgments about who should be included in civil society and who should not, about who is a friend and who is an enemy, they draw on a systematic, highly elaborate symbolic code.'[27] This code provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the politics of civility in the 1790s. Alexander refers to a homological set of symbols whereby 'worthy' members of society use the positive side of the symbolic set to define themselves and conversely they use the negative code to define the 'unworthy'. The semiologics of the codes provide a way of understanding the construction of political relationships in the 1790s, of how society was polarised by the cultivation of respectable and unrespectable identities. Alexander's discursive structure of the motives of political actors – that is, the kind

of people they are – defines the qualities of political respectability as someone who is autonomous, rational, reasonable, calm, self-controlled and sane. These characteristics make up part of the symbolic set Alexander refers to as the democratic code. The counter-democratic code – the discourse used to characterise the LCS and English reformers of the late eighteenth century more broadly – depicts the unrespectable as irrational and inclined towards hysteria, excitable, disorderly and passionate, and given to fantasy.[28]

This discursive structure has homological links with symbolic codes that Alexander uses to conceptualise the social relations and institutions actors are capable of sustaining within a democratic civil society. From this we can understand the social relationships of English reformers in the 1790s being cultivated through conservative literature as secretive and suspicious rather than open and trusting; their actions as calculating and conspiratorial, designed for self-interest and greed rather than straightforward and made on the basis of conscience.[29] It follows, as Alexander states, that if 'members of a national community are irrational in motive and distrusting in social relationships, they will naturally create institutions that are arbitrary rather than rule regulated, that emphasize brute power rather than law and hierarchy rather than equality, that are exclusive rather than inclusive and promote personal loyalty over impersonal and contractual obligation, that are regulated by personalities rather than by office obligations, and that are organized by faction rather than by groups that are responsible to the needs of the community as a whole'.[30]

According to Alexander, this schema is used by communities to distinguish the sacred from the profane, the respectable from the unrespectable. In the 1790s, conservative characterisations of the LCS were shaped and informed by the negative side of the symbolic code, which represents, as Alexander explains:

> the 'worst' in the national community, it embodies evil. The objects it identifies threaten the core community from somewhere outside it. From this marginal position, they present a powerful source of pollution. To be close to these polluted objects – the actors, structures, and processes that are constituted by this repressive discourse – is dangerous. Not only can one's reputation be sullied and one's status endangered, but one's very security can be threatened as well. To have one's self or movement be identified in terms of these objects causes anguish, disgust, and alarm. This code is taken to be a threat to the very centre of civil society itself.[31]

In this way, the symbolic code is more than a trope or nomenclature. In fact, as Alexander explains, the code reveals 'the skeletal structures on which social communities build their familiar stories, the rich narrative forms that guide their everyday, taken-for-granted political life.'[32] The 'familiar stories' constructed from within conservative culture of the 1790s were ones whereby the LCS and the individuals that made up its membership were consistently excoriated not only as ideologically different but also as dangerous. This binate discourse linked politics and civility in such a way that the political, moral and ethical behaviour of the LCS and its participants were regarded as debased, transgressive and subversive. They were not, according to this discursive structure, worthy members of the polity.

This was a potent assumption that defined and demarcated the virtuous citizen. It worked against 'restoring the right of suffrage to the unrepresented of the people of Great Britain',[33] which was the fundamental objective of the LCS. As conservative culture constructed and perpetuated distinctions between respectable and unrespectable politics, the LCS sought to address this counter-democratic discourse with a view to creating a sphere of symbolic and functional civility, a normative community that was far removed from the damaging images propagated by their adversaries. To achieve its agenda of constitutional reform, the LCS sought to locate itself within the radius of the positive discursive structure mapped out in Alexander's typology. The Society needed to represent itself as inclusive, autonomous, as a rule-regulated organisation based upon the principle of equality and rational deliberation in order to invert the political messages of loyalists. Faced with the stereotypes embodied in the conservative discourses of civil society, the LCS went into immediate damage containment, a process sociologists call stigma management.[34]

Much of this management can be viewed in the construction and programme of the LCS. From the beginning, the Society sought to establish and cultivate a network of cultural and symbolic understandings that had a meaning and existence beyond their explicit dimensions and which sought to posit the Society within the positive symbolic sphere of civil society. We can see this in one of the Society's earliest maxims that 'the number of our Members be unlimited.'[35] This was, *prima facie*, a prominent banner under which to cast the recruitment net as widely as possible and it had the desired impact. The LCS began as a private meeting with no more than four members, each described as 'plain homely citizens'[36] and among their number the founder of the Society, Thomas Hardy, a Scottish shoemaker. The first public meeting, held in January 1792, was attended by nine men and within two weeks a further fifteen had joined the Society. The LCS grew rapidly during its early months of existence, expanding to nine separate divisions with thirty members each by May 1792. The exponential development of the LCS led some contemporaries to make inflated claims about the size of the Society. In 1794, John Martin, a member of the LCS, estimated the membership at around 28,000,[37] while some years later, one-time assistant secretary of the Society, Alexander Galloway, made the extraordinary assertion that there had been 80,000 members.[38] In reality, however, the Society probably reached a peak of around several thousand members in the latter part of 1795,[39] which was still a large enough growth for Hardy to latter exclaim: 'What great events arise from little things!'[40]

As a directive, 'members unlimited' was a strategically important and, to some extent, successful motto. The physical growth of the Society provided a critical mass that not only lent the group a sense of authority and legitimacy, but also gave to it organic momentum and autonomy. This seemingly perpetual and self-determining development created an intimidating and ominous impression for some contemporaries.[41] As membership of the LCS grew, an internal structure based upon a system of divisions, each ideally with thirty members, was put in place as a means of spatial and time management. Maurice Margarot, who served as chairman of the LCS between 1792 and 1793 before being convicted of sedition in Scotland and transported to Botany Bay, explained that the Society was 'formed

into divisions, because we well know that large companies introduce disorder and confusion; therefore we never suffer … above a certain number to assemble together'.[42] Yet, for loyalists this divisional anatomy was not perceived as an exercise of governance and operational management; rather, it was symptomatic of the radical threat. In 1794, at the trial of John Horne Tooke, a member of the Society for Constitutional Information who was brought to court with Thomas Hardy and John Thelwall of the LCS on charges of high treason, Lord Chief Justice Eyre described the London Corresponding Society as 'a political monster' that spread 'itself every hour from division to division, and each division producing its sub-divisions, those sub-divisions becoming divisions, and so on *ad infinitum* … it is of that nature which does certainly present a very alarming aspect to all those who have a regard to the peace, the happiness, and tranquillity of the country, for it is calculated to produce the most powerful combination that I think the world ever saw.'[43] As John Barrell notes:

> This capacity of the divisions of the LCS to subdivide, and sometimes to subdivide again, appeared to loyalists to give the society the potential for infinite growth . the notion of the LCS as a cancerous, self-replicating, uncontrollable growth is everywhere in the speeches of ministers and crown lawyers in 1794 …. The society divided because it grew. But to the alarmist imagination it grew because it divided.[44]

While for some the policy of 'members unlimited' and the organisational structure it engendered gave the LCS the monstrous dimensions of the many-headed Hydra, it was in fact a strategy designed to counter such negative perceptions and to have meaning beyond its extrinsic and practical consequences. By representing itself as a society with 'members unlimited' the LCS was making a normative statement. It was a motto that expressed not only the demotic vision the Society held for a reformed polity but also the egalitarian nature of the LCS itself. To have 'members unlimited' meant that the LCS was, in theory at least, an inclusive institution, thereby locating the Society on the positive side of the symbolic set explicated by Alexander. The homological nature of this structure links the inclusiveness of the LCS with other elements on the positive side. The logic of this symbology is that an inclusive organisation can only be constructed by actors who are self-controlled, deliberative and rational. In the 1790s, it was these motivations that characterised and defined the citizen who had a right to participate in the political nation and this was an important symbolic statement for a society seeking electoral reform. It implied that members of the LCS and the disenfranchised it represented had achieved a level of civility that made them virtuous and worthy citizens.

For some members of the LCS, however, there was no need for homological implication. The openness of the Society meant that its membership was heterogeneous and that members tended to reside in diverse cultural locations, with some recruited from the higher ranks of society. Lord Daer, for instance, was one of the earliest LCS activists and he was joined by numerous men of professional standing who helped create a veneer of respectability for the Society. Physicians, like James Parkinson and Richard Barrow, brought with them an image of civility

to the LCS, as did lawyers who joined the group, such as Joseph Gerrald and Peregrine Palmer. The development of the LCS and its rendering of fashionable civility were also facilitated by the connection between Thomas Hardy and men of superior social standing, like John Horne Tooke, who were not members of the Society. As Hardy acknowledged: 'Much political information I frequently received from gentlemen experienced in the cause of Reform which was communicated to the Society and received with great approbation, and which was of much use in regulating their conduct as a Society'.[45]

While the presence and influence of middle-class reformers is indicative of the socially fluid world of late-eighteenth century radicalism,[46] the LCS was, in conception and practice, primarily a working-class organisation made up of 'tradesmen, mechanics and shopkeepers'.[47] The low weekly subscription of one penny and the aim of electoral reform appealed to the disenfranchised multitude. As Hardy once asserted, the LCS was to represent those who were 'humble in situation and circumstances'.[48] The predominant vocational profile of the LCS reflected this representation, with shoemaking, weaving and tailoring the most common means of employment held down by members of the LCS.[49] Yet, for some historians, this profile of the LCS suggests it 'was not a genuine proletarian society',[50] since it largely recruited, as one scholar puts it, 'the privileged and pampered plebeian aristocrat'.[51] Nevertheless, this 'labour aristocracy'[52] alarmed their anti-Jacobin opponents. The LCS was considered to be nothing more than a combination of 'Blackguards and Ragamuffins … whose sole aim was to subvert our glorious Constitution, and to hurry us into all those scenes of blood, confusion, and plunder which have laid waste the once fertile and well-governed kingdom of France'.[53] For this observer, the Society was a 'motley crew of pick-pockets, seditionists, modern reformers, house-breakers, and revolutionists'.[54] They impressed upon George Munro, the government spy, 'much horror', although he conceded that many were 'extremely civil' despite being what he called 'the very lowest tradesmen'.[55] However, Munro's compeer, John Groves, was more guarded in his concession. He acknowledged that the Society's membership comprised 'some of decent tradesmen-like appearance, who possess strong, but unimproved faculties' as well as 'others of an apparent lower Order – no doubt Journeymen, who though they seem to possess no abilities & say nothing, yet they appear resolute and determined'. Yet, 'the most numerous' members were those of 'the very lowest order of society – few are even decent in appearance, some of them filthy & ragged, and others such wretched looking blackguards that it requires some mastery over that innate pride, which every well-educated man must naturally possess, even to sit down in their company'.[56]

By characterising members of the LCS as unrespectable and dangerous demagogues, one of the great paradoxes of the 1790s was cultivated: how could men with 'unimproved faculties' and 'no abilities' establish a well-organised, revolutionary society that designed elaborate plots to overthrow the monarchy and parliament?[57] Government ministers and loyalists found the answer in the matrix of leadership that made members of the LCS 'puppets whose strings were pulled by more intelligent, educated men'.[58] It was, by implication, a hierarchical society that accommodated a mass of ignorant, passive and dependent dupes who held

ascriptive loyalty to manipulative men of higher status. The LCS, of course, did not view itself in the same way. The Society considered itself to be autonomous, allowing 'the People' to 'judge and resolve, if undirected by Faction, with both Wisdom and Moderation.'[59] A symbolic and practical process of social levelling was facilitated by the LCS, with members from higher ranks rarely placed in positions of authority. Thomas Hardy welcomed the membership of Lord Daer, for instance, but he believed Daer 'did not enter the society with the view of being president or of having undue influence in the society'.[60] Some scholars, including Albert Goodwin, might argue that men like Daer were forced to accept the equality of the LCS despite their pretensions and 'were kept firmly in their place.'[61] Whether or not they were coerced into submission, it seems Hardy believed disproportionate influence from the minority of members with 'superior' talent could be counter-productive, discouraging 'the people [from] exerting themselves in their own cause'.[62] Members of the LCS needed to be seen as capable of self-determined rationalism irrespective of their social status, as persons whose motivations and actions are not determined in deference to leadership. Indeed, there were claims to '*no leaders & no parties*' in the Society and 'that all judged for themselves & that when one active man was taken from the field ten others would rise to supply his place'.[63] The LCS recognised 'no *leaders*, depending only *on the correlative exertions of each other*.'[64]

This discourse was symbolically important within the constructs and narrative of civility. The claim of 'no leaders' not only epitomised the egalitarianism of the Society, but also posited the group as a whole and, by implication, its individual members on the positive side of the democratic code. Yet, from a purely practical perspective, a society as large and administratively complex as the LCS could not steer a strategic course with an unattended helm. Indeed, the 'no leaders' assertion was anomalous and the LCS actually functioned as an organisation under proactive managerial and operational control. For instance, John Thelwall, the political orator, and Joseph Gerrald, the attorney who was transported to Botany Bay in 1794 for sedition, assumed leading and influential positions in the LCS. Still others were given the opportunity to undertake roles of responsibility and significance as a result of the Society's internal democratic system. As John Barrell eloquently states: 'the LCS did not offer only jam tomorrow; a large part of its appeal was that it offered a sense of immediate, present participation, to whoever would join it and engage in its activities and debates.'[65] All members were eligible to be elected to a range of positions, each bearing *ex officio* influence within the Society. The divisions voted in a secretary and, from mid-1794, tithing men, whose duties included the critical, albeit unenviable, task of pressing members for overdue fees. A representative from the divisions was also chosen to sit on the general committee of the LCS, where they were collectively responsible for coordinating the activities of the whole organisation and where they had the opportunity to become an officer of the Society. It was a system that allowed John Ashley, a shoemaker, to become secretary of the LCS; John Baxter, a silversmith, to become chairman of the organisation; and Anthony Beck, a saddler, to control the Society's fiscal matters as treasurer.

The democratic structures of the LCS provided the organisation with organic management, but it also had a normative capacity. By installing an internal system of democracy, the LCS anticipated the reformed constitutional government they advocated. The ballot system used to elect office-bearers and representatives reflected the processes in place for selecting members of the House of Commons. Through this appropriation, the LCS could lay implicit and analogical claim to achieving a standard of polite civility. While the Society's democratic structures cultivated a *de facto* hierarchy similar to that within the parliamentary system, whereby leaders are empowered by virtue of their office, the democratic order of the LCS also provided members with equal opportunity to be elected to office. It demonstrated that members of the LCS – those tradesmen, mechanics and shopkeepers excluded from the British polity – had the faculties and propensities for active citizenship and political virtue.

The members chosen to undertake leading positions within the Society were to provide executive direction and to facilitate organisational functionality as well as to be role models, to some extent, for the group. Yet, an organisation as large as the LCS needed not only to represent itself from above as an institution that promoted inclusiveness, equality and civility, but also needed to integrate the whole body of members into the discourse of respectability. Grass-roots members were to be represented as actors who were rational and self-restrained, as polite citizens who were not inclined towards arbitrary and excitable behaviour. Although the LCS pursued a policy of 'members unlimited', it was able to reconcile its openness with the need to provide stability and orderliness by being rule regulated and enforcing norms of civility.[66] The key to achieving political reform was seen to be predicated upon regular and disciplined conduct. In contrast to the negative characterisations of the LCS propagated by conservatives, who discredited the Society as a tumultuous and violent organisation, the LCS publicly advocated an orderly and peaceable action plan. In its first address, dated 2 April 1792, the Society expressed 'their *Abhorrence* of Tumult and Violence, and that, as they aim at Reform, not Anarchy, Reason, Firmness, and Unanimity are the only Arms they themselves will employ, or persuade their Fellow-Citizens to exert, against Abuse of Power.'[67] Two years later, in a pamphlet entitled *Reformers No Rioters* (1794), the LCS was once more fending off accusations from 'pensioned alarmists' of transgressive behaviour. By that time, the LCS was 'accustomed to suffer from the misrepresentations and calumnies of those whose sordid interest can alone be promoted by the delusion of the people', but it was still compelled to reassert that one 'of the fundamental principles of this society, and a lesson we have ever industriously inculcated is, that riot, tumult and violence are not the fit means of obtaining a redress of grievances.'[68]

The Society extended this philosophy of decorous and orderly practice to its operational plan. A key feature of its modus operandi was a scheme of discipline designed to restrain affective conduct and to ensure the organisation could achieve its 'aim … to have a well regulated and orderly society'.[69] Although sociability and conviviality were key ingredients of radical culture,[70] the LCS attempted to temper their members' desires for a pot of beer and a pipe with regulations and conventions. Francis Place explained that 'Eating – drinking – & smoaking [sic]

were forbidden either in a division or in a committee. No man in liquor was permitted to remain in any division or committee and habitual drunkenness was sufficient cause for expulsion.'[71] A standardised structure and meeting regime was established through regular meeting times and formalised practices. Every member needed to stand and remove his hat before addressing the chair of the meeting. Members were not permitted to speak more than twice to one question and the chair was to 'take especial care to protect any member from interruption while speaking, provided such member shall confine his discourse to the matter in question.'[72] In 1794, the original version of the Society's new constitution included a section called 'Order', which discounted all noise as an 'interruption, whether intended to express applause or censure' and stipulated that 'approbation may be expressed by holding up a hand.' Members were to avoid using 'political appellations' as well as 'all invectives and declamatory remarks'. Those who failed to observe this rule were considered 'disorderly'. Any members 'attempting to trespass on order, under pretence of shewing [sic] zeal, courage, or any other motive, are to be suspected. A noisy disposition is seldom a sign of courage, and extreme zeal is often a cloak of treachery.'[73]

The regulation of LCS meetings was fundamentally about constructing structural solidarity and regularity. The orderly conduct of assembled groups provided a means for effective time management and, as Peter Clark says, 'contributed to greater institutional stability'.[74] Yet, the meeting regime of the LCS also had a deeper meaning beyond the functional and administrative. As a directive, the Society's code of conduct created and defined the normative boundaries of group and individual behaviour. Rules instilled discipline, a didactic and pragmatic process of teaching habitual self-constraint within the meeting space. Sociologists recognise this as part of the broader civilising process.[75] The orderly conduct of meetings through a framework of standardised rules is indicative of achieving civility. Sophisticated meeting behaviour develops as a manifestation of human rationality, 'in which people talk with each other about changes in their mutual relations and decide what they are to do …. The development of meeting behaviour can be considered … as a process in which people constrain each other towards control'.[76] Such constraint had important symbolic connotations during the 1790s: in tumultuous times, the disciplined and ordered structures of the LCS not only provided a stabilised and normalised space in the micro-world of the meeting room, but those structures also supported the implication that the Society and its members were not given to transgressive behaviour.

While the organisational and regulatory structures of the LCS provided essential functionality and important symbolism, they also tended to create contradictory values antithetical to the creation of an inclusive society without a hierarchical structure. The Society's regulations, for instance, aimed to exclude those whose conduct did not conform to the normative relational dynamics the LCS wished to establish. A policy of 'members unlimited' implied inclusiveness, but it could be nothing more than a chimerical ideal in a rule-regulated institution with exclusionary disclaimers. Similarly, the Society's meeting regimes cultivated hierarchy. Those with most authority chaired the meetings and participants were

meant to be deferential to their status. While the mechanism of turn taking was meant to provide 'a simple, economic and extraordinary efficient way of allocating activities across any number of participants'[77] as well as generating equality among the group, modern research into meetings indicates turn taking actually helps create and reinforce hierarchical structures. The least powerful participants tend rarely to speak or raise objections, whereas those with explicit authority and seniority generally dominate proceedings. According to communication theorists, 'turn-taking dynamics … are clearly related to the *status* of the individuals and they are therefore taken to be indicators of power.'[78]

Despite the paradoxical relationship between rule regulation and constructions of exclusiveness and hierarchy, the rigidity of decorum enforced by the LCS was critical to cultivating identities of civility when one considers most meetings of the Society took place in public houses. For the LCS to concentrate its official activities in public houses may seem, at first sight, to be inimical to enforcing a policy of no drinking and smoking during official gatherings. Why would a society seeking to cultivate personas of temperate reformers choose to foster a tavern-based culture that lent itself to excitable and dipsomaniacal behaviour? In part, the answer is about common and familiar practice. It was recognised, by one correspondent in the *Leeds Mercury* of 1802, that clubs 'meet nightly in taverns and public houses. Almost every street in a large town has a little senate of this description; and the priviledges [sic] of sitting in council over the affairs of the nation, and a pot of porter has long been claimed by free Britons, and acknowledged by administrators.'[79] During the 1790s, as Iain McCalman states, 'alehouse clubs in London had been absorbed into the democratic agitation … helping to make them a staple Jacobin form.'[80] Taverns were important sites within the construction of artisanal culture, spaces where sociability and politics overlapped in a mutually reinforcing connection. The raucous activities of men in the smoky parlours of the local public house reinforced fraternity and collective identity,[81] while at the same time acting as the vehicle for the emergence of a politically-conscious, popular public sphere.[82] The meetings of the LCS in public houses was, in this way, part of a broader cultural formation in which, as Mark Philp has suggested, sociability became 'the basic fabric of late eighteenth-century intellectual life'.[83]

The tavern-based culture of the LCS was also about convenient practice. Numerous public houses throughout the neighbourhoods of London helped facilitate and underpin the organisation and development of the Society. They became a central element in the spatial management of the LCS, emerging with the growth of the Society as part of the 'spatial practices and organisational geographies [that] were as key to the political identities of the LCS as were the ways in which they contested and debated the meanings of contested words like "equality" or "representation". These practices, then, were central to the LCS's democratic identities'.[84] When one considers the symbolic code explicated by Alexander, we can begin to understand how LCS meetings in public houses might contribute to the political identities and civility the Society attempted to propagate. A rule regulated institution is considered homologous with 'equality' and 'inclusiveness' and such institution can only be carried on by 'rational' and 'self-

controlled' actors.[85] The rough and rowdy tavern culture of the artisan counteracted – at least symbolically – motives of rationality and self-control. As James Epstein notes, the urban civility of the tavern 'was always subject to a series of tensions'. Taverns 'represented an ideal of rational sociability while at the same time housing emotions and behaviour that might undermine that ideal.'[86] To control and reconcile these tensions was a form of spatial colonisation. Regulating meetings in public houses was a way of pacifying manners in an ordinary social environment and such pacification demonstrated the restraint, temperance and moral fortitude of the participants. In many respects, the tavern-based culture of the LCS was both a litmus test of the group's civility and a character test of individual self-control. Members of the LCS, like later generations of radicals, realised that respectability, 'the prerequisite qualification for full membership of the political nation, consisted in the ability to rise above sensual instincts and passions through sobriety, self-help, frugality, duty, effort, industry, and "temperance in all things".'[87]

Although the Society had established a regime of regulation, some of the 'meetings associated with the LCS', as Jon Mee points out, 'had much more of the flavour of tavern free-and-easies than the civicism stressed in the official publications would suggest'.[88] Sometimes the unruly ingredient of the 'free-and-easy flavour' mutated and led to acrimonious exchanges and internal factionalism. The heterogeneous social and cultural composition of the LCS meant that some members carried agendas that deviated from the official LCS programme. Conflicts over internal politics led to five divisions seceding from the LCS between 1793 and 1797.[89] Still other members pursued their own course, such as those who formed the Lambeth Loyal Association.[90] Conservative alarmists drew an analogical link between this militant arming society and the LCS by virtue of the overlapping memberships. The civility and motives of the LCS were also frequently questioned and defined by the passionate outbursts and transgressive conduct of Society members engaged in private, individual pursuits. In 1793, for instance, William Hodgson, a physician, and Charles Pigott, a radical satirist, who were both prominent members of the LCS, were arrested and tried for sedition after Hodgson was overheard referring to George III as a German hog-butcher during a private conversation at the New London Coffee House.[91] Even an experienced LCS protagonist, like John Thelwall, could slip up and be given to moments of passion. After the Chalk Farm meeting in April 1794, Thelwall allegedly 'took a pot of porter & blowing off the head, said – "This is the Way I would serve Kings"'.[92]

In the conservative constructions of radicalism during the 1790s, incidents such as these were interpreted as correlating the LCS as a group with the idiosyncratic excitability of some members. The LCS was seen to be a violent, treasonous and conspiratorial institution, made up of passionate and hysterical members. Yet, for the most part, this was a misrepresentative, albeit critically damaging, image. Members on official LCS business tended to conduct themselves in a civil and controlled manner. When John Gale Jones, who in 1796 was appointed a deputy of the LCS on a political tour of north Kent, found himself confronted one night at a Rochester inn by 'two strangers, whose characters and views at least were equivocal',[93] he reacted in a calm and rational way. After insistent and pointed questioning, which Jones realised was a 'mode of sisting me, in the hope of

diverting me from my circumspection, and provoking me to anger', he felt himself not safe 'from malice or misinterpretation.'[94] One of the men had been 'drinking purposely to enable him the better to scold, or perhaps, if necessary, to fight me.'[95] As James Epstein notes, the environment in which Jones found himself was an arena 'for testing the courage of men's political convictions …. [which] in certain important respects [was] analogous to the code of the duel.'[96] However, Jones did not choose to defend his political honour through a passionate performance. Instead, when approached by one of the men after rising to depart, he 'turned round to them with a look expressive of as much contempt as I could summon to my countenance, and calmly observed, that as I had experienced sufficient abuse for that night, I would take another opportunity to hear the remainder.'[97] Jones retired to his room having exhibited to the strangers an unexpected or undesired orderly and disciplined demeanour.

While political tours, like outdoor meetings, sometimes placed LCS members in difficult and potentially dangerous positions, they were, by their very act, a symbolic statement about the openness of the Society's transactions. Contrary to loyalist portrayals, the LCS was proud of and relied upon being a public institution: 'the Society was very open in all its measures, indeed the object was publicity – the more public the better'.[98] One of the most effective means of gaining publicity was through the Society's publication of cheap democratic literature, which amounted to about eighty separate pamphlets and two journals between 1792 and 1798. The LCS believed 'the greatest obstacle' to obtaining political reform was the 'gross ignorance and prejudice of the bulk of the nation'.[99] A campaign of moral force was pursued, whereby the Society's publications proceeded 'to increase, to diffuse political knowledge, to make every man acquainted with his political rights'.[100] Importantly, the publishing programme of the LCS was not merely for didactic purposes. Indeed, as the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has shown, education provides cultural capital, those forms of knowledge and skills that give a person a higher status in society.[101] In the context of the 1790s, members of the LCS needed as much cultural capital as possible if they were to invert loyalist concepts of 'inferiority'.

Yet, perhaps very few, if any, of the members actually envisaged themselves as 'inferior'. At the Chalk Farm meeting of the LCS in April 1794, Thelwall audaciously taunted government spies and informers in the attending crowd by suggesting they report on their 'opportunity of learning good manners, order, and decorum from the Swinish Multitude.'[102] Some years later, Francis Place described the 'moral effects of the Society' as 'considerable'. He commended the LCS for inducing 'men to read books, instead of wasting their time in public houses, it taught them to respect themselves, and to desire to educate their children. It elevated them in their own opinions …. It gave a new stimulus to an immense number of men who had been but in too many instances incapable of any but the grossest pursuits, and seeking nothing beyond mere sensual enjoyments. It elevated them in society.'[103] According to Place, the LCS 'was a great moral cause of the improvement which has since taken place among the *People*.'[104] The Society had constructed the discursive and symbolic structures of civility that had a foundation in notions of an inclusive, open institution, which functioned through democratic

and disciplined practices. However, the boundaries of civility were surveyed and protected by the dominant discourses of conservatism. The LCS resided outside the margins of 'respectable' society and from there it was difficult to shift the pegs. Despite the exertions of the Society to define itself within the positive side of the democratic code of civil society, it remained for many contemporaries nothing more than a group of 'seditious Fools'.[105] James Gillray drove home the message of the LCS as a body of insensate drivellers in his caricature called *London Corresponding Society, alarm'd* (1798). It depicts a clandestine meeting of LCS members squatting around a table, their monstrous political dispositions reflected in their apish physiognomies.[106] It was in these dark, conspiratorial confines of the caricatured LCS meeting that Edmund Burke found the 'mother of all mischief'.[107] Even forty-five years after the Society was outlawed, John Adolphus, the Old Bailey barrister, described the Society has a mere club of 'miserable brawlers'.[108] Such enduring reflections prove the LCS could change the popular political landscape, but the political nation was a much tougher terrain.

Notes

I would like to thank my colleague at the Cradle Coast Campus of the University of Tasmania, Haydn Aarons, for reading parts of this paper.

1 Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 237.

2 On the London Corresponding Society see Henry Collins, 'The London Corresponding Society', in *Democracy and the Labour Movement*, ed. John Saville (London, 1954), pp. 103–34; Alan G. Steinberg, 'Thomas Hardy and the London Corresponding Society: The Revolution That Never Was', *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750–1850: Proceedings* (1983), pp. 399–417; Benjamin Weinstein, 'Popular Constitutionalism and the London Corresponding Society', *Albion*, 34 (2002), pp. 37–57; John Barrell, 'London and the London Corresponding Society', in *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780–1840*, ed. James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 85–112; and my forthcoming monograph *The Mob Club: The London Corresponding Society and the Culture of Reform in the 1790s*. For a brief overview see Michael T. Davis, 'London Corresponding Society (*act*. 1792–1799)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004). Also see Mary Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792–1799* (Cambridge, 1983); and Michael T. Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, 6 vols. (London, 2002).

3 British Library (hereafter BL), Francis Place Papers, Add. MSS 27808, fols. 105–106.

4 On Despard and the conspiracy see Mike Jay, *The Unfortunate Colonel Despard* (London, 2004); Clifford D. Conner, *Colonel Despard: The Life and Times of an Anglo-Irish Rebel* (Conshohocken, 2000); and Marianne Elliott, 'The "Despard Conspiracy" Reconsidered', *Past and Present*, 75 (1977), pp. 46–61.

5 McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 237.

6 *The Times*, 17 Oct. 1792.

7 *The Times*, 12 Sept. 1792.

8 On Burke's use of the 'monstrous', see Mark Neocleous, *The Monstrous and the Dead: Burke, Marx and Fascism* (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 9–35.

9 *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 1 (1798), p. 223.

10 M.O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 7.

11 *The Times*, 30 May 1792.

12 Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895; rpt. New York, 2002). For a discussion of the theoretical developments in crowd psychology since the publication of Le Bon's work see David Waddington and Mike King, 'The Disorderly Crowd: From Classical Psychological Reductionism to Socio-Contextual Theory', *Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 44 (2005), pp. 490–503.

13 On the Gordon Riots see Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 152–75.

14 Herbert M. Atherton, 'The "Mob" in Eighteenth-Century English Caricature', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 12 (1978), p. 55.

15 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (1790; rpt. Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 173. For a discussion of the 'swinish multitude' trope see Don Herzog, *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders* (Princeton, 1998), pp. 505–45.

16 William Cobbett, *A Summary View of the Politics of the United States* [1794], in *Porcupine's Works: Containing Various Writings and Selections*, 12 vols. (London, 1801), I: 63.

17 Kevin Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790–1832* (Cambridge, 2006).

18 For a discussion of the British Jacobin panic see Michael T. Davis, 'A Reign of Terror? The British Jacobin Panic and the Rule of Law in the 1790s', in *Moral Panics, the Press and the Law in Early Modern England*, ed. David Lemmings and Claire Walker (Basingstoke, forthcoming 2008). On the sociology of moral panics see Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (London, 1972); Eric Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (Oxford, 1994); and Kenneth Thompson, *Moral Panics* (London, 1998).

19 Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, 'Moral Panics: Culture, Politics, and Social Construction', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 20 (1994), p. 156.

20 Ibid., p. 157.

21 See Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, *Constructions of Deviance: Social Power, Context, and Interaction*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, 2000); Sharyn L. Roach Anleu, *Deviance, Conformity and Control* (Frenchs Forest, 2006); and Nanette J. Davis, *Sociological Constructions of Deviance: Perspectives and Issues in the Field* (Dubuque, 1975).

22 Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification: On the Polarizing Discourse of Civil Society', in *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, ed. Michèle Lamont and Marcel Fournier (Chicago and London, 1992), p. 291. I am grateful to my colleague, Haydn Aarons, for bringing this essay to my attention.

23 On concept of 'moral entrepreneurs' see Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (London, 1963).

24 On the concept of the threshold of repugnance see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (Oxford, 2000), *passim*.

25 Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York, 1966), cited in Adler and Adler, *Constructions of Deviance*, p. 14.
26 Ibid., p. 12.
27 Alexander, 'Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification', p. 291. For an explication of this code see Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 120–54.
28 For Alexander's schematisation of this discourse see Alexander, 'Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification', p. 293 (table 1).
29 See ibid. (table 2).
30 Ibid., p. 294.
31 Ibid., pp. 296–7.
32 Ibid., p. 294.
33 Thomas Hardy, *Memoir of Thomas Hardy, Founder of, and Secretary to, the London Corresponding Society* (London, 1832), reprinted in *Testaments of Radicalism: Memoirs of Working Class Politicians 1790–1885*, ed. David Vincent (London, 1977), p. 46.
34 On stigma management see Adler and Adler, *Constructions of Deviance*, pp. 280–323; and Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York, 1963).
35 Hardy, *Memoir*, p. 46.
36 Ibid., p. 44.
37 The National Archives (hereafter TNA), TS 11/958/3503, information of Evan Evans, 11 Sept. 1794.
38 BL, Add. MSS 27817, fol. 164.
39 See Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.
40 Hardy, *Memoir*, p. 44.
41 See Barrell, 'London and the London Corresponding Society', pp. 102–08.
42 William Cobbett and T.B. Howell (eds), *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, 30 vols. (London, 1816–22), XXIII: 743.
43 Ibid., XXV: 731.
44 Barrell, 'London and the London Corresponding Society', pp. 104–05.
45 BL, Add. MSS 27814, fol. 12.
46 For a discussion of the fluid interaction of polite and plebeian reformers in the 1790s see Michael T. Davis, 'That Odious Class of Men Called Democrats: Daniel Isaac Eaton and the Romantics, 1794–95', *History*, 84 (1999), pp. 74–85.
47 Hardy, *Memoir*, p. 46.
48 BL, Add. MSS 27814, fol. 8.
49 See Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society,* p. xix.
50 H.T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789–1815* (Oxford, 1985), p. 11.
51 Bryan D. Palmer, 'Most Uncommon Common Men: Craft and Culture in Historical Perspective', *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 1 (1976), p. 14. Also see Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism During the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1982), p. 36.
52 On the concept of 'labour aristocracy' see E.J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London, 1964), pp. 272–315; Michael J. Piva, 'The

Aristocracy of the English Working Class: Help for an Historical Debate in Difficulties', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 7 (1974), pp. 270–92.

53 [Anonymous], *The Decline and Fall, Death, Dissection, and Funeral Procession of His Most Contemptible Lowness the London Corresponding Society* (London, 1796), reprinted in Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, V: 182.

54 Ibid., V: 188.

55 TNA, TS 11/959/3505, report from George Munro, 14 Nov. 1792.

56 TNA, TS 11/965/3510(A), report from John Groves, 12 June 1794.

57 See John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793–1796* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 233–4.

58 Ibid., p. 234.

59 TNA, TS 11/956/3501, William Skirving to Thomas Hardy, 25 May 1793.

60 BL, Add. MSS 27814, fol. 22.

61 Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), p. 197.

62 BL, Add. MSS 27814, fol. 36.

63 BL, Add. MSS 27816, fol. 476.

64 *The Correspondence of the London Corresponding Society Revised and Corrected* (London, [1795]), reprinted in Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, II: 148.

65 Barrell, 'London and the London Corresponding Society', p. 94.

66 Rule regulated is 'a key element in the symbolic understanding of democratic social institutions'. As Alexander explains, it 'is considered homologous – synonymous or mutually reinforcing in a cultural sense – with "truthful" and "open", terms that define social relationships, and with "reasonable" and "autonomous", elements from the symbolic set that stipulates democratic motives'. Alexander, 'Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification', p. 294.

67 *London Corresponding Society, held at the Bell, Exeter-Street, Strand* ([London], 1792), reprinted in Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, II: 327.

68 *Reformers No Rioters* ([London], [1794]), reprinted in ibid., I: 289, 290.

69 BL, Add. MSS 27814, fol. 24.

70 On the place of sociability and conviviality in radical culture see McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, *passim*; Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (eds), *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770–1840* (Cambridge, 2002); Michael T. Davis, '"An Evening of Pleasure Rather Than Business": Songs, Subversion and Radical Sub-Culture in the 1790s', *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 12 (2005), pp. 115–26.

71 BL, Add. MSS 27808, fol. 10.

72 *Report of the Committee, Appointed to Revise and Abridge a Former Report of the Constitution, of the London Corresponding Society* ([London], [1794]), reprinted in Davis (ed.), *London Corresponding Society*, I: 304–05.

73 *The Report of the Committee of Constitution, of the London Corresponding Society* (London, [1794]), reprinted in ibid., I: 339. It is interesting to note that these regulations were removed from the revised constitution. Possibly the exclusion of these strictures was based upon notions or perceptions of civility. As Mary Thale suggests, 'their inclusion was seen as giving evidence to their enemies that the LCS did consist of men not fit to participate in the government of the country.' Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, p. xxvi, n. 51.

74 Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580–1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford, 2000), p. 246.

75 See Wilbert Van Vree, *Meetings, Manners and Civilization: The Development of Modern Meeting Behaviour* (London and New York, 1999).

76 Ibid., p. 320.

77 Deirdre Boden, *The Business of Talk: Organizations in Action* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), p. 66.

78 Francesca Bargiela-Chiappini and Sandra J. Harris, *Managing Language: The Discourse of Corporate Meetings* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 202–03.

79 Cited in Roger Wells, *Insurrection: The British Experience 1795–1803* (Gloucester, 1983), p. 52.

80 McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 113.

81 See Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp. 154–5, 226–7; Davis, 'An Evening of Pleasure Rather Than Business'.

82 For a discussion of the popular public sphere see Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism: From The Spectator to Post-Structuralism* (London, 1984).

83 Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London, 1986), p. 127.

84 David Featherstone, 'The Spaces of Politics of the London Corresponding Society', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30 (2004), p. 785. For a further discussion of the organisational geography of the LCS see Barrell, 'London and the London Corresponding Society'.

85 See Alexander, 'Citizen and Enemy as Symbolic Classification', p. 294.

86 James Epstein, '"Equality and No King": Sociability and Sedition: The Case of John Frost', in *Romantic Sociability*, ed. Russell and Tuite, pp. 44–5, 48.

87 James Epstein, *In Practice: Studies in the Language and Culture of Popular Politics in Modern Britain* (Stanford, 2003), p. 139.

88 Jon Mee, 'Rough and Respectable Radicalisms', *History Workshop Journal*, 56 (2003), p. 239. Also see Davis, 'An Evening of Pleasure Rather Than Business'.

89 In March 1793, Division 12 seceded to form the Society of British Citizens; in March 1795, Division 12 seceded to form the London Reforming Society; in April 1795, Division 16 seceded to form the Friends of Liberty; in September 1795, Division 27 seceded to form the Friends of Religious and Civil Liberty; and in August 1797, Division 10 seceded from the LCS. See Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, pp. 55–6, 243–52, 403–404.

90 On the Loyal Lambeth Association and the 'arming of the LCS' see Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, pp. 210–30.

91 See Nicholas Rogers, 'Pigott's Private Eye: Radicalism and Sexual Scandal in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la société historique canadienne*, 4 (1993), pp. 247–63; Jon Mee, 'Libertines and Radicals in the 1790s: The Strange Case of Charles Pigott I', in *Libertine Enlightenment*, ed. Peter Cryle and Lisa O'Connell (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 183–203.

92 Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, p. 140.

93 John Gale Jones, *Sketch of a Political Tour Through Rochester, Chatham, Maidstone, Gravesend, &c. Including Reflections on the Tempers and Dispositions of the Inhabitants of Those Places* (1796; rpt. Rochester, 1997), p. 7.

94 Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

95 Ibid., p. 7.

96 James Epstein, 'Equality and No King', pp. 47–8.

97 Jones, *Sketch of a Political Tour*, p. 7.
98 BL, Add. MSS 27814, fol. 12.
99 BL, Add. MSS 27814, fol. 12.
100 Cobbett and Howell (eds), *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, XXIII: 743.
101 See David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, 1998).
102 Frida Knight, *The Strange Case of Thomas Walker: Ten Years in the Life of a Manchester Radical* (London, 1957), p. 170.
103 Francis Place, *The Autobiography of Francis Place (1770–1854)*, ed. Mary Thale (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 198–9.
104 Ibid., p. 200.
105 Hester Lynch Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters: Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1784–1821 (formerly Mrs Thrale)*, ed. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, 3 vols. (Cranbury, 1989–93), II: 256.
106 See Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven and London, 1996), pp. 180–83.
107 *Morning Post*, 28 Oct. 1794.
108 [John Adolphus], 'Memoir of Sir John Gurney', *Law Magazine*, 23 (1845), p. 276.

Chapter 3

The Magician No Conjuror: Robert Merry and the Political Alchemy of the 1790s

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> Yet still am I troubled by the Revolutionary Struggle; the great object of human happiness is never long removed from my sight. O that I could sleep for two centuries like the youths of Ephesus and then awake to a new order of things!
>
> Robert Merry to Samuel Rogers, 12 December 1793
> University College London, Special Collections, Sharpe Papers 15, fo. 214

Dreaming of a new order of things could take many shapes in the 1790s, not least because even the most theatrical of fantasies were objects of government surveillance. On 20 December 1790, Covent Garden presented a pantomime under the title *The Picture of Paris*. Written by Robert Merry and Charles Bonner, with music by William Shield, the pantomime represented the events of the French Revolution up to the *Fête de la Federation* of 14 July 1790. The playbill on the front page of *The Times* promised 'an exact Representation of … the grand procession to the Champs de Mars … the whole to conclude with a Representation of The GRAND ILLUMINATED PLATFORM … on the Ruins of the Bastille'.[1] The pantomime culminates with the Federation Oath whereby the King swore to employ the powers delegated to him by the National Assembly to maintain the new constitution. The theatre historian George Taylor sees the production as eager to present the *fête* as consonant with a British idea of freedom.[2] Certainly it represented a very serious financial investment for Thomas Harris, involving, as Taylor points out, 'the full complement of Covent Garden's crew of painters and machinists, led by Inigo Richards'.[3] Harris had also assembled a dream team to write the words and music. Robert Merry was possibly the best-known poet in Britain at the time, fresh from his triumphs as Della Crusca in the pages of the fashionable newspaper *The World*. Building on the fact that the Lord Chamberlain had given a licence for the performance of the piece, Taylor goes on to conclude, 'that the authorities in England shared the belief of French moderates that the *fête* marked the end of the French revolution'.[4] I am not so sure that the reception of the pantomime by 'the authorities' was as clear-cut as Taylor suggests.

The newspapers of the period were heavily involved with the theatre. The front pages of most of them were mainly devoted to puffs for the coming attractions. Inside, the reviews were often written by the actors and playwrights themselves. Many of these writers were also in receipt of funding either from the Treasury or the Opposition. Thomas Harris in fact was one of the paymasters used by George Rose, Pitt's chief political fixer, to disburse funds.[5] Presented only a few weeks after the publication of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), *The Picture of Paris* was entering an unstable scene when it came to British responses to the French Revolution. If the *Argus* newspaper thought that 'the Managers of the house deserve equally the thanks of the several authors, and of the public at large, for the uncommon liberality displayed in the getting up every scene of this Piece', then *The Times* – widely regarded as Pitt's special gazette – questioned 'the propriety of such scenes on British ground', suggesting that the theatre ought 'to steer clear of politics.'[6] Implying that the play ought not to have been licensed, it goes on to aver that 'we cannot think the Lord Chamberlain's Licence will be followed up by that of the public'.[7] A few days later, it was even more definite that British political values were quite distinct from what had been celebrated on the Champ de Mars:

> We should be glad to be informed what reference the statues of *Truth*, *Mercy*, and *Justice*, exhibited in the new Pantomime of the *Picture of Paris*, has to the subject of it. – Surely the author of this incoherent jumble of ideas does not mean to affirm that the Revolution in France is founded on any of these godlike virtues.[8]

The Times was also sure that the King shared its views when he went to see the play:

> Their MAJESTIES yesterday evening seemed to pay particular attention to the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY in the PICTURE OF PARIS. As far as we could collect from looks, the Royal Visitors were certainly not of the opinion with STERNE in the instance of DEBATES at least – that 'They manage these things much better in FRANCE.'[9]

The representation of a monarch as merely the delegate of the National Assembly did not, according to *The Times* at least, pass muster with George III's idea of his relationship to Parliament.

Robert Merry, author of the 'incoherent jumble of ideas,' had in fact been busy for over a year making himself the English poet of the French Revolution. In August 1790 he had been welcomed to Paris as one of 'the two best poets of England' (the other was deemed to be William Hayley).[10] Although Merry had become famous as the man-of-feeling, Della Crusca, in the pages of *The World*, he seems to have shrugged off the Della Cruscan pseudonym as soon after 1789 as he could. In November 1790, Horace Walpole traced Merry's political enthusiasm to 'the new Birmingham warehouse of the original maker.'[11] 'The new Birmingham warehouse' is Joseph Priestley's. From around this time through to his death, reviews associated with dissenting opinion, such as the *Analytical* and the *Monthly*, gave Merry's political poetry their support, even if they were dubious about Della Cruscan style, not to mention the fashionable world from which it emerged.

Merry's former employers at *The World*, on the other hand, regarded his ardour for the French Revolution as an irksome distraction. In October 1790, Edward Topham had written to his lover, the actress Becky Wells, who effectively ran the paper, urging her to call Merry back to the business of using his poems to sell copies: 'In regard to public business, you must see Merry, for he appears to me now to be doing nothing …, and if he does not, he then certainly means to do no more; in which case I must look out for a proper person'.[12] Presumably, among other things, Merry was busy writing *The Picture of Paris*.

Not that politics and writing for a living were antithetical matters for Merry. Having squandered his inheritance living the dissipated life of a Guards officer in the 1770s, Merry was invested in the career open to talents. John Taylor the oculist, looking back from three decades later, had a straightforwardly economistic account of Merry's trajectory in this regard:

> Merry was in France during the most frantic period of the French revolution, and had imbibed all the levelling principles of the most furious democrat; having lost his fortune, and in despair, he would most willingly have promoted the destruction of the British government, if he could have entertained any hopes of profiting in the general scramble for power.[13]

The phenomenon of Della Cruscanism in the pages of *The World* is often seen as a vibrant example of the eighteenth century's commercialization of culture. Merry seems to have become more directly involved in political matters just as the phenomenon of Della Cruscanism was reaching its zenith, as if suddenly recognizing the potential of the press. The preface to his *Laurel of Liberty* (1790), published under his own name and dedicated to the National Assembly, expresses his confidence that the 'progress of Opinion, like a rapid stream, though it may be checked, cannot be controuled'.[14] From the time of the Regency crisis, Merry became involved with Sheridan, the manager of newspaper opposition to Pitt after 1784 (the *Poetry of the World* anthology published in 1788 was by permission dedicated to him). The Whig grandees who actually provided the money to him had become increasingly suspicious of Sheridan as a man of energy (rather than property). In practice, Sheridan's reformism may have been of a moderate kind, but Burke and other Whigs even in 1788–9 saw him as a dangerous demagogue, who at the very least might unleash forces he could not control. Merry told Samuel Rogers in 1792 that Sheridan had approached him to write for the *Morning Post* during the Regency Crisis: 'No man can conceive says he the effect of a daily insinuation – the mind is passive under a newspaper'.[15] Their relationship seems confirmed by Godwin's report that 'Sheridan fills Merry's hat full of arrows.'[16] Written after 1792, I suggest that these comments have an air of retrospective disenchantment with the Whig 'controul' of newspaper opinion. The judgment may be an important one in understanding Merry's own trajectory.

By the beginning of 1792, according to Werkmeister, Merry had used his arrows to become one of the 'four most prominent Opposition journalists', but over the course of the previous year he seems to have moved beyond the clubbable Whig orbit of Sheridan's circle.[17] Samuel Rogers, introduced to Merry by William

Seward, recorded a conversation at the house of Helen Maria Williams on 21 April 1791, which reveals something of how closely Paine's *Rights of Man* was being read in such circles. During a discussion of Elizabeth Montagu, Seward described her as a 'composition of art.' Wittily picking up on the allusion to Paine, Rogers retorted: 'the genuine soul of nature has forsaken her'.[18] The reference to Paine's attack on Burke ('Accustomed to kiss the aristocratical hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art, and the genuine soul of nature forsakes him') is immediately seized upon by Merry: 'What a beautiful expression is that of Paine!' said Mr. Merry; and the next – 'His hero or his heroine must be a tragedy victim', – and again 'We have dropped our baby-clothes and breeched ourselves in manhood.' Rogers concluded that Merry 'seemed a warm admirer of Paine'.[19] Not long afterwards, Merry and Paine seem to have been together in London for the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. Merry's *Ode to the Fourteenth of July* was read at the Revolution Society dinner attended by Paine, but *The Times* noted that Merry missed the performance of his poem to dine in a tavern with Horne Tooke, William Seward, and James Boswell.[20] Paine joined them there later according to the same report. In his journal, Rogers records dining later in 1791 with Merry and the dissenting ministers Priestley and Andrew Kippis.[21] By this stage, Della Crusca does seem to have become as securely familiar at least with middle-class dissent as Walpole's crack of the previous year had implied.

Pitt's biographer, John Ehrman, sees 1792 as 'a watershed'.[22] Over the course of the year, the government became increasingly alarmed at the spread of 'French ideas', and began to take action that included a royal proclamation against seditious writings in May. At the beginning of the year, the second part of Paine's *Rights of Man* was being eagerly awaited. The press regularly reported his printer's anxieties about handling such flammable matter.[23] Paine's book eventually appeared on 16 February. Under the ownership of Sampson Perry, whom the government had continually harassed with libel actions through 1791, the *Argus* newspaper had become the voice of Painite radicalism. Merry, according to his old friend James Boaden, 'became one of the eyes of the Argus'.[24] Inspired and encouraged by Paine's attempt to create a popular platform for political radicalism, the first meeting of the London Corresponding Society seems to have taken place on 25 January. Peter Macbean's evidence at Hardy's trial in 1794 mentions the presence of a Mr. Merry at one of the early meetings.[25] There is good reason to think that Merry was involved with the radical movement early in 1792, but in January and February at least he was involved in what at first blush seems a very different enterprise.

The Times for 10 January noted that a new Comic Opera called *The Magician* was in rehearsal. A fortnight later it announced that the performances would commence on the Saturday, 28 January. On precisely that day, Robert Merry wrote to the poet Samuel Rogers inviting him for 'a family mutton chop'. He ended the letter by mentioning the literary project that he was currently working on: 'My Opera will come out on Saturday … Jan. 28th when I shall be much obliged to you to *lend me a hand*'.[26] As it happened, *The Magician No Conjurer* was (in the words of *The Times* on Wednesday, 25 January) 'unavoidably deferred until Thursday

next'. In the event, the play did not appear at Covent Garden until Saturday, 2 February, where it ran into even more trouble than *The Picture of Paris*. Or, more to the point, it ran only for a barely respectable four nights. The reasons why are not exactly clear. It was never published in its entirety, although the songs were for sale in pamphlet form, and remained popular enough to be republished in periodicals and anthologies over the course of the year.[27] A manuscript of the entire play – at least in the form that the Licenser saw – exists in the Larpent collection at the Huntington Library.[28] Anyone who reads it would probably find the simplest explanation for its demise to be the fact that it is not very good.

The plot is a standard tale of young love thwarted by old foolishness. The old fool is Tobias Talisman, who has retreated to his Gothic castle in the country to practice the art of necromancy, keeping his daughter Theresa under close confinement. The Gothic possibilities of the female incarceration plot were a favourite of Merry's, but in *The Magician* the business is put to comic use with the complication of a competition between the fortune hunter Dareall and the sincere Somerville to win Theresa's hand. Somerville's victory is guaranteed when he saves Talisman from a resentful mob suspicious of his magical researches and further stirred up by a disappointed Dareall posing as the 'Great Vice-Chancellor of England'. Most of the newspapers expressed a dim view of the proceedings in their 3 February editions: 'the fable is weak as to its interest, and improbable in its progress, producing no scenes of sympathy, or kindling merriment, and rather harassing the mind with the difficulty of pursuing it, than offering any occupation to the tender, or the livelier passions'.[29] Yet many of them also suggested that 'curtailment' might bring more success, and even the early reviews accept that the play was greeted with 'a tumult of applause and disapprobation'.[30] Reviews of the later nights do suggest that improvements were made. The *Diary* of 6 February itself reported that 'Mr. Merry's Opera obviously rises in the public opinion. It was given before a crowded audience on Saturday evening, and though it must be suggested that the title of the piece is literally true, and that the Magician is no Conjuror, he promises to cast a lasting spell upon the public imagination'. The *Morning Herald* of the same day also reported that the opera received 'a very full and fashionable house, and went off to great applause'. What these and other positive responses suggest, however, is that the play was not taken off for commercial reasons.

Harris had already invested considerably in the play in terms of costume and scenery, and must have banked on Merry's reputation pulling in the audiences. The *Diary* for 3 February noted his 'usual liberality in regard to the dresses and the scenery'. Werkmeister believes that Harris pulled the plug after only four nights at the bidding of his paymasters at the Treasury. She reports that the play was withdrawn because of its 'stinging ridicule of Pitt, who, it was all too evident to the audience, was in fact "The Magician"'. Thereafter, she claims, Merry and his wife were frozen out of Covent Garden for political reasons. *The Magician*, she wittily says, 'having been more of a Conjuror than Merry realized'.[31] Anne Brunton – Merry's wife – was certainly not re-engaged at Covent Garden after the 1791–2 season, despite great success in Holcroft's *The Road to Ruin* in the spring. Some theatre memoirs of the time suggest that Merry's family had made her withdrawal

from the theatre a condition of their continuing financial support. John Taylor's *Records of My Life* (1825) claims that Harris was afraid that Merry would use his influence in the newspapers to ensure that Brunton's every demand was met. *The Secret History for the Green Room* (1792) professed itself ignorant of the reasons: 'Whether it is, that Mr. Merry wishes to withdraw our Heroine from the Stage, or that she has differed upon some point with the Manager, she is not engaged for the present season. Her loss is too visible, not to be felt by the Public'.[32] What I have not found is any contemporary newspaper explicitly identifying attacks on Pitt in *The Magician No Conjuror* as the cause.

Before looking at the newspapers, what of the play itself? Is there anything in the detail to suggest the political satire Werkmeister has ascribed to it? Given the tight censorship that existed of the stage, of course, there was little opportunity for it to represent Pitt in direct terms. *The Picture of Paris* was unusual in being granted the right to represent events in France directly, and we have already seen that it immediately received criticism for attempting to do so. The conditions for representing politics in the theatre had only worsened by 1792. Faced with this situation, predictably enough, the theatre made political interventions in oblique ways, as it always had done. The play's use of the Gothic plot of the incarcerated female may be significant in this respect. In *The Picture of Paris*, for all the pantomime, the Gothic business is given an overtly political bent by focusing on the dissolution of the religious houses. The incarceration theme may be given a comic treatment and English setting in *The Magician,* but Theresa's songs keep alive a political potential, especially in the air that culminates in the assertion of 'the freedom of the mind'.[33] This refrain may have given even some of Merry's most politically innocent fans pause, for it also provided the final line to one of his early political poems, 'Inscription written at La Grande Chartreuse'. That poem anticipates the Gothic business of his later plays *Lorenzo* (1791) and *Fenelon* (1795): its 'sumptuous palace' and 'deluded monks' are presented as places of tyranny and ignorance opposed to an enlightened religion of nature. [34] Written only a fortnight after the Bastille fell, by the time it was published at the end of 1790 in the *European Magazine*, Merry's poem looked like a manifesto committing himself to the political poetry of *The Laurel of Liberty* and the *July 14th Ode*:

> Then fare ye well – to join the world I go,
> Prepar'd to meet whate'er I ought to find,
> Start into bliss, or sicken into woe,
> But still, as Man, assert *THE FREEDOM OF THE MIND*.

Even in the first negative review of *The Magician* in the *Diary*, we read that the 'serious songs bear the traces of Mr. MERRY's ardent enthusiasm'.[35] What is not clear is whether the word 'enthusiasm' here is a knowing nod towards the mainly revolutionary ardour Merry had shown in his poetry since 1789.

In contrast to the openhearted celebration of freedom in such songs, there are recurrent references to the idea that 'throughout this famous nation/All is done by Conjuration'.[36] Of course, this idea was the fundamental corollary to Paine's call for an 'open theatre of the world' in *Rights of Man*, and much of Paine's language

there often adverts to the idea of the British system of government as a deception of one kind or another.[37] In fact, the specific identification between Pitt and the arts of conjuration went back as far as the satirical assaults on his administration organised by the Sheridan circle from the mid-1780s. The most obvious source is probably to be found in a satire first published in *The Political Miscellanies* (1787) that drew parallels with 'SIGNOR PINETTI the Conjuror'. The satire was much reproduced and became attached to the anti-Pitt satires in *The Rolliad*.[38] The analogy between Pitt and the conjuror even reappeared in the newspapers while *The Magician* was in rehearsal as a commentary on the political difficulties facing the Prime Minister at the beginning of 1792. The *Morning Chronicle* of 14 January wrote of the forthcoming King's speech: 'a plague upon it, if at a time when every cock and a bull speculation succeeds, the master conjuror may not have his plot also'. The pub landlord in *The Magician No Conjuror* comments of Talisman's activities: 'But people are not quite so easily kept in the dark, as Great Men imagine'.[39] Enlightening the people through the diffusion of political knowledge was the central aim of the popular political societies springing up in 1792. Apart from Paine's *Rights of Man* itself, the text that caused most embarrassment to the government in this respect early on was Charles Pigott's *The Jockey Club*, issued in three parts over the course of 1792. Published on 27 February, only a couple of weeks after *The Magician's* run had ended, the first part makes use of the idea of Pitt as a political trickster: 'it would appear as wars were conjured up for the purpose of raising taxes, not taxes for supporting wars'.[40] Conceivably Pigott took the trope from Merry's play, if not directly from Merry himself. Later in the following year, as we shall see, Merry and Pigott were to try and flee Pitt's magic circle of influence together. Pigott's posthumously published *Political Dictionary* (1795) gives an even stronger sense of the ready identification between Pitt and conjuration. The entry under 'Necromancer' begins: 'Mr Pitt, who, by means of charms and spells, and his opiate wand, conjures up the House of commons and the Privy Council to his opinions'.[41]

Merry himself returned to the trope late in 1794 in the first of a brilliant series of playbills mocking the Prime Minister under the name Signor Pittachio. Merry seems to have written the first at least, with the Foxite MP Joseph Jekyll probably responsible for the second. They originally appeared in papers such as the *Courier* and the *Telegraph* in late 1794, but Merry seems to have begun his caustic personal campaign against Pitt at around the time of *The Magician*.[42] Writing for the *Argus*, the most radical of the London dailies, under the name Tom Thorne, he produced a series of epigrams remembered years after for the virulence of its attacks on Pitt (and his fixer Rose). Looking back from 1799, Merry's obituarist in the *Monthly Magazine* took the view that 'no minister in any age had been so ridiculed before'.[43] Pitt was exposed as a fraud in the *Argus* as Talisman is in *The Magician*. The exposure in the latter is a prelude to a piece of 'open theatre' that attempts to repeat something of the idea of a grand fete of freedom from *The Picture of Paris*:

Let the Bells ring round
And the Tabor's Glee
Proclaim the heart festivity

> For happiness where e'er we rove is
> Virtue, Liberty, and Love.[44]

'Virtue, Liberty, and Love' sound like a disguised version of the revolutionary trinity of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Talisman ends by accepting that 'I am not quite so great a Conjurer as I thought'.[45] If one reads him in terms of some allusion to Pitt, as Werkmeister does, then here the Prime Minister accepts that he has been leading the country awry. The idea of Pitt being forced to admit that he could not continue to work his magic on the nation was at the forefront of public opinion at the beginning of 1792. If *The Magician* was perceived as part of this campaign, then there is little wonder that Harris took the play off.

Performance can give a play a political charge, even where a script seems to have none. Newspaper reviews can give us some sense of whether performances of *The Magician* played up the political potential I have traced thus far. None that I have seen mention Pitt directly, but they do show that the play had a political reception. The *Oracle* of 4 February described the piece as 'written assuredly to please the People', later in the same column, just after a mention of the travails of the manuscript of Part II of *Rights of Man*, the paper returned to the issue: 'Has not the collision of adverse opinions in politics produced this masculine judgment, that cannot be contented with mere sportive scenes of simple occurrences? More should not, however, be looked for in a Piece than its Author intended'. The comment archly suggests that Merry *does* mean to say something political in the play. Writing from an opposition point of view, the *Morning Herald* of 4 February was more explicit: 'This Author has also the disadvantage of standing on political ground, so that a party bias probably interfered, and infected in some degree the general opinion'. *The Times* sniped at the opera throughout its four-night run. Although it acknowledged that 'the Theatre was well filled, and the Boxes were replete with much fashion and beauty', my suggestion that the end of the play encourages the audience to enjoy a kind of revolutionary fête seems confirmed in its jibe that the 'last incident in the Magician is evidently taken from the PICTURE of PARIS'.[46] It capped its attack with a bad pun on 8 February: 'From the total want of connection and interest in the MAGICIAN, the author is justly entitled to the appellation of an INDEPENDENT Writer'.

'Independence' like 'freedom of the mind' is a political term not easy to tie down to particular positions, especially in the instability of 1792. They are terms that sit equally well with Whig definitions of liberty in terms of freedom from court influence as with more radical definitions of reform in terms of extending politics beyond the parliamentary elite. They do not perhaps help us much in identifying the particulars of Merry's political development. We have to be careful of assuming that Merry literally became a man of the people. John Barrell has suggested, for instance, that the theatricalisation of politics in the Pittachio broadsides could be understood in terms of positioning the popular readership precisely outside the political process.[47] Merry and Jekyll could be understood as Whig gentleman still presuming their birthright as the protectors of the liberties of the people. Encouraged to boo Pitt off stage so that Fox, for instance, can be brought on to assume to proper position of 'Man of the People', the vulgar crowd

remain in thrall to their traditional leaders in the elite. There are aspects of *The Magician* too that could be understood as a fantasy of this kind. Talisman is saved from the anger of the crowd by his daughter's suitor Somerville, who looks suspiciously like a self-idealization of Merry as the hero of enlightenment. Talisman learns 'true nobility is to be found in the heart, not in a Parchment Pedigree', a sentiment whose democratic potentiality could be seen as only sidestepping political divisions as such.[48] Perhaps Merry had not entirely cut himself off from the possibility of some kind of rapprochement between Whig values and a Painite radical movement in his fantasy Revolution. The review of the opera that appeared in the *Gazeteer* for 3 February reported that 'the Earl of Lauderdale and many gentlemen in Mrs. Dawkins party, were very strenuous in support of the piece'.

Yet there are signs that Merry was remarkably relaxed about his identity as a wit and a Whig. The *Gazeteer* was a paper that Merry himself had been involved in, and in the process moved it leftwards. Harriet Fawkener Bouverie wrote to William Adam on 11 November 1791 to convey Fox's concern about what was happening: 'I wish something could be done about our newspapers, they seem to try & outdo the Ministerial papers, in abuse of the Princes, the Morning Chronicle is grown a little better lately, but the others are intolerable, the Gazeteer particularly, Mr Merry has got that I am told'.[49] Lauderdale was a leading radical figure on the reformist wing of the Whig party and one of the prime movers – with Sheridan, Grey, and Philip Francis – in the setting up of the Society of the Friends of the People on 11 April 1792, another initiative that Fox characteristically feared had gone too far. Although it was for the most part an exclusive group, more aristocratic and parliamentary, with high subscriptions, initially the SCI and the LCS welcomed the Friends of the People, but it soon became apparent that it wanted to moderate the popular societies and assert what it regarded as its natural leadership. Thus, the *Argus* of 8 May, (in a column next to one of the Tom Thorne epigrams) reported hopefully that 'the ASSOCIATION, called, The Friends of The People, will probably give rise to a greater number of similar societies throughout the country … and the result will be a FAIR AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE'. Looking back from November 1792, however, the *Argus* was rather forgetful of its earlier optimism: 'We at first observed of this Society, that it appeared to us to be designed as a *conductor* to turn away the lightning accompanying the *thunder* of the Public for a reform of abuses in Government …we hope they will [now] lay aside their violent fears, at least those expressed for the several classes of men whose interest they profess to have at heart. There is no occasion for apprehensions from Mr. PAINE's advice on the score of Economy and Reform'.[50] Merry's name is included in the list of those who signed up at this first meeting of 11 April, but does not seem to appear in any of the published accounts of any of the later meetings. By May the Society had become emphatic about repudiating any Painite associations. Merry, in contrast, seems to have stuck by Paine and the popular radical societies. He had joined the SCI in June 1791 just as it was increasing its commitment to Paine. All the signs are that he continued this commitment long after the Friends of the People made its reservations apparent. On 28 May 1792, Godwin's diary records, perhaps with a tinge of envy,

that his friend Thomas Holcroft was dining with Paine and Merry.[51] The minute book of the SCI shows that Merry was in the chair on 1 June when a letter from LCS was read that responded to the proposal for a cheap edition of *Rights of Man* with 'infinite satisfaction to think that mankind will soon reap the advantage of Mr. Paine's labours in a new and cheaper edition of the Rights of Man', not a sentiment likely to be echoed in the Society of the Friends of the People. In fact Merry was a very visible presence during the intense period in the spring and early summer of 1792 of co-operation between the SCI and LCS over Paine's works.[52]

The *Oracle* of 15 June reported that 'Mr and Mrs. MERRY have taken the Laurel of Liberty with them to France. – The Poet presents his Ode to the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'. Sounding a note that was to echo across many accounts of Merry that followed, the paper commented: 'The MERRY POET has now dwindled into a SAD POLITICIAN!' Paine joined Merry in Paris in September, travelling to France with Achille Audibert and John Frost, another regular of SCI meetings that Merry attended in 1792. By 28 September Merry himself was back in London at a meeting of the SCI. The Society read a letter from the LCS proposing a supportive address to the French National Convention. With Frost (who had returned to London) among others, Merry was part of the committee asked to consult with the LCS about the address. Merry was back in France by the end of October. He wrote to his 'friend and fellow labourer' Horne Tooke from Calais on 29 October retailing information from Paine's friend Audibert that the armies of the Republic had more use for shoes than weapons.[53] A few weeks later, John Frost was back in Paris again too, with Joel Barlow, to present the SCI address to the National Convention (and the offer of the shoes). Frost had been declared an outlaw back in London for an incident at a coffee house at the beginning of the month and was being followed by the government spy Captain George Monro. In Paris, watched by Monro and others, these old friends from the SCI were debating the future direction of British radicalism at White's Hotel. Merry seems to have been part of the most radical faction calling on the Convention to invade Britain and assist the radical movement. To the delight of the Treasury prints back in London, both Paine and Sampson Perry were arrested in Paris during the Terror of the following year. Frost came back to London in February. He was indicted and bailed, but the government seemed reluctant to put him on trial, perhaps because of fears about disclosing Monro's role as a spy. Finally, Frost was tried on 27 May 1793 and found guilty.[54]

Merry also managed to return to London, in the summer of 1793, but avoided Frost's fate. On 11 August he was dining with Godwin and Holcroft, but Merry seems to have decided that it was insupportable to live in conditions where he was being visibly tracked in the newspapers.[55] In September he decided to head to Switzerland via Harwich and the Low Countries with Charles Pigott. They were funded by £50 from Samuel Rogers, but for some reason turned back at Harwich.[56] Separated from Pigott, Merry retreated to Scarborough. He wrote to Rogers asking for more money and begged that his presence be kept secret, but by mid-October the *Oracle* had intelligence of his return. If his movements were being watched, as seems likely given the government's use of Monro to track Frost, he was at least luckier than his co-traveller. Pigott returned to London and was arrested for

seditious words after an incident in a London coffee house. On 9 November, after weeks in gaol, the charges were thrown out by the Grand Jury.[57] Pigott then wrote to introduce himself to Rogers and to beg for money.[58] While Pigott languished in prison, Merry was trying to write himself into solvency. From October he starts writing to Rogers outlining his current projects and asking for help finding publishers. On 3 November he wrote to say that he thought his letters were being stopped and mentions that he has been writing an ‘Elegy upon the Horrors of War’. Then, on 8 December, he writes again asking Rogers for a further £25: ‘I take the liberty of sending you a little Pacquet, which I should be obliged to you to transmit to Mr Harris of Covent Garden Theatre, as you will see by the interiour direction – It is a little theatrical Piece, which I mean to conceal being *Mine* not to be exposed Aristocratical Malice’. On 12 December he explains further:

> The Piece I have sent to Harris, is a free translation of the French Play, of Fenelon, reduced to three Acts – I do not suppose it will be performed, on account of its coming from that democratic country, but if it should not it will be returned to you in Freeman’s Court, when I beg you will open & read it, & if you think it has any merit – get it published for me I beg of you not to mention my being the Translator in case it should be played – as the name of a Republican would damn any performance at this time. I have no objection to your giving it any support that your goodness may incline you to bestow. The Elegy you will shortly have such as it is but, to avoid offence, it is very tame.

He also tells Rogers that he forwarded money to Pigott who is ‘in much distress’.[59]

Fenelon and *The Wounded Soldier* were published eventually, the latter in cheap editions that seem a world away from Della Cruscanism, but there seems to have been no way back to literary celebrity for Merry.[60] Needless to say *Fenelon* was never produced at Covent Garden. An attempt to publish a volume of Merry’s collected work by subscription came to nothing. To the distress of Godwin, who begged him to reconsider, Merry left for the United States in September 1796.[61] By and large the government preferred to keep high-profile figures out of the courts. Pitt seems to have succeeded in conjuring Merry away. The obituary written for Merry in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* judged him to have been one of ‘the victims of the French Revolution since his mind was deeply tainted by the principles upon which the detestable event was founded’. More specifically, the *Magazine* goes on, his tragedy lay in the fact that he was led to ‘unite with people far beneath his talents, and quite unsuitable to his habits’. [62] In Boaden’s recollection, ‘the poet and the gentleman vanished together’.[63] Yet Merry, as we have seen, did not regard his politics as incommensurate with his literary pursuits. What is remembered by Boaden as a vanishing act without a magician was, in fact, the product of systematic government pressure. Merry himself seems to have been relatively open to positioning himself inside rather than above the crowd. The comedian John Bernard, who followed the Merrys to the United States to find work, remembered him as one of the few who was not shocked by the hullabaloo of elections in the new republic: ‘the temporary resident, exposed to actual collision with the crowd,

found the absurdity no joke. Merry was the only man I knew for whom it had a relish'.[64]

Notes

1 *The Times*, 20 Dec. 1790. I am grateful to David Worrall for allowing me to see a draft of the discussion of Merry's plays that appears in his forthcoming study *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787–1832: The Road to the Stage*.
2 George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London Stage* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 61–4.
3 Ibid., p. 62.
4 Ibid.
5 Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the Press c. 1780–1850* (London, 1949), pp. 70–71.
6 *Argus*, 20 Dec. 1790, and *The Times*, 21 Dec. 1790.
7 *The Times*, 21 Dec. 1790.
8 *The Times*, 30 Dec. 1790.
9 Ibid.
10 David V. Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790–1793* (Columbia, 1986), pp. 104–105. Erdman's source is the report in the *Journal de la Sociéte de 1789*.
11 Horace Walpole to Edward Jerningham, 10 Nov. 1790, *in Edward Jerningham and His Friends: A Series of Eighteenth-Century Letters*, ed. Lewis Bettany (London, 1919), p. 50
12 See 'Edward Topham to Becky Wells, October 4, 1790', *Memoirs of the Late Mrs Sumbel, Late Wells, Written by Herself*, 2 vols. (London, 1811), I: 76.
13 John Taylor, *Records of My Life*, 2 vols. (London, 1832), II: 274.
14 *The Laurel of Liberty: A Poem* (London, 1790), p. vi.
15 'Rogers Notebook', Sharpe Papers 41, University College London, Special Collections.
16 'Written in 1794 – notes of conversation with Merry', Dep. b. 229/2 (a), Abinger Papers, Bodleian Library. Earlier in this document Godwin lists people he has met by year, Merry appears in 1793 along with John Frost, Joseph Gerrald, Charles Pigott, and John Thelwall. Merry is the only one of this group to have avoided imprisonment in 1793–4.
17 Lucyle Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792–3* (Lincoln, 1967), p. 39.
18 P.W. Clayden, *The Early Life of Samuel Rogers* (London, 1887), p. 173. I have not been able to find any original transcription of this conversation in the Sharpe Papers.
19 Clayden, *Early Life of Rogers*, p. 174. Paine's attack on Burke is to be found in *Rights of Man*, ed. Eric Foner (Harmondsworth, 1985), p. 51.
20 *The Times*, 16 July 1791.
21 'Rogers Notebook', Sharpe Papers 41.
22 John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt Volume Two: The Reluctant Transition*, (London, 1983), p. 113.
23 Chapman appeared as a witness for the prosecution at Paine's trial on 18 Dec. 1792. For details, see *The Whole Proceedings on the Trial of an Information Exhibited Ex Officio by the King's Attorney General against Thomas Paine* (London, 1793), pp. 83–92.
24 James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble Esq*., 2 vols. (London, 1825), II: 47.

25 See *The Trial of Thomas Hardy, for High Treason, at the Sessions House in the Old Bailey, Taken in Short-hand by Joseph Gurney*, 4 vols. (London, 1795), III: 353.
26 Robert Merry to Samuel Rogers, 18 Jan. 1792, Sharpe Papers 15, fols. 203–4.
27 Joseph Mazzinghi [and Robert Merry], *The Magician No Conjuror, A Comic Opera in 3 Acts* (London, [1792]). *The Bon Ton Magazine* (Feb. 1792) believed the 'object of the satire was misapplied; and, besides, it was deficient in stage effect – of course, its success need not be described', p. 482, but reprinted some of the 'delightful' songs in this issue (pp. 489–90) and others in its March (p. 33) and July issues (p. 193). By the latter issue, the magazine was openly hostile to Merry's politics. Songs from the play were also reprinted in *The British Apollo; or, The Songster's Magazine* (London, 1792), pp. 54 and 117.
28 The play is in the Larpent Collection (Larpent MSS, LA933) of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
29 *Gazeteer*, 3 Feb. 1792.
30 See *Diary*, 3 Feb. 1792, and *London Chronicle*, 2–4 Feb. 1792.
31 Werkmeister, *Newspaper History,* pp. 92–3.
32 See Taylor, *Records of My Life*, I: 272–3, and Joseph Haslewood, *The Secret History of the Green Room*, 2 vols. (London, 1793), II: 181. In the 1795 edition of the *Secret History*, Haslewood made clear his disapprobation of Merry's political enthusiasm: 'His private friends regret this exclusive seduction of so rich an imagination, and think with regret upon the delightful companion which politics have taken from them' (II: 89).
33 Larpent MSS , LA933, fol. 32. The Gothic female incarceration plot was an obsession of Merry's. *Lorenzo* (1791), a play Merry wrote for his wife, does not have the contemporary French setting, but it does have a wicked father who keeps his daughter imprisoned in a castle. The motif appears again in more obviously Gothic guise in his late play *Fenelon* (1795) where a cruel abbess keeps a mother and daughter incarcerated until the intervention of an enlightened cleric.
34 Published in *European Magazine* (Nov. 1790), p. 388.
35 *Diary*, 3 Feb. 1792.
36 Larpent MSS, LA933, fol. 19.
37 Paine, *Rights of Man*, p. 182.
38 *The Political Miscellanies. Part the First* (London, 1787), pp. 89–91.
39 Larpent MSS, LA933, fol. 73.
40 [Charles Pigott], *The Jockey Club*, Part I, 12th edition (London, 1792), p. 139.
41 Charles Pigott, *A Political Dictionary: Explaining the True Meaning of Words* (London, 1795), p. 84.
42 The Pittachio prints have been usefully gathered together in John Barrell, *Exhibition Extraordinary!!: Radical Broadsides of the Mid 1790s* (Nottingham, 2001), pp. 9–19.
43 See the obituary in the *Monthly Magazine*, 7 (1799), pp. 255–8. The *Argus* from the period is missing, but one of the epigrams from this period printed in the obituary appears in the *Morning Chronicle*, 8 April 1792.
44 Larpent MSS, LA933, fol. 136.
45 Larpent MSS, LA933, fol. 110.
46 *The Times*, 3 Feb. 1792 and 4 Feb. 1792.
47 See John Barrell, "'An Entire Change of Performances?' The Politicisation of Theatre and the Theatricalisation of Politics in the Mid 1790s', *Lumen*, 17 (1998), pp. 11–49. Note that Jekyll, but not Merry, was listed among the cast of radicals satirised in the

anonymous pamphlet *The Decline and Fall, Death, Dissection, and Funeral Procession of His Most Contemptible Lowness the London Corresponding Society* (London, 1796), p. 14.

48 Larpent MSS, LA933, fol. 110.

49 Quoted in Donald E. Ginter, 'The Financing of the Whig Party Organization', *American Historical Review*, 71 (1966), p. 437, n. 51.

50 *Argus*, 8 May and 16 Nov. 1792.

51 See 'Godwin's diary', Dep. e. 200, Abinger Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

52 See The National Archives, London, TS 11/962/3508. Merry's name appears regularly in the minute book between 23 March and early June 1792, when he seems to have left for Paris. He was an enthusiastic proposer of other members during this period, including Colonel Keating, Thomas Lloyd, Samuel Rogers, and Dr Warner.

53 The National Archives, London, TS 11/951/3495. The contract for the shoes was given to Thomas Hardy.

54 On Monro's reports, see Erdman, *Commerce*, pp. 148, 202, 231, 242, 246, 262. At The National Archives, London, PRO 30/8/163 fols. 271–2, there is also a letter from Thomas Northey, dated 11 Dec. 1792, offering details of a society of British residents in Paris. Northey was unwilling to divulge names through the mail. Monro had first encountered Frost when the latter addressed a meeting of the LCS on 15 Nov. 1792, that is, a few days after the events in the coffee house for which he was later tried. Monro arrived in Paris three days before Frost on 20 Nov. according to his notes at the time (see TS 11/959/3505). Prior to Frost's trial in 1793, John Scott, Attorney General, wrote to the government to ask how they felt about information with regard to Monro's activities as a spy being revealed in court. See letter from John Scott Attorney General to Pitt, The National Archives, London, HO 48/3. In the event Monro did not appear and as a result the prosecution did not raise the matter of Frost presenting the address to the National Assembly (for which Monro was the only witness, as Scott points out in his letter). See *The Trial of John Frost for Seditious Words* (London, 1794). For two brilliant discussions of the coffee house incident and the trial of Frost, see James Epstein, '"Equality and No King": Sedition and Sociability – The Case of John Frost' in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770–1840*, ed. Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 43–59; and John Barrell, 'Coffee House Politicians', *Journal of British Studies*, 43 (2004), pp. 206–32.

55 See 'Godwin's diary'.

56 A series of letters from Merry to Rogers and another from Pigott to Rogers in the aftermath of the aborted flight to the continent are held at Sharpe 15 in the Special Collections of University College London. For an account of Pigott's political development in the 1790s, see my "'A Bold and Outspoken Man': The Strange Career of Charles Pigott II' in *Cultures of Whiggism: New Essays on English Literature and Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. David Womersley (Newark, 2005), pp. 330–50.

57 See Charles Pigott, *Persecution: The Case of Charles Pigott, Contained in the Defence He Had Prepared* (London, 1793).

58 'Charles Pigott to Samuel Rogers, 9 Nov. 1793', Sharpe 15, fols. 314

59 Sharpe 15, fols. 211–14.

60 There is a 1[d] edition (published together with 'the Holy War' – A New Song), with no date or place of publication in the collection of the National Library of Scotland at RB

s.445. It was also included in *The Hive of Modern Literature: A Collection of Essays, Narratives, Allegories, and Instructive Compositions* (Newcastle and London, [1795?]), pp. 283–6 and in *The Cabinet of Curiosities*, no. 5 (1795), pp. 150–53. The first number of the latter included several of the Pittachio satires.

61 See 'Godwin to Robert Merry, 20 Sep. 1796', Dep. c.514/21, Abinger Collection.

62 *Gentleman's Magazine*, 69 (1799), p. 254.

63 Boaden, *Memoirs of Kemble*, II: 47.

64 John Bernard, *Retrospections of America, 1797–1811*, ed. Bernard Bayle (New York, 1887), p. 124.

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Chapter 4

The Theatre of Crim. Con.: Thomas Erskine, Adultery and Radical Politics in the 1790s

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In 1797 a writer to the *St James's Chronicle* condemned the 'irruption of fashionable Licentiousness in Britain': 'In what a situation are we put! … On the one hand, a *Corresponding Society*, deluding the lower Orders; on the other, a *criminal conversation* Society, corrupting the morals of the middle and upper ranks'.[1] Social historians would agree that the 1790s represented a high water mark in eighteenth-century adultery: the number of divorces increased dramatically and public alarm intensified, apparent in a paper war against the vice which Donna Andrew claims has 'a Jeremiah-like, last days quality'.[2] This escalation in the number of divorce cases in the 1790s has been ascribed, in rather simplistic terms, to the influence of the French Revolution and in the case of Lawrence Stone's analysis to more controversial long-term developments, such as 'the rise of affective individualism, the ideal of the companionate marriage, and romanticism'.[3] The concomitant line of inquiry – how we might explain the politics of the 1790s in the light of the rise of adultery – has not received any significant attention, reflecting the continuing gender blindness of the political history of this decade, in spite of Joan Scott's polite critique of E.P. Thompson in the late 1980s.[4]

A crucial figure in considering the relationship between adultery and radical politics in the 1790s is Thomas Erskine, the barrister, Whig MP and later Lord Chancellor, best known for his defence of Hardy and Horne Tooke in the Treason Trials of 1794.[5] Another significant dimension of Erskine's legal career was his work as a barrister in trials for criminal conversation or crim. con. From the late 1780s, he appeared for both plaintiff and defendant in numerous divorce trials, using the fame achieved there, as well as income, to enhance his public reputation as a whole. He collaborated with the Lord Chief Justice, Lloyd Kenyon, in conducting what Stone has described as a 'reign of terror' against adulterers in the 1790s.[6] This dimension of Erskine's career has featured in accounts of him in an analogous way to how adultery is configured in relation to the politics of the 1790s: that is, it is regarded as marginal or tangential if it is recognised at all.[7] Crim. con. receives even less attention in David Lemmings's otherwise excellent entry on Erskine in the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* than it did in

the previous biography.[8] This contrasts with the views of Erskine's contemporaries who readily acknowledged the importance of crim. con. in his career. A 1799 assessment of Erskine claimed that 'in no part of his professional engagements has [he] deserved or acquired a higher reputation that in the mode of conducting trials for *crim. con.*', while the editor of his *Speeches* declared: 'None of the pleadings of Lord Erskine when at the bar exerted a greater interest, or were attended with greater success, than those in cases of adultery'.[9] Erskine's career as a whole has not received the attention it deserves, partly because he has fallen into what Annabel Patterson describes as the 'disciplinary chasm' separating political and legal history, but also because of the intrinsically theatrical nature of his work and temperament.[10] Hence Henry Brougham's portrait of Erskine, published in 1839, is primarily a study in effect rather than in more tangible legal or political achievement. Noting that it might be 'deemed trivial' or 'beneath a historian's province' to comment on the personal charisma of a statesman of such eminence, Brougham nonetheless focused on Erskine's 'noble figure', his 'eye that sparkles and pierces' and his 'graceful motion'. His magnetic pull on juries, according to Brougham, was such that he made it 'impossible [for them] to remove their looks from him when he had riveted and … fascinated them by his first glance'. His movements in court were those of 'a blood-horse, as light, as limber, as much betokening strength and speed'; his voice was of 'surpassing sweetness', his 'action', here being used in the Shakespearean sense of suiting the action to the word, was 'chaste, dignified, and appropriate'.[11] Brougham identifies Erskine the historical actor as literally that, a man whose place in British history was forged corporeally in a performance that is relayed as a source of considerable pleasure for the spectator, historian and, ultimately, the reader. In analysing Erskine we therefore confront the kind of interpretative difficulty faced by theatre historians when accounting for the power of a Garrick, a Siddons or a Kean. As Jacky Bratton has noted in relation to theatre history, 'our study is of something which is always-already irrevocably lost', a statement which is also applicable to the study of Erskine.[12] It is important to remind ourselves that the force of Erskine's case against the Crown during the Treason Trials, specifically his dismantling of the doctrine of constructive treason, was communicated not in print but as a performance, using voice, gesture and action and the space of the courtroom to communicate to the public at large. The physical feat of Erskine's seven-hour speech in defence of Hardy and the self-dramatisation that this entailed – he declared towards the end that he was 'scarcely able to stand up' – were crucial to his attempt to move the jury.[13] Erskine's theatricality is therefore not extrinsic to the politics of the 1790s but is in this sense fundamental and the argument I wish to make is that we need to develop ways of taking this theatricality properly into account. Firstly though, what do we mean by and with 'theatricality'?

The much debated 'turns' in historical and literary studies can also be described as theatrical turns (pun intended). Whether in the form of Geertzian 'deep play', Greenblattian self-fashioning or Butlerian performativity, theatricality has been crucial to the inter- and intra-disciplinary traffic which has characterised the Humanities in recent years which is perhaps why it is now receiving belated recognition in its own right in the form of special issues of journals, collections of

essays and conferences.[14] In British history, E.P. Thompson's version of theatricality in the form of his emphasis on theatre and counter-theatre as structuring class relations in the long eighteenth century has been seminal, influencing Iain McCalman's work on the cultures of ultra-radicalism, James Epstein's on political ritual, and my own study of the relationship between theatre and war.[15] Theatricality has also featured significantly in Burke studies, beginning with J.T. Boulton, and in that context has been the platform for a fruitful interaction between political and intellectual history, literary studies and cultural theory.[16] There has not been a parallel development, however, in studies of Paine, whose version of Enlightenment theatricality – the open theatre of the world – cries out for similar treatment. As yet though the study of 1790s theatricality as a distinctive phase in late Georgian theatricality as a whole is piecemeal and unsystematic. In the same way that Clara Tuite and I have argued for the importance of historicizing the category of sociability, I would suggest that we need to do something similar for theatricality: Tracy Davis's recent essay on the etymology of the term is an important first step and I want to return to her arguments in due course.[17] Foregrounding theatricality as an analytical tool and as a historical phenomenon in its own right may therefore suggest new perspectives on the 1790s, enabling us to identify the crisis of that decade as a crisis of theatricality. This chapter explores one aspect of this in the form of the career in crim. con. of Thomas Erskine. I want to focus on the period 1789–94 and three trials in particular – Parslow-Sykes of 1789, Duberly-Gunning of 1792 and Howard-Bingham from 1794.

Crim. con. differed from divorce trials in the ecclesiastical courts in that it was a civil action in which the husband sued the adulterer for loss of consortium in his wife: the amount of damages depended on the capacity to prove the wife's innocence and the husband's degree of culpability, the happiness of the marriage before it was violated by the seducer and the bonds of friendship or clientage between the men involved. Crim. con. therefore entailed more emphasis on the interpretation and evaluation of the marriage than was the case in divorces in the church courts which tended to focus on whether or not sexual intercourse had taken place because it was this 'sin' that constituted grounds for separation. One of the effects of crim. con. was to render the woman involved more passive by constructing her as the victim of a predatory seduction, often secondary to the importance of friendship between men. Beginning with the Parslow-Sykes case in 1789, Erskine, in collaboration with Kenyon, magnified these generic features of crim. con. Firstly, he exaggerated the gravity of the 'crime' of adultery by picking up Kenyon's suggestion in another trial that if unable to pay damages the adulterer should pay for his offence in his person i.e. be imprisoned.[18] Acting for the plaintiff, Parslow, Erskine argued that nothing could compensate his client for the injury he had suffered: Sykes deserved to rot in jail for violating Mrs Parslow's honour, even though there was no scope for such a punishment under civil law. Responding to Kenyon's crusading zeal, Erskine was therefore engaged in a deliberate attempt to destabilise the law as it stood in relation to adultery. Similarly, he attempted to amplify his client's loss by suggesting that Parslow had been deprived of not only the comfort and society of his wife but also of

prospective children by her: without children, Erskine declared, ‘the most splendid ornaments of life were disgusting; the palace, without these feelings, was no better than a dungeon!’[19] He also laid stress on the adultery as a violation of the bonds between men: Parslow and Sykes were ‘brother officers’, ‘men of honour’, bound by ties of a ‘sincere friendship’ which had been tragically broken by Sykes’s seduction of Mrs Parslow.[20] The focus on male homosociality in this and other crim. con. trials had a parallel in the dynamic created in the courtroom: not only did counsel often claim ties of friendship with both plaintiff and defendant, thereby enhancing their status as gentlemen, but the frequency of compliments, advice, and sometimes admonition passing between Kenyon and Erskine in particular created another powerful affective dimension to the theatre of crim. con. in the 1790s. According to Brougham, Kenyon ‘admired and loved’ Erskine ‘fervently, and used to appear as vain of him as a schoolmaster of his favourite pupil’.[21]

Even more significant, however, than the exaggeration of the generic features of crim. con was the manner in which Erskine conducted his argument – his striving for sentimental affect and apparent disregard for how far he needed to go in order to achieve this. He encouraged the jury to imagine Mr Parslow’s agony as when his wife failed to return from a carriage outing with Sykes: ‘He waited until night came on – but such a night – O Heavens! – such a night he passed, and nothing on this side the grave could be reward sufficient to pass it over again … ten, eleven, and the hour of midnight came, but not the wife – benumbed and stupifed by contending passions, it might be said of him, in the language of the almost-inspired poet – “But, O what damned minutes tells he ‘o’er, Who doats, yet doubts; suspects, yet strongly loves”’.[22] The reference to Shakespeare in the quote from *Othello* was echoed in Erskine’s reply to the case for the defence. He claimed that ‘the enormity of the defendant’s guilt was not only without a parallel in real life, but also beyond the fiction of even poetry itself; it was beyond the copies which that great master of description of the human *heart*, *Shakespeare himself*, had given’.[23] In his speech for the defence Bearcroft attempted to draw the jury’s attention to how they were being emotionally manipulated by his opponent’s performance but his argument was to no avail: Parslow was awarded the phenomenal sum of £10,000 in damages, cementing Erskine’s reputation and the notoriety of crim. con. at a single stroke.

The Parslow-Sykes case highlights how much of Erskine’s impact relied on the theatricality and also the literariness of his court-room behaviour. Imaginative literature had played an important part in Erskine’s education. According to Brougham and other commentators, he had immersed himself in ‘the old English authors’, Shakespeare and Milton, as well as moderns such as Dryden and Pope.[24] The defender of British liberty, trial by jury and the freedom of the press was therefore as much a product of literary culture, specifically print culture, as of his legal training: his career is one manifestation of what Clifford Siskin has termed the ‘work of writing’ in the eighteenth century.[25] Like Burke’s, Erskine’s eloquence was flamboyantly self-conscious in its striving for effect: like Burke too his speeches experimented with the capacity of language, especially figurative language, to make things happen. In conducting their campaign against adultery Kenyon and Erskine were very much aware that their arguments and performances

would not be confined to the courtroom but could be addressed to a wider public by means of the print media, which throughout the eighteenth century had commodified the scandal of adultery, particularly after 1770 when the Grosvenor case involving the King's brother had set a precedent for both the scope and the generic modes in which adultery could be disseminated.[26] From early in his legal career Erskine had been careful to ensure that copies were made of his celebrated speeches.[27] The radical publisher James Ridgway produced editions of a number of trials in which Erskine was involved and in 1810 a selection of his speeches.[28] Ridgway published an edition of the Parslow-Sykes trial and was one of a number of booksellers competing to produce accounts of the Gunning-Duberly trial in February 1792. Erskine appeared in this case for the plaintiff James Duberly, supplier of clothing to a regiment commanded by Major-General John Gunning, brother of the famous beauties the Gunning sisters, who owed his career to their ascent into the aristocracy. Gunning was married to the novelist Susannah Minifie, by whom he had a daughter, Elizabeth, who also later became a writer. In 1791 the Gunning family was involved in a scandal of labyrinthine complexity involving the daughter, forged letters and various male aristocrats, as a result of which the General expelled his wife and daughter from his house. The affair, labelled by Walpole the 'Gunninghiad', was played out in the print media, the parties involved publishing detailed, conflicting versions of the scandal, the outcome of which was to bury the truth of the affair in obscurity.[29]

The notoriety of the Gunnings stimulated interest in the crim. con. trial involving the General. As in the Parslow-Sykes case, Erskine tried to melodramatise the affair for sentimental effect. He countered the defence's construction of the case as farce – General Gunning and a friend Mrs Gardiner were said to have formed a foursome with the Duberlys, playing 'blindman's buff' in the dark – by depicting Rebecca Duberly as the hapless victim of an elderly libertine. Erskine read out in court her last letter to her husband and when she referred to her children – 'Teach them not to despise their mother' – he broke off, declaring 'Gentlemen, I cannot read the remainder. Indeed I have not nerves … I am almost tempted to exclaim with the poet, "*Are there no stones in heaven but those that serve for thunder*?"'[30] The poet, once again, is Shakespeare, the reference being to Othello's response to Emilia's revelation of Iago's treachery, after Othello has murdered Desdemona.[31] Gunning himself was not accorded any tragic dignity by Erskine, who represented him in terms of the Gothic grotesque: in phrases which were repeated in the press, Erskine branded Gunning as '*this hoary, this shameful, this detestable lecher*';[32] Rebecca Duberly 'had descended *from a celestial bed to prey on garbage*', quoting Hamlet on Gertrude's marriage to Claudius. Even the opposing counsel, Bearcroft, was not immune from the contaminating effects of Gunning's viciousness; 'instead of argument', Erskine claimed, Bearcroft had 'a scroll of slander given him to vomit out'.[33] Bearcroft's response, as in the Parslow-Sykes case, was to draw attention to Erskine's theatricality. He acknowledged the 'effect' of Erskine's eloquence and physicality – what he termed his 'endowments' of 'nature' – and how he had driven the jury to tears, but asked that consideration of the facts of the case be not clouded by emotion.[34] Erskine responded by representing his courtroom behaviour as a

transparent communication between himself and his audience that affirmed feeling as the only true grounds of judgement in the case. Bearcroft was contending, claimed Erskine, 'that all that you felt as men, as husbands, as members of society, did not arise from the principles of honour, of virtue, of religion; did not depend at all upon the evidence but upon some mysterious powers which he supposes to belong to me. *Gentlemen, I know myself*, – I am not endowed with that understanding which he has pleased to bestow on me, but I know that I possess a good and a feeling heart, which makes me express myself in a warm manner'.[35] Erskine was placing at the centre of the case the performance of his knowledge of himself, his own authenticity, anticipating, as Judith Pascoe has astutely observed, the 'egotistical sublime' or romantic theatricality of Wordsworth.[36] Moreover, the performance of selfhood here has a gendered meaning: Erskine was implicitly contrasting his transparent gentlemanly virtue with the skulking, hoary decrepitude of the Gothic Gunning, echoing the emphasis on the manliness of the 'open theatre of the world' in Paine's *Rights of Man*. (The Gunning crim. con. case took place at exactly the same time as the publication of the second part of Paine's work).

However, if Erskine 'knew' himself in the theatre of crim. con., the self that he realised was volatile, as suggested by the language of abjection – the references to vomit and decay – and also by the differing versions of the trial in the print media. There were five texts of the trial, the most of any crim. con. case in the 1790s, which can be attributed to the topical notoriety of the Gunnings, but also to the celebrity of Erskine himself. They range from Ridgway's edition to, on the one hand, a highly edited version published by Aitkin and, on the other, an edition purported to represent 'the only Authentic Copy' which is much longer than the Ridgway text.[37] Simply by being more copious, this latter edition of the trial, published by Robertson, gives more space to Erskine and hence greater proximity to the intensity of his courtroom performance. Rather than ameliorating the 'effect' of Erskine, print culture therefore had the capacity to magnify his theatricality, complicating his attempt to authorise himself both in court and in collaboration with Ridgway. These promiscuous representations of Erskine in print also aligned him with what he had opposed himself to in the trial – the compulsively self-publicizing Gunning clan, dominated by the fertile imaginations of Susannah Minifie Gunning and her daughter Elizabeth. The 'threat' of General Gunning was therefore not that of a decadent patriarchal order but of the effeminizing, commercialised late Georgian public sphere of which Erskine himself was a product: if he truly 'knew' himself, it was as the Gunnings' mirror, not their other.

Erskine's apotheosis in crim. con. was the Howard-Bingham trial of February 1794, the year of the Treason Trials. On this occasion he was acting for the defendant in a case involving scions of the aristocracy: the plaintiff, Bernard Edward Howard was the presumptive heir of the Duke of Norfolk, while the defendant, the Hon. Richard Bingham, was the son and heir of Lord Lucan. The errant wife, Lady Elizabeth Howard, née Bellasis, was the daughter of the Earl of Fauconberg. Erskine's speech in the case became one of the most famous of his career. Brougham described it as 'of exquisite beauty', ranking with his speeches for Stockdale and Hardy as among Erskine's 'noble performances'.[38] His coup in the Howard-Bingham trial was in overturning the logic of crim. con. to suggest that

it was the husband, rather than the adulterer, who had in fact seduced Lady Elizabeth. The latter had been compelled by her family to marry Howard for dynastic reasons; her prior and enduring love for Bingham, Erskine argued, was the true marriage in the case. In order to reinforce his representation of the Howard marriage as 'a scene of horror and of sorrow', Erskine offered an alternative image of what conjugality should be, encouraging his courtroom audience to envisage a woman encountering the first night of marriage: 'endeavouring to conceal sensations which modesty forbids the sex, however enamoured, too openly to reveal: wishing beyond expression, what she must not express; and seemingly resisting what she burns to possess'.[39] The 'crime' of the Howard marriage was that Lady Elizabeth Howard had not experienced her first night of marriage in this way but had approached it with revulsion and horror. Erskine's voyeuristic scenario, which he explicitly theatricalised by describing himself as drawing up 'the curtains of this blessed marriage-bed', effectively acknowledged women's rights to sexual desire in marriage.[40] He combined this with a critique of aristocratic privilege – Lady Elizabeth had been 'stretched upon' the marriage bed 'as upon a rack, as a legal victim to the shrine of heraldry' – and a plea for the reformation of manners.[41] If the aristocracy of England would mend its ways, marrying according to 'Affection and Prudence', and avoiding the 'tasteless circles of debauchery', the divisions that were currently shaking society would be no more: 'we should see our country living as one large and harmonious family, which will never take place amidst vice and corruption, by wars or treaties, informations, *ex officio*, or all the tricks and artifices of the State'.[42] Erskine was attempting to amplify the political meanings of crim. con., in this case linking it discursively with the climate of paranoia and surveillance that could culminate in the Treason Trials eight months later.

Once again, Erskine buttressed his argument with reference to dramatic texts: on this occasion, however, the allusion was not to Shakespeare, but to two well-known Georgian pathetic tragedies, Nicholas Rowe's *The Fair Penitent* and *Douglas* by John Home. In Rowe's play the heroine Calista loses her virginity to the villain Lothario on the eve of her marriage to her father's choice as husband, Altamont. As played by a succession of leading actresses throughout the eighteenth century, the character of Calista exemplified the culture's fascination with the theatricality of female abjection: she was the emblematic fallen woman. Erskine quoted from a speech in which Calista warns her husband, who is ignorant of her seduction by Lothario, of their fatal incompatibility: 'I tell thee, Altamont,/ Such hearts as ours were never pair'd above:/ Ill suited to each other; join'd, not match'd;/ Some sullen influence, a foe to both;/ Has wrought this fatal marriage, to undo us'.[43] Erskine encouraged his audience to imagine Lady Elizabeth addressing these words to her husband – 'I think I almost hear her addressing him in the language of the poet', changing 'Altamont' to 'Howard'.[44] (Similarly, later in the play he staged Howard's recognition of the alienation of his wife's affections by paraphrasing a speech from Home's *Douglas* in which Lord Randolph declares that his wife Lady Matilda Randolph had never loved him; Erskine substituted Elizabeth for Matilda).[45] By adapting the speech from *The Fair Penitent*, Erskine was not only playing the female part in the form of Calista, he was also invoking

the iconic reputation of the actress Sarah Siddons, who was renowned for her performances of both Rowe's heroine and Lady Randolph. Erskine was a friend and supporter of the actress: in a later crim. con. trial he praised her as 'the greatest and brightest character that has ever appeared on the stage … an ornament to her sex as well as to her profession'.[46]

Interpreting Erskine's performance in the Howard-Bingham and other trials as 'Siddonian' may be the key to defining what was distinctive about his theatricality, as well as what made it problematic. For all those such as Brougham who were admirers of Erskine's oratorical style, there were also many detractors. He was caricatured by the opposition press and later by the *Anti-Jacobin* as 'Counsellor Ego' or the 'Oratorical Swooner', whose courtroom histrionics, as Judith Pascoe has argued, rendered him vulnerable to suspicions of effeminacy. Pascoe quotes a report in the *True Briton* at the height of the Treason Trials: 'An appeal to the feelings of the Jury is always to be expected as a thing of course; but that appeal should be made with temperate dignity, not with the meretricious parade of an *actor*', 'meretricious', as Pascoe notes, meaning behaving 'in a way typical of a harlot, or by alluring through false show'.[47] In this case anti-theatricality and misogyny are synonymous. In the Howard-Bingham trial, Erskine's meretriciousness entailed more than an appeal to the feelings of the jury; it also represented an identification with the role of the adulterous woman, as when he 'voiced' Lady Elizabeth as Calista, or rather Siddons as Calista as Lady Elizabeth. By staging or ventriloquising the abjection of the adulteress, Erskine risked the effeminization of his own gendered authority. Moreover, the exaggeration of the affective dimensions of male homosociality, as in the Parslow-Sykes case, not to mention the homosociality of the crim. con. courtroom, had the potential to destabilise normative categories of masculinity: in a later crim. con. case, which involved accusations of sodomy, not explicitly raised in court, Erskine claimed that he was walking on 'a volcano', and that he was 'prepared, and ready to meet' the hydra of scandal.[48] It was a 'volcano' which was partly of his own making, the result of what Stone describes as the increasingly 'reckless' conduct of both Erskine and Kenyon in the theatre of crim. con.[49]

Invoking Siddons as a point of reference in the Howard-Bingham trial, if only indirectly, was important for Erskine as a means of negotiating these complications of gender. Siddons's distinctive status in late Georgian culture was secured by her formidable creative powers that enabled her to transcend the pejorative associations of femininity to assume the distinction of 'manly' genius. Her achievement, as Laura J. Rosenthal has argued, lay in her capacity to combine the positively feminine aura of the beautiful with the masculine power of the sublime.[50] Erskine's theatricality can therefore be regarded as comparable to the creative androgyny celebrated in the Georgian period as the 'genius' of Siddons or of her alter ego, Shakespeare.[51] Rather than exposing him to accusations of effeminacy, the mantle of Siddons or Shakespeare in fact acted as a protective shield, a powerful cultural legitimacy for his own self-magnification in the public sphere. The attack on Erskine as the 'oratorical swooner' or legal harlot therefore suggests a permeability between the discourses of crim. con. and politics, which Erskine himself was willing to exploit when he linked the Howard-Bingham trial to

the secret state of 1794. The stigmatization of Erskine's eloquence as unmanning, as excessive and self-dramatizing, echoes criticism of Burke, whose *Reflections*, like crim. con. disturbed by domesticating the state and politicizing the family.[52] It is this exercise of imagination, the discursive categories, political, social and gendered, thereby transgressed and the means by which it was achieved – an extravagance of language and gesture, a dancing on the volcano – that constitutes the distinctive theatricality in the early 1790s of both Burke and Erskine.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the meanings of theatricality in late Georgian culture. In an attempt to introduce some clarity to the conceptual miasma surrounding theatricality, Tracy Davis has gone back to the writer who first coined the term, Thomas Carlyle, in 1837, suggesting that what he meant by theatricality is not necessarily anti-theatrical, as the *OED* editors have claimed. Davis argues that theatricality in the age of reform anticipates Brecht's alienation effect in meaning a capacity for the reflexivity that is the concomitant of sympathy and essential for the functioning of the public sphere. We should be able to identify or sympathise with others but we also need to conceptualise and distance ourselves in the act of doing this, to recognise our own theatricality, in order to make a space for political and social change. Davis's essay therefore argues for an alternative definition of theatricality in relation to Georgian Britain, one which avoids the preoccupation of the period, and ours, with theatricality as a sign of inauthenticity, of false-show or the meretricious. She goes so far as to offer a 'clarification' of theatricality for the *OED*: '*Theatricality: n. A spectator's dédoublement resulting from a sympathetic breach (active dissociation, alienation, self-reflexivity) effecting a critical stance toward an episode in the public sphere, including but not limited to the theatre*'.[53] However, I would suggest that Carlyle's theatricality, as interpreted by Davis, is not necessarily the theatricality of Erskine. The difference lies in the meaning of sympathy against which theatricality is defined: Davis interprets this sympathy to threaten or dissolve subjectivity by producing an affective identification with the other. The sympathy that is apparent in Erskine's courtroom performances is closer, however, to its first definition in the *OED*: 'A (real or supposed) affinity between certain things, by virtue of which they are similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence, affect or influence one another (esp. in some occult way), or attract or tend towards each other'. Rather than being identified with compassion for the sufferings of another, and self-consciousness on the part of the sympathizing subject, this is sympathy as a communicative force, producing 'affinity', attraction or influence. According to Brougham, Erskine's power of communication had an almost erotic energy: 'he knew every avenue to the heart, and could at will make all its chords vibrate to the touch'. When he examined a witness 'he appeared to have entered the mind of the person he was dealing with, and to be familiar with all that was passing within it'.[54] Erskine's great quality, according to Brougham's review of his *Speeches* in the *Edinburgh Review*, was 'that sort of sympathy which subsists between an observant speaker and his audience, – which communicates to him, as he goes on, their feelings under what he is saying, – deciphers the language of their looks, – and even teaches him, without regarding what he sees, to adapt his words to the state of their minds, by merely attending to his own.' The 'sensation' of Erskine's

performance, according to Brougham, was ‘electrical’, baffling ‘all power of description’.[55] His power, like that of Siddons, was a mode of theatrical communication that created a galvanizing effect of sympathy between the performer and audience, a sympathy that in the Treason Trials had political meaning and effect. After Hardy’s trial, Thomas Holcroft praised Erskine’s performance, noting how he had aroused the political emotions of the jury: ‘their affections were expanded, and they glowed with that divine enthusiasm, in the behalf of justice, which strength of feeling and genius like yours only could infuse’.[56]

In 1794, therefore, the disjunction between theatricality and sympathy that Davis identifies in relation to Carlyle did not exist. Theatricality *was* sympathy and vice versa; an alienation effect was superfluous because a political meaning – Holcroft’s ‘enthusiasm’ – was already created in the synapse between actor and audience. Such an experiment in feeling was profoundly risky, however, because the limits of communication and what would be unearthed could not be easily be controlled: Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*, the novel of the Treason trials, explores these issues in the fraught confrontation between Caleb and the Burkean Falkland, its theatre, appropriately enough, being the courtroom. The problem of early 1790s theatricality, as refracted in Burke’s *Reflections* and in the Treason Trials, is therefore not that of false show or inauthenticity but the problem of unleashing the power of sympathetic feeling as a mode of political communication. Crim. con. is important because it provides the context by which we can recognise this. It highlights how a theatricality of sympathy could destabilise boundaries between the private and public, masculine and feminine, the familial and the social, rulers and ruled. As such, crim. con. acts as a kind of proscenium arch for the 1790s; it theatricalises Erskine’s theatricality in the Treason Trials and therefore performs a kind of alienation effect in its own right, not only for the politics of the period but also for its historiography. David Lemmings comments that Erskine’s ‘life story and its representation belong to the Romantic period rather than the Enlightenment’: I would claim that we are only beginning to appreciate how ‘Romantic’ he truly is.[57]

Notes

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1 *St James’s Chronicle*, 10–12 Aug. 1797.

2 Donna T. Andrew, ‘“Adultery à-la-Mode”: privilege, the law and attitudes to adultery, 1770–1809’, *History*, 82 (1997), pp. 5–23 (p. 17). The standard account of divorce in the eighteenth century can be found in Lawrence Stone’s *Road to Divorce: England 1530–1987* (Oxford, 1990); see also Randolph Trumbach, *Sex and the Gender Revolution: Volume One: Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London* (Chicago, 1998); Susan Staves, ‘Money for Honor: Damages for Criminal Conversation’, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 11 (1982), pp. 279–97; Katherine Binhammer, ‘The Sex

Panic of the 1790s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 6 (1996), pp. 409–34; David Turner, *Fashioning Adultery: Gender, Sex and Civility in England, 1660–1740* (Cambridge, 2002); Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660–1800* (Cambridge, 2003).

3 Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p. 239.

4 Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), chap. 4.

5 For Erskine's role in the Treason Trials see Alan Wharam, *The Treason Trials, 1794* (Leicester and London, 1992) and John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death* (Oxford, 2000). See also Judith Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship* (Ithaca, 1997), chap. 2.

6 Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p. 273.

7 The two twentieth century studies of Erskine address crim. con. only briefly: see Lloyd Paul Stryker, *For the Defence; Thomas Erskine, The Most Enlightened Liberal of his Times, 1750–1823* (London, 1949) and John Hostetettler, *Thomas Erskine and Trial by Jury* (Chichester, 1996).

8 David Lemmings, 'Erskine, Thomas, first Baron Erskine (1750–1823)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/view/article/8873, accessed 4 Jan. 2006]. See also Lemmings's *Professors of the Law: Barristers and English Legal Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000).

9 *Public Characters of 1799–1800* (London, 1799), pp. 62–3; *Speeches of Thomas Lord Erskine*, 2 vols (London, 1870), II: 512. See also John Lord Campbell, *The Lives of the Lord Chancellors and Keepers of the Great Seal of England*, 7 vols (London, 1846–47), VI: 530: 'It was in actions for *criminal conversation* that he was thought chiefly to excel'.

10 Annabel Patterson, *Nobody's Perfect: A New Whig Interpretation of History* (New Haven and London, 2002), pp. 202–203.

11 Henry Lord Brougham, *Historical Sketches of Statesmen who Flourished at the Time of George III* (London, 1839), p. 237. The power of Erskine's voice and his appeal to the emotions had been noted previously in 1794: 'it is ERSKINE only that captivates the ear, by the charms of sound; he alone conveys his arguments though the medium of the heart; he alone knows how to affect, to rouse, to sooth …', *Sketches of the Characters of The Hon. Thomas Erskine, and James Mingay, Esq. Interspersed with Anecdotes and Professional Strictures* (London, 1794), pp, 16–17.

12 Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 7.

13 Wharam, *Treason Trials*, p. 170. For a discussion of the theatricality of the Scottish sedition trials see Michael T. Davis, 'Prosecution and Radical Discourse during the 1790s: The Case of the Scottish Sedition Trials', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 33, 3 (2005), pp. 148–58.

14 See *SubStance*, 31, 2 & 3 (2002); *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 43, 3 (2002); Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (eds), *Theatricality* (Cambridge, 2003); 'Theatricality, History, Theory', American Comparative Literature Association Conference at Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, March 23–26, 2006. The concept of performativity and its relationship to theatricality has also been subject to extensive debate, consideration of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. See seminal essays in Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Performativity and Performance* (New York and London, 1995); Janelle Reinelt, 'The Politics of Discourse: Performativity meets Theatricality', *SubStance*, 31, 2 & 3 (2002), pp. 201–15; and

Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis, 'Theatricality: an Introduction' in *Theatricality*, ed. Postlewait and Davis, pp. 1–39. See also W. B. Worthen's discussion of 'dramatic performativity' in his *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 1–27. For applications of performativity to Romantic period culture see Angela Esterhammer, *The Romantic Performative: Language and Action in British and German Romanticism* (Stanford, 2001); Michael Simpson, *Closet Performances: Political Exhibition and Prohibition in the Dramas of Byron and Shelley* (Stanford, 1998); Alex Dick, 'Romantic Drama and the Performative: A Reassessment', *European Romantic Review*, 14 (2003), pp. 97–115.

15 E.P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture', *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), pp. 382–405; Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge, 1988); James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790–1850* (Oxford, 1994); Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society 1793–1815* (Oxford, 1995).

16 James T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (London, 1963). See also, for example, P.H. Melvin, 'Burke on Theatricality and Revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36 (1975), pp. 447–68; Paul Hindson and Tim Gray, *Burke's Dramatic Theory of Politics* (Aldershot, 1988); Mary Jacobus, '"That Great Stage Where Senators Perform": *Macbeth* and the Politics of Romantic Theatre' in *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference: Essays on The Prelude* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 33–63; Steven Blakemore (ed.), *Burke and the French Revolution: Bicentennial Essays* (Athens, 1992); Tom Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender, and Political Economy in Revolution* (Cambridge, 1993); Gillian Russell, 'Burke's Dagger: Theatricality, Politics and Print Culture in the 1790s', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 20 (1997), pp. 1–16; Siraj Ahmed, 'The Theater of the Civilized Self: Edmund Burke and the East India Trials', *Representations*, 78 (2002), pp. 28–55.

17 Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (eds), *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770–1840* (Cambridge, 2002); Tracy C. Davis, 'Theatricality and Civil Society' in *Theatricality*, ed. Postlewait and Davis, pp. 127–55.

18 *Trial for Adultery in Westminster Hall, December 9, 1789, before Lord Kenyon, John Parslow, Esq. Plaintiff, and Francis William Sykes, Esq. Defendant, for Criminal Conversation with the Plaintiff's Wife* (London, 1789), p. 13.

19 Ibid., pp. 12–13.

20 Ibid., pp. 2, 3, 7.

21 Brougham, *Historical Sketches*, p. 244.

22 *Trial for Adultery in Westminster Hall*, pp. 8–9.

23 Ibid., p. 42.

24 Brougham, *Historical Sketches*, p. 240: 'Shakespeare he was more familiar with than almost any man of his age; and Milton he nearly had by heart'. See also Campbell: 'Laboriously and systematically he went through a course of English literature', *Lives of the Lord Chancellors*, VI: 377.

25 Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700–1830* (Baltimore and London, 1998), p. 2.

26 For an account of the history of adultery trial literature after 1760 see Sarah Lloyd and Gillian Russell, *Scandal Sheets: Adultery, Publicity and Theatricality in Georgian England*, in preparation.

27 Lemmings, ‘Erskine, Thomas, first Baron Erskine (1750–1823)’.

28 Thomas Erskine, *The Speeches of the Hon. Thomas Erskine, When at the Bar, on Subjects Connected with the Liberty of the Press, and Against Constuctive Treasons*, 4 vols (London, 1810).

29 Horace Walpole, *The Correspondence of Horace Walpole*, ed. W.S. Lewis (New Haven, 1937–83), XI: 185. For an account of the affair see Carolyn D. Williams, ‘General Tilney and the Maidens all Forlorn: typecasting in Northanger Abbey’, *Women’s Writing*, 5 (1998), pp. 41–62. I am grateful to Clara Tuite for drawing my attention to this article.

30 *Trial between James Duberly, Esq. Plaintiff, and Major-General Gunning, Defendant, for Criminal Conversation* (London, 1792).

31 In that Othello’s line is said as he tries to stab Iago, fatally wounding Emilia instead, the reference was an implicit demand for a punitive response to Gunning’s ‘crime’: it also allowed Erskine to appropriate the grandiloquence of Shakespeare’s tragic hero.

32 *Trial between James Duberly*, p. 39.

33 Ibid., pp. 32, 35.

34 Ibid., p. 20.

35 Ibid., p. 32. My emphasis.

36 Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality*, p. 65.

37 *Gunning’s Trial, Five Thousand Pounds Damages* (London, 1792); *The Trial of General Gunning, for Criminal Conversation with Mrs. Duberly* (London, 1792); *General Gunning. Five Thousand Pounds Damages* (London, 1792); *The Trial at Large between James Duberley, Esq. Plaintiff, and General Gunning, Defendant, for Criminal Conversation with the Wife of the Plaintiff* (London, 1792).

38 Brougham, *Historical Sketches*, p. 242.

39 *The Whole of the Trial of the Hon. Richard Bingham, for Adultery with Lady Elizabeth Howard* (London, 1794), p. 28.

40 Ibid., p. 27.

41 Ibid., p. 28.

42 Ibid., pp. 31–2.

43 Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent* in *The British Theatre*, ed. Elizabeth Inchbald, 25 vols. (London, 1808), X:21.

44 *The Whole of the Trial of the Hon. Richard Bingham*, p. 29.

45 Ibid., p. 35.

46 Erskine’s speech for the defence in the case of Esten v the Duke of Hamilton for criminal conversation, *Morning Chronicle* 23 Feb. 1797. For a discussion of this trial and Erskine’s relationship with Siddons see Lloyd and Russell, *Scandal Sheets*.

47 Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality*, pp. 48, 50, 52.

48 *Trial for Adultery. The Whole Proceedings of the Trial of John Belenger Gawler, Esquire, for Criminal Conversation with Lady Valentia* (London, 1799), pp. 17, 13.

49 Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p. 275.

50 Laura J. Rosenthal, ‘The Sublime, the Beautiful, “The Siddons”’ in *The Clothes that Wear Us: Essays on Dressing and Transgressing in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Jessica Munns and Penny Richards (Newark, 1999), pp. 56–79 (p. 70).

51 Siddons’s articulation of the genius of Shakespeare and its affect on Romanticism is discussed by Julie Carlson in *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge, 1993).

52 Erskine's representation of Lady Elizabeth Howard, 'stretched upon the rack' of privilege, owes much to Burke's Marie Antoinette; both orators, of course, were fans of Siddons, who in the *Reflections* is central to Burke's conceptualization of the polity as patent theatre.
53 Davis, 'Theatricality and Civil Society', p. 145.
54 Brougham, *Historical Sketches*, pp. 238, 241.
55 *Edinburgh Review* 16 (1810), p. 108, attributed to Brougham in *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900*, ed. Walter E. Houghton, 5 vols. (Toronto, 1966), I: 447, 449.
56 Quoted Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), p. 347.
57 Lemmings, 'Erskine, Thomas, first Baron Erskine (1750–1823)'.

Chapter 5

Loyalty in an Age of Conspiracy: The Oath-Filled Civil War in Ireland 1795–1799

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I have often asked men who I knew to be disloyal what all this outrage and combination of oaths was intended for, and they all answer, "to obtain a reform in Parliament": at the same time, declare most solemnly that they are steady in their attachment to the King, and that they do not wish for the French to make a landing among us. . . . Every Person who has not joined in the general mass of insurgents has been disarmed and their houses greatly injured, and any who are resolute and have courage eno' to give them resistance are threatened to be murdered; in fact every creature here has either joined them, or is compelled thro' fear of life and property to give way to them.

Edward Moore, Aughmailoy, Co. Tyrone to John Lees, 30 March 1797,
Rebellion Papers 620/29/142

A few of my parishioners who have been forced to *unite* in order to save themselves and families from destruction have been privately with me (for there is a watch upon every body that comes near me); from these I have got much information, as renders it necessary to take my family into Armagh.

Rev. Charles M. Warburton, Armagh, to Bishop of Ferns, 12 April 1797,
Rebellion Papers 620/29/223

I have endeavoured to bring over to government party many of our vicinity so to sign to a paper or declaration by which all of us would solemnly shew and testify our firm allegiance to our Sovereign Lord King, George III. This proposal was rejected or utterly denyed by the major part of my congregations to whom I in particular applied wishing em to declare openly and publicly their reddiness at the risk of their lives and propertys to defend the prerogatives of our good King and constitution against all foreign and domestic enimys. I think it marvelous why these people who have previously swore allegiance to our good King should now deny subscribing themselves willing to defend the king and constitution against all enimys of both. But I see and understand that the people in general are so intoxicated with the blasphemous doctrine of Thomas Paine and his pupils so that

they deceive emselves in imagining that the oath of allegiance, government ordered or appointed to be taken, was compulsory and so it did not bind em to observe.

Father James McCarry, Carrickfergus, to Edward Cooke, 2 January 1798, Rebellion Papers 620/35/8

Sheweth that Petitioner is now about 21 years of Age, that in May last a number of People came to his House for the purpose of Swearing him an United Irishman and that he was prevailed on so to do from the dread and apprehension of taking Petitioners life if he refused them. That since that period or before he never joined any Rebels whatsoever or was ever known to be in any Riot which was fully proved at his trial and certified by three magistrates.

Petition of Daniel Costigan, labourer of Balyclery near Roscrea, King's County, State Prisoners' Petitions 93

Now under sentence of transportation and confined in the Gaol of Wexford, most humbly Sheweth That Petitioner was forced to join the Rebels in order to save his life as instant death would have been the consequence of a Refusal, he did not act in any Manner but as a private Man nor in any other Capacity. That Petitioner never was guilty of murder, nor any kind of Plundering, nor did he commit any Act or Acts of Cruelty. That Petitioner has a wife and four small Children, an old decrepid Father, with a Sister who is a Widow with seven children whose sole dependance for Support is on the Industry of Petitioner.

Petition of Darby Ryan, Wexford, 24 October 1798, State Prisoners' Petitions 270

Farmer, Now Confined on the Tender in the River. Humbly Sheweth That Petitioner was Forcibly taken away by the Rebells, with two of his Brothers, his brothers found Means to escape and Returned to their Homes. That your petitioner found it impossible to Allude the Watch over him in Consequence of his Brothers Getting away. That Petitioner was brought by the Rebells to the County Meath, where he was taken Prisoner and sent on board the Tender where he is now confined upwards of nine weeks. That Petitioner would never from his own Principalls have any Connection with the Rebells but Ever made it his Study to Support himself by his Industry.

Petition of Anthony Kavanagh, Mulone, Co. Wexford, September 1798, State Prisoners' Papers 176

Introduction

The struggle between the authorities and the United Irishmen for the hearts and minds of the Irish people in the years leading up to the 1798 rebellion may be pursued at a number of levels: relatively openly in the propaganda of the time; more opaquely in the quest for control of the processes of the law and of the jury rooms of the assize circuits; and very indistinctly in the intense local conflicts which sought, by the administering of oaths, to bend the will of the community towards either the status quo or revolution. A war of oaths – of allegiance to king and constitution on the one side and of secret commitment to political, sometimes

social, revolution and a French invasion on the other – began in earnest in 1795 and continued even after the rebellion. This struggle was important at the time, and continues to be significant for an understanding of the period leading up to the rebellion, because its objectives brought into the spotlight the issues of the scale of commitment, and the fluctuations in opinion, of the whole adult population of Ireland, in a period of acute upheaval. For political activists on both sides there may have been a simple, if stark, choice to be made, but for many, if not most, ordinary people this was a very delicate situation, for it was to squeeze them between the Scylla of vertical loyalty to traditional landlord authority and the Charybdis of horizontal loyalty to neighbours already committed to subversion.

The widespread experience among the Irish of reluctantly occupying the space between two implacable forces does not feature strongly in most interpretations of the years leading up to the rebellion in Ireland in 1798. The historical construction of the memory, or, rather, memories, of 1798 over the past two centuries has not found room for the ambiguities, ambivalences, equivocations and uncertainties expressed by the actors – or should it be victims? – cited above, who represent but a tiny sample of suppliers of a much larger body of similar evidence. Their attitudes and feelings could subsequently have been depicted in story and in art, but they were not. Instead, great moments of commemoration, as in 1898 and 1998, sought to create a nation's history that answered contemporary needs, leaving no room for the personal hesitations, neutrality and somersaults so common during the 1790s. The bold statue of the determined peasant in the city of Wexford, pike firmly grasped, sleeves rolled up for action and his chest swelled out – but, oddly, without a hat, *de rigeur* in 1798 – or the statue of the young peasant with unsheathed sword being inspired by his priest in Enniscorthy, represent an uncomplicated late nineteenth-century representation of the rebellion that helped to forge a nationalist unity, but at the expense of a more subtle understanding both of the difficulties of living through a period of social dislocation and of the 'varieties of Irishness'.[1] As Nancy Curtin has put it, 'Nationalist myths comfort and affirm, but still exclude'.[2]

Similarly with the bicentennial commemoration, the official organising committee of which found included in its 'mission statement' an order to shift attention away from the military aspects of 1798 towards recognising 'the 1798 rebellion as a forward-looking, popular movement aspiring to unity'. Don't mention the war, as Roy Foster succinctly put it: but also, don't mention the means of 'aspiring to unity'.[3] For to do so would inevitably illuminate the underlying intimidation and violence that pervaded Irish society from the mid-1790s, exhibited even in the manner in which the population was recruited to a cause. Competitive oath-taking reflected not unity but dissonance, the breaking of social bonds – when 'Even door neighbours who lived in habits of intimacy for years will now scarce exchange words' – and, eventually, civil war.[4]

Oaths

Oaths were by no means unfamiliar to the Irish in the eighteenth century, for they were frequently at the centre of politico-religious contestation. As sacred promises or sworn statements of facts, they were viewed as a potentially potent weapon, often looming large in the public consciousness. From the Non-Jurors at the beginning of the century to George III's use of his coronation oath to reject further Catholic relief at the end, oaths played a significant, sometimes determining, role in Irish history.[5] For much of the century the governing authorities controlled the functional and symbolic meanings of oath-taking. Oaths took a number of forms. Within the legal system, depositions (but not informations) were sworn to as truthful accounts in the indictment process; grand and petty juries took oaths before assizes; and witnesses gave sworn testimony under oath.[6] Their importance was reflected in the felonious nature of perjury, which could be punished by transportation. In a political context, oaths, in the form of oaths of allegiance, were seen as one way of creating some protection for a confessional Protestant state hegemony. Oaths of allegiance declared loyalty. Initially from the first decade of the century, then regularly from the 1750s, legislative attempts were made to register, and thus give toleration to, Catholic clergymen who were prepared to take an oath of allegiance. More importantly, and somewhat more successfully, attempts were made from mid-century to find a form of oath that lay Catholics could take which expressed their loyalty to the Crown without compromising their religious beliefs.[7] Oaths traditionally, therefore, were mediated by the state; were for confessional state purposes; and were taken openly in the public sphere.

In the last two decades of the century, however, the state's near-monopoly of the process of oath-taking was threatened from new directions, as oath-bound secret societies began to proliferate.[8] Most of these clandestine societies – the first was the Whiteboy movement of the 1760s, to be followed by the Oak Boys, the Hearts of Steel, the Houghers and the Right Boys – sought to redress local economic grievances such as enclosure of common land and the imposition of higher rents. Sustained by oaths of secrecy, of fidelity and of obedience to their leaders, these societies acted as enforcers of natural justice at the local level. They were not a threat to the state, in that they did not seek a change in the system of land ownership or the abolition of tithes, but their actions in defence of a moral economy – terrorizing those in the neighbourhoood who sought higher profits through the commercialization of the land – did represent the emergence of an alternative local legitimacy that threatened the socio-political role of the local magistrates and the law.[9] The Dublin government regarded their reliance on secret oaths – which 'nurtured the *omerta*, the code of silence, essential for success and … inhabiting the space between official law and its local reception' – to be particularly dangerous.[10] In the Whiteboy Act of 1765, the government made the administering of such oaths accompanied by intimidation a capital offence. Its attitude to illegal oaths was not to change in the more dangerous final decade of the century.

Illegal Oaths

If pre-French Revolution secret agrarian movements in Ireland were not real threats to the polity, the same could not be said of some of those secret societies that dominated the 1790s. The Defenders – originating in the mid-1780s as a clandestine Catholic movement in County Armagh to counteract the Protestant Peep-O'-Boys, who sought to disarm the local Catholic population – had by 1792–93 begun to spread south and east, into counties Down, Cavan, Louth, and Meath. By 1795 they were penetrating Connaught, north Leinster and Dublin.[11] With a strange ideological mixture of economic grievances; a millenarian desire for the restoration of Gaelic culture and the promotion of Catholic revanchism; and anti-clerical, pro-revolutionary Jacobinism, the Defenders had transmuted into an underground revolutionary republican movement.[12] At about the same time, the more socially radical of the United Irishmen of Dublin and Belfast – formed in 1791 as a public, non-sectarian, middle-class movement for parliamentary reform – made their first tentative steps towards forming a junction.[13] Within two years, these approaches had borne fruit; it now became possible to develop a mass-based secret organisation aimed at overthrowing, with French assistance, the Dublin government and destroying British hegemony in Ireland.

To have any chance of success, a secret organisation that relies on a mass constituency must depend heavily on strict discipline and trust if its operations are not to leak out. Oaths were seen as a major means of achieving these ends. Initially, while the Defender movement was spreading out of its Ulster heartland and the United Irishmen were still striving to bring them under unified control, the oaths used to recruit members varied considerably. Defender oaths tended to have strong millennial, occult and freemasonry undertones, as did their accompanying 'catechisms'. Both types of documents were, as several United Irish leaders later haughtily pointed out, 'vulgarly written' by 'illiterate men'. They differed from place to place, but with 'all promising secrecy, and specifying whatever grievance was, in each place, most felt and best understood'.[14] They also tended to include a clause which mimicked the oath of allegiance. The Defender oath that William Lawler took in Dublin in 1795 included: 'I ... do swear to be true to his majesty King George III, whilst I live under the same government'.[15] A similar oath was being used in County Armagh at the same time, to which the United Irishmen's *Northern Star* gave a Lockeian gloss: 'they would stand by the King as long as he stood by them, etc'.[16] The motive for including this clause is uncertain. Possibly it was expected to give protection to both the oath-giver and the oath-taker from the full force of the law. As the Carlow oath-administrator William Farrell later acknowledged, 'They took very good care to put no words in the oath that the law could take hold of'.[17] For James Weldon, however, a Defender executed for administering the oath, it was little more than a joke: 'if the king's head were off tomorrow we were no longer under his government', he was reported as explaining, with a laugh.[18] But such sleight of hand by the United Irishmen could also have been used to encourage (and mislead) the more timid potential recruits.

Farrell, for instance, viewed the opening section of the oath he gave, in which the taker swore 'to form a brotherhood of affection among Irishmen of all religious persuasions', as merely a 'hoodwinker' which allayed fears and masked the sectarian and revolutionary ambitions of the movement.[19]

As the Defender-United Irishmen alliance developed, both the oath and the oath-taking procedures became more regularised. In most cases, especially when the initial contact was in a public place, there was a two-step procedure, with two oaths being taken at different times, the interval ranging from several hours to the next day.[20] The first was an oath of secrecy, the second along the following lines: 'I *A.B.* do swear, that I will support liberty on the plan of my committee and their constitution, to the utmost of my power, and that I will obey the orders of my present committee, or any others that may be appointed'.[21] This procedure was necessary partly for security reasons. According to one Co. Tyrone report of initiation in a pub, there was no conspiratorial talk until the candidate had taken an oath of secrecy. The constitution would then be read and only at the end of the evening would the prospective member be asked to take the main oath.[22] William Farrell always ensured that no-one else was present when he gave the oath to a new member, but the security he hoped for was threatened once large-group arms-seizing missions were carried out by locals who recognised each other.[23]

The double-oath procedure might also have been required because, although most potential recruits were likely to agree to keep what they heard secret, many would have been less enthusiastic fully to commit themselves so quickly. When, for instance, William Sprol of Masalin, Co. Down, was accosted by two men who, to his bewilderment, 'threw' several 'signs' at him, he was prepared to join them in the neighbouring pub's garret and swear an oath of secrecy. But, having been read 'part of four or five sides' of a book, he baulked at swearing a further oath. 'Saying one oath was enough in one day', he told the conspirators.[24]

At times of heightened anxiety, intimidation or enthusiasm, however, it was not uncommon for mass oath-takings to occur, when no doubt the more measured procedures were ignored. Near Cushendall in Co. Antrim, more than sixty took the oath in one day in February 1796.[25] More than a year later, Farrell recalled how the people of Carlow flocked to take the oath during a period of 'alarm', the result of irresponsible United Irish propaganda suggesting that the Orange Order was administering oaths promising to exterminate Catholics.[26] The practice 'spread in every direction like wild-fire'.[27] One intercepted letter claimed that in one week in May 1797 more than twenty-six thousand were sworn in the counties of Meath, Wicklow, Louth and Dublin.[28] In the capital, on 28 May 1797, according to Leonard McNally, the government spy, several hundred servants were 'initiated' at one time. He may possibly have exaggerated the numbers involved, but he was surely right in thinking that by suborning servants 'domestic security will become very precarious indeed'.[29] Nearly a year later McNally asserted that there was in Dublin 'scarce a house where there are three [servants] but may boast a domiciliary committee'.[30] At about the same time, as he was preparing to dragoon Ulster, General Lake was squawked at by Lady Skeffington's parrot, '*Are you up*?', the

result of her servants making the bird 'a United Irish man while he was at her country house'.[31] Unsurprisingly, in the aftermath of the rebellion the government was to show little mercy to rebel servants.[32]

Persuading the people to take the United Irish oath was the responsibility of the committed revolutionaries. Many were peripatetic missionaries, sent abroad by the paramilitary Ulster United Irishmen from late 1795, with the aim of making new recruits – generating 'treason methodized' as one loyalist put it – and forming alliances with local Defender lodges, which comprised 'formidable numbers' who were, however, at that point 'nothing more than an undisciplined rabble'.[33] It was the Defenders who initially used travelling emissaries – in Dublin the movement first emerged under the influence of men from Co. Meath, probably militiamen – but the United Irishmen soon developed the practice, or, at least, ensured that the missionaries had themselves taken both United Irish and Defender oaths.[34] The Catholic priest Reverend James O'Coigley, executed at Maidstone in 1798, was one such, working among the Presbyterian Covenanters before moving to England.[35] Another was the Co. Tyrone Quaker John Shaw, who used his occupation as cloth merchant to cover his political activities as far south as Co. Waterford.[36] Two of the most effective were Ulstermen William Putnam McCabe – famous for his disguises – and James Hope, who were prominent in promoting the United Irish cell structure of organisation in Co. Wexford in 1797–98.[37] Pedlars, shoemakers, itinerant artisans and even a Chelsea Pensioner and a wandering hermit also perambulated the country, administering oaths as they went. Within Ulster itself, missionaries moved from county to county in conditions of greatest secrecy, if they had no legitimate cover. In one case, of an Antrim oath-giver called Dempsey, his disappearance resulted in a wake, as it was assumed he had drowned in the River Bann. Three weeks later he sent a letter from Co. Donegal, where he had been organising local societies.[38] Emissaries from Ulster, particularly once that province was subject to dragooning, were also reported as far afield as Connaught and Munster – 15,000 being sworn in the latter province – and Dublin as well as Ulster missionaries penetrated Counties Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford, Queen's, Carlow and Tipperary.[39] Others confined themselves more locally, 'riding the countryside organising and neglecting their businesses'.[40] All, whether itinerant or local, gave particular attention to suborning those trained in the use of arms – regular soldiers, militia and yeomanry.[41] The itinerants kindled the spark of local subversion and moved on, leaving a small nucleus of activists in each locality to fan the flames, cajoling, persuading and intimidating their neighbours.

The United Irishmen, for both internal and external purposes, could claim each oath taken as a sign of their growing influence, strength and popularity.[42] From seized United Irish documents and from informers, the government was aware that the numbers sworn were very considerable: 150,000 in February 1797, 160,000 a month later, with 14,000 reported in Dublin and 'only' 10,000 in Co. Antrim by mid-year.[43] Yet it would be a mistake to assume that each illegal oath represented the willing acceptance of a committed partisan. Oath administrators often used pubs and other convivial meeting places where prospective initiates had been

drinking. Many oath-takers did not fully understand what they were committing themselves to and became decidedly half-hearted once the penny dropped. Men of small property often lost their enthusiasm when discovering the types of people with whom they were expected to associate.[44] In the more rural areas it is likely that labourers and small farmers swore very indefinite oaths, as Samuel Barber's field labourer did in 1798 in Wexford: 'I'm sworn never to tell anyone that won't take the same oath which I did, to be true to the cause.'[45] One of the reasons, perhaps, why the United Irishmen became riddled with informers lies with the zeal with which men were sworn into an organisation, the purpose of which they were only dimly aware. As the worried father of William Tennant, a prominent Belfast merchant and United Irishman, advised his son in 1796: 'Oaths of secrecy can be no sufficient security for any society.'[46]

It is clear also that many Irish did not consider the taking of *political* oaths as evidence of permanent commitment; oaths were conditional and subject to denial if circumstances changed. Only oaths taken freely, while sober, and with sincerity were immutable. McCarry's Catholic congregation made this point explicitly, while in Co. Carlow it was reported, admittedly by a prominent local Orangeman and yeomanry officer, that 'the priests at all their chapels have told their flocks that any oath taken under the influence of fear is not to be kept'.[47] Presumably, this injunction would apply equally to illegal oaths, although the long history of difficulties with state oaths would stand out more clearly in the minds of Catholics. The same might be said of the members of the various Presbyterian sects, which had always refused to take oaths of any kind. In Co. Tyrone, Reverend John Lowry, a Seceding Presbyterian minister, supposedly informed his congregation that the oath of allegiance was not binding. It was 'a very improper [oath], as it obliged those who took it to support the constitution and the laws'.[48] It is perhaps true to say that, except for members of the Church of Ireland, no state oath could be seen to be purely political; there was always an underlying religious element too.

In Co. Down, the United Irishmen were successful in hindering enlistment into the yeomanry by claiming that 'those who swore the oath of allegiance were swearing that they accepted coercive legislation and would become informers'.[49] United Irish leaders such as Billy McKeever and Robert Moore in Londonderry and Samuel Neilson in Belfast were prepared publicly to take the oath of allegiance, without any intention of keeping their words, in the same way as they were prepared to commit perjury in court.[50] Many other leaders joined yeomanry units and took the oath, although their purpose was subversion.[51] In Co. Cork, Lord Shannon – alarmed at evidence of widespread illegal oath-taking – believed his tenants to be 'not over-scrupulous' about breaking 'every ... solemn tie', but was concerned that fear of 'the most immediate and barbarous assassination' prevented any violation of the United Irish-Defender oath.[52] Martha McTier, wife and sister of leading Ulster United Irishmen, made perhaps the most illuminating comment on oath-taking in a letter to her brother William Drennan in January 1797: 'Oaths [in Belfast] are taken and reconciled *in the usual way* by mental reservation.'[53] In

the same way as children deny the binding nature of a promise by crossing their fingers, in Ireland oath-taking could lose its imperative character if a silent and secret objection was made.

These examples refer to objections to a government-inspired oath of allegiance and therefore point to the dissolution of a consensual society, but there is no reason to believe that the same attitude did not apply equally (if not more so) to illegal oaths. The evidence of widespread threats and intimidation to coerce people into taking the United Irish oath is undoubtedly compelling.[54] From all parts of the country, both before and after the rebellion, victims, once the possibility of retribution diminished, claimed to have been coerced. There may have been a self-serving element involved – this was certainly the case among Protestant leaders in Wexford and the idea of using this defence may have percolated downwards – and it is likely that some who subsequently claimed to have been forced into the rebel forces had already taken at least the oath of secrecy, but there remains irrefutable evidence that terror was a natural element of United Irish policy, partly derived from the practices of Defenders and other secret agrarian societies.[55] Whether faced with the Charleville United Irishmen's threatened violence and assassination in north Co. Cork, or their compatriots' various forms of intimidation elsewhere – half-hanging in Kildare and beatings in Wexford – it is unlikely that those compelled against their own wishes to swear an illegal oath felt that it carried any moral weight.[56] But, like Anthony Kavanagh, even those who merely 'made a study' of their 'industry' could not avoid being drawn into the maelstrom.[57]

Oath of Allegiance

In the battle for the hearts and minds of the people of Ulster the United Irishmen gained a significant advantage in 1795–96, owing to the supineness of many country magistrates, the absence of great proprietors – especially in Cos. Londonderry and Donegal – and the indecisiveness of the Dublin government.[58] Charles Warburton, having been warned by his parishioners, was just one of many magistrates to seek safety in the larger towns.[59] Those who remained on their properties and watched impotently as illegal oath-taking swept their communities, have usually been accused of alarmism, but much of their frustration was caused by an awareness of the failure of both landlord and state authority. In Co. Tyrone, where 'The people were not headed by their landlords, no pains was (sic) taken to prepare the minds of the lower, or middling orders, against the arguments and indefatigable exertions of this ... formidable society. They were left open for the attack, and from the supine conduct of the gentlemen, were even made [to] believe *they* [the gentlemen] wished success to the measure'.[60] In large parts of Ulster those whom loyalists called 'neutral' or 'passive' were 'ballancing (sic) which of the two is the strongest party, the revolutionists or the counterrevolutionists'.[61] The passive – those 'who have taken the oath of secrecy and got with it a word or token which is to afford protection' – were of much greater numbers than the active

United Irishmen.[62] With the guarantee of state protection, they 'would willingly have come in and taken the oath of allegiance and enrolled their names for the defence of their country'; instead, they 'were daily joining the United Irishmen from fear'.[63]

The solution, for the Ulster magistrates, included the introduction of troops to restore order (and confidence) and a policy of counter-intimidation to win back those caught in the middle. Making it safe to take the oath of allegiance involved a sustained campaign against oath administrators and others guilty of treasonable practices. The government had in fact already set the wheels in motion, by passing in March 1796 an Insurrection Act that enabled the lord lieutenant and his privy council to proclaim districts at the request of local magistrates. Under the proclamation it became a capital offence to administer an illegal oath and anyone taking the oath was liable to transportation. It was not, however, used until November 1796, when east Co. Down was proclaimed.[64]

The results were at first unimpressive. The constant threat of reprisals inhibited jurors and witnesses at the assizes. The numbers brought to trial for administering oaths were, however, large: 50 in the first half of 1797 and 134 in the second half. (Actual numbers were probably higher, as some were also tried under the umbrella charges of treasonable or seditious practices, which included arms-raiding, tree-felling and pike-making, as well as administering oaths.) But the juries were very reluctant to convict. In Co. Monaghan at the spring assizes, the defence argument that the oath being administered was 'for friendship and union only' was accepted by juries; thereafter it was used successfully around the circuit.[65] In Armagh, there were 'No juries, no prosecutions, no Evidences against any person under the denomination of a *united man*!' According to the dispirited Charles Warburton, 'the game is nearly up in the North'.[66]

The situation was not as bleak as that, but Table 4.1 shows that only just over one-fifth of cases against oath administrators were successful in 1797.[67] To cover its embarrassment, the government changed its tactics for the summer assizes, focusing on obtaining several high-profile convictions: in Co. Armagh, of Lt John St Leger, found guilty of administering an oath and possessing gunpowder; in Co. Cork, of Richard Dry, a prominent oath-administering Defender and United Irishman (both he and St Leger were transported to New South Wales on the *Minerva*); and in Co. Antrim, of William Orr, who was executed for the same offence.[68] Orr's case became a *cause célèbre*. Nothing better demonstrates the intense conflict surrounding oaths in this period than this episode. In April 1796 two soldiers of the Fife Fencible Regiment, Hugh Wheatley and John Lindsay, had spent several days in the town of Antrim, en route to Londonderry. While at John Hyndman's Swan Inn they were suborned by three United Irishmen, William Orr, his cousin John and Billy McKeever (acting under the name Campbell). John Orr had administered a secrecy oath to the soldiers and a few days later they took another oath and were given a 'constitution' by William Orr to recruit among their peers in the regiment. McKeever was subsequently arrested and the two Orrs went

underground, but William was caught and brought to trial at the summer assizes in Antrim in 1797.

Table 4.1 Sentences of Administrators of Illegal Oaths, 1797–99, after Review

Period	% Guilty	% Acquitted	% Guilty Executed	% Guilty Transported or General Service	% Other
Jan-June 1797 (N= 50)	24	76	0	100	0
July-Dec 1797 (N= 134)	20	80	15	85	0
Jan-June 1798 (N = 169)#	51	49	31	61	8
July-Dec 1798 (N = 108)*	50	50	9	76	15
Jan-June 1799 (N = 53)	79	21	23	47	30
June-Dec 1799 (N = 8)	87.5	12.5	14	57	29

Includes all tried at assizes in this period for administering illegal oaths and all courts-martial trials in June 1798 for the same offence.

* Includes all tried at both assizes and courts-martial for administering illegal oaths in this period.

Despite being defended by John Philpot Curran and two prominent United Irishmen, William Sampson and James McGucken (the latter later becoming an important government informer), the prosecution witnesses' evidence could not be broken down.[69] No United Irishman involved in the episode came forward to give evidence for the defence. Left on his own, Orr was sentenced to death. Enormous efforts were made to save him. His brother forged his confession; the gaoler was offered a bribe; jury members, no doubt mindful of retaliation, claimed that they had been plied with whiskey while deliberating their verdict; and his counsel claimed that the jury had been rigged and that the witnesses were perjurers.[70] 'Unremitting exertions' were made 'to get signatures to petitions for laying before Government on Orr's behalf; where persuasions and party could not succeed, intimidations are thrown out, which in many instances has had the effect'.[71]

Mindful of the impact that a reprieve would have on future assize juries, however, senior Ulster loyalists persuaded the lord lieutenant, via the trial judge Barry Yelverton, to confirm the verdict.[72] Orr became a republican martyr and his death a rebel rallying cry in 1798; the loyalists had shown that, if United Irishmen tampered with the soldiery, they could expect no mercy; and lord lieutenant Camden reported to London that the summer assizes in Ulster had been 'most satisfactory'.[73] The jurors, meanwhile, continued to look over their shoulders, 'dare not appear after nightfall ... and lead the most uncomfortable lifes (sic) imaginable'.[74]

Orr might be considered unlucky; only four of the twenty-seven found guilty of administering oaths in the 1797 summer assizes were executed (see Table 4.1). The legal onslaught of oath-administrators reached its peak in the spring assizes of 1798 and during the first, fraught, month of the rebellion, when courts-martial first made an impact (mainly in counties where potential rebellion was smothered). Table 4.2 shows that the government's success rate increased significantly and no less than twenty-seven oath administrators were executed. The main explanation for this is straightforward; as the army slowly moved south from Ulster, searching for seized arms and threatening communities, the wall of silence among those sworn in to the United Irishmen began to collapse (see Table 4.3). By the time that the rebellion broke out, the policy of using illegal oaths to command fidelity to the cause had irremediably fractured. In the main areas of combat, significant numbers had to be forced to fulfil their pledges. Elsewhere, people flocked to take the oath of allegiance, either with relief or under compulsion. Thus, over a period of several years, thousands of Irishmen had taken oaths committing themselves to both sides. Oath was overlaid on oath, as local supremacy switched from one side to the other.

Table 4.2 Comparative Outcomes of Assizes and Courts-Martial, 1798

Tribunal	% Guilty	% Acquitted	Number of Executions
Assizes Jan-June 1798	43	57	19
Courts-Martial June 1798	96	4	8
Assizes July-Dec 1798	19	81	1
Courts-Martial July-Dec 1798	93	7	4

Table 4.3 Geographical Dispersal of Assize Trials for Administering Oaths, 1797–98 (%)

	Lent 1797	Summer 1797	Lent 1798	Summer 1798
Ulster	40	57	13	0
Leinster	36	27	47	35
Munster	8	8	32	65
Connaught	16	8	8	0

Neither side should have assumed that the taking of its oath involved permanent commitment. One of the best examples of the pliable nature of political loyalty comes from Co. Wexford, where from late 1797 the liberal landowner Lord Mountnorris seemingly had great success in persuading Catholics to take the oath of allegiance. In the event, his actions reinforced government complacency about the loyalty of the county and thus was partly responsible for its unpreparedness for rebellion in this part of Ireland.[75] The subsequent failure of the Mountnorris initiative is to some extent explained by the young liberal Protestant Elizabeth Richards and Reverend Thomas Handcock in their accounts of the Wexford rebellion. She noted with disgust on Wednesday 30 May 1798 that ‘Those men who the Sunday before had solemnly taken oaths of allegiance did not scruple to join the rebels’. Handcock, too, noted that only a few weeks before the outbreak the people of Enniscorthy ‘almost universally offered ... the most unequivocal acknowledgements of their past delusions’ and took the oath of allegiance. It was not long, however, before, as Richards wrote, ‘The mask was cast aside’.[76]

On the other hand, United Irish hopes that counties such as King’s and Queen’s, which only months before May 1798 seemed to be properly organised, would rise in support of the Kildare United Irishmen, were to be dashed. The proclaiming of the counties, military pacification and the disruption of the leadership in these counties led to numerous examples of formerly sworn United Irishmen confessing their involvement and taking the oath of allegiance.[77] The pendulum of opinion thus continued to swing merrily in the south in the months before the rebellion broke out.

Conclusion

Unlike President Woodrow Wilson and his fellow Americans, who in 1915 ‘stood apart, studiously neutral’, Irishmen in the 1790s were compelled to choose sides, and to choose often. Pressure came from everywhere – from landlords, clergymen, the military, and committed neighbours and relatives. Even Quakers and Presbyterian Covenanters, both of which sects forbade involvement in the profane world of terrestrial politics, found it impossible to avoid contamination.[78] For those less focused on a better world, who were not partisans, the breakdown of a civil consensus made life a matter of careful calculation, which frequently involved

taking the oath of whichever side currently appeared to be most powerful in a region. For small farmers and agricultural labourers, the pressure was little different from that imposed by agrarian secret societies and continued in some counties such as Waterford, Galway and Limerick after the rebellion. In the end, the issue was decided militarily, with victory on the battlefield confirming the supremacy of the oath of allegiance.

With the use of courts-martial ending the problem of jury intimidation (see Table 4.2), the government could afford to take a more lenient view of the crime of administering illegal oaths, especially as far more heinous offences occurred during the rebellion. Only five oath-administrators were executed in the second half of 1798. Numbers of executions increased again in 1799, but most occurred in southern and western regions, especially in Cos. Limerick and Galway, where a wave of agrarian-related disturbances had broken out (see Table 4.4).[79] Many of those executed were guilty of major violent crimes such as houghing and nocturnal house robberies, in addition to administering oaths. Overall, only 49 (22%) of the 223 found guilty of administering oaths were executed in the three years 1797 to 1799, a commutation rate significantly higher than for major crimes such as murder in this era. Of the 162 sentenced or commuted to transportation, less than one-fifth were sent to New South Wales. The rest, joining thousands who had been sentenced to general service during and after the rebellion by courts-martial, were inducted into the army, where they had to swear the oath of allegiance. No doubt they reconciled their action in the usual way, by mental reservation.[80]

Table 4.4 Geographical Dispersal of Courts-Martial Trials for Administering Oaths, June 1798 – December 1799 (%)

	June-December 1798	January-December1799
Ulster	27	2
Leinster	50	4
Munster	23	39
Connaught	0	55

Notes

1 Nuala C. Johnson, 'Sculpting Heroic Histories: Celebrating the Centenary of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 19 (1994), pp. 78–93; R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1660–1972* (London, 1988), p. 3.

2 Nancy Curtin, '"Varieties of Irishness": Historical Revisionism, Irish Style', *The Journal of British Studies*, 35 (1996), p. 212.

3 Roy Foster, 'Remembering 1798', in Ian McBride (ed.), *History and Memory in Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 83, 85. See also, Brian Walker, 'The Lessons of Irish History: The Continuing Legacy of the 1798 Rebellion and the United Irishmen', in

Brian Walker, *Past and Present: History, Identity and Politics in Ireland* (Belfast, 2000), p. 29.

4 See David M. Miller, 'Radicalism and Ritual in East Ulster', in Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson *et al.* (eds), *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin, 2003), p. 208; Thomas Higginson to Foster, 22 Aug. 1796, National Archives of Ireland, Rebellion Papers (hereafter R.P.) 620/24/156.

5 For George III's decision, see John Erhman, *The Younger Pitt: The Consuming Struggle* (London, 1996); Patrick Geoghegan, *The Irish Act of Union* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 138–40.

6 Neal Garnham, *The Courts, Crime and the Criminal Law in Ireland 1692–1760* (Dublin, 1996).

7 Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690–1830* (Dublin, 1992), esp. chapter 4; C.D.A. Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancien Régime* (London, 1994). The Test Oath (13 & 14 Geo. III, c.35) placed many Catholic clergy in a dilemma, for the interests of the state did not always conform with the interests of their parishioners. See Maurice J. Bric, 'Priests, Parsons and Politics: The Rightboy Protest in County Cork, 1785–1788', in C.H.E. Philpin (ed.), *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 172–3. In this respect the situation of the clergy, caught between two competing interests, may be compared with the Irish laity's similar *political* dilemma in the 1790s.

8 'Near-monopoly' because Freemasons in Ireland had been taking oaths of secrecy since the early eighteenth century. With an emphasis on benevolence and sociability, they were, however, no threat to the Hanoverian state, at least, not until the growing connection between freemasonry and the Volunteer movement in the late 1770s. See Jim Smyth, 'Freemasonry and the United Irishmen', in David Dickson, Daire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 168–75.

9 Jim Smyth, *The Men of No Property: Irish Radicals and Popular Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2002), chapter 2; Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity* (Cork, 1996), p. 35; R.R. Madden, *The United Irishmen: Their Lives and Times*, 2nd. ser. (London, 1843), I: lxxxix-xcvi; Pieter Tesch, 'Presbyterian Radicalism', in Dickson *et al.* (eds), *United Irishmen*, p. 41; Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York, 1985), pp. 61–3. See also, J.S. Donnelly, Jr., 'The Whiteboy Movement, 1761–5', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21 (1978), pp. 20–54.

10 Whelan, *Tree of Liberty*, p. 93.

11 Thomas Graham, '"An Union of Power"? The United Irish Organisation: 1795–1798', in Dickson *et. al.* (eds), *United Irishmen*, p. 245.

12 *Report of the Secret Committee of the [Irish] House of Commons* (Dublin, 1798), p. 37; Tom Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others: Underground Political Networks in Pre-Famine Ireland', in Philpin (ed.), *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland*, pp. 229–32; Thomas Bartlett, 'Defenders and Defenderism in 1795', *Irish Historical Studies* 24 (1984–85), p. 377; Marianne Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven, 1989), p. 219.

13 Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1997), p. 111.

14 William J. MacNeven (ed.), *Pieces of Irish History* (New York, 1807), pp. 56–7; *Northern Star*, no. 382, 31 Aug. 1795.

15 T.B. Howell and T.J. Howell (eds), *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, 34 vols. (London 1809–1828), XXVI: col. 234.
16 *Northern Star*, no. 382, 31 Aug. 1795.
17 Roger J. McHugh (ed.), *Carlow in '98: The Autobiography of William Farrell of Carlow* (Dublin, 1949), p. 29.
18 Howells, *State Trials*, XXVI: col. 256.
19 Ibid., p. 27. For the United Irish belief that taking the oath was merely 'promoting harmony', see *Northern Star*, no. 444, 4 April 1796.
20 See, for example, R.H. Foy, *Remembering All the Orrs* (Belfast, 1999), p. 15.
21 Unknown [Newry] to Isaac Corry, 10 May 1796, R.P. 620/23/102.
22 Nathaniel Alexander to Henry Alexander, 15 Nov. 1796, R.P. 620/26/85.
23 McHugh (ed.), *Autobiography of William Farrell*, p. 46.
24 Information of Alexander Moore, 4 July 1796, R.P. 620/24/100.
25 Report of Capt. McNevin, 24 Feb. 1796, R.P. 620/23/36.
26 For evidence of the United Irish deliberately spreading information about fictitious Orange oaths, see *Northern* Star, no. 471, 8 July 1796; *The Press*, 12 Oct. 1797; [John Washington Price], 'A Journal kept on board the *Minerva* Transport from Ireland to New South Wales, by J.W. Price, Surgeon of sd. Ship', British Library, Add. MS 13880, fol. 23; Lecky, *Ireland*, IV, 126–27; Allan Blackstock, 'The Irish Yeomanry and the 1798 Rebellion', in Bartlett and Dickson (eds), *1798*, pp. 339–40; Liam Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare 1790–1803* (Dublin, 1998), p. 69.
27 McHugh (ed.), *Autobiography of Farrell*, p. 30.
28 Lecky, *Ireland*, IV: 129.
29 Report of 'J.W', no. 82, R.P 620/10/121/62.
30 Report of 'J.W', no. 124, R.P 620/10/121/90.
31 D.A. Chart (ed.), *The Drennan Letters* (Belfast, 1931), p. 255.
32 See, for example, Petition of John Shannon (the Dublin Lord Mayor's servant), 27 Sept. 1798, National Archives of Ireland, State Prisoners' Petitions (hereafter SPP) 277; Petition regarding John Walsh, Tinehely, Co. Wicklow, n.d [1798], SPP 306; Petitions of Mary Bulger, SPP 434, Prisoners' Petitions and Cases (hereafter PPC) 277; Petition of Jane Ryan, 3 Dec. 1798, SPP 272; Sir Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland* 4th ed. (Fort Wayne, 1995), pp. 725–8.
33 Thomas Knox to Edward Cooke ?, 6 July 1796, R.P. 620/24/16. These overtures were underway at the local level by August 1795 (the Defender and United Irish leaders had been in contact in Ulster since at least 1792). Information of William Hart, 22 Sept. 1795, R.P. 620/22/41; Report of 'J.W', February 1797, R.P 620/10/121/50; *Report of the Secret Committee of the Irish House of Commons*, p. 39; Report of 'Smith-Bird', no. 29, 1796, R.P. 620/27/1.
34 Garvin, 'Defenders', 229–32; J.H. Smith [William Bird] to Edward Cooke, 26 July 1796, PRO HO100/62, fols. 144–45; Liam Kelly, *A Flame Now Quenched: Rebels and Frenchmen in Leitrim 1793–1798* (Dublin, 1998), p. 58.
35 Benjamin Binns to R.R. Madden, 1843, Trinity College Dublin, Madden Papers, 873/451; MacNeven, *Pieces of Irish History*, pp. 118–20.
36 Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals*, p. 122.
37 Kevin Whelan, 'Reinterpreting the 1798 Rebellion in County Wexford', in Daire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong (eds), *The Mighty Wave: The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford* (Dublin, 1996), p. 16; John Newsinger (ed.), *United Irishman: The Autobiography of James Hope* (London, 2001).

38 Nathaniel Alexander to Henry Alexander, 15 Nov. 1796, R.P. 602/26/85.

39 Report of 'J.W', no. 32, 5 Oct. 1796, R.P. 620/10/121/38; Report of 'J.W', no. 103, R.P. 620/36/227; Earl Camden to Duke of Portland, 6 Oct. 1797, Kent Record Office, Pratt Papers, U840 C31/1.

40 Nathaniel Alexander to Henry Alexander, 15 Nov. 1796, R.P. 602/26/85.

41 'J.H. Smith' to Cooke, no. 4, 23 July 1796, PRO HO100/62, fol. 142; Report of 'J.W', no. 33, 6 Oct. 1796, R.P. 620/36/227; R.P. 620/26/133; [Valentine Lawless (Lord Cloncurry)], *Personal Recollections of the Life and Times, with Extracts from the Correspondence of Valentine Lord Cloncurry*, 2nd ed. (Dublin, 1850), p. 141.

42 Nancy Curtin, *The United Irishmen: Popular Politics in Ulster and Dublin 1791–1798* (Oxford, 1994), p. 70.

43 Report of 'J.W', no. 66, Feb. 1797, R.P. 620/10/121/50; Report of 'J.W', no. 70, 3 March 1797, R.P. 620/36/227; *Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons*, pp. 137–8.

44 R.B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 479–80.

45 John D. Beatty (ed.), *Protestant Women's Narratives of the Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Dublin, 2001), p. 72 (account of Jane Barber).

46 Quoted in Allan Blackstock, 'The Rector and the Rebel', in Sabine Wichert (ed.), *From the United Irishmen to Twentieth-century Unionis*t (Dublin, 2004), p. 65.

47 L.M. Cullen, 'The 1798 Rebellion in Wexford: United Irishman Organisation, Membership, Leadership', in Kevin Whelan (ed.), *Wexford: History and Society* (Dublin, 1987), p. 268.

48 See above p. 77; Deposition of John McMullan, Aug. 1797, R.P. 620/32/50.

49 Trevor McCavery, '"As the Plague of Locusts Came in Egypt": Rebel Motivation in North Down', in Bartlett, Dickson (eds), *1798*, p. 219.

50 *Dublin Evening Post*, 26 Sept. 1797. For McKeever's career, see Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals*, pp. 121–2. Neilson took the oath of allegiance on release from prison in Dublin in February 1798. Chart (ed.), *Drennan Letters*, pp. 266–7.

51 See, for example, Price, 'Minerva', fol. 24; Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty* (London, 1972), pp. 127, 172, 174; Ruan O'Donnell, *The Rebellion in Wicklow 1798* (Dublin, 1998), p. 43.

52 Quoted in Lecky, *Ireland*, IV: 137.

53 Quoted in Curtin, *The United Irishmen*, p. 77. My italics.

54 For detailed examination of one case, see Michael Durey, 'Dilemma: Michael Johnston, High Constable and United Irish Captain', *The Journal*, 7 (1999), pp. 44–53.

55 Cullen, '1798 Rebellion in Wexford', p. 256. Another interpretation, that violence was evidence of *lack* of control by the United Irish leadership, is less convincing. Curtin, *United Irishmen*, p. 70. That they might have refused to take responsibility is another matter.

56 Price, 'Minerva', fols. 22, 25; Extracts of letters from the south of Ireland, March 1798, PRO HO100/80, fols. 154–56; Kelly, *Leitrim*, p. 51; Isaac Corry to [?], 30 March 1796, R.P. 620/23/60; James Waddell to Robert Ross, 14 June 1796, R.P. 620/23/174; Andrew Newton to Rev. Richard Bourne, 15 Aug. 1796, R.P. 620/24/20; Andrew MacNevin to Edward Cooke, 24 July 1796, R.P 620/24/52; Nathaniel Alexander to Henry Alexander, 15 Nov. 1796, R.P. 620/26/85; R.P. 620/26/140; *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons*, p. 6; Lord Gosford to Earl Camden, 19 June 1797, U840 0173/12; Lecky, *Ireland*, IV: 4, 83; Petition of Denis Kavanagh, Wicklow [1798], SPP 177;

Petition of Michael Carroll, Kilkenny [1798], SPP 77; Petition of John and William Carroll, Tipperary [1798], SPP 78; Petition relating to George Comyns, Co. Dublin, Oct. 1798, SPP 85; Petition of Fennell, King's Co., 15 Nov. 1798, SPP 135; Petition relating to Martin Doyle, Co. Wexford, 3 July 1799, SPP 545; Petition of Henry and Thomas Townsend, Wicklow, [1798], SPP 294. Petitioners claiming either to have been forced to swear an illegal oath or forced into the rebel army number more than one hundred.

57 See above, p. 72. See also, Beattie (ed.), *Protestant Women's Narratives*, p. 54 (account of Dinah Goff).

58 John Rea to Sackville Hamilton, 27 March 1797, R.P. 620/29/116; Nancy J. Curtin, 'The Magistracy and Counter-Revolution in Ulster, 1795–1798', in Jim Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 39–54; Lecky, *Ireland*, IV: 13; Allan Blackstock, 'The Social and Political Implications of the Raising of the Yeomanry in Ulster: 1796–8', in Dickson, Keogh (eds), *United Irishmen*, p. 236. For the effects of the absence of the great landlord, the Earl of Massarene, around the town of Antrim – he was near-insane and spent much of his life in a French debtors' prison – see Foy, *Orrs*, p. 4.

59 See above, p. 71. See also, Blackstock, 'Rector and the Rebel', p. 61.

60 Andrew Newton to O'Connor, 30 Aug. 1796, R.P. 620/23/9.

61 Sir George Hill to Pelham, 20 March 1797, R.P. 620/29/96.

62 W.M to [?], 8 April 1797, R.P. 620/29/200.

63 Lt. Hervey Stuart to Col. Lucius Barber, 17 Sept. 1796, R.P. 620/25/104.

64 *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons*, p. 14; Curtin, *United Irishmen*, pp. 70–71.

65 Birnford to Cooke, 11 April 1797, R.P. 620/29/216.

66 Warburton to Bishop of Ferns, 12 April 1797, R.P. 620/29/223.

67 The sources for these data are many and varied, including the PRO HO100 Ireland series; *Dublin Evening Post*; *Belfast Newsletter*; *Freeman's Journal*; *Northern Star*; State Prisoners' Petitions; Prisoners' Petitions and Cases; *Commons Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland*, xxvii–xix (1798–1800).

68 For St Leger, see SPP, 274, 821; R.P. 620/40/120; Reamonn O Muiri, 'Lt. John Lindley St. Leger, United Irishman', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 11 (1983–84), pp. 133–201.

69 For McGucken, see Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *Revolutionary Dublin 1795–1801: The Letters of Francis Higgins to Dublin Castle* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 58–60. For Sampson, see Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals*, passim.

70 Col. James Durham to Rev. Clotworthy Soden, 29 May 1796, R.P. 620/23/129; Foy, *Orrs*, chapter 3.

71 Lucius Barber to Cooke, 10 Oct. 1797, R.P. 620/32/160.

72 McDowell, *Ireland*, p. 543.

73 Camden to Portland, 6 Oct. 1797, Pratt Papers, U840 C31/1.

74 Barber to Cooke, 10 Oct. 1797, R.P. 620/32/160.

75 Cullen, '1798 Rebellion in Wexford', pp. 249–50.

76 Beattie (ed.), *Protestant Women's Narratives*, p. 32 (account of Elizabeth Richards); G.F. Handcock (ed.), 'Reminiscences of a Fugitive Loyalist in 1798', *English Historical Review*, 1 (1886), p. 537.

77 Liam Chambers, 'The 1798 Rebellion in North Leinster', in Bartlett, Dickson (eds), *1798*, pp. 128–30; SPP 418; Honora Meehan to Cornwallis, 27 March 1799, R.P. 620/8/82/11; SPP 67; SPP 89; SPP 93; SPP 135.

78 Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals*, p. 142; David W. Miller, 'Presbyterianism and "Modernisation" in Ulster', *Past and Present*, 80 (1978), p. 78; Beattie (ed.), *Protestant Women's Narratives*, p. 195 (account of Mary Leadbeater).

79 Michael Dillon to William Keller, 9 Feb. 1799, PPC 179; R.P. 620/9/87/5, 11; Patrick C. Power, *The Courts Martial of 1798–99* (Kilkenny, 1997), pp. 88–90; Thomas Bartlett, 'Clemency and Compensation: The Treatment of Defeated Rebels and Suffering Loyalists after the 1798 Rebellion', in Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union*, pp. 101–02; James G. Patterson, 'Republicanism, Agrarianism and Banditry in the Wake of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798', Ph.D diss., Fordham University, 2000.

80 Michael Durey, 'Marquess Cornwallis and the Fate of Irish Rebel Prisoners in the Aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion', in Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, Counter-Revolution and Union*, pp. 128–45. According to the Co. Down United Irishman, Andrew Bryson, the rebel recruits at the New Geneva holding camp in Co. Waterford had to swear the oath of allegiance, not 'the military oath'. Michael Durey (ed.), *Andrew Bryson's Ordeal: An Epilogue to the 1798 Rebellion* (Cork, 1998), p. 65.

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Chapter 6

Horrid Sympathy

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> But are they all horrid, are you sure they are all horrid?
> Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

> Georgie held her hand a moment longer than was usual, and gave it a little extra pressure for the conveyance of sympathy. Lucia, to acknowledge that, pressed a little more, and Georgie tightened his grip again to show that understood, until their respective finger-nails grew white with the conveyance and reception of sympathy. It was rather agonizing, because a bit of skin on his little finger had got caught between two of the rings on his third finger, and he was glad when they quite understood each other.
> E.F. Benson, *Lucia in London*

Sympathy was a word that grew enormously in range and significance during the eighteenth century, acquiring most of the layers of meaning we now assign it. Before that it had a more limited function within distinct fields of interest. In the realm of what Bacon called natural magic, it referred to the attraction between certain stones, plants, and metals and their effect upon the human constitution. Sir Kenelm Digby's fascination with the powder of sympathy, recently restored to light by Umberto Eco in his novel *The Island of the Day Before*, exploited the sympathy between a wound and the knife that made it. By application of the powder of sympathy it was supposed the wound could respond to the knife even at a great distances – so great that it was proposed as a solution to the problem of measuring longitude at sea, for if you had a wounded dog with you it would howl at the very moment the knife (in Greenwich) was turned towards it. In literature, specifically romance and epic, sympathy and its cognates pity and compassion, had a longer and richer career, beginning with Demodocus's song of the destruction of Troy, heard by Ulysses who is overwhelmed by the sadness of it, and weeps for those who have perished in the war. Virgil's ideal was a reconciliation of the qualities of heroic constancy and compassionate tenderness lodged in the word *pietas*. However the compassionate element ebbed and flowed. As the Roman Republic moved towards absolute rule so extra-legal forms of virtue – clemency, compassion, pity – grew more prominent, outgrowths as it were of an imperial prerogative. In the great romances of the early modern period sympathy is at the heart of the action. In *Orlando Furioso* it causes the love between Angelica and Medoro that drives the hero of the poem mad with jealousy. Tasso was disturbed

by these undercurrents of passion, wishing to keep piety firmly within the pale of self-control; although in *Gerusalemme Liberata* there is a gallant couple, Edward and Gildippe, who are addicted to sympathy.

> No wound in fight can either singly bear,
> For both alike in every anguish share;
> And oft one faints to view the other's wound,
> This shedding blood, and that in sorrow drown'd.[1]

In the English romances, Spenser and Milton followed Tasso in holding sympathy and its associated emotions at bay, while Sidney and the great translators – Chapman, Harington and Fairfax – did what they could to bring them to the surface of the action.[2]

So much for the literary history of sympathy. By the middle of the seventeenth century the Civil War had soured Thomas Hobbes's view of humanity. 'By nature,' he said, 'we are not looking for friends.' The only good reason for probing someone else's mind, he suggested, is as an overture to aggression. He concluded, much as Lockit will conclude in *The Beggar's Opera*, 'Man is a wolf to Man'.[3] His theory of civil society was founded, like Locke's, on the powerful instinct of self-preservation. Old-fashioned notions concerning the duties of benevolence and charity began to weaken. Early in the eighteenth century Daniel Defoe, John Trenchard and Bernard Mandeville attacked organised forms of charity, particularly charity schools, because they obstructed the channels of productive energy, debased the objects of their benevolence, and often had consequences the opposite of charitable. In the first plate of Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty* a charity boy is helping to drive an arrow into a dog's anus. Besides these failures, charity was often annexed to the pious programs of Societies for the Reformation of Manners, widely despised for meddling in matters that were none of their business. Social life was already understood to operate in response to mass movements of capital, labour, trade and public opinion, each so complex in its manifestations and evolution it was immune to the guidance of individual wills and intentions. Certainly attempts were made to mould mass sentiments by Bolingbroke on the one side, and his enemy Walpole on the other, usually by means of the press. But Swift's ironical salute to this mysterious force of opinion, which he characterises variously in his *Argument against abolishing Christianity* as 'the Current of the People,' 'this Majority of Opinions,' 'that great and profound Majority,' equivalent in all respects to the voice of God, impugns its rationality but does not dispute its power.[4]

If happy results were to flow from these vast and enigmatic social forces, something other than personal duty or local planning was going to provide it. As Adam Smith pointed out in *The Wealth of Nations*, the baker does not work through the night out of love for his customers but because he wishes to make a profit. Although his work produces much the same result as an act of Christian benevolence – the hungry are fed – it originates in a very different set of motives, none easy to assimilate to altruism, although their beneficial social result is undeniable. In his *Essay on Man* Pope wished to smooth these matters over by

saying that self-love and social love are the same, but Mandeville in his scandalous *Fable of the Bees* answered that they were very different, although it was true that good springs up and pullulates from evil, for only our most selfish behaviour insures public benefits. Mandeville enjoyed extracting paradoxes from the law of unintended consequences. In his *Modest Defence of the Publick Stews* (1724) he argued that legalised prostitution was the only fireproof guarantee of female chastity. But the inheritor of these paradoxes, Thomas Malthus, resolved them into a much harsher antinomy concerning the dialectical relationship between happiness and misery. As for benevolence, its proper office, he wrote, 'is to soften the partial evils arising from self-love, but it can never be substituted in its place'.[5] To make up for this gloomy state of affairs an irrational and impulsive bond between human beings had to be supposed and then idealised, and sympathy fitted the bill.

Although Mandeville's paradoxes were by no means popular, no-one could deny that phenomena such as public opinion and public credit were now operating outside accepted notions of cause and effect. Hume's *Treatise Concerning Human Nature* was the first systematic treatment of this state of affairs. His argument develops from the concession that nothing can certainly be predicted, not even that the sun will rise tomorrow. There is, Hume concluded, no necessary connexion between any two events, only an assumption based on associated ideas, the one introducing the other on the grounds of contiguity, apparent cause and effect, contrast, or custom: the night ends, the sun rises. As far as this concerned human relations, Hume relied upon sympathy to explain how we act upon our neighbours and are in turn acted upon by them. It is all accomplished by a law of attraction as powerful in the mind as it is in Newton's universe. An array of signals encourages us to convert ideas of other people's feelings (of satisfaction, pleasure, unease and dislike) into what Hume called impressions: reproductions of those same feelings, triggering the sympathies (and sometimes the antipathies) that dictate tides of social life. It is a succession of moments in which we feel what others feel, and the complexity of personal relations, like the complexity of those phenomena such as credit and public opinion, emerges from what he called the double relation of ideas and impressions. This is the reciprocal cycle of ideas and impressions, occurring when aroused feelings spark new ideas, and these ideas provoke new impressions, impressions new feelings, and so on. Philosophers who were influenced by Hume, such as David Hartley and Joseph Priestley, believed that even our most abstract concepts could be broken down into the re-ignited impressions of which they are composed.

Among other thinkers sympathy fell roughly into four broad divisions, none of them quite compatible with the others, although they were all based on the common assumption that sympathy arises predominantly from engaging with feelings of pain rather than pleasure, even though pleasure may be the end result. These divisions were physiology, morality, theatricality and identity. The physiologists (with Mandeville in the lead) argued that we have an instinctive faculty for sharing the pain of others; that it is not a pleasant experience and that we will do anything, even commit an act of charity, in order to terminate the sensation. There is no ethical or moral content to such an act; we give alms for the same reason we go to have our corns cut out, namely the relief of a present

discomfort. Lord Shaftesbury and Frances Hutcheson, originators of the idea of moral sensibility, believed that participating in another's pain and doing what was possible to assuage it, even if this amounted to nothing more than emitting signs of distress in return, was fundamentally a moral action contributing directly to the fabric of society and the public good. Adam Smith's influential *Theory of Moral Sentiments* rejected both positions: sympathy was not an instinct nor was it necessarily in the first place a moral sensation. He instanced Philoctetes whose distress from a wound in the foot was extreme enough to cause cries and gesticulations so unattractive no-one would sympathise with him. If extreme pain is going to win a sympathizing audience it has to be attuned to the requirements of art, like the graceful agony of the Laocoon. Therefore its first transaction is with the aesthetic demands of a theatrical representation rather than with the duties required by a direct encounter with distress. Indeed the morality incident to enjoying scenes of misery arises from the stoicism necessary for a successful performance of pain. So it is the sufferer who sets the example, not the audience; although it is true to say that in the evolution of a sympathetic drama (so often figured as a public execution) where stoicism is successively reinforced by the visible approval on the spectators' faces, there is a mutuality in the representation which involves the whole theatre eventually in a performance of moral value.[6] Smith's is one of the most deft adjustments of sympathy to the Aristotelian doctrine of catharsis, where the exhibition of pain is transmuted into socially useful pleasure. Finally, there is the sympathy of identity. This supposes what Smith says at the outset of his discussion is impossible, namely a full and unlimited exchange of feelings between two individuals. Then you know exactly what it is like to be another person suffering. Burke outlines this position in the *Enquiry*, where he says, 'For sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man'.[7] Under this regime, being like someone else is not a matter of resemblance but one of shared self-consciousness.

These four categories and the issues surrounding them are compendiously rehearsed in 'The Starling' scene of Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, when Yorick comes across a caged starling repeating in the voice of a child the phrase, 'I cannot get out'.[8] When he realises that it is only a human voice transposed to a bird's body he admits he is still wonderfully moved by these 'mechanical notes'. The fit of involuntary sympathy caused by a bird made to function like an automaton makes way for social and ethical considerations when Yorick interprets the bird's cry not as an artificial sound but as a real plea for liberty. He tries to respond by releasing it and when he finds he cannot, he transforms the bird from an imprisoned victim into a symbol of universal slavery. This symbol needs some theatrical adjustment before it activates his imagination to furnish the following scene, 'The Captive,' where he beholds a picture of himself in the Bastille. Meanwhile the bird is forgotten, left to cry in its cage unregarded until Yorick formally attaches it to his equipage as 'my bird,' including it on his coat of arms, where it forms a hieroglyphic pun on his author's name, sterne being the older word for starling. Here then are the four degrees of sympathy – instinctive, moral, theatrical and unlimited – with the first three of which only Yorick aspires to meddle; for the bird is first like a child, then like a slave, then like a human and finally like itself, at

which point it establishes a strange identity with Yorick as joint-property of their common owner, Laurence Sterne.

What about horrid sympathy, then; where does that fit in? The term is Milton's, coined in the tenth book of *Paradise Lost*, the last of the three times the word is used in the poem. Sympathy refers formerly to the charm Eve experiences when she views her image in a pool: already narcissistic, it is somewhat deviant.[9]

> As I bent down to look, just opposite,
> A shape within the wat'ry gleam appeared,
> Bending to look on me. I started back,
> It started back; but pleased I soon returned,
> Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
> Of sympathy and love.[10]

Horrid sympathy is exactly contrary, an identification with something quite different from the self, and therefore a much more deviant feeling. Having usurped the shape of a serpent in order to tempt Eve, Lucifer is turned into a snake in earnest as punishment. So are all his associates who have expected to see him emerge glistening with triumph from his exploit in Paradise. They are sadly disappointed by a metamorphosis that embraces them all:

> They saw, but other sight instead, a crowd
> Of ugly serpents, horror on them fell,
> And horrid sympathie; for what they saw,
> They felt themselves now changing.[11]

There have been plenty of occasions for a rueful sense of fellow-feeling in Hell, but this is not one of them. The gallantry of fallen angels putting up with the worst is turned to ugliness and pain, humiliating proof that they are definitively no longer what they were. It is an Ovidian moment on a vast scale. After their defeat in the battle of the sixth book Nisroc observed that pain is perfect misery, but it is even worse when it is, like Moloch's and Philoctetes's, 'uncouth' and, as Smith was to point out, repugnant to the sympathy of polite observers.[12] But it is worst of all when the uncouthness is beheld as the mirror image of one's own transformation, the picture of one's new self. Horrid sympathy occurs when the victim identifies the unseemliness of his own agony in the vileness of someone else's, an utterly unregenerate predicament whose common bond is extreme disgust and self-loathing. Milton enlarges on the disgust. Immediately after their metamorphoses these angels-turned-snakes try to eat a *trompe l'oeil* meal of painted fruit and turn into pictures of disgust as well as horror, for after making the mistake, 'with hatefullest disrelish [they] writh'd their jaws'.[13] They are trapped in sensations entirely free from pleasure, whether these are felt or observed

If horrid sympathy is compared with the four other kinds, then it is evident that it has something in common with the spontaneity of the first and the totality of the fourth, but nothing at all with the moral sense of the second or the careful self-representation of the third. That is to say it is unlimited, whether considered as an impulse or a condition. It belongs with the disorganization of the fallen world,

where living creatures war with each other, and where all suffer the 'outrage from liveless things' such as the weather.[14] It thrives where there is no 'propriety' – a key-word of Smith's which embraces for him as well as Milton the notion of property such as that claimed by Adam in Eve ('my own in thee,' 'sole propriety/ In Paradise of all things common else') and also the seemliness of things and actions that are in keeping, orderly and convenient. Horrid sympathy is accompanied by the loss of ownership which Milton distinctly represents as a transfer of authorship, a loss of symmetry, and a breakdown of narrative. The Fall causes God's ekphrasis of the whole creation, delivered to his only Son as a picture within the general frame of eternity, suddenly to acquire a specific locality in space and time ('For Man will heark'n to his glozing lyes').[15] The definitive blast of God's will, to coin a phrase of Sir Thomas Browne's, is blown out of instaneity into a sequence of choices and judgments made by two actors whose trespass renders them 'Authors to themselves in all'.[16] Self-authorship and the loss of propriety precipitates subsidiary forms of independence: the war of all against all amongst the beasts, the outrages of lifeless things, and so on. Amidst this loss of rank and ownership, then, things acquire agency while fallen angels and humans alike sink to the level of beasts, having shed variously their self-possession, beauty and immortality.

A frequent parallel chosen by commentators upon horrid sympathy in the eighteenth century is the North American deathsong, sung by captives in defiance of their enemies as they are being tortured to death. This was already a topos in primitivism, introduced by Montaigne and improved by Leibnitz. In discussions of sympathy it is frequently mentioned, especially by Scottish writers. Smith introduces the deathsong as an example of remarkable self-command among savage nations, whose youth are trained to greet even the most extreme sensations with impassivity. Although the point he wants to underline is that under such Spartan regimes compassion has no place – 'a savage … expects no sympathy from those about him'[17] – such stoicism in the face of painful death is, from Smith's point of view, the primary qualification for sympathy among civilised people. With the Native Americans it is a perfect conspiracy of insensibility, the victims chatting of indifferent things during the pauses of their torment, while their enemies exhibit no signs of compunction or admiration.[18] Nevertheless it provides a superb example of the 'concerted tranquillity'[19] Smith expects in successful scenes of sympathy, whose tendency is to expel all symptoms of emotion from the brilliant display of *sang-froid*.

When Adam Ferguson turns to the deathsong he restores the warmth of admiration for suffering nobly undergone. He takes the story of an old sachem and a young captive from Charlevoix. The old man says to the youth, 'I proposed to have placed you on the couch of my nephew, who was slain by your countrymen, to have transferred all my tenderness to you, and to have solaced my age in your company – but maimed and mutilated as you now appear, death is better than life: prepare yourself therefore to die like a man'.[20] Ferguson is sensitive to the dialectic of this kind of torture, which Lafitau (attentive to the exchange of insults that accompanied it) defined as '*repousser la force par la force*'.[21] Milton's Moloch has a similar grasp on the possibility of pain as a kind of weapon when he talks of

'Turning our tortures into horrid arms/Against the torturer'.[22] Ferguson softens it, introducing honour rather than scorn as the impulse for the defiance and the point of the cruelty: 'By a strange kind of affection and tenderness, [they] were directed to be most cruel where they intended highest respect'.[23] The idea that pain is deliberately administered to the victim by the spectator of a scene of sympathy, instead of merely witnessing agony and processing the circumstances of the scene into delight, migrates from septentrional America to the South Seas. Of the Polynesian 'Indians' of the Marquesas, Melville wrote: 'The sympathy which Christendom feels for them has, alas! in too many instances proved their bane'.[24] However, they learned (or already knew) to rebound the signals of woe as a kind of weapon. A Maori chief called Korrakorra managed to subdue an intransigent European by weeping at him.[25]

In her introduction to her plays ('in which it is attempted to delineate the stronger passions of the mind') Joanna Baillie chose the deathsong as the archetype of the public execution which sat at the centre of so many discussions of sympathy and Aristotelian tragedy, and deftly she restores it to the place in Smith's theatre of sympathy where it had always really belonged. She analyses it as a collaborative exercise in spectatorial pleasure and heroic constancy in which pain is the necessary medium. She traces its evolution from vindictive rage to performance:

> Revenge, no doubt, first began amongst the savages of America that dreadful custom of sacrificing their prisoners of war. But the perpetration of such hideous cruelty could never have become a permanent natural custom, but for this universal desire in the human mind to behold a man in every situation, putting forth his strength against the current of adversity, scorning all bodily anguish, or struggling with those feelings of nature, which, like a beating stream, will oft'times burst through the artful barriers of pride. Before they begin those terrible rites, they treat their prisoner kindly, and it cannot be supposed that men, alternately enemies and friends to so many neighbouring tribes, in manners and appearances so like themselves, should be so strongly actuated by a spirit of publick revenge. This custom, therefore, must be considered as a grand and terrible game, which every tribe plays against another, where they try not the strength of the arm … but the fortitude of the soul.[26]

Baillie would find such a scene rich in the species of sympathy that vindicates a fortitude transcending the demands of tribal or social affiliation. The man at the stake jeers that he has killed his tormentors' kindred more ingeniously than they are killing him, inspiring further pains that make good his claim for a place among the ranks of the heroic dead. His constancy in the fire is simultaneously an insult to his enemies and homage to those who have died as he is dying. Unlike Ann Yearsley and Shelley, who both use 'horrid sympathy' to denote a shared agony (in 'Addressed to Revenge' and *The Revolt of Islam* respectively), Baillie reserves the term for a bond established beyond the links of society or even of kind. In *Orra* the heroine, trapped in a Gothic castle, has a presentiment of meeting a ghost:

> I know not how,
> A horrid sympathy jarr'd on my heart,
> And forced into mine eyes these icy tears.

> A fearful kindredship there is between
> The living and the dead – an awful bond![27]

Similarly in *The Martyrs* the Roman legionary Cordenius Maro is converted to Christianity, and then explains why marriage to his beloved Portia would tie her to a creature entirely committed to another sphere of experience:

> His mind would dwell by ceaseless meditation,
> In other worlds of blessedness or woe;
> Lost to the one, and to the other link'd
> By horrid sympathy.[28]

Baillie is faithful to Milton's sense of horrid sympathy as a profound rupture in the system of familiar relationships. It is mutual recognition across a divide that measures loss of kind against the prospect of a new and terrifying community. Given her emphasis on the game-playing involved in the deathsong, it is possible that Baillie would prefer to see it as the last triumphal act of cultural continuity, and not choose to characterise it as horrid on the grounds that it preserves a tribal standard of virtue. However, the feat is achieved outside the purview of the victim's tribe. His audience is composed only of his enemies and the dead, and what they witness is often the most gruesome reduction of the human shape to an animate cinder. If horrid sympathy requires a transit from the realm of the human into another unprecedented zone of experience, where a bond is formed with alien thoughts and feelings, then the deathsong is such a context. Certainly Baillie is in no doubt about Orra's and Cordenius's examples, where horrid sympathy joins the living with the dead. You know what it is like to be a corpse. With Milton's fallen cherubim the gulf to be crossed has divided ranks and species, rather than the quick and the dead, and horrid sympathy is most intense when there is a joint or mirrored recognition of the awful extent of the change provoked by the crossing. By looking at someone else you know what it is like to be something quite different from what you were. You know, for instance, what it is like to be a snake.

Armed with this insight it is possible to review scenes in eighteenth-century literature that introduce a kind of sympathy that tends towards the horrid, even though they are often presented comically. For instance, there is the case of Mrs Sensitive in the ninetieth *Lounger* of Henry Mackenzie. The family consists of 'a number of birds and beasts, which it is the great pleasure of Mrs Sensitive's life to keep and fondle, and on which she is constantly exercising her sensibilities … three lap-dogs, four cats … a monkey, a flying squirrel, two parrots, a parroquet, a Virginia nightingale, a jack-daw, an owl, besides half a hundred smaller birds'.[29] Although Mrs Sensitive has no pity for humans in distress, and will not let objects of charity approach her house, she says she can understand her creatures, 'their looks and their language from *sympathy*'.[30] There is a more subtle example of the same thing in Dorothy Kilner's late eighteenth-century narrative *The Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (1784). The title-page tells us that the tale is designed to amuse and instruct its young audience, although it consists chiefly in scenes of cruelty to animals witnessed by a mouse and commented upon by a human

narrator. At one point the boy Charles is caught by his father dangling a mouse in front of a cat, and his parent says, 'I promise you the smallest creature can feel as acutely as you'.[31] He proves his point by horsewhipping the boy, providing him with a practical lesson in sympathy with animals. Charles is made to feel immediately and acutely what it is like to be an animal in order that he can act properly as a human being. But the weight of the lesson he learns falls upon the agony that lines all relations between humans and animals. They sympathise with each other only to the extent that they can suffer, and to know what it is like to be a mouse is always to be in some degree of pain. Sympathy between the species is horrid to the extent that it is known by nothing else. This is true even of the amiable scene between Tristram Shandy and the ass in Lyons. The price paid by the animal for verifying his claim, 'With an ass, I can commune for ever'[32] is a severe beating.

In the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*, the hero learns so well what it is like to be a horse that he neighs and trots like a horse, and speaks the thing which is in horse language. What is horrid about Gulliver's sympathy is not pain, although a good deal of shame attaches to it, but isolation. On the one hand his unlimited identification with the Houyhnhmns is not reciprocated: they still recognise him as human and eventually expel him from their island on that account; on the other hand, with his own kind Gulliver reproduces this one-sided identification by refusing the friendship of the Portuguese captain and the love of his wife as if he were part of the horse-community that has just rejected him. In this strange mirror of unrequited yearnings, the dominant feelings are, in one direction, disgust; and in the other, hopeless devotion. No doubt Swift had in mind the fable of the ass, told by Aesop and La Fontaine, where the reverse occurs, and animals perform the part of another species to raise their esteem. In 'The Ass and the Little Dog' the ass climbs into its master's lap in order to be fondled, only to be beaten off. The animal actually repeats the gesture of Gulliver's master-Houyhnhmn, by raising its hoof to the human mouth in a gesture of affection. Swift had no doubt that such horrid sympathy always worked the other way round. In his poem *The Beasts' Confession* he declares,

> The Ass was never known so stupid
> To act the Part of Tray or Cupid;
> Nor leaps upon his Master's Lap,
> There to be stroak'd and fed with Pap;
> As Esop would the World perswade.[33]

In the nineteenth century Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) explored the isolation of a creature like Gulliver who identifies hopelessly with a species that will always reject him while denying, or being denied, access to his own. She imagined a creature manufactured from the animated fragments of corpses, a monster so hideous that its disgusted creator is the first to be sickened by it. The monster's secret life in the De Lacey cottage is spent like Gulliver's time with the horses as a period of education into the language and culture of another species with which each is desperate to identify. The monster correctly predicts the

outcome, when the very sight of him will banish him forever from such amiable company; and the basis for his prediction is *Paradise Lost* which, along with Volney, Plutarch and Goethe, constitutes his curriculum. At first he sees his own predicament mirrored in the misery of fallen Adam, but soon he sees Satan as 'the fitter emblem of my condition'.[34] Sympathy grows truly horrid for the monster when he realises that he will never find true sympathy, only a competitive agony with his own creator. 'My agony was still superior to thine,' he tells Frankenstein's corpse; then he sings his deathsong to Robert Walton. 'I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames'.[35] Like Baillie's *Orra* sympathy is shown plying the line between the living and the dead, and like Kilner's fable of sympathy, the line is one of limitless agony.

The watershed for these Gothic experiments with horrid sympathy is the 1790s, when Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) was written, a story of sympathy so entire, singular and painful between a gentleman and his servant that it leads not to love, admiration or even mutual narcissism, but the grimmest persecution and deadliest hatred. It is generally supposed that among radical circles such as Godwin's there was a reaction against an effeminate and ineffectual sensibility, perhaps most clearly enunciated in Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, where she targets the 'sentimental jargon' of 'the stupid novelists'.[36] Coleridge compared circulating libraries with a *camera obscura*, by whose means 'the moving phantasms of one man's delirium [are transmitted] to an hundred other brains'.[37] Wordsworth's assault on sentimental literature in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* seems to have been propelled by the same impatience with self-pleasing sympathetic indolence that attracted the scorn even of novelists who had been its sponsors, such as Mackenzie and, earlier, Sterne himself. In her own novels Wollstonecraft associates the word sympathy with a negative feeling, such as the formal expression of mutual dislike between Mary and her husband, while sympathy between Maria and Jemima leads to agonised presentiments of the death of her child. On the radical side, sympathy was charged with weakness or error. William Wilberforce thought 'these sweet and benevolent tempers ... are apt to evaporate in barren sensibility, and transitory sympathies'.[38] Adam Ferguson warned, 'Sympathy is no doubt a part in the social nature of man … but, like every other natural disposition, it is susceptible of abuse, and by no means a safe or adequate principle of estimation'.[39] But on the conservative side, sympathy still had the job of asserting the community of the species. Henry Hunter preached a sermon on the death of Louis XVI in which a personified Britain 'loses all thought of the enemy and the king, in respect for the virtues, and sympathy in suffering, of the man'.[40]

In *Caleb Williams* the involuntary but total entry of Caleb into the secrets of Falkland's soul is successively characterised as self-alienation, equal at least on Caleb's part to Faust's bargain with the devil, Lucifer's expulsion from heaven, the condition of a slave, and finally that of a Siamese twin severed from its partner. At all events it is unnatural, out of kind, a loss of the connexion with species, and it is fuelled by a hatred which goes well beyond a simple desire for the death of the enemy. Falkland wants to reduce Caleb to the condition of an animal before he

kills him. But this persecution has its source in sympathy: ‘There was a magnetical sympathy between me and my patron’.[41] No sooner is an emotion caused in the one than it is transfused to the other. At first this makes Falkland feel like the vulnerable party. He asks Caleb, ‘Do you think I will be an instrument to be played on at your pleasure, till you have extorted all the treasures of my soul?’[42] At this stage Caleb is driven by an irresistible curiosity, nothing else. This when he says that in order to satisfy it, ‘I would have submitted to the condition of a West Indian negro, or to the tortures inflicted by North American savages’.[43] But once he is inescapably bound by the filaments of this relationship, he compares his tortures to those of Lucifer. From this point on he emphasises again and again his expulsion from society and even from humankind. ‘Thus was I cut off for ever from all that existence has to bestow …. No language can do justice to the indignant and soul-sickening loathing that these ideas excited. My resentment … extended itself to the whole machine of society’.[44] He expresses his exquisite sense of isolation as the absence of all sympathy (‘I was a solitary being cut off from the expectation of sympathy … dead to every manly sympathy,’ an entire stranger to ‘the delicious gifts of confidence and sympathy’),[45] yet in every sense he is the creature of a ‘magnetical’ sympathy that has grown horrid. In his strange adaptation of Aristophanes’s comical idea of all human creatures as originally double, with four legs and arms and two heads and impelled by an insuperable desire to copulate and reunite, Caleb describes his involuntary twinning with Falkland not as the consummation of such a desire but as its total frustration, answered by nothing but the encounter with his disgustingly divided counterpart. It is the same nausea that Gulliver feels for his wife when he gets back from the land of the horses. This is how Caleb describes it:

> The pride of philosophy has taught us to treat man as an individual. He is no such thing. He holds, necessarily, indispensably, to his species. He is like those twin-births, that have two heads indeed, and four hands; but, if you attempt to detach them from each other, they are inevitably subjected to miserable and lingering destruction. It was this circumstance, more than all the rest, that gradually gorged my heart with abhorrence of Mr Falkland. I could think of his name, but with a sickness and a loathing, that seemed more than human.[46]

He has reached the point of horrid sympathy where he knows what it is like to be this degenerate Falkland, just as Lucifer, in the sight of his brother rebels, knows what it is like to be a snake. The split ending of the novel, which in the one version has Caleb and Falkland falling remorsefully into one another’s arms, and in the other has Caleb about to die with the wounds of his mind still gaping, testifies to the difficulty of grasping the full dimensions of horrid sympathy within the terms of a novel, which are necessarily limited by the norms of sociability and humanity.

Godwin wrote the fiction in 1794, the year of the Terror and of the Treason Trials. One of his early and enthusiastic readers was Joseph Gerald, who was transported for sedition and died in Botany Bay. There is no doubt that the relationship between Caleb and Falkland was intended to explore not only the injustice of class relations in Britain, but also the extraordinary degree of psychic

damage they were capable of wreaking. Godwin's interest in this psychological dimension of oppression began with the Treason Trials, held first in Edinburgh in 1793 then in London the following year. They were lengthy analyses on the part of the defendants and prosecutors alike of the nature and degree of imagined ideas, how these might be transfused from one brain to another, and what the effects of such an exchange of sentiments might be. They were discussions of seditious if not horrid sympathy. From the prosecution's point of view sedition was to commit an imaginary crime by transmitting the idea of it to other brains, so poisoning them.[47] For its part the defence argued that such a charge of virtual treason could arise nowhere else but in the obsessive ideas of those who were themselves imagining an imagined crime, contaminating the minds of juries with a foul and improbable notion.[48] Godwin took a central position in this debate with his *Cursory Strictures*, published by instalments in the *Morning Chronicle* from 2 October 1794. He argued that peaceful men were being tried for their lives to assuage terrors that had no other origin than the wild fancies of those who had decided to persecute them. He doubted if the history of English law could show a parallel instance of 'such wild conjecture, such premature presumption, imaginations so licentious, and dreams so full of sanguinary and tremendous prophecy'.[49] It is not hard to see the parallel between this sort of persecution and Falkland's publication of the false history of Caleb. Yet Caleb's autobiographical vindication of his personal history often reaches the limit of obliquity or inexpressibility that frames the extreme passages of slave narratives, a sure sign that the intelligible limits of suffering have been surpassed, and that the only form of available sympathy is of the horrid kind.

Almost at the same time as Godwin was composing his novel, Edmund Burke, one of the century's major theorists of sympathy, was handling the topic of horrid sympathy from the other side of the political spectrum in his four *Letters on a Regicide Peace*. Burke's position in the letters is his refusal to approve Britain's peace negotiations with France, 'the cannibal Republick' and 'the Moloch of Regicide'.[50] In normal circumstances, he avers, 'It is with nations as with individuals … the secret, unseen, but irrefragable bond of habitual intercourse, holds them together'.[51] But he wants to show how the 'systematic unsociability'[52] of the new republic has provoked the inhuman excesses surrounding executions at the guillotine, where blood has allegedly been drunk, and hideous excesses have compromised the already suspect principles of the Declaration of Right. 'They have apostatified their Apostacy,' he announced, by sequestering, plundering and killing at will.[53] The France Burke paints is an outcast from the community of nations, its patriotism monstrous and its energy dreadful: it is rather like Caleb in Falkland's false history, culpably misled by notions of sympathy and fraternity to the point where it has forsaken its system of social relations and of political order, and rendered itself an outlaw with whom no other nation can honourably treat. Alternatively France, from Godwin's point of view, is the true Caleb, unjustly denied the fruits of sociable sympathy that is every human being's right.

Burke is surprised to find that any sympathy can be shown towards those responsible for such anarchy; and yet he finds among the Opposition benches of Parliament that considerable sympathy has been expended on aristocratic revolutionaries such as Lafayette. So Burke tries to lay out the grounds of

sympathy so that its exponents may never trespass into the zone of the horrid. He says,

> Men are rarely without some sympathy in the sufferings of others; but in the immense and diversified mass of human misery, which may be pitied, but cannot be relieved, in the gross, the mind must make a choice. Our sympathy is always more forcibly attracted towards the misfortunes of certain persons, and in certain descriptions: and the sympathetic attraction discovers, beyond a possibility of mistake, our mental affinities, and elective affections. It is a much surer proof, than the strongest declaration, of a real connexion and of an over-ruling bias in the mind.[54]

Burke applies this acid test of sympathy to the death of Robespierre. He acknowledges the cruelty of the proceeding, but then adds there have been many such cruelties, and at least this was visited upon the perpetrator of many of them. He concludes, 'Murderers and hogs never look well till they are hanged. From villainy no good can arise, but in the example of its fate. So I leave them their dead Robespierre'.[55] One cannot sympathise with Robespierre because he has exceeded all bounds of human resemblance, and is now like nothing but an animal. Like France in its present state, he has ceased to belong to our kind. On the other hand, Sir Sidney Smith, a gallant soldier and worthy human being, has been imprisoned as a spy, and 'there he lies, unpitied by the grand philanthropy'.[56] Burke draws the corollary. 'I cannot pity my kind as a kind, merely because they are men,' he confesses, 'this affected pity only tends to dissatisfy them with their condition … Whatever may be the intention … of those who would discontent mankind by this strange pity, they act towards us in the consequences, as if they were our worst enemies'.[57] He loops the terms of this warning back towards Defoe's, Trenchard's and Mandeville's arguments about mistaken charity in order to affirm, with peculiar lucidity, the absolute hostility of horrid sympathy to all forms of sociability. This is why he ventures the paradox in his fourth *Letter* that gentleness not founded on a degree of charitable rancour will collude with cruelty and injustice. 'They will never love where they ought to love, who do not hate where they ought to hate'.[58] Mandeville would have appreciated the piquancy of the contradiction; but not Godwin, who is overwhelmed by the intuition of the irrevocable and inhuman consequences of horrid sympathy: sympathy, that is, so illimitable, so wide of human intention and control, it makes one person the owner of another's thoughts and feelings, leading to such an inhuman degree of exposure each party is at a loss to measure the pain of such terrible self-recognition.

Notes

1 Torquato Tasso, *Jersusalem Delivered*, trans. John Hoole (London, 1811), 1.431–4; p. 16.
2 See Colin Burrow, *Epic Romance* (Oxford, 1993).
3 Thomas Hobbes, *On the Citizen*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 3, 22, 25.

4 Jonathan Swift, *Satires and Personal Writings*, ed. William Alfred Eddy (1932; rpt. London, 1962), p. 3.
5 Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1970; rpt. London, 1986), p. 179.
6 Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (1976; rpt. Indiana, 1982).
7 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton (Oxford, 1987), p. 45.
8 Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, ed. Graham Petrie (1967; rpt. London, 1986) p. 96
9 Burrow, *Epic Romance*, p. 279.
10 John Milton, *Poetical Works*, ed. Helen Darbishire, (1958; rpt. Oxford, 1961) IV: 461–5.
11 Ibid., X: 538–41.
12 Ibid., VI: 362; 462.
13 Ibid., X: 569.
14 Ibid., X: 706.
15 Ibid., III: 93.
16 Ibid., III: 122.
17 Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 205.
18 Ibid., p. 206.
19 Ibid., p. 28.
20 Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (New Jersey, 1995), p. 92.
21 Pierre Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Americains*, 2 vols (Paris, 1724), II: 172.
22 Milton, *Poetical Works*, II: 62.
23 Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. 92.
24 Herman Melville, *Typee* (New York, 1964), p. 220.
25 John Liddiard Nicholas, *A Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand*, 2 vols (London, 1817), I: 424.
26 Joanna Baillie, *A Series of Plays*, 3 vols (London, 1798).
27 Ibid., *Orra,* Act 4, scene 3.
28 Joanna Baillie, *The Martyrs* (1826), Act 3, scene 3.
29 Henry Mackenzie, *The Lounger* 3 vols (London, 1788), III: 91.
30 Ibid.
31 Dorothy Kilner, *Life and Perambulations of a Mouse* (London, n.d.) p. 53.
32 Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, p. 367.
33 Swift, *Poems*, ed. Harold Williams, 3 vols (1937; rpt., Oxford, 1966), II: 607.
34 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, ed. Johanna M. Smith (Boston, 1992), p. 113.
35 Ibid., p. 185.
36 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792; London, 2004), p. 229; Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London, 1993), p. 3 and passim.
37 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson, (1906; rpt. London, 1967), p. 182.
38 William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System* (London, 1958), p. 82.
39 Ferguson, *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (New Brunswick, 1995), p. 256.
40 Hunter cited in John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death* (Oxford, 2000), p. 69.
41 William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, ed. David McCracken (Oxford, 1970), p. 112.

42 Ibid., p. 118.
43 Ibid., p. 144.
44 Ibid., p. 183.
45 Ibid., pp. 247, 255, 262.
46 Ibid., p. 303.
47 Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, p. 161.
48 Ibid., p. 371.
49 Godwin cited in ibid., p. 307.
50 *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. R.B. McDowell, 9 vols (Oxford, 1980), VIII: 312, 323.
51 Ibid., VIII: 199.
52 Ibid., VIII: 257.
53 Ibid., IX: 101.
54 Ibid., VIII: 307.
55 Ibid., IX: 85.
56 Ibid., VIII: 309.
57 Ibid., VIII: 369.
58 Ibid., IX: 99.

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Chapter 7

Class, Gender and British Elections, 1794–1818

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In 1802, William Cobbett fulminated that the parliamentary elections were 'not as heretofore, a contest between such a gentleman and such a gentleman; but between the high and low, the rich and the poor.' (Cobbett was still a conservative at this time).[1] Government pamphleteer John Bowles proclaimed that at Lancaster, 'the Jacobinical mob was addressed by *a Lady*, who told them, that "the contest was between shoes and wooden clogs – between fine shirts and coarse ones – between the opulent and the poor; and that the people were every thing if they chose to assert their rights."'[2] As E.P. Thompson argued, these elections were part of a radical resurgence from 1798–1802, a time when authorities feared insurrections and equated calls for an expanded suffrage with Jacobinism.[3] Indeed, with Pitt's Gagging Acts of 1795, elections were one of the few times in which dissent could be openly and legitimately expressed. But in 1803, the Napoleonic Wars resumed, and organised radicalism has widely been assumed to be quiescent for several years. Nonetheless, if we examine the longer period of 1796–1807, elections in Nottingham, Norwich, Yorkshire and Westminster reveal a language of class beginning to influence the traditional politics of deference to local dynasties and assertions of electoral independence. The period 1790–1820 also represented, as Judith Lewis has found, the high point of women's participation in elections, when 28 per cent of county and 20 per cent of borough elections reveal evidence of female activity.[4] By examining the very different ways in which aristocratic, middle-class and plebeian women participated in elections, class approaches to parliamentary politics can be illuminated.

Aristocratic women had long played a key role in the traditional system of deference. Most parliamentary seats which were not controlled by the government were influenced by great aristocratic families. As George Tierney noted in 1793, seventy-one peers and the treasury together nominated or procured the return of 167 members of parliament, while ninety-one commoners controlled the return of 139 members, and about one third of those commoners were members of the gentry. For instance, Lady Irwin nominated two members for Horsham, and Mrs Allanson, two for Rippon. As Elaine Chalus and Judith Lewis have so brilliantly shown, aristocratic women exercised this influence through hospitality and philanthropy, as gracious ladies of the neighbourhood.[5]

Party politics provided another avenue for aristocratic women's participation, since the number of contested elections had increased greatly since 1763. Tierney believed that some of this influence was legitimate, stemming from the 'friendly offices' of neighbourhood and connection.[6] The campaigning activity of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, for the Whigs during the 1784 Westminster election is well known. But radicals attacked the Duchess and other great ladies who canvassed for the Whigs as exercising undue aristocratic influence. The influence of these ladies could be coercive, on the one hand promising jobs and patronage, on the other hand, threatening tenants with eviction if they did not vote as instructed.[7] Despite the tradition of deference, the principle of independence was also important, especially for middle-class voters. Some historians have suggested that electors deferred to aristocratic interests by giving one of their votes to a representative of a great family, while choosing another for reasons of principle. Many middle-class voters in urban areas often regarded themselves as truly independent individuals, for if they had their own businesses and property not dependent on aristocratic patronage or landlords, they could indeed vote as they wished. They sometimes resented the expectation that they would defer to aristocratic influence, which was often associated with moral corruption. Furthermore, by the 1790s, the term the 'middle-class' began to be used in politics. The editors of the *Oeconomist*, a liberal Newcastle magazine distributed widely throughout Britain, celebrated the middle class as the paragon of political virtue. While they did not explicitly link the middle class to superior domestic virtue, they argued that domestic duties justified political participation: 'at the present period ... political measures do in their effects obtrude themselves with such imperious force into the most sacred recesses of domestic retirement, that for the regulation of a family it is absolutely necessary to be, alas, too intimately acquainted with the regulations of the state.'[8] However, unlike aristocratic women, middle-class women did not have great family connections or the clout of landholding to give them connections in politics; they tended to help out behind the scenes.

Through voters' clubs and the hustings, plebeian men had long been intensely involved in electoral politics, especially in those few boroughs with a wider franchise.[9] But working men's vulnerability to bribery and threats made their independence problematic. For instance, in a Bristol election of 1781, a journeyman cooper complained that between 'Bribery, Flattery, and Threats, but few of us could vote according to our own Inclinations, fearing to be turned out of employ. All we get from the rich, he complained, is a scanty maintenance, for ourselves and our Families; and scarcely that: whilst *they* live in all Manner of Luxury, and get Fortunes besides, by the sweat of our Brow'.[10] Although the outright purchase of votes was illegal, and perhaps not as common as once thought, electoral agents often tried to get around legal restrictions by bribing the wives of voters. Wives of voters could be offered money – although they often indignantly refused. But around 1802, a story went around that a lottery ticket was an acceptable, even legal gift to the wife of a voter.[11] In order to exert electoral power, plebeian men therefore could not act as individuals; they had to combine together in clubs or act together in crowds, seeking alliances with the local factions or dynasties in order to further their economic and political interests. Women had

long participated in these crowds, although not in these clubs, but as we shall see this decade represented a time in which a more self-conscious articulation of class interests defined on the basis of community became apparent, and provided a new opportunity for plebeian women.

Party politics did not map onto class lines during this period, but occasionally the language of class began to appear in some elections in the 1790s. The Whigs presented themselves as defending the principles of the Glorious Revolution against the overweening crown, but also expected deference to the descendants of the great aristocratic families who had led the revolution. Many Whigs, though not all, opposed the government party. During the 1790s, the Whigs splintered, when some of their leading politicians, such as Edmund Burke and William Windham, sided with the government, and others, such as Fox, espoused the cause of parliamentary reform. The Foxites, while still expecting deference to aristocratic interests, explicitly started appealing to the middle classes who were for reform.[12] In Southwark, George Tierney, at that time a member of the Friends of the People, vowed to run without bribery, corruption and influence. The opposition newspaper the *Morning Chronicle* reviled the ministerialists for 'regaling themselves in voluptuous indulgence,' amidst the 'ruin and desolation' of war and the sufferings of the poor and the middling classes. They strengthened 'their interest by Matrimonial treaties and Cabinet arrangements,' alleged the Whigs, noting that the candidate opposing Sheridan at Stafford was married to the mayor's daughter and 'supported by all the ministerialist influence in the county.'[13] But the Whigs found difficulty in using this argument, since they were associated with so many libertines, and also with aristocratic domination. Radicals sometimes allied themselves with their erstwhile Whig antagonists, as when John Horne Tooke stood for Westminster alongside, although not on the same platform as Fox. But radical-Whig alliances were always contingent, especially on the local level, where national Whig-Tory divisions uneasily mapped onto municipal factions.

Conservatives could play the moral card against the Whigs; the *True Briton* editorialised that English voters must reject 'Men, who talk about *rights* and neglect *duties*; who conceal private *vice* beneath the *mask* of public *virtue*; who disguise *Disaffection* under a show of *Patriotism*.'[14] Conservatives also had to recognise that some of their support had become contingent as well. During the 1780s, Pitt had ably appealed to many provincial middle-class people who were disillusioned with party politics, especially with the Whigs, by presenting himself as an exemplar of virtue. During the wars against the French, the language of virtue increasingly focused on domestic, religious and national virtues as against the perfidious Gaul and the dangerous radicals. But in order to spread this virtue, the Government increasingly relied on loyalist associations and clubs, which could have their own agendas.

The city of Norwich is a good case study for these tensions. Norwich had a fairly broad franchise, aided by a flourishing trade in banking, brewing and weaving. Politically, it was divided between the orange and purple cause of the Tories, largely brewing and banking and Anglican interests, and the blues, mostly dissenters, especially Quakers and Unitarians, including the Quaker banking family of the Gurneys and many cloth merchants, as well as the large number of

journeymen weavers. The liberal Blues usually supported the Whigs, but their support was increasingly contingent. On a more elevated social scale, the members of Parliament usually came from very grand families, such as Windham of Felbrigg and Hobart, brother to the Duke of Buckingham, and the female members of these families exerted the traditional electoral influence.[15] But independent interests had long been assertive in Norwich.

The Norwich Blues also overlapped with a dissenting intellectual culture very hospitable to female learning. They were trying to work out a new form of social and intellectual life independent of Anglican and aristocratic influence. Since they were excluded from many conventional institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge, the young men of these circles often met in more informal social groups where women could converse alongside men. In her cosy parlour, Mrs John Taylor darned socks while holding her own in the political discussions which raged around her. Women also attended meetings of the Tusculorum Society, a debating society, although they did not contribute to the arguments or vote. Some of these women, such as Anna Letitia Barbauld, were respected intellectuals in their own right, who contributed pamphlets to debates on religious toleration and politics. Women such as Mary Wollstonecraft also contributed to the periodical the *Cabinet*, which also contained essays by Thomas Starling Norgate advocating voting rights for women.[16]

Two models of women's political participation had earlier contrasted in an election in 1784. T.P. Coke, representative of the Whig dynasty, was defeated as part of the backlash against the Foxite Whigs, especially by those who thought he was insufficiently patriotic. On one hand, Lady Coke assiduously canvassed for her husband, deploying the resources of his hospitality and landholdings, although his opponents warned voters not to be swayed by female beauty. On the other, some women presented themselves as motivated by disinterested concern for the public good, such as 'Belinda,' a writer of squibs who styled herself a 'female patriot,' and those who proposed a 'female patriotic association' to mobilise against the Foxites.[17] But in the 1786 election, Peter Pindar savagely attacked Eliza Goodwill for her female scribbling.[18] In that contest, the Foxite candidate Beevor lost against Henry Hobart, representative of aristocratic interests, in a fiercely-fought election which cost £15,000. Hobart was widely accused of threatening tradesmen and dependents with loss of custom and jobs.[19]

The independent interests of Norwich had succeeded in electing the Whig William Windham to represent them in 1784. But they turned against him by the 1790s. First, he had neglected local interests, and second, he not only supported the war, which damaged Norwich's commerce and industry, he became Pitt's War Minister.[20] The liberals portrayed Windham as 'a creature of the court', a man 'who in the midst of ministerial banquettings, and courtly debaucheries' sent thousands of innocent soldiers to their deaths. Many middle-class and plebeian people in Norwich had become very enthusiastic in their support for the French revolution, celebrating the anniversary of the 1688 revolution with radical sermons and founding the Revolution Society. Windham refused to support Norwich's petition for reform and offended local economic interests by allegedly declaring in Parliament that he would sacrifice commerce to preserve the British constitution.[21]

In the summer of 1794 Windham ran against James Mingay, who was supported by the dissenting banker Gurney. Radicals processed throughout the city with a loom 'covered with black cloth and empty shuttles while Windham's supporters exhibited a model guillotine with a female figure suffering under it, labelled French liberty.'[22] Anne Plumptre, a vicar's daughter who wrote for the *Cabinet*, observed to a correspondent, who she addressed as 'Dear Citizen', that the city 'execrated' those who voted for Windham.[23]

Upon the dissolution of Parliament in 1796, Hobart and Windham agreed that they did not need to have an election, since there were no other candidates for the two seats. This common practice of uncontested elections disgusted independent voters, who quickly found another candidate just a few days before the election: Bartlett Gurney, the Quaker banker. Gurney, a member of the city's liberal, dissenting circles, reluctantly sacrificed his 'domestic comforts and engagements in business' to stand against the war minister.[24] Although the Norwich liberals had begun to distance themselves from the well-organised radical plebeians of the city, they still thought of themselves as 'Citizens' defying aristocratic power. Louisa Gurney, aged eleven, watched the election from Friend Toll's shop in market place, adorning herself with a blue cockade and bawling 'Gurney for ever.' When she heard that Windham had won the election, she wrote, 'I was so vexed. Eliza and I cried. I hated all aristocrats; I felt it right to hate them. I was fit to kill them.'[25] Lucy Aikin, another member of this circle, criticised 'toadeaters of the aristocracy' and celebrated the rising middle class: 'For many purposes wealth is power, genius is power, virtue is power, and from power result influence, consequence, eminence.'[26]

These middle-class women worked behind the scenes to defeat Windham. Mrs Taylor helped her husband, William Taylor, a staunch Whig and dissenter who in 1790 had founded the Norwich Revolution Society, which had forty branches attracting artisans and shopkeepers. Once this had been suppressed by the government, he established the Norwich Patriotic Society in 1795, which provided the backbone of resistance to Windham. Women did not join these clubs, but Anne Plumptre invited John Thelwall, the radical lecturer and friend of many in the Cabinet circle, to speak in Norwich. Middle-class women, however, did not play an open part in this election. The fact that two influential Norwich radicals continued to rail against petticoat influence would have made such action difficult. For instance, Thelwall expressed hostility to the idea that women could be included in public opinion. He denounced Burke's restrictive notion of public opinion for including twenty-thousand women among the four hundred thousand people with the leisure to follow politics. For Thelwall, the inclusion of women dramatised the illegitimacy of Burke's public opinion as including only 'the favoured four hundred thousand – a mixed herd of nobles and gentles, placemen, pensioners and court-expectants, of bankers and merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, parsons and physicians, warehousemen and shopkeepers, pimps and king's messengers, fiddlers and auctioneers, with the included twenty-thousand petticoat allies – ladies of the court, and ladies of the town!'[27] Similarly, Mark Wilks, the influential Baptist minister and radical activist, vehemently denounced female political influence in 1795. Wilks had earlier supported Windham but turned against him for the radical

cause. A ‘zealous’ preacher with long hair falling ‘carelessly’ over his ‘meagre’ shoulders, Wilks was unaffected by the feminism of the *Cabinet* circle: he boasted to young women that his wife’s ‘affectionate *obedience*’ ensured the happiness of his marriage. In 1795, Wilks preached a curious sermon called *The Modern Athaliah* in which he compared modern politicians to Athaliah, an ancient queen who murdered the sons of a Jewish king: ‘Though it was contrary to the canons of the Jewish nation for a woman to fill any situation of authority and trust, Athaliah will hold the reins, and will suffer no competitor’.[28] Although Wilks used the figure of Athaliah to represent those local aristocratic politicians such as William Windham for ‘currying favour with the court,’ this denunciation could obviously have a chilling effect on any woman who wished to play an open role or exert influence behind the scenes.

Several conservative women, nonetheless, played an important role in the election. First, they continued their traditional roles of canvassing voters and even coercing their tenants’ votes. For instance, Mrs Long of Dunston ‘voted all her City tenants for [William Windham] at the last [Norwich] election and such of her country tenants as were Freemen or Freeholders, which she always sends at her own expense.’[29] Second, they moved beyond dynastic influence toward a more ideological role as writers. For conservatives, the public sphere of politics should be reserved for the aristocratic elites; but the private was still an important realm where the populace must be inculcated in deference and religion, and against Frenchified levelling ideas. For instance, a Mrs Jaggar wrote flyers comparing Gurney’s supporters to bloodthirsty medieval rebels and vicious Jacobins:

> The Factious rebels of this day
> The more secure to burn you
> In treach’rous ambush hidden lay
> Behind the name of Gurney.[30]

‘An Englishwoman’ signed one of the most thorough and perhaps influential squibs for Windham, which appeared just before the election. As Gaddis notes, this pamphlet represented Windham how he wanted to be presented to the voters. By signing the pamphlet an ‘Englishwoman,’ the author could be seen as espousing true patriotism rather than factionalism. Denouncing the cosmopolitan universal humanity espoused by the circles of intellectual and dissenting Norwich, she declared that Windham, unlike the ‘Citizen of the World’ (presumably the anti-slave trade Gurney) did not ‘fraternise with Blacks and Tartars, or murder his countrymen.’ Here, she referred to Windham’s opposition to the abolition of the slave trade, and the fears inspired by the Sainte Domingue rebellion. Using a conservative definition of patriotism, she asserted that Windham was ‘a TRUE BRITON, true to his GOD, his COUNTRY, and his KING.’ For the ‘Englishwoman,’ patriotism was founded in the Church of England: ‘That Freedom, whose basis is Religion and Loyalty, shall yet be our boast, in spite of Faction and Folly; preserved to us and to our children, by the blessings of Heaven, and the counsels of such men as WINDHAM, it will ensure us a Contented life here, and Eternal Happiness hereafter.’[31]

This pamphlet has been seen as influential in swaying public opinion in this election, but traditional political manipulation was probably more important. Although Gurney won most of the votes in Norwich, Windham brought in non-resident voters who were able to turn the tide for the government. The Norwich election is also interesting in terms of the ongoing debate about the extent of corruption in electoral politics. While some historians attempted to show through a computer analysis that corruption was almost unknown in Norwich, Michael Weinzierl argues that letters to Windham promising votes in return for favour demonstrate that economic pressure did play a part in swaying the election. However, Weinzierl points out that since both sides resorted to dirty tricks, and since the electorate was too big to be easily controlled, party political corruption cancelled itself out.[32]

The dissenting middle-class interests, supported from behind the scenes by women, did better in the 1802 election. The Foxites were back in Parliament, the peace in Amiens interrupted the war, and radical Sir Francis Burdett won the election in Westminster. In Norwich, Windham was defeated by the dual platform of William Smith, a radical anti-slavery dissenter of a mercantile background, who had long supported moderate parliamentary reform, and country gentleman Robert Fellowes. This election was seen as notable because a middle-class radical man managed to defeat a member of the great aristocracy. William Wilberforce, a friend who had long joined him in opposing slavery but supported the administration, jovially wrote that he was the 'first existing Jacobin in the House of Commons.'[33] Smith claimed to represent the independent interests of the town against the war, and declared the 'rights and liberties of the meanest citizen should be equally the objects of his care and attention with those of the proudest elector among them.' Windham's party bitterly claimed that Smith and Fellowes were appealing to the 'poor and ignorant' part of the population, and trying to turn them against 'establishments of every kind,' whereas the 'great weight of property and consequence' supported Windham.[34] Some workers supported Windham, such as a party of butchers, who engaged in fisticuffs with 'the sailors with blue and white cockades' supporting Smith and Fellowes. During the campaign, Smith and Fellowes' supporters also expressed their trade pride in a procession where men bore a placard with the Weavers Arms, celebrating Liberty and Loyalty, an old woman carried a symbolic lock of wool, and two boys weaving on a loom rode on a float. Men in green cockades, bearing staves, walked alongside.[35]

Smith's wife played an important role in managing his campaign. She was a 'bluestocking, with a strong taste for theological disputation,' but she also went riding and played cards. Mrs Smith 'managed matters in London,' arranging for transportation and 'overseeing the entertainment of the electors.' On one day Mrs Smith was able to report that 'five men had gone over from Windham to us because there was no wine at their House, nor anything to eat that they liked.'[36] In gratitude for her labours, one hundred and eighty independent gentlemen therefore toasted 'Mrs Smith, and the female citizens of Norwich' at a celebratory banquet, but the ladies did not actually attend the banquet. At the procession celebrating Smith and Fellowes' victory, ladies waved handkerchiefs from the window, but they did not march themselves.[37]

Amelia Opie also played a role in 1802–3 struggles against Windham, to the chagrin of her husband, who wrote 'I am very sorry to find this cursed election lasting so long, and I wish you would not appear so prominent in it … scolding you about the election. What business had you to get mounted up somewhere so conspicuously?' But Opie actually seems to have vacillated between a social and a political interest in the election. She found Windham to be charming and had reluctantly given up her support for him, and wrote that she wanted to attend the election ball. A few years later, she remained curious about politics, asking Samuel Whitbread the price of a borough seat (£4,000) but when she went to a dinner party with Sheridan and other Whig MPs, they did not want to spend their time of relaxation talking politics. As a woman, Opie remained marginalised from the political scene.[38]

The behind-the-scenes participation of women in Norwich elections represented the attitude toward politics prevalent among the liberal, mercantile middle-classes: men tried to devote themselves to the pursuits of private life, maintaining their businesses and families, but when duty called, they would enter public life for the public good. They believed that among the middle classes lay the chief virtues of society. One pamphleteer wrote that '*I do not* love the union of the *very high and the very low*; having long since learned, that it is on the middle mass of the people, purified from the froth and the dregs, that every country must depend for its genuine character and support.'[39] For instance, a Norfolk freeholder admired the dissenters because they were 'respectable from the example which they set to society as fathers, husbands, etc. They are formidable because they do not, after the example of our Clergy and Gentry, allow private friendship, avarice, animosity, or jealousy, to sway them one moment from pursuing, as a body, what they think is a political good.'[40] Liberal Norwich wine merchant William Youngman wrote that 'he who has trampled upon the duties of private life, will never pursue, by just and efficacious means, the public good.' The duty of the government was to establish 'public virtue and domestic felicity,' and the duty of the citizen was to serve in public office, give charity, and be a good husband and father.[41] Although some Norwich liberals were sympathetic to Mary Wollstonecraft's feminism, most believed that women were most valuable in the home.

The tradition of aristocratic influence faced a more plebeian challenge in Nottingham in 1802. This election is fascinating because it represented a struggle between the principle of working-class voting, supported by women representing their community *en masse*, and the principle of deference, supported by the genteel ladies. Nottingham, a town with a wide freeman franchise, and dominated by the framework and hosiery knitting industry, had long been divided between the local Whigs and Tories. There was also a great deal of tension between the county interests, controlled by great aristocratic families, and the Whig corporation. The Whigs fiercely resisted the county's efforts to create freemen in the city in order to gain votes. The Whig magistrates, were of course middle and upper class, but they tried to appeal to the people of Nottingham through paternalist price-fixing in the market during times of high prices. However, sometimes this tactic would not calm the situation, and the town erupted into food riots, as in 1800. Nottingham also had a long tradition of an organised labouring force among the framework knitters, and

regular recourse to riots during elections and during the fraught early years of the wars against the French, when, in 1794, supposed Jacobins were 'ducked in the Leen and Trent rivers.'[42]

In the 1802 election campaign Daniel Parker Coke and Sir John Borlase Warren seemed to be the only candidates standing, but just before the election was called the Whig sheriff, John Allen, allowed the Whig Joseph Birch, a Liverpool merchant, to stand for election, and the poll was extended for five days. The Foxite Birch celebrated the British Constitution, a system of limited monarchy, religious toleration and civil liberty,' and the 'commerce and manufactures of the British Empire.' He toasted 'The Duchess of Devonshire, and the Female Patriots of the British Isles.'[43] But the Whigs also knew they needed the support of the radical working class of Nottingham, which had a wide franchise. A journeyman stockingmaker nominated Birch, and a woolcomber seconded him. Local women supported Birch, but in quite a different way than the canvassing of aristocratic ladies; instead, they represented their community *en masse*. According to the local mainstream newspaper, Birch came to the hustings chaired by a crowd waving purple, pink and yellow ribbons, preceded by 'twenty-four damsels, dressed in white, ornamented with wreaths of flowers, and carrying leaves of laurel in their hands; the foremost supporting a standard of the arms of the representative.'[44] Women sometimes marched in patriotic pro-war processions at this time, so such appearances were not unprecedented, but this incident also marks an important beginning for later events such as Peterloo, when the presence of women and children in crowds represented community unity.

Daniel Parker Coke claimed that he had had to surrender the poll because of the riot and disorder which broke out; his supporters were assaulted by the Birchites, and the Whig magistrates refused to maintain order. George James, a stocking-maker, apparently led the mob which tore the coats off Tory voters' backs; and at night, gardens were destroyed, haystacks fired, and cattle and horses maimed, as historian Malcolm Thomis reports. As a result of this disorder, Coke's supporters took a petition to the House of Commons, which overturned the election and allowed for a new election to take place in 1803. The House of Commons also passed a bill taking away the chartered rights of the borough of Nottingham to control elections, and allowed the more Tory, aristocratic-dominated county magistrates to oversee them. During the ensuing 1803 election, the local Whigs defended the 'chartered rights' of Nottingham against this successful attempt, claiming that the county was infringing on the rights of the freemen of Nottingham. However, even Fox and Cartwright denounced the disorder of the elections, especially the destruction of property, as part of the old corrupt borough system with its factional party politics. Instead, they wanted a more rational system with an expanded, yet still limited, taxpayer suffrage.[45]

Yet the 1803 contest also reveals a striking language of class and politics. On one hand, conservatives tried to link Jacobinism and Whiggism, portraying the women who led the procession as prostitutes and Birch's supporters as dangerous radicals. On the other, Birch's supporters resented aristocratic control and the expectation of deference, and defended these women as representative of the community. Government hack John Bowles claimed that the procession was a wild

Jacobin orgy, led by 'extremely immodest' women, the 'foremost of whom represented the Goddess of Reason, and was in a state of the most grossly indecent personal exposure.' The Tories depicted Birch's supporters as French-inspired Jacobins who paraded a tree of liberty, warning that if Birch won, Nottingham would see 'murder, desolation, famine, rapine ... widow's tears, orphan's cries, the shrieks of Virgin innocence and beauty immolated at the polluted shrine of Cruelty and democratic Despotism.' They portrayed themselves as John Bull's 'legitimate sons,' his offspring by 'his chaste and lovely wife LIBERTY' in contrast to his 'bastards,' mothered 'by a wanton French strumpet named *Licentiousness*.' Above all, Bowles feared that the Nottingham radicals were trying to put the principle of 'universal suffrage' into practice at Nottingham.[46]

Birch and the radical Whigs felt that these claims insulted the purity of Nottingham womanhood, and by extension, their own manhood. R. Davison declared that the women on the hustings were not prostitutes, but the friends and relations of the electors, who had every right to be there.[47] Although women were organised in at least one female friendly society and largely represented in the knitting trade, the radical Whigs presented them as passive creatures who needed to be protected by the manly electors of Nottingham.[48] By insulting their wives and daughters, Birch declaimed, Bowles had insulted the 'WORKING CLASS OF ELECTORS.' The cause of the women therefore helped define the election as one based on class, rather than Whig-Tory factionalism. Birch declared that the election was 'a contest between the rich and the poor; where the one are struggling, and nobly struggling, to secure the right of electing their own Representative, and the other endeavouring to acquire the power of arbitrarily dictating to them.' A squib against Mr Coke mockingly lamented, 'Ah me! with what troubles each day does perplex/By these knitters of hose, and by the fair sex.'[49]

To enjoy their manly independence, the radical-Whigs attacked, and the Tory aristocrats defended, the principle of deference in the elections. The radicals asserted their right to vote independently against pressure from the Tory side, which threatened to dismiss journeymen and even pressured parents of Bluecoats charity school pupils to vote for Coke. As R. Davison proclaimed, 'the power of the Noble, the influence of the Landlord, and the iron hand of the Master, have all been brought into this Contest against the Poor Man's sole refuge in distress.'[50] Coke's supporters, he claimed, 'laid the iron hand of tyranny on all their dependents, threatening them with the deprivation of their hard earned bread, if they dared to obey their own inclinations or consciences.' Coke's side defended this pressure as necessary deference. Workers should vote as their employers desired because all depended on the prosperity of trade: 'no workman employed by others, can prosper, or accomplish anything better than rags, unless he is honest, industrious, looks up with reverence to superiors, and with due respect to his employers.' This 'grand chain' of deference must not be broken, otherwise workers would lose the protection of great men, warned Coke's supporters.[51]

For the Tories, female participation in the election was acceptable if carried out in the traditional deferential fashion by 'ladies,' who embroidered the cushion on which Coke was chaired at his re-election, and waved blue and white handkerchiefs from windows at his procession. Coke's side also provided a grand

entertainment for the wives of burgesses. The Radicals, however, mocked female support as frivolous and unthinking, ridiculing a fashionable girl wearing Coke's blue ribbons who explained, 'it is very genteel to be for Mr Coke.'[52] Aristocratic influence could become especially controversial in elections when exerted by women. Of course, aristocratic and gentry women continued to participate in elections in much the same way as they had for decades.[53] But their ability to engage in politics derived from their family and dynastic connections, not because women in general were recognised as needing or deserving a public voice. When they were not acting on behalf of their own families, their activities became suspect, as the Duchess of Devonshire had discovered in 1784.

This was never more apparent than in a fiercely contested election for the two Norfolk county members of Parliament in 1806. The ministry of All the Talents had collapsed, and an election was called. In Norfolk, the Tory Colonel John Wodehouse faced Thomas Parker Coke and William Windham, recently reconciled as Whig allies against the slave trade after a long split over the war and the French Revolution. Wodehouse, the son of the former county representative, drew upon Tory principles, but also money he acquired from his wife, a wealthy heiress, to fight the expensive election. He canvassed assiduously, with the help of two Tory ladies, Mrs Atkyns of Ketteringham Hall and Mrs Berney of Bracon Hall, who was also aided by her son. The ladies helped with the campaign and wore Wodehouse's colours of pink and purple, 'canvassing, cajoling, arguing, and shouting, "Vote for the Colonel!"' They presumably saw themselves as acting as gracious ladies in the interest of their localities, distributing largesse, and supporting the conservative cause, the royal family and the church. While Mrs Berney was the widow of a local squire, Mrs Atkyns came from a much more colourful background; after a brief career as an actress, she married a local gentleman and flamboyantly espoused the interests of the French royal family.

Coke gained support from the agricultural interests due to deference for his large landholdings, but voters also admired him for his consistent Whig principles. Windham, however, was still not very popular, having been linked with the hated war, and saw the election as a chance to redeem himself. But the two Whig magnates faced what they saw as a 'female conspiracy.' Lady Townsend had withdrawn her previous support from Coke because she wanted to use her interest to get her son elected at Yarmouth.[54] While Windham and Coke had quietly accepted the votes and pamphlets women had produced for them behind the scenes in earlier elections, female influence now turned against them. It was easier to attack the two Tory ladies, Mrs Berney and Mrs Atkyns, for their public role instead of publicly expressing resentment at Lady Townsend. The Whigs portrayed them as Amazonian, 'brazen-faced widows' and 'saucy and overbold' 'witches' who dared, 'To *trade and traffick* with *our fate/*In *riddles* and *affairs of state.*' The squibs mocked Mrs Berney as old and horse-faced, while more dangerously, alluding to her former theatrical career with sexual innuendos, claimed she will sing standing on one leg, and dance 'in an entire *new pair of pink inexpressibles*.' In contrast, Coke and Windham's supporters portrayed themselves in a dignified fashion as '*Illustrious Statesmen*,' protecting the Constitution and King from foreign and domestic foes; and 'the *Beloved Patron of Agriculture and Commerce*,

dispensing Wealth and Plenty to a generous and grateful People.'[55] More viciously, some of Coke and Windham's supporters (without their knowledge) hired two prostitutes and dressed them in pink and purple to process around the town in a carriage, mocking the ladies. After being attacked by the Whig mob, Mrs Berney and Mrs Atkyns had to slink back to their manors. In the end, Coke and Windham trounced Wodehouse in the election, but Mrs Berney's son was so outraged by this insult to his mother's honour that he mounted a petition against the election, described by Thomas Amyot as 'female vengeance,' and the election was overturned. Coke's brother served in his stead, and he took his brother's Derby seat.[56] Mrs Atkins and Mrs Berney had made the mistake of acting on principles and social ambition rather than dynastic connections.

In the 1807 Yorkshire election, however, aristocratic and middle-class women who campaigned on behalf of a moral principle could still seem respectable. The Evangelical William Wilberforce and Henry Lascelles, heir to the Earl of Harewood, stood on opposite sides to the slavery debate, but they both had supported Pitt and the government. Wilberforce was very popular, but Lascelles had alienated the clothiers by refusing to protect the woollen trade against the incursions of new machinery. A new candidate stepped into the race: the young Lord Milton, son of Lord Fitzwilliam, head of the ancient Whig nobility of Yorkshire. Anti-slavery advocates thought he was stronger for their cause than Wilberforce, and the small clothiers of the woollen trade also sided with him. He also gained support from Whigs who wanted to side with the Commons against the Crown. Wilberforce was asked why he only fought for the slaves, and did not fight for peace, or oppose the taxes, which threatened the middle-classes of society with intolerable burdens.[57] As E.A. Smith noted, Milton's victory was 'in some measure the triumph of a coalition between aristocratic influence and an industrial "middle-class" of small independent masters and craftsmen over the merchant clothiers and upper and middling gentry of the rural areas.'[58]

While contemporary accounts do not describe plebeian women as participating in election processions, they were organised in female friendly societies in this area.[59] Although most labouring men and women did not have the vote, they came out in crowds to support Milton, but Lascelles' supporters depicted them as a rabble of thieves, prostitutes, and clothiers.[60] When this calumny did not work, great families threatened to turn off tenants who voted for Milton.[61] However, landholding ladies used their own clout to support both Milton and Wilberforce. [62] 'Lady Johnson of Hackness, near Scarborough, we understand has not only subscribed 1000£ in support of Mr. Wilberforce's election, but has sent a number of Freeholders to York at her own expense,' reported the *Sheffield Iris*.[63] Mrs Ofbaldiston led the female canvassers for Milton, buttonholing every voter for miles around, but also instructing her tenants how to vote. Upon Milton's triumph, the populace of Malton drew her around the town, 'preceded by an excellent band of music, with gold fringed colours waving before them,' after which she treated the voters to a feast. She earned the toast of the 'female patriot of Yorkshire.' However, these female efforts were a drop in the ocean compared to the extremely expensive professional operation mounted by Wilson's supporters, with a

complicated network of election agents and voters clubs, which women could not join.[64]

The rather coercive 'influence' of landlords and employers, whether male or female, became increasingly controversial as the parliamentary reform movement revived and demanded the electors be able to vote without pressure from landlords and employers. In response, the Whigs, such as Windham himself, defended the practice of landlords and employers coercing the votes of their tenants and employees. Arguing against Mr Curwen's bill prohibiting corrupt electoral practices, he justified the 'influence ... legitimately attached to property' in a classic Whig argument for the influence of great families.[65] But radicals espoused another view of the franchise; as Cobbett, now on the radical side, admonished the voters of Westminster, 'The possessor of the elective franchise ... acts not only for himself, but for his country in general, and more especially for his family and his children.'[66]

Although liberal middle-class voters often allied themselves with the Whigs, as in Norwich, this alliance was contingent, and could be broken, as increasingly happened in Westminster, when radicals resented the Whigs' dynastic politics. There, radicals tied to Sir Francis Burdett had tried to prevent Westminster from becoming a '*a mere family property*, handed over from one Lord to another Lord, just like a private estate, with all the game and deer thereon feeding and being.' They opposed the Whigs just as much as ministerial candidates, portraying them as 'place-hunting patriots.'[67] Radical candidates running against the Whigs defended honest men of the middle class against the aristocratic, corrupt Whigs, and criticised them for trying to use female influence as they had in 1784. In 1806, James Paull celebrated the 'Honest Men of the *middling* Classes Struggling with Adversity!' against the 'Placemen, Courtiers and Apostates' represented by Sheridan. While Sheridan toasted 'female patriots,' he referred to those women entranced by Sheridan's dubious, aging charms, rather than women with their own political opinions.[68] Similarly, in 1818, Lady Caroline Lamb attracted negative attention when she canvassed for her cousin Mr Lamb, who was running against Hobhouse, supported by Burdett and his radical followers. She was a glamorous and unstable aristocrat, a former lover of Byron's who wrote *The Female Dandy*, a cross-dressing adventure. She led, as had the Duchess of Devonshire, a phalanx of ladies to canvass for the Whig cause, 'galloping over all parts of Westminster, and where her horse could not go, she walked, leaving few lanes or alleys unexplored.' She supposedly persuaded nearly forty former voters for Burdett that 'Mr Lamb was the *liberty candidate.*' But Hobhouse's supporters denounced 'the conduct of Ladies of high rank who threatened honest tradesmen with the loss of their business if they did not vote as those Ladies directed them.' However, they insisted that he was not complaining about female influence, but aristocratic influence. Conversely, the Whigs asserted the legitimacy of aristocratic deference, and insisted that they were better suited than radicals to lead reforms: true reformers should 'place their faith ... on those, whose principles had been regularly and faithfully cherished from one generation to another, and whose great stake in the country afforded the surest guarantee, that they could only be employed for the public good;' that is, the Whig aristocracy.[69]

The Whig aristocracy, of course, managed to keep their electoral clout for decades to come, and both sides drew upon the traditions of deference and aristocratic campaigning. Yet as reformers continued to attack deference as corruption and celebrating independent voting, aristocratic ladies' electoral participation increasingly seemed too much like dynastic politics, and out of step with the middle-class voters who believed in independence and a separation of public and private. As K.D. Reynolds and Judith Lewis observe, by the early to mid nineteenth century aristocratic women withdrew from their more public roles under the pressure of the ideology of separate spheres, although they continued to instruct their tenants how to vote, and correspond with politicians behind the scenes. With some notable exceptions, overt female influence risked discrediting the continuing dominance of the aristocratic elite over politics.[70]

In conclusion, aristocratic, middle-class, and plebeian women participated in elections in very different ways, reflecting their class orientation. Aristocratic women continued to use influence in their family's or allies' interests, but also acted to further the interest of party politics, both Whig and Tory. However, this latter strategy was rather risky if too public. While some aristocratic women gained personal clout and satisfaction from their political activities, for others, electioneering could be a terrible burden. In a 1797 Norfolk county election, J.H. Astley of Burgh Hall asked his wife to manage his campaign, writing letters, inserting advertisements, and so on, since he was on military service in Scotland putting down unrest in Fife. She found these tasks very difficult as she was eight months pregnant, and he harshly criticised her for not managing well.[71] Upper-middle-class women also might become pawns in dynastic electoral politics. For instance, the daughter of George Garland, a wealthy and influential trader and burgess of Poole, was engaged to marry Christopher Spurrier, who wished to run for Parliament there. But a few weeks before the wedding, Spurrier threatened to break off the engagement, because Garland supported his rival in the race. The marriage only came off because Garland, moved by his daughter's tears, later promised Spurrier two thousand pounds to help him get a seat in Parliament elsewhere.[72]

Liberal middle-class voters were becoming increasingly assertive and restive at aristocratic domination. They envisioned politics in terms of independent individual voters, free from aristocratic pressure, valuing their private lives but taking part in politics when necessary. They toasted their wives as 'female patriots,' but these women tended to participate behind the scenes, lacking the landholding clout of aristocratic women. Of course, many middle-class voters sided with the conservative government party. Their organizations, and government advocates, increasingly drew upon a domestic language to attack reformers and radicals: in Norwich, for instance, a tradesmen's club celebrated William Pitt for keeping the 'horrors of war from devastating our native land,' preserving 'to us the comforts of a peaceful fireside' and defending 'the beds of our wives and the chastity of our daughters from the violation of a foreign foe.'[73] The Nottingham election shows an early example of the use of the language of the 'working class' in an election, demonstrating a vision of united communities, symbolised by the presence of young women dressed in white, even though the

actual election became entangled in factional local politics. Plebeian women could participate as members of organised crowds, representing their communities, in a continuity from food riots to friendly societies. Finally, these incidents also show that electoral politics, while often seen as a traditional, even corrupt aspect of British life, could be a forum for the expression of class and gender tensions.

Notes

1 *Cobbett's Political Register*, 1 (1802), p. 55.
2 John Bowles, *Thoughts on the Late General Election, as Demonstrative of the Progress of Jacobinism* (London, 1803), p. 2.
3 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), p. 457.
4 Judith Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism: Gender, Class and Politics in Georgian Britain* (London, 2003), p. 40.
5 Ibid., pp. 45–50; Elaine Chalus, '"That Epidemical Madness": Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century,' in *Gender in Eighteenth Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London and New York, 1997), pp. 151–78; Elaine Chalus, 'To Serve My Friends: Women and Political Patronage in Eighteenth-Century England,' in *Women, Privilege, and Power. British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Amanda Vickery (Stanford, 2001), p. 77.
6 [George Tierney], *The State of the Representation of England and Wales. Delivered to the Society, the Friends of the People, Associated for the Purpose of Obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, on Saturday the 9th of February 1793* (London, 1793), p. 4.
7 Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton, 2004), chap. 3.
8 *Oeconomist*, 1 (1798), pp. 69, 129–30; this is a different perspective from Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780–1840* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 338, who argues that domesticity and middle-class consciousness were not linked until the 1830s.
9 John A. Phillips, 'Popular Politics in Unreformed England,' *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980), pp. 599–625; John A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England: Plumpers, Splitters and Straights* (Princeton, 1982), p. 77. Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England, 1734–1832* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 19, 179, 280. For works which stress the difficulties of keeping this independence, see Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 225 and Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), p. 219.
10. *The Bristol Contest: Containing a Particular Account of the Proceedings of Both Parties, from the Death of Sir Henry Lippincott, Bart. to the Close of the POLL. Together with the Various Papers, Letters, Advertisements, Squibs, Songs, &c. which were Printed at the Contested Election, Between Henry Cruger, Esq and George Daubeny, Esq., in 1781* (Bristol, 1781), pp. 1–10.
11 *Norwich Chronicle*, 3 July 1802; *Nottingham Journal*, 25 June 1802; *Leeds Mercury*, 9 May 1802.

12 Harold A. Ellis, 'Aristocratic Influence and Electoral Independence: The Whig Model of Parliamentary Reform', *Journal of Modern History*, 51, 4 (1979), pp. 1251–76; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, p. 139 for the increasing use of middle-class language in politics in the 1790s.
13 *Morning Chronicle*, 27 May 1796.
14 *True Briton*, 27 May 1796; also see *Sun*, 28 May 1796.
15 Michael Weinzierl, 'The Norwich Elections of 1794, 1796, and 1802: Conflict and Consensus', *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*, 6, 2 (1986), p. 180.
16 Janet Ross, *Three Generations of Englishwomen. Memoirs and Correspondence of Mrs John Taylor, Mrs. Sarah Austin, and Lady Duff Gordon* (London, 1888), I: 7; [Thomas Starling Norgate], 'On the Rights of Women,' *Cabinet*, 1 (1795), p. 178; 2 (1795), pp. 36–42. Attribution from Penelope J. Corfield and Chris Evans (eds), *Youth and Revolution in the 1790s* (Stroud, 1996), p. 190.
17 *The Election Magazine; or, Repository of Wit and Politics* (Norwich, 1784), pp. 15–32; Wilson, *Sense of the People*, p. 422.
18 *The New Election Budget* (Norwich, 1986), p. 173.
19 Norfolk and Norwich Record Office (NNRO), BUL 14/17/12–15, Election squibs; *Norfolk Chronicle* 3 Aug. 1786.
20 *An Address to the Electors of Norwich being a Vindication of the Principles and Conduct of Mr. Windham's Opponents, at the Late Election, 12 July 1794* (Norwich, 1794).
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23 NNRO, MS4262, Anne Plumptre to unnamed correspondent [1794].
24 *Morning Chronicle*, 2 June 1796.
25 Jewson, *Jacobin City*, p. 69.
26 *Memoirs, Miscellanies and Letters of the late Lucy Aiken*, ed. Philip Hemery le Breton (London, 1864), p. 33.
27 Burke himself had only included women in his definition in his drafts of *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, which were published in an unauthorised version as *Thoughts on a Regicide Peace* by the printer John Owen. In the official version, he left women out of public opinion. Edmund Burke, *Works*, ed. R.B. Macdowell, 9 vols (Oxford, 1991), IX: 187.
28 Sarah Wilks, *Memoirs of Rev. Mark Wilks, Late of Norwich* (London, 1821), pp. 44–50; Mark Wilks, *Athaliah; or the Tocsin sounded by Modern Alarmist* (Norwich, 1795), p. 4.
29 British Library, William Windham MS, Add. MSS 37908 fol. 81, J. Freeman to Windham, 30 July 1794.
30 Windham MS, Add. MSS. 37908 fol. 228, letter from Mrs. Jaggar and flyer, 1796.
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32 Wienzerl, 'The Norwich Elections of 1794, 1796, and 1802: Conflict and Consensus', p. 180.
33 Duke University Library, Special Collections, Smith papers, Wilberforce to Smith, 15 July 1802.
34 *Norwich Chronicle*, 3 July 1802.

35 *Norwich Chronicle*, 10 July 1802.
36 Richard W. Davis, *Dissent in Politics 1780–1830: The Political Life of William Smith, MP* (London, 1971), p. 131.
37 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 10 and 31 July 1802.
38 Cecilia Brightwell, *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie* (Norwich, 1854), pp. 95, 117. There is no mention of her activities in the newspapers or other sources.
39 *An Address to the Freeholders of the County of Norfolk, containing a brief statement of the political situation of the County; and a view of the Public conduct of those g'm who have offered to represent in Parliament, in the Even of the Dissolution* (Norwich, [1802]), p. 12.
40 *Norfolk Chronicle*, 7 Aug. 1802.
41 [William Youngman], 'On Public Spirit,' *Cabinet*, 1 (1795) p. 114, key to authors in J. Corfield and Evans, *Youth and Revolution in the 1790s,* p. 190.
42 *Records of the Borough of Nottingham* (Nottingham, 1947–1952), VII: 394–5; VIII: ix; Malcolm Thomis, *Old Nottingham* (Newton Abbott, 1968), p. 85–88; Rosemary Sweet, 'Freemen and Independent in English Borough Politics, c. 1770–1830,' *Past and Present*, 161 (1998), pp. 84–115.
43 *Nottingham Journal*, 13 Aug. 1802.
44 *Nottingham Journal*, 16 July 1802.
45 Thomis, *Old Nottingham*, p. 88; *House of Commons Journals,* 58 (1802), p. 22; Rachel Eckersley, 'Of Radical Design: John Cartwright and the Redesign of the Reform Campaign, c. 1800–1811,' *History*, 89, 4 (2004), p. 566; John Cartwright, *An Address to the Electors of Nottingham* (London, 1803).
46 John Bowles, *Thoughts on the Late General Election*, pp. 3, 115; *Coke and Birch, the Paper War, carried on at the Nottingham Election, 1803, containing the whole of the Addresses, Songs, Squibs etc circulated by the Contending Parties* (Nottingham, 1803), p. 119.
47 *Norwich Iris*, 2 Apr. 1803.
48 *Records of the Borough of Nottingham*, VIII: 6; *Nottingham Journal*, 8 Apr. 1803.
49 *Coke and Birch, the Paper War*, p. 174, 131; *Norwich Iris*, 4 June 1803.
50 *Nottingham Journal*, 8 Apr. 1803.
51 *Coke and Birch, the Paper War*, p. 158.
52 *Coke and Birch*, p. 197; *Nottingham Journal*, 21 May 1803.
53 For examples, see NNRO, HMN 4/65/1–26, J. Astley to Mrs Astley, 15 Sept 1797, 15 Oct 1797, Oct 17, 1797; HMN 4/69/1–18, Martin Coulcher to Anthony Hamond, 17 July 1802; Dorset Record Office D/WIB C1, Charlotte Lady Bolingbroke to Mrs Fanny Williams, 18 July 1802.
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Chapter 8

The Military Committee and the United Irishmen, 1798–1803

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The burgeoning scholarship on the Society of United Irishmen has transformed academic perceptions of Ireland's first coherent, mass based republican movement. This constructive revisionism has been spurred in no small degree by the bicentenaries of the organization's foundation in 1791 and its primary armed showing in 1798. Whereas the well supported centenary celebration of the Rebellion elapsed without significant advances in research, the 200th anniversary commemorations engaged numerous professional historians in parish to national level events across Ireland. A sizable new literature has emerged, drawing heavily on the vast primary sources available in Ireland, Britain and France[1] Yet, there remains no overarching reassessment of the United Irishmen and recent historiographical trends have favoured examination of the organization's political programme over its paramilitary history. Remarkably, there remains no military history of the 1798 Rebellion in which 30,000 perished and crucial aspects of the United Irishmen have been neglected in consequence.[2]

The Act of Union (1800) and the Rising of 1803 are traditionally viewed as chronological aftershocks of the 1798 Rebellion. Union represented a London driven effort to achieve the internal security of the islands of Great Britain and Ireland by constitutional modifications. Government was lulled into a sense of complacency by the comparative ease with which the abolition of the Dublin parliament was effected. Republicans, of course, did not regard the loss of the colonial assembly as relevant to their far reaching democratic objectives. British delusions were shattered by the shock of the Rising of 1803 which presented a much greater threat to the Establishment than the heavily censored wartime media was permitted to acknowledge. The 1803 uprising was strongly associated in popular history with the leadership of Robert Emmet and has generally been deemed a semi-farcical and romantic sequel to the 1798 Rebellion. This misleading image was assiduously promoted in Whitehall and Dublin Castle. Recent scholarship, however, has revealed that connections between the United Irish conspiracies of 1798 and 1803 were far stronger than previously entertained. In fact, the remarkable continuity of personnel and strategy points to a single, evolving process rather than the workings of a distinct opportunist cabal. This can

be explained by highlighting the role of the hitherto obscure and secretive 'Military Committee' of the United Irishman.[3]

The Military Committee was not primarily concerned with propaganda as their political associates were wholly capable of stimulating the emergence of a huge support base. Harnessing this restive constituency was devolved to the agents of regional networks who, on occasion, received assistance from full-time national level organisers numbered amongst the assets of the Military Committee. Essentially, the Committee was a non-elected sub-grouping of the Executive Directory by whom they were tasked with overseeing national paramilitary organization and planning contingencies for revolution. The reports of the mid-level informer John Bird (aka Smith) made reference to a 'military committee' and 'military department' which formulated plans for 'the capture of Dublin'. Bird may have provided more specific information if he had not been assassinated by republicans aware of his treachery.[4] As matters stood, the role and importance of the Committee within United Irish structure was unappreciated by British intelligence and, contrary to popular belief, the republican upper command tier was never penetrated. Secrecy was facilitated by the fact that members were early adherents known to each other and, for the most part, men who were unconnected with the public face of the movement. The quiet but assiduous back-room work of the Committee safeguarded activists from prosecution for seditious libel and other coercive ploys ranged against the open political leadership. Ironically, the ability of the Committee to avoid legal challenges has ensured that very little documentation is extant to throw light on its activities.

The impetus to form the Military Committee seems to have derived from the unexpected appearance of Wolfe Tone and a French invasion fleet in Bantry Bay in late December 1796.[5] Atrocious weather prevented the disembarkation of French forces sufficient to overwhelm those available to the Crown. Dublin Castle responded to this narrow reprieve by stepping up counter-insurgency while the United Irishmen embarked on a major expansion ahead of the anticipated return of the French. Republicans urgently required practical contingencies to govern co-operation with their allies. By early 1797 such matters were addressed by the Committee whose initial core centred on Miles 'Citizen' Duigenan. Although a grocer, wine merchant and money lender in Grafton Street, Dublin, it was Duigenan's background in the plebeian, violent Defender organization which warranted his participation in a far more ambitious venture.[6] Significantly, Duigenan was part owner of the *Morgan Rattler* privateer which engaged in smuggling and gunrunning between Rush, County Dublin, and the Continent. Formal access to the European mainland was then curtailed by the French embargo on official British shipping. Duigenan's smuggling partner, Thomas Richard, was related to the prominent United Irishman Arthur O'Connor, a former MP, and this connection may have greater import than revealed in extant documents. In Dublin 'Citizen' Duigenan was credited with orchestrating the transformation of laterally aligned and ad hoc groupings of metropolitan United Irishmen into a constitution bound hierarchy of paramilitary cells commanded by elected officers. Adopting the military format was an essential precursor to mobilization and deployment.[7]

Duigenan's known early associates included James Dixon of Old Kilmainham, the friend of Belfast militant Henry Joy McCracken, and a life-long revolutionary. William Cole and Surgeon Thomas Wright participated in the circle at this time and it is highly likely that both Philip Long of Crow Street and Charles O'Hara of High Street were also then deeply engaged.[8] Wright had served as a British army medical officer in the American War of Independence and was one of the first United Irishmen to propose the adoption of the avowedly conspiratorial cell structure. Long was the thirteenth child of Philip Long of Waterford, possibly the richest man in Ireland with a fortune amassed from the Newfoundland provisions trade.[9] Philip Long junior enjoyed personal success in the Iberian wine business following a stint as a captain in the Neapolitan army. His military service and southern European contacts were significant assets. O'Hara, a publican, hailed from Antrim and had an extensive network of family members and friends engaged in sedition. Walter Cox was another Committee operative whose dynamic revolutionary acumen and visceral populism required careful handling. Possessed of valuable talents, Cox was an industrious proselytiser, gunsmith, engraver and ultra-radical propagandist. The *Union Star* 'assassination' sheet, linked to Arthur O'Connor and edited by Cox, may have appalled liberal minded United Irishmen but clearly appealed to those who would bear the brunt of an armed campaign in Ireland.[10]

Duigenan and others liaised closely with a discrete subset of Executive Directory members whose militarism set them apart from the more reticent architects of the organization's political programme. Henry Jackson, Oliver Bond, Arthur O'Connor and Lord Edward Fitzgerald comprised the activist tendency which almost certainly conceived and bestowed authority to the Military Committee.[11] Samuel Neilson of Belfast was also significant in this regard when at liberty and the later writings of John Sheares of Cork indicate a degree of cognizance of critical issues. The United Irish Executive, by means of private resources and those of the organization, was also capable of maintaining a full time presence in both Paris and Philadelphia in 1797.[12] The Philadelphia adjunct was sufficiently secure in 1797 to publish an American edition of the United Irishman constitution and this trans-Atlantic reach enabled Wolfe Tone to quickly relocate from an unhappy temporary exile in the city to revolutionary France. Emissaries and plenipotentiaries maintained regular lines of communication between the Dublin leadership and their allies abroad with traffic passing through such far-flung centres as London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Lyon, Amsterdam and Cadiz in the late 1790s and early 1800s. This was facilitated by access to shipping owned by prominent United Irish merchants, some of whom, such as Philip Long and John Allen, were members of the Military Committee. Bringing foreign military aid to Ireland was an essential pre-requisite of United Irish strategy and, as such, fully within the remit of the Committee. While the French were the priority in this regard, direct and indirect negotiations with the Dutch and Spanish administrations occurred between 1797 and 1802.[13]

By April 1797, the Military Committee claimed 4,420 organised adherents in the capital as opposed to persons who had simply sworn the initial oath of secrecy. It would appear that the provision of a general oath of secrecy, open to trusted

female republicans, was a precaution directed by the Committee ahead of the recruitment of an entirely male force obliged to swear the additional and binding 'military oath'. The 'military' or 'second' oath represented a complete break with the legal phase of the United Irishman, 1791–5. Progressive induction was calculated to boost internal security and to inculcate a sense of revolutionary purpose. The 'military oath' bound the recipient to rise to assist the French and to obey the commands of superior officers. The solemnity of this wording and the masonic character of the administration process were accentuated by the infliction of fatal penalties on those who transgressed the absolute codes of secrecy and discipline. Lesser infractions, such as excessive drinking, subjected individuals to censure and ignominious dismissal.[14]

Many of those who joined the United Irishmen after the proscriptions of 1794–5 would have had prior subversive experience in the paramilitary Defenders and illegal proto-trade union Combinations. In hindsight, it is clear that Peter Leech of the Weavers Combination and Edward Condon of the Carpenters Society rose to prominence in Dublin on the strength of their union authority.[15] Similarly, Richard Dry of Weaver's Square, a Protestant factory owner and Defender leader turned United Irishman, was destined for high command until sentenced to transportation for life in New South Wales, Australia.[16] These recruits were the kernel of a revolutionary army intended to co-operate with rurally located comrades in adjacent counties before spearheading a national uprising in the four provinces. This ambitious plan was to be triggered by the landing of a substantial French expeditionary force to which the United Irishmen had pledged to assist as auxiliaries. The first concrete evidence of the emergence of such a national strategy surfaced on 10 May 1797 when a meeting of the Ulster Directory in Armagh was briefed on tactical plans for revolution.[17] Remarkably, the French sponsored coup d'etat model remained essentially unchanged from 1797 to 1803, although numerous minor refinements were made. The variant outlined by Henry Jackson to Ulster delegates in Dublin in June 1797 probably reflected one such revision by the increasingly focused Military Committee.[18]

Preparing disparate cadres and disseminating orders, however, was the prerogative of a distinct elite grouping of full time organisers which numbered Ulstermen William Putnam McCabe, James Hope and William Metcalfe. Senior emissaries, anonymous and unelected, worked directly under the Military Committee from which they derived their authority and on whose behalf they travelled the country.[19] They transmitted the new regulations on oaths, as well as county and provincial command structures. Masonic traditions, membership and networks evidently proved useful in this regard. Such operatives, aided by a small coterie of other professional revolutionaries, supervised the implementation of the August 1797 re-organization. This reform 'new modelled' simple cells from thirty-six to twelve man units, a tightening of security which may have been inspired by the army's 'dragooning' of Ulster and the Midlands in March to June 1797. From August 1797 United Irish Secretaries became 'sergeants' of twelve man squads who were then required to meet in groups of ten to elect one of their number a 'captain' of 120 men. 'Captains', in turn, secretly convened at a later date to elect one man 'colonel' over a 'regiment' of 1,200. Higher commands, namely the

appointment of one 'adjutant-general' per county, required an ideologically problematic deviation from the rigid, democratic constitution of the United Irishmen. Such persons were selected by the Military Committee from suitable persons associated with County Committee level command. If not ex-officio members of the Committee, 'adjutant-generals' were made privy to Executive level deliberations.[20]

May 1797 witnessed an important change inside the Military Committee when Duigenan was imprisoned on charges of sedition for what transpired to be a term of seven months. He was immediately succeeded as chief military strategist by Lord Edward Fitzgerald whose army background was a major asset to the United Irishmen. Fitzgerald appreciated the British approach to conventional warfare and had first hand experience of the irregular campaigns in North America. A veteran of the 19th Regiment during the American War, Fitzgerald attended Military College in Woolwich, England from 1786–8 before serving as a Major in the 54th Regiment in Canada. From 1796 Fitzgerald and O'Connor aided Wolfe Tone's efforts to bring a French army to Ireland and were partly responsible for the Bantry Bay expedition. Although somewhat notorious for befriending Tom Paine in Paris in 1792, Fitzgerald did not renounce his parliamentary seat for Kildare until July 1797 when he protested the final derailing of the stalled reform question. Fitzgerald had hitherto minimised scrutiny of his revolutionary activities and, from May 1797, bridged the gap between the Executive and the Military Committee. It was hardly a coincidence that Fitzgerald was the only permanent member of the Leinster Directory in 1797–8 and was intimately acquainted with all the major players. By the onset of Rebellion, he was indisputably the single-most important United Irishman and the organization's de facto Chief of Staff.[21]

It was during Fitzgerald's tenure as head of the Military Committee that the United Irishmen became the most formidable revolutionary organization in the western world. Fitzgerald grouped persons of expertise and proven reliability around him, especially Irishmen who had served as officers in foreign armies. Known adherents included Colonel Lumm who attained prominence in Fitzgerald's native Kildare and had prior service in the French military.[22] Major James Plunkett of Roscommon was a veteran of Talbot's Regiment in the French army, whereas Patrick Dillon of Donnybrook, Dublin, had served with the same country's famed Dillon's Regiment. Mayo's Major Anthony James MacDermott had been in the Austrian army, as had fellow ex-officers and Committee members Hervey Mountmorency Morres and Malachy Delaney. Wright and Long, early associates of Duigenan, had held commissions in the British and Neapolitan forces respectively. It is unclear if O'Hara, Cox, Cole, Dixon and Ambrose Moore ever donned uniform abroad, although all possessed attributes prized by Fitzgerald. Similarly, while MacDermott's friend Garret Byrne of Ballymanus was apparently not ex-military, his talent was demonstrated as Adjutant-General for Wicklow during the Rebellion of 1798.[23] Dillon's brother Richard was a former member of the Executive Directory, as was the army captain turned Dublin brewer John Sweetman.[24]

On 12 March 1798 a major blow was struck against the United Irishmen when the bulk of the political leadership was arrested at a meeting in Oliver Bond's house in Merchant's Quay, Dublin. Among those seized were Bond and Henry Jackson, two of the leading figures inclined towards the military wing of the movement. John McCann, secretary to the Leinster Directory, was also seized, an employee of Jackson's and a man who had been deeply engaged in restructuring the Dublin cells. In a related move, Lumm was detained on the same day in England. Thomas Addis Emmet and William MacNeven were the two most important losses sustained by the political commanders, even if their objective of inciting mass subversion had, by and large, been achieved. Crucially, both Fitzgerald and Neilson escaped the net and thus provided a degree of continuity and stability to the organization at a moment of crisis. It quickly emerged that the Government had acted upon the limited information provided by Thomas Reynolds and neither appreciated the full scale of the conspiracy nor had identified the majority of prime movers. However, a raid on Fitzgerald's city quarters in Kildare House, Dublin, yielded 'the plan of attack of the city of Dublin' and made its author a fugitive. The huge sum of £1,000 was offered as a bounty for his arrest while this 'well designed' battle-plan was studied in Dublin Castle.[25] Reynolds divulged that Fitzgerald had discussed a major gun running operation with him in Kildare House as recently as 11 March and the balance of evidence pointed towards his seniority in the conspiracy.[26]

Fitzgerald's papers and the insights of the somewhat reticent Reynolds alerted the authorities to the work of the Military Committee. Ironically, the arrests at Bond's cemented the grip of its members on the national organization, not least in that they became the most authoritative surviving command element in the capital. Moreover, McCann's returns of United Irish strength inspired the government to intensify the tempo of counter-insurgency in Leinster so that prior excesses of 'dragooning' were surpassed in the eastern counties in the spring of 1798. This immediately equipped rural groupings in the Dublin zone with motivational grievances to complement their revolutionary ideology. The total absence of legal outlets for pro-democracy agitation, moreover, passed the initiative to the revolutionaries in Fitzgerald's circle. They still looked to the French to spark the national uprising by invasion, even though the 28 February 1798 arrest of Arthur O'Connor, John Allen and Fr. James O'Coigley in Margate, England, stymied a significant mission to Paris. The importance of this may be inferred from the fact that Walter Cox, Fitzgerald's right hand man, allegedly travelled twice to England during the spring to assess the prospects of rescuing O'Connor. Allen emerged as a figure of high standing in 1802–3.[27]

Cox was involved in drafting military plans attributed to Fitzgerald under whom he reputedly served as 'an officer' in early 1798. Cox possibly acted the part of a secretary and it emerged some years later that Fitzgerald had presented him with a military handbook written by the British General Dundas. Such texts were certainly consulted by Military Committee members.[28] Robert Emmet, younger brother of Thomas Addis Emmet and a significant United Irishman in his own right by the summer of 1798, made painstaking studies of Colonel Templehoff and other European tactical authorities. Thomas Wright attempted to

distil such knowledge into a secret tactical handbook with the aid of Robert Emmet and Michael Farrell, leaders of the elite United Irish cell in Trinity College Dublin prior to their expulsion in April 1798. The reliance on a small hard core of trusted activists may be discerned from the fact that Cox personally recruited over 1,000 United Irishman in the capital, an offence punishable by death under the Insurrection Act of 1797. Amongst the papers recovered from the Emmet household on Stephen's Green, Dublin, in March 1798 was a stirring 'address' to the republicans of the metropolis written but not signed by Robert Emmet. The militants generally lived and worked in close proximity to each other and, by and large, such intimacy reduced the efficacy of surveillance by Assistant Town Major Henry Sirr's Dublin Castle agents.[29]

In essence, the strategy devised by the Military Committee in the early months of 1798 required a coup d'etat style assault on Government communications in the capital in the midst of an invasion crisis. When the major garrison and reserve forces in Leinster were committed to contain the French advance from the western coast, the city rebels would rise behind the lines in Dublin to surprise the Executive. Parliament and the Privy Council would be in session and their influential members concentrated in the capital. The urban uprising would be quickly supported by an initial influx of insurgent forces from neighbouring counties, followed by the mobilization of provincial allies whose appearance would paralyze, isolate and reduce rural garrisons. Areas controlled by the United Irishmen would then supplant local administration and co-ordinate the revolution until it could be consolidated. With the advancing French supplying officers, a cadre of professional troops, tens of thousands of firearms and some artillery support, the defeat of the Dublin Castle regime was confidently predicted.

The plan was militarily sound and involved elements which had never been attempted in western warfare. It was designed to maximise the difficulties faced by regulars, predominately English and Scottish soldiers, serving in a hostile and unfamiliar colonial environment. The large Irish Militia was untested in battle and known to have been infiltrated by republicans. The equally unpredictable civilian yeomanry was capable, at best, of policing duties in non-mobilised sectors or scouting in support of regular cavalry and dragoons. However, the United Irishmen sought to achieve an early tactical and psychological advantage by crippling the military command structures in the capital. This was an unforeseen and novel objective in the Irish context and never attempted elsewhere. Neither Dublin Castle nor army headquarters at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, were strongly defended, and the Viceroy's residence in the Phoenix Park was generally lightly guarded by a sergeant's detail. If surprise could be achieved, the insurgents stood a reasonable chance of killing or capturing the Lord Lieutenant, Commander-in-Chief and Chief Secretary. Moreover, if heavy fighting broke out in the capital the irregulars would have drawn their opponents into the least desirable mode of combat in late Eighteenth century warfare. The Dublin metropolis, one of the largest built-up areas in Europe, was patently unsuited to the deployment of regulars.

Fitzgerald and the Military Committee fully appreciated that the British would be 'very cautious' of 'bringing the best-disciplined troops into a large city'. Disciplinary grounds had previously been cited by senior military officers who objected to 'free-quartering' or forced billeting of troops in baronies proclaimed under Martial Law. City fighting, however, posed far greater challenges than dispersion and criminal opportunism. The army would have no choice but to deploy in urban centres under the scenarios envisaged by their republican enemies.[30] The United Irishmen correctly deduced that the bulk of army reinforcements would have to march from the main reserve camp established in Loughlinstown, outside Bray. It had been formed in 1797 to discourage a French descent on the suitable beaches of south county Dublin. Henry and John Sheares intrigued inside the camp, as did the United Irishmen of Bray and Cornelscourt.[31] A feint or full-scale attack on the camp by rebels was planned to frustrate the progress of its troops towards an embattled capital. Ambushing parties were to interdict the two arterial road routes to the south city at Rathfarnham and Ballsbridge. Roads to the north and west of the capital would also be contested in the suburbs to inhibit reinforcement from garrisons and camps in Kildare and Meath. While it was never likely that the amateur and lightly armed rebels could overcome regulars in such contests, the real aim was to buy time and disrupt army communications while the citymen assaulted the Executive.[32]

The main danger in Dublin was posed by the approximately 2,500 troops living in the Royal Barracks on the River Liffey, one of the largest city barracks in the world. The scale and location of this complex made it far more important than the smaller barracks in Cork Street, Kilmainham, Parliament Street and James' Street. Even if seriously depleted by deployment against the French, it stood to reason that a substantial garrison would be retained in the Royal Barracks. Yet, a successfully positioned unit of 1,000 soldiers was capable of presenting a firing front of just sixty men in the widest street in Dublin where the United Irishmen had no intention of offering battle.[33] Marching troops were incapable of securing their flanks in the densely populated warrens of the south city which separated the civil and military headquarters. Parliament buildings at College Green, Dublin Castle, Army Headquarters and the Mansion House would compete for protection. No effective defence could be offered to attacks by rebels posted in elevated vantages with grenades, bottles and rocks. The army's capacity was reliant on its well equipped and trained ranks and files sustaining frequent and timed long-range fire against defined targets. This would be nullified as soon as insurgents closed with the soldiers and pitted their heavier, stronger and longer reaching pikes against socket mounted bayonets. As a general rule, the army never fought at night but they would be required to do so by the insurgents. Fitzgerald predicted that the soldiers would 'immediately become a small mob in uniform' with a melee favouring the more numerous insurgents. Drawing on his study of the dynamics of street fighting during the French Revolution, Fitzgerald anticipated the use of barricades and makeshift anti-cavalry obstacles such as spiked chains to further coral and impede the British. It would be extremely difficult to coordinate a major counterattack in such conditions, especially if the civil and military command had

been neutralised at the outset. Surprise and the targeting of dispatch riders would contribute to confusion.[34]

Also noteworthy were Fitzgerald's comments on the 'broken roads, or enclosed fields, in a country like ours, covered with innumerable and continued intersections of ditches and hedges, every one of which are an advantage to an irregular body'.[35] Prior to May 1798, the army believed that the mere showing of massed red coats would intimidate civilian malcontents from standing their ground. This fallacy was disproved by the rout of the North Cork Militia at Oulart Hill, Wexford, on 27 May and the strong showing of the rebels in Enniscorthy, Carlow, Naas and Blessington. By then the intrinsic feasibility of Fitzgerald's theories had been established and the outcome of the Rebellion was in the balance. The government was ultimately obliged to rapidly shift the bulk of the British army into Ireland and experiment with battalion strength Light Infantry formations and howitzers.[36]

Fitzgerald's knowledge of ordnance disposed him to adopt ideas from the campaigns in India, most importantly the utility of rocketry.[37] There was no mention of rockets in the Kildare House draft but Fitzgerald and others had, in preceding months, test fired prototypes over the sea at the inner suburb of Irishtown. Tone had once lived in Irishtown with Thomas Russell, a veteran of the wars in India. Rockets were also tested in the more remote mountains above Rathfarnham village, County Dublin. Signal rockets were intended to help coordinate the interaction of rural and urban revolutionaries and this was done with considerable effect in July 1803. Fitzgerald's ideas concerning special equipment extended to the planned use of grappling irons, chain barriers and ladders to secure strategic objectives in the capital. Gunpowder was secretly imported from Wales on the *Golden Pillar* and undoubtedly other vessels at the disposal of the United Irishmen. Modest stocks of firearms and powder, backed by plentiful quantities of pikes, would give the rebels a fighting chance during the first phase of mobilization when French assistance was beyond reach. While not totally original in all elements, the Military Committee's evolved conception of revolutionary warfare was far more sophisticated than seen in either North America or France.[38]

Shaping an organization capable of following the strategy of the Military Committee was a major challenge. A national command structure was required in which the lower echelon units headed by 'captains' reported to the 'colonels' who, in turn, either met or corresponded with the provincial leadership. As Rebellion neared, it was necessary for the 'colonels' to receive orders from a single 'adjutant-general' in each county who liaised directly with the national leadership in all matters of grand strategy. Security concerns dictated that the democratic proceedings of the organization were jettisoned and that the 'adjutant-generals' were imposed by above by the Military Committee rather than being elected from below. This represented a significant ideological compromise and signalled that, if deficient in any other respect, the Military Committee did not foment revolutionary violence without serious reflection and preparation. By the onset of Rebellion in May 1798, Ulster and Leinster possessed nominated, if not functioning, adjutant-generals. Munster evidently lagged behind but was still ahead of the partly organised province of Connacht. Both

provinces, at least, possessed figureheads who were members of the Committee. If, in the final analysis, the Committee malfunctioned as a national headquarters, essential preliminary steps had been taken prior to the premature onset of the armed campaign. Efforts to create a chain of command, moreover, proved useful when nominal governance collapsed into chaotic morass in the mid-summer of 1798. By then adjutant-generals Garret Byrne of Ballymanus (Wicklow), the friend of Major McDermott, and Edward Fitzgerald of Newpark (Wexford), had established themselves as guerrilla leaders of considerable ability.[39]

The adjutant-generals would have been the primary utilisers of information compiled centrally by the Military Committee. On 19 April 1798, commanders of 'regiments' in the provinces were sent detailed instructions on preparations for combat.[40] Orders on procurement and storage of war material, transport of provisions and tactical organization were included. Unit standards and bugles were recommended for cohesion and rallying, as well as being calculated to boost morale. Intelligence on the disposition of Crown Forces was also sought with a view to building up a comprehensive picture of the scale of the challenge. Vast numbers of pikes were manufactured to provide rank and file members a means of defence against cavalry and troops at close quarters. Pikes required little training to handle effectively *en masse* and were easily concealed, maintained and replaced. Byrne and Edward Fitzgerald possessed confidence in their subordinates, many of whom, such as Esmond Kyan and Philip Hay, were former army officers. Kyan was an experienced ex-artilleryman whereas Wicklow's gifted rebel commander, 'General' Joseph Holt, had no formal training beyond the paramilitary Volunteers of the late 1770s. Clearly, the rise to prominence of the major fighting leaders of the United Irishmen was neither spontaneous nor entirely attributable to local prestige.[41]

The arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald on 19 May 1798 threw the United Irish leadership into disarray and agitated John Sheares and Samuel Neilson. It was Neilson, however, who succeeded Fitzgerald as chief military strategist and who enjoyed the allegiance of the core of the Military Committee. Sheares, a charismatic associate, pressed for immediate widespread action on the grounds the disaffected militiamen in Loughlinstown camp could offset the short term absence of the French. Yet, the French were anticipated to make an imminent descent on the Irish coast and it was not realised that Napoleon's 'Army of Ireland' would be diverted to Egypt via Malta in mid-May 1798. Neilson's coterie, therefore, believed that the Dublin strategy could and should be advanced to trigger a nationwide, unilateral uprising which was calculated to facilitate the eagerly awaited expeditionary forces from France. It was decided to rise on 22 May, later postponed due to communication problems until 23 May. An ingenious, if crude, contingency was devised whereby rural cadres would be alerted to the commencement of the Dublin centred uprising by the non-arrival of the city mails. This had been agreed when Neilson was captured on the afternoon of 23 May as he reconnoitred Newgate prison with a view to springing Fitzgerald. This ill-timed setback deprived the Military Committee of a key player at a vital juncture. His position was immediately filled by the more discrete Charles O'Hara.[42]

The Rebellion foundered due to a last minute intelligence breakthrough at Dublin Castle which enabled government forces to pre-empt the mobilization of the city rebels by occupying their intended rallying sites. Large quantities of weaponry were dumped by insurgents near Smithfield market and other metropolitan meeting places when they noticed that the military had been alerted. Surprise was deemed essential in the city centre gambit and the loss of initiative contributed to the bungling of efforts to stop all outgoing mail coaches. However, suburban rebel parties watching the roads halted a number of provincial deliveries and this uneven performance resulted in the sparking of several major outbreaks of insurrection in Kildare, Meath, Wicklow and Carlow. The Kildare turn out was particularly impressive and it took a sharp rearguard action at Old Kilcullen to prevent one of several columns approaching the capital on the night of 23–4 May. By dawn, many thousands of rebels had attacked or encircled the garrison town of East Leinster with mixed results. Minor rebel victories and their ability to absorb heavy casualties generated an exceptionally dangerous situation in the Dublin zone.[43]

O'Hara's response to the unexpected turn of events is unknown. However, it is highly significant that Morres, the Military Committee's overall Munster commander, instructed his subordinates to remain unmobilised. This mirrored the decision of Connacht leader, Plunkett. Both would have realised that the absence of the French, coupled with the failure of the Dublin rising, jeopardised the entire revolutionary project. Their stance may reflect a split in the Committee over the unilateral strategy pushed by Neilson and Fitzgerald. On 24–5 May, instead of an overwhelming and invincible uprising, the military was in a position to defeat isolated rebel factions which had risen under the misconception that the capital had fallen to their comrades. Ironically, several rebel groups had managed to move beyond local strikes into comprehensive mobilization. Even when heavily checked in Naas, Carlow Town, Tara Hill and Newtownmountkennedy in the last week of May, the defeated rebels simply regrouped in relatively secure high ground and boggy terrain where the military hesitated to follow. The tactical flexibility of irregulars had denied the army the decisive victories it needed to preserve the American colonies. Moreover, the contagious dynamism of insurgency, fanned by rebel emissaries, opportunism, optimism and misinformation, spread the Rebellion into Wexford, where it reached formidable proportions, and, to a lesser extent, into Louth and Offaly. In east Ulster, the leading militant and de facto adjutant-general, Henry Joy McCracken, was disposed to disregard the caution of the provincial leadership in Belfast. McCracken and Henry Munro pitched Antrim and Down insurgents into the Rebellion as late as 6 June, notwithstanding the complicated and generally negative scenario developing to the south. Morres and Plunkett, however, held firm in order to conserve their resources for a French led campaign.[44]

In general, the Military Committee had a strong vested interest in supporting the fielded insurgents and the extent to which this occurred has been considerably underestimated in Rebellion historiography. Quite apart from fraternal obligations, the positive reportage of the United Irishmen in Paris strengthened the hand of agents attempting to secure French aid in the midst of an escalating North African

campaign. The Committee assumed the role of a national headquarters providing intelligence, reinforcements, munitions, armaments and medical facilities to their adherents in the countryside. Dublin colonels Felix Rourke, Southwell McClune, Francis McMahon, Edward Rattigan and Thomas Seagrave headed fighting columns in Wicklow, Wexford and Kildare. Thomas Wright, Philip Long and Patrick Dillon supplied logistic support from their resources in the city. Amongst those drawn into this network was Robert Emmet who gained seniority in the capital in consequence. Numerous conferences were held to debate appropriate strategies and representatives of the Committee, not least Long, communicated decisions to the rebels in Kildare. It is highly likely that the near simultaneous establishment of high ground camps by disparate rebel factions in late June 1798 stemmed from a central directive. Certainly, Dublin based emissaries were active as far north as Derry advising specific practices and schedules. By early July, however, the bulk of the United Irish leadership was willing to accept an amnesty which the government offered to forestall an endemic guerrilla war. Indeed, promoting this somewhat unpopular stratagem in Wicklow involved the participation of Garret Byrne, Edward Fitzgerald of Newpark, James Hope and William Putnam McCabe.[45]

A dilemma was faced in late August 1798 when a small French expeditionary force landed on the west coast near Killala, Mayo. The Dublin leadership hesitated due to uncertainty whether General Jean Humbert was leading a raid in force or constituted the vanguard of a full scale invasion. Wright, Long and Robert Emmet were central to these deliberations.[46] Plunkett and others argued caution, even though a Franco-Irish column of 5,000 men secured significant and morale boosting victories at Killala and Castlebar in Mayo. Indeed, the military was humiliated by its poor performance against Humbert's numerically inferior forces. Morres also vacillated while his associates in Westmeath and Longford made weak and poorly co-ordinated efforts to speed the march of the French on Dublin.[47] The realization that Humbert was heading northeast towards Fermanagh and possessed only the strength of a small corps, settled the issue. Unsurprisingly, Humbert was comprehensively defeated by vastly superior British forces at Ballinamuck on 8 September and all French footholds were mopped up by the end of the month. The French received prisoner of war status while in excess of 400 of their surrendered Irish allies were hanged. Once again, the main bodies of United Irishmen stood down wherever active and maintained dormancy elsewhere in order that they might avail of decisive French intervention at a later date.[48] On 10 November 1798, Joseph Holt, the most capable rebel commander under arms, accepted negotiated terms and thus reduced resistance in the Wicklow mountains to a token level. Holt had first consulted with associates in Dublin and his retirement conformed to the decision of the rump leadership to stand down fighting units.[49]

Wicklow's Michael Dwyer and a small number of associated factions in south Leinster persevered in offering defiance to the Government with the assistance of the Dublin leaders. This aid was politically important as it proved that their remained elements were willing and able to keep the flame of Rebellion alive after the severe defeats of 1798.[50] Modest investment in disciplined rebel factions paid dividends in that it destabilised the Dublin regime and generated useful

propaganda when the Republican Movement was functioning at a low ebb. Contrary to the impression given in traditional historiography, the 'year of liberty' was not viewed by contemporaries as the end of the republican project. Residual insurgency aside, the British had no choice but to contemplate the likelihood of defeat in Ireland arising from French intervention. It was known in Dublin and London that the United Irishmen continued to work steadily towards securing that objective in 1799–1803. The Rising of 1803 has been widely misinterpreted as stemming from a different revolutionary trajectory to that which spawned the 1798 Rebellion. It was, in fact, a clear manifestation of the same continuum. Distortion on this issue owes much to the apparent centrality of its charismatic leading figure, Robert Emmet, whose elevation to the leadership of the remnants of the Military Committee was all but ignored. The two major overt attempts to overthrow British authority in Ireland in 1798 and 1803 were actually the work of the same leadership and followed an utterly consistent policy. The Military Committee was not simply the common denominator in both efforts but the prime mover. Far from rising to prominence due to personal acumen and family prestige, Emmet's position in 1803 derived from his role as chief military strategist of the Committee.[51]

The scope and nature of the planning for the Rising of 1803 reveal a great deal of the inner workings of the Military Committee from its inception to its demise. The post-Rebellion position was by no means as bleak as it might have appeared to uninformed commentators. Due, in no small part to the controversial preservation of forces urged by Plunkett, Morres and the Simms brothers in Belfast, the vast bulk of United Irishmen survived the Rebellion. No more than 30,000 had been killed of an organization which boasted in excess of 300,000 sworn adherents. When allowances are made for retirement and losses through transportation, conscription and flight abroad, it is clear than a substantial auxiliary paramilitary force could still be raised. Moreover, tens of thousands of survivors had gained combat experience in hard fought campaigns which only terminated when the republican leadership negotiated amnesties that the government was anxious to promulgate. Dublin city and county, where no major contests had occurred, was home to thousands of men who had fought elsewhere and returned home. A large pool of tested leaders and men was thus available to the republican commanders. The halting progress of the Union Bill through parliament in 1799 and 1800 was of little concern to those pledged to effect national sovereignty and republican democracy.[52]

In the early months of 1799, the United Irish Directory was reformed with a view to restoring its badly damaged command structure and upgrading communications with France. O'Hara provided continuity as leader of the Military Committee with the earlier incarnation, as did Thomas Wright and Philip Long. Dixon, Cox and Cole were amongst the coterie which remained close to the inner workings of the conspirators. Miles Duigenan, the early pioneer, also reprised a role in the affairs of the United Irishmen. They were assisted by the increasingly prominent Malachy Delaney, the former Austrian army veteran, who had distinguished himself in the fighting in Leinster in May/June 1798. Robert Emmet rose to Directory level command in January 1799 having proven his capabilities in

various ways in the summer and autumn of 1798. By April 1799, Emmet and Delaney were working on a training manual for insurgents under the direction of Wright. However, a rare security leak led to their having to go on the run to avoid arrest and questioning. For all intents and purposes, the surviving Committee members re-coalesced as the successor to the formal pre-Rebellion leadership.[53]

In August 1800 Emmet and Delaney secretly travelled to Hamburg via Scotland and England on behalf of the new Directory. En route they briefed several formerly senior United Irishmen interned in Fort George, Inverness. Edward Carolan triggered this dangerous consultation by bringing an unexpectedly negative report of the agents in Paris to Committee members in Dublin. Fort George internees Neilson, Thomas Addis Emmet and William James McNeven approved a refined strategy devised by their successors in which a reduced force of 15,000 French soldiers would be requested from Paris. It was feared that an army of the large scale favoured by Arthur O'Connor's smaller clique might tempt the French military to regard Ireland as an Atlantic province once victorious. Furthermore, the reduced size of the expedition had implications for its financial viability. Upon arrival in the free city of Hamburg, where a substantial United Irish émigré community resided, Delaney approached the French military commander, General PFC Augureau. Delaney had served under Augureau in Austria and the emissaries received the general's approbation. Emmet and Delaney relocated to Paris in January 1801 with the personal approval of Napoleon Bonaparte. The French were reassured that they were once again in a position to liaise directly with authoritative United Irish representatives.[54]

The signing of the March 1802 Peace of Amiens temporarily wrong-footed the United Irishmen who, more than ever, required Anglo-French enmity to triumph. However, the gradual release of senior men from internment in Scotland provided a timely accretion of talent. William Dowdall, an increasingly important if shadowy figure, worked with Long and others to recruit support in London, Paris and Dublin. They fostered connections with the allied republican conspiracy of Colonel Edward Marcus Despard and Sir Francis Burdett in England, although pre-emptive arrests rendered this moot. Scotland also featured in a subsequent invasion contingency. In October 1802 Emmet returned to Ireland in the knowledge that the French anticipated the resumption of war with England and that United Irish prospects were immeasurably improved as a result. He immediately replaced O'Hara as the chief military strategist and, along with Long, Dowdall and John Allen, re-coalesced as the core of the United Irish leadership. They relied heavily on the connections and activities of old Committee associates Cox, Duigenan, Dillon, Dixon et al. and also the newly ascendant veteran fighting commanders such as Miles Byrne, Nicholas Gray, Michael Dwyer, Arthur Devlin and Mathew Doyle. This grouping of high ranking revolutionaries conferred a compelling degree of legitimacy on seditious proceedings in an encouraging context. Consequently, the most important organisers of 1797–8 were once again at the disposal of the leadership in 1802–3 with Hope, McCabe and Miness reprising important roles. The Military Committee had become the highest tier of the United Irishmen.[55]

The imprint of the Military Committee is most clearly seen in the evolution of its tactics in response to the lessons of 1798. Internal security, the key to launching a surprise attack on the Executive, was bolstered by the enlistment of persons who had functioned efficiently during the Rebellion and its aftermath. All others were rejected. Cumbersome and indiscrete practices, such as levying dues from ordinary members, were abandoned in favour of obtaining substantial financial donations from within the inner circle. Emmet, Dowdall, Allen and Long expended large sums of their personal wealth. Weaponry, the main outgoing of the conspiracy, was centrally controlled and approximately nine 'depots' were leased in the vicinity of key rebel objectives. This ensured that insurgents converging on the mobilization sites would not be rendered conspicuous by carrying pikes and other unusual paraphernalia. Firearms were prioritised with large quantities stockpiled in United Irish owned premises in France. Several hundred pistol calibre short barrelled muskets were commissioned from trusted gunsmiths in Dublin to give insurgents an edge in close quarter fighting. Such weapons were easily concealed and deadly at the range envisaged for use. Veterans of 1798 armed in this fashion would form the elite first wave of the uprising, backed by a second wave of larger units of rebels equipped with pikes and muskets secreted in caches around the city. Numerous arms dumps were prepared in warehouses, workshops, tombs and fields dotted around the capital. Targets included government armouries and the Magazine in the Phoenix Park where arms and munitions could be either seized or destroyed. All were carefully reconnoitred with specific assault squads assigned to the most important objectives.[56]

Rocketry, a theoretical component of Fitzgerald's plans in 1798, was an actual element of Emmet's refinements in 1803. Signal rockets were manufactured in a Patrick Street depot between March and July 1803 and at least one was brought to Limerick. Three rockets were to be fired at 9.00 on the night of the uprising to order simultaneous initiation of attacks in many locations across the metropolis and suburbs. It was also intended to fire rockets at static targets, such as barrack complexes. Emmet planned to use culvert mines to ambush troops and identified a number of corner buildings to demolish with gunpowder as soldiers passed. Improvised ordnance of varying types were manufactured, ranging from grenades to the sizable 'infernals'; bored logs packed with black powder and surrounded by shrapnel holding frames. While it is clear that heavy casualties could have been inflicted with such devices, the primary purpose was to inhibit troop deployments until the rebel assault squads had neutralised the Executive in Dublin Castle and raided the Lord Lieutenant's residence. In the context of a French invasion, a genuine prospect following the March 1803 resumption of war with Britain, the United Irishmen were in a position to realise their ambitions with the first coup d'etat in modern history.[57]

The manner in which the conspiracy of 1803 collapsed is beyond the scope of this paper.[58] However, a number of salient points can be made in relation to its viable and less realistic elements. In the first instance, the plot advanced to its final stage owing to a profound failure of British intelligence in Ireland. The Act of Union (1800) and Peace of Amiens (1802) instilled a degree of complacency which the United Irishmen fully exploited by prudent re-organization. Moreover,

high level personnel changes in the Executive after 1798, in particular the loss of Lord Cornwallis as Lord Lieutenant, Lord Castlereagh as Chief Secretary and Edward Cooke as Undersecretary of State for civil affairs, deprived the new administration of experienced counterinsurgents. As residual political violence either petered out or retreated to containable levels, the military and its civilian auxiliaries lost their edge and the opportunity to confront the dormant United Irishmen in their midst. A concerted effort to counter this trend was not initiated by Dublin Castle until 10 June 1803 by which time it was too late to act decisively in a pre-emptive manner. The restoration of habeas corpus and repeal of Martial Law legislation in 1802 greatly complicated the issue of civil and military jurisdiction and necessitated a level of voluntary co-operation between watchmen, yeomanry, magistrates, sheriffs and soldiers that was often unforthcoming. In hindsight, it was deemed fortunate the rebels acted prematurely when neither their national organization nor their French allies were fully primed.[59]

An explosion in the Patrick Street arms depot on 16 July 1803 fatally injured two United Irishmen and wrecked the main workshop used for manufacturing rockets. While the cover-up operation was largely successful the United Irish leadership became convinced that the government's puzzling inaction was merely temporary. After intense debate it was decided that the Rising should be brought forward and precede the French invasion expected in August. Indeed, the logic of striking before the capacity to do so was lost revolved around the hope that a dramatic act might spur the French to accelerate their plans. A communications lag ensured that Emmet, Long, Allen and Dowdall were unaware that the French were incapable of marshalling an expedition in the narrow time scale envisaged. Oblivious to this fatal flaw, rebel emissaries contacted allies in the provinces on 19 and 20 July to warn them to hold themselves in readiness. Adherents in the inner counties of Leinster were alerted in person or by letter on 22 and 23 July. Remarkably, the agents of Dublin Castle received no direct warning that this was occurring and were incredulous when suspicious movements of people occurred on the day of the rising, 23 July 1803. By then, nothing more than a riot was feared by anyone privy to such reports. More seriously, the Lieutenant-General Henry Fox, Commander-in-Chief, understood that the civilian yeomanry would perform guard duty whereas the civil leadership, Lord Lieutenant Hardwicke and Undersecretary Alexander Marsden, expected military patrols. Incredibly, neither troops nor yeomanry protected the capital on the night of 23 July.[60]

Emmet lacked the financial resources and lead in time to act as first intended; culvert mines and imploding houses had to be cancelled. More seriously, inability to obtain the tens of thousands of firearms stockpiled in France and, perhaps, smaller quantities secreted in Ireland, ensured that there were very few weapons available. Whereas the elite first wave squads were well armed, those who volunteered to form the second wave did so in the understanding that they would also be fully equipped. The harsh reality was that hundreds, if not thousands, of those who had agreed to fight refused to do so when the arms deficit became apparent. This was also the case with the provincial adherents who required, at very least, cadres of gunmen to support the pikemen. None could be provided and had Emmet appreciated the magnitude of this setback it is inconceivable that the

rising would have been attempted. All but a handful of formerly militant Ulstermen agreed to participate. In this respect, the failure of the Committee veterans to permit time for proper acknowledgment of their orders proved disastrous. The mode adopted for the transmission of orders was also inadequate leaving at least one important group, the Dwyer faction in Wicklow, unaware that the moment had come due to the incompetence of their liaison. A similar situation arose in relation to the Wexford and Carlow leaders who also waited for messengers who never showed up. This exacerbated problems encountered in accessing major arms dumps, a factor in which communications may have played a critical part. Certainly, substantial quantities of firearms known to have been procured were never recovered and much remained in the depots discovered after the Rising. It seems likely that the requirement for secrecy crippled much of the potential of the insurrection.[61]

Several hundred rebels gathered as promised in the south city after six o'clock on the evening of 23 July. Many had travelled by canal and road from Kildare and were simply told to await developments. However, a three hour wait in the capital on pay day boded ill for the maintenance of discretion. Other local rebels were safely hidden in distillery buildings and private premises along the Thomas Street and James Street axis. This was the epicentre of the Rising and the section of the city separating the Castle from army headquarters in Kilmainham. As the hours elapsed, several acts of chronic ill-discipline began to undermine the conspiracy, not least an unsanctioned arms raid on the Mansion House home of the Lord Mayor. A series of violent attacks on magistrates and soldiers confirmed that the rebels were eager to fight and that the authorities were evidently unaware of what was in train. Emmet considered cancellation and an ill-tempered consultation with Kildare rebel officers flared up when the shortage of firearms was disclosed. Many prospective insurgents left for home leaving others clamouring for action. When it transpired that the coaches needed for the assault on the Castle could not be obtained, Emmet feared total defeat was in prospect. Acting under the mistaken belief that the military were poised to move on his depots and largely unarmed supporters, Emmet formally cancelled the Rising by means of firing a single rocket around 9.30 p.m.[62]

Well organised and orderly rebels in the suburbs understood the rocket signal and melted away without detection, including a force of over 100 blocking the coastal road to the south. Emmet then hastily read extracts from a proclamation to give compromised supporters the cloak of political legitimacy and led whoever would follow towards the Castle and the main road leading to the Dublin Mountains.[63] Further acts of ill-discipline rendered this useless and, having sent word to the still uncommitted elite units to disperse, Emmet and his senior officers departed for their Rathfarnham headquarters. Against all expectations, the comparatively small number of rebels who remained on the streets rendered themselves extremely dangerous. Two detachments of the first rate 21st Regiment were engaged by the crowd who, in both cases, forced the soldiers to retreat with loss. The Coombe barracks was assaulted and soldiers of the 62nd Regiment were fired upon with fatal effect in Chapelizod. At least two dispatch riders were killed and others prevented from delivering their messages from General Fox.

Government casualties included the hated Chief Justice, Lord Kilwarden, the chance victim of an ambush. The cumulative result of this chaos was that the insurgents established control of the most strategic part of the city for at least two hours and had demobilised by the time a concerted attempt was made by the military to restore control. The city yeomanry, basking in undeserved praise of their conduct in 1798, had played no part while the Castle guard only ventured out when the crisis had subsided. The question of what might have been attained had the rebels struck with purpose haunted the authorities and led to a total overhaul of security policy.[64]

The fall out of the Rising of 1803 included Martial Law. Several thousand were arrested and approximately forty United Irishmen executed. Emmet and Thomas Russell were amongst those hanged whereas Allen and Dowdall escaped to France. Long, significantly, was detained in Dublin but not brought to trial in order to conceal from the public the true extent and seriousness of the conspiracy. There were, however, clear indications that the Government had won a narrow reprieve, including a hugely expensive upgrade of national military installations. The scale of the programme went far beyond what had been mooted due to the resumption of the French War and negated British assertions and hopes that the Union was the solution to their Irish question. Internal military correspondence acknowledged that the Dublin administration had been indebted to 'accidental' factors in July 1803 and that United Irish preparations were 'fully sufficient to have effected the defeat of the Garrison'. While circumstances did not favour the Military Committee in 1798 and 1803, the operation of this coterie clearly warrants greater attention that has hitherto been the case in the historiography of the United Irishmen.[65]

Notes

1 For a full bibliography of the United Irishmen see Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Daire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin, 2003), pp. 659–724.

2 The main general account remains the discredited Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty: The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London, 1969).

3 For detailed accounts of the origins, course and consequences of the United Irish conspiracies see Ruan O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798* (Dublin and Portland, 2003) and *Robert Emmet and the Rising of 1803* (Dublin and Portland, 2003).

4 Bird to Henry Charles Sirr, n.d., [mid] 1798, Sirr Papers, Trinity College Dublin, MS 869/84–5. Bird was erroneously reported killed in February 1798 but evidently did not long survive republican assassins. *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 18 Feb. 1798.

5 An informer claimed that the United Irish 'military organisation had no existence until towards the end of 1796, and was as near as could be engrafted on the civil. Anon to Lord Castlereagh, 7 Aug. 1798, The National Archives (TNA), England, Home Office Papers, HO 100/78/34.

6 See O'Donnell, *Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, p. 33. Duigenan lived and worked at 68 Grafton Street in the 1790s. See R.B. McDowell (ed.), *Proceedings of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen* (Dublin, 1998), p. 118.

7 [Francis Higgins] to [Edward Cooke], 15 July 1796, National Archive of Ireland (NAI), Rebellion Papers, 620/18/14.

8 For the early United Irish engagement of Dixon, O'Hara, Long and Duigenan see [Collins], n.d., NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/54/20 and R.R. Madden, *The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times*, 4 vols (2nd ed., Dublin, 1857–60), I: 498–501. Prominent city United Irishman, Mathew Dowling, allegedly attempted to have O'Hara and Dixon appointed to the Petit Jury of County Dublin in order to influence political trials. Higgins to unknown addressee, 12 January 1798 in Bartlett (ed.), *Revolutionary Dublin, 1795–1801: The Letters of Francis Higgins to Dublin Castle* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 363–5.

9 See 'Philip Long genealogy', Private Collection, John Mannion Papers, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

10 Information of Leonard MacNally, n.d., NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/10/121/148. See also, 'Supect list', n.d., NA, Rebellion Papers, 620/12/217. Cox brazenly turned himself in as editor of the *Union Star* in return for immunity from prosecution. Cooke to William Wickham, 10 March 1798, TNA, HO100/75/189.

11 See O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, pp. 37–9.

12 Gunrunning from America was also suspected. The British representative in Philadelphia believed that American munitions were exported to Ireland in ships serving Limerick, Newry and Dublin. Phineas Bond to Hawkesbury, 14 Dec. 1803, TNA, FO 5/39/159.

13 28 Nov. 1803, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/11/130/59. Dublin United Irishman John Fitzsimmons and his relative, Lieutenant-Colonel Clinch, both served in the Spanish military. Higgins to Marsden, 19 Sept. 1803 in Thomas Bartlett (ed.) *Revolutionary Dublin*, p. 502.

14 See Ruan O'Donnell, *The Rebellion in Wicklow, 1798* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 49–51.
15 Luke Brien to [Marsden], 5 April 1803, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/64/112.

16 Ruan O'Donnell, 'Desperate and diabolical characters': Defenders and United Irishmen in New South Wales, 1793–1800' in *Irish-Australian Studies*, ed. Richard Davis (Sydney, 1997), pp. 360–72.

17 *Report from the Committee of Secrecy* (Dublin, 1798), p. 117.

18 Ibid., pp. 120–21.

19 O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, p. 39.

20 27 Aug. 1797, National Library of Ireland, Frazer Papers, MS 1/17.

21 For Fitzgerald's pre-Rebellion biography, see Stella Tillyard, *Citizen Lord, Edward Fitzgerald, 1763–1798* (London, 1997).

22 John Patrickson to Downshire, 7 May 1798, Public Record Office, Belfast, D.607/F/163.

23 See [Higgins] to [Marsden], 29 Sept. 1800, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/18/14; Sheila Mulloy, 'General James Joseph MacDonnell', *Co. Roscommon Historical and Archaeological Society Journal*, pp. 413–37; McDowell (ed.) *Proceedings*, pp. 22, 140 and O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, p. 225. Moore provided a link between Fitzgerald and at least two Irish officers in the Spanish military. Higgins to Marsden, 19 Sept. 1803 in Thomas Bartlett (ed.) *Revolutionary Dublin*, p. 502.

24 For Sweetman's rank, see McDowell (ed.) *Proceedings*, p. 40.

25 Richard Annesley to Downshire, 15 March 1798, PRO, Belfast, D.607/F/96. See also *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, 20 March 1798.
26 See J.T. Gilbert, *A History of the City of Dublin*, 3 vols (Dublin, 1861), III: 286.
27 'GH' to Thomas Ellis, 25 July 1803, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/65/74 and O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, p. 53.
28 'GH' to Ellis, 25 July 1803, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/65/74. See also Madden, *United*, II: 270–72.
29 For Cox see Cooke to Wickham, 10 March 1798, TNA, HO 100/75/189.
30 For the Fitzgerald Plan see Sir Richard Musgrave, *Irish Rebellion of 1798* (Fort Wayne, 1995), Appendix 12, pp. 845–7.
31 *Freeman's Journal*, 31 May 1798.
32 O'Donnell, *Rebellion in Wicklow*, pp. 168–72.
33 Castlereagh, Chief Secretary in Dublin in 1798, admitted 'troops could not act in a line in Dublin, but must fire by platoons of not more than 6 or 8 abreast'. *Parliamentary Debates*, I, 1803–1804, p. 752.
34 Musgrave, *Irish Rebellion*, Appendix 12, p. 845.
35 Ibid., p. 846.
36 For the Rebellion in Wexford see Daniel Gahan, *The People's Rising, Wexford 1798* (Dublin, 1995).
37 See Musgrave, *Irish Rebellion*, p. 675.
38 Miles Byrne, *Memoirs of Miles Byrne*, 2 vols (Paris, 1863), I: 357–8, Madden, *United Irishmen*, III: 363 and Musgrave, *Rebellion*, p. 680.
39 Byrne and Fitzgerald of Newpark were cousins. The Wexfordman's assumption of this responsibility was telling in that it occurred in the absence of public republicanism and reform agitation. This indicates Fitzgerald was imposed on the county's United Irish structure by the Military Committee and may have resulted in his temporarily being sidelined by Beauchamp Bagenal Harvey when the Rebellion commenced. Ruan O'Donnell, 'Edward Fitzgerald of Newpark' in Nicholas Furlong (ed.), *Journal of the Wexford Historical Society*, no. 17 (1998–9), pp. 121–43.
40 19 April 1798, TNA, HO 100/76/138–9.
41 For Hay and Kyan, see O'Donnell, *Rebellion in Wicklow*, p. 43.
42 O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, pp. 71–9, 91–2.
43 *Freeman's Journal*, 26 May 1798.
44 O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, pp. 135–6.
45 See Information of Thomas Wright, 1 May 1799, TNA, HO 100/86/301–2; Samuel Sproule to John Lees, 2 June 1798, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/38/22; and Information of Patrick McCabe, n.d., 1803 in Madden, *United Irishmen*, I, p. 493.
46 O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rebellion of 1798*, pp. 112–5.
47 Ibid., p. 136.
48 See *Finn's Leinster Journal* and *Freeman's Journal*, 15 September 1798.
49 See Sproule to Lees, 18 and 19 Oct. 1798, NAI, 620/40/170, 172; and 4 Nov. 1798, NAI, 620/41/12.
50 See Thomas Bartlett, '"Masters of the Mountains": The Insurgent Careers of Joseph Holt and Michael Dwyer, County Wicklow 1798–1803' in *Wicklow, History and Society*, ed. Ken Hannigan and William Nolan (Dublin, 1994), pp. 379–410.
51 The best traditional biography of Emmet is Helen Landreth, *The Pursuit of Robert Emmet* (Dublin, 1949).

52 *Freeman's Journal*, 28 July 1798 and *Finn's Leinster Journal*, 15 Sept. 1798.
53 Information of Thomas Wright, 1 May 1799, TNA, HO 100/86/301; and Wickham to Castlereagh, 1 May 1799, TNA, HO 100/86.302.
54 31 Aug. 1803, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/11/130/26 and O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rising of 1803*, chap. 5.
55 Madden, *United*, III: 316–7 and William Wickham, 5 Dec. 1803, British Library (hereafter BL), Hardwicke Papers, MS 35740, fols. 202–203.
56 Miles Byrne, *Memoirs*, I: 338–9; Madden, *United Irishmen*, III: 374 and Anon to Swan, [n.d., 1803], NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/64/121.
57 R[obert] E[mmet], 'Account of the late plan of Insurrection in Dublin and the cause of its failure', BL, Hardwicke Papers, MS 35740/196–201. See also T.B. Howell and T.J. Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, 34 vols (London, 1811–26), XXVIII: 699, 791.
58 For full details see O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rising of 1803*, chap. 2.
59 'Names of persons on a private list in the Chief Secretary's office to be detained on suspicion', 10 June 1803, BL, MS 35739, fol. 225.
60 *Freeman's Journal*, 19 July 1803. In the aftermath of the Rising of 1803 Fox was accused of 'utter neglect of the country … I pray to God that he may be impeached and executed as soon as the ordinary proceedings in such cases will allow'. John Pollock to Lord Hobart, 17 Sept. 1803, PRO, Belfast, T267/1/7/41.
61 See Information of Michael ['Red Mick'] Dwyer, 19 Oct. 1803, NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/67/107.
62 O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rising of 1803*, pp. 75–86.
63 'The Provisional Government to the People of Ireland', NAI, Rebellion Papers, 620/11/134.
64 O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rising of 1803*, pp. 177–81.
65 Colonel F. Beckwith to General Francis Grose, 27 July 1803, Kilmainham Papers, NLI, MS 1145, p. 235.

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Chapter 9

The Radical Underworld Goes Colonial: P.F. McCallum's *Travels in Trinidad*

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'McCallum, P. F., hackwriter', is how he is indexed in *Radical Underworld;* he gets a glancing mention in connection with Jonathan 'Jew' King, blackmailer and radical, and the campaign against the Duke of York.[1] Pierre Franc McCallum occupies the fringes of the history of British popular radicalism, as the sometime ally of and ghost writer for Mrs Mary Anne Clarke, the Duke of York's former mistress whose revelations in 1809 about brokering the sale of commissions in the British army produced one of the nineteenth century's most notorious scandals.[2] However, my own interest in this obscure member of the metropolitan literary underworld was piqued not by his sorry career as a journalist, scandal-monger, blackmailer and pornographer, but by his role in a different underworld located in the British West Indies. McCallum's book, *Travels in Trinidad*, published in 1805, offers the most detailed account and sustained indictment of the regime of General Thomas Picton, the first British governor of the island. Indeed, Iain McCalman's own work on the Jamaican-born mulatto, Robert Wedderburn – sailor turned tailor, 'unrespectable' radical and underground revolutionary, millenarian prophet and evangelical preacher, anti-slavery activist and occasional agent in the pornography trade – drew attention to circuits running between London's plebeian radicals and the Caribbean.[3] More recently, Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have traced the networks, often hidden or unacknowledged, linking metropolitan radicalism to a wider, trans-Atlantic world of sailors, displaced workers and slaves.[4] This essay presents a case study of a figure in whose person and writing we can see the convergence between London's radical underworld and the West Indies, one that also produced a critical understanding of a mutually constituted regime of ruling-class authority.

We have few details about McCallum's life prior to his arrival at Port of Spain in February 1803. Despite leaving autobiographical fragments, there remains a calculated mystery about his origins and pursuits, combined with a strong element of self invention.[5] He mentioned nothing about his parents or how he got the name Pierre Franc, beyond noting that he was often suspected of being a foreigner. He was probably born in Glenorchy in Argyle; he was educated in Argyle by a private tutor and then in London. McCallum recorded that he went abroad at an early age, travelling the four corners of the globe. Before heading for North America, he eked

out a living as a hack journalist in London; he may have been a dropout from the Inns of Court. The ever acerbic, anti-radical *Satirist* later maintained that McCallum was 'formerly an itinerant news-monger, who collected and *manufactured* accounts of accidents for the Morning Post and other papers, at the rate of *one penny* per line; but repeatedly detected in mutilating and killing, *in print*, persons who were sound and living' he was discharged.[6] He was also accused of editing a democratic paper connected with the naval mutinies of 1797.[7] The following year, he made a tour from London to the Scottish Highlands, taking an interest in the conditions of the Highlanders and their fate as 'indentured vagabonds' working off their passage to North America. In 1800 he surfaced in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he quarrelled with the governor of the province, and probably was banished.[8] He spent time in Philadelphia and New York, where he 'met many of Tom Paine's pupils'. McCallum was a recognisable sort of cosmopolitan, a footloose adventurer drifting through the Atlantic world, before landing at St. Domingue during the great slave insurrection. According to his account, he became a confidant of the revolutionary leader, Toussaint Louverture. After the landing of nearly 25,000 French troops in 1802 (a force that grew to 80,000), he retreated into the mountains with the rebel forces.[9] With a bounty placed on his head, and perhaps marked as a British spy, McCallum escaped on a British frigate, carrying him to Philadelphia. In late August 1802, the *New York Daily Advertiser* gave notice of a volume ready for publication, entitled *The Crimes of Saint Domingo, In a Series of Letters from the Ruins of Cape Francois* 'by P. MacCallum, Esq., of the Inner Temple London'. Dedicated to the American people and featuring an account of Toussaint's life, the work attacked Charles Victor Emmanuel Leclerc, who had double crossed Toussaint and sent him to die in a French prison.[10] McCallum had planned to return to London, but with the news that Trinidad had been formally ceded to Britain and having gotten wind of Picton's tyranny, he decided to return to the Caribbean in order to 'enquire minutely into every part of his conduct'.[11]

Part 1

McCallum arrived at Port of Spain to find a society in flux. The British had seized Trinidad from Spain (an ally of France) in 1797, but only after the Peace of Amiens (1802) was the island ceded to Britain. Trinidad held a pivotal place in debates leading up to the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807; for abolitionists, who in the wake of the Haitian and French revolutions were in retreat, Trinidad – a large, fertile and underdeveloped island – posed a critical test for preventing the spread of slavery.[12] Trinidad's plantation economy and the large-scale importation of African slaves were very recent, and connected predominantly with newly arrived sugar planters who moved from neighbouring French islands, following the *cédula* of 1783 which had reversed Spain's policy of exclusion and opened the island to foreign settlement. Previously a Spanish backwater, Trinidad over night became an open frontier, attracting ambitious planters and a motley crew of casualties from other islands looking to revive their

fortunes. Between 1784 and 1797, the slave population had risen from just under 2,500 to just over ten thousand. The large population of free persons of colour (4476), who were mainly French and thought to be imbued with revolutionary principles, outnumbered whites.[13] Following the island's conquest, General Sir Ralph Abercromby placed Colonel Picton in charge along with a relatively small and poorly disciplined military force; he was appointed governor in September 1801 and promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. Picton and his subordinates operated within the context of a frontier thrown into confusion by war, revolution and the island's uncertain fate. Thus Christóbal de Robles, a large-scale planter with long experience, advised Picton on assuming power that given the colony's turbulent population of refugees, desperadoes and revolutionaries, he must stamp his government with 'an imposing character' before the situation deteriorated. 'If those men do not fear you, they will despise you … A few acts of vigour may disconcert their projects.' Robles claimed that the circumstances of the conquest 'have virtually combined in you the whole power of the government. You are supreme political, criminal, civil, and military judge … our laws enable you to judge summarily, without recusation or appeal … You are not shackled by forms or modes of prosecution'. Picton took Robles' advice as accurately describing his authority and mandate for producing order out of social chaos, later citing it in defence of his conduct.[14]

Picton did indeed bring order to Trinidad.[15] However, in summer 1802, the Addington administration replaced Picton as governor of Trinidad with a three-man commission headed by Colonel William Fullarton, with Picton retained as second commissioner and Commodore Samuel Hood appointed as third commissioner. The reasons for this change are not entirely clear. Henry Dundas, Pitt's secretary of war, had expressed the government's approbation for Picton's policies, although by 1802 complaints about the governor's authoritarian rule reached London.[16] Also, Lord Hobart, secretary for war and the colonies under Addington, and his brother-in-law John Sullivan, who also served as his under secretary, were connected to Fullarton through previous service in India. Moreover, Picton was a strong proponent of developing Trinidad's plantation economy; his own speculations in land and slaves amounted to a small fortune.[17] In this he was out of step with British government plans for Trinidad. Fullarton arrived at Port of Spain in January 1803; he clashed almost immediately with Picton over matters of colonial administration, policy and personal style. Support for the two men sharply polarised an already divided community, with most of the governing elite and large planters lining up behind the former governor and the British opposition of merchants, shopkeepers and professionals and the free coloureds gravitating to Fullarton's camp. The dispute culminated in proceedings brought against Picton in Privy Council, his trial in 1806 at King's Bench and a public campaign against 'the blood-stained Governor of Trinidad', to which McCallum's book contributed.[18]

As Picton was the villain of the piece, Fullarton became the hero of McCallum's story. Picton's reputation preceded him, greeting new arrivals to the island by pointing out the 'rectangle', the gallows outside his window 'constantly guarded by a corps of turkey-buzzards'. As for Fullarton, McCallum maintains, 'no

man is more deservedly esteemed; – few men will be ranked with him on the score of virtue, humanity, and benevolence'.[19] In fact, the two men represented not only differing visions of empire in the Caribbean but contrasting styles of elite masculinity. Picton was a Welshman – 'of obscure parents', notes McCallum – who had begun his military career at the age of thirteen. Fullarton was a product of the Scottish enlightenment. Following his studies at Edinburgh University, he served as secretary to the British embassy in Paris where he mixed with the likes of Turgot, d'Alembert and Voltaire; by age twenty-six he was a member of parliament; he was a fellow of the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh, and authored a well-known work recommending military reform in India.[20] In 1792 he joined the Friends of the People and was a delegate to the first Scottish 'convention' calling for parliamentary reform, although he soon distanced himself from the reform movement.[21] Through the contrasting figures of Picton and Fullarton, McCallum advanced the case for responsible colonial government in the Caribbean. But this may not be the full extent of McCallum's relationship to Fullarton.

The author, who described himself as 'a traveller', arrived at Port of Spain about three weeks after the first commissioner. Was this mere coincidence, or was he summoned? The question is prompted by a number of factors. First, Picton, and his supporters back in London, accused McCallum of being employed by Fullarton as a spy and propagandist. It remains unclear how McCallum maintained himself in Trinidad while finishing his manuscript. Certainly Fullarton who arrived with his own entourage – 'his *legion of secretarys*' [sic], wrote Picton – could have paid him; he drained Trinidad's treasury and secret service funds.[22] Secondly, McCallum notes the recent change in the government of Trinidad as being favourable to his political investigations, 'because the source of information is stripped of all its difficulties. Hence there is a wide field laid open, provided one had patience to pursue it.' But his researches exhibit more than patience; the author clearly had access to 'a wide field' of administrative documents not readily available to those outside of government. In fact, an intense conflict ensued between Picton and Fullarton over control of the colony's administrative records: information mattered, particularly once Fullarton decided to haul Picton before the Privy Council in London on capital charges. Thirdly, not only were both men Scots, but McCallum admitted to having already met Fullarton 'but once, about ten or eleven years ago in Scotland'. Fullarton was an agricultural reformer with strong ties to the Scottish Highlands through his marriage to Marianne McKay, the eldest daughter of Lord Reay, head of the McKay clan.[23] The two men shared a common interest in the condition of the Highlanders. On his return from first 'paying my respects to the First Commissioner' at Port of Spain, the author reports on their meeting: 'A secret satisfaction unaccountably stole across my mind as I approached him, for affability was depicted on his countenance'. The hour spent with Fullarton 'was the most agreeable hour I ever spent: probably I shall never experience such another'.[24] Could McCallum be cuing his readers; was the 'secret satisfaction' of this 'agreeable hour' one in which a deal was struck between confederates? We cannot be sure. In the event, McCallum denied any such connection, claiming to have met with Fullarton only twice while he was in

Trinidad.[25] Nonetheless, the book itself, together with McCallum's subsequent career, gives one pause; it has the feel of working undercover, takes delight in bringing secrets into view.

Part 2

Travels in Trinidad is composed as a series of twenty letters addressed to 'A Member of the Imperial Parliament'. Among its most striking characteristics is the author's presentation of himself as a 'free-born' Briton and his claims as an author. Thus in his preface, McCallum asks to be excused for his style, on the grounds that he too is a victim of tyranny:

> Should it be thought by any of my Readers, that, in reciting the atrocities of which the Island of Trinidad has unhappily been the theatre, I have indulged too freely in the sitle of asperity, I may, I trust, claim some excuse, when it is recollected that I was myself the victim of oppression. I am not sure whether I ought to apologise to my Readers for such language; the hatred which a FREE-BORN BRITON must ever bear towards a system of tyranny, will ... give point and energy to his language.

Several pages later, after describing Picton as a later-day Nimrod – 'a mighty praetor, whose knife was set in oil that it might cut the deeper, and never hesitated to engulf the reeking blade into the warm-bowels of a fellow-creature' – he again asks his readers' indulgence for 'some heated or incautious expressions', remembering the 'agony of mind' for the sufferings of Picton's victims that 'must create reprehensive language'.[26] Clearly McCallum had literary pretensions; his writing bears the hall-marks of a *philosophe-manqué.* There is an anxious display of learning, an uneasy desire to legitimate the author's literary self. His text is overburdened with literary quotations, with classical references, snippets of Greek and Latin and knowledge gleaned from natural science and political philosophy. Nonetheless, his bad grammar, flawed Latin and literary deportment were subject to the disdain of elite review. The *Satirist* claimed the work 'contained as many grammatical errors as pages'.[27] More than this, the tone and 'energy' of his language broke with the conventions of polite letters; his language constantly veered out of control. According to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, the book lacked 'decorum and good manners', it was disfigured by 'an atrabilious malignity of temper' (the *Anti-Jacobin's* own language often veered out of control). They also accused McCallum of operating under a subterfuge, as the work's title suggested a work of travel literature which it was not. The *Anti-Jacobin* exposed McCallum's *Travels* for what it was: the worst brand of 'Jacobin performance', one calculated to stir the revolutionary chaos of the Caribbean (excite 'every nerve of jacobinism'), 'to revive the deadly insubordination in Trinidad; and to communicate that spirit to every colony which we posses'.[28]

In his own words, McCallum described the island as full of 'British runaways, or more properly speaking … *scape-hemps* from the other West Indian Islands … like America, a rookery for fugitive vagabonds of every description'.[29] Despite his

disapproving tone, it was a rough-and-tumble world that fit McCallum rather well. He did not take long getting himself into trouble. Not content to merely record the political history of Trinidad, he made cause with local British inhabitants opposed to Picton's rule. Trinidad had been left officially under Spanish law; it was ruled by Picton in consultation with a small, oligarchic Cabildo, or council. In practice, the island was ruled neither by Spanish nor British law, but according to Picton's personal authority. With the news of the island's cession, the opposition, primarily composed of British merchants, shopkeepers and professionals, gathered force. The movement was led by men such as Thomas Higham, a wealthy merchant, John Shaw, also a merchant, and John Sanderson, a doctor said to have been a member of the London Corresponding Society.[30] In an address to the King, drawn up in December 1802 and eventually signed by a fairly large group of British inhabitants, they pressed for the introduction of 'the privileges and protection of the British constitution, as experienced by a free representation in a House of Assembly, and in a Trial by Jury'. Picton, a vehement opponent of bringing British law, constitutional guarantees or an assembly to Trinidad, banned a proposed public dinner to be held at Higham's store to support the address, denouncing it as seditious and threatening to break it up by force. The following week, however, a meeting was held at Wharton's Tavern to petition for British constitutional rights; the meeting ended chaotically as moderates and radicals split over the best means for conveying the address to London. Picton, who had allowed the meeting, was furious. Higham, at whose shop the address had been left for signing, was arrested, and briefly imprisoned; both he and Shaw were dismissed from their positions as ranking officers in the militia for their 'seditious conduct'.[31] McCallum reconstructed these events in careful detail, punctuated with his own bombastic style of denunciation: 'I declare, while I record this shameful stretch of authority, my blood boils with indignation at the meanness of the wretch [Picton] … as to descend to such contemptible measures for effecting his infamous and tyrannical purposes'.[32]

McCallum arrived in the months following this conflict and Picton's proclamation to the commanders of quarters and alcades of barrios 'to pay strict attention to the conduct of certain well-known seditious characters'. He was immediately placed under surveillance: 'I find his [Picton's] jackalls [sic] are already industriously enquiring in an underhand manner respecting my pursuits, but, as I have adopted a plan of securing the manuscript of these letters, I am indifferent about his resentment, as long as the first commissioner remains in the Colony'.[33] Picton's spy system is a recurrent theme of *Travels in Trinidad*; readers are repeatedly told that the book is being written under the 'Inquisition's' watchful eye. Much of the book's drama derives from the Gothic theme of surveillance and counter-surveillance: Picton tracking the author as McCallum exposes the governor's hidden secrets.[34] It can only, and does end in McCallum's arrest and imprisonment: the writer turned victim becomes the hero of his own text.

In April, while his protector Fullarton was away surveying the island, McCallum was summoned to the house of William Harrison, a British merchant on good terms with Picton, where he was confronted by several officers in the uniform of the island's volunteer corps, demanding to know why McCallum had not joined

the corps in accordance with a proclamation issued by Picton. In the ensuing questioning by Harrison, McCallum asserted his right as a prisoner to be heard 'at your bar'. The scene is transformed into a histrionic re-enactment of the well-worn theme of the free-born British subject who confronts the unlawful powers of government, anticipating, indeed welcoming, his role as martyr in the cause of liberty:

> To be silent at a moment so critical … would be cowardice in a free-born Briton who so highly venerates the privileges which he inherits as his birthright; therefore, the horrors of the inquisition … will not intimidate me to commit an act, that would deprive me of the immunities guaranteed by the constitution of *England*.

McCallum argued that one cannot be mandated to become a volunteer; furthermore, he maintained that the same constitutional rights that pertain in Britain must also operate in a British colony. From here the discussion turned to Picton's charge that he was a government spy employed by Fullarton to write a history of the former governor's administration; McCallum insisted that he was his own man. The account closes with McCallum noting Commodore Hood's assertion that 'I was formerly an editor of a democratic paper in London, which was the cause of the mutiny in the fleet'. A charge he also denied.[35] Yet one often senses that what is being denied provides clues to past and present purposes that can only be hinted at.

'*The Author arrested by an Officer of the Inquisition, and brought before Commissioners Picton and Hood*' – reads the first heading from the next letter. McCallum was arrested on an affidavit sworn by Harrison, and presented to the two commissioners at Hood's house. To Picton's opening demand that he give an account of himself, the author responds, 'On my return to London, I intend to publish all you wish to know of me, and if you are *spared* to read it, that you will find interesting.' 'You are a common disturber of the public peace,' surmises Picton. McCallum informs the general that the proceedings against him are 'illegal, and repugnant to the natural and constitutional principles of a British subject. *Commissioner Picton.* – Silence, Sir. you shall not be heard!'[36] Charged with contempt, McCallum was conveyed to a cell in Port-of-Spain's infamous prison, but brought back two days later for further examination. The second interview borders on subversive farce. Asked his name, McCallum replies to Hood: 'Your Excellency is no stranger to that, for you seem to know more about me already than I do myself.' Asked where he was born, he answers, 'I really cannot exactly say'. Pressed for where he was baptised, he quibbles that he must have been present but cannot remember. The dialogue continues:

> *Commodore Hood.* – Did your parents ever tell of the circumstances?
> *Answer.* – They might, but I am certain I never asked them a question half so childish.
> *Commissioner Picton.* – What school was [sic] you educated at?
> *Ans.* – Have you perceived that my education has been neglected? You may depend it is sufficient to enable me to do ample justice in exposing your oppressive conduct.
> *Commodore Hood.* – Stand up Sir! – Do you – Sir – know who you are speaking to – Sir. You must know – Sir – we represent his Majesty – Sir.

Threatened with being deported to England to stand trial for opposing their authority, McCallum relishes the thought of defending himself under English law. He tells the commissioners: ‘Though I am not in England, and cannot avail myself of the protection of the constitutional shield, yet I will think, act, and speak as an Englishman’. Turning the tables on Picton and Hood, he claims that their conduct ‘resembles the mock liberty of France’. Picton remarks to Hood on how ‘industrious’ their prisoner has been in ‘raking up the kennel of information’, and associating ‘“*with a well known set*”’. McCallum coolly takes out his snuff box ‘to take a pinch’. The scene closes with Hood in exasperation ordering the guards to ‘Commit him! commit him!’[37]

A number of observations can be made about this set piece. First, it should be noted that McCallum’s rendition of his confrontation with colonial authority comports surprisingly well with the transcript of his examination before Picton and Hood found in the colonial office records.[38] Secondly, and most obviously, it was intended to display McCallum’s patriotic courage, his nonchalance and ability to match wits with his so-called social and cultural betters; thus the confrontation contained a measure of democratic levelling. McCallum was no doubt emboldened by the knowledge that Fullarton would return to Port of Spain and that there were limits to his danger. Nonetheless, the encounter bears similarities to a more general style of British ‘Jacobin’ play. Whether occurring in courtrooms, taverns, coffee houses or the street, such play was manifested by a variety of gestures of defiance, usually involving risk; indeed, taking a risk, playing on sedition’s edge, were part of the stakes of such unauthorised performance. [39] Thirdly, the question of whether inhabitants of British colonies fully enjoyed British constitutional rights or were British subjects just as if they were in Britain, was particularly vexing.[40] Indeed, the intensity of McCallum’s claim to the status of a free-born British subject reflected the concept’s fragility in a place like Trinidad. As for refusing to serve in the militia, McCallum maintained he was not subject to service as he was merely a traveller soon to leave the island. But more than this was going on. From correspondence in the colonial office papers, we find that ‘a considerable ferment exists in the Corps, and … that some Gentleman have in consequence positively refused to turn out’; moreover, McCallum had been publicly agitating against recruitment, on the grounds that there ‘existed no power in the Government of this Island to embody a Militia’, particularly during a time of ‘profound peace’.[41]

Here we also can just glimpse Port-of-Spain’s ‘well-known set’ of trouble makers, its own radical underworld. McCallum was arrested as part of a more general roundup. When he was taken back to his cell following his second examination, he passed his landlord, the Highlander Willaim McKay, being brought in for interrogation and carrying a box containing ‘the papers of the Ugly Club’. Most of what we know about this club comes from McCallum, its founder and secretary. The club included, among others, Shaw, Higham, Hargrave (a printer), Alexander McDonald, who was McCallum’s roommate, Dr Joseph Timbrell, a surgeon in the artillery, and its president Sands, described as having lately been employed in the naval yard at Martinique; it met Saturday evenings at McCallum’s lodgings at McKay’s tavern, ‘a convivial party … to sing a song, and drink a glass of porter’. On orders from Picton and Hood, McCallum’s rooms were

searched and his papers seized together with the club's minute book. 'The Ugly Club was pronounced to be an unlawful assembly; and a deep laid plot against the government.' Several members were examined under oath, in an attempt to incriminate Shaw, Higham and McCallum, but they all told the same story, 'and spoke with such confidence, and even contempt for this mockery of justice', that the inquiry led nowhere. McCallum and his friends portrayed their activities as harmless sociability, pointing to club rules banning politics. But their proceedings possessed more than a touch of cloak-and-dagger antics, with members taking assumed names. McCallum was M'Sprat; Timbrell, as vice-president, went by the name Sir Daniel Dirk and at its meetings 'bearing for Insignia in his Right Hand a drawn Knife, and on his Head a white hat with a blood or flame-colored Cockade.'[42]

Colonial authority is peculiarly dependent on surveillance; indeed, the colonial archive is, in large part, an archive of surveillance.[43] Despite the 'spy culture' operating in both colonial and metropolitan sites, it remained difficult for Picton and Hood to expose the everyday world of these radicals, just as it did for their counter-parts in London to penetrate radicalism's tavern life, with its boozy free and easies, seditious toasts, blasphemous sing-songs, scurrilous jokes and ritual mocking of authority.[44] To what extent the Ugly Club represented a transported version of this masculine milieu of 'unrespectable' radicalism, cannot be determined. But clearly McCallum's claims for the club's innocence were disingenuous; the authorities were being kidded. Once again, the *Anti-Jacobin,* which had been given copies of government records from Trinidad, was not fooled by McCallum's presentation, it asked:

> Will moving from tavern to tavern, and organizing seditious clubs; passing with revolutionary zeal, with jacobin activity, from dwelling to dwelling, and scattering the seeds of discontent amongst the inhabitants, entitle him to the innocent character of a 'mere transitory person?'[45]

Part 3

From the day of his arrest, on 11 April, McCallum kept a diary, chronicling each of the eight days of 'MY CAPTIVITY', smuggling out letters (some of which fell into government hands) dated 'Bastille, Felon Side'. His talent for self-dramatisation was given full rein. The prison at Port-of-Spain, where Fullarton first uncovered the dark secrets of Picton's 'reign of Terror', was classic Gothic space. On a previous visit, McCallum described its horrors:

> in the lower department, which appeared to me in somewhat like a hen-coop … were lodged no less then one hundred negroes, with large ugly heavy chains riveted about their necks, waists, &c.; and, to my great astonishment, British seaman confined in the same filthy hole…. In some adjacent cells were lodged about thirty or more poor Africans of all ages, accused of witchcraft, necromancy, &c.: all these unfortunate creatures were shackled and rivetted to the ground.[46]

Locked in his dungeon cell, surrounded by spiders 'almost as large as crabs in Europe', gangs of rats, 'together with plenty of scorpions, centipedes, blindworms, moschetos [sic]', he prepared to meet a martyr's fate. The prison was governed by Jean Baptiste Vallot, 'one of the most dismal ill looking monsters of the human species', and whose offering of rum and water McCallum feared was poisoned.[47] From prison, he wrote to Shaw, comparing himself to 'Saint John' and declaring himself 'the friend of Hambden [sic], doomed to be the Martyr of prosecution'. He assured Shaw that when he received the report of his 'mock trial' before Picton and Hood, 'you will find I have not deviated from the Character of an Englishman', adding 'I could not be worse, even in a Case of High Treason!!!'[48]

Thus McCallum set his cause within the terms of England's mythologised past and a libertarian martyrology stretching back to the seventeenth century. But his imprisonment also connected with a closer community of suffering; with fellow prisoners and victims oppressed by Picton, men and women who had shared the same space of terror. Here lodged members of a slave underworld largely impenetrable to the knowledge and understanding of colonial authority; here African women accused of witchcraft, sorcery and casting spells with charms were tortured to produce evidence for the poisoning commission first convened in late 1801, several of whom were taken from the prison to be burnt alive.[49] In Vallot's hell hole, runaway slaves were held in chains; their ears clipped and stamped, their backs whipped. Unruly British seaman who had fought for their nation, vagabonds and rebels, enemies to Picton's order and rule, joined the ranks of Trinidad's Bastille. Within the jail, the young mulatto woman, Louisa Calderon, was subjected to judicial torture; she later testified against Picton at his trial in King's Bench for her torture; her case became a *cause célèbre*.[50] Many of the figures in the island's landscape of injustice, whose cases were chronicled by McCallum, had served time. As the gallows outside Picton's window greeted his arrival, McCallum languished his final days in Trinidad amid the heat and stench of crowded bodies, the sound of clanging chains and groans of pain. His examination and imprisonment, with all its Gothic hues, brings some coherence to the book's narrative structure, as the prison world incorporates the wider world of corruption and tyranny, the major themes of the work.

Part 4

However, while the jail housed Port-of-Spain's subaltern class of outcasts and enemies to authority, McCallum also directed attention to a different site of moral decay. He had a nose for scandal, particularly for sexual scandal. Then, as now, sexual information was a powerful weapon. For the likes of McCallum, the exposure of the exploits of their social betters pulled back the curtain on aristocratic corruption, called elite hypocrisy to the court of public opinion. Print culture was an equaliser of sorts. The politics of scandal turned on the empowerment of otherwise powerless figures like McCallum.[51] Seen as the incarnation of imperial acquisitiveness and licence, the Caribbean provided a rich field of inquiry for a writer like McCallum.[52] Thus he maintained that the unlimited

licence afforded by the West Indies caused Europeans to abandon Christian morality 'in the riot betwixt Lust and Mammon'. In a passage echoing scores of other works on the West Indies, he writes:

> On the arrival of the European, his first object is, to look out for a mistress, either of the black, yellow, or livid kind. As there are plenty in the market, he has no difficulty to encounter. After pleasing his taste, he bargains for her, in the same manner you would for a colt in Smithfield, either with the mother or the proprietor, for a certain sum of money. He supports this wretched companion of his solicitude in all her extravagance; she denies him nothing, and he is equally generous in return; — free from the trammels of all moral restraint, he is at once launched into the labyrinth of guilty fascination.[53]

'The labyrinth of guilty fascination' is a telling phrase. Moreover, 'guilty fascination' and the lure of sexual pleasure were not things from which Picton was immune. Citing Mably, a favourite of more philosophically inclined radicals, McCallum connected moral decadence to the operations of politics. His portrayal of Picton brought together politics and sexual scandal, blurring the lines of private corruption and public tyranny. After indulging many prostitutes, 'black or livid-coloued were equally welcome to his depraved embraces', McCallum tells readers that Picton took up with Rosette Smith, a mulatto half his age, whom he persuaded to leave her husband and children 'to become Lady Governess'. McCallum charged that 'Allured by ambition, she abandoned everything dear to the imagination of a female'. Soon after their 'honeymoon', Picton gave her the fuel contract for the garrison and the profits from this perk 'enabled Smith to bribe almost all the kept ladies in the colony to reveal the secrets of their paramours, and thereby he became acquainted with the sentiments of the inhabitants generally. Those who unguardedly insinuated their disapprobation, or animadverted on his tyrannical conduct became the objects of his vindictive rage'.[54] Plenty of evidence corroborates McCallum's picture of Rosette Smith, 'the *aspera & horrenda virago* of government-house', and the deep hostilities she engendered.[55] Taking a free woman of colour for a mistress, or 'housekeeper', was standard practice among British administrators and military officers in the West Indies. Giving power to such a woman was another matter. Picton had stepped across an accepted racial boundary. Moreover, what was condoned in the Carribean might stir anxieties in Britain about the fragility of English character and civilization, including fears of the mixing of races. McCallum played on such fears about the vulnerability of British norms away from 'home'.

That said, McCallum's own views on race and the Caribbean's slave population were at best uneven. He opposed the slave trade and slavery. In an appendix to his book, titled 'Horrors of West India Slavery', he concludes that the laws for protecting slaves, 'are perfectly nugatory'; planters' promises to ameliorate slaves' condition are 'altogether delusive', certain to continue until parliament abolishes the slave trade, thus forcing West Indians to 'reform their horrid system'.[56] He was also ready to see similarities between colonial and metropolitan forms of unfree labour, comparing the one hundred thousand slaves in Barbados as having been kidnapped by European 'Barbarians' 'in the same way the press-gangs do sailors in

either London or Liverpool'.[57] Still, the vaunted rights of free-born Englishmen did not extend to Africans; the rights-bearing status of 'free-born' subjects was defined in opposition to slavery, and was specific to 'Englishness'. McCallum had no confidence in the capacities of Africans either as soldiers or free cultivators of the land. He shared a common European view of the dangers of recruiting black regiments. The 'mournful scenes and horrid barbarities' witnessed in St. Domingue argued against the arming and training of 'these hirelings', bond by no ties of loyalty. McCallum easily fell in line with stereo-types of blacks: 'Hence, devoid of every principle which distinguishes the human species from the brute creation, a ferocious excitement stimulates them to crimes, as much as the crocodiles of the Nile when they seize and devour young children.'[58]

These are hard words to read. They remind us that popular radicalism possessed its own 'dark side'.[59] On the other hand, they do not entirely square with the volume's concluding letter which provides a brief history of the Haitian revolution and its leader, the man McCallum calls 'my much lamented friend General Toussaint … one of the best men, that ever governed a kingdom or a colony – whose character will form a striking contrast with those of Picton or Hood'. Toussaint, whose personal leadership was beyond reproach, assumed a heroic stature. Yet it was not unusual for British commentators, Coleridge for example, to oppose slavery and admire Toussaint, while fearing the spread of 'the Horrors of Saint Domingo' (i.e. blacks killing whites) to the British West Indies. In this section, however, McCallum viewed the violence of the insurgents as mitigated by that of their former masters: 'If the cold cruelties of despotism have no bounds, what can we expect from the paroxysm of despair? Surely, allowance ought to be made … for they were taught the example from their oppressors'. According to McCallum, 'fortunately for the western hemisphere', Napoleon 'mistook the character of the negroes; they were no longer a horde of runaway slaves. No, they were united together in the bonds of indissoluble freedom'. [60] As for the future prospects of an independent Haiti, he offered no real prognosis, beyond an earlier warning, that 'if the negroes maintain their independence', they would soon threaten Jamaica.[61]

At one level, McCallum's *Travels* is, as Selwyn R. Cudjoe concludes, a colonialist text, albeit a contradictory one.[62] The book's most overtly racist passages occur in conjunction with discussions countering anti-abolitionist arguments that the tropics were fit only for African slave labour. By 1803 the question of how to imagine a society in the West Indies based on free labour was a pressing contemporary concern, with Trinidad a key testing ground for various settlement schemes.[63] McCallum was a strong advocate of introducing Scottish Highlanders into Trinidad. 'This project I have had in view ever since I travelled in St. Domingo', he writes, 'it is a White Population, which ought to consist of Scotch Highlanders – a hardy race, that will vegetate in any climate, and less given to intemperance than others.' He translated a Scottish version of 'agrarian patriotism' and the cult of the virtuous yeoman farmer to Trinidad, and set it against the moral corruption of planters as well as the unsuitability of Africans as free labourers.[64] He appropriated the term 'slave' with its full emotive force, applying it to Highlanders in their native land, where they still suffered from forms of 'feudal

oppression', as well as to those who had mortgaged their freedom in order to emigrate to America; he added, however, 'with feelings more acute than the negro, he is more sensible to the pangs of misery'.[65] McCallum was intent on highlighting the plight of the Highlanders and demonstrating their suitability for free settlement in the West Indies; in this context he played down the horrors of slavery, while connecting two peripheries of Britain's imperial state.

Part 5

McCallum was a man on the make; he may have acted as a government spy and his *Travels* may well have been secretly commissioned by Fullarton. He was also a serious political writer, after his own fashion. And, of course, he was himself a victim of Picton's despotism. After eight days of 'captivity', McCallum was banished from Trinidad; taken from prison, he was allowed to collect his belongings and escorted onto an American schooner bound to New York. He made his way back to England, as somehow did his manuscript; and despite the efforts of friends to 'screen' Picton, to suppress the volume by threats to prosecute its printer, William Jones, the publisher of the *Liverpool Chronicle*, the book eventually appeared. McCallum complained, however, that most London booksellers refused to take the book because Picton 'was known to be under the immediate patronage of the late facinorious administration [that of Pitt], and, therefore, the bookseller who would dare to publish anything respecting the conduct of their pupils might be sure of Newgate for a certain period'.[66] He was present at Westminster Hall to record Picton's trial. Copies of his trial pamphlet were shipped to Trinidad for distribution. As the full title suggests, he identified with Louisa Calderon as a fellow victim: *Trial of Thomas Picton ... Taken in short-hand by Pierre F. McCallum Esq., Who was a Prisoner in the same Cell where the unfortunate Young Lady was Tortured, and who was the Means of bringing Picton's Horrid Crimes to Light*.[67] Several months later, McCallum again landed in jail, thrown first into King's Bench for debt; too late to benefit from the insolvent act of that year, he helped to orchestrate an illumination in the prison on the passing of the act, threatening to demolish the windows of all those who refused participation. From King's Bench, he was sent to Horsemonger jail, and then to the Fleet.[68] In a letter requesting a grant from the Royal Literary Institution to discharge his debts, he made his claim as the author of *Travels in Trinidad* and 'some other tracts'. He went on to note: 'however, the only thing I am proud to exult in during my literary pursuits, is the share I took … in the Island of St. Domingo, under the auspices of the late General Toussaint, in framing the laws and constitution of that Island – civilizing the ignorant and deluded natives of Hayti, and restoring them to reason by the inculcation of religion, through the medium of the gospels.'[69] The truth and sincerity of a begging letter remain difficult to judge; nonetheless, it is interesting that McCallum thought his association with Toussaint and Haiti, as law giver and missionary, might ingratiate himself with a benefactor.

Picton's rehabilitation, early in 1807, put him onto the scent of the Duke of York, drawing out connections between royal and military corruption and favour.

In a curious move, McCallum published a tract championing the Duke of Kent's case against the Duke of York who had removed his brother from command at Gibraltar for having brutally mistreated his soldiers; was McCallum touting for a new patron?[70] In September 1808, he tracked down Mary Anne Clarke, who had gone to ground, and became the ghost writer for her *Recollections ... Exhibiting the Secret History of the Court of Saint James's, and the Cabinet of Great Britain*; for the suppression of her memoirs, Clarke netted £10,000 from the Duke of York, along with life annuities for herself and her daughter.[71] Just before his death in 1810, McCallum published *Le Livre Rouge, Or the Red Book* which provided a complete catalogue of the British aristocracy's parasitic drain on the nation. *Le Livre Rogue* went through at least six editions in the year of its publication and was the direct precursor to John Wade's more famous *Black Book*, an annual publication listing all government pensions and sinecures.[72] McCallum died squabbling with Mrs Clarke, but perhaps on the elusive brink of success as a radical blackmailer and scandal monger; he left a wife and child in poverty.

What are we to make of McCallum's radicalism, his writings and his world? Self-styled literati, he fashioned himself as a 'gentleman'. According to the *Satirist*, he was 'known as an *absolute* beggar' and 'libellous swindler'.[73] He sought literary patronage, sometimes from questionable quarters; he readily turned his hand to literary blackmail; he thrived on intrigue and undercover dealing. He inhabited the shadowy underworld that Iain McCalman has brought so brilliantly to light; he was a marginal figure, a déclassé intellectual with a shaky career as a journalist, and perhaps as a would-be lawyer. He shared the insecurities found among 'the overlapping categories of degraded artisan, failed shopkeeper and marginal professional.'[74] In his writing we often sense ambivalence, knowingness and dissimulating turns reminiscent of a William Hamilton Reid, who informed on infidel London.[75] He was a man with something to conceal, ever motivated in some measure by self advancement. But then radicals frequently blurred the lines thought to separate various expressive modes and commitments; the search for truth and profits took many forms.

Travels in Trinidad was constructed from a matrix of discourses – constitutionalist, libertarian, humanitarian and colonialist – and the employment of overlapping literary genres – exposé, melodrama, the Gothic, autobiography, travel and historical narrative. Most importantly, McCallum juxtaposed an idealised vision of British constitutional liberty to its colonial absence. At the same time, however, his critique relied not solely on difference between 'home' and away, British liberty versus colonial despotism, but on revealing the corruption of powerful British leaders, most notably Pitt, Dundas, Castlereagh and the Duke of York, who screened and protected Governor Picton, and the networks linking metropolitan and colonial rule. Thus he had a hand in documenting an instance of a more general condition: the 'aristocratic reaction' of an era that witnessed a crisis in ruling-class legitimacy manifest not only in Europe but on a global scale.[76] The repressive authority of the aristocratic state, which found expression at 'home' in treason trials, the suspension of habeas corpus, the infamous 'Two Acts' and anti-trade union legislation, was more brutally expressed in Ireland, India and the West Indies. From the social margin of the metropolis and the 'periphery' of the imperial

state, McCallum challenged elite power, disclosed its secrets and mediated through his own experience and writing a trans-Atlantic radical underworld.

Notes

1 Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 38–9, 332. In fact, as his research notes show, he had collected quite a bit more on the man. I am grateful to Iain for generously lending me these notes early in my researches.
2 For the Duke of York affair, see Peter Spence, *Birth of Romantic Radicalism: War, Popular Politics and English Radical Reformation, 1800–1815 (*Aldershot, 1996), chap. 6; Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton, NJ, 2004), chap. 7; Philip Harling, 'The Duke of York Affair (1809) and the Complexities of War-Time Patriotism', *Historical Review*, 39 (1996), pp. 963–84.
3 As well as the material on Wedderburn in *Radical Underworld,* see 'Anti-Slavery and Ultra-Radicalism in Early Nineteenth-Century England: The Case of Robert Wedderburn', *Slavery and Abolition*, 7 (1986), pp. 99–117, and the edited volume, *The Horrors of Slavery and Other Writings by Robert Wedderburn* (Edinburgh, 1991). Also see Peter Linebaugh, 'A Little Jubilee? The Literacy of Robert Wedderburn in 1817', in *Protest and Survival: Essays for E.P. Thompson*, ed. John Rule and Robert Malcolmson (London, 1993), pp. 174–220.
4 Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, 2000).
5 In *The Loss of El Dorado* (London, 1969), pp. 218–19, V.S. Naipaul, whose own account of events in Trinidad draws on *Travels in Trinidad*, describes McCallum as 'a mystery man, this pamphleteer,' noting 'he was one of the earliest foreign correspondents'.
6 *Satirist*, Jan. 1809, p. 88.
7 *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 22 Dec. 1805, p. 400.
8 The National Archives (hereafter TNA), CO 295/5, 'Examination of P. McCallum', fols. 152–53.
9 For this stage in the war, see C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint Louverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York, 1938), chap. 13; Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), chap. 12.
10 *New York Daily Advertiser*, 28 Aug. 1802, p. 3, this work does not seem to have been published.
11 Pierre F. McCallum, *Travels in Trinidad during the Months of February, March, and April, 1803; in a Series of Letters, Addressed to a Member of the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain* (Liverpool, 1805), pp. 13, 81, 278, and *The Rival Queens, or which is the Darling? Containing the Secret History of the Origin of the Late Investigation* (London, 1810), pp. 1–4, 12; *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 22 (Sept-Dec. 1805), appendix, p. 524.
12 *Parliamentary History of England*, 36 (1801–03), (London, 1820), for Canning's motion respecting the development of Trinidad, 2 May 1802, cols. 864–66; James Stephen, *The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies ... to which are subjoined Sketches of a Plan for Settling the Vacant Lands of Trinidada* (London, 1802), pp. 151–97; David Eltis, *Economic*

Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (New York and Oxford, 1987), pp. 5, 11.

13 Lionel M. Fraser, *History of Trinidad*, 2 vols (Port of Spain, 1891 and 1896), 1: 288–9; James Millette, *Society and Politics in Colonial Trinidad* (Port of Spain, 1981), pp. 15–19, 115. For Trinidad's high proportion of African-born slaves, see B. W. Higman, *Slave Populations of the British Caribbean, 1807–1834* (Baltimore and London, 1984), pp. 122–7; for free persons of colour, see Carl C. Campbell, *Cedulants and Capitulants: The Politics of the Coloured Opposition in the Slave Society of Trinidad, 1783–1838* (Port of Spain, 1992).

14 H. B. Robinson, *Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton*, 2 vols (London, 1835) 2: 54–7.

15 For the fullest account of Picton's role in Trinidad, see Millette, *Society and Politics;* also see Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad, 1783–1962* (Kingston and London, 1981), chap. 3.

16 TNA, CO 295/2, Picton to Hobart, 27 Apr., 20 May 1802; Hobart to Picton, 9 July 1802; PC 1/3557, bundle 1, Dundas to Picton, 8 Apr. 1797, 18 Jan. 1798.

17 British Library, Add. MSS 36,870, Picton's letter book, Picton to Dundas, 14 May 1799 and 30 July 1799; TNA, WO 1/92, Picton to Hobart, 28 June 1801; National Army Museum, Maitland Papers, microfilm copy, Picton to Maitland, 25, 26 Dec 1801, 11 Jan., 29 Feb. 1802.

18 Robinson, *Memoirs of Picton*, pp. 136–40.

19 McCallum, *Travels*, pp. 16–21, 25.

20 See National Archives of Scotland, GD24/1, Stirling Home Papers, Fullarton to Kames, 9 July 1777, 4 Nov. 1777, 11 Feb. 1778; William Fullarton, *A View of the English Interests in India; and an account of the military operations in the Southern Part of the Peninsula during the campaigns of 1782, 1783, and 1784* (London, 1787). Although he served with distinction in the army of the East India Company, commanding the southern forces in the wars against Haidar Ali, Fullarton did not hold a regular rank in the British army.

21 *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot First Earl Minto, from 1751 to 1806*, ed. Countess of Minto, 3 vols (London, 1874), 2: 21; *Political Papers. Chiefly Respecting the Attempt of the County of York, and other Considerable Districts ... to Effect a Reformation of the Parliament of Great Britain,* collected by the Rev. Christopher Wyvill, 3 vols (York, n.d.), 3: no. 18, pp. 36–40.

22 TNA, PC1/3557, bundle 4, Picton to the Duke of York, 31 Oct. 1803.

23 See his *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Ayr, with Observations of the Means for its Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1793) and *A Letter Addressed to the Right Hon. Lord Carrington, President of the Board of Agriculture* (London, 1801).

24 MacCallum, *Travels*, pp. 246, 19, 25.

25 However, compare this to the pre-publication notice of his book in the *New York Daily Advertiser*, 23 July 1803, pp. 2–3, describing him as having 'enjoyed a considerable share of Colonel Fullarton's friendship'.

26 MacCallum, *Travels*, pp. iv, 20.

27 *Satirist*, Jan. 1809, p. 88; also see *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 23, Apr. 1806, p. 438 and Appendix, p. 517.

28 *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 22, Dec. 1805, pp. 395–400.

29 MacCallum, *Travels*, pp. 141–2.

30 Ibid., pp. 156–74; Millette, *Society and Politics*, pp. 102–105.

31 TNA, CO 295/5, ‘Memorial of John Shaw and Thomas Higham’, fols. 93ff.
32 MacCallum, *Travels,* pp. 163–4.
33 Ibid., pp. 174–5.
34 The Gothic tones are brilliantly developed in Naipaul’s *Loss of El Dorado*, pt. 3.
35 MacCallum, *Travels*, pp. 241–6.
36 Ibid., pp. 247–50.
37 Ibid., pp. 255–9.
38 TNA, CO 295/5, ‘Examination of P. McCallum’, 12 Apr. 1803, fols. 152–3.
39 See James Epstein and David Karr, ‘Playing at Revolution: British “Jacobin” Performance’, forthcoming in *Journal of Modern History*.
40 On this point, see P.J. Marshall, ‘Britain and the World in the Eighteenth-Century Century: IV, The Turning Outwards of Britain’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6 (2001), p. 3.
41 TNA, CO 295/5, Lt. Col. Charles Grant to Commissioners, 10 Apr. 1803, fol. 147, also the affidavits of Harrison, Bourke, Brunton, Wane and Stevens, concerning McCallum’s conduct; and McCallum’s letter, *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 22 (Sept–Dec. 1805), appendix, p. 526.
42 McCallum, *Travels,* pp. 259–60; TNA, CO 295/5, affidavit of MacKay, fol. 154; CO 295/6, ‘Charges against Mr Joseph Timbrell’, fol. 240; *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 23 (Jan.–Apr. 1806) appendix, pp. 518–26. The minute book itself does not seem to have survived.
43 See C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996).
44 McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, chap. 6, and ‘Ultra-Radicalism and Convivial Debating-Clubs in London, 1795–1838’, *English Historical Review*, 102 (1987), pp. 309–33. The term ‘spy culture’, is borrowed from David Worrall, *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance* (Detroit, 1992), p. 7.
45 *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 23 (Jan.–Apr. 1806), appendix, p. 524.
46 McCallum, *Travels*, pp. 130–31; TNA, CO 295/4, Fullarton to Sullivan, 4 Mar. 1803, fol. 77. As Naipaul notes, with each retelling of its horrors, Vallot’s jail became ‘a place of myth’. *Loss of El Dorado*, p. 274.
47 McCallum, *Travels*, pp. 251–2.
48 TNA, CO 295/5, intercepted letter to Shaw, fol. 156.
49 The case against Picton for these and other deaths ‘unlawfully inflicted’, was heard in Privy Council. For massive documentation of these cases, see TNA, PC 1/3557; CO 295/5; William Fullarton, *Substance of Evidence Delivered before ... Privy Council in the Case of Gov. Picton* (London, 1807).
50 For the Calderon case, see *A Complete Collection of State Trials*, ed. William Cobbett and T.B. Howell, 30 vols (London, 1816–22), 30: ‘Proceedings before the King’s Bench, in the Case of Thomas Picton’. Also see James Epstein, ‘The Politics of Colonial Sensation: The Trial of Thomas Picton and the Cause of Louisa Calderon’, forthcoming.
51 See Clark, *Scandal*, chap. 1.
52 On this point, see Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York, 2003), p. 130.
53 McCallum, *Travels,* p. 73.
54 Ibid., p. 146.

55 See, for example, County Records Office, Aylesbury, Hobart Papers, D/MH M93, Smith to Lord Hobart, Trinidad, 1 Sept. 1802; TNA, CO 295/4, fol. 159, petition of Rebecca Griffith and Grace Lilburn, Mar. 1803.

56 McCallum, *Travels*, pp. 338–50. For an excellent discussion of McCallum's views on race, see Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *Beyond Boundaries: the Intellectual Tradition of Trinidad and Tobago in the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst and Boston, 2003), pp. 43–9.

57 McCallum, *Travels*, p. 10. For the kidnapping of sailors by 'crimps', see John Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots for 1794', *International Review of Social History* 16 (1971), pp. 42, 47; Nicholas Rogers, 'Liberty Road: Opposition to Impressment in Britain during the American War of Independence', in *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour*, ed. Colin Howell and Richard Twomey (Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1991), pp. 53–75.

58 McCallum, *Travels*, pp. 26–7. On black military recruitment, see Roger Norman Buckley, *Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments, 1795–1815* (New Haven, CT, and London, 1979).

59 On this point, see W.D. Rubinstein, 'British Radicalism and the "Dark Side" of Populism', in his *Elite and the Wealthy in Modern British History: Essays in Social and Economic History* (Brighton, 1987), pp. 339–73.

60 McCallum, *Travels*, pp. 313, 316, 323; David Geggus, 'British Opinion and the Emergence of Haiti, 1791–1805', in *Slavery and British Society, 1776–1846*, ed. James Walvin (Baton Rogue, LA, 1982), pp. 123–49, particularly pp. 137–54. McCallum's treatment of reciprocal violence and Toussaint's character, bears comparison with Marcus Rainsford, *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti* (London, 1805), chap. 5.

61 McCallum, *Travels*, p. 115.

62 Cudjoe, *Beyond Boundaries*, p. 49.

63 See Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor Versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford and New York, 2002), chap. 7.

64 See C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London, 1989), p. 85. The *Monthly Magazine*, Jan. 1806, p. 551, announced a forthcoming work by McCallum, which was to be an answer to Lord Selkirk's *Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland, with a View of the Causes and Probable Consequences of Emigration* (London, 1805).

65 McCallum, *Travels*, pp. 28–31, 81–5.

66 Ibid., pp. v-viii; *The Trial of Thomas Picton ... Taken in short-hand by Pierre F. McCallum, Esq...* (London, 1806), p. 33 (quotation); *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 23 (Jan.-Apr. 1806), p. 515, McCallum states that Castlereagh declined appeals for a government prosecution.

67 TNA, CO 295/14**,** Hislop to Windham, 29 Apr. 1806, fols. 60–61. Two versions were published, one selling for 1s/6d , the other for 6d. The full title quoted is of the cheaper edition, copy in the Library Company of Philadelphia.

68 *Satirist*, July 1810, pp. 175–77; Edward Alured Draper, *An Address to the British Public, on the Case of Brigadier-General Picton* (London, 1806), p. 49. See *Globe*, 11 Apr. 1806, for notice that his remaining effects at 40 Suffolk St., Charing-Cross, will be sold as part payment of his rent, and legal steps will be taken to recover the rest.

69 British Library, Files of the Royal Literary Fund, microfilm, file #202, McCallum to David Williams, 4 June 1807. He was granted £10.

70 McCallum, *Rival Queens*, p. 35, and *Observations on H.R.H. The Duke of Kent's Shameful Persecution since his Recal [sic] from Gibraltar* (London, 1808). See TNA, TS 11/806 [2638], for the charges drawn up and the recommendation to prosecute McCallum for scandalous libel of the Duke of York.
71 Mary Ann Clarke, *The Rival Princes: or, a Faithful Narrative of Facts, relating to Mrs. M. A. Clarke's Political Acquaintance with Colonel Wardle. Major Dodd, &c., &c., &c.*, 2 vols (London, 1810); McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 41. For what appears to be the only surviving copy, and then only of volume one, with the publisher's name and printing details cut out of the title and back pages, see TNA, TS 11/20.
72 For the continuing influence of radical critiques of 'old corruption' and Wade's publication in particular, see Philip Harling, *The Waning of 'Old Corruption': The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779–1846* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 143–50, and 'Rethinking "Old Corruption"', *Past and Present,* 147 (1995), pp. 127–58, although Harling misses the connection to McCallum.
73 *Satirist*, Jan. 1809, p. 88, Aug., p. 153. McCallum was here being denounced in league with various other figures from London's underworld, including Jonathan King, Thomas Hague and Peter Finnerty.
74 McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 45.
75 For Reid, see Iain McCalman, 'The Infidel as Prophet: William Reid and Blakean Radicalism', in *Historicizing Blake*, ed. Steve Clark and David Worrall (London, 1994), pp. 24–42.
76 Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, pp. 133–4, 164–6.

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Chapter 10

Islam on the Romantic Period Stage: Hyder Ali, Tippoo Saib and Beyond the Captivity Narrative

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In an almost throw-away remark made on the last full page of *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840*, Iain McCalman mentions the role of the nineteenth-century radical pressman, John Duncombe, in both promoting and conserving the canon of Victorian melodrama.[1] When I first read this passage, I was both enthralled and mystified as to how this could be. What very slowly dawned on me was that the locations of the radical presses of the late 1810s and '20s, particularly those on the north side of Waterloo Bridge, were mapped over the locations of the theatres. It took me an embarrassingly long time to catch on. Even worse, it was more than a decade before I realised that T.J. Wooler, editor of the iconic *Black Dwarf*, had founded a journal called *The Stage* (1814–15).[2] Despite my slow start, some of the spin-offs of my subsequent research are outlined in this chapter.

There was no monolithic reception of Islam on the British Romantic period stage. Curiously, the representation of different ethnicities and cultures was probably more frequently encountered by London playgoers than is the case today. Instead of crude generalizations about religion or ethnicity, there were nuanced receptions specific to different regions. These receptions include the subject of this chapter, that of Indian (Moghul) Islam typified by Hyder Ali (Haidar-Ali) and Tippoo Saib's fight against the British in the thirty years up to 1799.

Representations of Indian Islam on the Romantic stage run contrary to what one might have predicted from Linda Colley's influential *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850*. This is mainly because the London non-patent playhouses, such as the Royal Coburg Theatre (now Old Vic), were highly sensitive to their racially mixed audiences.[3] Unexpectedly, William Barrymore's *El Hyder; the Chief of the Ghaut Mountains. A grand eastern melo-dramatic spectacle* (1818) and H.M. Milner's *Tippoo Saib; Or, The Storming of Seringapatam* (1823) – both Coburg productions – presented Moghul rulers as heroic figures affirming their sovereignty and delivering rousing speeches to their subjects. In *Tippoo Saib*'s case, this included military defiance of the British invasion. In both *El Hyder* and *Tippoo Saib*, their eponymous Islamic leaders fight

to rescue their children (in *Tippoo*, from British hostage takers) and outwit internecine treachery while at the same time articulating national integrity. These dramas were remarkable representations to put before British audiences when one considers that Hyder Ali and Tippoo Saib had pretty consistently defeated the British over a thirty year period and had killed or physically maltreated thousands of prisoners. The Mysore ruler Tippoo Saib continued to be demonised long after his death defending the Seringapatam fortress in 1799.[4] If, as Colley argues, there was an attempt to present Tippoo as the Asiatic Napoleon, then these dramas are profoundly counter intuitive.[5]

Barrymore's *El Hyder* announces a surprising phase in this representation of Moghul India. Its popular success was such that it was not only featured frequently on the metropolitan stage but was played in productions deep inside rural England.[6] The Coburg's playbill had summarised the principal protagonists and their action as 'El Hyder, (the Warrior of Hindoostan)' and his struggle against 'Hammet Abdulcrim (Usurping the Throne of Hindoo-stan).' The storyline was based on an episode early in Hyder Ali's life when, although allegedly intent on securing his own 'secret design,' he had sought to reinstate the Rajah of Biddenoor's son, Chinavas Appiah, as a puppet ruler.[7] In Barrymore's play, the juvenile prince's name is changed to Chereddin, presumably for easier vocalization and projection. The early playbills identify, amongst other roles set out for the cast, a group designated as 'Leaders of the Patriotic Band.' This designation of Indian patriotism must have been doubly confusing to London theatre-goers aware of late eighteenth-century India's military encounters with the East India Company. Hyder Ali had usurped the throne of Mysore in 1761 yet here he was being portrayed as 'the Warrior of Hindoostan,' assisted by this 'Patriotic Band' of soldiers fighting off the 'Usurping' Hammet, a role played by Barrymore himself. Given that the historical Hyder Ali and his son, Tippoo Saib, had fought the British since 1767 until 1799, it was a surprising turnaround. Barrymore's two act drama presents Hyder Ali as an Indian patriotic hero, securing his kingdom against internal treachery.

Georgian theatre-goers familiar with the captivity narratives studied by Colley, which record stories of maltreatment, malnourishment, enforced circumcision and harsh incarceration, must have felt it strange to witness *El Hyder*'s finale in which the usurper's citadel is overthrown (the playbills breathlessly promised, 'Investment & Capture of Fortress!—Destruction of Arsenal! By the Springing of a Mine, With Burning Ruins!!!') and its denouement where Hyder Ali is reinstated as the *de facto* Islamic regional ruler.[8] A reviewer in *The Inspector, A Weekly Dramatic Paper* particularly commented on 'the last act where the Castle is stormed and destroyed by fire … There was a grand and gradual conflagration, and the partial light which the flames threw on the agonised countenances of the perishing soldiers, portrayed a melancholy delineation of the horrors of war.'[9] This spectacular ending was perhaps made rather less sensational in subsequent years in order to emphasise the extraordinary role of two British sailors, Harry Clifton and Mat Mizen, who assist Hyder Ali's ascendancy. Although even the name of their shipwrecked vessel (H.M.S. *Tiger*) echoes the legendary ferocity of "Tippoo's Tigers," Harry and Mat collude in Hyder's success by waving a statutory British

flag at his victory, creating a moment of dramaturgy which fails to compromise the decisive nature of the military outcome:

> Hyder … and Soldiers return to the assault – 'Hurrahs' are heard, and Clifton, Mat, with Sailors, dragging in two pieces of artillery, enter – they blaze away -the Portcullis is beaten down – Hyder's cavalry gallop on, and enter the breach -the Sailors and others follow… general conflict ensues – Horse and Foot … El Hyder and Hamet – Clifton and Sailors clear the ramparts – the Usurpers party are defeated – Chereddin is brought on upon a shield raised on the shoulders of four men – Mat waves the British Flag upon the ramparts – red fire – shouts and – Curtain.[10]

With one dramatic stroke, Barrymore's *El Hyder* totally reversed almost a generation of East India Company propaganda.

El Hyder also sharply diminished the masculine implications of the British military. The heroic Clifton (like the reinstated Indian prince Chereddin) was played by a woman. In the sailor's case, this was Barrymore's wife. While *The Inspector* had commented on the closing scene's 'agonized countenances of the perishing soldiers … [and] melancholy delineation of the horrors of war,' the review confirms that Clifton's role was played by 'Mrs. W. Barrymore who speaking technically is one of the best breeches figures we ever saw, and one of the prettiest women; she gave a peculiar force and interest to the part so natural in a young sailor and the manner in which she fought and vanquished her adversary, was surprising.'[11] *The Inspector*'s comments strongly suggest that it was the reversal of gender roles, rather than the implicitly treacherous implications of Clifton's alliance with Hyder Ali, which were amongst the most striking aspects of this performance in 1818.

Of course, even though they are mysteriously thrown up in Mysore, Mat Mizen and Harry Clifton readily articulate ideals of English liberty despite the enormous disjunctions between the utterances of the chirpy duo and the historical reality of Hyder's reign. In 1782 Hyder Ali had received 400 British sailors and sixty Royal Navy officers as prisoners captured by the French: very few of them survived.[12] What makes *El Hyder*'s ending even more surprising is that Mat and Clifton handily bump into a number of able-bodied English sailors, apparently similarly conjured up from nowhere, who freely assist them in storming the ramparts. Apart from stressing Britain's exclusive command of freedom ('here's a compass that always points to one port, liberty; and dam'me if we an't the only nation that knows how to steer by it'), Clifton and Mat also affirm that 'British lads espouse the cause of all who are oppress'd … England is the first to combat in the cause of liberty'.[13] At one point, Mat even makes the far-reaching claim that 'We Englishmen know too well the blessings of liberty – their houses are their castles, and never will they infringe on the rights of others, which they would die to maintain themselves'.[14] This conventional loyalist discourse, promoting freedom through an essentially imperialist programme of influence, is predictable enough and consistent with much of the Georgian stage but, in *El Hyder* it is already deconstructed by the patriotism and martial prowess of the El Hyder himself, a facet of the narrative which the play establishes from the outset.

El Hyder's dramaturgy, Mat and Harry's flag-waving notwithstanding, does little to undermine the impact of the Moghul Indian character its victor, whose heroic stature is established right from the start. At the very beginning of the play, just outside Delhi, El Hyder is introduced as an embattled leader suffering defeat at the hands of the usurping Hammet, a beleaguered figure surrounded by his troops and the senior aides, Kozzan and Moloc (designated as 'patriot chieftains'). Within the drama's structure, and coming as it does so early during the performance, Hyder's first appearances are crucial in immediately establishing his moral stature as Islamic patriot and resourceful military leader:

> *Kozzan:* Welcome, noble chief! Thy presence gives fresh courage to our almost drooping spirits. Say, when shall we forth again and meet our bold oppressors? Lead us to the embattled plain, and there, by conquest, revive our faded laurels.
>
> *Moloc:* Aye, to the fight, great chief! defeat sits heavy at our hearts. To the fight! and with blood-stained swords, warm from our enemies' breasts, wipe away our late disgrace!
>
> *El Hyder:* Disgrace! What tongue gives utterance to so foul a word? Disgrace! -were not their numbers treble ours? Did we not dispute each inch of ground? Nor, e'er gave way till their overwhelming myriads swept us from the field: and then, no trophy did we leave – no! naught but tattered standards – gasping, mangled heroes, who, with their last breath did cry, "Allah protect the right – our cause is just – we die content!" Disgrace, indeed![15]

Despite incongruent hints of medieval classicism, these speeches – El Hyder's in particular – project an unequivocal sense of personal integrity, sacrifice, patriotism, leadership and allegiance to the Islamic faith. Significantly, this is a purely Indian exchange. At this point, neither Clifton nor Mat Mizen having entered the play, being in hiding until they make an undignified entrance literally poking their heads into the action ('[S.D.] *opens cottage window* … *Clifton:* Yeo, ho, there, my hearty! What breeze is blowing now?').[16] By contrast, the usurping Hammet is made an unsympathetic figure. His status as a conquering ruler is emphasised in the dramatic spectacle of his entry in 'A splendid Procession,' where Hammet (rather than El Hyder) arrives as an oriental despotic monarch 'on a splendidly caparisoned Elephant,' surrounded by 'Banners, six Bengal Seapoys … six Warriors of Behaleea … six Warriors of the Hircarrah Tribe …six Soldiers of the Brighasis Tribe; three Choobdars – Artillery – Seapoys – Prisoners – Sepoys – Artillery – Officers of State – Officers of the Household Military Band … Ladies of the Harem veiled, escorted by Black Slaves'.[17] Hammett's ultimatum to the captured princess reinforces his villainous role. As he explains to Princess Zada, 'imperious necessity,' 'right of conquest and the people's choice' require her to be 'my consort … and sit as sovereign, or, as a captive, remain my bonded slave'.[18] In other words, the contrast between the heroic determination of El Hyder and Hammet's despotic power could hardly be greater. The play's dramatic structuring of El Hyder as an Islamic patriot, uniting his country against internal treachery and

selflessly seeking to reinstate the thrones of the junior Rajahs is a remarkable rejection of East India Company influence.

The denigration of the historical Hyder Ali continued long after his son Tippoo's death in 1799. Even as apparently innocuous a work as Charles Stewart's *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippoo Sultan of Mysore. To which are Prefixed, Memoirs of Hyder Aly Khan, and his Son Tippoo Sultan* (1809), published by East India Company College in Hertford, took care to remind its readers that, ten years earlier, 'The month of May 1799 was rendered memorable in the East, by the capture of Seringapatam, and the downfall of its Sovereign, the inveterate enemy of the British Nation.' Stewart's inclusion of 'Memoirs of Hyder Aly Khan' in the same volume also reminded readers of how his 'unrestrained ambition,' 'absolute dominion' and exploited latent sexual fears when it related how 'the English prisoners [captured in 1780] … were not only … also circumcised, and every means used to make them embrace the Mohammedan religion. The [English] girls were either married to the young soldiers or distributed as slaves.'[19] It is remarkable that this emphasis on Tippoo's ignorant brutality was continued through the apparently unpromising opportunity afforded by his library catalogue. The *Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippoo Sultan* was aimed at spreading disinformation about Tippoo's literacy. Without referring to the inevitable damage to the books caused by the heavy British assaults at Seringapatam, Stewart claimed that 'of nearly 2000 volumes, of Arabic, Persian, and Hindy (or Hind st ny) Manuscripts … a great portion were in bad condition; and several having lost both the first and last pages, it was extremely difficult to discover the Author, or the period in which they were composed.' He went on to say that 'Very few of these books had been purchased either by Tippoo or his father. They were part of the plunder from Sanoor, Cuddap h, and the Carnatic … and were taken by Hyder in the fort of Chitore, during the year 1780.' Stewart carefully phrased his supplementary comment that, although 'the Sult n was ambitious of being an Author … we have not discovered any *complete* work of his composition' (my italics).[20]

These anti-Hyder views were exhibited in the English town of Hertford as well as in Calcutta. The vocabulary of Hyder's usurping habits had been stressed amongst the British in India who, upon Tippoo's fall in 1799, urged their Governor to seek 'The restoration of the injured race of Princes, whose dominions their rebellious subject Hyder Alli had usurped' and they welcomed 'the liberal provision your Lordship has bestowed do the family and chiefs of our implacable and cruel Enemy, the late Sultaun of Mysoor.'[21] This address, delivered at the theatre in Calcutta, aimed to 'secure to the [East India] Company's possessions the blessings of internal tranquility [and to] increase, beyond calculation, the resources, strength and stability of the British Empire in the East.'[22] Despite the British in Calcutta's condemnation of a 'rebellious' usurper, Barrymore's *El Hyder* reverses this portrayal and depicts Hyder Ali as the victim of usurpation. Not only does El Hyder pledging fealty to Princess Zada ('And with our lives we will guard the sacred trust!'), he also announces the approach of 'the tyrant Hammet' in arrogant Islamic splendour ('a vaunting banner rears its head – 'tis the brilliant crescent').[23] Right from the start, El Hyder had stressed that Zada and prince

Chereddin are 'prisoners to Hamet![sic] – prisoners to that tyrant, who, by shedding the blood of sweet innocence, seeks to gain a throne, which, when he sits there, will become a throne of infamy – the seat of base pollution' and that Zada considered him 'a base usurper'.[24]

If this was the reception of Hyder Ali in *El Hyder*, the treatment of his son, Tippoo Saib, in H.M. Milner's, *Tippoo Saib; Or, The Storming of Seringapatam. A Drama, in Three Acts* (c.1823) is even more unexpected because Tippoo's contemporary vilification was far more comprehensive and systematic than that of his father's reputation. The key reasons for the substantial differences between British perceptions of Hyder Ali and his son were primarily brought about by the acute anxieties raised by the protracted war with France together with the sheer effectiveness of an increased print culture disseminating news about the various campaigns against Tippoo. The nightmare scenario for the British in the 1790s was the possibility of an effective military alliance between Tippoo and the French. In the years leading up to Tippoo's death, Seringapatam had held a garrison of the French republican army. At the fortress's fall, Tippoo's captured diplomatic papers were translated with amazing rapidity and published within the year at the behest of the East India Company as *Official Documents Relative to the Negotiations Carried on by Tippoo Sultaun, With the French Nation, and Other Foreign States, For Purposes Hostile to the British Nation* (1799). Despite their undoubtedly biased provenance, the impounded documents reveal beyond doubt that Tippoo's diplomacy was conducted within an Islamic political discourse. The papers also make clear that Tippoo carefully balanced his own interests in seeking the potential support of the French while maintaining his independence. Tippoo's tactics were to keep the British simultaneously fearful and appeased. During his immensely literate conduct of this diplomacy, he ordered his scribes to write to let 'the infamous English' 'know, and tremble, that in India, in the midst of the earth, there are Republicans, who have sworn their destruction.'[25] This statement was no exaggeration. The French garrison observed not only the political ideology of the republic but also regulated time according to the Revolutionary calendar, all helpfully translated in the East India Company's book, for example 'The Quintidi of the 3d Decade of the month of Floreal, the fifth year of the French Republic, one and indivisible, (answering to May 14th 1797).'[26] For their part, the French vowed 'hatred to all things, except Tippoo Sultaun the Victorious, the Ally of the French Republic. War against Tyrants; and Love to our Country, and that of citizen Tippoo.'[27] In return, 'citizen Tippoo' acquiesced in allowing them to plant a 'Tree of Liberty … surmounted with the Cap of Equality' right in the midst of the Seringapatam fortress.[28]

For one tantalising moment in the late 1790s, there stood the possibility that an Islamic military theocracy in central India would combine with a republican, de-Christianised, Western power and that both of them would ally against the East India Company and their British supporters. However, Tippoo Saib's diplomatic papers also strongly suggest that he never ceased thinking of the French as both atheistical as well as infidel. The French invasion of Egypt in July 1798 provoked a vituperative response against them which was included in a letter addressed to the British during the final stages of Tippoo's increasingly beleaguered negotiations

aimed at staving off attack. In the letter, written almost exactly a month to the day before he was killed, Tippoo invokes the 'holy theology' of his 'Brethren Musselmans' while castigating 'the irruption of the French Nation, those objects of divine anger, by the utmost treachery and deceit, into the venerated region of Egypt … of the views of the irreligious people; of their denial of God and his prophets.'[29] It was fear of the possibility of such alliances which had induced London-based East India Company employees to sing their (over-optimistic) anniversary duet, *Tippoo's Defeat* (to the tune of 'Rule Britannia'), at their meeting in August 1792:

When Tippoo with insidious hand,
Dar'd Britain's Sons on Indian plains;
The guardian Angels of our land,
Appear'd and sung Prophetick strains.

Led on by him your valour show
Where the proud Saub[sic] tyrannick reigns,
And as he seeks not Peace – lay low
His boasted tow'rs and golden fanes.[30]

The destruction of Tippoo's 'golden fanes' (or temples) is a reminder that both sides were aware of the Islamic dimension of the conflict. The East India men's song came hard on the heels of an initial defeat of Tippoo's forces at the end of the Third Mysore War upon which setback Lord Cornwallis demanded as hostages Tippoo's two sons, Abdul Khalik and Moiz-Ud-Din. In London a news story announcing that Tippoo was dead was quickly discredited but not before the stock market rose sharply ('The Stocks were forc'd up five per cent by the flam / Of our having taken Seringapatam'), an event recorded in the caricature print, *Wonderful News from Seringaptam*.[31] The financial implications are also implicit in James Gillray's *Scotch-Harry's News, or Nincumpoop in High Glee. Vide. News from India...*, a print showing Home Secretary Henry Dundas bringing the news to George III and Queen Charlotte that 'Seringaptam is taken! Tippoo is wounded! & Millions of Pagodas secured,' a pun on the Indian wealth repossessed.[32] Although it was only a tactical defeat, the event was immediately theatricalised in Sadler's Wells' 'Musical Entertainment' *Tippoo Saib* (1792), a piece by Mark Lonsdale with music by William Reeve. Perhaps unexpectedly, the Sadler's Wells *Tippoo Saib* included a song with a refrain in Irish Gaelic, transliterated as 'Buac 'aill lion deoc.' As Linda Colley notes, there were many Irish mercenaries fighting on the British side in India but what the song particularly draws attention to is the challenge to concepts of masculinity and racial supremacy made by Tippoo's military resolve.[33] The song recounts the ubiquitous Irish soldier Dennis O'Neal's bravado ('There in the Thickest was Dennis O'Neal') but his glorifying is also explicitly racist:

Tippoo take it from Dennis he speaks to your face.
Tis'nt' your Black looks do make him turn pale:
Put a Sword in his hand and he'll die like a Man.
But you won't make a Judy of Dennis O'Neal.
With your Jumping. [sic] Jungling. [sic] grinning. [sic] mouthing. [sic]

> Clout headed. [sic] thick headed. [sic] brazen nos'd copper fac'd
> Ill looking Thief! Who made you a Chief.
> I wish. For your sake I had an Oak Stake
> For a Dev'l of a Fellow is Dennis O'Neal.
> Arrah.Buac' aill lion deoc' for Dennis O'Neal.[34]

This stream of racism was not repeated in the rejoicing following Tippoo's death in 1799. Indeed, the Sadler's Wells production marks the high-point of the expression of anti-Tippoo sentiment. From then on, his reception in the theatre would be much more circumspect concerning his role as an enemy of the British.

In 1792, however, fears of defeat and implied feminization at the hands of Tippoo ('you won't make a Judy of Dennis O'Neal') were rife in the popular culture. Hannah Humphrey had published a print the previous December entitled, *The Coming-On, of the Monsoons, or the Retreat From Seringapatam*, a scene showing Tippoo in his fortress urinating on dead or fleeing British above a caption from Shakespeare's *Henry IV* Part I where Falstaff exaggerates the numbers of his assailants.[35] Fears of the reality of Tippoo's powers were stimulated by captivity narratives such as Henry Oakes, *Authentic Narrative of the Treatment of the English, Who Were Taken Prisoners On the Reduction of Bednore, by Tippoo Saib* (1785) and Francis Robson's, *The Life of Hyder Ally … To which is annexed, A Genuine Narrative of the Sufferings of the British Prisoners of War, Taken by His Son, Tippoo Saib* (1786). Such anxieties at the foe in the east impelled bravado in the songs at Sadler's Wells ('Come, Soldiers, chear, now the danger's past, / And the Tyrant Tippoo flies at last') but always alongside an explicit awareness of the risks he posed ('Since here we are, a courageous Band, / All alive on the Plains of Indostan; / Let us not forget our Throats to wet / In a health to all the Slain').[36] Relief at the apparent settlement of the conflict is typified in Alexander Dirom's, *Narrative of the Campaign in India, which terminated the War with Tipu Sultan in 1792* (1794). Subsequent captivity accounts, such as James Bristow's *Narrative of the Sufferings of James Bristow, Belonging to the Bengal Artilley* [sic], *During Ten Years Captivity with Hyder Ally and Tippoo Saheb* (Calcutta and London, 1794), appear to have further reinforced fears of Tippoo and may help explain the immediate euphoria which greeted his overthrow seven years later. When Tippoo was killed in May 1799, the effect on the national temperament was immediate.

Publications sponsored by the East India Company, such as the *Official Documents Relative to the Negotiations Carried on by Tippoo Sultaun* referred to above, were one way of influencing the reception of British control of Indian territories, particularly as it raised the spectre of collaboration with the French, but there were also more widely dispersed cultural forms which betray both the relief and animosity Tippoo's death elicited. The stereotypical Dennis O'Neal's countrymen sang 'Goodbye Mr. Tippoo' at the plebeian Royal Amphitheatre, Dublin.[37] In London, elite forms of music were also drafted. Harriet Wainwright's score of a *Chorus in Commemoration of the Conquest of Seringapatam* (c.1800), had a Preface celebrating 'the glorious conclusion of a War, which exterminated Tyranny, added Power, and Importance, to the British Empire, and diffused

throughout all Asia the blessings of Peace.' Wainwright's chorus sang of how 'Oppression dies! / The Tyrant falls! / The golden City bows her walls.' These pieces, encompassing the entire musical spectrum from popular to elite, are excellent indicators of Tippoo's reception in Britain since, at that date, music-making was necessarily a communal rather than a solitary activity. And there were also other forms of social celebration. In July 1800 the Theatre Royal, York, which was habitually sponsored and supported by local army regiments and Volunteer militias, re-staged an adaptation of Sadler's Wells' *Tippoo Saib; or, The Plains of Hindostan* and promised to show 'Pantomime Action, An East India Campaign; With the Death of Tippoo' and ending with an uplifting 'Indian Dance, [and] … Eastern Divertissement of Parasols.'[38] Four days later they appear to have re-deployed their *Tippoo Saib* scenery once again for a revival of James Cobb's Covent Garden *Ramah Droog, Or, Wine Does Wonders* (1798), a comic opera whose scenic devices required '*an Ambassador from Tippoo Sultaun, in a Palanquin*,' a sure sign of the pomp perceived as a requisite of the ruler of Mysore's status.[39] Someone in London even produced *The New Game of Tippoo Saib* (c.1800), a board game played with dice, almost an unconscious emblem of the precarious nature of the campaign.[40]

If these were all indicators of the extent of public interest in Tippoo's fate, this taste was further catered for by a panoramic painting of *The Grand Historical Picture of the Storming of Seringapatam, By the British Troops and their Allies.* Painted by Robert Ker Porter (1777–1842) and over 2500 square feet in size, the panorama (now destroyed) was exhibited in the Exhibition room of the Lyceum, Strand, together with a proposal to publish three prints, at least one of which survives as a woodcut with a numbered key and 'Descriptive Sketch' explaining the figures and places represented in Porter's painting. Not only did the panorama format invite communal viewing, The Lyceum building at that time (also known as the English Opera House) was also evolving into the Lyceum Theatre after its enlargement in 1816.[41] The woodcut explanation provides a very clear schema of the principal action: '11. Citizen Chapuy, the French Commander / 12. Tippoo Sultaun / 13. The Sally Port Gate where he fell.' The French presence was just as explicit in the panorama as Tippoo's Islamic religion, depicted as '37. Principal Mosque of Seringapatam,' a gathering of minarets over the fortress's skyline. Different versions of the battle quickly followed such as a coloured aquatint, *The Assault of Seringapatam dedicated to Maj. Gen. David Baird in 1799* (1802), after a painting by Sir Alexander Allan (1764–1820) etched by the celebrated engravers, Cardon and Luigi Schiavonetti. The East India Company also struck a medal (minted by Matthew Boulton), showing a scene of the fortress under attack on the reverse and the British Lion grappling with the Tiger of Mysore on the obverse. To clinch the Company's message, the date on the Lion side was given in Roman numerals while the Tiger side had a Persian inscription, praising Allah and giving the date in accordance with the Islamic calendar. Although the medal was issued both to British and to native Indian combatants fighting on their side, the choice of Persian is a reminder that the striking of the medal was an expression of power and subjugation as much as of a celebration. However, the naturalization of antagonism against Tippoo Saib in the period around 1800 is nowhere better typified than in an

extraordinary anonymous poem included in a Warwickshire printed pamphlet entitled, *Four Theatrical Addresses* (Alcester, c.1801). The writer's, 'Upon the Preliminaries of Peace, 1801,' rather disingenuously glanced back at how 'Reluctant Britain, but unus'd to fear, / …Through Asia's plains triumphant armies led.' However, a reference to lines about how '[Britain's] threats in vain the indignant Saib braves,' explains that 'Tippoo is a word, in English ears, of so undignified and unpoetical sound, that the less appropriate one of Saib, has been adopted as sufficiently so, in this country, to describe the person it is here intended to represent.'[42] The writer's designation of 'Tippoo' as an 'unpoetical' word, however exceptional it may have been, is a good indicator for how deeply antipathy towards the Mysore ruler had entered into British cultural discourse. Tippoo Saib had become a figure on the verge of exclusion from the contemporary expressive register of language.

If this was the case in the early 1800s, within twenty years Tippoo Saib was not only incorporated back into the discourses of popular entertainment, but his entire status had been rehabilitated. This was an amazing turnaround. William Barrymore had incorporated the early events of Hyder Ali's military and regional ascendancy into his Royal Coburg Theatre *El Hyder* of 1818 but right from the playhouse's opening that year, the Coburg had quickly established a reputation for topicality. The opening night had featured Barrymore's *Trial by Battle; or, Heaven Defend the Right: A Melodramatic Spectacle* (1818), a medieval drama exploiting the implications of a recent, and complex, legal case.[43] Such dramas were often designated on the playbills as 'local,' meaning that they dealt with topical or political issues. For example, it was probably Barrymore who wrote the Coburg's 'local extravaganza,' *The Election; Or, Candidates for Rottenburgh* (1818), a piece featuring 'Mend'em (a Reforming Cobler) [*sic* and] / Stichloose (a Political Tailor).'[44] *El Hyder* itself had been preceded by dramas such as *North Pole; or, The Arctic Expedition*, a 'Melo-Drama … partly founded on the present EXPEDITION TO THE ARCTIC REGIONS.'[45] Given this context, it is perhaps less surprising that, five years after *El Hyder*, the Coburg returned to another Indian theme and staged H.M. Milner's, *Tippoo Saib; Or, The Storming of Seringapatam*, a play text now surviving only in an edition *Adapted to Hodgson's Theatrical Characters*' (c. 1825), a version aimed at childrens' toy theatres. Although the Coburg's repertoire did not noticeably favour plays with Indian ettings, its audiences were obviously familiar with the Asian sub-continent. Their *Crockery's Misfortunes; or, Transmogrifications. A Burletta* (1821) had presented its eponymous Crockery as a servant returning to England after thirty years in 'Hingy' (India). Although clearly retaining his cockney-dialect transposition of vowels, he doesn't much like London's 'halteration' into a gas-lit metropolis ('Oh, dear, there vasn't no gash afor[e] I vent to Hingy').[46] The Coburg's confident sense of its audience's tastes, also permitted them to stage *Tippoo Saib; Or, The Storming of Seringapatam*.

Linda Colley's brief comment in *Captives* about Milner's play (to which she does not attribute authorship or a playhouse) accurately assesses that late Georgian parents buying Hodgson's juvenile (or toy theatre) edition of *Tippoo Saib* 'must

have been somewhat taken aback by the opening speech allocated to Tipu himself.'[47] It is worth quoting a little more of the speech than Colley allows:

> Tippoo: 'Tis well, my brave people! I know your loyalty, and dread not the tyrannic power that even now threatens us with destruction. Let your hearts warm in the cause, and our arms will not lack strength sufficient to crush your presumptuous enemies. When your sultan calls upon you, it will be to save yourselves from a miserable degradation; it will be to triumph over oppression, and to enjoy what they come here to despoil you of. Be firm, my people, and a million such powers will crumble into nothingness, before a people fighting for their Sultan and their native land.[48]

Remarkably, the Coburg play affirms not only that Tippoo is threatened by a 'presumptious' 'tyrannic power' but that India will 'triumph over oppression' and restore to the Indian people 'what they come here to despoil you of.' The syntax of this sentence is perfectly crafted to suit the masculine, declaratory style of contemporary acting. The play's opening immediately and unequivocally establishes Tippoo's role as a beleaguered patriot at the head of 'a people fighting for their Sultan and their native land,' in other words, Milner's play situates Tippoo Saib within British ideals of selfless patriotic valour and righteous resistance. He follows Barrymore's El Hyder figure in displaying statesman-like presence in front of his troops, but *Tippoo Saib* also reminds the audience that in 1792 the sultan's two sons, Abdul Khalik and Moiz-Ud-Din (Mirza and Morad in Milner's text), were taken as hostages by Lord Cornwallis:

> Tippoo: Are not my children in bondage? May they not, ere this, have become the victims of tyranny, and shed their innocent blood to gratify the vengeance of the oppressive English? … Were my children once more restored to me, I should possess a strength sufficient to contend with my haughty foes; but one effort on my part to save them, should they still exist, may hurl my poor boys into a gulph of misery.[49]

These opening speeches confirm Tippoo not only as the patriotic leader of his country, a sovereign ruler resisting conquest by an invading alien power, but also as an accomplished politician, orator and statesman. Not least, the speeches confirm Tippoo as a dutiful father forced to contend with British hostage-taking.

Tippoo Saib also strongly identifies the avaricious nature of the East India Company. In an attempt to obtain the restoration of his sons, one of Tippoo's advisors, Achmed Ali Kawn, recommends that the enemy are bought-off with treasure sufficient 'to gratify the avarice of the English, and restore the Rajahs to a father's arms'.[50] This accusation of avarice is also repeated in later negotiations when Achmed offers them 'a store of wealth, equal to every thing your avarice can require'.[51] At several other points, the play balances within a remarkable neutrality the conventional claims and counter-claims of the two sides. Set against the popular knowledge of the maltreatment of British prisoners trickling from the published captivity narratives, *Tippoo Saib* also introduces the equivalent immorality of Abdul Khalik and Moiz-ud-Din's confinement as hostages. Lady Emily, the sister of the Lord Mount Alford character (a figure presumably representative of Lord Cornwallis), enters the play in a broken dialogue addressed to Tippoo's son, Mirza, in which she is pacifying his fears of maltreatment,

'Believe me your doubts are misplaced; have I not endeavoured to sooth your sorrows, and make this place as agreeable as possible to you. You mistake my brother, and the English nation, if you imagine the one capable of cruelty, or the other base enough to sanction it'.[52] The play's immediate presentation of Tippoo's patriotic nobility, especially when set against the dubious morality of British hostage taking, makes a dramatic contrast with the ideological assertions of Alford's rallying call to his troops prior to their assault on the fortress: 'Now, my brave lads, we must on to the heights of Malavelhi, where true English courage must triumph over Indian despotism, and lay every proud foe in the dust who dares oppose us in our career of glory'.[53] Of course, the real-life victor of Seringapatam was Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington. In Milner's play, Wellesley's name is transposed into the heroic figure of Arthur Fitz-Henry, Alford's *aide-de-camp*. Wellington's popular reputation was such that the Coburg handled it deferentially but, quite remarkably, Milner created in *Tippoo*'s narrative an incident where the sons are threatened with murder by Alef Achbar, one of Tippoo's own courtiers. Milner's elaborate stage business is contrived to allow Arthur Fitz-Henry and Tippoo to briefly unite and rescue Mirza and Morad: '*Arthur*: … never shall it be said that an Englishman and a soldier destroyed the innocent, to please a guilty wretch like thee. *A struggle, in which Tippoo Saib throws off his disguise, and rescues one of the Children—Arthur saves the other—Guards enter, Alef is secured, and Picture is formed*'.[54] In Milner's narrative device, the Wellington figure's British bravery is balanced by that of Tippoo's Moghul courage and filial devotion.

These extraordinary scenes in *Tippoo Saib; Or, The Storming of Seringapatam* are counter-intuitive to what one might have expected from the diverse but systematic demonization of Tippoo which took place within a whole spectrum of British official and popular public discourse from the 1790s onwards. What had brought about this change? Part of the reason was the radical disposition of the playhouse itself. The Royal Coburg, in defiance of the royal patent theatres of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, positioned itself as an anti-prince regent playhouse, choosing to support the memory of the Prince of Wales's deceased daughter, Princess Charlotte, husband of the Belgian prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg. This allegiance was announced on the masthead of its playbills and a portrait of Charlotte was hung inside the theatre.[55] Upon her return to England, Queen Caroline herself had made a politically motivated visit to the Coburg to see John Howard Payne's, *Marguerite! Or The Deserted Mother!* Although no text of *Marguerite!* survives, the title and plot outline carried on the playbill were suggestive of the queen's predicament.[56] Ideologically, the playhouse personnel themselves were known to be radically inclined: one their comedians, Joe Cowell, recollected that nearly all of the Coburg staff and players were pro-Queen.[57] However, what may have been more important was the presence of servants within the theatre's audience. At contemporary playhouses, servants often kept seats for their employers, arriving before the start of the performance. In some theatres there was even a specific 'footmens gallery,' an area known to occasionally erupt into rioting as when, during James Townley's satire on servants, *High Life Below Stairs* (1759), real-life servants objected to how they were portrayed.[58] The presence of

black or coloured servants at the playhouses is exceedingly difficult to recover but an Old Bailey case of 1795, at the height of the twin antagonisms caused by Tippoo's continued insurgency and possible alliance with France, brought to the court a plaintiff named Tippoo Saib, a servant at Lord MacDonald's townhouse in Westminster. This Tippoo Saib had been robbed of a £3 gilt watch by Jane Cartwright near to his employer's house in Great George Street. There is nothing to categorically determine Tippoo Saib's ethnic origin (he swore his oath on the Bible) but his presence in court not only confirms the forcible Anglicization of whatever was the servant's real name, but also the man's specific denigration. To be anachronistic, calling a London manservant, implicitly of Indian extraction, Tippoo Saib in the 1790s would have been comparable to naming a German manservant 'Adolf Hitler' in 1930s England.[59]

It may have been deference towards the playhouse's servant populated audience, mixed with an existing predisposition towards radical thinking, which ensured that the Coburg would present their own perspective on the Moghul Tippoo Saib rather than the version disseminated by the propaganda of the East India Company and their captivity narratives. However, the ultimate confirmation for how dramas such as *El Hyder* and *Tippoo Saib* were perceived amongst the plebeian sections of the London population comes from the events surrounding Joseph Glossop's (then the Coburg's owner) purchase of The Royalty Theatre, Tower Hamlets, in 1821. The Royalty Theatre in Wellclose Square was close to London's docklands.[60] In the late eighteenth-century it moved from being an area associated with the manufacture of armaments to one in which the milling and warehousing of sugar from the West Indies had become increasingly important. The Royalty had had a fraught history with intermittent but strenuous attempts at its suppression. In the 1780s, the patentees of Covent Garden and Drury Lane had tried to close it down in order to protect their monopoly.[61] Around 1803, the Society for the Suppression of Vice (in what must have been one of its first organised campaigns) had sought the Royalty's closure on the grounds of the area's supposed continuing importance to armaments manufacture and how the playhouse was promoting idleness amongst the workforce.[62] That the Royalty was situated in an area which had long been multi-racial and multi-lingual is evidenced by a production such as their *Harlequin Mungo; or, A Peep into the Tower* (1788), a (silent) pantomime featuring Harlequin as a slave on a West Indies sugar plantation who elopes with the (white) slave owner's daughter before they secure freedom and marriage in London. Despite the efforts of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, the playhouse had somehow survived into the 1820s. By that time the area had prospered into 'a new and elegant neighbourhood' subsequent to the building of the East India Company's East India Dock, one of whose access roads led directly into Wellclose Square.[63] The East India Docks had been opened in 1806, constructed upon an anti-pilfering pattern of secure berths similar to those introduced in the nearby West India Docks. Such a dockyard design was aimed at preventing the customary culture of theft from ships at berth. Two thousand armed men formed into three regiments constantly patrolled the East India Docks as part of the Company's security system. This climate of the visible intimidation of the local population was repeated in the law courts. Scores of Old Bailey records from

this period show that the East India Company was intensely litigious in prosecuting anyone stealing its property, however trivial the goods pilfered.

In 1821 Glossop was in the position of requiring a suitable opening-night production for this vividly sited playhouse. Instead of a piece specifically written for the occasion (such as Barrymore's *Trial by Battle* composed for the Coburg's first night), the Royalty's re-opening saw Glossop stage the ex-Coburg *El Hyder; the Chief of the Ghaut Mountains*. Glossop's choice is a revealing indicator for how he had selected the first night's main piece with the area's likely audience in mind. Contemporary commentators were well aware of the racial and cultural heterogeneity of the Royalty's maritime hinterland. A first night review of the Royalty's *El Hyder* in *The Drama; or, Theatrical Pocket Magazine*, slyly noted that 'Mr. Glossop … has perfectly "astonished the natives" of Rag Fair, Rosemary Lane, Tower Hill, Wapping, and Wellclose Square.' The reviewer's reference to the local 'natives' is implicitly meaningful because the notice went on to remark how 'The manager, [being] well aware of the company he had to deal with, opened with a gallimaufry, calculated to please the palates of his customers; he therefore presented them with *The Sailor's Frolic*, which set the tars of Wapping Old Stairs in ecstasies; after which, came *El Hyder*, with all its paraphernalia of "gun, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder," and the whole concluded with a treat for the "Mr. Sholomons of Duke's Place"—"*The Benevolent Jew*"'[64] All three of these first-night entertainments were geared towards accommodating a multi-cultural audience. *The Sailor's Frolic* was a popular song dating from the early 1800s with a mid-nineteenth century version subtitled 'or, Life in the East' (c.1850). The innuendo about the 'Mr. Sholomons' appreciative of *The Benevolent Jew* is a reference to C.F. Barrett's long established 'patter' song for spoken accompaniment which the Spitalfields presswoman Ann Lemoine had included as a specifically Royalty Theatre favourite at least twenty years earlier in her collection, *Laugh When You Can; or, The Monstrous Droll Jester* (c.1795–98). Although Barrett gave the Jewish figure in his song the stereotypical identity of a wealthy trader on the stock exchange, the benevolent Jew celebrated in its verse was someone orphaned at the age of nine and forced to live by selling pencils, sealing-wax and 'pomatum' cosmetics in order to make his 'money galore.' The song ends with a deferential reversal of religious stereotypes by having the Jew explain through the song's title that, after acquiring his wealth, 'I made that my plan, / To be honest and just to mankind, sirs, / Altho' I'm a Jew.'[65] In other words, the whole of the Royalty Theatre's first night programme was calculated by Glossop to be deferential, courteous and politically respectful to an audience who were as likely to be formed from East Indies Company Lascar seamen as London Jews trading the Company's eastern commodities.

There is every reason to think that Milner's *Tippoo Saib* was considered a potentially dangerous re-evaluation of the Moghul leader. The year after its first performance, the publisher H. Fisher (who also produced *The Imperial Magazine* 1822–34) brought out James Scurry's narrative of his *Captivity, Sufferings, and Escape … Detained A Prisoner During Ten Years, In the Dominions of Hyder Ali and Tippoo Saib* (1824). Scurry had died in 1822 but his *Captivity, Sufferings, and Escape* was published with a Preface reminding the reader – long after the fact –

that 'Hyder Ali Cawn, and his son Tippoo Saib, have long been distinguished, and not less detested, throughout every part of the civilised world, for the cruelties which they practiced on their prisoners of war, during their dominion of India'.[66] Extraordinarily, the contemporary drama appears to have responded directly to this attempt to return to these memories of Tippoo and his father. The American John Howard Payne's opera *The Fall of Algiers* (1825) for Drury Lane included a character called Timothy Tourist, a prisoner of the Dey of Algiers, who specifically mocks captivity narratives:

> If I should but live … what a great man I shall become; what a figure I shall cut in the literary world with a published account of my travels – title page, narrative of a captivity among the Algerines – author, Timothy Tourist – size, imperial, with a whole-length portrait-paper hot pressed – price six guineas – edition twenty first – to be had of all booksellers from Whitechapel to Chelsea. By great good luck I have preserved my memorandum-book, and so to add a few observations, that I don't remember to have seen made in any other work on the same subject.[67]

The Fall of Algiers was popular enough for another edition to be printed by Thomas Dolby, another of the radical pressmen highlighted by Iain McCalman.[68] That it was Scurry's captivity narrative that had attracted Payne's attention is confirmed by this passage having been a late (technically illegal) insertion, not part of the text delivered to George Colman the Younger, the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays, for licensing.[69]

Barrymore's *El Hyder*, Milner's *Tippoo Saib* and, not least, John Howard Payne's *Fall of Algiers*, all testify to a skeptical reaction to the East India Company's role in expanding its commercial empire. The anti-regent Royal Coburg Theatre between 1818 and 1824 was part of a critical mass of progressive, mainly plebeian, sentiment which was in the process of redefining, in its own terms, the exact nature of an appropriate response to Britain's role in India. The unexpected nuances of this popular response are only fitfully glimpsed. Something of its nature can be judged by a newspaper report of an outdoor 'Radical Reform' meeting held outside Glasgow in the months after the Peterloo Massacre. An unidentified speaker, his words occasionally interrupted by alarms of an impeding cavalry attack upon the crowd ('Here another cry arose of cavalry coming'), warmed to his subject by reminding his listeners of 'the gallant Tippoo Saib and several others, among whom were the descendants of Tamerlane the Great, who held such a respectable situation in the pages of history.' According to the speaker, they 'had enthralled a great portion of Asia, commonly called the East Indies, in a military despotism' but 'what, he would ask, had all these victories brought to the country? The proceeds had been pocketed by [a few] individuals.'[70] Such intricacies, of histories whose words are torn away like on this windswept Glasgow common, are exactly what Iain McCalman has so unequivocally taught us are the meanings to which we should truly attend. Barrymore's *El Hyder* and Milner's *Tippoo Saib* were remarkable interventions in re-writing the history of British involvement in India.

Notes

1 Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 236.
2 *The British Stage, and Literary Cabinet* 4 Dec. 1818, p. 292. The British Library (BL) catalogue lists *The Stage* but the copies are destroyed.
3 The royal patent theatres, principally Covent Garden and Drury Lane, held their operating license from the time of Charles II. Apart from the summer season Haymarket theatre (which usually performed opera), all the other playhouses in London were forced to perform burletta, a genre where words are set to music. Effectively, this imposition de-barred all except these duopoly theatres from performing spoken drama of the type most readily recognised as William Shakespeare and the canonical texts of Elizabethan, Jacobean and Restoration drama. Watson Nicholson's, *The Struggle for a Free Stage in London* (London, 1906) remains a useful work in this field.
4 The most comprehensive introduction to this period, with a wealth of visual material, is Anne Buddle, with Pauline Rohatghi and Iain Gordon Brown, *The Tiger and the Thistle: Tipu Sultan and the Scots in India, 1760–1800* (Edinburgh, 1999).
5 Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World 1600–1850 (*London, 2002), p. 297.
6 Ten years later *El Hyder* ('with … Terrific Effects of … Storming and Bombarding the Fortifications and Out works of the Tower, Pagoda, and Mineret') had reached as far as Stamford, Lincolnshire, produced in a still surviving Georgian theatre whose seasons coincided with the local horse racing. Playbills, Stamford Theatre, 22 and 28 Aug. 1828.
7 Francis Robson, *The Life of Hyder Ally: With An Account of His Usurpation of the Kingdom of Mysore, and Other Contiguous Provinces. To which is annexed, A Genuine Narrative of the Sufferings of the British Prisoners of War, Taken by His Son, Tippoo Saib* (London, 1786), p. 28.
8 Playbill, Royal Coburg Theatre, 16 Nov. 1818.
9 *The British Stage, and Literary Cabinet*, 4 Dec. 1818 p. 292; *The Inspector, A Weekly Dramatic Paper*, 9 Jan. 1819, p. 7.
10 William Barrymore, *El Hyder: The Chief of the Ghaut Mountains. A Grand Eastern Melo-dramtic Spectacle, in Two Acts* (1818), *Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays* (London, 1852), VI: 25.
11 *The Inspector, A Weekly Dramatic Paper*, 9 Jan. 1819, p. 7.
12 Colley, *Captives,* p. 276.
13 Barrymore, *El Hyder*, pp. 16, 25.
14 Ibid., p. 7.
15 Ibid., p. 3.
16 Ibid., p. 6.
17 Ibid., p. 8.
18 Ibid., p. 8.
19 Charles Stewart, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Library of the Late Tippoo Sultan of Mysore. To which are Prefixed, Memoirs of Hyder Aly Khan, and his Son Tippoo Sultan* (Cambridge, 1809), pp. 1, 33–4.
20 Ibid., p. v.
21 *Addresses presented by the Inhabitants of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta to the Governor General, congratulating him on the Successful Termination of the fourth Mysore War* (Calcutta, 1799), p. 8.

22 Ibid.
23 Barrymore, *El Hyder*, p. 22.
24 Ibid., pp. 4, 9.
25 *Official Documents Relative to the Negotiations Carried on by Tippoo Sultaun, With the French Nation, and Other Foreign States, for Purposes Hostile to the British Nation; To Which is Added, Proceedings of a Jacobin Club, Formed at Seringapatam, by the French Soldiers In the Corps Commanded by M. Dompart: With a Translation* (Calcutta, 1799), p. 190.
26 Ibid., p 187.
27 Ibid., p 192.
28 Ibid., p 188.
29 Ibid., p 171.
30 *Tippoo's Defeat, Duet & Chorus sung at the Anniversary Meeting of the Gentlemen of the East India House, Aug: 13, 1792 Written by Ephraim Epigram, Esq. The Music by Dr. Arne* (London, 1792).
31 Anon., *Wonderful News from Seringaptam*, 18 May 1792 (Lewis Walpole Library, Connecticut).
32 James Gillray, *Scotch-Harry's News, or Nincumpoop in High Glee. Vide. News from India*, 23 May 1792.
33 Colley, *Captives,* pp. 310, 323.
34 Mark Lonsdale, *The Overture Favourite Songs & Finale In the Musical Entertainment of Tippoo Saib as Performed With Universal Applause at the Sadler's Wells Theatre The Words by Mr. Lonsdale The Music Composed by W. Reeve* (London, 1792), pp. 14–15.
35 *The Coming-On, of the Monsoons, or the Retreat from Seringapatam*, 6 Dec. 1791.
36 Ibid., pp. 18–19.
37 *From Sweet Tipperary to Pick Up Some Honour. Good Bye Mr. Tippoo. A Favourite Song Sung by Mr. Johannot at the Royal Amphitheatre Peter Street* (Dublin, 1800).
38 Playbills, Theatre Royal, York, 29 July 1800.
39 James Cobb, *Songs, Duets, Trios, and Finales in Ramah Droog, Or, Wine Does Wonders; A Comic Opera in Three Acts. As Performed at the Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden* (London, 1798), p. 17.
40 BL, Shelfmark: P1054.
41 Edward Wedlake Brayley, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Theatres of London* (London, 1826), pp. 41, 43.
42 *Four Theatrical Addresses: Upon the Providential Preservation of His Majesty's Life, At Drury-Lane Theatre. Upon the Preliminaries of Peace. Upon the Opening of the New Theatre at Warwick. And a Farewell Epilogue* (Alcester, 1801), p. 11.
43 '*The Mysterious Murder* and *The Murdered Maid*: The Case of Mary Ashford and the Cultural Context of Late-Regency Melodrama,' *Gothic Studies*, 3 (2001), pp. 181–95.
44 Playbills, Royal Coburg Theatre, 13 July 1818.
45 Playbills, Royal Coburg Theatre, 22 June 1818.
46 Anon., *Crockery's Misfortunes; or, Transmogrifications. A Burletta, In One Act. Performed for the First Time, on Monday, July 11th, 1821, At the Royal Cobourg Theatre* (London, 1821), pp. 2, 4.
47 Colley, *Captives,* p. 300.
48 H.M. Milner, *Tippoo Saib; Or, The Storming of Seringapatam … Adapted to Hodgson's Theatrical Characters* (London, c.1825), p. 5.
49 Ibid., p. 6.

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., p. 12.
52 Ibid., pp. 9–10.
53 Ibid., p. 14.
54 Ibid., p. 22.
55 *The Inspector, A Weekly Dramatic Paper*, 9 Jan. 1819.
56 Playbills, Royal Coburg Theatre, 18 June 1821.
57 Joe Cowell, *Thirty Years Passed Among the Players in England and America: Interspersed with Anecdotes and Reminiscences of a Variety of Persons, Directly or Indirectly Connected with the Drama During the Theatrical Life of Joe Cowell, Comedian. Written by Himself* (New York, 1845), p. 48.
58 John Jackson, *The History Of The Scottish Stage, From Its First Establishment To The Present Time; With A Distinct Narrative of Some Recent Theatrical Transactions. The Whole Necessarily Interspersed With Memoirs of His Own Life* (Edinburgh, 1793), p. 376.
59 Jane Cartwright, 16 Sept. 1795, *The Proceedings of the Old Bailey*, Ref. t17950916–43. The twenty-eight-year-old Cartwright was convicted and transported.
60 For the earlier history of the Royalty Theatre, see Watson Nicholson, *The Struggle for a Free Stage in London* (London, 1906), pp. 98–123; Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 21–5; David Worrall, *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship and Romantic Period Subcultures, 1774–1832* (Oxford, 2006).
61 George Colman, *A Very Plain State of the Case, or The Royalty Theatre Versus the Theatres Royal* (London, 1787).
62 Thomas Thirlwall, Royalty Theatre. *A Solemn Protest Against The Revival Of Scenic Exhibitions And Interludes, At The Royalty Theatre; Containing Remarks On Pizarro, The Stranger, And John Bull; With A Postscript* (London, 1803); John Percival, *A Few Observations in Defence of the Scenic Exhibitions at The Royalty Theatre, and on the Intolerant Censure of The Drama in General; Contained in the "Solemn Protest" of The Rev. Tho. Thirlwall, M.A.* (London, 1804).
63 Edward Wedlake Brayley, *A Topographical and Historical Description of London and Middlesex*, 5 vols (London, 1820), II: 771–2.
64 *The Drama; or, Theatrical Pocket Magazine. for October 1821*, pp. 302–303.
65 Ann Lemoine, *Laugh When You Can; or, The Monstrous Droll Jester ... To Which is added, The Benevolent Jew, as Recited at The Royalty Theatre* (London, c.1795–8), pp. 59–60.
66 James Scurry, *Captivity, Sufferings, and Escape ... Detained A Prisoner During Ten Years, In the Dominions of Hyder Ali and Tippoo Saib* (London, 1824).
67 John Howard Payne, *The Fall of Algiers. A Comic Opera, In Three Acts … As now Performed at the Theatres-Royal, London* (London, 1825), p. 6.
68 John Howard Payne, *The Fall of Algiers, A New Opera, In Three Acts. The Whole of the Music Composed by Mr H.R. Bishop. First Performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, January 19, 1825* (London, 1825).
69 BL, Add. MSS 42869.
70 *The Times*, 6 Nov. 1819.

Chapter 11

The 'She-Champion of Impiety': A Case Study of Female Radicalism

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> I look upon her as by far the most interesting woman in the country, and one who has done more public good than any other one.
>
> Richard Carlile in *Republican*, 24 September 1825

During August 1826, letters to the London radical journal the *Republican* reported that the town of Nottingham was 'in an uproar' with the launch of a radical bookshop trading in politically extreme and heretical publications. Large crowds of 'Christians' assembled in protest each night outside the shop; some prayed and others spat insults against the store's owner: radical, freethinker and former state prisoner, Susannah Wright. Wright found herself in the 'midst of a Christian storm' when angry crowds, affronted by the caricatures of God and the King adorning the front window, made repeated attempts to break into the bookshop and to drag her out into the street. Witnesses reported that she was subjected to 'profane curses' and 'horrid imprecations', and Wright herself wrote of receiving several death threats. While evening produced the largest wrathful gatherings, her radical friends were able to rally around the shop in support. During the day, however, she was forced to take all means to defend herself. Faced with two youths who used the 'most dreadful language' against her, she reached for the pistol which she kept under the front counter, and advised that she would most certainly fire it if they did not leave. They hurriedly 'scampered off'. The trouble came to a head by the end of the month when furious crowds attempted to break into the shop five or six times in one evening and by nine o'clock her friends sent for the police. The irony must have struck many. Initially an inadequate force was sent and reinforcements were needed to quell the riot outside the shop. After several arrests the police succeeded in clearing the streets by eleven o'clock.[1]

The riot outside the Nottingham bookshop was preceded by five years of public malediction against Susannah Wright – most of which took place in London. Wright entered the political fray during tumultuous times when radicals of all stripes sought to reform the old order based on Church and King. Between 1819 and 1821 the government witnessed overt public discontent on an unprecedented scale and the glint of the guillotine resurfaced in the collective memory of Britain's ruling elite. The government responded with a raft of repressive legislation which

criminalised all forms of heterodox political and religious expression. Prosecutions for sedition, treason and blasphemy soared and the country's gaols swelled with political prisoners. During that time, Wright's work in the London bookshop of imprisoned radicals Jane and Richard Carlile resulted in several court appearances and almost two years as a state prisoner in both Newgate gaol and Cold Bath Fields prison. While she gained celebrity as a popular radical heroine, her profile also came with much public deprecation as the 'She-Champion of Impiety'.[2]

Almost every student of radicalism since E.P. Thompson has noted the imprisonment of Susannah Wright as part of the spate of radical prosecutions in the early 1820s.[3] Yet previous scholars have invariably done so with scant detail – depicting her as an accessory of, and incidental to, the story of prominent radical Richard Carlile – that she has become little more than a footnote in radical history. An example is the treatment of Wright's story in Edward Royle's document collection *Radical Politics 1790–1900*. Royle includes an article written by B.B. Jones from the *Reasoner* of 1859 which contained some of the most detailed accounts of Wright's experience in the radical movement. Regardless of the fact that Jones wrote the article the 'because no one has given any account' of the individuals who 'assisted Mr Carlile in his arduous task against despotism',[4] Royle reproduced it over a century later as a record of Richard Carlile's experience; Wright's name was included but the remainder of the detail of her experience was edited out.[5]

An exception to this pattern was a paper published by Iain McCalman almost 25 years ago. McCalman argued that the women in Carlile's circle had been either neglected or misunderstood by historians, even those who were beginning to uncover the women 'hidden from history'. Opposed to the 'supplementary' role ascribed to radical women, he pointed to a radical movement 'in which women played a genuinely critical part' and where the movement enjoyed the exceptional dedication of women such as Susannah Wright.[6]

This essay aims to give full justice to the story of Susannah Wright, not only to extricate her from Richard Carlile's shadow but also to restore her to her rightful place in the historical record. The woman brandishing a pistol in her own bookshop was a viable political actor in her own right. As a case study, her story is a document of independent agency; an experience that cannot simply be read as a subsidiary to that of the radical male narrative. Through her eyes we can see how a woman negotiated various spaces of political activity and forged a radical identity, and how her involvement provided a platform for other women to express their radicalism. Moreover, it places radical women in the evolving scholarship of the alternative or radical public sphere: Wright's experience broadens our understanding of how courts and prisons were active sites of radical political activity.[7] Finally, Susannah Wright's story highlights the complex and often contradictory nature of contemporary attitudes to gender. As a freethinker and a woman, how did her experience fit with newly emerging notions of femininity which were often imbued with deeply religious undertones?

Susannah Wright was not new to the radical scene when she was first arrested for blasphemy in 1821; her public debut was preceded by an active participation in the less visible world of the radical family. A native of Nottingham, she attributed

the formation of her principles to the 'distinguished spirit' of local reformers.[8] In the years before her arrest, she, and her husband William Wright, published many heretical and politically stinging caricatures (in his name) and sold them through their radical bookshop in Fleet Street. The Wrights also participated in the regular Sunday gatherings of radicals at the home of B.B Jones and his wife, where to amuse themselves for the evening the 'Atheistical friends' would 'read and discuss' the latest in radical and heterodox literature[9] – an intellectual and physical challenge to Christianity on its most sacred of days, the Sabbath. Wright also frequented the radical bookshop of Jane and Richard Carlile – a notorious outlet of radical texts and the site where many radicals courted prosecution, including Jane and Richard themselves.

Susannah Wright was one of the earliest of a string of volunteers who responded to Richard Carlile's appeal for help to keep the shop open following his arrest and imprisonment, and that of his wife Jane and sister Mary-Ann Carlile. Vowing to 'attend to the business at all risk', Susannah was assured of the backing of the Joneses and other 'atheistical friends'.[10] Like the Carliles before her, and the string of volunteers who followed, Susannah was soon charged with blasphemy and, in December 1821, faced court for the first of three appearances for the sale of a tract penned by Richard Carlile from his prison cell. Released on bail after her first hearing, her trial was delayed until July 1822 by which time she had given birth to another child. She put these months to good use: as Carlile noted in the *Republican*, 'she is determined to defend herself, and read her own defence, and will not allow [Judge] Best to silence her'.[11]

On 8 July, Susannah and her children, B.B Jones and his wife, and a tight-knit band of unnamed female radical supporters left the Jones' home in Surrey to attend the trial. Jones recalled that Wright defended herself against the charge of bringing the 'Christian religion into disbelief and contempt among the people' with 'an ease peculiar to herself'. He assisted her in the dock, keeping her place in her notes when she was frequently interrupted by the Judge disapproving of her line of defence or during the commotion in the public galleries caused by heckling from several youths. Jones recollected that the plan from the outset was to get as much of the defence read as possible, which included reading the offending tracts so as to 'prove' their innocence.[12] This was a pattern by now familiar at political trials, where the accused radicals used the courtroom to convey their message to a wider public audience.[13]

So engrossed was Susannah in the trial proceedings that Jones had to remind her to request a break to attend to her baby. She emerged from the court to the cheers of a large crowd who had gathered outside, and a group of about twenty close supporters retired for refreshments to nearby Castle Coffee House. Returning to the Court, Wright brought almost four hours of defence to a close by advising the Jury to 'be firm and do your duty' and by insisting that she scorned 'mercy and demand[ed] justice'.[14] Wright's defence had invoked the language of historic rights, but without any overt appeal to the constitution. Rather, her appeal to the freedom of expression and opinion rang with overtones of the rights of the free-born English.[15] Despite such bravado, her supporters were determined to avoid her

being taken into custody pending sentencing and ushered her swiftly out of the court before the guilty verdict was announced minutes later.

It was not until four months later that Wright again returned to Court for sentencing. This time, her notoriety attracted more of the public gaze both in crowd numbers and press interest. Under the pretext of addressing the Court in 'plea of mitigation of punishment' Wright instead challenged the validity of her guilty verdict, arguing that Christianity had no place in the law. Clearly agitated by the content of her statement the Chief Justice issued repeated warnings that he would not suffer such profanity against the law or the church in his court. This only spurred Susannah to greater defiance, telling the judge, 'You, Sir, are paid to hear me'.[16] She continued to ignore his interruptions to the amusement of the crowded courtroom. Exasperated by her recalcitrance, the Judge sentenced Wright to be confined for ten weeks in the loathed Newgate prison to deliberate on her plea.

Early nineteenth century courtrooms were undoubtedly gendered spaces; only the public galleries were open to women and the business of the court was performed and controlled by men.[17] It was no accident that Jones assisted Wright with her notes rather than one of her numerous female attendants. In relation to the courtrooms of the 1790s, James Epstein has argued that 'all those who spoke were men'.[18] Susannah Wright's experience suggests that by the early 1820s this was no longer the case. Wright's trial reveals ways that women could circumvent and contest the unequal power relations implicit in the early nineteenth century legal process.[19] Women were absent as officers of the courts, but they were not absent from the courtroom. By all accounts, Wright was surrounded by women in her trials, from her close circle of female friends to the unknown supporters in the public galleries, some of who travelled long distances to attend the trial. Nor was this support unique to Wright's trial: she herself reported attending Jane Carlile's trial every day for a week to 'watch the conduct of her inhumane Judges'.[20] Most importantly, she was not silent; neither did she allow herself to be silenced. Her defence in the July trial lasted almost four hours and in her November trial she countered the Judges interruptions by claiming that 'nothing but absolute force shall prevent me reading'.[21]

Historians of the radical movement have often downplayed the role of the Carlile's imprisoned associates with the suggestion that Richard was responsible for writing their defences. Carlile did mention working on Susannah's defence in private correspondence with another imprisoned shopman, yet as McCalman notes, much of it accords with the style and language of her other correspondence to the *Republican*.[22] Regardless, it is perhaps better to think of radical defences at this time as a collective effort; learning from and building on each subsequent iteration; honing ways to circumvent the legal arguments against them and to utilise this arena to publicise the radical agenda.

The question of authorship is further redundant when Wright's performance of the defence is taken into account. One woman who travelled from Manchester for the trial recorded her awe at Wright's skill in negotiating the courtroom: 'never will the impression be effaced from my memory; the firmness she evinced and her resolution not to be silenced'.[23] This was not the case of an uneducated or docile woman regurgitating the words of an astute leader: she performed her defence in

an exemplary manner – unsettling the prosecution with her legal tactics and understanding, challenging the jury on their own understanding of the Christian faith, and frustrating the judges with the force and persistence of her defence. Surprisingly, not even the most conservative of newspapers took the opportunity to question the right or the propriety of a woman to conduct her own defence. Given her notoriety, the absence of any criticism suggests that it is time to look more closely at the British courtroom not only as platform for political radicalism but also as a contested site of power and gender relations.

Susannah's performance at the trial, and the harshness of her treatment, made her into a popular radical heroine. Newspapers around the country printed the trial transcripts or reproduced those reported by *The Times*. Veteran ultra-radical and poet Allen Davenport was clearly enamoured with her efforts in the poem he dedicated to her, 'The Captive':

> Ah! Great was my surprise rely on't,
> When I beheld thy slender form;
> "Is this," me thought, "the mighty giant,
> That battl'd in the *legal* storm!
>
> "And was it she that brav'd the fury,
> Of the ruthless bench and bar,
> And scorn'd the verdict of a jury,
> *Empanell'd* for religious war!"[24]

Despite Wright's popular radical appeal, the nature of her crime and its moral implications polarised press opinion in the metropolis. The *Morning Chronicle* and *The Times* remarked that she and her attendants were 'very respectably dressed'.[25] In the courtroom, Wright described herself as a respectable woman in the 'genteel' occupation of laceworker; a stinging taunt to the aristocracy who were mocked by radicals as the 'useless' classes. Describing a working woman charged with blasphemy as 'respectable' infuriated the conservative *New Times*, which countered with a savage invective against Susannah Wright, aligning her with the most maligned and liminal of the female population – the prostitute.[26] Wright, the columnist sneered, was a 'wretched and shameless woman', an 'abandoned creature' who had 'shunned all the distinctive shame and fear and decency of her sex'.[27] John Stoddart's *New Times* saw itself as the voice of a deeply religious conservatism in which blasphemy was akin to prostitution in terms of the moral outrage and danger it posed, particularly from the mouth of a woman: 'Blasphemy from any lips is shocking, but from those of a female it is beyond expression horrible.'

Not satisfied at excoriating Susannah, Stoddart (or Dr Slop as radicals had dubbed him) broadened his attack to include her female supporters. Women choosing openly to support Wright were left in no doubt that they would be tarnished as the lowest form of 'public woman'.[28] Noting the 'several females' in attendance with Wright at her trial the *New Times* editor ranted:

> this is the first time … that a *body of women* has defied all shame, and trampled upon all decency, in so profligate and daring a manner – in a manner at which the lowest

> prostitutes would shudder! … It is manifest that these female brutes came prepared, not only to applaud what the She-Champion of Impiety had already done; but to hear her load with fresh insults the law of her country and the law of her GOD.[29]

This was not the first time Stoddart had attacked female reformers so voraciously. In 1819, one month before the events at Peterloo, the Blackburn Female Reform Society gained national prominence with their involvement at one of the great reform meetings in Blackburn. The *New Times* compared them to the murderous '*Poissardes* of Paris, those furies in the shape of women' and likened Mrs Alice Kitchen, who addressed the meeting, to a 'hardened and shameless Prostitute'. [30] Affronted by the collective and public response of women to Wright's trial, the vehemence of the *New Times* attack was a stark warning for women who were beginning to find a place in public politics: participation put reputation and moral standing at grave risk.[31] Significantly Wright's supporters – inside and outside the court – included many men but they received no mention in the *New Times* report. The commentary conflated the moral heresy of radicalism firmly with its women.[32]

Faced with Wright's obduracy and her refusal to plead for a lighter sentence, the Judges chose the most feared and detested of London's prisons as punishment. Despite the handiwork of its celebrated City of London architect, the façade of Newgate held no illusion for the London populace: the cruelty, squalor, destitution, filth and disease accumulated in the collective memory over the centuries and earned the prison a loathsome and detested reputation akin to that of the Bastille across the channel. Although some contemporary accounts credit the work of Quaker prison reformers with the almost miraculous transformation of the female prison population, voices from within the prison during the 1820s (few as they are) depict an environment still desperately over-crowded and impoverished.[33]

Just as the conservative press linked Wright firmly with the maligned figure of the prostitute, so too did the authorities when they criminalised her heterodoxy and confined her with the most marginal of the prison population, the female felons. Writing to Jane Carlile shortly after her imprisonment, Susannah recalled how she and her now seven-month-old baby were sent to a 'small and disgustingly filthy' cell in the female felons' ward with five convicted felons of 'the most wretched stamp', two of whom were facing execution for their crimes. With stiflingly overcrowded cells, poor ventilation, and minimal hygiene facilities, it is little wonder that Wright was plunged into 'an atmosphere of the most offensive nature'.[34] An exchange with a turnkey gives an idea of the conditions under which she lived. When Susannah was directed that she and the baby were to sleep on the floor with an 'old blanket and rug … as filthy as the streets and full of holes', she was furious. Wright scoffed at the turnkey's suggestion that there was nothing he could do to improve her situation; for years, he claimed, even 'well-off' women were forced to sleep on the floor in Newgate. Wright retorted that had she been one of them 'I would have excited a rebellion against you'. Given the choice of her original cell, or another with two women as 'filthy' with snuff 'as I never before saw', she reluctantly made her own way back to her first cell. After spending a freezing night with her baby on the damp stone floor, the next morning she took her fight to the prison Keeper who also advised that a bed was 'against the rules'.

Wright pressed on, demanding that she be moved to the prison infirmary where she was aware that 'good beds' existed.[35]

The Keeper insisted that the judges intended Wright to be treated as a felon, but he did defer to the visiting Sheriff with whom Wright successfully negotiated an upgrade to more comfortable lodgings. When she vowed not to 'unfold the object of religion to the prisoners', she gained a sense of her bargaining power within this otherwise powerless space: 'I cannot describe the difference this expression made on their countenances', she wrote.[36] Contagion was an ever-present danger in the unreformed prison, but here was the threat of contamination of a different sort. Prison officials had long feared the spread of radical views of political prisoners within prisons since the 1780 Gordon riots razed Newgate.[37] Radical men were generally housed separately from other prisoners to ensure that their views were contained within prison. Even though prison authorities considered female prisoners already morally destitute, the strength of Wright's character perhaps convinced them that even such depraved women were in need of protection from the 'She-Champion of Impiety'.

Notwithstanding any concessions, the structure of the prison itself worked against Wright and others like her. Newgate's floor-plan allowed for some male prisoners, with the necessary financial means, to be housed in the less crowded 'Masters Side' which had rooms specifically designated for state prisoners. There were no state rooms allocated in the female section of the prison.[38] In the case of Jane and Mary-Ann Carlile the problem had been resolved by housing them in Richard's apartment, but Susannah Wright was on her own in her battle to distance herself both physically and morally from the female felons. Wright's negotiation of her accommodation in Newgate forced a change to the rules to place her on a similar footing to her radical male counterparts.[39] We should not underestimate the significance of this struggle to forge a radical identity and reject the stigma of the female criminal. Wright's challenge to both the spatial and regulatory boundaries of the prison saw her achieve recognition within the prison that often eluded other radical women: prison officials saw Wright first and foremost as a radical; her gender became of secondary significance.

Wright issued further challenges to the prison regime and to her status as a criminal by insisting on special visiting rights rather than those more restrictive rules enforced with the female felons. She also vehemently refused the religious instruction and redemption efforts of the Quaker ladies. These she dismissed as mere entertainment: 'I know you would help me to laugh at them if you were here' she wrote to Jane Carlile.[40] It is not surprising that she reported the Ladies were 'afraid to have anything to say' to her: Wright's most biting insult was to label an opponent 'Christian'.

Despite Susannah securing some comforts in Newgate, the wholesale squalor, closed environment and the daily ritual of standing in an open air yard 'with snow burying her shoes and icy water running into the clogs' left her health severely compromised.[41] The *Morning Chronicle* noted that she returned to court on 6 February 1823 after the end of the ten week sentence 'genteelly dressed' but in 'infirm health'.[42] She nevertheless showed remarkable resolve, for she was determined to 'see the old women of the bench go into hysterics' by continuing to

challenge the very basis of Christianity and its place in the law. She took her battle directly to them, sending copies of her statement to their private residences. The appearance was a short one: once it was clear to the judges that she would not yield by pleading mitigating circumstances, they immediately pronounced sentence. She was ordered to be held in Cold Bath Fields prison for a further 18 months with heavy penalties; a fine of £100 and £200 in sureties for good behaviour – an impossible sum for Susannah and William. Despite her ill-health, she managed to leave the court with a 'laugh of triumph' and a 'contemptuous smile on her countenance'.[43]

Unlike Newgate's ancient presence in the landscape of inner London, Cold Bath Fields was a newer prison, designed with reform intentions of separate and solitary confinement. In consequence, it was sited further away from the centre of London in nearby Clerkenwell. Distance meant supporters, such as the Joneses who had previously visited three or four times a week and often with Susannah's children, now could only visit on the weekend. From her letters published in the *Republican*, it is clear that she regarded the relative geographic isolation from family and friends as a small price to pay: in Cold Bath Fields she was quickly afforded higher standing than the female felons. Unlike other prisoners, she was permitted to receive her female friends within her ward in a 'manner quite satisfactory'. She reported that she was housed in 'the best part' of the prison. Even so, this caused problems when she had to share her ward with those committed for short periods; the 'vagrants and other disorderly persons … unhappy beings, wretchedly filthy and diseased … disease which is attendant upon a want of cleanliness and bad living, or a connection with persons in that state'. Despite all her care, she despaired that she could not keep herself and her infant free from 'that disease'.[44] Carlile reported in the *Republican* that compared to her experience in Newgate, Wright was 'treated with kindness approaching to paternal attention' by the magistrates and by Mr Vicary, the Keeper, his family and the newly appointed matron, Mrs Adkins.[45] Other than the issues of hygiene and space, and the continuing health problems from her stay in Newgate, Wright could claim from Cold Bath Fields that 'prison has no terrors for me'.[46]

Her ability to cross the gender divided walls of the prison to meet with other male radicals imprisoned in Cold Bath Fields also attests to her success in forging a radical identity. Despairing that 'prejudice and ignorance were so fast rooted in the minds of the people', fellow radical prisoner James Watson reassured her that '*perseverance on our part will work wonders*'.[47] Indeed, this contact with James Watson was reminiscent of the radical collectives forged decades earlier in both Newgate and Cold Bath Fields, where many radical men had continued their publishing endeavours and transformed their prisons into virtual colleges that offered unprecedented opportunities for self-improvement.[48]

Improved conditions at Cold Bath Fields did not mean Wright acquiesced quietly in her confinement. She continued to rage against the conduct of the magistrates, mostly religious men, whose 'order is the law, until another comes and contradicts it by some new whim'.[49] Like her radical male counterparts, Wright defied her containment in the private prison space by maintaining a presence in the public eye through letters to radical journals. She also continued trenchant public

assaults against those responsible for her incarceration. In a caustic public letter to Judge Bayley, published in the *Republican,* Wright cursed the 'Christian' Judge and threatened that when justice presided in the country he would 'be a criminal at her bar', if he failed to first follow the suicide of his 'late patron *Castlereagh* and inflict justice on yourself prematurely'.[50] After almost six months in prison, her defiance continued unabated and she concluded her letter: 'Conscious in my opinion that I am right: cheerful in my dungeon's solitude; happy even in my widowhood; proud in being the Christian's victim: smiling on each pang as you inflict them, I remain, Yours, &c. Susanna [sic] Wright'.[51]

Wright might have made the best of her incarceration – politically and personally – but women were particularly vulnerable to the moral scarring of prison and the stigma of criminality at a time when an emerging middling class increasingly equated feminine ideals with passivity, gentleness and childrearing. Jane Carlile remained defiant when she wrote that 'neither me nor my children will ever have occasion to blush at the cause of my incarceration'.[52] Similarly, Susannah Wright gave no hint of concern as to her reputation. Interestingly, none of the accounts of Susannah accuse her of abandoning or disgracing her family, or of failing to fulfill the duties of wife and mother. Even the ultra-conservative *New Times*, so afraid of her monstrous influences on a generation of unsuspecting and unthinking mothers and their infants, passed no judgment on Wright's own role in this respect.

The attempts to question the morality of Susannah, Jane and Mary-Ann provoked a counter-assault from radical supporters. The pages of radical journals such as the *Republican* and *Black Dwarf* assured the women that their actions were seen as both praiseworthy and virtuous. Relief funds were organised all over the country, and financial subscriptions were offered to 'Susannah the Chaste' or to 'the heroine in the cause of Free Discussion',[53] or were accompanied by letters from group leaders such as Alfred Cox of Nottingham, who wrote to Susannah Wright: '… you may assure yourself of the sympathy of every virtuous character as well as the approving testimony of a good conscience, of which no earthly power can deprive you'.[54] Allen Davenport celebrated her moral inspiration in his poem 'The Captive':

> What tho' the Christian bigots blame thee,
> What tho' they frown upon thee still;
> While truth is thine they cannot shame thee,
> Rail and bluster how they will.[55]

Importantly, many women independently offered their support through financial subscriptions, gifts and letters of support. Moreover, the prosecution and martyrdom of some radical women provided an opportunity for a wider circle of women to participate in public debate through that hitherto essentially masculine dominated medium of the printed word. The harsh treatment of Susannah, Jane and Mary-Ann enticed other female radicals out of the private world of the family and provided the platform on which they could join the radical public sphere. Letters of support came in from around the country and were reproduced in the *Republican*

(along with their replies). Subscription lists were printed weekly and featured women's names more prominently than at any other time during the 1820s (and dropped off noticeably after their release).[56] While some subscribers preferred to remain anonymous – 'a female republican' – others listed specific donations against their own name, and that of their daughters, alongside their husband and sons.[57] For Richard Carlile it was glaringly obvious that the three female 'martyrs' had given a 'kind of zest' to the struggle for free expression. Carlile clearly saw Wright and the female support she engendered as a means to mobilise women more widely to join the cause: the transcript of her defence was dedicated to the 'Women of the Island of Great Britain' for 'their example, consideration [and] approbation'.[58]

The financial subscriptions and letters of support confirmed the contribution of these women as equals of men. The radical martyr was becoming a familiar trope in radical literature: correspondence about Susannah, Jane and Mary-Ann showed that women could be radical martyrs as well and that their contribution to the cause was no less valued because of their gender. The three women were toasted at radical meetings throughout Britain along with male heroes such as Thomas Paine. Similarly, when Adam Renwick, a Sheffield silversmith, sent a gift to Richard Carlile in the form of an elegantly fashioned sixteen blade pen knife, he allocated a blade each to Susannah, Jane and Mary-Ann Carlile, forging them into the radical movement as equals alongside the names of radical icons such as Mirabaud, Paine, Volney and Richard Carlile.[59]

On 8 July 1824 Susannah received the news she was no longer a prisoner: she had been released one month early from her 18 month sentence and her fine had been waived. Despite flaunting her apparent comfort with prison life, Wright left prison in a 'dreadful state with the loss of sight in one eye' and a spate of 'nervous disorders'.[60] She virtually disappeared from the radical scene during the winter of 1824–5, and Carlile feared that she had succumbed to the raft of 'disorders' with which she left prison.[61] By the end of 1825, however, Wright had sufficiently recovered in strength to battle with yet another prison Keeper when she was refused entry to Dorchester gaol to visit Richard Carlile. Admonished for arriving at the prison without a letter requesting a visit, she was then denied the use of pen and paper to comply with the Keeper's edict. Like so many before, he underestimated her indomitable spirit. Wright made the arduous trip back to the village to compose the letter and eventually gained entry to see Carlile. At that time, he enthused, she 'so delighted me with the detail of the particulars of her share of the campaign since 1821' that for ten days the radical luminary 'neglected everything to listen to her'.[62]

Ironically, William Wright must continue to be accorded the fate in the historical record that normally falls to the female spouse in a radical family. William and the children were ignored in the public accounts and in private correspondence much as many radical wives and children were.[63] We know little of his involvement in the radical movement, or of his relationship with Susannah. The fact that she was married was even ignored by all the press accounts. We do know that William had a short stint as a radical bookseller in Fleet Street, although his name disappears in publishing circles after 1821. From the accounts of both the

newspapers and reflections of Susannah's closest friends, William was absent from her court proceedings. We know the Wrights had more than the one child who endured Susannah's prison experience with her; perhaps it was William who attended to the day-to-day task of child care. And we know of William's death, eighteen months after Susannah was finally released from prison. The intimate details of their relationship are lost, yet there is a sense that William supported Susannah's radical role, and that the radical community supported him, both by providing him with a home (with the Joneses) during her imprisonment, as well as financially. The Wrights are a reminder that the concept of a radical couple is a hazardous one if it is used to imply a hierarchy of dedication or service.

Noting her liberation in the *Republican,* Richard Carlile praised Wright for her 'enthusiasm, her perseverance, her undauntedness, her coolness' during the 'hottest part' of the radical struggle. He earnestly hoped that she would recover her health and 'some day receive that great reward from the public, to which she is eminently entitled'.[64] He was not alone in the esteem he held for Wright as the woman who had done 'more public good than any other one'. Allen Davenport clearly thought her efforts worthy of a place in history:

> "That captive," said the friendly spirit,
> With pallid cheeks, and tender frame,
> Has won the laurel wreath of merit,
> And purchased everlasting fame.
>
> For not a name in hist'ry's pages,
> Shall be found more fair and bright,
> Which may descend to future ages,
> Than the name of – Susan Wright.[65]

What then explains the relative absence of Susannah Wright from the broader radical literature of the period, and in the historical record? Wright's close association with Richard Carlile goes some way to explaining the dereliction by her contemporaries. Even among those who admired Carlile's struggle for a free press were many who were disgusted by his anti-religious zeal and by the most marginal of his advocacies, birth control. A woman imprisoned for blasphemy, who continued her trenchant attacks upon Christianity and supported Carlile's most extreme tenets was a direct affront to a newly evolving moral code; from which a radical movement struggling for a place in the hegemonic order was not immune.[66] Despite Carlile's 'most anxious wish' to impress on his female readers that 'religion has nothing to do with morality',[67] the extremism of Wright's politics undoubtedly curbed her influence among mainstream radicals, both male and female. While she engendered popular support during her imprisonment, her defenders still lamented: 'Alas! How few of her countrywomen have attained to such an honour, and how very few there are of her own sex, who have even thought her worthy of notice'.[68]

Susannah Wright's fierce public denouncement of Christianity also limited the attention she received even within the pages of papers sympathetic to the radical cause. On the same day that her hometown paper, the *Nottingham Review*, briefly

reported her trial, it publicly supported the work of local Bible Societies to counteract the unpleasant consequences of the infidel press.[69] The limits to the exposure Susannah Wright gained at the time may also help to explain why historians have failed to see her as a significant player in the radical movement. Yet Susannah Wright's independent contribution to extreme postwar radicalism deserves a more prominent place in radical historiography. Her story, and that of her female supporters, advances our growing understanding of women's involvement in the radical public sphere; how they negotiated and operated within the radical movement not only as radical wives and daughters but as women with independent agency. This essay suggests that despite the fewer sources left by radical women from which to elucidate their experience, we can know more about female radicalism in early nineteenth century Britain. We simply have to look harder.

Susannah Wright's prison experience evinced neither reform nor redemption. After William's death, she returned to live with her mother in Nottingham to open the radical bookshop which caused such a furore in August 1826. By mid September, however, she reported to the readers of the *Republican* that she had witnessed a remarkable turnaround in her situation. The riots, death threats and curses had ceased and even some of her most vehement opponents, she claimed, were now enquiring for her publications. In what seems to be her last entry in the public record, Wright jubilantly announced that 'the Victory is ours' for she had succeeded in establishing free discussion in Nottingham; a triumph indeed for the She-Champion of Impiety.

Notes

1 *Republican*, 29 Aug. 1826.
2 *New Times*, 16 Nov. 1822.
3 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London, Penguin, 1968), pp. 802–803.
4 B.B Jones, 'The Peoples' First Struggle for Free Speech and Writing', *The Reasoner*, 5 June 1859, pp. 178–9.
5 Edward Royle, *Radical Politics 1790–1900 – Religion and Unbelief* (London, 1971) pp. 104–105. Apart from Thompson and Royle, historians including James Epstein and Joel Wiener also mention Wright in the story of Richard Carlile but do little to explore her independent contribution to the radical movement.
6 Iain McCalman, 'Females, Feminism and Free Love in an Early Nineteenth Century Radical Movement', *Labour History*, no. 38 (1980), pp. 6–13. Historians who have followed McCalman's lead in documenting radical women have neglected to fully explore Wright's contribution to early nineteenth-century radicalism.
7 Several radical historians have revised Habermas' original theory of the public sphere to include a plebeian or radical public sphere. See Geoff Eley 'Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century' in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, 1992) for his convincing argument for how the public sphere was characterised both by diversity and conflict. See also Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1–10.

8 *Republican*, 23 Aug. 1822.
9 *The Reasoner*, 5 June 1859.
10 *The Reasoner*, 5 June 1859.
11 *Republican*, 15 Mar. 1822.
12 *The Reasoner*, 5 June 1859.
13 For other accounts of radicals using trials and courts as extensions of the public sphere see Gilmartin, *Print Politics*, pp. 139–43; James Epstein, 'Equality and No King': sociability and sedition: the case of John Frost' in *Romantic Sociability, Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770–1840*, eds Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge 2002), pp. 43–61; and Michael T. Davis, 'Prosecution and Radical Discourse during the 1790s: the Case of the Scottish Sedition Trials', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 33, 3 (2005), pp. 148–58.
14 *The Times*, 9 July 1822.
15 This is in contrast to the radical trial of Joseph Gerrald in 1794 where James Epstein argues that Gerrald – a Godwinite and believer in natural rights – was forced by the courtroom environment to couch his defence in terms of of 'our ancient constitution'. See James Epstein, 'Our Real Constitution': Trial Defense and Radical Memory in the Age of Revolution', *In Practice, Studies in the Language and Culture of Popular Politics in Modern Britain* (California, 2003) pp. 59–82.
16 *The Times*, 22 Nov. 1822.
17 Epstein, *In Practice*, p. 111.
18 Ibid., p. 111.
19 There are other examples where women defended themselves in the courts in this period. See the case of Mary Ann Tocker who successfully defended herself in a libel case in Malcolm Thomis and Jennifer Grimmett, *Women in Protest 1800–1850*, (London, 1982), p. 90.
20 *Republican*, 23 Aug. 1822.
21 *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1822.
22 McCalman, 'Females, Feminism and Free Love in an Early Nineteenth Century Radical Movement' (1980), p. 6, note. 31.
23 *Republican*, 20 Sept. 1822.
24 Printed in the *Republican,* 9 Jan. 1824.
25 *The Times*, 15 Nov. 1822; *Morning Chronicle*, 15 Nov. 1822.
26 E.P Thompson first noted the use of the term 'abandoned creature' against Wright which was a 'conventional epithet for prostitutes'. Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 803.
27 *New Times*, 16 Nov. 1822. The quotes which follow originate from the same edition. See also W.H Wickwar, *The Struggle for Freedom of the Press, 1819–32* (London, 1928).
28 Anna Clark, *Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (California, 1995), pp. 140–57. Clark argues that where 'public man' represented a notion of citizenship and civility, 'public women' was a term employed to describe prostitutes, p. 51.
29 *New Times*, 16 Nov. 1822.
30 See James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790–1850*, (Oxford, 1994) pp. 88–9. Such scathing attacks on female reformers helped fuel the loathing of radical publisher and satirist William Hone towards Stoddart. Hone, in collaboration with George Cruikshank, dedicated his immensely successful satire, *The Political House that Jack Built.* Hone dubbed

Stoddart 'Dr. Slop' and the *New Times*, the 'Slop Pail'. In 1820 the pair produced another satire *A Slap at Slop* which ran to four editions. See Edgell Rickword, *Radical Squibs and Loyal Ripostes: Satirical Pamphlets of the Regency Period, 1819–1821*, (Bath, 1971) pp. 9–10; p. 37.

31 Eileen Yeo documents the 'dangerous territory' that faced women entering the political public sphere in the nineteenth century. See her introduction in Eileen Yeo (ed.) *Radical Femininity: Women's Self-representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester, 1998). See also Clark, *Struggle for the Breeches*, pp. 35–7; 51–3.

32 At times radical men were also charged with posing a threat to the morals of the young and unwary. See for example the trial of William Tunbridge in Christina Parolin 'Let us have Truth and Liberty': contesting Britishness and Otherness from the prison cell, London 1820–1826', *Humanities Research*, vol. XIII. No. 1, 2006, p. 71.

33 For a rare account of Newgate from within see the fascinating article by Deidre Palk 'Fit Objects for Mercy': Gender, the Bank of England and Currency Criminals, 1804–1833', *Women's Writing*, 11, 2 (2004), pp. 237–58. Her paper is based on letters from female felons convicted of forgery that requested and received regular pecuniary assistance from their prosecutors, the Bank of England.

34 Letter to Jane Carlile reproduced in the *Republican*, 13 Dec. 1822.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Iain McCalman and Jon Mee, 'The Gordon Riots', Appendix A in Charles Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 662–6.

38 Until the work of prison reformers such as John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, male and female felons mixed freely in Newgate although their sleeping quarters were designated separately on Newgate's architectural plans.

39 For accounts of radical male prisoners see Christina Parolin, 'Let us have Truth and Liberty', 2006, pp. 71–83 and note 49 below.

40 *Republican*, 13 Dec. 1822.

41 *Republican,* 7 Feb. 1823 and 16 July 1824.

42 *Morning Chronicle*, 7 Feb. 1823.

43 *The Times,* 7 Feb. 1823; *Morning Chronicle* 7 Feb. 1823.

44 *Republican*, 11 Apr. 1823.

45 *Republican*, 16 Jul. 1823.

46 *Republican*, 11 Apr. 1823.

47 *Republican*, 18 Sept. 1826.

48 See Iain McCalman, 'Newgate in Revolution: Radical Enthusiasm and Romantic Counterculture', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 22 (1998), pp. 95–110; Michael T. Davis, Iain McCalman and Christina Parolin (eds), *Newgate in Revolution: An Anthology of Radical Prison Literature in the Age of Revolution,* (London, 2005); my forthcoming PhD thesis *Radical Spaces: Architecture, Identity and Popular Politics, 1800–1840*, which explores the prison experience of radicals in Cold Bath Fields and Newgate in the 1820s.

49 *Republican,* 11 Apr. 1823.

50 Lord Castlereagh was detested by radicals for his keen support of Home Secretary Lord Sidmouth's anti-radical legislation. The Cato Street conspirators planned to march the streets with the men's heads on pikes. The radical community viewed his suicide in 1822 as a cause for celebration.

51 *Republican*, 13 June 1823.

52 *Republican*, 10 May 1822.

53 *Republican*, 20 Dec. 1822; 6 Feb. 1824.
54 *Republican*, 23 Aug. 1822.
55 *Republican,* 9 Jan. 1824.
56 McCalman, *Females, Feminism and Free Love*, pp. 7–8.
57 Mary Walker forwarded a subscription from over 60 female reformers from Manchester for Jane and Mary-Ann to 'convince our enemies that we approve of your conduct, and glory in your spirit'. *Republican*, 10 May 1822.
58 *Report of the Trial of Mrs Susannah Wright* (London, 1822).
59 *Republican*, 23 Oct. 1823.
60 *Republican*, 24 Sept. 1825.
61 Ibid. Reports from male radical prisoners in Newgate report her visiting on two occasions shortly after her release from Cold Bath Fields. See *Newgate Monthly Magazine*, 1 October 1824; 1 Nov. 1824.
62 *Republican*, 18 Nov. 1825.
63 See Eileen Yeo, 'Will the Real Mary Lovett Please Stand Up?' Chartism, Gender and Autobiography' in *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J.F.C. Harrison*, ed. Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (Cambridge, 1996) pp. 163–81.
64 *Republican*, 16 July 1824.
65 *Republican*, 9 Jan. 1824.
66 As Eileen Yeo notes, the rising middling classes made religious family life a key factor in their claim to moral superiority. Yeo, *Radical Femininity*, p. 3.
67 *Republican*, 29 Nov. 1822.
68 *Republican*, 30 July 1824.
69 *Nottingham Review*, 22 Nov. 1822. Susannah's close alignment to Carlile also alienated her from many of the prominent radicals with whom Carlile had public disputes, such as William Cobbett and Henry Hunt, and therefore from the other radical journals and pamphlets that recorded the public life of radicals.

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Chapter 12

Betrayal and Exile: A Forgotten Chartist Experience

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In Green Point Cemetery on the outskirts of Cape Town in South Africa the vertical sun beats down on the grave of William Oliver Jones. The man interred beneath the scorched earth of the western Cape had died in 1827 leaving less than 6,000 guilders and a gold watch to his wife and son.[1] It is unlikely that the name on the headstone meant anything to the passer-by, then or now. It is easy to understand why: Jones was an assumed name, taken when its bearer emigrated to the recently established Cape Colony a decade before his death. In 1817 William Jones, or as he had become almost universally known in Britain, William Oliver, had been exposed as the government spy and *agent provocateur* who had, many believed, single-handedly fomented the Pentrich rising on the border between Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire that led to the execution of three of the hapless insurgents and the transportation of thirty others for life.[2] In the climate of fear and repression that increasingly gripped Britain following the Napoleonic wars few individuals were singled out for greater popular animosity than 'Oliver the Spy'. Oliver was the 'prototype of Lucifer', fumed one critic, 'whose distinguishing characteristic is first to tempt and then to destroy'.[3] The whiff of brimstone that still hangs in the air drew on deeply held cultural values and religious beliefs: from Dante who, in 1314, reserved the innermost region of Hell, the circle of treachery, for Judas and others who betrayed friends and benefactors, to Charles Lamb who, using the pseudonym 'Dante' in 1820, salivated on the prospect of the traitors' eternal torment:

> Close by the ever-burning brimstone beds
> Where Bedloe, Oates and Judas, hide their heads,
> I saw great Satan like a sexton stand
> With intolerable spade in hand,
> Digging three graves …
> For Castles, Oliver and Edwards.[4]

After the exposure of his nefarious activities Oliver understandably disappeared. In sub-Saharan Africa he found relative anonymity and a quiet life as a government inspector, far from those whom he duped and who had suffered as a result of his actions.[5] He had escaped his past.

Long before the study of the 'British world' became fashionable Iain McCalman related the story of Oliver's African grave in order to make the point that many Britons lived lives in two hemispheres. What has been called the 'tyranny of distance' did indeed seem to provide many individuals – even the most infamous – with an opportunity to escape their past. As extraordinary as the Oliver-Jones story is it is not unique. George Edwards, whose eternal suffering Lamb also imagined, was relocated to Cape Town after he testified against the Cato Street conspirators in 1820.[6] What of those who betrayed later generations of radicals? Despite the extensive scholarship that has been lavished on Chartism – sufficient to fill two book length bibliographies – betrayal and exile are a largely forgotten Chartist experience.[7] The most celebrated Chartists in Australia were those 'martyrs' who had been transported for their part in leading a Chartist uprising at Newport in Monmouthshire in 1839: John Frost, Zephaniah Williams and William Jones. British Chartists worked hard to ensure that these men were not forgotten; the radical press contained regular (and often apocryphal) reports of their progress – or lack of it – and petitions demanding their repatriation were regularly dispatched to the politicians at Westminster.[8] There were others, however, who, like Oliver, were only too happy to disappear over the horizon of history as soon as the ship carrying them to the antipodes passed out of sight of Dover. The essay which follows uncovers the long hidden tracks of two unrespectable radicals – Chartist 'traitors' – who were relocated to Australia and New Zealand. Their story begins in Lancashire.

On Tuesday morning, 9 August 1842, the streets of Manchester were crowded with thousands of working people – women as well as men – from Manchester, Salford, and many surrounding towns and villages in south east Lancashire. They were in the streets because they were on strike. For more than a week, industrial action, that had begun in the Staffordshire Potteries, had been spreading through the midlands and across the north of England until it finally reached the 'shock city' of the Industrial Revolution where it quickly brought the heart of the nation's cotton industry to a standstill. Arriving by train from London for a national conference that had been planned months before, the Secretary of the National Charter Association, John Campbell, commented to fellow passenger and Chartist, the irascible Tom Cooper, on the scene before them. 'So soon as the City of Long Chimneys came in sight', recalled Cooper, 'and every chimney was beheld smokeless, Campbell's face changed, and with an oath he said, "Not a single mill at work! Something must come out of this, and something serious too!"'[9] Initially the aim of the strikers had been to resist a wage reduction during what was the worst economic depression of the first half of the nineteenth century, but by the time the industrial action had spread to Manchester the demands had been extended to include enactment of the People's Charter – the document that set out six points of democratic political reform and encapsulated the hopes of a generation of working people for a better world.[10]

Among the crowds milling around the tense streets of Manchester were William Griffin and James Cartledge. Griffin had been living in Manchester since September 1840 when he took up the position of regional correspondent for the most important Chartist newspaper, the *Northern Star*. Prior to this move into journalism, he had been a painter by trade in nearby Stockport. An active trade

unionist, he had come to prominence there as Secretary of the local Working Men's Association. His move into the 'trade of agitation' was, as in so many other cases, a matter about which he was given little choice. As one prominent Manchester Chartist put it, Griffin 'was very much persecuted for his principles'.[11] After his appointment to the *Star* Griffin rose rapidly in the Chartist ranks and became a target for local opponents of radical reform. According to the editor of a rival newspaper, the *Manchester Times*, for example, Griffin was nothing less than a man who 'manufactures falsehoods to obtain a paltry existence'; another political opponent was even more condemnatory describing him as the 'biggest liar that ever put pen to paper'.[12]

In addition to his journalistic activities, Griffin fulfilled many lecturing engagements during 1840–1. If not extreme his views were strident. Reflecting on the performance of the Whig Government for an audience in Tib Street, Manchester, in May 1841, for example, he could find nothing but harsh words. The indictment was a familiar one: the government had 'forced upon the people the infernal New Poor Law' and established 'bodies of rural police'; they had created a ponderous National debt and increased the burden of taxation on the working classes; emancipated black slaves while ignoring the plight of 'white slaves' at home; 'coerced Ireland and slain the Canadians'; and, squandered public funds on the aristocracy and the monarchy – 'a German woman' and a 'German pauper'. In sum, the Whigs had 'brought the country to a most wretched condition'.[13] Those who had opposed the government by demanding their rights – 'which truth, reason, and the laws of God and nature entitle them to' – or joined trade unions to protect their wages and conditions had been persecuted: 'they had transported the Dorchester labourers and the Glasgow cotton-spinners' and imprisoned more than 400 Chartists – 'our industrious countrymen' – for 'telling the truth'. Rising to his task Griffin devoted his peroration to a condemnation of the treatment of Chartist prisoners. The Whigs, he railed, 'deserve the contempt of every true lover of his species for their recent base, unprincipled, flagitious, unconstitutional, decency-defying, hypocritical, meanly, cruel, sneakingly malicious, spitefully revengeful and waspishly venomous treatment of Feargus O'Connor, O'Brien and the rest of the incarcerated Chartists, and for kidnapping and banishing Frost, Williams and Jones.'[14] As an abstainer for 'upwards of six years', Griffin was best known for his lectures on the benefits of teetotalism. 'Drunkenness', he insisted in October 1840, 'was one of the greatest evils of this country'. 'Although the working classes were oppressed very severely by Government', he continued, 'there were thousands who oppressed themselves'.[15] In February 1841, Griffin appended his name to the well known Address issued by a number of Chartists based in London that called on Chartists to take the pledge,[16] but like many others in the Chartist majority who supported the leadership of Feargus O'Connor, his commitment to moral improvement did not translate into support for a qualification to the suffrage.

During June 1842 Griffin became Secretary to the committee charged with erecting a monument in honour of a leader of the previous generation of radicals, 'Orator' Henry Hunt.[17] At this time he was also nominated to the General Council of the National Charter Association, an organisation that is often cited as the first nation-wide 'party' of the working class in British political history.[18] Griffin's nomination had come from the local painters branch of the Association, emphasising his

continuing strong links to his former trade on the eve of the strike. In mid-1842, however, for reasons that are not entirely clear, Griffin lost his position with the *Northern Star*, and he publicly indicated his intention to leave Manchester, and probably the country, after the inauguration of the Hunt Monument during the planned National Conference in August.[19]

Originally hailing from the Potteries in the English midlands, by the early 1840s James Cartledge had resided in Manchester for about twenty years. During that time he had worked in a factory, as a 'Methodist' preacher, a school master, as purveyor and Secretary of the Hulme and Brown Street Chartist co-operatives, and as a Chartist lecturer. In 1843 he was described as a one-armed man, possibly the result of a factory accident.[20] Cartledge was first mentioned in the Chartist press early in 1840 as a member of the Brown Street branch of the Chartist Association and in October of that year became their representative at South Lancashire Delegate meetings.[21] By this time he had earned a reputation as a 'zealous and sincere' advocate, a standing reflected in his election as Secretary of the South Lancashire Chartist Council, and his nomination as a candidate for the NCA Executive in late 1840. Although unsuccessful in the nationwide election in June 1841 (he received 499 votes) Cartledge had been included among Feargus O'Connor's 'old list' of trusted local leaders that was published in the *Star* earlier in the year. At this time he was also nominated by the Brown Street branch to the NCA General Council and he had become a regular performer on the Lancashire lecture circuit.[22] Understandably Cartledge had quickly come to the attention of the local authorities and they did not like what they saw. Following a formal interview in December 1840, Sir Charles Shaw, Head of the Manchester Police, reported to the Home Office that Cartledge was 'as bad [a] character as [is] to be found any where'.[23]

Cartledge's radical outlook contained many familiar elements. He was an advocate of the 'productive powers of the land', a vehement opponent of the standing army, and a staunch teetotaller, also appending his name to the London Chartist declaration that urged Chartists to take the pledge.[24] Early in 1842 he outlined his views on the management of the economy in two public letters to the Tory Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. Proudly describing himself as a 'working man' Cartledge lambasted Peel for introducing an income tax and for modifying, rather than repealing, the corn laws that buttressed the wealth and power of the land owning aristocracy and kept the price of the people's bread high. These policies, predicted Cartledge, would 'starve thousands and send them to premature graves'. Not surprisingly, he believed that the problem stemmed from the fact that working men were not represented in the House of Commons. 'Many have been the legislative enactments passed by the representatives of the *idle drones* of society', he wrote, 'for the purpose of plundering the industrious producer of the just share of his produce'.[25] Cartledge was careful to exclude the middle classes from the ranks of the productive classes, a distinction that was characteristic of the abrasive class consciousness of many Chartists. 'Being a working man', he told Sir Robert, 'I have long ceased to expect any thing of real advantage to the working classes from a Parliament representing only landholders, fundholders, Government functionaries, pensioners, lawyers, doctors, parsons, merchants, manufacturers,

shopkeepers, and all the nonproducing schemers in society'.[26] At the same time Cartledge was astute enough to recognise that taxing income and tinkering with the corn laws would win Peel few friends in his own party and he concluded his first epistle by humorously entreating the Prime Minister to embrace the six points and join the National Charter Association.[27]

For reasons that are unclear, in July 1842 Cartledge resigned as South Lancashire Secretary to return to the Potteries, but he was back in Manchester a month later to attend the national conference that took place at the height of the Plug Plot disturbances. The timing of the conference was both propitious and disastrous for William Griffin and James Cartledge. As noted, Cartledge was present as a delegate (representing Mossley in Cheshire), and Griffin attended the proceedings as a free lance reporter and in his capacity as Secretary of the Hunt Monument Committee. Not surprisingly the Chartist leaders were soon drawn into the strike taking place all around them. On 16 August they issued a public address that sought to harness the wave of popular energy that had been unleashed and consolidate the political agenda of the strike. Apocalyptic language was the order of the day: [28]

> we have solemnly sworn, and one and all declared, that the golden opportunity now within our grasp shall not pass away fruitless, that the chance of centuries, afforded to us by a wise and all seeing God, shall not be lost; but that we do now universally resolve never to resume labour until labour's grievances are destroyed, and protection secured for ourselves, our suffering wives, and helpless children, by the enactment of the People's Charter.

The Address caused a frisson of alarm among the political classes not only by daring the authorities to act but also by seeking to spread the outbreak throughout Britain: 'All Officers of the Association are called upon to assist in the peaceful extension of the Movement … Strengthen our hands at this crisis. Support your leaders. Rally round our sacred cause, and leave the decision to the God of Justice and of Battle'.[29] Cartledge delivered the text of the fateful Address to a local Manchester printer (it was later alleged that it was written in his hand).[30]

The response of the authorities was swift and decisive. Over the coming days and weeks many Chartists, including Cartledge and Griffin, were arrested on various charges of sedition, conspiracy, tumult and riot. In the months that followed, under undoubted pressure, both Griffin and Cartledge were induced to 'betray' their 'old friends and companions to the minions of tyranny'.[31] The decision provoked a torrent of vitriolic abuse. Griffin was a 'wretched CAITIFF', a 'VILE MISCREANT', 'A BRAGGART TRAITOR' and a 'base and treacherous scoundrel'.[32] It also touched a raw nerve in a movement whose members routinely skated close to the edge of sedition. 'If on earth there be a name more hated than another', fumed Bronterre O'Brien, a leading Chartist, 'it is the name of a TRAITOR. A spy is as bad as a devil; but a TRAITOR is a bishop of devils'.[33] The Manchester correspondent of Bronterre's Chartist newspaper speculated that Griffin would be 'comfortably quartered' on the public purse for his treachery[34] and, given the rash of death threats against him, he understandably disappeared after the completion of the state trials in March 1843. He was 33 years old when he vanished; he was married with a child that had died during 1841–2.[35] When it became clear that he planned to corroborate Griffin's testimony

Cartledge was also denounced as a 'traitor' and a 'Government pal'. His name has been ignored by Chartist historians with the exception of R.G. Gammage in whose index he is immortalised as 'informer'. He was aged 33 and married with two children when he disappeared.[36]

Why did they do it? The possible motives for their perfidiousness are many: from cowardice to vindictiveness; from moral turpitude to self-preservation; from a desire for personal gain to a sense of higher loyalty to a cause betrayed by others.[37] The evidence is patchy. We know that Griffin had lost his position with the *Star* and that Cartledge's steady rise through the Chartist ranks had also been recently disrupted and that both men were facing severe financial hardship, but this seems insufficient reason to betray friends and comrades.[38] Moreover, betrayal involved many risks in a political culture where ritual violence and retribution were not uncommon. Both men had loved ones to protect, but so did many others facing the same charges who did not agree to give Queen's evidence. During the trial it was clear that both men had been well looked after since they had become assets of the crown and the defence worked hard to generate the impression that their testimony had been purchased by fancy suits of cloths, hunting and fishing trips in Ireland and first class train travel at public expense.[39] In court it emerged that Griffin had been the first to agree to testify and that he subsequently visited Cartledge, his 'intimate friend', to urge him to think 'proper' and 'go into the witness box, instead of the dock'.[40] Cartledge insisted that he had rejected all inducements until it became clear that he was already being branded as a traitor (and his wife insulted) by the Manchester Chartists, although he later admitted under cross-examination that these same Chartists had collected money to send his wife to visit him in Chester Castle.[41] In searching for motive it is also possible that Griffin and Cartledge acted to protect the movement, agreeing with Shakespeare's Enobarbus that the 'loyalty well held to fools does make / Our faith mere folly.'[42] Certainly there were many Chartists who believed that their cause was being betrayed by the leadership of O'Connor, but neither Griffin nor Cartledge had given any indication that they dissented from the policies that he articulated on behalf of the Chartist majority; on the contrary. Finally, if we turn to psychoanalytic studies of politics we find that, as a child, the 'traitor' had 'drastically split loyalties between parents', but we do not have the evidence with which to explore this hypothesis.[43] The answer to the question of motive must remain beyond the historian's grasp. What we can say with certainty is that there is no evidence that prior to their arrests either Griffin or Cartledge were anything other than sincere and committed radicals.

This much of the story of William Griffin and James Cartledge I had recorded when I wrote about the Manchester Chartists a decade ago; in fact at that time I went on to speculate that after giving evidence Griffin probably went to America, where he had earlier sought to go, or to Ireland where he had been hidden by the authorities before testifying. Cartledge, I suggested, appeared to have resided unmolested in Upper Hanley in the Potteries.[44] This speculation then was wrong on both counts. James Cartledge was relocated to Van Diemen's Land in 1844; William Griffin was relocated to New Zealand settling in Auckland in the same year. To complete their story we must follow them to the ends of the earth.

Together with wife, Margaret, two infant children, and his brother, John, James Cartledge travelled to Hobart Town on the *London* arriving in July 1844. Born in Ulster, Margaret was the daughter of a well-known Manchester Chartist, bricklayer-cum-lecturer, William Shearer.[45] Undoubtedly she too suffered the trauma of separation from family and community and the ignominy of exile. On the voyage Cartledge was employed as the Captain's secretary, and after their arrival, he was given a government post, undoubtedly in accordance with the 'deal' that he had struck in Lancaster. The position Cartledge was given, however, had the appearance of a cruel joke: he was made Superintendent of the Launceston Treadmill. The terrible irony of his new avocation would no doubt have been keenly felt. Little is known about his period as a prison official, but he is credited, according to an unpublished family account, with putting an end to flogging during his time in office.[46] Chartists had been treated to harrowing accounts of flogging in Van Diemen's Land by the likes of William Ashton, a veteran radical who returned to his native Barnsley in 1838, after seven years in Tasmania. 'I have seen …', recalled Ashton in a best-selling pamphlet published in 1838, 'the pools of blood between the stones, and the flesh flying from the end of the lashes into the air'.[47] Cartledge would have undoubtedly been familiar with this account of the horrors of transportation. Not surprisingly, he left government service after a relatively short time, and thereafter he and his brother got involved in various business ventures. During this time he also studied to become a master mariner.

The move to Launceston on the north coast of the colony was serendipitous. By 1851 the Cartledges had become well established in their new home in the Tamar Valley. They had three more children; they owned a comfortable home; and the brothers co-leased a small timber mill at Supply River. At this time James and John also built and registered an 18 ton schooner, the *Cousins*, to transport produce to and from their mill. In 1852, however, John and his family removed to Melbourne with a view to trying their luck on the Victorian goldfields. The lure of gold can not be underestimated. In raw numbers gold produced mass immigration that saw the population of the Australian colonies jump from just 400,000 in 1850 to over 1.1 million a decade later, as well as significant internal migration. In the early 1850s tales of the fabulous wealth from the goldfields that were opening up in New South Wales and Victoria had become a constant refrain in the British press and radicals were by no means immune to its attractions. Writing in his eponymous London newspaper, G.M.W. Reynolds, for example, suggested that Australia now held out the prospect of realising a key Chartist aspiration: independence. 'The industrious working man', he mused, 'could, [in] Australia, soon become an independent person'. Although he did not know it, Reynolds might have offered James Cartledge as an example.[48]

In 1854 James, Margaret and their children followed John to Melbourne, not to dig for gold (probably due to his earlier industrial accident), but to establish a building supplies business there. After two years, however, they returned to Tasmania, settling in Torquay in the East Devonport district on the north coast of the island.[49] After his return Cartledge began school teaching again, opening a school in Torquay, as well as operating a local store. He also retained his interest in shipping and by 1861 he owned two ships, the *Cousins*, and the *Tamar Maid*,

which were engaged in transporting timber from Tasmania to Victoria. Later generations of the Cartledge family continued to run this shipping business successfully until the 1890s (when the vessels were sold to the well-known White Star line).[50] As his wealth grew Cartledge's business interests diversified. During the 1860s and 70s he and his brother were involved in a mining company, a woollen mill, and building investment company. James Cartledge died in 1877 as the patriarch of an extensive and successful colonial family.[51]

Apart from underscoring the fact that Chartist lives were often rich, diverse and unexpected what can be said about Cartledege's transformation from Chartist traitor to colonial capitalist? According to an unpublished family history, James was not involved in politics in Tasmania. Two points need to be made about this claim. Firstly, Cartledge, like many other former Chartists, did not need to agitate for political rights in his new home because he already enjoyed them. By the 1860s the provisions of the more liberal constitutions of the self-governing colonies conferred on many Australian colonists the political rights still denied to the working class in Britain.[52] Long before this, however, prosperity had enfranchised many, like Cartledge, who would have remained outside the formal political nation at home.[53] Secondly, the point must be made that Cartledge continued to be active in the social and cultural life of his community in ways that Chartists would have regarded as part and parcel of the micro-politics of everyday life. In 1857 he was on the committee that built the first Wesleyan Church in Torquay and he is still regarded as a foundation member of that congregation.[54] Both he and his brother were active in the Australia Felix Tent of the International Order of Rechabites and the Launceston Teetotal Society. James and John were life long total abstainers; both brothers had been involved with the Rechabites and teetotal Chartism in Manchester.[55] Both brothers were also involved in the establishment of the first Permanent Building Society in Tasmania. They were by no means the only ex-Chartists involved in building societies.[56] In fact, many post-Chartist careers in Britain would have followed a similar pattern of activity.

After arriving in Auckland, William Griffin lived quietly, having returned to his trade, working as a painter and glazier, and, in 1849, he married Elizabeth Wallace in St Patrick's Church.[57] By this time Griffin had also begun to re-establish the political career that he had left in shreds in a court room in Lancaster. In 1851 he helped to found the Auckland Building Operatives' Society which began a campaign for shorter working hours, and at about the same time, he became a founding member of a working men's freehold land company, known as the Auckland Land Company.[58] For Chartists Auckland was a veritable paradise – its franchise, both under the Charter of Incorporation of 1851 and, to a lesser extent, the Constitution of 1852 – providing an opportunity to put their principles into practice. Under the auspices of the Operatives' Society, Griffin organised public meetings to select working class candidates for election to the municipal authorities.[59] The continuities with the agenda of Chartism in the 1840s and 50s are striking. Notwithstanding the fact that he had removed to the other side of the globe, Griffin's activities could just have easily been pursued by any Chartist in Britain. During the 1840s many Chartists were simultaneously involved in the

increasingly vocal campaigns for shorter working hours, in various schemes for rural resettlement (both Chartist and non-Chartist), and in municipal politics.

In 1851 Griffin also returned to journalism, commencing a fortnightly newspaper entitled the *Auckland Independent and Operatives' Journal.*[60] This was a thoroughly Chartist newspaper in both content and tone. It columns contained a range of articles that might have appeared in any British equivalent: from defences of trade unions and poetry extolling the virtues of education, to reports on the activities of friendly societies and co-operatives and encomiums on Mechanics Institutes. Griffin's editorials outlined a British radical agenda adapted to a colonial situation. 'The extension of the franchise has always been the greatest bugbear to all who wish to foster and uphold class legislation', he insisted, but in the colonies responsible government was equally important. The 'present system', he predicted in July 1851, 'will, in a short time, be treated as a matter of history – not only here, but in every other Colony where it obtains'.[61] Notwithstanding the fact that Griffin had a past to conceal he clearly saw his audience as the British world at large, boasting of the circulation of his newspaper in the 'neighbouring Colonies, and in England, Scotland and Ireland', and regarding it as part of his mission to encourage migration. He sought to accomplish this largely through a series of articles describing Auckland when he arrived in 1844 and comparing it to the present day. This was a story worth telling. In 1844 wages were depressed and unemployment high; many skilled tradesman were reduced to 'drudgery' – 'a plasterer, a stonemason and a printer using the spade as labourers; a tailor salting pork for the coast; and a painter [Griffin himself?], sorting [Kauri] gum for three shilling a day'.[62] By 1851 things had improved dramatically. 'We know some who worked early and late', he wrote, 'who could live without work now, having sufficient income from rents to keep them'. Similarly, many 'who were journeymen, have now become employers, with a half-a-dozen to a dozen workers under them'. Even those 'who have not been so very successful, but still have been able to purchase a piece of freehold property, by which they have secured a home for themselves for life, and some portion of their family after them'.[63] Here was a vision that Griffin knew would have been enormously seductive to his former colleagues working in the dark, Satanic mills of Lancashire, and he looked forward to the day when the future prosperity of New Zealand would be secured by the immigration of 'our millions of surplus population of Great Britain'.[64]

Griffin was not the only Chartist to see in his adopted home the opportunity to create a better Britain; in 1855 another former Chartist wrote to a leading London Chartist newspaper, *Reynolds' News*, to paint such a glowing picture that he concluded by suggesting that New Zealand was 'the reverse of Old England': 'Here we have no beggars', he reported, 'there you are all beggars – that is the working classes, for the best of them have to beg for work. Here the master has to beg for the workmen'.[65] Perhaps the best known Chartist to emigrate to New Zealand, George Binns, wrote home from Nelson, that we, by which he meant New Zealanders, 'have energy and enterprise, hope and strength, an uncultivated country and splendid climate; our wants are few; our living simple and rational; we are not borne down by state debts and heavy taxes …. Our course is onward'.[66]

Griffin also continued to agitate for shorter working hours taking a leading role in the campaign that led to the introduction of an eight hour day in Auckland in September 1851.[67] During the 1850s Griffin continued to promote working class candidates for public office, and in 1857 he was himself elected, serving on the Auckland Provincial Council for four years from 1857 to 1861. His election highlights a fundamental difference between colonial variants of radicalism and their British antecedents: power, potential and actual. He was not the only expatriate Chartist to make a relatively quick and easy transition from agitator to legislator. Henry Parkes – Chartist in 1838, colonial parliamentarian in 1854, Cabinet Minister in 1866, Premier of New South Wales in 1872 – is only the most obvious example. There were many others.[68]

As a member of the Council, Griffin pursued a familiar agenda. Within a month of taking his seat, for example, he was one of the leading promoters of an unsuccessful attempt to introduce an unmet Chartist demand, Payment of Members, for Council members.[69] During his four years in provincial government Griffin was most vocal in relation to two issues. The first was teetotalism. In January 1858 he tabled a lengthy notice of motion in relation to the Licensed Victuallers' Bill then before the Council. Alcohol was ubiquitous in colonial New Zealand (and Australia): around the time that Griffin moved his motion one in eight residents of Auckland were arrested for drunkenness while on the south island the 15,000 residents of Canterbury 'maintained half-a-dozen breweries, besides importing over three gallons of spirits, seven gallons of beer and nearly two gallons of wine per person'.[70] According to Griffin, drink exacted both an individual and a social cost. 'The following are only a few of the evils directly springing from this baneful source', he told his fellow Councillors: 'Destruction of health', 'disease in every form and shape', 'premature decrepitude', 'stunted growth', 'delirium tremens', 'Destruction of mental capacity and vigour', 'Extinction of all moral and religious principle, disregard of truth, indifference in education, violation of chastity, insensitivity to shame, and indescribable degradation'. Moreover, 'in a national or colonial point of view', Griffin continued, 'as affecting the wealth, resources, strength, honour, and prosperity of the country, the consequences of intoxication and intemperate habits among the people are as destructive to the general welfare of the community as they are fatal to the happiness of individuals'. 'Among others', he continued, 'the following evils may be distinctly traced': 'The destruction of an immense amount of wholesome and nutritious grain' as well as the 'loss of productive labour in every department of occupation'.[71]

Like most Chartists social class was never far from the centre of his thinking. The 'upper classes of society', Griffin insisted, had encouraged 'habits of intoxication' by example, particularly in relation to the rites of passage such as baptisms, marriages, funerals, holidays and other festivities and entertainments.[72] To those familiar with the arguments of British temperance campaigners, including the teetotal Chartists, this case put before the Auckland Provincial Assembly will be immediately recognisable; in fact the terms of the argument are almost identical to those used by Griffin in his Chartist lectures nearly two decades earlier.[73]

Given his Chartist past, it is no surprise that access to land was the other issue that Griffin enthusiastically took up in the Council. In his recent history of democracy in Australia, John Hirst has argued that settlers were more interested in land than democracy,[74] but this is to miss the centrality of the land in the Chartist mentality. Chartist Land Associations were first mooted in 1840, reflecting the widespread adherence to a vision of a society based on agricultural small-holdings among the urban working people who made up the core of the movement. In 1845 the Chartist Land Company was formed with the aim of resettling Chartists on small farms and over the next three years about 70,000 Chartists contributed hard earned money in an attempt to turn this dream into reality. At the very time that the Land Company was crumbling under the weight of financial and legal difficulties the colonies of settlement emerged as a place where the passion for the land could be easily translated into a vision of independent yeomanry democracy. 'When a man can look around him on his eighty acre Australian farm, where his own industry has made the vine and orange grow luxuriantly … and can say, in the midst of peace and plenty, "This is my own", mused John Dunmore Lang, a leading New South Wales radical, in an article for a London radical newspaper, 'he does not need to envy the half-starved myriads at home, who can only say "This is my native land"'.[75] Speaking of the soil, the well-known Chartist poet, Gerald Massey, who visited Australia in the 1880s, suggested that, 'if you tickled it with a hoe, it would laugh out with a harvest'.[76] For Griffin agriculture was the first great step to independence for both the individual and the nation.[77] No Chartist promoter of the Land Plan could have put it better.

For different reasons, however, migrants to both New Zealand and the Australian colonies found that their expectations in relation to the land were not so easily fulfilled. As one correspondent wrote home from Melbourne in disappointment, the 'lands are locked, and the working man can only obtain a small portion through the land jobber'. The last national leader of the Chartists, Ernest Jones, also took up the theme in 1855: what have Victorian workers got for 'the enormous sum of money' they paid in taxation, he wondered: 'He cannot get a yard of land for the sustenance of his family, for the government and its supporters have divided all the land amongst themselves'. Another expatriate Chartist wrote to the London radical journal, the *Leader*, at this time to report that at every meeting he had attended in the colony, 'the land question turns up in some shape or other': 'from what I have observed of the working classes in this country, I think they will never let that question rest till the lands are unlocked'.[78] In New Zealand substantial quantities of land were still in the possession of the Maori and the pressure on the colonial authorities was invariably to obtain more land leading to, among other things, the bloody Maori wars of the 1860s. On Council Griffin was primarily concerned to ensure that the land already in possession of the crown was made accessible to operatives, and that the small farmer had free access to what was called the 'Waste Land of the Crown'.[79]

In 1851 Griffin had warned readers of his *Operative Journal* of the dangers of 'gold fever', but when gold was discovered in Thames on the Coromandel peninsula of New Zealand's north island in 1867 he succumbed himself, becoming a miner at age fifty-seven. His decision had been forced to a large extent by a lack

of work as a painter in Auckland.[80] Griffin apparently had little success at mining, but he reputedly took an active part in various agitations for better working conditions on the gold fields. Not surprisingly he became ill in Thames and died in 1870 at the age of 60. In 1890 the Auckland Operative House Painters Union launched a fund to erect a memorial over his grave. He is venerated as a pioneer of the New Zealand labour movement.[81]

In 1963 Asa Briggs suggested to a conference of labour historians that what he called 'detective chases after Chartists down under' were unlikely to be fruitful.[82] The cases of William Griffin and James Cartledge show that Briggs was wrong. The two parts of the lives of William Griffin and James Cartledge have remained discrete for over a century and it is only by chance that I have been able to put them back together. Although their stories are exceptional by any standards, their basic pattern is not uncommon. By 1861 there were over 650,000 residents of New Zealand and the Australian colonies – free settlers, transportees as well as a sprinkling of traitors – who had been born in Great Britain or Ireland. Among them were many former Chartists, particularly following the collapse of Chartism as a mass movement during the early 1850s. Chartism was one of Britain's most successful, if unheralded, exports. A recognition of this globalisation from below underscores the need for a transnational approach to nineteenth century labour history. The study of those who benefited from what is nowadays called a witness relocation program, however, allows us to focus, by way of conclusion, on one further critical issue to the study of the British world: the nexus between anonymity, distance and luck.

Why were these men never recognised or denounced? Cartledge and Griffin had been peripatetic lecturers in the service of the movement ensuring that their faces would have been known to many. Surely it is not credible to argue that in each case a traitor's luck held for up to half a century; that no-one on the dusty streets of Auckland or Launceston ever recognised an infamous face? Unlike Oliver and Edwards, neither Griffin nor Cartledge even bothered to change their name and both became prominent citizens in their new home. Surely, there was someone in Australia or New Zealand who could associate their name with their past ignominy? If Griffin or Cartledge had been recognised it is difficult to accept that it would not have left a mark on the public record. While ritual violence, as part of the demotic political culture in Britain, might have been increasingly uncommon by the Chartist years, psychological violence – exposing enemies of the people to public ridicule and other forms of discomfiture – were still commonplace.[83] When 'lying Tom Powell', whose testimony ensured the conviction of the 1848 'conspirators' in London, was identified in Adelaide in the colony of South Australia, there was an outcry at both ends of the British world. In the *South Australian Register* Powell's fellow colonists were urged to avoid him with alacrity; in the *Friend of the People*, a London radical journal, George Julian Harney was horrified to learn that 'the scoundrel Powell' had resurfaced and lamented that the law would prevent 'an honest man' from 'putting such a reptile past the power of further mischief'.[84] Other evidence also suggests that the tyranny of distance was easily crossed. In 1859 in the Union Hotel in Bourke Street, Melbourne's busiest thoroughfare, H.R. Nicholls, for example, bumped into a

former member of his old Chartist branch in Hoxton who he had not seen for a decade.[85] Similarly, Owen Suffolk, a small-time habitual criminal transported in 1847 for fraud and theft by deception, had successive attempts at a fresh start in Victoria and New South Wales ruined because he was exposed as a 'Pentonvillian'. He could not escape what he called the 'shadow of my old crimes'.[86]

Another explanation is called for: the luck of the traitor will not suffice. Perhaps Cartledge and Griffin were recognised after all but their past offences were overlooked thanks to what we might call convenient colonial amnesia. Many former Chartists prospered in the 'better Britains' of the southern seas and exposing a traitor might have involved unwanted and unnecessary disruption for accuser as well as accused. The colonies were a place where many people sought a new beginning and it would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of forgetting in this process. Early in the 1810s Lachlan Macquarie, the Governor of New South Wales, had taken the controversial and highly symbolic step of inviting successful ex-convicts – emancipists – to his dining table, into government service and into colonial society, but the 'shame of Botany Bay' persisted and reputation and respectability remained fragile and contested.[87] After the final end of transportation in 1868 migrants had the luxury of regarding the 'convict stain' as, to use David Dunstan's words, 'being located mainly on other persons' garments',[88] but prior to this the ability to let sleeping dogs lie was a valuable attribute. In this sense, perhaps Griffin and Cartledge were doubly fortunate after all: they enjoyed a second chance at the expense of others among people disposed to forget if not forgive.

Notes

1 See M. Chase, 'Richards, W.J', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), XLVI: 792–3.

2 Ibid. See also M. Thomis and P. Holt, *Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789–1848* (Hamden, 1977), pp. 43–61; A.F. Fremantle, 'The Truth About Oliver the Spy', *English Historical Review*, 47 (1932), pp. 601–16.

3 Extract from Baines' *Leeds Mercury* in E. Baines, *The Life of Edward Baines* (London, 1851), p. 94. See also S. Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical and Early Days* (London, n.d), pp. 137–8.

4 See Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Modern Library Edition (New York, 1950), Canto 34. Lamb's poem was published in the radical journal, the *Champion* in 1820. See E. and R. Frow, *Radical and Red Poets and Poetry* (Salford, 1994), pp. 40–41.

5 Chase reports that Oliver was 'implicated in fraud and other misdemeanours' in the Cape Colony. Whether he was associated with his previous activities is not clear.

6 Edwards lived quietly in Green Point until his death in 1843. See R.M. Healey, 'Edwards, George', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, XVII: 925.

7 Notable exceptions are two linked articles by John Belchem on Thomas Powell, 'The Spy-System in 1848: Chartist and Informers – An Australian Connection', *Labour History* [Australia], 39 (1980), pp. 15–27; 'The Nemesis of Thomas Powell', *Labour*

History [Australia], 43 (1982), pp. 83–9. See also F.C. Mather, *Public Order in the Age of the Chartists* (Manchester, 1959), chapter 6. The term 'tyranny of distance' is taken from the title of the well known book by Geoffrey Blainey published in 1966.

8 See *Reports of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Public Petitions*, (1840), CXVI: 1023–1029; (1841), CXXIV: 847–52; (1844), CXLII: 922. For reports on Frost, Williams and Jones see *inter alia* J.P. Townsend, *Rambles and Observations in New South Wales* (London, 1849), pp. 242–3; *English Chartist Circular*, vol. 2, 83 [1842], pp. 123–4; *People's Paper*, 12 May 1855; *Reynolds' News*, 2 November 1856; *South Wales Daily News*, 28 April 1877. For discussion of transported Chartists see G. Rude, *Protest and Punishment* (Oxford, 1978); R. Fyson, 'The Transported Chartist: The Case of William Ellis', in O. Ashton, R. Fyson and S. Roberts (eds), *The Chartist Legacy* (Rendlesham, 1999), pp. 80–101; J. Humphries, *The Man From the Alamo* (St Athan, 2004).

9 T. Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Cooper* (1872; rpt. Leicester 1971), p. 206.

10 See M. Jenkins, *The General Strike of 1842* (London, 1980); F.C. Mather, 'The General Strike of 1842: A Study in Leadership, Organisation and the Threat of Revolution during the Plug Plot Disturbances', in R. Qunault and J. Stevenson (eds), *Popular Protest and Public Order* (New York, 1975), pp. 115–40.

11 *Northern Star*, 12 Sept. 1840. See also P.A. Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 195; P.A. Pickering, 'Chartism and the Trade of Agitation in Early Victorian Britain', *History*, 76 (1991), pp. 221–37.

12 *Manchester Times*, 12 June 1841; *Northern Star*, 30 Oct. 1841.

13 *Northern Star*, 29 May 1841.

14 *Northern Star*, 29 May 1841.

15 *Northern Star*, 24 Oct. 1840.

16 *Northern Star*, 6 Feb. 1841.

17 *Northern Star*, 18 June 1842.

18 *Northern Star*, 30 July 1842. For the National Charter Association see: F. Engels, 'A Working Man's Party' (1881), in K. Marx & F. Engles, *Articles on Britain* (Moscow, 1978), p. 376; R. Groves, *But We Shall Rise Again: A Narrative History of Chartism* (London, 1938), pp. 115–16; J. Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom* (London, 1982), p. 220f.

19 *Northern Star*, 30 July 1842; *The Trial of Feargus O'Connor and Fifty-Eight Others on a Charge of Sedition, Conspiracy Tumult and Riot* (1843; rpt. New York, 1970), p. 133.

20 See Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists*, pp. 190–91.

21 *Northern Star*, 18 April 1840; 17 Oct. 1840.

22 *Northern Star*, 19 Nov. 1840; 21 Nov. 1840; 10 April 1841; 24 April 1841; 5 June 1841; HO 45/46 Chartist Plan of Lecturers for South Lancashire.

23 HO 40/45 fol. 889, Shaw to Phillips, 20 Dec. 1840.

24 *Northern Star*, 19 Dec. 1840; 26 Dec. 1840; 16 Jan. 1841; 17 April 1841; 16 July 1842.

25 *British Statesman*, 15 May 1842. See also *English Chartist Circular*, vol. 2, 82 [1842], pp. 119–20; vol. 2, 84, p. 127; vol. 2, 87, pp. 139–40. The 'tree of liberty can never flourish', he insisted, 'until its roots are struck deep in the soil of UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE'.

26 *British Statesman*, 15 May 1842; 19 June 1842. See also A. Briggs, 'The Language of Class in Nineteenth Century England', in A Briggs and J. Saville (eds), *Essays in Labour History* (London, 1967), pp. 43–73.

27 *British Statesman*, 15 May 1842.

28 For the full text see *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, pp. 96–7.

29 *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, p. 97.
30 *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, pp. 125, 156. Ironically it was Griffin who initially identified Cartledge's handwriting although he later denied it.
31 *British Statesman*, 8 Oct. 1842. At this stage only Griffins' treachery was known.
32 *British Statesman*, 8 Oct. 1842; *Northern Star*, 15 Oct. 1842.
33 *British Statesman*, 8 Oct. 1842.
34 *British Statesman*, 8 Oct. 1842; *Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, 8 Oct. 1842.
35 *British Statesman*, 8 Oct. 1842; *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, p. 157.
36 *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, pp. 130, 440; R.G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement* (1854, New York, 1970), p. 430; *Ms. Cartledge Family Sources and Notes* (compiled by D.L. Cartledge), National Library of Australia, 95/5919.
37 See C.J. Friedrich, *The Pathology of Politics: Violence, Betrayal, Corruption, Secrecy and Propaganda* (New York, 1972), p. 84.
38 The Judge was not convinced. In summing up he suggested that Griffin at least was 'actuated by motives more or less malicious', *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, p. 371.
39 *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, pp. 131, 161. Apparently after he was first approached by the police Griffin sought money from O'Connor to go to America where he would be unable to testify.
40 *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, p. 160.
41 *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, p. 130. O'Connor believed that Griffin had deliberately implicated Cartledge in order to 'save him' from poverty. Cartledge believed that the Chartists had sent his wife to pressure him into taking his trial and not traversing. See *Trial of Feargus O'Connor*, pp. 137, 440–1.
42 'Antony and Cleopatra', Act 3, Scene 13, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (London, 1994), p. 554.
43 See A.F. Davies, *Skills, Outlooks and Passions: A Psychoanalytic Contribution to the Study of Politics* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 401.
44 See Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists*, pp. 190–1, 195.
45 For Shearer see HO 45/43 fol. 3; *Northern Star*, 8 May 1841; 4 Sept. 1841. John Cartledge was also an active Chartist. See *Northern Star*, 10 April 1841; 14 Aug. 1841.
46 *Ms. Cartledge Family Sources and Notes*. See also H.A. Johnson, *Bygone Days on the Tamar* (Launceston, 1988), p. 26.
47 W. Ashton, *A Lecture on the Evils of Emigration and Transportation delivered at the Town Hall, Sheffield, 23 July 1838* (Sheffield, 1838), p. 15. See also J. Knott, 'A Chartist's View of Australia', *The Push from the Bush*, 13 (1982), pp. 2–13.
48 Extract in *People's Advocate* [Sydney], 14 Aug. 1852. See also P.A. Pickering, 'The Finger of God: Gold's Impact on New South Wales', in I.D. McCalman, A. Cook and A. Reeves (eds), *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 37–51.
49 *Ms. Cartledge Family Sources and Notes*.
50 *Ms. Cartledge Family Sources and Notes*; K. Pink, *And Wealth for Toil: A History of North-West and Western Tasmania 1825–1900* (Burnie, 1990), pp. 158–9; C. Ramsay, *With the Pioneers* (Hobart, 1979), p. 220.
51 *Ms. Cartledge Family Sources and Notes*; Ramsay, *With the Pioneers*, p. 226.
52 The £10 franchise that prevailed in the early 1850s enfranchised the majority of working men due to the higher wages and rents.
53 See P.A. Pickering, 'A Wider Field in New Country: Chartism in Colonial Australia', in M. Sawyer (ed.), *Elections: Full, Free & Fair* (Sydney, 2001), pp. 28–44. Cartledge had

styled himself 'one of the unrepresented' when living in Manchester. See *English Chartist Circular*, vol. 2, 87 [1842], p. 143.

54 See M.E. Stansall, *Tasmanian Methodism* (n.p. n.d [1975]), p. 67; Ramsay, *With the Pioneers*, p. 210.

55 *Ms. Cartledge Family Sources and Notes.*

56 *Ms. Cartledge Family Sources and Notes*. See J.T. Ward, *Chartism* (London, 1974), pp. 236–7.

57 What became of the first Mrs Griffin is unclear.

58 *Auckland Independent*, 9 Aug. 1851; 23 Aug. 1851; *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 July 1870; *New Zealand Herald*, 11 Nov. 1890; H. Roth, 'Griffin, William', *New Zealand Dictionary of Biography* (Wellington, 1990), I: 164. One of New Zealand's foremost labour historians, Herbert Roth, comments that Griffin 'is said to have been active in the Chartist movement'. Another historian who alludes to Griffin's Chartist background but is unaware of the particular circumstances of his relocation is T. Simpson, *The Immigrants: The Great Migration from Britain to New Zealand, 1830–1890* (Auckland, 1997), p. 97.

59 *Auckland Independent*, 4 Oct. 1851; 1 Nov. 1851; J. Buller, *Forty Years in New Zealand including a personal narrative, an account of Maoridom and the Christianisation and Colonisation of the Country* (London, 1878), pp. 433–4; W. Pember Reeves, *The Long White Cloud Ao Tea Roa* (1924; rpt. Twickenham, 1998), pp. 189–90.

60 For a detailed discussion of the *Auckland Independent* see P.A. Pickering, 'Mercenary Scribblers and Polluted Quills: The Chartist Press in Australia and New Zealand', in J. Allen & O. Ashton (eds), *Papers for the People: A Study of the Chartist Press* (London, 2005), pp. 190–215.

61 *Auckland Independent*, 26 July 1851. See also 20 Sept. 1851; 18 Oct. 1851.

62 *Auckland Independent*, 31 May 1851, 14 June 1851.

63 *Auckland Independent*, 26 July 1851.

64 *Auckland Independent*, 23 Aug. 1851.

65 *Reynolds News*, 27 May 1855.

66 Binns' letter is in the Place Collection in the British Library, Set 56, vol. 22, p. 18. See also S. Roberts, *Radical Politicians and Poets in Early Victorian England* (Lampeter, 1993), pp. 39–57.

67 See *New Zealand Herald*, 11 Nov. 1890; G.H. Scholefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (Wellington, 1940), pp. 331–2.

68 For Parkes see A. Martin, *Henry Parkes: A Biography* (Melbourne 1980); Pickering, 'Wider Field in a New Country'. I am completing a longer study of the impact of Chartism abroad.

69 *Votes and Proceedings of the Auckland Provincial Council*, Session VII, 27 Nov. 1857, p. 6.

70 K. Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (Auckland, 2000), p. 107.

71 *Votes and Proceedings of the Auckland Provincial Council*, Session VIII, 12 Jan. 1858, pp. 67–9, 76–7.

72 *Votes and Proceedings of the Auckland Provincial Council*, Session VIII, 12 Jan. 1858, p. 76.

73 See B. Harrison, 'Teetotal Chartism', in S. Roberts (ed.), *The People's Charter: Democratic Agitation in Early Victorian Britain* (London, 2003), pp. 35–63. By the 1890s the debate over drink was threatening to divide liberal politics in New Zealand, and it was only resolved by the introduction of what was called the 'local option', where

voters in each constituency could chose to reduce the number of liquor licences and even prohibit the sale of alcohol in their community.

74 *Votes and Proceedings of the Auckland Provincial Council*, Session VIII, 9 Feb. 1858, pp. 132–3; J. Hirst, *Australia's Democracy: A Short History* (Sydney 2002), p. 59.

75 *British Banner*, 21 June 1848. See also A. Beever, 'From a Place of "Horrible Destitution" to a Paradise of the Working Class. The Transformation of British Working Class Attitudes to Australia, 1841–1851', *Labour History* [Australia], 40 (May 1981), pp. 1–15; N. Kirk, *Comrades and Cousins: Globalisation, Workers and Labour Movements in Britain, the USA and Australia from the 1880s to 1914* (London, 2003), chapter 2.

76 Cited in D. Shaw, *Gerald Massey: Chartist, Poet, Radical and Freethinker* (London, 1995), p. 172.

77 *Auckland Independent*, 29 Nov. 1851. See also Pickering, 'Mercenary Scribblers'.

78 *Reynolds' Newspaper*, 25 Mar. 1855; *People's Paper*, 17 Mar. 1855; *Leader*, 31 Mar. 1855.

79 *Votes and Proceedings of the Auckland Provincial Council*, Session VIII, 9 Feb. 1858, pp. 132–3. See also W.H. Oliver, *The Story of New Zealand* (London, 1960), chapter 6.

80 *Auckland Independent*, 14 June 1851; *Daily Southern Cross*, 14 July 1870; Roth, 'Griffin, William'.

81 *New Zealand Herald*, 11 Nov. 1890; Roth, 'Griffin, William'.

82 A. Briggs, 'Chartists in Tasmania: A Note', *Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin*, 3 (1963), pp. 4–8.

83 See Pickering, 'Trade of Agitation'.

84 *Friends of the People*, 3 May 1848. See also Belchem, 'The Nemesis of Thomas Powell'.

85 Cf. H.R. Nicholls, 'Typescript Account of Chartist Meetings in London', c.1852, Mitchell Library, p.11. The branch had comprised a handful of committed activists. See: P.A. Pickering, 'Glimpses of Eternal Truth: Chartism, Poetry and the Young H.R. Nicholls', *Labour History* [Australia], 70 (1996), pp. 53–70.

86 *Owen Suffolk's Days of Crime and Years of Suffering* (1867; rpt. Kew, 2000), ed. D. Dunstan, pp. 117, 134.

87 See J.B. Hirst, *Convict Society and Its Enemies: A History of Early New South Wales* (Sydney, 1983), chapter 4; K. McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies* (Melbourne 2004).

88 Dunstan, *Owen Suffolk*, p. xvii

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