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**HISTORY, REVOLUTION AND THE BRITISH  
POPULAR NOVEL: HISTORICAL FICTION IN THE  
ROMANTIC AGE**

**SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF PHD AT THE SCHOOL OF  
ENGLISH, COLLEGE OF ARTS, CELTIC STUDIES AND SOCIAL  
SCIENCES, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND, CORK, BY**

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**DECEMBER 2012**

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## **Declaration**

The thesis submitted is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere.

Signed:

Date:

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## Abstract

“History, Revolution and the British Popular Novel” takes as its focus the significant role which historical fiction played within the French Revolution debate and its aftermath. Examining the complex intersection of the genre with the political and historical dialogue generated by the French Revolution crisis, the thesis contends that contemporary fascination with the historical episode of the Revolution, and the fundamental importance of history to the disputes which raged about questions of tradition and change, and the meaning of the British national past, led to the emergence of increasingly complex forms of fictional historical narrative during the “war of ideas.” Considering the varying ways in which novelists such as Charlotte Smith, William Godwin, Mary Robinson, Helen Craik, Clara Reeve, John Moore, Edward Sayer, Mary Charlton, Ann Thomas, George Walker and Jane West engaged with the historical contexts of the Revolution debate, my discussion juxtaposes the manner in which English Jacobin novelists inserted the radical critique of the Jacobin novel into the wider arena of history with anti-Jacobin deployments of the historical to combat the revolutionary threat and internal moves for socio-political restructuring. I argue that the use of imaginative historical narrative to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the Revolution, and offer political and historical guidance to readers, represented a significant element within the literature of the Revolution crisis. The thesis also identifies the diverse body of historical fiction which materialised amidst the Revolution controversy as a key context within which to understand the emergence of Scott’s national historical novel in 1814, and the broader field of historical fiction in the era of Waterloo. Tracing the continued engagement with revolutionary and political concerns evident in the early Waverley novels, Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer* (1814), William Godwin’s *Mandeville* (1816), and Mary Shelley’s *Valperga* (1823), my discussion concludes by arguing that Godwin’s and Shelley’s extension of the mode of historical fiction initially envisioned by Godwin in the revolutionary decade, and their shared endeavour to retrieve the possibility enshrined within the republican past, appeared as a significant counter to the model of history and fiction developed by Walter Scott in the post-revolutionary epoch.



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## Chapter One: Writing Revolution: Literary Historical Engagements

As History cannot afford any Precedent for the monstrous Conduct of the French Convention, you have properly taken your Allusions from the Regions of Romance. I agree with you that the Age of Knight-errantry is revived. The French Democrats, in the genuine Spirit of Quixotism, are sallying forth to rid the World of Royalty; while their Dulcinea, whom, under the false Name of Liberty, they admire as the Paragon of Beauty, differs as widely from genuine Liberty, as a common Prostitute from a Roman Matron.

Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron*

How glorious, then, is the prospect, the reverse of all the past, which is now opening upon us, and upon the world.

Joseph Priestley, Letter to Edmund Burke, 1791

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 ushered in a dramatic new epoch of change, upheaval, and prolonged European warfare which would culminate in the defeat of Napoleon and the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in the early nineteenth century. Shaping and influencing the various categories of Romantic literature, the Revolution had a profound impact on the form of the British novel, which offered a composite response to the complex of social, political and historical issues raised by its events. Noting how the issue of the Revolution had come to pervade the popular novel, in *The British Novelists* (1810) Anna Letitia Barbauld observed, “no small proportion of modern novels have been devoted to recommend, or to mark with reprobation, those systems of philosophy or politics which have raised so much ferment of late years” (Cited in Grogan 10). While much attention has been afforded to the manner in which the Revolution controversy resulted in the intensive concentration on political and gender concerns apparent within the fiction of the late eighteenth century, this chapter considers how the episode of the Revolution contributed to the novel’s intensifying engagement with its socio-historical milieu and evolving awareness of the historicity of the present. Taking the strand of French Revolutionary fiction which materialised during the 1790s as its primary focus, the chapter traces the divergent depictions of the Revolution apparent



in the Revolutionary novels of Edward Sayer, Mary Charlton, Ann Thomas, John Moore, Helen Craik, Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson.

As Lorraine Fletcher has highlighted, the contemporaneity of a novel's setting "does not debar a work from being 'historical'" (145). My analysis of the various attempts of novelists to portray the events of their contemporary historical moment, and determine the social and historical effect of the revolutionary episode identifies the French Revolutionary novel as a significant form of Romantic historical fiction. Particular attention is afforded to the ongoing chronicle of the Revolution offered in Charlotte Smith's *Desmond* and *The Banished Man*, which reflected Smith's stated desire to engage with history as it unfolded. Although disillusion with the progress of the Revolution insured that the majority of English Jacobin novels tended to employ British settings and concentrate on domestic social and political ills, the works of Smith and Robinson offer notable exceptions. Appearing in 1792, Smith's novel *Desmond* relied on the Revolution as an example of the potential for social change, while the later novels of Smith and Robinson attempted to contextualise the loss of early revolutionary promise in the wake of the Terror. My discussion of *Hubert de Sevrac* and *The Natural Daughter* emphasises the significance of Robinson's return in both novels to the point of revolutionary history marked by the advent of militant civil violence, and, in the eyes of many spectators, the decline of revolutionary potential. My analysis of the Revolutionary narratives of Smith and Robinson highlights their continued dedication to early revolutionary ideals, as well as their changing employment of the Revolution as a means through which to critique British social and political injustice. Within the chapter, this is contrasted with the manner in which staunchly anti-Jacobin Revolutionary novels such as Edward Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaide, a Moral Tale. In Which are Exhibited the Effects of the Late French Revolution on The Peasantry of France* (1791), Mary Charlton's *The Parisian; or, Genuine Anecdotes of Distinguished and Noble Characters* (1794) and Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel Founded on the French Revolution* (1795) emphasised the inherent barbarity of the revolutionary enterprise, celebrating "British liberty" and contrasting the anarchy of Revolutionary France with the stability of the British social and political structure. The chapter then moves to consider the more nuanced political commentary apparent in John Moore's *Mordaunt. Sketches of Life, Characters, and*

*Manners, in Various Countries; Including the Memoirs of a French Lady of Quality* (1800) and Helen Craik's *Adelaide de Narbonne* (1800).

Contemporary comments testify to the fact that the Revolution was viewed as a major historical epoch by participants and spectators. In England, Wordsworth heralded the revolution as the dawn of a new age, while in France, Mirabeau declared, "History has too often recounted the actions of nothing more than wild animals, among which at long intervals we can pick out some heroes. Now we are given hope that we are beginning the history of man" (Cited in Hibbert 63). After the success of the French revolutionary army against the leagued forces at Valmy, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe avowed, "At this place, on this day there has begun a new era in the history of the world; and you can all claim to have been present at its birth" (Cited in Hibbert 179). For liberals and radicals, the Revolution symbolised a break with the past, and an opportunity to move beyond a society based on oppression, prejudice and privilege. Recalling the heady early days of the Revolution, Robert Southey later remarked that "old things seemed passing away and nothing was dreamt of but the regeneration of the human race" (Cited in Paulson, *Representations* 43). In contrast, Burke characterised the revolution as a negative and unnatural phenomenon, emphasising the broader historical significance of its events in his *Reflections*:

Excuse me, therefore, if I have dwelt too long on the atrocious spectacle of the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, 1789, or have given too much scope to the reflections which have arisen in my mind on occasion of the most important of all revolutions, which may be dated from that day – I mean a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions. (70)

Burke firmly asserted, "all circumstances together, the French Revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world" (9), a view which would be confirmed in the eyes of many by the progress of revolutionary events in the 1790s. The development of the Revolution, the rapid changes in the French leadership, the onset of the Terror, and French attempts to export republican principles by force of arms were viewed with wonder and consternation within late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Britain. Although commentators continued to highlight the parallels between French and English history – events in France were initially

likened to the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and the progression of the revolution inevitably led to comparisons with the English Civil Wars, or the Great Rebellion as it was commonly termed – the revolution increasingly came to be characterised as an event wholly unprecedented in its nature. As the hero of Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron* observed in a letter to an English confidant, he little expected "to behold a Revolution so sudden and wonderful, that the Annals of History will scarce afford a Precedent" (1: 3).

Any survey of the eighteenth-century novel indicates that revolutionary analogues and references, as well as discussion and dialogue centred on the Revolution's events quickly became regular features of late eighteenth-century fiction. References to their wider historical milieu furnished novels with a certain sense of contemporaneity, as well as allowing writers to add their contribution to the ongoing debate surrounding the Revolution. While Charlotte Smith celebrated the ameliorative social effects occasioned by the advent of the Revolution in the final volume of *Celestina: A Novel* (1791), the conservative Henry James Pye incorporated a French émigré's recital of his family's enforced flight from the violence of Revolutionary France in *The Democrat: Interspersed with Anecdotes of Well-known Characters* (1795). In *The Aristocrat, a Novel* (1799), which was set in England between 1791 and 1795, a brief narrative reference to the progress of the characters through France in 1791 also provided Pye with an opportunity to harshly criticise the altered state of France since the Revolution, while the short narrative history of the Jacobin villain Vallaton offered in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) included a sketch of his experience in Paris in 1793. Numerous other novels of the period featured news of individuals that had journeyed to France, or enclosed letters which detailed unfolding revolutionary events. As Grenby has noted, "it took no great ingenuity on the part of an author to send an expendable character or two off to France, have one of them be 'seized by the sbirri of Robespierre's party' perhaps, and the other send a letter home bearing the news from Paris" (*Anti-Jacobin* 36). The outbreak of the Revolution and attempts to introduce a more equitable civil structure in France prompted radical novelists such as Wollstonecraft, Smith, Inchbald, Godwin, Holcroft and Robinson to explore the situation of the disenfranchised sections of British society within their fiction. In response, a host of anti-Jacobin narratives including *The History of Sir George Warrington; or the Political Quixote* (1797), Charles Lloyd's *Edmund Oliver* (1798)

and Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* stressed the destructive effects of the spread of revolutionary ideas and principles on members of British society, while Pye's *The Democrat* sketched the insidious, yet unsuccessful attempt of a French Jacobin to incite the British nation to revolt against their government.

While the late eighteenth-century novel was rife with references and allusions to the unfolding Revolution, and its effects on British society, the radical and anti-Jacobin fiction which was set during the Revolution offers a particularly acute insight into British responses to the Revolution, and divided perceptions of its proceedings. Given the fascination of the Revolution's events, the frequent employment of the Revolutionary setting within contemporary fiction is unsurprising. As Grenby noted in his study of the anti-Jacobin novel, Burke's *Reflections* highlighted that the Revolution "was made for the novelist, being already replete with a full cast of brave heroes, susceptible heroines and dastardly villains" (*Anti-Jacobin* 29). News from France was a frequent feature within contemporary periodicals, and the success of Helen Maria Williams' eight-volume eyewitness history of the Revolution (1790-1796), which served as an important source of information on the Revolution for British audiences, provided a clear indication of the popularity of such subject matter with readerships. Williams' incorporation of a range of inset stories and narratives such as her account of the sufferings experienced by Monique du Fosse and her husband during the ancien régime - described in *Letters Written in France, in the Summer 1790, to a Friend in England; Containing Various Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution* as a history with "the air of a romance" (139) - lent considerable sympathetic interest and emotional intensity to her chronicle of contemporary history. Such vignettes operated "not only to justify the French Revolution, but also to dramatise it" (Watson, *Revolution* 30), and Williams continued to include narratives and anecdotes of individuals caught up in the events of the Revolution as she recounted the progress of the Revolution through the dark years of the Terror and its aftermath. As Phillips has commented, "like so many others on both sides of the Revolution debate, Williams embraced the view that the deepest meaning of the Revolution would be felt in private life . . ." (*Genres* 95). Many reviewers praised Williams' vivid portrait of the French revolutionary scene, and, in 1796, the *Critical Review* declared that if William's *Letters* wanted

the profound investigation of the statesman or legislator, - if they are destitute of those political discussions, in which historians of the higher order are fond of indulging, - they will be found to contain what is most valuable, *a picture of the times* [my italics]. What they lose in stateliness, they gain in interest, if they plunge not deeply into the intrigues of cabinets, or the views of politicians, they delineate correctly the fluctuations of popular sentiment; and if they enter but little on the disgusting and generally tiresome details of senatorial debates or military exploits, they paint the manners, and, by variety of engaging anecdotes, expose the human heart. (Cited in Kennedy 329-30)

Williams' *Letters Written in France* opened with a description of the Fête de la Fédération (14 July 1790) as "the most sublime spectacle which, perhaps, was ever represented on the theatre of this earth" (63), and throughout her *Letters*, Williams positioned herself as a spectator and recorder of the great historical event in process in France. Her extended account of the Revolution served as one of the main counterpoints of Burke's depiction of the Revolution in the 1790s, revealing continued sympathetic identification with the founding ideals of the Revolution.

Appearing in the same month as Williams' *Letters Written in France*, the *Reflections* envisioned the revolution as a sentimental family drama, presenting it "as a child's unnatural rebellion against an affectionate father's lenient rule" (Blank and Todd 32). As Johnson has highlighted, Burke's writings about the Revolution were "embryonic political novels in and of themselves, and not simply discursive political commentary" (Austen 5). The *Reflections*' dramatic narrative of revolutionary events proved highly significant, providing "conservative novelists with their paradigms, character types, and catchwords, and progressive novelists with their targets and counterplots" (Johnson Austen 4). Burke's account of the revolution was "a version characteristic of one type of onlooker, the hostile witness" (Butler, "Telling" 351), and the *Reflections* consciously evoked "a chamber of Gothic horrors" (Scrivener 48) for readers. The *Reflections* and the *Letters* both helped to shape British views of the Revolution, and the French Revolutionary fiction which emerged in the period clearly indicates the influence of the texts of Burke and Williams, as well as their employment of gothic and sentimental narrative modes in their depiction of the events of the Revolution. Paulson has highlighted that at the end of the eighteenth century, the Gothic which had flourished from the 1760s onwards "did in fact serve

as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to understand what was happening across the channel in the 1790s” (“Gothic” 534). Gothic plots acquired a new resonance in the context of the French revolutionary turmoil, and Paulson has suggested that the popularity of Gothic fiction in the 1790s and after “was due in part to the widespread anxieties and fears in Europe aroused by the turmoil in France finding a kind of sublimation or catharsis in tales of darkness, confusion, blood, and horror” (“Gothic” 536). Contemporary commentators such as William Hazlitt also linked the popularity of the gothic with the upheaval and controversy occasioned by the events of contemporary history - in his lecture “On the English Novelists” Hazlitt suggested that Ann Radcliffe’s narratives derived part of their interest “from the supposed tottering state of all old structures at the time” (112). In *The Banished Man*, Charlotte Smith pointedly emphasised the gothic qualities exhibited by contemporary history, highlighting that the scene of France left the writer at “no loss for *real* horrors” (194). Appearing within a broader tradition of French Revolutionary fiction which materialised in the 1790s, *The Banished Man* accorded with the advice of the friend who appears in Smith’s “Avis Au Lecteur”: “Keep, therefore, as nearly as you can, to circumstances you have heard related, or to such as might have occurred in a country where Murder stalks abroad . . .” (194). Offering a direct engagement with contemporary historical events, although these Revolutionary novels varied considerably in complexity and political tone, this body of texts remains as an important record of the British response to the Revolution, revealing the ubiquitous literary appeal of the Revolution, and the various attempts of contemporaries to discern the meaning and nature of the revolutionary episode. The following sections in this chapter turn to consider instances of this fiction in more detail.

### **Charlotte Smith’s Revolutionary Chronicle: *Desmond* and *The Banished Man***

In the preface to her early Revolutionary novel, *Desmond* (1792), Smith clearly signalled her desire to engage with history as it unfolded. Justifying her public intervention in the sphere of history and politics, she observed,

But women it is said have no business with politics. – Why not? – Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting around them, in which they have

fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or friends engaged! – Even in the commonest course of female education, they are expected to acquire some knowledge of history; and yet, if they are to have no opinion of what *is* passing, it avails little that they should be informed of what *has passed*. . . . (45)

Written in immediate response to developing historical events, *Desmond* and the later *Banished Man* allowed Smith to enclose a chronicle of the Revolution within the frame of the popular novel. Set amidst the early years of the Revolution, and drawing on the sentimental tradition in its depiction of the hero's ardent love for Geraldine Verney, an exemplary woman married to an unworthy and dissolute husband,<sup>20</sup> *Desmond* characterised the Revolution as an event which, in its consequence, involved the freedom and the happiness not only of the French "but of the universe" (87). One of the earliest instances of Jacobin fiction, as Diana Bowstead has commented, "*Desmond* is at least as extraordinary as William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*" (259). While *Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle* (1788), *Ethelinde, or the Recluse of the Lake* (1789), and *Celestina* (1791) demonstrated concern with issues of property ownership and inheritance, the inequities of the legal system, and the position of women in British society, *Desmond* was more overtly radical in tone than Smith's earlier fiction, and represented a resolute move by Smith to employ the novel as a "vehicle of political discussion" (*Desmond* 47). *The Critical Review* decreed the principal novelty in the narrative to be "the introduction of French politics" (100), although it did not approve Smith's radical stance, noting, "Her politics we cannot always approve of. Connected with the reformers, and the revolutionists, she has borrowed her colouring from them . . ." (100). *The Monthly Review* also noted that Smith had "ventured beyond the beaten track, so far as to interweave with her narrative many political discussions" (406), claiming that Smith had "observed the present state of society with an attentive and discriminating eye" (406).

As well as offering satirical portraits of members of the British establishment, the numerous inset dialogues and debates featured in *Desmond*

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<sup>20</sup> Smith drew on her own unhappy experience of the marital state in her depiction of the Verney's marriage in *Desmond*. For a detailed account of Charlotte's relationship with Benjamin Smith, see Lorraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998).

allowed Smith to address a range of legal and social issues including parliamentary and court corruption; unequal representation; the harshness of the penal system; the poor laws and the game laws; widespread poverty; and slavery. Smith's novel was immediately recognisable as a response to Burke's *Reflections*, the conservative text that would dominate the pamphlet war. Smith's use of epistolary narrative recalled the format of Williams' *Letters Written in France*, as well as that of the *Reflections*, which Burke had presented as having their origin "in a correspondence between the Author and a very young gentleman at Paris" (3). In addition, as Blank and Todd have highlighted, "the names of Edmund Burke and that of his addressee De Pont are echoed in the correspondents Erasmus Bethel and Desmond" (22). In *Desmond*, the reality behind the Burkean ideal of chivalry and benevolent paternalism appears as a society where the possessors of power and property care for little but hedonistic pleasures, and fail to fulfil their civic and social duties. Drawing on seventeenth-century political rhetoric that associated the family with the wider state body, Burke's *Reflections* had implicitly linked domestic order with wider national stability in its powerful condemnation of the Revolution's events. Identifying the *Reflections* as one of the most significant texts in the canon of Romantic nationalism, Keane has remarked that Burke's text brought together "images of the land and the constitution in the familial unity of the nation-state" (5). *Desmond* consciously subverts Burke's model of familial and national order, positing the tyranny implicit within the patriarchal family as analogous with the despotism of the ancien régime, and charting the gradual development of its heroine towards a reasoned political response to the Revolution.<sup>21</sup> Countering Burke's negative assessment of the French Revolution, and undermining his celebration of inherited rank and the civilising influence of chivalric culture, *Desmond* relies on the Revolution as an example of "the potential for social transformation, for the renewal of a national culture freed from the bondage of tradition and prejudice" (Conway 395).

Critiquing the dominant structures of power in England and France, *Desmond* posited social and gender inequality as an essential feature of the traditional institutions venerated by Burke. Bowstead has aptly observed that "comments on

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<sup>21</sup> In *The English Jacobin Novel on Rights, Property and the Law*, Johnson has contended that, although the novel offers instruction in the ways of equality, a shrewd reader of *Desmond* will recognise the damage done by patriarchalism and the limits of contractarianism in the fact that it is Desmond, an educated and propertied man already enjoying certain rights, who is poised to be the central figure of the social contract, as opposed to Geraldine Verney, or a lower-class male character.



Geraldine Verney's situation in *Desmond* are as radically feminist in their implications as anything in Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*" (258). While the story of Smith's heroine underlines the negative consequences stemming from the concept of the *feme covert* in Britain,<sup>22</sup> the presence of the French character Josephine de Boisbelle, who appears as a more radical counterpart of Geraldine Verney, allows Smith to highlight that women in these societies labour under similar legal and economic disadvantages. Married to "one of the most worthless characters in France" (92), the unhappy Josephine has a similar history to Geraldine, but she chooses to contravene marital duty, and acts on her own desires when she enters into a sexual relationship with Desmond. As Eleanor Ty notes, because Smith shows the same thing happening to women from two different countries, Geraldine and Josephine's shared difficulties can be viewed "as the result of socially and historically produced structures which maintain power relations that subordinate women, regardless of their skill or intelligence, to men" (140). Through its deliberate conflation of political and domestic tyranny, *Desmond* suggests that misrule in the home is replicated in the governance of the nation. Desmond relies on Lockean political language when writing to Bethel about Geraldine's domestic situation (292) and the novel's association of private and public modes of tyranny culminates in Geraldine's personal identification with the sufferings experienced by the French people under the ancien régime. Dismissing fears for her safety during her journey to join Verney in France, Geraldine declares,

If I get among the wildest collection of those people whose ferocity arises not from their present liberty, but their recent bondage, is it possible to suppose they will injure *me*, who am myself a miserable slave, returning with trembling and reluctant steps, to put on the most dreadful of all fetters? – Fetters that would even destroy the freedom of my mind. (303-4)

Smith's linkage of familial abuse with the social and legal injustices perpetrated in the public sphere is highly significant; as Blank and Todd have highlighted, this narrative strategy ultimately ensures that the story of Smith's heroine "necessitates

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<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the legal status of British women in the eighteenth century, see Gillian Skinner, "Women's Status as Legal and Civic Subjects: 'A Worse Condition than Slavery Itself?'," *Women and Literature in Britain: 1700-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 91-110.

readers outraged by the fictional sufferings of the ill-used wife to extend their emotional sympathies to the political arena and the very real miseries of the socially oppressed” (29).

In the preface to the novel, Smith clearly stated that the political content of *Desmond* was based on her personal experience of the reaction to the Revolution in both England and France,<sup>23</sup> noting, “As to the political passages dispersed through the work, they are for the most part, drawn from conversations to which I have been a witness, in England, and France, during the last twelve months” (45). Incorporating extensive dialogues concerned with the proceedings of the Revolution and the state of England, *Desmond* also reveals an explicit engagement with the documents and tracts that dominated the Revolution controversy. The texts and views of Burke, Paine and Price are woven into the fabric of the narrative, while quotes from John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) are also incorporated within the novel’s debates. *Desmond* functions as a form of social history in its detail of the British reaction to the Revolution, as well as offering the reader a chronicle of the first, constitutional phase of the Revolution. Highly concerned with documentary realism, and adopting the journalistic style of Williams’ *Letters Written in France*, as well as including references to early events such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (26 August 1789), the March of the Women to Versailles (5 October 1789) and the suppression of the religious orders (13 February 1790), *Desmond* charts the major events occurring between June 1790 and February 1792, including the abolition of the titles of hereditary nobility (19 June 1790), the creation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy (12 July 1790), the celebration of the first Fête de la Fédération (14 July 1790), the Flight to Varennes (20 June 1791) and the King’s acceptance of the French Constitution (18 September 1791). A strict adherence to real historical dates is notable in the narrative letters, and Smith strives for “a precise historical verisimilitude” (Doody, “English” 182) throughout her novel, presenting her characters as responding to developments in France at the time when they could be first expected to have heard news of them.

*Desmond* also offers an insight into divided French responses to the Revolution through its range of French characters. Montfleuri serves as an example

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<sup>23</sup> Smith’s claim that she visited France in the early stages of the Revolution has recently been verified and dated more precisely. See Jacqueline Labbe, “Gentility in Distress: A New Letter by Charlotte Smith (1749-1806),” *The Wordsworth Circle* 35.2 (2004): 91-3.

of those members of the nobility that supported the claims of the Third estate, and the initial reforms of the National Assembly, while his uncle, the Comte D’Hauteville, symbolises the ardent French royalists who sought to maintain the traditional system of the ancien régime, and the Duc de Romagnecourt represents the body of French émigrés striving to galvanise European support and military aid for the counter-revolutionary movement. Smith also incorporated contemporary French documents within her narrative. In a textual note on the conversation of the French abbé and Montfleuri in Letter XIII of the first volume of the novel, she records that she drew sentences from a French pamphlet entitled “Lettre aux Aristo-theocrate Francais.” Similarly, in the following letter, an authorial note indicates that the latter part of the narrative of the Breton is a sort of free translation of a pamphlet detailing the abuses of the feudal system entitled “Historire d’un malheureux Vassal de Bretagne, ecrite par lui-meme.” Evoking the sense of immediacy evident in Williams’ spectatorial history,<sup>24</sup> *Desmond* clearly seeks to counter conservative accounts of proceedings in France with its own objective “eyewitness” analysis of the Revolution. In her *Letters Written in France*, Williams had also contested representations of the Revolution’s horror which were gaining currency in England, declaring, “I hear of nothing but crimes, assassinations, torture, and death . . . I hear these things, and repeat to myself, Is this the picture of France? Are these the images of that universal joy, which called tears into my eyes, and made my heart throb with sympathy?” (147).

Highlighting the circulation of false and exaggerated accounts of the state of France by the first wave of French emigrants, as well as heartily condemning conservative detractors of the revolution, who are accused of deliberately misrepresenting and distorting the historical truth of its events, one of the most significant aspects of Smith’s narrative lies in its express concern with the nature of historical representation. The words of Fanny Waverly explicitly condemn the transmission of malicious narrative and rumour by the opponents of revolutionary reform:

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<sup>24</sup> In *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel* Watson has highlighted that the documentary effects of *Desmond* “seem designed to replicate the impact of Williams’s *Letters from France*” (36). For a discussion of the thematic parallels between William’s *Letters* and Smith’s *Desmond*, see Antje Blank and Janet Todd, Introduction, *Desmond*, by Charlotte Smith (Ontario: Broadview, 2001) 7-33. See also Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s: Romantic Belongings* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000). Arguing that *Desmond* is in part a fictionalisation of William’s *Letters*, Keane offers a reading of Lionel Desmond as a recasting of a sentimental Williams.

I tremble at every sentence of French news; and the people among whom I live are such inveterate and decided enemies to the revolution, that they exaggerate with malicious delight, all the mischief they hear of, and represent the place whither you are going as a scene of anarchy, famine, and bloodshed. – I have heard stories that I am sure are improbable, and I hope impossible. . . . (321-2)

Noting the manner in which Smith pits fictive eye-witness accounts against unfavourable and fake representations, Blank and Todd have remarked that *Desmond* “caricatures enemies to the Revolution in France as almost pathologically averse to historical truth” (23). While Blank and Todd have observed that “as in the world of state politics . . . the fictional world of *Desmond* is infiltrated by a web of informants and gossipers whose national and personal ‘news’ proves equally unfounded” (23), Ty has also emphasised the novel’s overt concern with the objectivity of representation and documentation. Focusing on Desmond’s attempt to conceal his whereabouts from Bethel by refusing to locate and date certain of his letters in the third volume of the novel, Ty notes,

The concealment of vital information as a means of subterfuge questions the objectivity of reporting and writing. By omission, Desmond hopes to divert Bethel’s attention and conceal the fact that he has been acting as a knight escorting Geraldine in France. This suppression of information becomes vital when it is linked to the politics of the 1790s. In a novel that raises issues about the factual or historical ‘truth’ of the revolution, Smith shows her awareness of the influence of gaps, omissions, and silences on one’s assessment of an event. (Ty 133)

*Desmond* maintains that political opponents of the Revolution have wilfully distorted historical facts for their own purposes, and Smith’s hero heartily condemns Burke, who, he claims, “dresses up contradictions with the gaudy flowers of his luxuriant imagination, in one place, and in another, knowingly misrepresents facts, and swells the guilt of a *few*, into national crimes; to prove the delinquency of a whole people struggling for the dearest rights of humanity” (360). Offering a disparate account of

recent history, *Desmond* appears in a certain measure as an attempt on Smith's part to clarify the historical record, and the narrative suggests that in "the overcharged picture" (182) offered by conservative narrators of the Revolution, "all the transient mischief has been exaggerated; and we have . . . lost sight of the great and permanent evils that have been removed . . ." (182).

Writing from Paris in the wake of the celebrations of the first Fête de la Fédération, Desmond declares:

I can now, however, assure you – and with the most heart-felt satisfaction, that nothing is more unlike the real state of this country, than the accounts which have been given of it in England; and that the sanguinary and ferocious democracy, the scenes of anarchy and confusion, which we have had so pathetically described and lamented, have no existence but in the malignant fabrications of those who have been paid for their misrepresentations. (87)

Desmond goes on to accuse the British government of the deliberate commission of propaganda in a bid to quell enthusiasm for domestic reform, and "impede a little the progress of that light which they see rising upon the world" (87). When the heroine visits France she is amazed to find no symptoms of the misery occasioned by the Revolution of which she has been assured, and after witnessing a solemn religious procession, she reflects in wonder, "All religion, however . . . is not abolished in France – they told me it was despised and trampled on; and I never enquired, as every body ought to do, when such assertions are made – Is all this true?" (325). Here, again, the principal target of Smith's critique is Burke, who had represented the acts of the National Assembly in relation to the clergy as sacrilegious, and lamented the demise of the religious spirit in France. Throughout the novel, the *Reflection's* tenets are propagated by a host of conservative voices who echo Burke's views without deigning to enquire into the arguments of political opponents such as Paine (205). Smith's hero regularly condemns the *Reflections* and its admirers, criticising Burke's exaggerated and emotional portrayal of the Revolution, and describing his text as "an elaborate treatise in favour of despotism" (182). Burke is clearly the source of the consternation expressed by Montfleuri in the first volume of the novel:

But, when I meet, as too often I have done, Englishmen of mature judgement and solid abilities, so lost to all right principles as to depreciate, misrepresent, and condemn those exertions by which *we* have obtained that liberty they affect so sedulously to defend for themselves; when they declaim in favour of a hierarchy so subversive of all true freedom, either of thought or action, and so inimical to the welfare of the people - and pretend to blame us for throwing off those yokes, which would be intolerable to themselves; and which they have been accustomed to ridicule us for enduring; I ever hear them with a mixture of contempt and indignation. . . . (100-01)

Montfleuri moves on to suggest that the actions of commentators such as Burke can be attributed to their fear that the light of reason which has shown the French “how to overturn the massy and cumbrous edifice of despotism, will make too evident, the faults of their own system of government, which it is their particular interest to screen from research and reformation” (101).

Like many contemporary critics of the *Reflections*, Desmond highlights Burke’s reliance on a sentimental register, declaring that “fine sounding periods are not arguments – that poetical imagery is not matter of fact” (183). Burke’s political thought is further undermined by its association with that of Robert Filmer, the seventeenth-century advocate of divine right and absolute monarchy whose *Patriarcha* was refuted by Locke. Desmond questions Burke’s interpretation of history, and the meaning ascribed to the Glorious Revolution in the *Reflections*, drawing on Locke to support his argument, as Paine had done in *The Rights of Man*. Focusing on Burke’s assertion that the present and future generations of the English nation were irrevocably bound by the compact of 1688, Desmond includes an excerpt from Locke’s *Two Treatises* in a letter to Bethel in order to subvert this view. This was one of the most refuted elements of Burke’s work, and Paine had taken particular affront at the notion that men could be bound by the actions of their ancestors. Desmond undercuts Burke’s tenets, predicting that the appearance of the *Reflections* will stimulate every advocate of true liberty to speak in its defence: “I foresee that *a thousand pens will leap from their standishes* (to parody a sublime sentence of his own) to answer such a book” (183). In his subsequent reply to Desmond, Bethel encloses a copy of *The Rights of Man*, one of the most famous

contemporary answers to the *Reflections*, and his avowal that it is a book containing “much sound sense . . . however bluntly delivered” (194) pointedly emphasises the divergence of *The Rights of Man* from Burke’s hyperbolic literary style. Paine’s text is well received by Desmond, who celebrates its author for contradicting what he terms Burke’s most absurd positions. While Burke had dismissed the ideas that inspired the French revolution as abstract speculation and novelties, Smith deliberately locates them within a lengthy philosophical tradition in *Desmond*, and by tracing arguments in favour of the French Revolution back to the works of English philosophers such as Milton and Locke, she highlights “the arbitrary nature of Burke’s canon of venerable forefathers” (Blank and Todd 23).

Smith’s English hero resolutely declares that he loves “everything ancient, unless it be ancient prejudices” (113), while the French Montfleuri condemns an unqualified veneration of the past, and undue reliance on precedent in a more direct manner, remarking that “the antiquity of an abuse is no reason for its continuance” (94). Montfleuri’s account of the history of France issues a challenge to defenders of the ancien régime that cast the reigns of former monarchs such as Henry IV and Louis XIV as precedents justifying the continuance of the ancient form of French government (102). Montfleuri offers a radical appraisal of French history, emphasising the religious persecution, violence, unremitting warfare, economic distress and tyranny that characterised the country’s former mode of government. Challenging conservative commentators who held the Revolution to be an unaccountable event, and cast doubts on its permanency, Montfleuri presents an expansive and detailed historical analysis of the causes of the Revolution. Tracing a lengthy history of social oppression and national discontent which laid the foundations for recent events, he also identifies the progress of letters, the advances of the Enlightenment, and the influence of the political ideals of the American revolutionaries as significant contributory factors. Figuring the American Revolution as a precedent for events in France, Montfleuri testifies to the transformation of the American nation in the wake of its struggles with Britain, declaring, “I revisited this country two years since, in which fourteen years before, I had served as an ensign, when it was the seat of war. – I see it now recovered of those wounds, which its unnatural parent hoped were mortal, and in the most flourishing state of political health” (106). Highlighting that contemporary detractors who prognosticated disaster

for the new American government were proven incorrect,<sup>25</sup> in a pointed reference to the arguments of the *Reflections*, Montfleuri undermines “that idea of the veteran statesmen, that a country, under a new form of government, is destitute of those who have ability to direct it” (1: 107). Montfleuri’s words reflect his confidence in the emergence of a stable French leadership:

Honest ministers then, and able negociators will arise with the occasion. – They have appeared in America; they are rising in France – they have, indeed, arisen; and, when it is seen that talents and application, and not the smile of a mistress, or a connection with a parasite, give claims to the offices of public trust, men of talent and applications will never be wanting to fill them. (107)

Montfleuri’s commentary provides an extensive defence of the revolutionary effort, emphasising the despotism of the ancien régime and the evils of the taille, the gabelle and the infamous lettres de cachets.

While Montfleuri’s discourse is re-echoed in the inset narrative of the Breton, whose history highlights the oppression arising from unlimited monarchical power, aristocratic privilege and the abuse of seigneurial rights, Smith’s characters also counter reactionary attitudes to early symptoms of revolutionary violence. Observing that a degree of instability is natural after such a period of national upheaval, Smith’s heroine suggests that France must have due time to return to civil order. Writing to Fanny Waverly of the improvements occasioned by the revolution, Geraldine notes, “That these blessings are not yet fully felt, seems to be the only complaint that the enemies to the freedom of France can alledge against it; as if, immediately after such a change, all could subside into order, and ‘every man sit down under his own vine and his own fig-tree’” (324). Referring to the establishment of a permanent constitution in France, Smith’s hero also observes that “some evils . . . must be felt before this great work can be compleated – and, perhaps, some blood still shed . . .”

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<sup>25</sup> In “‘The Slight Skirmishing of a Novel Writer’: Charlotte Smith and the American War of Independence,” *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008) 71-86, Barbara Tarling has also emphasised that the record of American achievement in the years since 1775 underpins *Desmond’s* optimistic vision of a reformed French polity freed from the abuses of power associated with the ancien régime, and offers a direct challenge to Burke’s negative prognosis.



(311). Desmond is quick to emphasise, however, that outbreaks of violence in France have not occasioned calamities equal to those of one campaign of the recent American War. Geraldine Verney links the revolutionary violence with the oppression of the ancien régime, attributing the ferocity of the French not to “their present liberty, but their recent bondage” (303). Notably, she also endorses accusations of famine plots; suggesting that artificial bread shortages were created by the upper orders in 1789 and 1790 in a bid to quell the political agitation of the Third Estate, and reduce the people to obedience, she writes, “the wretched projectors fell victims to the indignation of the people’ and the cry of ‘du pain, du pain, pour nous & pour nos enfans’ was loudly urged in the ears of royalty, when royalty was believed to have encouraged such atrocity” (326). Adopting an extreme position, Smith’s heroine continues,

While humanity drops her tears at the sad stories of those individuals who fell the victim of popular tumult so naturally excited, pity cannot throw over these transactions a veil thick enough to conceal the tremendous decree of justice, which, like “the hand writing upon the wall,” will be seen in colours of blood, and however regretted, must still be acknowledged as the hand of justice. (326)

Similarly, in his reflections on the ill-fated flight of the French royal family to Varennes,<sup>26</sup> Smith’s hero emphasises Louis’ violation of the civic oath he had sworn during the Fête de Fédération (14 July 1790), and his withdrawal of the support he had pledged to the new constitution (310-11). Desmond underlines the stakes involved in the king’s attempt to reach the counter-revolutionary forces, asserting that the success of the royalists and their foreign allies would have resulted in the restoration of absolute monarchy and ancien-regime repression. Pointedly utilising Burke’s term for the Bastille, he declares, “Then would the *King’s castles* have been rebuilt, and *lettres de cachets* have re-peopled the dungeons!” (311). Focusing on the flight in its broader context, the more moderate Bethel is also largely unsympathetic; referring to the intended evasion of Louis XVI as

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<sup>26</sup> On 20 June 1791 the royal family attempted to flee Paris to join the counter-revolutionary forces but, after being recognised, they were arrested at Varennes and escorted under guard to Paris. This act signalled Louis’ opposition to the Revolutionary government and his willingness to overthrow it by force, ultimately sealing his fate.

“disappointed treachery” (314), he emphasises that this act “would have plunged France, if not all Europe into an immediate war” (314). Desmond’s description of the calm deportment of the French people upon the return of the royal family to Paris undermines Burke’s depiction of the ferocity of the French revolutionary populace in the *Reflections*. Rejoicing at the calmness and magnanimity shown by the French people on the re-entrance of the king into Paris, Desmond remarks, “This will surely convince the world, that the *bloody democracy* of Mr Burke, is not a combination of the swinish multitude, for the purposes of anarchy, but the association of reasonable beings, who determine to be, and deserve to be, free” (310).

Incorporating a range of voices and perspectives, *Desmond* ultimately offers a multitude of viewpoints on the Revolution and its inherent meaning. Extreme conservative opinion is pointedly undercut in the text, yet Smith’s cast of liberal characters reflect varying attitudes to proceedings in France. As Smith engaged with events largely as they unfolded, the latter parts of the text emphasise the threat offered to France by the leagued Northern powers, and reflect growing uncertainty occasioned by the militant strain apparent in the late constitutional phase of the Revolution. Writing to Bethel, Desmond claims that should the European powers unite against the liberties of France, it will be “the first instance, in the annals of mankind, of an union of tyrants to crush a people who profess to have no other object than to obtain, for themselves, that liberty which is the undoubted birthright of all mankind” (359-60). Bethel reveals similar concerns about the “host of foes” (178) which have arisen against the Revolution, and those whose material interests lead them to oppose efforts for ameliorative economic and political reform (179). Both the hero and heroine of *Desmond* are optimistic about the future of France, yet some of the text’s final words on the Revolution are those of the measured Bethel, whose fears about the lack of unanimity apparent in the French leadership would quickly transpire to be highly prescient. Identifying the death of Mirabeau as a turning point, he writes to Desmond,

It does not make you suppose, that because I think our form of government good, I do not, therefore, allow, that there may be a better; nor that I am jealous least a neighbouring nation should find that better. – At the same time, I am compelled to say, that the proceedings of the National Assembly, since the death of Mirabeau, give me too little reason to believe they will. – I

dread the want of unanimity – the want of some great leading mind, to collect and condense the patriotic intentions and views of those who really wish only the salvation of their country. (315-6)

Reservations about the revolutionary enterprise are also evident in the narrative close. Although the novel concludes with the image of a radical new family unit including the illegitimate daughter of Desmond and Josephine de Boisbelle, critics have justly emphasised the darker elements of Smith's ending. As Conway has observed, it is ultimately Desmond who emerges "as the voice of authority" (406) at the close of the text. The language of possession employed by Smith's hero in his discussion of his impending marriage to Geraldine Verney is problematic, as is the fact that it is Verney that directs and authorises his wife's next marriage, bequeathing "his wife and children to Desmond, just as he would bequeath a piece of property" (Mellor 119). Similarly, although Desmond rejoices at the marriage of Fanny Waverly, Geraldine's younger sister, to Montfleuri, the enlightened representative of the revolution, he casts some doubt on his ability to serve as a good husband, suggesting Smith's reservations with regard to the place of women in terms of revolutionary reform, and the fulfilment of revolutionary idealism.<sup>27</sup>

Appearing in the dramatically altered climate of 1794, *The Banished Man* marked a continuation of Smith's chronicle of the Revolution, beginning at the point where *Desmond* terminated. Published in the wake of *The Old Manor House* (1793), *The Banished Man* charts the decline of early revolutionary promise, and the advent of the militant Jacobin regime, drawing heavily on Smith's personal family history.

<sup>28</sup> As in the earlier *Desmond*, in the narrative preface to *The Banished Man*, Smith

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<sup>27</sup> Garnai and Anne K. Mellor have also commented on this aspect of *Desmond*. While Garnai contends that Smith's particularised enactment of the financially vulnerable woman, and the terror and helplessness that motivate her behaviour, indicates her awareness of a tyranny so profound that it resists the liberating potential of the Revolution, in *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002), Mellor has also suggested that *Desmond* offers an exploration of the gender politics that sustain both conservative and republican political ideologies. Keane has also identified a gender critique that cuts across the revolutionary/counterrevolutionary argument in the novel, focusing particularly on Smith's treatment of the French character Josephine de Boisbelle.

<sup>28</sup> The marriage of Smith's daughter Anna Augusta to the French émigré Alexandre de Foville supplied the material for the love story between Angelina Denzil and the exiled D'Alonville, while the experience of the English hero, Ellesmere, who fights in the early Revolutionary Wars and is injured at Dunkirk, corresponds with that of Smith's son Charles Smith. Mrs Denzil, referred to variously in the text as Henrietta Denzil and Charlotte Denzil, appears as Smith's most famous autobiographical portrait, and the legal struggles of the Denzil family mirror those experienced by the Smiths.

emphasised the engagement of her novel with the historical, noting, “I have in the present work, aimed less at the wonderful and extraordinary, than at connecting by a chain of possible circumstances, events, some of which *have* happened, and all of which *might* have happened . . .” (109). The sense of revolutionary potential underpinning *Desmond* is challenged by the cyclical historical view apparent within the preface to Smith’s later novel, which explicitly associates the terrors of contemporary France with the cruelty of the Roman Empire, lamenting that the French people “have given themselves up to the tyranny of monsters; compared with whom, Nero and Caligula are hardly objects of abhorrence” (109). Smith was not alone in offering such an allusion; Roman and Greek history were frequently invoked within contemporary discussions of Revolutionary France. Indeed, although many of the French Revolutionaries were convinced that they “were superior to the ancients, were their own model, creating their own precedents” (Paulson, *Representations* 18), others continued to identify directly with the ideals and figures of classical republicanism, seeing themselves as “heroic Romans of the Republic” (Paulson, *Representations* 6). As Paulson has highlighted, such imagery could be employed in contrary ways, and “while the revolutionaries were trying to valorize their day-to-day actions, the émigrés were identifying them with the vices, licentiousness, and anarchy on the other side of the Greco-Roman coin” (*Representations* 12). Smith’s reference to the darker side of the empire which succeeded the Roman Republic is notable, as are the foreboding overtones of the novel’s opening sentence: “It was a gloomy evening of October 1792: the storm which had never ceased the whole day, continued to howl round the castle of Rosenhein; and the night approached with tenfold dreariness” (111).

Craciun and Fletcher have both emphasised the significance of Smith’s selection of particular historical dates to begin her Revolutionary narratives.<sup>29</sup> While *Desmond*’s preface was dated on 20 June 1792, the date of the invasion of the Tuileries Palace, *The Banished Man* opens in the wake of the September Massacres and the Battle of Valmy, suggesting Smith’s shifting attitude towards the Revolution. Commencing in the aftermath of the French defeat of the Austro-Prussian advance, like Smith’s earlier poem *The Emigrants* (1793), *The Banished Man* focused on the situation of the French émigrés, detailing the experience of the exiled French royalist

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<sup>29</sup> See Craciun, *Citizens of the World*, 138-9 and Fletcher 216.

Armand D'Alonville. Appearing as a modern Aeneas (Fletcher 217) in the opening chapters as he flees the advancing French forces with his injured father, D'Alonville's subsequent adventures take him across much of the terrain of Northern Europe. In *The Banished Man*, Smith attempts "action on an epic scale" (Fletcher 216), drawing on the political situations of Germany, Austria, Poland, England and France, and, as in the previous *Desmond*, the main historical events of the period are interwoven with the narrative. Detailing the counter-revolutionary efforts of the French émigrés, and the military clashes occurring during the Flanders Campaign of the War of the First Coalition, the novel also sketches internal developments in France such as the September Prison Massacres, the perpetual banishment of the émigrés, the trial and execution of Louis XVI, the advent of the Terror, the execution of Marie Antoinette, and the struggles for power between the various revolutionary factions within the National Convention. Smith's focus on the plight of the émigrés has been interpreted by some critics as a sign of her growing conservatism, yet, as Craciun has highlighted in her analysis of the literature inspired by the French émigrés, the émigré theme could be utilised to serve radical as well as reactionary purposes in the French revolutionary period, with progressive writers turning to "the émigrés to critique everything from homegrown British xenophobia, to Britain's injustices against its own subjects, to Britain's role in fomenting war and thus contributing to the Terror" (*Citizens* 141).

Emphasising the pervasiveness of national prejudice against the French, and the manner in which chauvinistic doctrines inform British responses to the émigrés, *The Banished Man* offers a critique of the brand of militant nationalism that emerged as part of the response to the Revolution.<sup>30</sup> While anti-Jacobin texts such as Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron* celebrated Britain's "native Generosity" (1: 162), and her extension of "her sheltering Arms" (1: 162) for the protection of the émigrés, in

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<sup>30</sup> In *Citizens of the World*, Craciun has discussed the manner in which a range of British women writers including Smith, Helen Maria Williams, Mary Robinson and Mary Wollstonecraft cultivated a radicalized cosmopolitanism through their engagement with French revolutionary politics. Craciun argues that Smith channelled her cosmopolitanism into her revolutionary novels, "and specifically into her heroes, self-identified as 'citizens of the world'" (11). Arguing that the cosmopolitan ideals of these female writers served as an alternative to the new sense of British nationalism that emerged in the Romantic period, Craciun has linked the decline in critical popularity of Smith's fiction to the increasing hostility to nationalism found in her novels. In "The Politics of Truth and Deception: Charlotte Smith and the French Revolution," *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (New York: State U of New York P, 2001) 337-63, Judith Davis Miller has also contended that *The Banished Man* consciously challenged contemporary patriotic principles by arguing against narrow national prejudice and in behalf of principles that transcend national boundaries.

contrast, Smith's D' Alonville receives a hostile reception from the local populace upon his arrival in London:

To the antipathy which the inferior class of the English have been taught to entertain against every other nation, but particularly against the French, together with the numbers that had lately taken shelter in England, was now added doubts, lest every foreigner was an incendiary: and the assurances of Ellesmere, on behalf of his friend, were hardly sufficient to secure him from molestation. To a stranger, so imperfectly acquainted with the language, as to be unable to follow their rapid dialogue, the loud tones and rough language used on such occasions seem doubly harsh and menacing; the specimen of national hospitality with which D' Alonville was greeted on his first touching English ground, was not very flattering, nor much calculated to raise his depressed spirits. (226)

*The Banished Man* suggests that the events of the Revolution have simply given new impetus to the "long rooted national hatred" (227) of the English, and Smith's French hero is continually met with suspicion and distrust by those whom he encounters within British society. The conversation among the domestics at Ellesmere Hall reflects widespread lower-class antipathy towards the French, contrasting D'Alonville with "honest heart of oak Englishmen" (240) and figuring him as "a natural born enemy to us, and our king and country" (240). Mary Ellesmere admits that she would consider D'Alonville handsome "if he was not a Frenchman" (234), while the careful politician Mr. Ellesmere warns his brother of the misconstructions that could be placed upon his fraternisation with a foreigner at such a period of crisis. Offering an acute insight into the climate of paranoia and aggressive loyalism that characterised British society in the 1790s, *The Banished Man* incorporates numerous characters whose attitudes have been moulded by national prejudice and reactionary propaganda, as well as including a satirical allusion to the effects of contemporary alarms and government repression on the literary marketplace. Highlighting the strictures placed on radical material, in a letter to Mrs. Denzil, the rapacious publisher Joseph Clapper declares that he will change the title of her "Ode to Liberty," having "promiss'd the trade that there shall be no liberty at all in the present work; without which assurance they would not have delt

for the same” (277). A veiled reference to the contemporary tradition of radical fiction which appears within the narrative suggests that Smith wished to locate her own text within this corpus.<sup>31</sup> Writing to a friend about the hypocrisy of her distant relation Lord Aberdore, Mrs Denzil notes, “Alas! it is almost a pity to give you, who have so much philanthropy, a true idea of *men as they are* (my emphasis), especially of those whom we call *great men . . .*” (272). Smith’s allusion to the titles which distinguished Jacobin novels such as Godwin’s *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, and Robert Bage’s *Man as he is* (1792) is notable. As we will see, *The Banished Man*’s juxtaposition of the corruption apparent within English society with that of the French revolutionary regime signals that, despite her disappointment in terms of the progress of the Revolution, Smith’s stance on social and institutional abuses within Britain remained unchanged.

While *Desmond* and *The Old Manor House* emphasised affinities between Britain and ancien-regime France in their critique of British social and political life, Smith’s later work continued to draw on the situation of France in its arguments for the necessity of internal reform. Smith deliberately conflated British social and economic ills with those of the violent Jacobin regime in novels such as *The Banished Man* and *Marchmont: A Novel* (1796), a strategy which Robinson also adopted in her later *Natural Daughter*. *The Banished Man* echoes Smith’s earlier poem *The Emigrants*, which consciously juxtaposed the sufferings of the émigrés with those of the victims of institutional oppression in Britain. Smith’s Mrs Denzil, reduced to poverty and indigence by a corrupt legal system and the negligence of the powerful trustees of a contentious family will,<sup>32</sup> explicitly associates her struggle with that of the French exiles, exclaiming to D’Alonville, “Alas! Sir, my children and I have also been wanderers and exiles. I know not whether we may not still be

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<sup>31</sup> Miller has also linked *The Banished Man* with the radical Jacobin tradition, suggesting that “the unstated theme of the novel deals with the limitation on knowledge that is willingly self-imposed, as people see others only through the lens of prejudice and therefore cannot ‘know’ them at all as real individuals” (348). For further insight into Smith’s connections with other radical figures in the 1790s, and her friendship with Godwin see Garnai; Clemit, “Charlotte Smith to William and Mary Jane Godwin: Five Holograph Letters,” *Keats-Shelley Journal* 55 (2006): 29-40; and A. A. Markley, “Charlotte Smith, The Godwin Circle, and the Proliferation of Speakers in *The Young Philosopher*,” *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008) 87-99.

<sup>32</sup> This served as an obvious portrait of Smith’s own legal situation. Smith’s overt use of her public position as an author to highlight corruption within the legal establishment and condemn the behaviour of the trustees of Richard Smith’s will was a radical act in itself, and her frequent employment of prefatory materials and narratives which gave a public voice to her grievances attracted considerable contemporary criticism.

called so; for the victims of injustice, oppression, and fraud, we are now banished from the rank of life where fortune originally placed us . . .” (268). The parallels between the situation of the British subject Mrs Denzil and the Jacobin government’s persecution of a segment of the French people are continually reiterated in the text, and Mrs Denzil concludes her lengthy satirical description of England’s “blessings” with the pointed remark that she has “lost in it everything *but* [her] *head*” (273). Expressing her sympathy for the wretched situation of the French émigrés Madame de Touranges and Gabrielle, Mrs Denzil later writes,

*I*, who am, in my own country, reduced to a situation as distressing as that which they are thrown into by being driven from their’s – *I*, who am deprived, by fraud and perfidy, of my whole income, and compelled to procure a precarious subsistence, by my pen, for my children and myself – *I* have, perhaps, felt more for these unfortunate victims of political fury, than those who have not known by experience what it is to fall from affluence to indigence. . . . (344)

*The Banished Man* also continues Smith’s practice of undermining the values which Burke had defended in his *Reflections*, pointedly undercutting Burke’s celebration of hereditary succession by figuring poverty and misery as the only inheritance of the victims of legal and social injustice in Britain (429). As Antje Blank has remarked, the narrative sets Burkean tenets “of ancestral pride and partial affections against a Godwinian philanthropy of universal benevolence, effectively damning conservative ideology as a breeding-ground for callous narrow-mindedness and social oppression” (86).

Smith’s employment of elements of anti-Jacobin motif<sup>33</sup> ensured that many of the novel’s contemporary reviewers<sup>34</sup> tended to view *The Banished Man* as an

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<sup>33</sup> Horrified by the situation of France under the revolutionary regime, in his progress through his native land, D’Alonville is faced with the distresses of a revolutionary prison, and forced to witness one of the mass public executions of the Reign of Terror. Such scenes were a notable feature of the anti-Jacobin literature the period, much of which offered graphic depictions of the guillotine and of the horrors faced by imprisoned royalists. The character of Heurthrofen, who adopts revolutionary principles in a bid to raise his social stature, and satisfy his own greed and ambition, also resembles the archetypal Jacobin villains to be found in many conservative novels of the period.

<sup>34</sup> Contemporary critics have also disagreed about the political viewpoint of *The Banished Man*. Fletcher has suggested that the novel reflects a conservative stance, while Grenby has also emphasised the conservative aspects of the text in *The Anti-Jacobin Novel*. Other critics have figured



anti-revolutionary novel, and an attempt on Smith's part "to reinstate herself in the opinion of those who ha[d] been offended by the turn of her politics in a former publication, and to do away all suspicion of her having embraced the wrong side of the question" (*Critical Review* 275). Although the *British Critic* decreed that the virtues of *The Banished Man* made full atonement "for the errors of Desmond" (623), congratulating "lovers of their king and the constitution, in the acquisition of an associate like Mrs Charlotte Smith" (623), the *European Magazine* observed, "Though on a slight reading Mrs. Smith will be generally accused of having changed her political opinions, yet, on strict examination, she will be found as much the friend of real liberty as when she wrote her novel of Desmond" (276). The reviewer added, however, that Smith, "like all other thinking people, [wa]s aware that even liberty may be bought too dear" (276). Smith herself openly defended the political position she had adopted in *Desmond* in the preface to *The Banished Man*. Suggesting that the violent actions of the French were fuelled by fear, she refused to retract her support of the ideals of the Revolution and its initial reforms, remarking,

[I]f I had been convinced I was in error with regard to what I formerly wrote on the politics of France, I should without hesitation avow it. I still think, however, that no native of England could help *then* rejoicing at the probability there was that the French nation would obtain, with very little bloodshed, that degree of freedom which we have been taught to value so highly. But I think also, that Englishmen must execrate the abuse of the name of Liberty which has followed; they must feel it to be injurious to the *real* existence of that first of blessings, and must contemplate with mingled horror and pity, a people driven by terror to commit enormities which, in the course of a few months, have been more destructive than the despotism of ages. . . .  
(109)

Grenby has described *The Banished Man* as a novel "shaped by its context" (Introduction xxxiii), drawing on the significance of changing attitudes to the Revolution, the power of publishers, and the financial and personal difficulties

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the text as continuous with the radical sympathies evident in *Desmond*. For examples of this viewpoint see Garnai, Miller, Keane and Antje Blank, "Things as They Were: The Gothic of Real life in Charlotte Smith's *The Emigrants* and *The Banished Man*," *Women's Writing* 16.1 (2009): 78-93.

experienced by Smith during the composition of the text to account for the contradictory ideological strands apparent in the narrative. Although The British Club, or the “Friends of the Rights of Man, associated at Paris” toasted Smith along with Helen Maria Williams in 1792, claiming that they had “distinguished themselves by their writings in favour of the French revolution” (Cited in Craciun, *Citizens* 139), the radical strain in Smith’s writing certainly had a negative impact on the general popularity of her fiction in the wake of *Desmond*. Smith’s need to cater to an increasingly conservative audience, as well as her own disillusion with the growing violence of the Revolution, undoubtedly shaped the writing of *The Banished Man*, but, in contrast to anti-Jacobin texts which painted graphic scenes of the violence and horror of the Revolution, Smith’s narrative offered a frank appraisal of recent historical events. Rather than a recantation, the novel presented a continuation of the type of empirical analysis offered in *Desmond*, raising complex questions about the phenomenon of the Revolution, and its progress and effects.

Offering an array of conflicting responses to the Revolution, *The Banished Man* presents a divided view as to whether revolutionary reform has proven beneficial to the general populace. The peasant woman whom D’Alonville encounters upon his return to the ruined castle of Rosenheim mourns the loss of her former aristocratic patrons and the charitable relief dispensed by the great estate, declaring, “Folks may say what they will of all people being upon a footing; but I am sure one such good house as our castle above was, is a thousand times better for the poor than all these new notions, that have brought us no good yet” (162). This mode of thought is re-echoed in the discourse of the French boat-man whom D’Alonville encounters upon his return to his native France. Dismissing the liberty and privileges celebrated by defenders of the new regime, the boatman observes, “I have been out of luck, sure enough, if so many blessings were going about, to have caught none of them . . . I’ve had nothing but plagues and sorrows; but, I suppose, if I complain to you, Monsieur le Soldat, I shall be clapped up in prison as soon as you catch me on shore” (309). The melancholy history of the boatman, who has lost a flourishing family in the midst of the revolutionary upheavals, highlights the general suffering occasioned by the French revolutionary wars, internal civil strife, and the government persecution of suspected internal enemies to the Revolution. The faith in the French leadership which was apparent in the earlier parts of *Desmond* is replaced by a condemnation of the Jacobin regime in *The Banished Man*. Smith’s hero reflects

sadly on the deplorable state of the French exiles, driven from their native land as a result of their adherence to their king and a government which “however defective, was infinitely preferable to the tyrannical anarchy which had, under the presence of curing those defects, brought an everlasting disgrace on the French name” (170). The most obvious textual indictment of the progress of the Revolution occurs in the second volume of the novel when D’Alonville rescues a servant of De Touranges who has been cast into an oubliette by the local peasantry in reprisal for his attempts to protect his master’s property. Noting that the oubliette was a powerful symbol of pre-revolutionary tyranny, Grenby has argued that the abuses which Smith’s D’Alonville encounters in France are designed to show that the Revolution “has simply replicated the abuses of the ancien régime” (Introduction xxix). The execution of D’Alonville’s brother Du Bosse, which is represented in the press as occasioned by “the unpardonable crime of having received his brother, an emigrant” (367), also suggests the failure of the stated ideals of the Revolution.

Despite its condemnation of the violence into which the Revolution had fallen, however, *The Banished Man* reveals continued sympathy with the initial revolutionary effort, or what is termed “the first revolution” (261) in the text. Garnai has observed that what has often been “mistakenly perceived as Smith’s disavowal of revolutionary principles is, rather, a dual project which upholds those principles but at the same time mourns their loss” (15). The political sentiments of Smith’s liberal English hero recall the endorsement of the initial revolutionary effort which Smith offered in the preface to *The Banished Man*. Although he condemns the progress of the revolution and the treatment of the French royal family, the reader is informed that Ellesmere’s pity for the exiles does not convince him to alter his original opinions

as to the errors the former government of their country, or the propriety of those reforms which, had they been carried on by reason and justice, would have rendered France, under a limited monarchy, the most flourishing and happy nation of Europe. His thorough conviction of what it might have been, only increased the concern and disgust he felt in reflecting on what it was. (207-8)

*The Banished Man* offers an unrelenting view of the new modes of oppression apparent in Revolutionary France, yet the text also reiterates the point made in the earlier *Desmond*, that the revolutionary violence can be traced, at least in part, to the despotism of the preceding political system. Revealing a vicious cycle of oppression as he recounts his experience at the hands of the local peasantry to D'Alonville, De Touranges' servant relates, "they threw me into the dungeon in revenge for the trouble I had given them; telling me, that I should stay there a day or two to see how I liked the places where my ci-devant lord had it in his power to condemn to death any one who offended him" (328). While Fletcher has suggested that Smith's depiction of the emblematic castle of Rosenheim incorporates the notion that the ancien régime "contained much worth saving in its rights of property and forms of law" (217), the later narrative sketch of the castle of Vaudrecour explicitly evokes the darker aspects of the ancien régime. Smith's detail of Vaudrecour's history reveals the castle's historical association with the tyranny of Louis the Eleventh, and the reader is informed that though the castle had fallen to decay, "many parts yet retained their Gothic horrors unimpaired" (321). The description of Vaudrecour continues:

Some of its various lords had occasionally resided at it; for the domain around it was extensive, and the power of its possessor so great, as to be gratifying to that spirit of tyranny which high birth and great possessions are too apt to encourage. The present Marquis De Touranges had but seldom seen it, having been there only twice with large parties of his friends, for the purpose of passing the festival of St Hubert, in a country abounding with game; but his feudal rights (and in Brittany les Droits du Seigneur, were particularly absurd and oppressive), had unfortunately been insisted upon with too much rigour by the persons who were entrusted with the management of his affairs in this province, which had raised the resentment of the peasantry around him, though he was himself no otherwise to blame than in not preventing that abuse, which is most always the consequence when power is delegated to the mercenary and the ignorant. (321-2)

Thus, although the cruel action of the peasants towards De Touranges' servant is condemned, the opening passages of the chapter contextualise their hostility, offering

an implicit critique of De Touranges' failure to fulfil his duties, and his complicity in the exploitative practices of the ancien régime. Given the text's shared concern with British social injustice, it is significant that Smith's textual note on the oubliette highlights that there was one of these structures remaining at Hurstmencaux castle in Sussex in the early 1770s. The belief of royalist characters such as D'Alonville that the French populace will rise in support of efforts to reinstate the royal family and the ancient mode of government ultimately proves unfounded, while the desires for vengeance nurtured by ardent royalists such as De Touranges and his mother indicate awareness on Smith's part that a successful counter-revolutionary effort would not necessarily result in a cessation of civil violence in France. Indeed, the primary happiness to which Madam de Touranges looks forward in her exile is "that of seeing the house of De Touranges restored to its original splendour, and trampling in the dust the party to whom it owed its being eclipsed" (264).

Reflecting heated contemporary debate about the nature of the revolution, the French national character, and the viability of efforts at wide-scale social reform, Smith's text includes contrasting viewpoints on the Revolution. A character who holds in abhorrence all those who do not believe in "the infallibility of powers and princes" (231), Sir Maynard's stance on the Revolution is shaped less by contemporary events, than his association of the revolutionary proceedings with the seventeenth-century English past. Describing Sir Maynard's relation with D'Alonville, the narrator observes,

he found great pleasure in conversing with him; expressed his approbation of his political sentiments; and the first day at dinner made him drink Eternal Confusion to all Dissenters, Roundheads, and Sans Culottes. D'Alonville had no very clear notion of what the two first were; but imagining by their being joined to the other, that they might be the English species of the same genus, he swallowed as much wine as Sir Maynard thought necessary to direct, towards their extirpation. (233)

Musing on the revolution as he surveys the poverty and misery of the lower orders of the French, D'Alonville characterises it primarily as a regressive event, suggesting that the tyranny of the Jacobin regime far outweighs the oppression of the ancient mode of government. As Grenby has highlighted, however, D'Alonville's claim that

if the French people had burdens under the government of an arbitrary monarch, they “danced gaily under them” (313) exposes his aristocratic ignorance “of the abuses of tyranny, and reveals his distance from Smith’s prefatorial position” (Introduction xxx). D’Alonville’s declaration is immediately undercut by a conflicting view as the narrative voice remarks,

An Englishman would perhaps have beheld the same scene with different sensations - an Englishman might have thought the experiment right; and that the attempt to shake off such burthens as the taille, the gabelle, the corves, and vassalage, was a glorious attempt, and failed only because the headlong vehemence of the French national character, and the impossibility of finding (in a very corrupt nation, and among men never educated in notions of real patriotism) a sufficient weight of abilities and integrity to guide the vessel in the revolutionary tempest, has occasioned it to fall into the hands of pirates, and utterly to destroy it. (313-14)

Disclosing an opposing stance on the Revolution, the reliance of this statement on a chauvinistic view of the French national character is equally problematic, suggesting the role played by national prejudice in informing and colouring evaluations of the revolutionary enterprise. Writing to D’Alonville at the close of the text, Ellesmere reflects on the unprecedented nature of recent historical events and the uncertain state of the future. Figuring the revolution as an historical anomaly which largely defies comprehension, his words reveal a lack of faith in the ability of history and precedent to explain its events:

We differ still as to the commencement of a revolution, which in its progress has baffled all the reasoning which we could derive from analogy, in reflecting on the past events of the world – all the speculative opinions we could from thence build on the future. *You* think, that even in its first germinations, it threatened to become the monster we now see, desolating and devouring France. I still think, that originating from the acknowledged faults of your former government, the first design, aiming only at the correction of those faults, at a limited monarchy and a mixed government,

was the most sublime and most worthy of a great people that ever was recorded in the annals of mankind. (473-4)

While D'Alonville mourns the destruction which the revolution has wrought on the kingdom of France, in contrast, Ellesmere deplores "the injury done to the cause of rational liberty throughout the world" (474), a regret which would be re-echoed within other literature of the period. As *The European Magazine* remarked in its review of *The Banished Man*, "the hearts which throb with the love of legitimate freedom are severely pained by the reflection that this grand and interesting drama, whose ground-work was an honour to human nature, should have been so wretchedly distorted by the enormities of its actors" (273).

Given the disillusion which it expresses in terms of the progress of the Revolution in France, *The Banished Man's* focus on the contemporary Polish conflict is particularly notable. Smith's narrative was composed in the midst of the struggles of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to initiate liberal reforms and maintain its national independence. In the second volume of the text, D'Alonville and Ellesmere aid the Polish exiles Carlowitz and Alexina, who have fled Poland in the wake of the Polish-Russian War of 1792. A supporter of the liberal constitution of 1791,<sup>35</sup> which was contested by the Targowica Confederacy and the Russian Empire, Carlowitz's flight through Germany is presumably occasioned by the defeat of the reformist forces and King Stanislaw August Poniatowski's decision to join the Confederacy. Although De Touranges feels little sympathy for Carlowitz due to his association with the Polish reform movement, D'Alonville recognises that they share the condition of exile, and the disparity in their political sentiments does not impede a friendship from developing between them. Displaying an awareness of the manner in which political belief is shaped by external conditions, D'Alonville declares to Carlowitz,

If every man should consider his fellow-man as a brother, the tie is surely strengthened between unhappy men. If I can assist you, then, your opinions

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<sup>35</sup> Although it was partly inspired by events in France, and Catherine II claimed that Poland had fallen prey to Jacobinism, the May 3rd Constitution, which remained in place for only one year, was generally welcomed in Britain because its establishment was not violent and its reforms were more moderate than those of the French Revolution. The constitution was celebrated by many English political commentators, including Paine and Burke.

will not lessen my zeal to do so. Had I been a Polonese, I might have thought and acted as you have done: Had you been a native of France, you would have seen he [sic] monarchy exchanged for anarchy, infinitely more destructive and more tyrannical, with the same abhorrence as I have done.  
(214)

Toby Benis has suggested that Carlowitz is modelled on Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the leader of the unsuccessful national insurrection which broke out in March 1794 in the wake of the Second Partition of Poland with the stated aims of defending the integrity of the borders of Poland, regaining the independence of the nation, and strengthening universal liberties. Although the French royalist D'Alonville disagrees with Carlowitz's desire to return to Poland "and once more attempt to rouse the dormant or timid virtue of his country" (387), Ellesmere, a supporter of the constitutional phase of the Revolution, is more disposed to Carlowitz's reforming spirit, and seldom thinks that "the bold assertions of Carlowitz [a]re carried too far" (387). A firm defender of the principles of liberty, the exiled Pole is appalled by the results of the Revolution in France. Recounting his brief visit to Paris, he tells D'Alonville, "I quitted almost immediately a place where I saw and heard actions and language more inimical to the cause of the real liberty and happiness of mankind, than could have proceeded from the united efforts of every despot that had ever insulted the patience of the world" (380). Smith's reorientation of the reader's attention from the apparent failure of ideals of liberty in France to the contemporary Polish struggle is highly significant. One of the closing letters of the novel includes an account of Carlowitz's hopes that Kosciuszko's uprising will prove successful, suggesting that his experience in France has not displaced his faith in liberal reform or, indeed, the potential efficacy of movements of violent resistance. Contemporary sources indicate that Smith completed the final chapters of the novel in July and August of 1794, and Ellesmere's fears that the hopes Carlowitz entertains of the affairs of his country "will be found too sanguine" (475) undoubtedly reflect the uncertain situation of Poland in that period.<sup>36</sup> In its negotiation of the French Revolution and the Polish conflict, *The Banished Man* ultimately reserves a final

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<sup>36</sup> While Kosciuszko initially met with military success, by the summer of 1794 events had taken a turn for the worse, and the uprising would ultimately fail in the face of the superior force of Russia and Prussia, culminating in the Third Partition of Poland in October 1795.



judgement on the subject of revolution, and through its presentation of the competing perspectives of its varying cast of characters, leaves the question open as to “whether a similarly comprehensive reformation ought to be attempted to cure Britain’s social and political ills” (Grenby, Introduction xxxi).

**“The path of Adversity leads to the abode of Truth:” Mary Robinson’s  
Revolutionary Romance**

Appearing in the wake of Smith’s *Banished Man*, Mary Robinson’s *Hubert de Sevrac* (1796) offered a similar attempt to re-examine the question of the French Revolution, characterising it as “an epoch, the most important in the annals of Europe” (1: 6). Describing the novel as an “historically updated and overtly politicized Radcliffean romance” (“Romance” 133), William Brewer has observed that in *Hubert de Sevrac* Robinson “embed[ded] her revolutionary sympathies in a sensationalist gothic narrative, seeking both to entertain and to provide political guidance to her readers ( “Romance” 119). Featuring an elaborate gothic plotline of imprisonment, murder, abduction and mysterious assailants, the novel focuses on the experiences of the Marquis de Sevrac and his family in the wake of their flight from Revolutionary Paris to Lombardy. Like Smith’s earlier fiction, Robinson’s Revolutionary novel emphasises the disparity in contemporary responses to the Revolution, as well as reflecting on the manner in which recent historical events had shaped attitudes towards the French nation. This is readily apparent in De Sevrac’s experience when he seeks lodgings in Florence:

[N]o small portion of those whom he addressed, with barbarous contempt reflected on his countrymen; spoke of crimes and massacres, plunder and oppression, either by the court or the emancipated people . . . Those who were zealous in the cause of freedom, taunted him with the long catastrophe of past events; the sufferings of a groaning multitude, and the tyranny of their rulers. Others, who preferred the chain of a despot to the expanding wing of liberty, mocked his tame submission, and counselled him to unite with that phalanx, whose efforts were combined to manacle the human race, and to steep the chain of power in the blood of the struggling million. (2: 246-47)

Robinson situates *Hubert de Sevrac* at the point when the revolution began to move into its militant stage. Opening in the summer of 1792, the narrative concludes after a period of approximately two years. While the inset histories of many of the text's characters return to the period of the ancien régime, allowing Robinson to retrace the causes which prompted moves for revolutionary change in France, the novel does not contain the wealth of immediate historical reference apparent in Smith's Revolutionary novels, an omission which Garnai has linked to the harsh climate of contemporary censorship – *Hubert de Sevrac* appeared in the wake of the implementation of the Gagging Acts (1795) by Pitt's administration. Strongly motivated by fears of the increasing militancy of the French Revolution, the oppressive legislation enacted in Britain to counter the domestic reform movement led many liberals and radicals to protest against government infringement of British civil liberties, and Pitt's "Reign of Terror." As Godwin dryly observed in the preface to the 1795 edition of *Caleb Williams*, "Terror was the order of the day; and it was feared that even the humble novelist might be shown to be constructively a traitor" (2). Building on Brewer's contention that censorship and self-expression are central themes in the novel, Garnai has suggested that in *Hubert de Sevrac* Robinson "limits, and, in fact, cautiously censors, her own presentation of a pro-Revolution argument" (105).

Raising challenging questions about the complicity of the French nobility in the practices of the ancien régime, *Hubert de Sevrac* reconsiders the causes and progress of the Revolution, as well as attempting to account for the civil violence which began to emerge in 1792 with the journee of the 10 August and the September Massacres. As Craciun has commented in her discussion of *Hubert de Sevrac*, "the expulsion of the émigrés and the spiralling violence of the revolution are inseparable (here and in all of Robinson's later novels) from the *ancien régime* disparities of wealth that created such resentment" (*Citizens* 152). This is fore-grounded in a conversation occurring in the final volume of the novel between the English St. Clair and the exiled French aristocrat, Hubert De Sevrac. While St Clair highlights that the events of the revolution have involved thousands in ruin, De Sevrac's reply serves as a reminder that the revolution represented a wide-scale attempt to implement a more equitable social system in France: "'To render millions happy,' interrupted de Sevrac, 'ought I then to repine?'" (3: 161). Describing the initial French revolutionary movement as a glorious effort, in the opening chapter of the narrative

Robinson laments the manner in which extremism perverted the cause of freedom and liberty:

But, at that dreadful period, when the tumult of discontent perverted the cause of universal liberty; when vast multitudes were destined to expiate the crimes of individuals, indiscriminate vengeance swept all before it, and like an overwhelming torrent engulfed every object that attempted to resist its force. It was at that momentous crisis, that the wise, the virtuous, and the unoffending, were led forth to the scene of slaughter; while in the glorious effort for the emancipation of millions, justice and humanity were for a time unheard, or unregarded. (1: 7)

Tracing the influence which the political ideals of the American Revolution exerted in France through the history of the republican D'Albert, in *Hubert de Sevrac* Robinson celebrates "that spirit of liberty, which has since produced the emancipation of millions" (3: 89). The *European Magazine* strongly objected to Robinson's characterisation of the Revolution, declaring, "What we least approve of in this work is an evident partiality towards French philosophy, and something too much of the cant of French Democracy" (35). Although the novel condemns the violence of the succeeding Terror, the text's evocation of the oppressive past of the ancien régime allows Robinson to celebrate the first phase of the revolution, and the ideals which it embodied. The Fall of the Bastille, one of the most celebrated moments of the early Revolution, is depicted as a glorious and historic moment in the narrative: "A few weeks after this intelligence came, the mighty effort for freedom burst forth in France, Monsieur D'Albert . . . was one of the first that forced the walls of the bastille . . . surrounding nations heard with astonishment, of the proudest energies which humanity is capable of evincing" (3: 96-7). The opposing depictions of the Revolution offered throughout the course of *Hubert de Sevrac* are striking. De Sevrac mourns the "storm . . . that pours "its crimson torrents" (1: 14) over his native France, yet, at another point the narrative voice likens the effects of its rage to that of "the thunder which clears a noxious atmosphere" (2: 37). Robinson's imagery recalls Wollstonecraft's *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794), which had also relied on images of tempests and hurricanes in its discussion of the Revolution.

While conservative texts such as Ann Thomas' *Adolphus de Biron* presented the plight of the émigrés as symptomatic of the general barbarity of the Revolution, the émigré novels of Smith and Robinson are particularly notable for their focus on the redemptive possibilities contained within the condition of exile. At the close of *The Banished Man*, D'Alonville writes,

I fear that from disposition and education, I am as volatile, as inconsiderate, as impetuous, as the generality of young men of my rank and country, who, born in the lap of prosperity, were educated only to appear in those scenes of life, where solidity of character would have impeded rather than have assisted their progress towards those objects to which the ambition of the French nobility was directed. (480)

Attributing the personal development of D'Alonville, and his new appreciation of the true nature of honour and integrity to his adverse experiences in the wake of the Revolution, in *The Banished Man* Smith offers a Revolutionary re-working of the bildungsroman. Robinson also concentrates on the power of adversity to strengthen mind and promote more enlightened thinking, suggesting that "the path of Adversity leads to the abode of Truth" (2: 141). Condemning the ancien régime and "the overbearing tyranny which, dealt from the court to the nobles, descended from the nobles to the people" (3: 90-1), *Hubert de Sevrac* charts the movement of its French exiles towards heightened social and political awareness, and their eventual rejection of distinctions based on rank and birth rather than personal merit. De Sevrac's flight from France occasions many painful reflections: "It was at that awful hour, that de Sevrac examined the retrospect of his prosperous days. All the phantoms of delight purchased by the sufferings of the people, all the irritated tribes of wretchedness, whose wants had hitherto been unregarded, now conspired to taunt his imagination" (1: 8). Struggling to understand recent events, his daughter echoes Godwinian tenets when she asks her father "if the nobles had relinquished their superfluous luxuries, and by a more equal participation, afforded the peasantry something, beyond the bare necessaries of life, would not the world have been more at peace?" (1: 12). Sabina's subsequent observations of the condition of the Italian peasantry offer a jarring contrast with the illusions of a contented peasantry which she has garnered from literature and the Spectacles of Paris: "She knew not, that, while she contemplated

the lively portrait, the wretched original pined in solitude, and toiled in sadness . . .” (2: 85-6). Discrediting her father’s attempt to speak of inequality as a matter of political utility, Sabina’s experiences lead her to reject the elitist ideology of the ancien régime, while her reflections highlight the collusion of her family in the exploitative practices of pre-Revolutionary France: “‘And yet we lived amongst such as never felt for those, whose hard fortune placed them in poverty: all our friends, all our associates, were the enemies of the people,’ cried Sabina” (1: 13). Later in the narrative, in an exchange with Sabina, Ravillon, the villainous enemy of De Sevrac, suggests that De Sevrac’s fate has been sealed by the part he formerly played in the French court. While Sabina protests that her father never injured the unfortunate, Ravillon refuses to accept this distinction between aristocratic adherents of the former system like de Sevrac, and those who carried out acts of conscious oppression against the people: “‘But he upheld those who did,’ replied Ravillon . . . ‘He knew, that millions groaned under oppression, and yet he revelled amidst the spoils, wrung from their afflicted hearts’” (1: 150).

This question of De Sevrac’s guilt pervades the entire narrative; continually followed by accusations of crime and murder, De Sevrac is falsely imprisoned on separate occasions, and at one point, he is brought as far as the scaffold before his innocence is proven by St. Clair. The mysterious stranger (a disguised Ravillon) who visits Sabina and swears vengeance against her father declares that the name of De Sevrac “is stained with blood” (1: 244), while De Sevrac also alludes to past transgressions, suggesting that the trials that have beset him represent “a series of punishments” (3: 160) which have awakened him to repentance. The close of the narrative reveals De Sevrac’s sense of guilt to be the result of remorse at the fate of Eustace de Fleury, the father of a young French woman to whom he was attached in his youth. De Sevrac reveals to St Clair that after he requested the Count de Briancour’s aid in restoring him to his beloved, who was destined for a convent by her father, Briancour utilised a lettre de cachet to condemn Adelaide’s father to perpetual imprisonment in the Bastille. The resemblance of this plotline to that of Smith’s earlier novel *Celestina* is striking. Characterising Louis XVI as “a weak and credulous master” (3: 86), easily manipulated by the satellites of his court, Robinson suggests that individuals such as Monsieur Briancour, who abused their position to secure their own advantage, represented the worst elements of the ancien régime. The history of Briancour’s excesses and villainy serves as a searing indictment of the

former mode of governance in France, and an institutional system which permitted such individuals to wield power:

The wealth of de Briancour, was one of those overgrown monsters that helped to crush the throne, which his vices had long contaminated. Invested with command, and by nature fond of sway, he was the instrument of oppression, and the minion of a corrupt and tyrannical phalanx. Hourly enriching his favourites, and enslaving the people, he sheltered himself behind the screen of prerogative; and, while he kept the bastille in the dark perspective, beheld, without remorse, the last pang of violated humanity. (3: 85)

Robinson's narrative pointedly juxtaposes the sufferings of the émigrés with those of the victims of the ancien régime. Containing numerous references to the Bastille and the instrument of the lettre de cachet, powerful symbols of pre-revolutionary tyranny, *Hubert de Sevrac's* various inset stories offer a sustained critique of the economic, social and sexual oppression that characterised the ancien régime. Despite his noble qualities, De Sevrac is corrupted by his elevated position, and "the contaminating atmosphere of Versailles" (1: 181), forgetting the plight of Adelaide's father amidst the pleasures and effusion of the Bourbon court. He relates to St Clair,

The splendours of the court, the honours daily heaped upon me after my father's death, like destructive opiates, deadened the present sense of anguish, only to enflame the fever of remorse: St. Clair, can you believe it possible, that the glare of lustre which surrounded me dazzled my weak mind, and at times obliterated even the memory of my victim? Yet, as I towered in popularity, I found a persecuting rival in de Briancour: the story of Adelaide was a never-failing source for his malevolence; but I perceived that my associates considered the event as of little importance, and as it grew familiar to every ear, I also heard it with increased indifference. (3: 258)

Lamenting the effects of aristocratic privilege, Robinson suggests that "had Monsieur de Sevrac never basked in the sun-shine of a court, he had been the pride

of his contemporaries, and an example for posterity” (2: 255). Originally possessed of noble qualities, Adelaide’s brother serves as another example of the destructive effects of a system based on privilege and tyranny. Exiled from France despite his brave military service under La Fayette as a result of offering a challenge to Briancour, the seducer of his sister, De Fleury is driven to a life of crime and utterly consumed by his desire to avenge the persecution of his family. Recounting his experience, he declares,

Born in the atmosphere of tyranny . . . we were taught to prey upon our brother, man; and destined to behold the suffering race, scourged by their remorseless rulers . . . Can you condemn the spirit of revenge which mingled with my blood? Can you wonder, that the creatures of a despot became the objects of my hatred? (3: 286)

Robinson employs the history of de Fleury to illuminate the violent, hidden past of the ancien régime, suggesting that his experience represents one of innumerable narratives of oppression appearing in that dark volume: “Reflection told him . . . that if ever time should unfold the pages of secret history, there would be found many de Fleury’s and many de Briancours . . .” (3: 294). The repressive pre-revolutionary past and its consequences haunt the narrative, and the secret at the heart of *Hubert de Sevrac* is ultimately revealed to be an act of tyranny which took place in the preceding generation. At the close of the text Ravillion relates that his desires for vengeance on the family of De Sevrac initially originated in the discovery that the elder Marquis de Sevrac killed his father:

In the forest of Montnoir; for some trifling offence, during the *chasse*, he seized a moment when no one was near, and shot him through the heart. The deed was attributed to accident: my father was but a poor domestic; your’s a rich and powerful noble, whom none dared to disbelieve, and much less to charge with murder. (3: 307-8)

Thus, while de Sevrac’s pride of birth and obsession with chivalric honour lead him to value the purity of his name above his own life, and those of his family at various

points in the narrative, the novel concludes with the disclosure that the noble name of de Sevrac masks a legacy of tyranny and murder.

Marked by a preoccupation with questions of guilt, punishment and retribution, *Hubert de Sevrac*'s fascination with the concept of vengeance is clearly related to its wider historical context. Describing France as "the scene of vengeance" (3: 87), although Robinson condemns the decline of the initial revolutionary effort into civil violence, she also attempts to contextualise the emergence of Jacobin brutality. Like *Desmond* and *The Banished Man*, *Hubert de Sevrac* locates the roots of popular extremism in the oppressive nature of the ancien régime. This was a common theme amongst observers of the early Revolution such as Arthur Young, as well as more radical figures. In her *Historical and Moral View of the Origins and Progress of the French Revolution*, Wollstonecraft suggested that under the weight of oppression the French people rose like "a vast elephant, terrible in his anger, treading down with blind fury friends as well as foes" (Cited in Paulson, *Representations* 44), while John Thelwall publicly declared during the Terror, "the excesses and violences in France have not been the consequences of the new doctrines of the Revolution; but of the old leaven of revenge, corruption and suspicion which was generated by the systematic cruelties of the old despotism" (Cited in Thompson 174). Re-echoing the preoccupation of Godwin's *Caleb Williams* with the "constant potential for simple inversion of the persecutor-persecuted relationship which events in Paris had so terribly exemplified" (Paulson, "Gothic" 538), the history of Robinson's De Fleury offers a reflection on the civil outrages which had alienated both conservative and liberal opinion in Britain. While St. Clair asserts that reflection should have taught De Fleury to be merciful despite the wrongs he suffered, De Fleury responds, "when the mind is basely shackled, when the noblest energies of nature are checked by tyranny, the temperate light of reason vanishes. Bewildered, lost, he rushes onward, wild and impatient, goaded by wrongs, and panting for revenge" (3: 287). Tracing a vicious cycle of repetition in the history of France, Robinson suggests that a system based on persecution and despotism will inevitable breed further violence. De Fleury's dying words explicitly evoke contemporary characterisations of the remorseless cruelty displayed by the French, such as the report of the London Times on 7 January 1792 that the French people were "loose from all restraints, and, in many instances, more vicious than wolves and tygers" (Cited in Paulson *Representations* 97). Condemning the failure



of the nobility to safeguard the people, De Fleury asserts that a long series of injustice has taught him “the office of a tyger” (3: 291), declaring with his last breath, “What makes the man revolt? The tyranny of man!” (3: 292).

The corruption of De Fleury’s virtues within the repressive climate of the ancien régime clearly serves as an echo of the history of De Sevrac, who ultimately comes to view De Fleury as a victim of despotism: “The scene of present horrors he at last beheld, as the mere effect of past enormities, among which the *lettre de cachet* was an evil of the greatest magnitude” (3: 294). *Hubert de Sevrac* repeatedly figures the violence of the French revolutionary regime as a continuation, or repetition, of older modes of oppression. When De Sevrac condemns the brutality of the Revolution, Sabina pointedly represents this violence as continuous with that of the ancient system of government: “The persecution to which you allude, is neither new nor augmented. The curtain which has long concealed the scene, is raised; and the axe of vengeance succeeds the tortures of the dungeon! No more!” (2: 149-150). Describing the pre-revolutionary period as a time “when the few were happy, and the million wretched” (2: 150), Sabina is quick to remind her father that laws “that owned no code, but in the bosom of a despot, were the mere mockery of freedom” (2: 150) when he mourns the violation of law under the succeeding revolutionary government.

Numerous anti-Jacobin novels would strive to represent the French revolutionary regime as “a restatement of traditional French despotism” (Grenby, *Anti-Jacobin* 47), offering depictions of the evils of revolutionary tyranny and accounts of early aristocratic enthusiasts of the Revolution horrified by its violent development. In his discussion of anti-Jacobin fiction, Grenby has suggested that complacency yielded by events of the mid 1790s insured that exhibiting the evils of the ancien régime quickly became a highly serviceable ploy for British anti-Jacobins, allowing them “to compare their notion of an initial, mild and well-meaning resistance against tyranny, with the Revolution’s subsequent demonstrable fall into an absolutely indefensible Terror, a fall made all the worse not by the paradise lost, but by hopes of a redemption from corruption betrayed” (*Anti-Jacobin* 46). He highlights a paradigm “in which contempt for the Revolution does not rely on praise for the ancien régime, but rather draws strength from the comparison” (*Anti-Jacobin* 47). In contrast, Robinson’s focus on the continuities between the ancien régime and the new republican administration appears as part of an attempt to understand the

progress of the Revolution, tracing the civil turmoil unleashed by the revolutionary movement to the destructive effects of the system which it sought to supplant. De Sevrac's experiences ultimately lead to an acceptance that France stood in need of change, and his grief at the fate of his country is accompanied by a growing recognition that "it was the vast distance between the court and the people, that deluged France with blood" (2: 209). The novel culminates with a change in De Sevrac's political sentiments and his open avowal that he has become "the convert of liberty" (3: 316). Highlighting the disparity between the lesson offered by Robinson's émigré novel and that imagined by nationalist writers, Craciun has described the experience of Robinson's émigrés as "a fortunate fall that as in Smith's novels, transforms them into 'citizens of the world,' more sympathetic, egalitarian and feminist than their ancien régime counterparts" (Craciun 152). Their journey through the European landscape highlights the presence of the same economic and social inequities that characterised ancien-regime France; however, Robinson's émigrés, who are, in fact, partly of British extraction, finally arrive in England "not as loyal subjects and good Christians, but as enlightened citizens of the world importing 'energy' and 'philosophy'" (Craciun, *Citizens* 153).

Composed in the wake of the Terror and the widespread reactionary backlash in Britain, *Hubert de Sevrac*'s revisiting of an earlier moment in the French Revolution allowed Robinson to celebrate the ideals of liberty, justice and equality heralded by the early revolutionary enterprise. Appearing at the close of the revolutionary decade, Robinson's *The Natural Daughter* marked a second return to the point which marked the demise of the early promise of the Revolution. Opening "on a bright April morning in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two" (91), *The Natural Daughter* culminates amidst the extremities and violence of the fall of Robespierre, the revolutionary figure who was commonly portrayed as "embodying the worst excesses of the Terror" (Craciun, *Citizens* 100). In *The Natural Daughter* Robinson's continued sympathies with early revolutionary principles are evident both in the narrative's main thematic concerns, and the physical text of the novel itself. As Sharon Setzer has argued, Robinson's refusal to capitalize the titles of nobility except at the beginning of sentences offers a "symbolic rejection of aristocratic privilege" (30), while the wider narrative reveals "the fatal effects of barbarous and prejudiced opinions" (123), and a British social structure marked by social and economic grievance. The novel's critique of the

sexual double standard, the tyranny of custom, and the mental subordination of women echoes Robinson's *Letter to the Women of England* (1799), as well as the concerns of her earlier fiction. Like Wollstonecraft's unfinished *Maria; or, The Wrongs of Woman* and Smith's *Desmond*, which moved away from the conventions of the sentimental love story, *The Natural Daughter* focuses on the harsh realities of the unequal marital state, as well as evincing interest in the rights of unwed mothers and illegitimate children. The infant Frances passes through the hands of a number of potential guardians in the text, including Sir Lionel Desmond - whose name offers a clear allusion to Smith's earlier Revolutionary novel *Desmond*. Robinson's Lionel Desmond declares his intention to provide for Frances, carelessly remarking, "[she] may be mine for aught I know" (135). Expressing his pity for the unknown infant, Sir Lionel asks, "If every child were abandoned by its father, what would become of inheritance?" (135). Speaking volumes, the succinct reply he receives goes to the very heart of the issues raised by Robinson's text: "'You mean if every father owned his own children,' said lady Pen" (135).

The presence of what he terms "some flawlessly formulaic depictions of Robespierre's France" (*Anti-Jacobin* 41) have led Grenby to classify *The Natural Daughter* as an anti-Jacobin novel, although the novel's evident radical concerns caused him to qualify this with the observation that "the novel is not a classic anti-Jacobin novel by any means, for Robinson criticises the tyrannical 'prejudices' still to be found in Britain and was considered by many to be a Jacobin" (*Anti-Jacobin* 41). Indeed, when it appeared, the radical quality of the novel immediately attracted the censure of the *British Critic*, which objected, "it is of little use to lament or censure the French revolution, if the morals and manners which tended to produce it, are inculcated and held up for imitation. . . ." (321). Emphasising the doleful effects of the Revolution on the French populace through its inset account of the fate of the French Lisette and Henri, *The Natural Daughter* freely laments "the horrors which usurpation diffused under the mask of freedom" (171). However, a close view of Robinson's narrative indicates that, in contrast to the host of anti-Jacobin writings that propagated anti-revolutionary and anti-Gallic sentiment by juxtaposing the blessings of the British constitution with the oppression of the Jacobin regime, *The Natural Daughter* consciously blurred the distinction between Jacobin tyranny and the economic and sexual inequities evident within British society as part of a pervasive social critique.

In *The Natural Daughter*, the selfish young Englishman Leadhead proudly declares, “my tandem is the terror of the country: but father’s money pays for all” (176), while the incident at the racecourse where he carelessly drives his tandem over an old woman and breaks her leg pointedly evokes a notorious image of ancien-régime tyranny - that of the carriages of the French nobility crushing the populace beneath their wheels in the crowded Parisian streets. Within the narrative, the threat of imprisonment and sexual exploitation faced by Martha and Mrs Sedgley within the bounds of Revolutionary France is mirrored in their experiences of social, sexual, and familial oppression in Britain. Embarking on a trip to the continent to avoid immurement in her tyrannical father’s Scottish domains, after being imprisoned and forced into a false marriage in France, Robinson’s Mrs Sedgley returns to her native Britain in hopes of finding “protection and repose” (168), yet she is cast off by her English seducer, Morley, and her family, eventually abandoning her own child to avoid the social stigma of unwed motherhood. As Setzer has observed, Robinson’s text blatantly subverts conservative “distinctions between French monstrosity and English morality” (31), and the climactic scene revealing the identity of Frances’s father suggests “that Jacobin terrorism was not the antithesis of English law and order but rather in some instances, its own dark double” (31). Admitting that he connived in the destruction of the child which his wife’s sister bore him in order “to screen his name from obloquy” (294), the “unnatural father” (295) Morley also threatens the life of his other illegitimate child, Frances, leading Martha to denounce him as a “monster of cruelty” (293). Menaced by the threat of revolutionary violence, and the licentious advances of Marat, while Mrs Sedgley recounts that she rejoiced to find “not only a countryman, but a protector” (163) amidst the terrors of Revolutionary France, she quickly comes to repent this trust, and the English Morley is ultimately unveiled as “the English counterpart of the misogyny represented by Marat and Robespierre” (Craciun, *Citizens* 126).

### **Revolution in all its Horror**

The radical Revolutionary fiction offered by Smith and Robinson in the 1790s celebrated the potential for social transformation embodied in the early revolutionary project, and revealed the attempt of both writers to retain those values in the face of the harsh historical realities of the Terror. From its very beginning, however, one of the prevailing strategies of the anti-Jacobin novel was “to display the Revolution in

France in all its horror” (Grenby, *Anti-Jacobin* 11). This is readily apparent in Edward Sayer’s *Lindor and Adelaide* (1791), one of the earliest known anti-Jacobin novels, as well as one of the first to take Revolutionary France as its narrative setting. The increasing violence of the Revolution ensured that Sayer’s novel was succeeded by a range of anti-Jacobin texts which emphasised the barbarity of the French revolutionary movement. Indeed, as the revolution progressed, radical writers continually expressed regret that the inequity into which the revolutionary effort had fallen had become the most powerful argument available to conservative polemic, and a means with which to discredit any semblance of liberal dissent within British society. As Robinson’s Mrs Sedgeley declared in *The Natural Daughter*, “Every individual who shrinks from oppression, every friend to the superior claims of worth and genius, is, in these unsuspecting times, condemned without even an examination . . .” (167). Opening in a village near Grenoble in the summer of 1791, Sayer’s novel recounts the mournful history of Lindor and Adelaide, two French peasants “whose singular fate it was to derive all their misery from the political situation of their country, to avoid which the humble obscurity of their lives afforded them no protection” (1-2). Offering an idyllic picture of ancien-régime France, Sayer’s novel commences with a sketch of the manner in which the spread of revolutionary ideas incites the villagers to cast off the protection of their benevolent seigneur, the Marquis D’Antin. Although the narrator observes that “to speak of the rise and progress of these new principles throughout the country, would be to write the history of France during the present reign” (10), the novel moves on to offer a detailed depiction of how the lives of Lindor and Adelaide and the other villagers are affected by the turmoil of the Revolution. Much of the novel centres on a day of celebration of the Revolution which is held in the village of Ermonville, a ceremony which Grenby has described as “a sort of rural Feast of the Federation” (*Anti-Jacobin* 32). Sayer’s imagined celebrations quickly escalate into riot and murder, culminating in the death of Lindor, who is attacked by the mob for his espousal of loyalist sentiments, the attempted rape of Adelaide by one of the revolutionary supporters, and the firing of the deserted castle of the Marquis.

Within the novel, Sayer’s portrayal of the barbarity of the revolutionaries is accompanied by lengthy tracts of Burkean-style disquisition on the Revolution. In his “Advertisement”, Sayer openly highlighted the similarities between his text and

that of Burke's *Reflections*. Claiming that *Lindor and Adelaide* was in the press when the *Reflections* appeared, he noted,

The Author thinks it right to premise this, lest he should be supposed, to have deformed in the expression, and in the copying, some of the sentiments, which bear a near resemblance to those contained in that manly, impassioned, interesting, and astonishing work of human wisdom and human benevolence. That some do resemble them, is indeed his pride, but not his wonder. . . . (iii-iv)

Reviewers of the novel also linked it with Burke's *Reflections*; indeed, the *English Review* deemed *Lindor and Adelaide* "only another name for the Reflections on the Revolution in France, reduced to the popular form of a novel" (189). In the course of the lengthy lectures which are interspersed with the novel's main events, Sayer's French prier offers a detailed consideration of the development of civil government in France, arguing that historical and geographic factors necessitated the exercise of a system of absolute monarchy in France. Contrasting England's civil structure with that of France, he suggests that the English system of government arose from the particularities of England's historical situation, tracing a lengthy tradition of British liberty dating from the Anglo-Saxon period. Like the *Reflections*, *Lindor and Adelaide* explicitly countered views of the French Revolution as an extension of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, emphasising instead its parallels with the English Civil Wars. Noting that "the same sentiments were then held in that country as with us at present" (129), Sayer's prier employs the period of the Civil Wars and the Interregnum as an exemplum, underlining that the calamities occasioned by levelling principles and the alteration of the ancient institutions of church and state quickly incited the English to restore their ancient mode of government. Suggesting that the later Revolution of 1688 was accomplished "in a manner, and upon principles wholly dissimilar to ours" (131), his discourse directly echoes Burke's discussion of the Glorious Revolution in the *Reflections*:

England complained of the abuse of the laws, and prevented it, by punishing him who had abused them; we complain not of the abuse, but of the use of our laws, and redress the evil by destroying the laws themselves . . . A

declaration of rights was made, but not of such as in the vague opinion of the people might be proper or conducive to their happiness, but such as had, according to the knowledge of learned men, existed in point of fact among them before, with a very few indeed of any novelty, and these were composed of such as appeared from the experience of past abuses to be necessary. (131-3)

Emphasising France's former glory and prosperity, the prier claims that no republic could furnish greater examples of learning, virtue, science, exertion or public zeal, asking, "Upon the whole, can it be denied that this *odious* government, with all its imperfections, was at least the second in excellency known to the present time, and infinitely better than any that history can furnish us with?" (144). Condemning the Revolution and countering the various complaints which had been raised against the ancien régime such as the inordinate power of the French nobility, the practice of uneven taxation, the vast expenses of the court and the French Royal family, the riches and corruption of the Church, and the unequal administration of justice, Sayer's prier even offers an apologia for the policy of arbitrary imprisonment and the employment of lettres de cachets. His emphasis on the crucial role played by the nobility in French society, his defence of royal expenditure and his comments on the procedures of the National Assembly are all highly reminiscent of the *Reflections*. In another echo of Burke, he discounts the ideals of the revolutionaries as visionary, impractical and dangerous in the existing state of society, asking, "What shall support this new generation, that set the wisdom of their forefathers at nought, and begin the world anew?" (174). While the prier earnestly wishes that the "spirit of improvement properly restrained, may still be useful" (177), his hopes are less sanguine at the close of the narrative. Bidding the English nation to derive instruction from the fallen state of France, *Lindor and Adelaide* concludes with the prier's mournful prediction that France's present misfortunes "are only the seeds of heavier, and pregnant with the calamities of individuals, will at length people the nation with universal mischief" (355). Given its appearance at a point when the early reforms of the Revolution were still being welcomed by many in Britain, it is unsurprising that Sayer's defence of the ancien régime was generally poorly received by contemporary reviewers. The *Monthly Review* raised particularly strong objections to the novel's representation of the revolutionary enterprise, wryly

condemning the manner in which the prier “is made to *talk* Lindor, a peasant, not only out of his love for the new liberty, but into such an imprudent zeal for the old slavery, that he wantonly provokes the brutish villagers, (such they are here represented,) all eager for the Revolution, to murder him in a tumult” (280-81).

Grenby has suggested that it is questionable whether anti-Jacobin writers such as Sayer fully believed in the portrait of the Revolution’s horror which they supplied. As Paulson has emphasised, however, it is vital to take into account “what was thought to have happened, as reported in available sources” (*Representations* 5), as well as what actually happened, when considering contemporary representations of the event of the Revolution. While Grenby has observed that delineations of the barbarity of the revolutionary enterprise may have served as “an easy and appealing way of coming to terms with an event so complex as the Revolution” (*Anti-Jacobin* 44), as the Revolution became progressively more violent, such depictions also afforded a key means of countering internal agitation for social and institutional reform in Britain. Written during the period of the Terror, Mary Charlton’s *The Parisian* (1794) also emphasised the violence of the French populace, and the lawlessness of the Revolution, describing Revolutionary France as a country “where the existence of virtue was almost denied” (2: 214). Although the *Monthly Review* noted its “lively exhibition of some of the frivolities of high life” (466) in Britain, the novel offered a harsh condemnation of the anarchy unleashed by the French Revolution. The *English Review* recommended the novel to those “fond of secret history” (393), commenting on Charlton’s representation of her heroine as “the daughter of the Prince de Lamballe, who was brother to the Duchess of Orleans, and is said to have been stolen, when a child, at the instigation of the Duke, in order that she might not share with the Duchess the large fortune of her father, the Duke de Penthièvre” (393). While The *Analytical Review* noted that *The Parisian* appeared to be “as it pretends, founded, in part at least, on real facts” (489) and determined it to be more interesting as a result, the *Critical Review* contested the narrative’s authenticity, and condemned its focus on “the late wretched Duke of Orleans, a man who surely required not the blackening of imagination” (116). *The Parisian* opens with the removal of the daughter of the Comte D’Ogimond – Charlton’s figure of the Duke of Orleans - and his ward from France to England in the early 1790s. While in England, the girls remain under the care of the directress of their education, Madam la Marquis de Germeil, who many readers would doubtless have recognised as a



figure of Stéphanie- Félicité de Genlis. In *The Parisian*, the fate of the Comte D'Ogimond, who remains in France and becomes embroiled in the disputes of the revolutionary factions, offers an indictment of the unstable state of French politics, while the violent attack on Charlton's innocent heroine which takes place upon her subsequent return to France suggests the general brutality and lawlessness of the revolutionary regime. Laure is saved from a summary execution at the hands of a "self-created tribunal" (2: 142) of the French populace, who mistake her for a French duchess, only by the adroitness of the hero, and the novel concludes with the flight of the main French characters, along with a retinue of loyal servants, to the safety and protection of English shores.

England also serves as an asylum to the émigré hero of Ann Thomas' epistolary novel *Adolphus de Biron* (1795). Opening in the early 1790s, and concluding shortly after the trial and execution of Louis XVI, Thomas' novel offers a staunch denunciation of the Revolution, whose spiralling events incite De Biron, whose mother was Scottish, to renounce his French heritage and embrace his identity as a British subject. Thomas' broad cast of characters are unanimous in their condemnation of the actions of the French revolutionaries and the perilous situation of the French Royal family, although the terrors of the Revolution are sketched largely in abstract terms. Writing from Paris in the opening letter of the novel, Adolphus refers to the shocking "Spectacles of Horror already exhibited" (1: 3) and "the rude and boisterous Voice of Faction" (1: 8), while De Biron's English confidant, Alexander Bruce, speaks of crimes, "the most impious and unheard of" (1: 27), and Eugene Villeroi condemns a people who "refine on every Species of Cruelty" (1: 26). Monsieur D-'s later letter from Revolutionary Paris employs similar language; writing to Mr. Stanley he declares that he is "surrounded with every Thing that can be imagined horrible in human Nature, continually beholding this once flourishing and magnificent City polluted with the most atrocious Crimes" (2: 163). Observing that the subject of the novel related chiefly to "the distresses of individuals, in consequence of the anarchy in France" (472), the *Critical Review* asserted that the French revolutionary government was "deplored by the suffering parties, in terms of the warmest sympathy, intermixed with just indignation" (472). Considering the causes of recent events, in the opening letter of the novel De Biron attributes the outbreak of the Revolution to the influence of Voltaire, the decline of religious feeling in France, and French interference in the American War. While De

Biron claims that French participation in the American Revolution poisoned their loyalty, and taught them “to be ungovernable” (1: 5), his fellow Frenchman, Monsieur D-, also traces the calamities of the French to their “unjust and unprovoked interference in that War” (2: 89), and the subsequent dissemination of revolutionary ideas in France. Condemning France’s violation of British-French treaties, and the part which they played in the dismemberment of the British Empire, Monsieur D- declares, “I cannot help considering our present Calamities as the just Judgement of Heaven for our Perfidy” (2: 89).

Like Burke’s *Reflections*, *Adolphus de Biron* laments the failure of the French to form “a Constitution similar to that which renders their British Neighbours a free and happy People” (1: 194). Drawing frequent comparisons between the conduct of the French and the practices of savage tribes, Thomas’ narrative bemoans the fall of a nation previously celebrated for its civility and refinement. As in the case of Sayer’s *Lindor and Adelaide*, the novel suggests that the English reader should derive instruction from the perilous state of Revolutionary France, which “while it astonishes . . . also instructs, and conveys an Example to the World, proving the Danger of Innovations, which are too often replete with Horror” (1: 201). Thomas’ narrative is particularly harsh in its condemnation of those radicals who were lobbying for social and political reform in Britain, claiming that under the mask of patriotism, they “would demolish the beautiful and well compacted Fabric [the British Constitution], which it has been the Work of Ages to erect, which has been cemented by the Blood of our Ancestors, and which ought never to be parted with but together with our own” (2: 66). Paine’s *Common Sense* (1776) and the “inflammatory” doctrines of the *Rights of Man* (1792) are singled out for particular censure in the text, and Matilda D- also explicitly condemns the intervention of British women in the Revolution debate, declaring,

The Revolution has made not only the Men, but the Ladies also profound Politicians, and to those whose Minds are tinctured with Spleen, Ill-nature, and with that sort of malicious Pleasure which delights in human Miseries, it affords the finest Opportunity to vent the Rancour of their Hearts. Some in a verbal Manner point out to you the Necessity of all this Murder and Carnage: Others snatch the Pen, and write, as if one of the Furies dictated every Line. (2: 77)

The appearance of such criticism within a novel which itself represented a public contribution to the ongoing debate surrounding the Revolution is notable; undoubtedly, however, Thomas had in mind the cast of radical women writers such as Wollstonecraft, Williams and Smith who would be openly condemned in anti-Jacobin texts such as Richard Polwhele's *The Unsex'd Females: A Poem, Addressed to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature* (1798).

*Adolphus de Biron* continually elevates Britain over France, drawing on Burkean discourse in its lavish praise of England's time-honoured constitution and the equity of the British legal system. Britain is presented as the home of true liberty, serving in the course of the text both as an asylum for the victims of ancien-régime oppression, and the new wave of French emigrants created by the Revolution. Describing the novel as "a remarkable epistolary *counter*-picaresque that follows the providential convergence upon British soil of a dizzying array of Continental refugees and erstwhile British expatriates" (167), Kevin Gilmartin has highlighted that in its geographic range between Zurich, Italy, France, Russia and India, *Adolphus de Biron* provocatively wrests "home loyalties from cosmopolitan experience" (167). Although the inset history of Madam de Villeroi serves to highlight the injustices which existed under the ancien régime, Thomas remains firm in her condemnation of the Revolution, suggesting that the French adopted unjustifiable measures to remove some evils. The execution of Louis XVI at the close of the text is greeted with grief and horror, leading Adolphus to rejoice in his right "to claim Great Britain for [his] Country" (2: 189), and prompting the departure of Eugene Villeroi to join the counter-revolutionary forces in the plains of Germany. Praising the magnanimity, fortitude and resignation of Louis XVI in his final moments, the novel's closing words on the Revolution are those of Villeroi, who predicts that vengeance will soon overtake the revolutionaries "and that too of no common Nature" (2: 193).

Published in 1800, John Moore's epistolary novel *Mordaunt* was set during the period of the Directory. Interspersed with historical detail and anecdotes, as well as an extensive account of Mordaunt's travels in Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Germany, the novel moves between England and the Continent. Although the hero does not travel to France in the course of the novel, *Mordaunt* warrants consideration as a French Revolutionary novel given that the first volume comprises a lengthy retrospective account of Mordaunt's time in Revolutionary France, and the

narrative also incorporates the memoirs of a French marchioness whom the hero encounters in Vevay. Moore's depictions of Revolutionary France were also one of the most remarked aspects of the text within the contemporary reviews. The *Critical Review* included extracts of Moore's representation of "the revolutionary horrors of France" (264) in its discussion of the text, while The *Monthly Review* also selected extracts from the inset history of the marchioness' sufferings during the early Revolution and the Terror for praise. Moore and his son had visited France in 1792, and *Mordaunt* reflected the continuation of Moore's long-standing interest in French political affairs, appearing in the wake of his eyewitness account of the Revolution, *A Journal During a Residence in France* (1792), and his *View of the Causes and Progress of the French Revolution* (1795). Mordaunt's letters to his friend Somers in England relate that, after his arrival in France at the beginning of August 1792, he beheld the head of the Princess de Lamballe being carried to the Palace de Royal, developed an acquaintance with the Duke of Orleans, witnessed the September Massacres, heard the eloquent speeches of Vergniaud, and observed first-hand the tyranny of Robespierre.

Offering character sketches of key figures such as the Duke of Orleans and Robespierre, Mordaunt's epistles contain a series of lengthy reflections on the revolutionary enterprise, and the fate of the various revolutionary factions and leaders. Noting that at the beginning of the Revolution, "men of candour in every country of Europe wished well to it, because they thought it would confine the power of the monarch within just limits, and might favour the cause of rational freedom all over the world" (1: 40), Mordaunt firmly denounces its progress, claiming it had "disgraced the cause of liberty all over Europe" (1: 53-4). While his discourse on the fate of the French royal family is reminiscent of the *Reflections*, Mordaunt's comments on the National Assembly also echo Burke: "The choice of members for the national convention gives no favourable idea of so very popular an election" (1: 49). Asserting that the Girondins were the most enlightened, moderate, and best-intentioned of the revolutionary factions, he attributes the September massacres to the instigation of Robespierre, Danton, and Marat, describing the Jacobin party as a society "composed entirely of ignorant, brutal enthusiasts, prompted by a few wicked and ambitious men" (1: 50). Describing Revolutionary Paris as an "abode of terror and cruelty, from whence the neighbouring nations are menaced with devastation and ruin" (1: 48), Mordaunt offers a harsh reproach of the violence of the

Parisian populace, and their behaviour to the Bourbons and the Girondins. Supporting the “generous” intervention of the foreign powers in the affairs of France, and condemning the foolishness, cruelty and imperial rapacity of the French republican system, Mordaunt employs the language of disease and contagion to describe the “convulsive disorder” of the Revolution (1: 52).

Mordaunt’s faithful transcription of the history of Madam la Marquise de –, occupies a significant portion of the second volume. Deeming Adelaide’s story to be very affecting, the *Critical Review* observed that it displayed “in very lively colours the vicissitudes and atrocities of the French Revolution” (275). Following a brief account of her family history, the inset narrative of Adelaide - whose name recalls the unfortunate heroine of Sayer’s *Lindor and Adelaide* - details her travails since the outbreak of the Revolution. After the departure of her husband, who leaves France to join the emigrant forces enlisted under the Prince of Conde, and the lengthy imprisonment and execution of her mother during the Reign of Terror, Adelaide is forced to flee to Switzerland to escape the advances of a licentious French Count, an avowed supporter of the Jacobin party. Saved once more from her persecutor by the efforts of Mordaunt, Adelaide finds asylum in England, which she describes as “that happy country where no such scenes exist, where the power of the crown is limited by the constitution, where law alone is supreme, and, with a commanding voice, tells the monarch as well as the people, *Thus far shalt thou go, and no further*” (2: 73).

Rich in references to key figures and events of the Revolution, the inset narrative history of Adelaide appears as a relatively typical anti-Jacobin sketch of the Revolution’s excesses, yet the presentation of the Revolution which Moore offers in *Mordaunt* is certainly more measured than that of Sayer or Charlton. Moore had favoured the constitutional phase of the Revolution, and the text reserves its main censure for the subsequent violent progression of the Revolution and the actions of the militant Jacobin leaders. While the Marchioness views the Revolution with horror, claiming that it has wholly perverted the French national character, Mordaunt’s response is more considered. Writing to Somers he reflects,

I certainly have no inclination to palliate the crimes that have been committed in France since the Revolution; but I can make a distinction between those men who acted from honest motives, and those who were impelled by ambition, self-interest, or revenge: I perceived, however, that she could not

bear such discrimination; her mind being fixed on the horrid result, she disregarded the motives of those who began the revolution, and held the memory of all who had at any period promoted it in the utmost detestation. (1: 395)

*Mordaunt* is also notable for its satire of fashionable London life and its critique of British society during the early years of the Revolution crisis. Condemning the violence of public and private debate in Britain at this period, Mordaunt confides to his friend Somers that political disputes concerning the Revolution, and the scandals and calumnies that accompanied them incited his withdrawal from Britain shortly after escalating violence in France prompted him to return to the safety of Dover. Letter LXVI in the final volume of the novel, which is entitled “Political Conversation,” also suggests the ignorance of British attitudes towards the French, offering a satirical description of the climate of anti-Jacobin hysteria that developed in Britain in the 1790s. Although *Mordaunt* firmly asserts the dangers of the French Revolutionary enterprise, and the need for “every honest well-meaning individual in Great Britain . . . cordially to join, to the utmost of his capacity, against the ambition and rapacity of the French republic” (1: 38), such concerns offer a link between Moore’s text and the French Revolutionary fiction offered by female writers such as Smith, Robinson and Burney.

**Craik’s Corday: *Adelaide de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet***

Appearing in the same year as *Mordaunt*, Helen Craik’s *Adelaide de Narbonne, with Memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet* also featured a heroine named Adelaide who becomes embroiled in the Revolutionary conflicts. Like Moore, however, Craik offered a more nuanced reflection on the Revolution than that presented in Sayer’s staunchly conservative *Lindor and Adelaide*. Published seven years after her execution for the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat, *Adelaide de Narbonne* presented a rare portrait of the controversial figure of Charlotte Corday, “the Angel of Assassination,” in British fiction, as well as one of the earliest novelistic depictions of the War in the Vendée (1793-1796). *Adelaide de Narbonne* features common anti-Jacobin motifs in its detail of the violence of the Parisian mob, the anguish of imprisoned royalists and aristocrats, and the corruption, viciousness and licentious

appetites of revolutionary leaders and figureheads such as Jean-Paul Marat. The sufferings of the French royal family are also reiterated in the text through letters and testimonials from Madam Elizabeth (the sister of Louis XIV) and the history of Victorine, a fictional niece of Marie Antoinette who serves as a figure for the French Queen. Victorine shares the turmoils of the Royal family; placed in the Tuileries Palace during the insurrection of the 10<sup>th</sup> August, she is later rescued from imprisonment in the Prison de l'Abbaye. Adelaide's experience in the Prison de la Force also allows for a sketch of the massacres of the French prison population carried out by crowds alarmed by fears of counter-revolutionary action.

Ever present as an ominous, foreboding force in the background of the novel, Marat appears as the gothic villain of the piece, attempting to force the Countess of Narbonne into an unwelcome marriage to satisfy his licentious desires and gain control of her vast wealth and honours. Depicting him as a "bloody monster" (3: 64), a "demon of destruction" (3: 66) who intentionally incites revolutionary violence by the publication of inflammatory writings, Craik suggests that Marat deliberately manipulated the Parisian populace to serve his own purposes. Describing Marat as the man "who was destined to steep [her] days in anguish" (3: 66), Adelaide draws on Moore's *Journal* to describe Marat: "'Nature,' says this agreeable writer, 'has not been partial to Marat in point of looks; he is a little man, of a cadaverous complexion, and a countenance exceedingly expressive of his disposition. To a painter of massacres Marat's head would be inestimable'" (3: 66). The English neighbourhood of Mr. Hastings, a harsh detractor of the Revolution, eventually provides a safe haven from the extremes of French revolutionary terror for the Countess of Narbonne, her family and dependents, as well as a community of nuns from the Abbey of Narbonne, and various other émigrés. The close of the text sees the virtual re-creation of the French estate of Narbonne in Cumberland under the safety of the British system of government:

It was not merely in the construction of Bertram's residence that the Countess shewed a predilection for local circumstances; the repairs in the chapel of the Abbey had likewise been conducted in the same spirit of tender recollection, and made to bear as strong a resemblance as possible to the ever-regretted one at the rock. (4: 299)

Although it condemns the Terror and the instability of the Jacobin government, as in the case of Moore, Craik reveals a more sympathetic stance towards the Revolution than earlier writers such as Thomas or Sayer. Thus, while Hastings condemns the hypocrisy and injustice of the French radicals “with all the sullen phlegm of a trueborn Briton” (1: 184), his more measured friend Montague, a former supporter of the rights of the American colonists whom Craik introduces as a fictional English suitor of Corday, duly warns against the dangers of “forming rash judgements, taken up on a superficial knowledge of this nation” (2: 187). In further conversation with Hastings he observes, “The errors, or, if you will have it so, the crimes committed in different stages of the French Revolution, are by no means approved of by me; but I execrate rather the necessity of the times from which they proceed, than the unfortunate individuals who are forced to have recourse to them” (1: 190). Craciun has argued that the royalist and anti-Jacobin politics of Craik’s text “are thoroughly and constantly in conflict with a simultaneous reliance on a discourse of natural rights and liberties that echoes Rousseau, Wollstonecraft, Godwin, Williams and Robinson” (“Cordays” 196). Indeed, the conflicting ideological views evident in the novel led the *Anti-Jacobin Review* to determine the author’s sentiments on government to be “undiscoverable” (59). Although the review noted that the author execrated “the sanguinary horrors of a Revolution and all the miseries of republican France” (59), the reviewer concluded, “she holds the scale of politics with so even a hand, as far as mere opinion reaches, that it were impossible to learn her own decided sentiments . . .” (59). Emphasising Craik’s critique of the legal and political disenfranchisement of women within both the ancien régime and the new French republic, Craciun has also noted that the dehumanized sketches of republican mob violence commonly found in counterrevolutionary texts of the period “are accompanied in Craik’s novel by similar accounts of royalist violence” (“Cordays” 199). As Craciun has highlighted, *Adelaide de Narbonne* refigures the storming of Versailles and Burke’s famous account of Marie-Antoinette’s flight from the revolutionaries - the close of the first volume sees Adelaide under attack from a band of royalist soldiers who have plotted to storm the Castle of Narbonne and abduct her partly in reprisal for her marriage to a republican sympathiser. Offering a detailed depiction of the destruction wrought by the royalist band that lays waste to the surrounding villages and massacres the local inhabitants, Craik’s narrative underlines the continuities between republican and royalist modes of violence. Faced



with the brutality of the royalist campaign, even the devout Royalist supporter Hastings is forced to “damn Royalists as well as Republicans, if they are scoundrels!” (1: 271).

While much of the novel centres on the eventful personal history of the fictional French Countess de Narbonne, Corday is introduced in the narrative as a personal friend of the heroine. Although Corday resided at Normandy, Craik places her in the midst of the War of the Vendee, where she is witness to the early counter-revolutionary effort led by Francois de Charette. Weaving the history of Corday together with that of the fictional Adelaide, Craik capitalises on fascination with the figure of Corday and her assassination of Marat. Corday’s contemporaries had been shocked at the concept of a woman committing such a bold political act, struggling to reconcile Corday’s action with her youth, beauty and essentially feminine appeal. The day after Corday’s execution, the *Journal de Perlot* wrote,

The spectacle of such wickedness, beauty, and talent united in the same person, the contrast between the magnitude of her crime and the weakness of her sex, her appearance of actual gaiety, and her smile before the judges, who could not fail to condemn her, all combined to create an impression on the spectators that is difficult to portray. (Cited in Kindleberger 979)

Conflicting representations of Corday and the motivation for her transgressive act ensured that she became a popular figure within both conservative and radical ideologies. To her judges Corday was simply “a ‘monster’ in female guise” (Cited in Kindleberger 976), or, as the *Gazette de France nationale* declared, a virago that had “thrown herself absolutely outside of her sex” (Cited in Kindleberger, 983). To her supporters, Corday was the very embodiment of republican virtue and sacrifice, while Corday’s action also held an appeal for anti-Jacobins, strengthened, doubtless, by the proclamation of the Montagnard leadership that Corday was “the tool of a counter-revolutionary or Girondin plot” (Kindleberger 978). Craik describes Corday as “a Republican, but a rational one” (1: 31), delineating Corday as a political moderate: “she wished for reforms in a Government which even the most sanguine advocate for Monarchy cannot deny wanted them; but she wished not for reforms that were only to serve as a cloak for partial and additional abuses, for actions whose atrocity disgraced human nature, and threw a stain on the French character . . .” (1:

31). Making little reference to her Girondin sympathies, Craik associates Corday with the constitutional phase of the Revolution: “The Constitution of 1791 was her favourite topic; the present system of terror met her warmest reprobation” (1: 54).

Undermining their political differences, *Adelaide de Narbonne* continually links Corday with royalist sympathisers such as the Countess of Narbonne and her son St. Julian, and the narrative keenly asserts, “the opinions of the virtuous, the rational, the wise, and the just, are nearly the same on all occurrences of moment . . .” (1: 32). Adelaide overcomes her initial unfavourable feelings towards the republican Charlotte due to her superior qualities, and Craik presents a highly favourable picture of Corday’s kindness, purity and strength. Corday’s chastity, modesty and delicate femininity are stressed, yet the narrator also emphasises “the solidity of her judgement, the calm but quick discrimination of ideas, and the masculine fortitude of mind she possessed” (1: 76). Craciun has argued that Craik developed Helen Maria William’s characterization of Corday as “a new kind of female political subject uniting both masculine and feminine qualities” (“Cordays” 201). The narrative clearly draws on Williams’ account of Corday in *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France* (1796), and Craik’s description of the immovable calm and heroic demeanour which Corday maintained in the courtroom and on the scaffold is closely modelled on William’s text. Describing Corday’s execution, the narrator of *Adelaide de Narbonne* suggests that it is difficult to conceive of the kind of heroism which Corday displayed on the way to her execution, noting, “She ascended the scaffold with undaunted firmness; and knowing that she had only to die, was resolved to die with dignity” (4: 282). Although the narrative offers a critique of Corday’s act, the text’s final judgement on Corday is notably mild:

In the case of the beautiful and unfortunate Charlotte de Cordet, it is evident that, though instigated to the deed she committed by the purest, the most benevolent, and most patriotic motives which could actuate the human breast, yet the practical part of immutable justice is not allowed to the arm of a single individual, whose private passions and prejudices, in that event, would unavoidably lead to innumerable evils in the execution of the laws, and prove ultimately inimical to personal safety, and subversive of all order whatever in civilised society. No degree of acknowledged evil ought, therefore, to be

tolerated, even though occasional good may sometimes happen to result from it. (4: 302-3)

Both Corday's loveliness and heroism are celebrated in Craik's text, which sketches the gradual crystallisation of political purpose in Corday's mind. After reading an epistle detailing Marat's violent proceedings, in the first volume of the text Charlotte declares, "I confess, the idea of my country's situation, and the sufferings of those individuals with whom I am more particularly connected, wring this heart of mine with inconceivable agony, and make it feel at times as if raised to the level of actions above the common reach of my sex" (1: 70). In a letter to a friend she asks, "Is there no hand friendly to the rights of humanity, no breast courageous enough on the side of insulted nature to stop the progress of this disgrace to mankind?" (1: 69). Further hints of her destiny are offered in her admiration of the heroic royalist Bertha, who longs for the chance to make her last hours "serviceable to the cause for which she expected to suffer" (3: 214). In the composition of her narrative, Craik may well have drawn on Corday's prison letters which appeared in print days after her assassination of Marat. While the historical Corday wrote to the Girondin deputy Barbaroux, "I judge a life only by how useful it can be" (Cited in Kindleberger 997), Craik's Charlotte also wishes for "an opportunity of performing one meritorious action above the common herd of vulgar attainment" (3: 224). Craik's text also echoes Corday's own representation of her action in her *Adresse aux Francais amis des lois et de la paix* as one provoked by compassion for her country's sufferings. As many anti-Jacobin accounts of Corday would do, *Adelaide de Narbonne* supplies her with a private motivation for the murder of Marat, presenting Corday's action as one partly motivated by personal anger at Marat's persecution of the Countess de Narbonne, the supposed loss of her fiancé, and the confinement of her elderly father. The main textual emphasis, however, is placed on Corday's political purpose, and the narrative celebrates Corday's patriotism and public agency:

From the beginning of the Revolution she had been accustomed to assimilate certain periods of ancient and modern history with those events daily passing before her; and, in conjunction with nearer considerations, produced by the fate of her friends, might probably be excited, by the examples of antiquity,

to the commission of a deed which she believed, with the fond enthusiasm of an ardent disposition, was due to the sufferings of a father, and the memory of those victims heretofore immolated at the bloody shrine of Republican tyranny; a deed no less calculated to revenge the injuries inflicted on the beings dearest to her heart, than destined to deliver her unhappy country from the galling yoke of a monster, who was equally a disgrace to mankind, and the nation to which he belonged. (4: 278-9)

Although Craik's Charlotte pronounces the name of Madame de Narbonne as she commits the murder, the narrative quickly moves on to present Corday firmly acknowledging the transaction during her trial and declaring it an act of public duty,

She acknowledged the transaction, and justified it by declaring that it was a duty she owed her country, and mankind in general, to rid the world of a monster, whose sanguinary doctrines were framed to involve the nation in anarchy and civil war; and asserted her right to put Marat to death, as a convict already condemned by the public opinion. (4: 280)

The narrative allusion to Corday's identification with the figure of Brutus – Corday quoted lines from Voltaire's *Brutus* in her *Adresse aux Francais* – is particularly notable, suggesting Craik's explicit association of Corday's act with the patriotism and self-sacrifice of the male heroes of antiquity.

### **Revolutionary Fictions**

In the opening lines of its review of Charlotte Smith's *The Banished Man* in 1794, the *European Magazine* remarked, "That most prominent event of the present Century the Revolution of France, has furnished an abundance of incidents which narrators of fictitious history may frequently adopt with great effect" (273). The range of French Revolutionary fiction which emerged as part of the literary response to the Revolution testifies to the truth of this observation, appearing as an important reflection of the heightened historical consciousness which the French revolutionary experience generated within the literature of the late eighteenth century. Doody has argued that "the modern historical novel, as Scott was to develop it, is really an

offspring of those novels of the French Revolution and of the Revolutionary era” (*Life* 318). Observing that female novelists in the French revolutionary era were aware of the novelist’s unique capacity “to produce the present . . . as history” (“English” 195), Doody has placed particular emphasis on Smith’s depiction of the manner in which the lives of her characters are conditioned by the events of the Revolution, claiming that *Desmond* marked “the beginning of the historical novel in England” (“English” 194). Lokke has built on this contention, arguing that *Desmond* encapsulates Smith’s vision of “an activist purpose for the historical novel” (60), while Craciun and Lokke’s study of British female responses to the French Revolution, *Rebellious Hearts*, has also acknowledged the contribution of Smith, Robinson and Craik to the genre of historical fiction. Little sustained critical attention has been paid to their status as historical novelists, however, and less consideration has been afforded to the novels of Moore, Sayer, Charlton and Thomas. Indeed, in his study of the anti-Jacobin novel, Grenby proved reluctant to classify those anti-Jacobin texts which offered representations of the Revolution as historical fiction, noting,

they might have been historical novels, because they were depicting events of several years previously and because they had left behind the scene of crisis which had originally put the Revolution into fiction, but they were still, implicitly in their depictions, ideological novels, having absorbed unchallenged the anti-Jacobinism of previous representations. (*Anti-Jacobin* 64)

It is vital to consider the broader political and ideological motivations underpinning British depictions of the Revolution, yet it remains evident that the Revolutionary novels discussed above were united by their engagement with the historical event of the Revolution, and their various attempts to delineate its broader social and political effect. Enclosing complex analyses of the Revolution, and raising challenging question about the historical “truth” of its events, the French Revolutionary fictions of novelists such as Smith, Robinson and Craik revealed more developed historical concerns than those of Charlton or Thomas, yet all of these texts contained characters whose lives were visibly affected by a wider historical process, and many featured real historical figures of the Revolution. Through their

imaginative engagement with contemporary history, these novelists offered a distinct and significant type of historical fiction to Romantic audiences, and their texts require due attention within the broader history of the genre. While a preoccupation with the events of contemporary history would become increasingly evident within the early nineteenth-century novel with the emergence of texts such as Porter's *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, and the appearance of a range of novels set during the Irish Rebellion of 1798, the French Revolution and the crisis it had occasioned within British society continued to fascinate authors. Works such as the anonymous *Memoirs of M. De Brinboc* (1805), Edward Mangin's *George the Third* (1807) and Maria Edgeworth's "Madame de Fleury" (1809) and *Emilie de Coulanges* (1812) testify to a continuing engagement with the event of the Revolution in nineteenth-century fiction, while novels such as Pye's *The Aristocrat* (1799), Robert Bisset's *Douglas; or, The Highlander* (1800) and Hamilton's *Memoirs of Modern Philosophers* (1800) revisited the early years of the Revolution controversy in Britain. Drawing on earlier French Revolutionary fiction, Frances Burney's *The Wanderer* (1814) offered a penetrating view of British society in the early 1790s, moving between England and Robespierre's France. Appearing in the same year as Scott's *Waverley*, Burney's *Wanderer* was to be quickly followed by Scott's own portrayal of the moment of the initial moment of the Revolution crisis in *The Antiquary*. Both of these novels will be considered in more detail in Chapter Three, but, first, I wish to consider the range of radical and anti-Jacobin novels set in earlier periods of history which appeared during the French revolutionary era, and their relation to the broader dialogue surrounding the Revolution. As we will see in the next chapter, these works of historical fiction also staged an important intervention in the French Revolution debate.



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## Conclusion

In *The Historical Novel*, Lukács famously linked the emergence of the modern historical novel with the mass transformations and upheavals of the French revolutionary era, “which for the first time made history a mass experience, and moreover on a European scale” (23). As Lukács and numerous commentators in his wake have observed, the epochal events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars framed an evolved sense of historical consciousness in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, generating more developed awareness of the historicity of the present, and the impact of history on individuals and societies. Suggesting that tendencies towards a conscious historicism reached their peak after the fall of Napoleon and the Bourbon Restoration, Lukács concentrated exclusively on the appearance of the Waverley novels at the time of Napoleon’s collapse, yet this is not to tell the full story of the historical novel, or, indeed, to tell the full story of the genre in the Romantic period. This thesis has sought to contribute to our understanding of Romantic historical fiction by locating the Waverley novels within a wider narrative of literary and generic development, and exploring the significant political and historiographical role which the genre played within the French Revolution debate and its aftermath. During the “war of ideas” writers clearly conceived of an active political purpose for the historical novel. While these texts appear as a vital element within the wider response of the British novel to the crisis engendered by the French Revolution, the employment of forms of fictional historical narrative to intervene in the Revolution debate also represents an important stage in the development of the genre of historical fiction. Revealing competing historical and political perspectives, the varied body of historical fiction considered in this study testifies to the manner in which the Revolution question was fought out within the terrain of history.

Heydt-Stevenson and Sussman have justly remarked that during the Romantic era, “historical context affected not only the shaping of characters in novels, but the very shaping of novels themselves” (6). An increasing preoccupation with socio-historical contexts is evident throughout the diverse sphere of the late eighteenth-century novel, and this is nowhere more evident than in the strand of French Revolutionary fiction which emerged during the revolutionary decade. Like Burke’s *Reflections*, Williams *Letters* and the broader range of histories, travel



journals, press records, and reported or eyewitness “accounts” which permeated the broad culture of contemporary print, the novels of Smith, Robinson, Sayer, Charlton, Thomas, Moore and Craik were all participants in a complex political and ideological struggle surrounding the historical representation of the Revolution, and the inherent “meaning” of its events. Indeed, these novels serve as a significant register of the contemporary reception of the Revolution, with *Desmond’s* celebration of the ameliorative effects of the Revolution giving way to conservative representations of violence and Terror as evidence of the inevitable conclusion of its principles, and the attempts of *The Banished Man* and *Hubert de Sevrac* to appraise the progress of events and retain the values of the early Revolution. In a memorandum of 1806, Napoleon observed, “It is often said that history can only be written long after the events. I do not agree. One can say what occurred one year after an event as well as an hundred years” (Cited in Gooch 153). In their engagement with the French revolutionary episode, these writers offered a distinct type of historical fiction to Romantic audiences, tracing history “in the making,” and exploring the profound consequences of the historical events which overshadowed their time.

In a period when traditional conceptions of history and its validity were subject to increasing scrutiny, radical and anti-Jacobin novelists awarded a crucial function to forms of imaginative historical narrative, drawing on history’s instructive potential for vastly disparate political objectives. While conservative novelists relied on the genre to counter the threat of revolution, and defend the eighteenth-century political and institutional structure against the encroaches of impious reformers unversed in the lessons of history and experience, a turn to historical fiction simultaneously permitted radical novelists such as Godwin and Smith to offer a more expansive meditation on the transformations and reversals of the French revolutionary era, and counter Burke on his own historical terrain. Novelists such as Reeve, Walker, West and the authors of *The Minstrel* and *Berkeley Hall* returned to the past to offer historical and political guidance though the vehicle of the popular novel, while Godwin’s application of his conception of the moral and instructive value of individuated history to the realm of fiction resulted in a mode of historical fiction of considerable psychological and historical complexity. Extending the intellectual enterprise of *Caleb Williams* into the theatre of history in *St Leon*, Godwin afforded imaginative historical narrative a key role in renovating the nation.

This endeavour to promote more enlightened social and political thought through the medium of the historical is also evident within *The Old Manor House*, with its complex interplay between the American and French Revolutions, and the debate surrounding the political settlement of 1688.

An awareness of the diverse forms of historical fiction which materialised amidst the Revolution debate can do much to enhance our understanding of the genre in the later Romantic period, and its contemporary reception. The disparate forms of historical fiction produced by Burney, Scott, Godwin and Mary Shelley in the years after 1814 indicate a continued preoccupation with the broader historical and political issues raised by the Revolution, rehearsing the terrain of the Revolution debate in a period of renewed social and economic agitation. While *The Wanderer* and *The Antiquary* present divergent perspectives on the early French revolutionary period, Godwin's treatment of Britain's republican moment in *Mandeville* stands in sharp contradistinction to Scott's portrait of the seventeenth-century civil conflicts, and his endorsement of the advent of the Glorious Revolution in *Old Mortality*. Extending the historical project initially envisioned by Godwin in the revolutionary decade, the mode of radical historical fiction developed by Godwin and Mary Shelley in the 1810s and 1820s appears as a significant counter to Scott's national historical novel, revealing a shared intellectual endeavour to revitalise the political and intellectual energies of lost republican pasts, and preserve a view of alternate political potentiality. In their complex and multi-layered accounts of history and development, the post-revolutionary fictions of Godwin and Shelley demonstrate a continuing intellectual commitment to the potential power of historical fiction to affect social change, and an unwavering belief that "the true principle of social improvement lies in the correcting public opinion" (*Political Justice* 125). Although it was the Waverley novels which would ultimately guarantee the triumph of the historical novel in the nineteenth century, this thesis has sought to explore the diversities of Romantic historical fiction, contending that a broad and inclusive definition of the genre can do much to enrich our understanding of this composite category of Romantic literature.

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