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HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEWS

BRITISH ATTITUDES TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION*

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ABSTRACT. *The study of British attitudes to the French Revolution continues to attract substantial scholarly attention. In recent years, this has resulted not only in the excavation of a substantial volume of new detail, but also in increasing attention being paid to the political experiences of members of the middling and lower orders during the revolutionary and Napoleonic decades. While historians have been interested in radicals and reformers from these social strata since the publication of E. P. Thompson's* The making of the English working class *in 1963, it is only more recently that their loyalist and less partisan counterparts have been examined by scholars to the same extent. This article begins by summarizing the recent publication of large collections of primary sources and of major biographies in this area. It then discusses recent historiographical advances and debates in the following areas: the British debate over the French Revolution; the political participation of members of the middle and working classes in patriotic and loyalist activities; the culture of popular politics; and the question of national identity.*

While a great deal of substantial and important work was published on British responses to the revolution in France during the 1970s and 1980s, it is not surprising that such a rich field of study has continued to attract scholars over the past fifteen years or so, mining an enormous volume of new detail as well as challenging previous wisdom and consensus. A substantial amount of attention has been paid to the political experiences of members of the middling and lower orders during the revolutionary and Napoleonic decades. How did they participate in loyalist and patriotic activities, as well as in radical and pacifist demonstrations? Why did they display loyalty and patriotism? To what extent could the governing elite invite and welcome their participation in its defence? Was there ever a danger that their political opponents, the adherents of radical politics, might have destabilized the state sufficiently to overthrow the government? How did the measures taken by government to guard against such an enormity affect the ordinary British subject? What can we know about the political culture of middling and lower order loyalists and radicals? How far did the experience of war against revolutionary and Napoleonic France draw

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subjects from across the British Isles into a common sense of national identity? How does all of this relate to what we already know about the politics of the governing elite in the revolutionary and Napoleonic decades?

I

Scholars working on Britain during the age of the French Revolution now have far easier access to a range of primary sources than ever before. Major print and electronic collections of pamphlets, speeches, and correspondence have recently been published, dealing with the works both of towering political figures and of much more minor players. Following the foundation laid by T. W. Copeland's edition of Edmund Burke's correspondence published between 1958 and 1970,[1] another multi-volume work is now in progress: *The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke*, under the general editorship of Paul Langford.[2] The edited volumes of *Writings and speeches* which have so far been published, like the Copeland edition of the *Correspondence*, are already the standard scholarly references. Another vast undertaking was the publication of a collection of *Political writings of the 1790s* in eight volumes by Gregory Claeys, which deliberately did not include the easily accessible works of Burke and Paine, but which made available pamphlets by less celebrated authors. Even more substantial is the *Eighteenth-century collection online* produced by Thomson Gale from its 'Eighteenth-century microfilm collection', which includes all extant political pamphlets from the 1790s in facsimile. A paperback anthology of the pamphlet debate has recently been published by Iain Hampsher-Monk, which includes a useful introduction to the ideological issues at stake in Britain in the 1790s.[3]

It would be astonishing, of course, if historians had completely abandoned interest in the major politicians of the period in their increasing preoccupation with more ordinary subjects, and a wealth of biographies of political figures of all types has been published in recent years. John Ehrman's splendid, comprehensive trilogy on *The younger Pitt* was completed in 1996 with volume III: *The consuming struggle*, which dealt with the years from 1797 to 1806 and the tortuous progress of the war, together with the concerns of domestic government and of the empire, alongside Pitt's private life, his illnesses, and his death in 1806, concluding with a final assessment of the man and his legacy. Pitt has also been well served by recent biographers, with Eric Evans, Michael Duffy, Michael Turner, and William Hague all publishing one-volume treatments, as well as Jennifer Mori's monograph focusing particularly on Pitt's response to the French Revolution.[4] Alongside these, the arrival of an excellent study of Henry Addington's premiership, by Charles John Fedorak, is one example which indicates the importance of the recent stream of

[1] T. W. Copeland, ed., *The correspondence of Edmund Burke* (10 vols., Cambridge and Chicago, 1958–70).

[2] The two volumes relevant to this article are L. G. Mitchell, ed., *The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII: *The French Revolution* (Oxford, 1989), and R. B. McDowell, ed., *The writings and speeches of Edmund Burke*, IX: *Part 1. The revolutionary war*, 1794–1797; *Part 2. Ireland* (Oxford, 1991).

[3] Iain Hampsher-Monk, *The impact of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2005).

[4] Eric J. Evans, *William Pitt the Younger* (Lancaster, 1999); Michael Duffy, *The Younger Pitt* (London, 2000); Michael Turner, *Pitt the Younger: a life* (London, 2003); William Hague, *William Pitt the Younger: a biography* (London, 2004); Jennifer Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution, 1785–1795* (Edinburgh, 1997).

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biographies relevant to this article.[5] The Addington volume is of great value in its own right in focusing afresh on a subject who has often languished in Pitt's shadow and who has been misjudged as a weak and ineffective leader. Furthermore, when placed alongside the biographies of Pitt, Fedorak's life of Addington allows us to examine Pitt's manoeuvring and opportunism in 1803–4 from the viewpoints of both of these statesmen. Other prominent politicians who have recently received biographies, long overdue, include Charles James Fox, Henry Dundas, and the duke of Portland.[6] In terms of military leadership, Christopher Hibbert's biography of Wellington was published in 1997, and at least six studies of Horatio Nelson were published in 2005 alone to coincide with the bicentenary of the battle of Trafalgar.[7]

Edmund Burke has been the subject of two recent, important, scholarly biographies. Conor Cruise O'Brien's *The great melody* (1992) is a lengthy, personal, emotive and lively discussion of Burke's life and works which defends his consistency over time and subject matter.[8] F. P. Lock's *Edmund Burke* (1998) is a more conventional, detached academic study. Not only is it likely to become the standard and most comprehensive life of Burke, but it is also highly readable.[9] Although the volume covering the 1790s is still in progress, since one of Lock's aims in writing this biography was to elucidate the author of the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, the first volume, which covers Burke's life to 1784, is nevertheless relevant here. Lock has argued elsewhere that '[t]he *Reflections* has always, and rightly, been regarded as the product of the whole of Burke's long experience in politics', as his esteem for constitutional forms and social hierarchies in different countries and continents developed and strengthened over the decades.[10] These biographical works have been complemented by Nicholas K. Robinson's *Edmund Burke: a life in caricature* (1996), which is a beautifully produced collection of many of the satirical prints published of Burke throughout his career in politics.[11]

Three new biographies of Tom Paine have been published, by Jack Fruchtman, John Keane, and Trevor Griffiths.[12] They are all vibrant works, and the first two are substantial volumes which employ a considerable volume of new material, Fruchtman offering more analysis of Paine's writings and Keane providing more detail about his activities. They are valuable works, both of which will provide starting points for future research, but both have been shown to be flawed in various ways: they incorporate too many historical errors, and they do not locate Paine sufficiently well in his historical context.[13] These are joined by

[5] Charles John Fedorak, *Henry Addington: prime minister, 1801–1804: peace, war and parliamentary politics* (Akron, OH, 2002).

[6] L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992); Michael Fry, *The Dundas despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992); David Wilkinson, *The duke of Portland: politics and party in the age of George III* (Basingstoke, 2003).

[7] Christopher Hibbert, *Wellington: a personal history* (London, 1997); Marianne Czisnik, *Horatio Nelson: a controversial hero* (London, 2005); Andrew Faber, *Nelson: Britannia's god of war* (London, 2005); Roger Knight, *The pursuit of victory: the life and achievement of Horatio Nelson* (London, 2005); John Sugden, *Nelson: a dream of glory* (London, 2004); Edgar Vincent, *Nelson, love and fame* (New Haven, 2005); Colin White, *Nelson: the new letters* (London, 2005).

[8] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The great melody: a thematic biography and commented anthology of Edmund Burke* (London, 1992).

[9] F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1: *1730–1784* (Oxford, 1998).

[10] Idem, *Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1985), pp. 31, 29–30.

[11] Nicholas K. Robinson, *Edmund Burke: a life in caricature* (New Haven, 1996).

[12] Jack Fruchtman, *Thomas Paine: apostle of freedom* (New York, 1994); John Keane, *Tom Paine: a political life* (London, 1995); Trevor Griffiths, *These are the times: a life of Thomas Paine* (London, 2004); see also Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: social and political thought* (London, 1989).

[13] H. T. Dickinson, 'Review article: Thomas Paine', *History*, 81 (1996), pp. 228–37.

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recent lives of other writers of the 1790s, including studies of Joseph Priestley,[14] Mary Wollstonecraft,[15] Hannah More,[16] Joseph Johnson,[17] and John Horne Tooke.[18] Alongside a great deal of material which has been uncovered on new aspects of British responses to the French Revolution, therefore, historians have also been provided with a substantial volume of important work on more familiar figures.

II

The ideological response to the French Revolution in Britain continues to be a fertile area of historical debate; and, again, while significant work has been published on those who have previously been established as leading characters, historians have also turned their attention to the large supporting cast. In addition to the biographies already mentioned, several other books and articles have appeared which discuss Edmund Burke's views on the Revolution in France. Although most agree with O'Brien's view that Burke's opposition to the Revolution was not politically inconsistent with his stances on earlier issues, scholars such as John Whale and F. P. Lock have tended to move away from attempts to extract a whole political philosophy from the *Reflections*,[19] presenting it instead as the work of an active and pragmatic politician 'whose writing [was] strategic and provisional rather than theoretical and systematic' and needs to be firmly grounded in Burke's historical context.[20] J. C. D. Clark's substantial introduction to his 2001 edition of the *Reflections* reinforces this interpretation, as well as arguing that the *Reflections*, far from being the work of a conservative extremist, presented Burke's attempt to hold both his Whig principles and his desire for stable government in tension.[21] Derek Beales has defended Burke against the charge commonly made against him of possessing only a weak grasp of the true facts of the situation in France. Beales focuses particularly on Burke's masterly analysis of French monasticism, and his objection to the destruction of the monasteries and convents on the grounds of the importance of their social role and scholarly contribution.[22] Joseph Pappin, however, has recently criticized British writers in particular for over-emphasizing

[14] Jenny Graham, *Revolutionary in exile: the emigration of Joseph Priestley to America, 1794–1804* (Philadelphia, 1995); Robert E. Schofield, *The enlightened Joseph Priestley: a study of his life and work from 1773 to 1804* (University Park, PA, 2004); Malcolm Dick, ed., *Joseph Priestley and Birmingham* (Studley, 2005).

[15] Gary Kelly, *Revolutionary feminism: the mind and career of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Basingstoke, 1992); Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a revolutionary life* (London, 2000); Diane Jacobs, *Her own woman: the life of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London, 2001); Lyndal Gordon, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a new genus* (London, 2005).

[16] Anne Stott, *Hannah More: the first Victorian* (Oxford, 2003).

[17] Helen Braithwait, *Romanticism, publishing and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the cause of liberty* (Basingstoke, 2003).

[18] Christina Bewley and David Bewley, *Gentleman radical: a life of John Horne Tooke, 1736–1812* (London, 1998).

[19] For example, Peter Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the natural law* (Ann Arbor, 1958).

[20] John Whale, 'Introduction', in Whale, ed., *Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France: new interdisciplinary essays* (Manchester, 2000), p. 12. Cf. Lock, *Burke's Reflections*, pp. 88, 98–9, and also the earlier work of Frank O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke: his political philosophy* (London, 1973).

[21] J. C. D. Clark, 'Introduction', *Edmund Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France: a critical edition* (Stanford, CA, 2001).

[22] Derek Beales, 'Edmund Burke and the monasteries of France', *Historical Journal*, 48 (2005), pp. 415–36.

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Burke's pragmatic, practical politics, arguing that Burke's status as a consistent natural law philosopher requires to be upheld.[23]

Until recently, Burke was viewed as crucial to the British argument, and Paine's reply to his *Reflections* (1790) with *Rights of man* parts I (1791) and II (1792) was seen as the other foundation stone upon which the rest of the monumental collection of pamphlets and speeches in favour of and in opposition to the French Revolution and political reform in Britain were stacked. Over the past fifteen years, however, these assumptions have been challenged. Lock suggested that Burke and Paine shared too little common ground to be viewed as debating the issues between themselves in any meaningful sense, and Clark reminded us that Burke is better read in the context of Price than in that of Paine.[24] Mark Philp questioned whether the outpouring of print can actually be termed a debate at all, so heterogeneous were the views expressed;[25] while Gregory Claeys and Kevin Gilmartin went so far as to query not only the typicality of Burke's views, as expressed in the *Reflections*, but also his very centrality to the dispute.[26] They argued instead, as did H. T. Dickinson and J. G. A. Pocock, that the conservative British response to the revolution in France was multi-layered and that it is too simplistic to reduce it to variations on a theme of Burke.[27] Indeed, Jennifer Mori suggested that the very heterogeneity of the patriotic response to the French Revolution and the war, embracing the views of Britons from many different standpoints, was a major success for the Pitt administration.[28] Gilmartin pointed out that Burke had written his tract for an elite readership and had never intended it to be a blueprint for a popular movement.[29] Claeys noted that most loyalists were preoccupied with defending economic inequality, and were concerned to oppose what they wrongly assumed to be Paine's support for total economic levelling; and he also observed that most loyalists were not prepared to go so far as Burke on many issues, such as his view that the British political classes had given up certain political rights in the Glorious Revolution of 1688.[30] Most recently, however, Amanda Goodrich has argued that Burke *was* crucial to the shaping of the British debate on the French Revolution by his defence of aristocracy in general, and of the French *noblesse* in particular. This raised the ire of many of Burke's respondents, including Paine, and, Goodrich contends, ensured that the aristocracy became a key issue in the loyalist versus radical argument.[31]

[23] Joseph L. Pappin III, 'Edmund Burke and the Thomistic foundations of natural law', in Ian Crowe, ed., *An imaginative Whig: reassessing the life and thought of Edmund Burke* (London, 2005), pp. 203–27, esp. p. 226.

[24] Lock, *Burke's Reflections*, p. 164; Clark, *Edmund Burke: Reflections*, pp. 53–68.

[25] Mark Philp, 'Vulgar conservatism, 1792–1793', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), p. 43.

[26] Gregory Claeys, 'Republicanism versus commercial society: Paine, Burke and the French Revolution debate', *History of European Ideas*, 11 (1989), p. 313; Kevin Gilmartin, 'Burke, popular opinion, and the problem of a counter-revolutionary public sphere', in Whale, ed., *Burke's Reflections*, pp. 94–5.

[27] H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular conservatism and militant loyalism, 1789–1815', in Dickinson, ed., *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789–1815* (Basingstoke, 1989), pp. 103–27 at pp. 104–5; J. G. A. Pocock, 'Introduction', *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Indianapolis, 1987), p. xl.

[28] Jennifer Mori, 'Languages of loyalism: patriotism, nationhood and the state in the 1790s', *English Historical Review*, 118 (2003), pp. 33–58.

[29] Gilmartin, 'Burke, popular opinion, and the problem of a counter-revolutionary public sphere', pp. 99, 104.

[30] Gregory Claeys, 'The French Revolution debate and British political thought', *History of Political Thought*, 11 (1990), pp. 59–80.

[31] Amanda Goodrich, *Debating England's aristocracy in the 1790s: pamphlets, polemics and political ideas* (Woodbridge and New York, 2005).

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In a series of books and articles published between 1985 and 1995, H. T. Dickinson developed the work on conservative ideas at the end of the eighteenth century that he had originally presented in the last chapter of his *Liberty and property* (1977).[32] An important strand of Dickinson's argument was to emphasize that the radicals not only lost the battle in Britain in the 1790s because of their weaknesses and the strength of government repression, as had largely been accepted earlier, but because the conservatives won the ideological argument by the persuasiveness of their ideas and tactics.[33] This was largely possible, Dickinson claimed, because they were able to appeal to widespread prejudices and deeply engrained opinions which were already held by many of the British middling and lower orders in favour of the traditional institutions and the existing constitution in church and state. They believed that their liberty and prosperity were protected by parliamentary monarchy, the rule of law and the prevailing social order. This conviction created an inherent distrust of British radicalism and French Jacobinism in the 1790s.[34] Dickinson's reasoning reinforced Ian Christie's case that Britain had avoided revolution in the 1790s, despite the French example, because the British economy was fundamentally prosperous and because the British social order encouraged paternalism and beneficence towards the poor, as well as earlier arguments about the power of the conservative case proposed by scholars such as Philip Schofield and Jonathan Clark.[35]

The work of various other scholars supported this interpretation (though often, of course, following different agendas), to the extent that in 1991 John Dinwiddy labelled it 'the Dickinsonian consensus'.[36] Marilyn Morris discussed the debate on monarchy in Britain in the 1790s, arguing that the French Revolution forced loyalists and radicals alike to modify their ideas on the British monarchy. While radicals generally eschewed a republican system in favour of reform within the monarchy, loyalists tended to incorporate republican virtues into their patriarchal image of monarchy.[37] Stella Cottrell examined the virulent popular British gallophobia which was fruitfully exploited by the loyalists in order to win their case.[38] John Dinwiddy, however, disputed the strength of the conservative case, suggesting

[32] H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and property: political ideology in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977); idem, *British radicalism and the French Revolution, 1789–1815* (London, 1985); idem, 'Popular conservatism and militant loyalism'; idem, 'Popular loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in Eckhart Hellmuth, ed., *The transformation of political culture: England and Germany in the late eighteenth century* (London, 1990), pp. 503–33; idem, 'Britain and the ideological crusade against the French Revolution', in L. Domergue and G. Lamoine, eds., *Actes du Colloque international* (Toulouse, 1992), pp. 153–74; idem, 'The French Revolution and the counter revolution in Britain', in Hans-Christophe Schröder and Hans-Dieter Metzger, eds., *Aspekte der Französischen Revolution* (Darmstadt, 1992), pp. 231–63; and idem, *The politics of the people in eighteenth-century Britain* (Basingstoke, 1995), ch. 8.

[33] For instance, Dickinson, 'Popular conservatism and militant loyalism', p. 124. [34] Ibid., p. 104.

[35] Ian R. Christie, *Stress and stability in late eighteenth-century Britain: reflections on the British avoidance of revolution* (Oxford, 1984); see also Christie, 'Conservatism and stability in British society', in Mark Philp, ed., *The French Revolution and British popular politics* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 169–87; Thomas Philip Schofield, 'English conservative thought and opinion in response to the French Revolution' (Ph.D. thesis, London, 1984); idem, 'Conservative political thought in Britain in response to the French Revolution', *Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), pp. 601–22; J. C. D. Clark, *English society, 1688–1832* (Cambridge, 1985).

[36] John Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism', in Philp, ed., *French Revolution and British popular politics*, p. 38. [37] Marilyn Morris, *The British monarchy and the French Revolution* (London, 1998).

[38] Stella M. Ní Ghallchóir Cottrell, 'English views of France and the French, 1789–1815' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1991); idem, 'The devil on two sticks: franco-phobia in 1803', in Raphael Samuel, ed., *Patriotism: the making and unmaking of British national identity*, I: *History and politics* (London, 1991), pp. 259–74.

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that, far from constituting an asset, the reiteration of familiar ideas and arguments was actually a sign of staleness and laziness in conservative propagandists; and that support for, and disaffection with, the government tended to appear and reappear in phases throughout the long military conflict with France, depending more upon circumstances than upon the quality of the conservative argument.[39] The problem of the actual motivation of Volunteers and others who engaged in loyalist or patriotic activities is considered in section III below.

In terms of radical ideology, historians continued to build on J. G. A. Pocock's earlier, fundamental work recovering the classical republican tradition in England,[40] and they examined the development in the later eighteenth century of claims to natural rights and the belated influence of John Locke's notion of an original contract between government and society.[41] Mark Philp has discussed the extent of republicanism in English thought in the 1790s, while Rachel Hammersley has shown the influence of seventeenth-century English republicanism on some of the leaders of the Cordeliers Club in Paris during the 1790s, including key revolutionaries such as Camille Desmoulins.[42] *Thomas Paine: social and political thought* (1989) by Gregory Claeys showed that Paine contributed to the international development of a language of natural rights, while both Claeys and Michael Scrivener have demonstrated that John Thelwall's ideology was also based on natural rights theory.[43] Scholars of political economy such as Donald Winch have also developed Pocock's contention that many eighteenth-century thinkers, such as Burke, but also Paine, held in tension an acceptance of modern commerce with doubts about its effects.[44]

Finally, books such as Peter Spence's *The birth of romantic radicalism* (1996), Bernard Semmel's *Napoleon and the British* (2004), and Mark Philp's splendid edited volume, *Resisting Napoleon: the British response to the threat of invasion, 1797–1815* (2006), pay unusual attention to the Napoleonic phase of the conflict in its political aspect in Britain. Spence argued that, after the repression and apparently mass loyalism of the 1790s, radicalism in Britain was taken over by the rhetoric of romanticism and became, by 1809, the most respectable voice of opposition to the Tory government. In *Resisting Napoleon*, Jon Mee and Mark Crosby, examining the circumstances of William Blake's trial for sedition in 1803, show that the war of ideas had not ended in 1795 or even 1802, even if the case ended in Blake's acquittal by a Sussex jury, proving that Blake 'was not the only person for whom Englishness and

[39] Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism', pp. 45–6, 48–9.

[40] See particularly J. G. A. Pocock, *The ancient constitution and the feudal law* (Cambridge, 1970); idem, *The Machiavellian moment* (Princeton, 1975); idem, *Virtue, commerce and history* (Cambridge, 1985).

[41] See Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and bourgeois radicalism: political ideology in late eighteenth-century England and America* (Ithaca, NY, 1990); and Dickinson, *Politics of the people*, p. 179.

[42] Mark Philp, 'English republicanism in the 1790s', *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 6 (1998), pp. 235–62; Rachel Hammersley, *French revolutionaries and English republicans: the Cordeliers Club, 1790–1794* (Woodbridge, 2005).

[43] Claeys, *Thomas Paine*; idem, *The politics of English Jacobinism: writings of John Thelwall* (University Park, PA, 1995); Michael Scrivener, *Seditious allegories: John Thelwall and Jacobin writing* (University Park, PA, 2001).

[44] For Pocock, see n. 40, and also idem, 'The political economy of Burke's analysis of the French Revolution', *Historical Journal*, 25 (1982), pp. 331–49; Donald N. Winch, 'Commercial realities, republican principles', in Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: a shared European heritage*, II: *The values of republicanism in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 293–310; idem, *Riches and poverty: an intellectual history of political economy in Britain, 1750–1834* (Cambridge, 1996).

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uniformity of opinion were incompatible'.[45] In the same volume, Philip Harling contributes a fine chapter, demonstrating that one of the differences in British politics between the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars was that '[i]n the admittedly still narrow but somewhat less heated political circumstances of the Napoleonic era, it was once again possible to criticize some of the more obvious shortcomings of the war effort without having one's "loyalty" or "patriotism" called into question'.[46] In the 1790s, only opponents of the war itself voiced criticisms of the management of the British war effort, because for anyone else to have done so would have raised doubts about their commitment to the pursuit of the conflict. Accordingly, even William Wilberforce and his fellow slavery abolitionists found it impossible to speak out against atrocities such as the government purchase of 13,000 African slaves to make up some of the enormous loss of soldiers' lives in the West Indian campaigns.[47] Simon Burrows's essay in the same collection argues (as did Bernard Semmel) that, for all the enormous volume and poison of British anti-Napoleon propaganda, in the end it failed to extinguish a sneaking admiration in Britain for the French emperor.[48] Hence, while Burke, Paine, and other leading activists and MPs have certainly not been ignored in recent scholarship, historians have also listened to the voices of more minor political agitators and consumers, whether 1790s loyalists, radicals of the Peninsular War period, or those who contemplated Napoleon Bonaparte from behind British shores.

III

Attention to the rank and file is particularly true of publications on the engagement of ordinary people in loyalist and patriotic activities. As Mark Philp and Kevin Gilmartin have suggested,[49] scholars working on British conservatism in the 1790s have responded to E. P. Thompson's call, previously taken up by students of British reformers and radicals, to consider members of the middling and lower orders as participants in the political arena, rather than simply as objects of elite political discussion. This has not only resulted in the excavation of a great deal of new information, but it has also stimulated consideration of the paradox of how the British state allowed, and even encouraged, the lower and middle orders to defend its elitist constitution. As Gilmartin put it, 'how was public opinion mobilized in defense of a regime committed to limiting the political force of public opinion?'[50] Moreover, historians have questioned the motives of ordinary people for engaging in patriotic or loyalist activities and organizations: were they demonstrating genuine loyalty and patriotism, or did they have ulterior motives?

[45] Jon Mee and Mark Crosby, '"This soldierlike danger": the trial of William Blake for sedition', in Mark Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon: the British response to the threat of invasion, 1797–1815* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 122. See also Jon Mee, *Dangerous enthusiasm: William Blake and the culture of enthusiasm in the 1790s* (Oxford, 1992).

[46] Philip Harling, 'A tale of two conflicts: critiques of the British war effort, 1793–1815', in Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon*, pp. 36–7.

[47] Ibid., pp. 30–1.

[48] Simon Burrows, 'Britain and the black legend: the genesis of the anti-Napoleonic myth', in Philip, ed., *Resisting Napoleon*, pp. 141–57.

[49] Philp, 'Vulgar conservatism', pp. 42–69; Kevin Gilmartin, 'In the theater of counterrevolution: Loyalist Association and conservative opinion in the 1790s', *Journal of British Studies*, 41 (2002), pp. 291–328.

[50] Gilmartin, 'In the theater of counterrevolution', p. 296; see also Mark Philp, 'Introduction', in Philp, ed., *French Revolution and British popular politics*, p. 16.

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As well as examining the ideology of British loyalists in the 1790s, H. T. Dickinson also explored their activities and tactics.[51] He showed a rich vein of British political society and culture beneath elite level and a considerable spectrum of activity: a widespread willingness to accept and to act upon the political messages disseminated by the loyalist propagandists. Dickinson pointed out that conservatives adopted many of the same tactics as radical and reforming politicians did in attempting to rally popular backing, and that loyalists were, in fact, much more successful in attracting large numbers of people to show support for their cause. On the other hand, Dickinson also argued that, while popular conservatism and militant loyalism were often incited by the elite, it is misleading to regard them as having been wholly under elite control. The very numbers of people drawn to express support for loyalist causes strongly suggests that it is impossible that they could all have been forced or manipulated into such support. Alan Booth also made this point: 'It is clear that many Church and King crowds were simply too large for the mercenary theory to be an adequate general explanation.'[52] In welcoming popular demonstrations in favour of the existing political system, Dickinson concluded, the governing elite 'had to accept that at times popular prejudices would get out of control'.[53]

David Eastwood focused attention on the dilemma for the governing elite of requiring to mobilize public support for the sake of domestic stability during the war, and yet not wishing to encourage permanent popular participation in the political process.[54] David Wykes has argued that the Priestley riots in Birmingham in July 1791 spilled over into a much more intense, government-inspired 'Church and King' campaign against rational Dissenters well beyond Birmingham throughout the following winter.[55] An even more widespread example of government ministers struggling to promote, and yet retain control of, public support was the Loyal Association movement. In 1996, Michael Duffy presented new evidence on the Assocation's origins, conclusively showing that the movement was the result of both government and outside activity. The responsibility for its genesis came from outwith the government – the original proposals, published on 23 November 1792, came from John Reeves and were previously unknown to ministers – but ministers seized upon Reeves's proposals and modified them to their own satisfaction before they were republished by Reeves on 26 November.[56] In response to Philp's caution that any widening of legitimate political participation in the 1790s was problematic for the conservative elite, Gilmartin argued that the governing elite were always aware of the challenge of encouraging public support for the Loyal Association movement without losing control, and that

[51] See n. 27.

[52] Alan Booth, 'English popular loyalism and the French Revolution', *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 54 (1989), p. 27.

[53] Dickinson, *Politics of the people*, p. 286.

[54] David Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English state in the 1790s', in Philp, ed., *French Revolution and British popular politics*, esp. p. 150. For an earlier recognition of this problem, see Robert R. Dozier, *For king, constitution and country: the English loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, 1983), pp. 54–5.

[55] David L. Wykes, '"The spirit of persecutors exemplified": the Priestley riots and the victims of the church and king mobs', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 20 (1991–2), pp. 17–39. See also idem, '"A finished monster of the true Birmingham breed": Birmingham, Unitarians and the 1791 Priestley riots', in Alan P. F. Sell, ed., *Protestant nonconformists and the West Midlands of England: papers presented at the first conference of the Association of Denominational Historical Societies and Cognate Libraries* (Keele, 1996), pp. 43–69; and G. M. Ditchfield, 'Priestley riots in historical perspective', *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 20 (1991–2), pp. 3–16.

[56] Michael Duffy, 'William Pitt and the origins of the Loyalist Association Movement of 1792', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 943–62.

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'the management of unintended consequences was no casual afterthought or latent effect but rather a constitutive feature of conservative enterprise, evident in the earliest efforts to manage a popular response to the French Revolution'.[57] While conservative strategies mirrored radical tactics, as Dickinson had observed, this was necessary in order to prevent radicalism from occupying this territory. It was paradoxical to rally public support for political subordination, but nonetheless intentional, and 'the association worked to organize and police the terms within which reasoning about popular contentment, for ordinary readers, entered the discourse of public life … [and] the arena within which "the Labouring Part of the British Public" would be permitted to achieve political self-awareness'.[58]

An even more intense version of this difficulty arose with the emergence of the Volunteer Corps. As Austin Gee has pointed out, the recent American, Irish, and French precedents of civilian military participation were not encouraging for the British elite.[59] (In fact, it would also need to be said that nor was the mobilization of the people necessarily welcomed by all of the masses, as recruitment rioting proved, together with protests against high war taxes.)[60] In an article published in 1956, J. R. Western had identified this amateur military defence organization as having a fundamentally political role as well as its military *raison d'être*, that is, to form part of the loyalist strategy against domestic radicalism, and this was accepted by scholars such as Dozier and Dickinson.[61] Recently, Eastwood and J. E. Cookson have emphasized the independent nature and the local preoccupations of many Volunteer units.[62] Eastwood argued that localism was both the principal strength and the major weakness of the movement. The impetus to establish a corps often arose from local concerns, and their initial funding frequently came from local subscriptions, but their local entrenchment often meant that Volunteer corps refused to serve outside their county, and finding continued funding was frequently problematic after the initial supply had been exhausted. Eastwood suggested, however, that 'this kind of patriotism operated at a subnational level perfectly consonant with the decentralized traditions of the English polity'.[63] Cookson also contended that the loyalty of the Volunteers to the state emerged from local allegiance. He downplayed the role of the Volunteers in suppressing domestic radicalism and found their role as a bulwark against French invasion to be their principal function, so that they helped to establish an attitude of what he termed 'national defence patriotism', which was able to unite people of widely differing political opinions in a way that counter-revolutionary loyalism could not. Linda Colley also argued that the main reason for men volunteering was the desire to protect home and hearth against possible French invasion.[64]

[57] Philp, 'Vulgar conservatism', pp. 42–69; Gilmartin, 'In the theater of counterrevolution', p. 295.

[58] Gilmartin, 'In the theater of counterrevolution', p. 328. The reference is to William Paley, *Reasons for contentment: addressed to the labouring part of the British public* (Carlisle, 1792).

[59] Austin Gee, *The British Volunteer movement, 1794–1814* (Oxford, 2003).

[60] See Emma Vincent Macleod, *A war of ideas: British attitudes to the war against revolutionary France, 1792–1802* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 187–95.

[61] J. R. Western, 'The Volunteer movement as an anti-revolutionary force, 1793–1801', *English Historical Review*, 71 (1956), pp. 603–14; Dozier, *For king, constitution and country*, pp. 138–9, 154; Dickinson, *Politics of the people*, p. 282; see also Macleod, *A war of ideas*, pp. 70–2.

[62] Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English state', pp. 158–61; J. E. Cookson, *The British armed nation, 1793–1815* (Oxford, 1997), ch. 3.

[63] Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English state', p. 159.

[64] Cookson, *British armed nation*, pp. 73ff, 237ff; cf. Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, 1992), pp. 302, 305–8.

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It seems undeniable that many individual Volunteers were not always highly motivated by ideological hostility to the French Revolution. As both Cookson and Colley showed, some used membership of a corps to promote their own personal status in the local community, especially before the encouragement of mass enlistment in 1798. Moreover, the preoccupation with local and personal concerns over national concerns identified by Cookson and Colley accords with a more general argument proposed by Paul Langford in 1991.[65] More recently, Gee, in presenting the fullest account and analysis yet of the British Volunteer movement, has also taken issue with Western's approach and has soft-pedalled the militant loyalism of the Volunteers, in favour of their role as military defenders of the British state. Gee argued that the Volunteers were loyal to the crown in a general sense, and that they were responsible to act as a force of order, but that few saw themselves as an actively political, anti-radical or counter-revolutionary force. Instead, they were 'more a constitutional than a partisan force, supporting the existing system' rather than the current administration.[66]

Most recently, however, even the credentials of the Volunteers for being a genuinely constitutional force have been challenged by Nicholas Rogers. Both Rogers and Katrina Navickas contributed valuable case studies of Volunteering to the *Resisting Napoleon* volume edited by Philp.[67] Rogers discussed the instance of the sea fencibles, established in 1798, greatly expanded in 1803, and intended to constitute the first line of defence, had an invasion occurred. Naval recruiting officers had an enormously difficult task on their hands, particularly in 1803, partly because many happened to be relatively new to the job, and substantially due to the manpower demands of all the different armed forces after the war was reignited. Their problem was considerably exacerbated, however, according to Rogers, because service in the sea fencibles was one method of avoiding impressment into the navy, a service renowned for its appalling working conditions. Rogers takes up Clive Emsley's suggestion that a similar phenomenon was at work in the rapid expansion of the military Volunteers, powered by the desire to evade militia duty,[68] and suggests that enlistment in the fencibles and Volunteers may often have been a case of 'play-safe patriotism' rather than of full-blooded, self-evident loyalism and/or patriotism. Moreover, in noting the collusion of local elites with those trying to avoid more demanding forms of armed service, perhaps for the sake of the local economy, Rogers also calls into question the extent of the patriotism of the local propertied classes.[69] Navickas demonstrates the layers of political and social divisions which underlay expressions of loyalty in Manchester and Liverpool, again qualifying the motivation of individuals and casting further doubt on generalizations that historians can legitimately draw. Just as middling and lower order participants in patriotic and loyal activities (whose political loyalty could not in fact be

[65] J. E. Cookson, 'The English Volunteer movement of the French revolutionary wars, 1793–1815: some contexts', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 867–91; Colley, *Britons*, pp. 301–2; Paul Langford, *Public life and the propertied Englishman* (Oxford, 1991).

[66] Gee, *British Volunteer movement*, quotation from p. 264.

[67] Nicholas Rogers, 'The sea Fencibles, loyalism and the reach of the state', in Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon*, pp. 41–59; Katrina Navickas, 'The defence of Manchester and Liverpool in 1803: conflicts of loyalism, patriotism and the middle classes', in Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon*, pp. 61–71.

[68] Clive Emsley, *British society and the French wars, 1793–1815* (London, 1979), p. 102.

[69] On the other hand, see Andrew Mackillop, 'The political culture of the Scottish Highlands from Culloden to Waterloo', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), pp. 511–32, in which he argues, across a broader chronological period, that the Highland elites worked in a relationship of mutual accommodation with the state's fiscal and military aims.

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guaranteed) posed problems of control for the governing elite, so they continue to pose questions for historians regarding their motivation for engaging in such activities.

IV

The study of popular radicalism[70] has also benefited from the examination of local examples, such as John Stevenson's and F. K. Donnelly's examinations of radicalism in Sheffield.[71] One of the most extensive contributions has been Jenny Graham's weighty pair of volumes, *The nation, the law and the king* (2000).[72] Graham conducted a detailed investigation of reformism and radicalism in major English urban centres outside London, such as Norwich, Manchester, Sheffield, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Derby, supplemented with details from other towns, such as Nottingham, Bath, Cambridge, Newcastle, and Bristol. Our understanding of both radicalism and loyalism has been deepened and enormously enriched by the addition of many publications on various aspects of what may collectively be described as 'popular political culture'.

One particularly productive area of interest has been the press and propaganda. Jeremy Black, Bob Harris, Hannah Barker, and Stuart Andrews extended investigation of the newspaper press to the provincial papers as well as the London press, discussing the reaction of this influential genre to the Revolution in France.[73] Barker pointed out that the newspaper press was in a prime position to take advantage of the British public's voracious appetite for a constant flow of information about the Revolution, and that therefore 'its version of events was extremely influential'.[74] Harris's work begins to end the dearth of modern published writing on the eighteenth-century Scottish political press.[75] Anthologies of radical poetry, broadsides, and literature from the 1790s have also been published, and a modern edition of Charles Pigott's *Political Dictionary*, an extraordinary text fighting for a radical stake in the political meaning of language.[76] Kevin Gilmartin's *Print politics* (1998)

[70] For a bibliographic overview of radicalism in the 1790s generally, see Michael T. Davis, 'Le radicalisme anglais et la Révolution française', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 342 (2005), pp. 73–99.

[71] John Stevenson, *Artisans and democrats: Sheffield and the French Revolution, 1789–1797* (Sheffield, 1989); F. K. Donnelly, 'The foundation of the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information', *Labour History Review*, 56 (1991), pp. 51–3.

[72] Jenny Graham, *The nation, the law and the king: reform politics in England, 1789–1799* (2 vols., Oxford, 2000).

[73] Jeremy Black, *The English press in the eighteenth century* (London, 1987); idem, *The English press, 1621–1861* (Stroud, 2001); Bob Harris, *Politics and the rise of the press: Britain and France, 1620–1800* (London, 1996); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, politics and public opinion in late eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1998); Stuart Andrews, *The British periodical press and the French Revolution, 1789–1799* (Basingstoke, 2000).

[74] Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, politics and English society, 1695–1855* (Harlow, 2000), p. 176.

[75] Bob Harris, 'Scotland's newspapers, the French Revolution and domestic radicalism (c. 1789–1794)', *Scottish Historical Review*, 84 (2005), pp. 38–62; idem, 'Print and politics', in Bob Harris, ed., *Scotland in the age of the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 2005), pp. 164–95. See, too, John Dwyer, 'The *Caledonian Mercury* and Scottish national culture, 1763–1801', in Karl Schweizer and Jeremy Black, eds., *Politics and the press in Hanoverian Britain* (Lewiston, NY, 1989), pp. 147–69.

[76] Michael Scrivener, ed., *Poetry and reform: periodical verse from the English democratic press, 1792–1824* (Detroit, 1992); John Barrell, ed., *Exhibition extraordinary!! Radical broadsides of the mid 1790s* (Nottingham, 2001); A. V. Beedell and A. D. Harvey, eds., *The prison diary of John Horne Tooke* (Leeds, 1995); Michael T. Davis, Iain McCalman, and Christina Parolin, eds., *Newgate in revolution: an anthology of radical prison*

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deals with the radical press in the early nineteenth century, showing how it became an outlet for radical views which could not be expressed in parliament.[77] Edward Larkin has provided a thoughtful study of Thomas Paine as a writer, rather than simply as a political agitator, arguing that, despite 'his central role in both the American and French Revolutions, Paine remains virtually unstudied as someone who sought to make his living by his pen', because scholars have tended to trivialize him by emphasizing his popularity rather than the intellectual content of his writings, even though Paine himself challenged the legitimacy of the distinction between 'popular' and 'intellectual' publications.[78]

The graphic satires of the French revolutionary period have also become a fruitful area of exploration for British scholars, building on the work of M. Dorothy George in the mid-twentieth century and a series of volumes published by Chadwyck-Healey in 1986.[79] Individual artists have been examined in Robert Patten's work on George Cruikshank, David Alexander's study of the 1790s radical Richard Newton, and Richard Godfrey's book on James Gillray; while satirical representations of individuals have been considered in Nicholas Robinson's book on Edmund Burke and Vincent Carretta's volume on George III.[80] Elsewhere, Tamara Hunt has explored the question of national identity in this period through graphic satires.[81]

Diana Donald and David Bindman have directly discussed the impact of the French Revolution on the print-making industry. Donald argued that graphic satire followed the rule that loyalism employed most weapons used by reformers for its own purposes. Hence, while the publishers and vendors of radical prints were pursued and harassed by the Loyal Associations, loyalists also commissioned prints to advocate their own cause. Such prints exploited traditional English gallophobia, depicted the guillotining of Louis XVI, and contrasted the wretchedness of republican France with British happiness. It was often easier for loyalist prints to attack the Jacobin enemy than it was to depict the blessings of Britain. The cap and staff of liberty traditionally borne by Britannia, for instance, could easily be mistaken for the new French revolutionary symbols, and were thus quietly dropped from images of Britannia by the mid-1790s. By late 1793, Bindman argued, most satirical artists and publishers were only producing pro-British, loyalist prints, although they reserved the right to criticize Pitt for his domestic policies and to make fun of King

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literature in the age of revolution (London, 2005); Robert Rix, ed., '*A political dictionary explaining the true meaning of words' by Charles Pigott* (Aldershot, 2004).

[77] Kevin Gilmartin, *Print politics: the press and radical opposition in early nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1996). [78] Edward Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the literature of revolution* (Cambridge, 2005).

[79] Mary Dorothy George, ed., *Catalogue of political and personal satires preserved in the department of prints and drawings in the British Museum* (7 vols., London, 1935–54); idem, 'Pictorial propaganda, 1793–1815: Gillray and Canning', *History*, 31 (1946), pp. 9–25; idem, 'America in English satirical prints', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 10 (1953), pp. 511–37; idem, *English political caricature* (2 vols., London, 1959). The Chadwyck-Healey volumes relevant to this discussion are Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the foreigner* (Cambridge, 1986); H. T. Dickinson, *Caricatures and the constitution* (Cambridge, 1986). See also Herbert M. Atherton, 'The British defend their constitution in political cartoons and literature', in Harry C. Payne, ed., *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 11 (1982), pp. 3–31.

[80] Robert L. Patten, *George Cruikshank's life, times and art* (2 vols., London, 1992, 1996); David Alexander, *Richard Newton and English caricature in the 1790s* (Manchester, 1998); Richard Godfrey, *James Gillray and the art of caricature* (London, 2001); Robinson, *Edmund Burke: a life in caricature*; Vincent Carretta, *George III and the satirists from Hogarth to Byron* (London, 1990).

[81] Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: political caricature and national identity in late Georgian England* (Aldershot, 2003).

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George III.[82] Alexandra Franklin's and Mark Philp's *Napoleon and the invasion of Britain* (2003) reprinted ninety-two images and texts, many of which were gallophobic and supportive of the British government until those that were produced in the years following the invasion scare of 1803–5, when satires against the British government again became popular.[83] The volume contrasted the divided state of British society which faced the threat of invasion from France in 1798 with the much greater unity which opposed the menace of Napoleon between 1803 and 1805.

On the issue of mass participation in the consumption of graphic satires, Donald pointed out that the fact that some prints were adapted for the decoration of ceramic goods, at a cost to manufacturers (and, presumably, their customers), is a good indicator of their popularity, whereas the subsidy and free distribution of other prints leaves their impact a matter of doubt. Eirwen C. Nicholson, however, has argued that the audience for most graphic satires was considerably more limited than has often been assumed. She also noted that loyalist prints, like the newspapers, took very little notice of British radical societies, preferring instead to regard Charles James Fox and his acolytes as embodying the Jacobin threat, perhaps suggesting that the prints were sold chiefly to MPs and the governing elite.[84] Although Timothy Clayton has argued that prints were central to national culture in the eighteenth century, this was really the higher end of culture. Clayton noted that while Gillray was persuaded to sell prints of his *Consequences of a successful French invasion* (1798) for sixpence each in order to increase its sales, he found that '"there has hardly been one sold but to people who would have paid Half a Crown as willingly as sixpence"'.[85]

Holger Hoock has considered monuments as patriotic propaganda;[86] and other historians have also investigated musical sources alongside textual and visual material. Philp noted that music and song were 'probably the most far-reaching form of entertainment in the country' and that they played an important part in the unprecedented level of national mobilization in this period. Moreover, 'the performance of songs became, in the 1790s, an arena of increasing contestation. The government and local authorities cracked down on street singers and ballad singers singing and selling potentially subversive material.'[87] This conclusion is reinforced in research by Michael Davis.[88]

There has been only a limited amount of recent work on the religious aspect of British attitudes to the French Revolution. Eileen Groth Lyon and Stuart Andrews have shown how theological radicalism influenced political radicalism, while Robert Hole's work also shows the other side of the coin in examining the substantial contribution of mainstream

[82] Diana Donald, *The age of caricature: satirical prints in the age of George III* (London, 1996), pp. 147–57; David Bindman, 'Introduction', in David Bindman with Aileen Dawson and Mark Jones, eds., *The shadow of the guillotine: Britain and the French Revolution* (London, 1989), pp. 33–4.

[83] Alexandra Franklin and Mark Philp, *Napoleon and the invasion of Britain* (Oxford, 2003). See also Franklin, 'John Bull in a dream: fear and fantasy in the visual satires of 1803' in Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon*, pp. 125–39.

[84] Eirwen C. Nicholson, 'Consumers and spectators: the public of the political print in eighteenth-century England', *History*, 81 (1996), pp. 5–21.

[85] Timothy Clayton, *The English print, 1688–1802* (New Haven, CT, 1997), p. 232.

[86] Holger Hoock, '"The cheap defence of nations": monuments and propaganda', in Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon*, pp. 159–71.

[87] Mark Philp, Roz Southey, Caroline Jackson-Houlston, and Susan Wollenberg, 'Music and politics, 1793–1815', in Philp, ed., *Resisting Napoleon*, pp. 173, 175.

[88] Michael T. Davis, '"An evening of pleasure rather than business": songs, subversion and radical sub-culture in the 1790s', *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 12 (2005), pp. 115–26.

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Anglican clergy to conservative propaganda.[89] It has further been shown that, while Evangelicals were not necessarily wholly in favour of the status quo in Britain, they usually opposed the French Revolution and argued that any political reform in Britain should be postponed to a more opportune time. Seceding and Dissenting churchmen also generally opposed the Revolution, particularly for its persecution of Christians, although revolutionary sympathizers and those proponents of political reform in Britain were more likely to belong to such churches.[90]

As Michael T. Davis has pointed out, the analysis of the cultural milieu of radical politics in particular has stimulated some of the most innovative historiography of popular politics of the last fifteen years and more.[91] Iain McCalman has reconstructed the varied and colourful subculture of London radicals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, describing the links between pubs, clubs, theatres, brothels, and other rendezvous.[92] David Worrall has investigated the oppressive culture of surveillance in which the radicals operated, and John Barrell has extended this to the quotidian world in which less partisan individuals went about their business.[93] Chris Evans has recently published an examination of the multi-dimensional context in which the political debates of the 1790s took place.[94] Elsewhere, Barrell has also, brilliantly, probed the murky world of the 1790s treason trials via an examination of the battle between the government and the radicals over the definition of the word 'imagine' as it was used in the fourteenth-century statute of treason condemning the act of imagining the king's death, under which radicals in both England and Scotland were tried.[95] By the end of the 1790s the security of the constitutional authority of the king had been merged with the safety of his person in the government's interpretation of this statute; and government law officers had also found it acceptable to consider remote potential consequences of a defendant's actions as well as his immediate intent in prosecuting him for treason. James Epstein has also examined the discourse of the courtroom during the 1790s treason trials and its influence on the wider radical movement.[96]

On the familiar question of the extent to which Britain was in danger of experiencing insurrection during the 1790s, historians continue to be divided. Philp, for example, has questioned how far conservative propaganda made any difference to the views and

[89] Eileen Groth Lyon, *Politicians in the pulpit: Christian radicalism in Britain from the fall of the Bastille to the disintegration of Chartism* (Aldershot, 1999); Stuart Andrews, *Unitarian radicalism: political rhetoric, 1770–1814* (Basingstoke, 2003); Robert Hole, *Pulpits, politics and public order in England, 1760–1832* (Cambridge, 1989); idem, 'English sermons and tracts as media of debate on the French Revolution, 1789–1799', in Philp, ed., *French Revolution and British popular politics*, pp. 18–37.

[90] Emma Vincent, 'The responses of Scottish churchmen to the French Revolution, 1789–1802', *Scottish Historical Review*, 73 (1994), p. 205; Macleod, *A war of ideas*, ch. 6.

[91] Davis, 'Le radicalisme anglais et la Révolution française', p. 92.

[92] Iain McCalman, *Radical underworld: prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers in London, 1795–1840* (Cambridge, 1988).

[93] David Worrall, *Radical culture: discourse, resistance and surveillance, 1790–1820* (Hemel Hempstead, 1992); John Barrell, *The spirit of despotism: invasions of privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford, 2006).

[94] Chris Evans, *Debating the Revolution: Britain in the 1790s* (London, 2006).

[95] John Barrell, *Imagining the king's death: figurative treason, fantasies of regicide, 1793–1796* (Oxford, 2000). See also Alan Wharam, *The treason trials of 1794* (Leicester, 1992); and Michael T. Davis's forthcoming book on the Scottish political martyrs of the 1790s, to be published by Palgrave.

[96] James Epstein, '"Our real constitution": trial defence and radical memory in the age of revolution', in James Vernon, ed., *Re-reading the constitution: new narratives in the political history of England's long nineteenth century* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 22–51.

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activities of its consumers. Might it frequently have had no more than entertainment value for them?[97] Philp argued that the strength of the conservative ideological case alone cannot have been sufficient to persuade the masses to refrain from radical protests and campaigning, and that it is unwise to lay too much emphasis on the 'natural loyalty' of the British people. The British government might not have been guilty of a Pittite 'Reign of Terror',[98] but the repressive policies it did pursue might still have been sufficient to defeat the radicals and to quieten the rest of the population.[99] While Edward Royle has also argued that the strength of the state made it impossible that an insurrection could have succeeded, Jenny Graham has defended the radicals from charges of weakness and failure, arguing that they were only defeated by government determination.[100] Meanwhile, Ian Christie has continued to argue that the relative strength of the British economy, combined with sufficient elite paternalism towards the poor, explains why there was no serious threat of revolution during this period.[101] For his part, Roger Wells has consistently rejected this claim, amassing a wealth of evidence showing the economic straits faced by many British people throughout the 1790s and early 1800s, together with the political, religious, and constitutional strains imposed on the state at this time.[102] Nicholas Rogers also emphasized the political power of the British crowd, while others have discussed anti-monarchism in the 1790s, and Iain McCalman has analysed the London insurrectionists and their influence on the rest of the radical movement.[103] N. A. M. Rodger argues strongly, in his magisterial second volume on the history of the British navy, that there was no significant involvement of British or Irish radicals in the naval mutinies of 1797.[104] David Eastwood agreed that 'the most serious threat to the conservative order in Britain in the 1790s would have come from a radical politicization of the plight of the poor', but, like Christie, he proposed that a very substantial increase in the poor rates, together with various charitable enterprises, were deliberately implemented to combat the political problem of poverty and were effective.[105]

Surely some middle ground is likely to hold truth: that ministers did not possess unlimited force with which to compel obedience from the British population, and required the active support of part of the population and at least the acquiescence of the rest.

[97] Mark Philp, 'The fragmented ideology of reform', in Philp, ed., *French Revolution and British popular politics*, p. 70.

[98] A contemporary, Foxite charge conclusively laid to rest by Clive Emsley in the early 1980s in two articles: 'An aspect of Pitt's Terror: prosecutions for sedition during the 1790s', *Social History*, 6 (1981), pp. 155–84; idem, 'Repression, "terror" and the rule of law in England during the decade of the French Revolution', *English Historical Review*, 100 (1985), pp. 801–25. See also Jennifer Mori, 'Responses to revolution: the November crisis of 1792', *Historical Research*, 69 (1996), pp. 284–305.

[99] Mark Philp, 'Introduction', in Philp, ed., *French Revolution and British popular politics*, p. 13.

[100] Edward Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the threat of revolution in Britain, 1789–1848* (Manchester, 2000), p. 10; Graham, *The nation, the law and the king*.

[101] Christie, 'Conservatism and stability in British society'; cf. Christie, *Stress and stability*.

[102] Roger Wells, 'English society and revolutionary politics in the 1790s: the case for insurrection', in Philp, ed., *French Revolution and British popular politics*, pp. 188–226; cf. Roger Wells, *Wretched faces: famine in wartime England, 1793–1801* (Gloucester, 1988); and idem, *Insurrection: the British experience, 1798–1803* (Gloucester, 1983).

[103] Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, culture and politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998); Steve Poole, *The politics of regicide in England, 1760–1850* (Manchester, 2000); Frank Prochaska, *The republic of Britain, 1760–2000* (London, 2000); Anthony Taylor, '*Down with the crown': British anti-monarchism and debates about royalty since 1790* (London, 1999); McCalman, *Radical underworld*.

[104] N. A. M. Rodger, *The command of the ocean: a naval history of Britain, 1649–1815* (New York, 2005), ch. 29.

[105] Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English state', pp. 162–5.

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Regular troops, militia men, and Volunteers were all used to suppress disturbances, but they were finite in number; militia and Volunteer units could only be employed in restricted geographical areas; and the Volunteers were not always reliably submissive to orders in such circumstances. Active loyalists, persuaded by and, to some extent, persuasive in conservative propaganda, were no more than a sizeable minority in the country. Otherwise, what existed was not so much mass loyalism as mass acquiescence for enough of the time to ensure broad stability, interpersed with moments of enormous stress and tension as well as moments of mass patriotism.[106] For some, this acquiescence may have been born of ignorance, lack of interest, or a sense of weakness; for others, it may have been bought by economic good fortune or well-placed philanthropy; while others may have been sufficiently enthused by military or naval victories when they occurred, and sufficiently convinced or intimidated by conservative propaganda or demonstrations, to remain quiescent. In other words, public opinion was volatile – apt to protest when economic circumstances were rough or when victories were not forthcoming, but tending to support or remain quiet for enough of the time that no serious threat of insurrection ever arose; and this quiescence may have been partly natural and partly the economic and propaganda work of government and loyalists.

V

Iain Hampsher-Monk has examined Edmund Burke's changing justification for intervening in French affairs, contending that Burke finally arrived at a vision of Europe as 'a single juridical enclave', while Tom Furniss has explored Burke's ideas on nationality, arguing, by contrast, that Burke was concerned throughout his political career with the protection of local identities from metropolitan centralization and imposition. This was the case whether he was discussing Ireland, America, France, or India.[107] The recent historiography of the British experience in the 1790s has reflected both of these tendencies among historians: a call for fewer parochial histories of the different kingdoms of Britain (more or less imperfectly heeded), and denials that such a history can be accurate.

Discussion of the development or otherwise of a sense of British national identity has been a major element of British historical scholarship concerned with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries since the publication of Linda Colley's highly influential *Britons: forging the nation, 1707–1837* in 1992. In this volume, Colley argued that the main factors causing the progression of a genuinely British sense of identity in this period were war, Protestantism, and empire, all of which were at stake in the French revolutionary period, making that one of the central periods to her argument and ensuring that scholars of this period have debated her contentions warmly.[108] Most recently, Bernard Semmel's *Napoleon and the British* (2004) suggested that the British contemplation of Napoleon led to as much consideration

[106] See Macleod, *A war of ideas*, ch. 8.

[107] Iain Hampsher-Monk, 'Edmund Burke's changing justification for intervention', *Historical Journal*, 48 (2005), pp. 65–100; Tom Furniss, 'Cementing the nation: Burke's *Reflections* on nationalism and national identity', in Whale, ed., *Burke's Reflections*, pp. 115–44.

[108] Colley, *Britons*; for discussion see, for instance, A. Grant and K. J. Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom? The making of British history* (London, 1995); Alexander Murdoch, *British history, 1660–1832: national identity and local culture* (Basingstoke, 1998); Theodore Koditschek, 'The making of British nationality', *Victorian Studies*, 44 (2002), pp. 389–98; Terry Brotherstone, Anna Clark, and Kevin Whelan, eds., *These fissured isles: Ireland, Scotland and British history, 1798–1848* (Edinburgh, 2005).

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of British identity as it did about their French rival. If the French were the major 'other' against whom Britons defined themselves, Semmel suggests, Napoleon complicated the 'traditional dichotomies drawn between Britain and France' (Protestant/Catholic and constitutional/absolute monarchy, changing easily in 1790s British commentary to Christian/atheist and constitutional monarchy/republican chaos), and this 'blurred British conceptions of national identity'.[109] Elsewhere, historians such as Sean Connolly have emphasized the 'varieties of Britishness' which co-existed and their continuing distinctives, and the extent to which they did *not* co-operate in the British project;[110] while J. C. D. Clark has denied that there was an 'invention' of Britain in the long eighteenth century, arguing instead that national consciousness developed in Britain in this period as part of a much lengthier process.[111]

Colley's purpose was in sympathy with J. G. A. Pocock's earlier calls for British historians to engage in 'four nations' or 'three kingdoms' history, rather than to write Anglocentric *faux* British history, or on the other hand, to concentrate exclusively on Irish, Welsh, or Scottish history.[112] While historians engaged in the study of British attitudes to the French Revolution have generally sought to show that they have taken this point on board, it has often not resulted in very much more than lip-service. With a couple of notable exceptions,[113] Scotland is still usually ignored in this field, or treated largely as another English county, from which supporting examples may be drawn to buttress a line of argument, or dealt with exclusively. There is substantial confusion in the literature over whether 'England and the French Revolution' or 'Britain and the French Revolution' is meant in any particular context and, while this reflects a far wider tendency in contemporary society to confuse 'England' and 'Britain', it might be hoped that scholars would use language more precisely.

In this context, to be fair, the lack of integration of Scottish history with wider British history can be attributed to the relative lack of substantial work on Scotland and the French Revolution, although this cavity is beginning to be filled. Following Henry Meikle's seminal account of *Scotland and the French Revolution* of 1912, a small but significant body of work has at last begun to be collected. The study of Scottish radicalism in the 1790s has been led by John Brims,[114] while David Brown, Michael Fry, and Atle Wold have written

[109] Semmel, *Napoleon and the British*, p. 16.

[110] S. J. Connolly, 'Varieties of Britishness: Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Hanoverian state', in Grant and Stringer, eds., *Uniting the kingdom?*, pp. 193–207; Brotherstone, Clark, and Whelan, eds., *These fissured isles*.

[111] J. C. D. Clark, 'Protestantism, nationalism, and national identity, 1660–1832', *Historical Journal*, 43 (2000), pp. 249–76.

[112] See, for example, J. G. A. Pocock, 'The limits and divisions of British history: in search of the unknown subject', *American Historical Review*, 87 (1982), pp. 311–36; idem, 'The new British history in Atlantic perspective: an Antipodean commentary', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), pp. 490–500.

[113] Cookson, *British armed nation*; Gee, *British Volunteer movement*.

[114] John Brims, 'The Scottish democratic movement in the age of the French Revolution' (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 1983), which has some interesting material on conservatives as well; idem, 'The Scottish "Jacobins", Scottish nationalism and the British union', in Roger A. Mason, ed., *Scotland and England, 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 247–65; idem, 'The Covenanting tradition and Scottish radicalism in the 1790s', in Terry A. Brotherstone, ed., *Covenant, Charter and party. Traditions of revolt and protest in modern Scottish history* (Aberdeen, 1989), pp. 50–62; idem, 'From reformers to Jacobins: the Scottish Association of the Friends of the People', in T. M. Devine, ed., *Conflict and stability in Scottish society, 1700–1850* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 31–50; idem, 'Scottish radicalism and the United Irishmen', in David Dickson, Dáire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan, eds., *The United Irishmen: republicanism, radicalism*

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on the government of Scotland in this period.[115] Wold has also discussed Scottish loyalism, concluding that Loyal Associations were not so strong in Scotland as they were in England, but that various other expressions of loyalism were more forceful or relatively more voluminous in Scotland than they were further south, such as resolutions, advice to government ministers, personal military service (including the Volunteers), and financial contributions. Andrew Mackillop's discussion of Highland Volunteering reinforced the conclusions of Eastwood, Cookson, and Gee in arguing that loyalism often grew from primarily local, rather than national, considerations, as did my own study of Edinburgh during the 1790s.[116] In comparison with English historiography, however, local and regional studies based on material held by Scottish local archives, let alone a more general synthesis of such work, remain a glaring gap.

Most recently, Bob Harris has produced an edited collection, *Scotland in the age of the French Revolution* (2005), which does not claim to be comprehensive, but which challenges various received interpretations, such as the 'uninflammability' of the Scots in this era, and the ease with which a feebly supported Scottish radicalism was doused. Several of the contributions begin to compare the Scottish experience of the French Revolution with the English, rather than (as traditionally) with the Irish experience; yet, as Harris concludes, there is still 'an urgent need to re-think Scotland's experience in this decade from a comparative British perspective'.[117]

The Irish experience of the French Revolution and its effects has generally been, if anything, even less well integrated into the British story, having deviated from the familiar English paths even more than Scotland did, and not even being incorporated into Colley's *Britons*. However, a greater body of work has been built up on Irish responses to the French Revolution than on Scottish reactions in this era, much of which was steadily accruing before 1998, but which was certainly boosted by the bicentenary of the Irish Rebellion in that year. Marianne Elliott's *Partners in Revolution* (1982) was a seminal study of the Irish dimension to Britain's conflict against revolutionary France, and an exception to the general lack of integration of the Irish and British experiences, and her more recent biography of Theobald Wolfe Tone was a masterly assessment of the United Irishmen's chief thinker and representative in France.[118] The revolutionary period was central to Thomas Bartlett's study, *The fall and rise of the Irish nation* (1992), and the edited volumes by

and rebellion (Dublin, 1993). See also Elaine W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the age of revolution: planting the green bough* (Edinburgh, 1994).

[115] David J. Brown, 'Henry Dundas and the government of Scotland' (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 1989); idem, 'The government of Scotland under Henry Dundas and William Pitt', *History*, 83 (1998), pp. 265–79; idem, 'The government response to Scottish radicalism, 1792–1802', in Harris, ed., *Scotland in the age of the French Revolution*, pp. 99–124; Fry, *The Dundas despotism*; Atle Libaek Wold, 'The Scottish government and the French threat, 1792–1802' (Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh, 2003); idem, 'Scottish attitudes to military mobilisation and war in the 1790s', in Harris, ed., *Scotland in the age of the French Revolution*, pp. 140–63.

[116] Andrew Mackillop, '*More fruitful than the soil': army, empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715–1815* (East Linton, 2000), ch. 7; Emma Vincent Macleod, 'A city invincible? Edinburgh and the war against revolutionary France', *British Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23 (2000), pp. 153–66.

[117] Harris, ed., *Scotland in the age of the French Revolution*, p. 17.

[118] Marianne Elliott, *Partners in revolution: the United Irishmen and France* (London, 1982); idem, *Wolfe Tone: prophet of Irish independence* (London, 1989).

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T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan in the *New history of Ireland* series are further substantial contributions.[119]

Nancy Curtin examined the aims, methods, organization, and composition of United Irishmen in Ulster and Dublin; Stephen Small traced the roots of United Irish ideology in earlier Irish and British political discourse; Stella Tillyard considered the life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, the movement's Anglo-Irish aristocratic leader; and many of the essays contained in the collection on *The United Irishmen*, edited by David Dickson, Dáire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan, offered further new evidence and interpretations of the movement.[120] The *Bicentenary perspective* edited by Thomas W. Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan is an enormously wide-ranging volume, investigating aspects of the 1798 Rebellion from United Irish organization to poetry, local politics to religious responses by denomination, and political ritual and popular politics to government intelligence.[121] Jim Smyth has examined the Catholic Defender movement; Kevin Whelan has considered the association of the United Irishmen with the Defenders; and Dáire Keogh's book, '*The French Disease*' unpicks the relationship between the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church in Ireland and political reformers.[122] Dáire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong, Daniel Gahan and A. T. Q. Stewart all produced re-examinations of the tragic outplaying of the Rebellion in Wexford, all disputing the previously dominant view that this was a spontaneous, unorganized, sectarian revolt of peasants and arguing that it was rather an uprising planned by the United Irishmen and which remained organized in nature almost until the end.[123] Elaine McFarland's book, *Ireland and Scotland in the age of revolution: planting the green bough* (1994) is a study of Scottish influences on the United Irishmen, and of their involvement in Scotland in the 1790s and beyond, showing the marked lack of support in Scotland for revolution and the failure of the 'green bough' to take root.[124]

Finally, although it has yet to be examined in any great detail, there is evidence from recent work that concentrated analysis of the impact of the American Revolution on British attitudes to the French Revolution would be worthwhile. In 1993, Mark Philp suggested that the American example constituted a major ingredient in the British debate on the French Revolution, from Thomas Paine onwards, and Amanda Goodrich's

[119] Thomas Bartlett, *The fall and rise of the Irish nation: the Catholic question, 1690–1830* (Dublin, 1992); T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan, eds., *A new history of Ireland*, IV: *Eighteenth-century Ireland, 1691–1800* (Oxford, 1986); W. E. Vaughan, *A new history of Ireland*, V: *Ireland under the Union, I, 1801–1870* (Oxford, 1989).

[120] Nancy J. Curtin, *The United Irishmen: popular politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791–1798* (Oxford, 1994); Stephen Small, *Political thought in Ireland, 1776–1798: republicanism, patriotism and radicalism* (Oxford, 2002); Stella Tillyard, *Citizen lord: Edward Fitzgerald, 1763–1798* (London, 1997); Dickson, Keogh, and Whelan, eds., *The United Irishmen*.

[121] Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan, *1798: a bicentenary perspective* (Dublin, 2003).

[122] Jim Smyth, *The men of no property: Irish radicals and popular politics in the late eighteenth century* (Basingstoke, 1992); Kevin Whelan, *The tree of liberty: radicalism, Catholicism and the construction of Irish identity, 1760–1830* (Cork, 1996); Dáire Keogh, '*The French disease*': *the Catholic church and radicalism in Ireland, 1790–1800* (Dublin, 1993).

[123] Dáire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong, eds., *The mighty wave: the 1798 rebellion in Wexford* (Dublin, 1996); Daniel Gahan, *The people's rising: Wexford, 1798* (Dublin, 1995); A. T. Q. Stewart, *The summer soldiers: the 1798 rebellion in Antrim and Down* (Belfast, 1995).

[124] McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the age of revolution*.

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research reinforces this claim.[125] Jonathan Clark contributed a chapter to Ian Crowe's collection on Burke, drawing the connections so far as Burke was concerned. As Clark argues, Burke never saw the two revolutions as similar processes, and Clark's proposal that the American Revolution was, in some ways, more radical than the French is controversial. But Clark begins with a lengthy and very clever riff, assuming that Burke's *Reflections* (1790) was actually written in 1777 on the American Revolution, and the aptness is striking.[126] Stephen Conway has proposed that, rather than the French revolutionary wars being seen as the 'first modern conflict', there is greater continuity than this allows between the American Wars of Independence, which showed many of the signs of modern warfare, and the French conflict.[127]

VII

In conclusion, while recent historians of Britain and the French Revolution have continued to write about leading political figures of the revolutionary and Napoleonic decades, they have also focused, to great effect, on a wider British political society. This society stretched from the Volunteers of Inverness, to the radical underworld of pubs and brothels in London; from writers and printers of political pamphlets to the singers of simple ballads lamenting warfare; from those who laughed at ridiculous images of 'little Boney' to those who were impressed by grand monuments to generals and admirals; and from those who enlisted to defend Britain, so long as they could do it from their own stretch of shoreline, to those who drilled in the middle of the night because they would rather have been governed by French revolutionary principles than by a British constitutional monarch. Further local studies are needed; much more work is needed on Scottish attitudes to the French Revolution; and much more consideration is required of how the Scottish and Irish stories should be integrated into the British experience of the revolutionary and Napoleonic decades. More work along the lines of John Barrell's *The spirit of despotism* (2006), which reconstructs the political experience of the period for the ordinary citizen, would also be valuable. But the advances made over the past fifteen or twenty years are striking indeed. While radicals in particular had benefited from the attention of earlier historical work, the cast of supporting characters about whom we now know something has been immeasurably widened.

[125] Mark Philp, 'The role of America in the "debate on France" 1791–1795: Thomas Paine's insertion', *Utilitas*, 5 (1993), pp. 221–37; Goodrich, *Debating England's aristocracy*, passim.

[126] J. C. D. Clark, 'Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in America* (1777); or, how did the American Revolution relate to the French?', in Crowe, ed., *An imaginative Whig*, pp. 71–92.

[127] Stephen Conway, *The war of American Independence, 1775–1783* (London, 1995), ch. 2.

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