Abstract

The French Revolution had a profound effect on almost all aspects of British culture. French events and ideas were avidly discussed and disputed in Britain. Long-standing British political and cultural debates were given new life; new socio-political ideologies rapidly emerged. The sense of political, religious and cultural crisis that developed in the 1790s was only slowly to dissipate. Generations afterwards, many British thinkers and writers were still considering and renegotiating their responses. The effect of the Revolution Crisis on British literature was particularly marked, something that was widely recognised at the time and has been the focus of much scholarship since. It has become something of a cliché that British literary Romanticism was born out of the Revolution. The last few decades have produced new waves of powerful criticism which has re-examined the relationship between the Revolution Crisis and the works it shaped. Different strands of radical writing have now received detailed investigation, as have equally complex conservative responses. Writing by and for women is now receiving as much attention as writing by men, and previously neglected forms, such as the popular novel, pamphlets and children's literature, are now the subject of an increasing number of studies. The writing of the 1790s and early 1800s has in fact provided many scholars with their test-case for exploring the very nature of the relationship between text and context. It is this profusion of recent, sophisticated and rapidly evolving scholarship which this essay surveys.
A recognition of the immense impact that the French Revolution had on British literature is nothing new. As early as 1818, William Hazlitt insisted that the whole 'Lake School' of English poetry 'had its origin in the French revolution, or rather in those sentiments and opinions which produced that revolution'. Nor was this any great revelation. The poets themselves openly acknowledged the influence. Shelley wrote that the genius of the English Romantics was 'less their own spirit than the spirit of the age'. Indeed, the connections between the Revolution and British literary creativity are impossible to miss. Almost all major writers of the 1790s – from Burke to Burns, Wollstonecraft to Wordsworth - wrote openly about events in France and about their changing reactions to the changing Revolution. The symbolic meaning of events in France dominated the entire œuvre of Blake after 1789, including a poem nakedly called 'The French Revolution' (1791). Wordsworth's 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive', and Coleridge's 'France: An Ode' (1798) are merely the most quotable and celebrated examples. Nor was the influence of the Revolution on English literature dampened down by Napoleon or even Waterloo. Later Romantics were happy to confess to the continuing influence of what De Quincey called the 'great moral tempest' of the Revolution. These continuing responses merge seamlessly with the writings of the next generations on the events in France many years before, Carlyle's The French Revolution (1837), say, or Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities (1859). For more or less a century after it had begun, the French Revolution remained central to English literature.

The significance of this relationship between British creativity and French rebellion has not been lost on literary critics. Actually, the understanding of British Romanticism as more than a collection of individual writers working separately, as a coherent movement, owes its existence to scholars' perceptions of the impact of the Revolution. All of the quotations in the above paragraph were used by M. H. Abrams to make this point in his highly influential essay 'English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age' (1963). It was the French Revolution which created English Romanticism, Abrams argued, specifically the frustration of the hopes of the British poets that the Revolution would usher in a new age of freedom and enlightenment. When the Revolution turned repressive and political optimism faded, Abrams’ argument ran, the idealism of the poets was turned inwards, and a new egalitarian, energetic and imaginative literary movement was born. As we shall see, not everyone would now
accept this rather neat explanation of Romantic creativity, nor Abrams' exclusive concentration on just a few, male writers. Succeeding generations of critics have not, however, sought to sever the connection between the Revolution and British writing. Far from it. Instead, they have devoted their time to analysing in much more detail what the 'spirit of the age' was, and exploring the relationships between text and context for all writers, not only those who were writing explicitly politically.

Indeed, one of the most noticeable changes to studies of the literary impact of the French Revolution has been their increased range and plurality. What is so striking is the sheer number of different writers whose work is now being seriously scrutinised, and the abolition of the distinction that was once made between 'major' and 'minor' figures. Thus, we now have far more consideration of women's writing, black writers, children's literature, writing from different regions, writing for different audiences, diaries, journalism, ephemera, conduct literature and almost every other form of literary production. We also have much more investigation into the audiences for these many different kinds of works and their roles in the construction of the texts. A second obvious shift is the way in which scholars, when they write about the French Revolution and British literature, are no longer thinking in terms of a straight causal link from historical events to cultural production, but are now seeing both text and context as inter-linked at every level, and continually feeding back into one another. This is partly the influence of the 'new historicists' who have tended to regard the 'French Revolution' not as a series of events which shaped literary texts, but as a concept constructed in people's minds from the literary texts which they or others read.

All this has meant that the most exciting studies of the period we now have are not straightforward studies of the impact of the Revolution on British literature, but focus instead on other, larger questions, bringing in the Revolution, and the sense of crisis it engendered, as an important part of the context. In such studies, the French Revolution is not usually regarded as a transfiguring event, suddenly changing everything in 1789 or 1793. Rather, important political, economic, social and cultural shifts were already underway, and continued during the 1790s and 1800s. The Revolution catalysed many of them, or changed their direction. The 1989 bicentenary of the Revolution can seem to have been a pivotal moment in this regard. Much new work was published – for example two important special issues of Studies in
Romanticism which focussed, respectively, on the Revolution's relationship with English and French romanticism⁷ - which tended to emphasise the importance of events in France. Since then, the crisis of the 1790s has increasingly come to be regarded as giving renewed prominence or fresh inflections to existing ideological debates or processes already underway: a tradition of English republicanism or the scepticism of the Scottish Enlightenment say, or the radicalism of John Wilkes or an evangelical revival.

Likewise, scholars do not now tend to see the Revolution as a series of events taking place in France, and then being passively perceived, deliberated upon and responded to by Britons. Instead, it is the sense of crisis that developed in Britain, not events in France themselves, which literary scholars now often consider as constituting the 'French Revolution'. Writers responded to this crisis, and their texts contributed to it, shaping its development as well as the way in which events across the Channel in France, both past and continuing, were understood. The actual Revolution in France itself has become no less important for Anglo-American scholars, but they have come to regard it as part of a larger history of intertwining processes and discourses.

A good example of this kind of study is Gerald Izenberg's Impossible Individuality: Romanticism, Revolution and the Origins of Modern Selfhood, 1787-1802 (1992).⁸ As the title suggests, it is a book about the construction of our modern concept of individuality, looking at Wordsworth, Schlegel and Chateaubriand amongst others. These changes were already underway, Izenberg argues, but the Revolution was nevertheless vitally important as the anvil on which the modern sense of selfhood was forged. Two further examples are Eve Tavor Bannet's The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel (2000) and G. J. Barker-Benfield's The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain (1992).⁹ Both books investigate aspects of British culture across the whole eighteenth century, but both also emphasise the Revolution crisis of the 1790s as crucial in redefining the possibilities and proprieties of womanhood. For Barker-Benfield, the Revolution inspired Mary Wollstonecraft, Hannah More and others to rewrite the code of sensibility which had for decades been used to define and limit women. In Bannet's book the importance of the French Revolution itself is actually minimised, when compared, that is, with the behavioural and attitudinal changes slowly fomented
by British women writers across the eighteenth century. But, Bannet argues, the British reactions to the French Revolution nevertheless remain crucial in shaping and re-shaping ideas of domesticity. In such books, the Revolution crisis is not the one 'great cause' of new kinds of literary production, but fits into more complicated historiographical narratives and is itself understood only in the light of prior texts as well as those which were written in response to it. Like so many other recent 'new historicist' studies, Izenberg's, Barker-Benfield's and Bannet's books use texts to explain contexts as well as contexts to explain texts.

So plentiful have been books like these over the past twenty years that it will not be possible to consider them all in this short survey. To try to impose some order on the profusion of material which has been published in this field, I will divide the rest of this assessment into some basic generic categories - poetry, drama, novels - as well as a final, catch-all section, on other literary genres, such as travel writing, botany books and children's literature. There are, though, many studies which cross these divides. Important trans-generic books which have shaped the territory include Marilyn Butler's Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries (1981), which first called for a nuanced investigation of the connections between Romantic creativity and historical process, Seamus Deane's The French Revolution and the Enlightenment in England (1988), which charts the influence of French Enlightenment writers on British radicals, and a little more recently, Paul Keen's The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s (1999), which shows that the political anxieties of post-Revolutionary Britain crystallised existing worries about social mobility and wider readership, and resulted in a re-consideration of the proper place of literature within society. Other general studies, though they deal with more specific aspects of the impact of events in France on British literature, are Simon Bainbridge's Napoleon and English Romanticism (1995), J. R. Watson's Romanticism and War: A study of the British Romantic Writers and the Napoleonic Wars (2003), Anne Mellor's short essay on 'English Women Writers and the French Revolution' (1992), and Adriana Craciun's British Women Writers and the French Revolution (2005).

Throughout the discussion that follows, two things will immediately be noticed. The first, no doubt the result of the 'de-canonisation' of literary studies and the search for new voices, is that whilst most older studies of the French Revolution and British literature tended to concentrate on the poetry of the 'great' Romantics - Blake,
Wordsworth and Coleridge especially - it is prose which has attracted more attention in recent years. The second is that the French Revolution evidently gave rise to a severe bout of introspection in Britain, during which questions were raised about almost all aspects of culture and society. An almost endless range of answers was proposed to these questions from all quarters. It is these questions and answers which are so interestingly reflected in the enormous range of literature which saturated the market in the 1790s and 1800s, and which has only recently begun to be appreciated in its full profusion.

*The French Revolution Crisis and British Poetry*

For the student seeking a brief overview of the interactions between British poets and the French Revolution, there are several good places to start. Single chapters which present solid introductions are P. M. S. Dawson's 'Poetry in an Age of Revolution' (1993), Iain Robertson Scott's short essay on "Things As They Are": the Literary Response to the French Revolution' (1989), and W. A. Speck's chapter on 'Poems on the State of Affairs' (1998). Two other slightly fuller introductions, designed for undergraduates, are Kelvin Everest's *English Romantic Poetry: An Introduction to the Historical Context and the Literary Scene* (1990) and Stephen Prickett's *England and the French Revolution* (1989), as much an anthology of relevant excerpts as a sustained critical commentary. Prickett concentrates on the gradual withdrawal of support for the Revolution by the Lake poets, and gives more consideration to their nuanced use of language in their interpretation of events across the Channel.

From these general introductions, a student might want to move on to more detailed studies of individual Romantic poets and their specific relationship to their political context. This would certainly be easy enough for either Blake or Wordsworth. Recent analysis of both their careers nicely illustrates the new directions historicist criticism is taking. A stimulating full-length study of Blake's relation to the Revolution crisis is Jon Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (1992). One question critics have always asked about Blake is whether he should best be regarded as a political and social activist, or as a mystic writer whose works might almost as well have been written in any other context. Mee, writing from a broadly Marxist perspective, stresses the former
approach, situating Blake's writing in a tradition of radicalism. Or rather in several traditions of radicalism, because for Mee, Blake is a 'bricoleur', drawing on whatever was at hand to inform his writing. Thus, Mee argues, he drew on popular culture for his ideas and rhetoric just as much as he drew on the more intellectual, dissenting Enlightenment ideas which influenced Coleridge and Godwin. The discussion in Mee's 'Introduction' of an earlier book on Blake, David Erdman's *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, demonstrates how historicist literary criticism has evolved. While Erdman, as his sub-title indicates, strove to link Blake with his Revolutionary context, he did so by showing the direct influence of certain historical events on the writing. Mee wanted to go further, exploring Blake's language, rhetoric and poetic forms as in themselves a response to the crisis of the 1790s.

The precise nature of Blake's radicalism has been the subject of much debate. Saree Makdisi's book *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (2003), like Mee's, tries to distance Blake from the mainstream of radicalism, the 'struggle for liberty and the "rights of man" against the hereditary religious and political order of the old regime'. In this carefully argued book, Blake is shown to disdain the idea of liberty, if by liberty is meant the bourgeois notion of individual rights and the freedoms of a capitalist economy. Makdisi's is also the first major study to offer a sustained post-colonialist reading of Blake's work. Christopher Z. Hobson's *The Chained Boy: Orc and Blake's Idea of Revolution* (1999) also provides a critique of long-standing assumptions about Blake's idea of revolution. The standard account of Blake's career is that he came to reject revolution in the early to mid-1790s, feeling that it must inevitably slide into a new reactionary regime, even worse than that which had been replaced. Such a reading supports M. H. Abrams' thesis that disillusionment with the French Revolution forced poets to internalise their revolutionary impulses, leading to the great outpourings of imagination which constitute and define Romanticism. For Hobson, however, Blake's poetry of the early 1790s reveals a shift in his understanding of the purposes and possibilities of revolution, but not a total rejection. In this light, his later works can be read as just as politically radical as his early, idealist writings. Amongst many other shorter studies of Blake's interaction with his political context, especial mention might be made of Lisa Plummer Crafton's *The "Ancient Voices" of Blake's The French Revolution* (1997) and Barton
Investigations of Wordworth's relationship with the Revolution are just as frequent. In the 1980s, at least four important studies of his politics appeared: Nicholas Roe's *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (1988), Alan Liu's *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (1989), J. K. Chandler's *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (1984), which focussed in particular on the influence of Edmund Burke on Wordsworth, and perhaps most influential of all, Marjorie Levinson's *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* (1986). Writing broadly in the tradition of Marxist criticism Levinson theorised interestingly about the relationship between history and literature in her *Rethinking Historicism*, but it was her new readings of ostensibly unpolitical poems such as the 'Intimations of Immortality' ode and 'Tintern Abbey' in the earlier book which have had the most lasting effect. For her, political events were vital in shaping Wordsworth's verse, even when they were apparently absent. His choice of images could reveal the link Levinson argued. An apparently innocuous reference to a solitary 'tree', for example, might allude to the French tree of liberty, or his 'single field' to the Champ de Mars. But it was the omissions that were more important, representing a deliberate suppression of political optimism and its replacement with a new system of belief, the 'myth of the soul' at the core of the Intimations ode. For the disenchanted Wordsworth, latching on to new ideals in the poem, 'there are victories', wrote Levinson, 'far greater than those once anticipated from the French Revolution. Rather than grieve over those mundane losses, the reader is exhorted to set his sights on those other and spiritual palms … the "soothing thoughts that spring / Out of human suffering."'

Such an approach has perhaps proved so influential because it helps to explain, and perhaps even authorise, Wordsworth's rather forlorn retreat from his youthful idealism. According to David Bromwich, for instance, the absence of any overt political commitment in a poem such as 'Tintern Abbey' remained key, not because the absence is indicative of any coherent political position, but because it signals the development of the 'humanism', the endorsement of individual integrity, which was to characterise Wordsworth's later work. In other words, events in France prompted a search for new meanings, and although the answers Wordsworth latterly came up with
were not necessarily political themselves, they were still a response to the Revolution. When taken to its furthest extent, this kind of insistence on what one might call the de-politicised politicisation of Wordsworth's poetry can seem rather far-fetched. 'I have attempted to show how the ostensible disengagement of Wordsworth's poetry from social and political action can be construed as his unique way of engaging in radical politics', one critic has written, the contention being that in refusing to advocate any political position, Wordsworth was urging his readers to unite with him in constructing a new, more enlightened understanding of the world.23

Certainly Wordsworth's response to the Revolution is extremely complicated. Three essays by Kenneth R. Johnson, Jonathan Wordsworth and Anne Janowitz, though each sits comfortably beside one another in the volume Revolution and English Romanticism (1990), show how many different approaches may be taken to Wordsworth's shift from 'revolutionary consciousness into an imaginative creativity'.24 Many more scholars will undoubtedly continue to explore the meaning of his political withdrawing and reneging. One recent study devoted to this 'apostasy' is Charles Mahoney's Romantics and Renegades(2003).25 Wordsworth seems to have understood the complexities of his position himself, artfully re-writing the account of his past political opinions in The Prelude, even to the extent that he falsified the historical record, as James A. W. Heffernan notes in 'History and Autobiography: The French Revolution in Wordsworth's Prelude' (1992).26 For some commentators, Wordsworth's responses to the Revolution were not motivated by political conviction at all, but ought to be regarded as sublimations of his deep-seated psychological traumas: see for instance Keith Hanley's essay, "A Poet's History": Wordsworth and Revolutionary Discourse' (1992).27

There is not quite the same profusion of studies on the effects of the French Revolution on the work of other poets, though good studies exist for most major figures. Attempts to trace the fading of Coleridge's post-Revolutionary pessimism have not been nearly so numerous as for Wordsworth. Nicholas Roe's judgement that 'Coleridge's awareness of a radical collapse of hope in France and Britain finds no compensating alternative that might resemble Wordsworth's great statements of belief in 'Tintern Abbey' is still very credible.28 A provocative consideration of the decline of Coleridge's revolutionary enthusiasm is to be found at the centre of the historian John Barrell's Imagining the King's Death (2000). This is a massive and complex
book, again written from a Marxist perspective, focusing on the period from the French regicide in 1793 to the British treason trials of 1794-95. It investigates how agents of the British state sought to make the act of imagining the King’s death a treasonable offence. Their argument was that thinking and writing about revolution would promote it, and revolutions, as the French example showed, killed kings. Many (including the juries who tried those arrested for ‘thoughtcrimes’ like these) could not agree, but Barrell shows how both conservatives and radicals engaged with the argument about the political power of imagination. Years later, Coleridge tried to downplay his youthful radicalism by arguing that his revolutionary fervour was less, not more, precisely because he had vented it through his imagination, writing such pieces as the anti-government poem ‘Fire, Famine and Slaughter’ in 1795-98.29

For Robert Southey, the best volume-length study of his political writing remains Geoffrey Carnall’s Robert Southey and his Age (1960).30 But a process of reassessment is underway. A new biography, Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters by W. A. Speck, focuses on the poet’s changing political alignments (2006).31 A special edition of the online journal Romanticism on the Net (2003-04) included an essay by Ian Haywood, examining Southey’s radical poetry of the 1790s, especially Joan of Arc (and the play Wat Tyler) which imagined the overthrow of a violent British state; another by Carol Bolton, looking at the metrical romance Thalaba the Destroyer, which, she argued, continued to offer a radical critique of British society behind its imperialist agenda; and a third, by Simon Bainbridge, which compared the responses to political events of Southey and Wordsworth.32 Another important article on Southey’s politics is David Eastwood’s ‘Robert Southey and the Meanings of Patriotism’ (1992).33 A new edition of Southey’s poetical works under the general editorship of Lynda Pratt will doubtless form the foundation of much further work.34

The influence of the Revolution on the next generation of major Romantic poets has also been well charted. ‘Keats and Politics: A Forum’, a special edition of Studies in Romanticism edited by Susan Wolfson in 1986, signalled a reassessment of Keats as a radical whose writing emerged from the political controversies of the 1790s.35 Nicholas Roe’s John Keats and the Culture of Dissent (1997) has done more to trace the connections.36 The restatement of a radical agenda after Waterloo, built on the frustrated hopes of the 1790s, formed the foundation of the circle that gathered around Leigh Hunt, argues Jeffrey Cox in his Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School
(1998), uniting Keats, Shelley and many other writers in common cause. Shelley's own relationship to the Revolution has been traced in Timothy Clark's *Embodying Revolution* (1989) and William Keach's *Arbitrary Power: Romanticism, Language, Politics* (2004). David Duff's *Romance and Revolution* (1994) roots Shelley's poetry still deeper in the controversies of the 'Revolution crisis', examining the linguistic continuities between the political pamphlets of the 1790s and Shelley's romances, and exploring the way in which the visionary, chivalric romance, a seemingly unlikely vehicle for revolutionary sentiments, was appropriated by Shelley and others for their radical ideas. The Making of Poets (2002), Ian Gilmour's extremely readable account of the influence of the radical culture of the 1790s on the young Shelley, also reveals the profound effect of these same influences on Byron.

In keeping with new historicist principles, lesser-known poets have also been brought under discussion. Robert Burns' relationship to events in France has been traced briefly by Thomas Crawford and Gavin Sprott. An essay by Marilyn Butler, in a volume commemorating the bicentenary of the poet’s death, provides a fuller consideration, attending both to Burn’s nationalism and his internationalism – including his enthusiasm for, then aversion to, the French Revolution (1997). Andrew Noble, introducing an anthology from the Canongate Press (2001) has argued for Burns’ unequivocal radicalism. He likens Burns to Blake and reminds readers that Thomas De Quincy thought him a ‘Jacobin’. He also laments ‘a persistent compulsion to downplay, even deny, the revolutionary Burns’, modern commentators and academics being complicit with the reactionary Coleridge and Wordsworth in the construction of this fallacy.

John Clare's politics, particularly in connection with rural radicalism, have been examined by Roger Sales and by James McKusick in an essay entitled 'William Cobbett, John Clare, and the agrarian politics of the English revolution'. This latter essay is to be found in *Radicalism in British Literary Culture* (2002), a volume tracing the continuities between the seventeenth-century English radical tradition and the controversies stirred up by the French Revolution. In it appears Jon Mee's introduction to Richard Lee, an almost forgotten 'Jacobin' poet. Lee was closely connected with the radical London Corresponding Society, was the owner of a shop called 'The Tree of Liberty'. According to Mee, he was 'the purveyor of the most flagrantly seditious literature in London'. He was soon arrested, and his poetry is of questionable quality, but Mee's analysis, situating Lee in a long radical and
religious tradition not too far away from Blake, helps to shed further light on the murky world of underground radical writing that was first brought to our attention by Iain McCalman's book on the *Radical Underworld* (1987). Charles Hobday's essay on two more 'sans culottes poets', John Freeth and Joseph Mather, performs a similar service.

Another poet who began as a radical writer, but who shifted towards political quiescence was Amelia Opie. Shelley King's *Politics, Poetics and Propriety* (2003), a study of the contemporary reception of Opie's poems, argues that she was manoeuvred into political orthodoxy by the critics, although the radicalism can still be detected beneath the surface. Ann Frank Wake's essay on Opie in the collection of essays on British women writers and the French Revolution, *Rebellious Hearts* (2001), also questions why 'she hid or disguised her dissenting politics in the poetry' when her letters reveal a 'more enthusiastic participation in Jacobin politics'. Wake's answer is that women writers were likely to be demonised for expressing politically radical opinions in 1790s Britain, but, like Kari E. Lokke discussing Charlotte Smith's sonnets in the same volume, she concludes that women poets were able to use the poetic representation of landscape to transcend restrictive gender codes and communicate their political opinions.

Not all analyses have focussed on individual voices. Richard Cronin, for instance, provides a good account of the British poetic response to the Revolution as a whole in his *The Politics of Romantic Poetry* (2000). His 'Introduction' provides a useful summary of recent work in the field, and his later chapters show convincingly how the political issues of the 1790s remained current for many writers into the 1810s and '20s. Another writer to synthesise the responses of many voices is Simon Bainbridge, who has tracked down the war poetry of both canonical and non-canonical writers, published on its own and in newspapers and magazines (2003). Bainbridge presents a double argument: that the wars with France had an important effect in shaping the poetry produced in Britain, and that the war poetry written by figures such as Coleridge and Byron, and Charlotte Smith and Felicia Hemans, had an important effect in shaping public attitudes to the wars.
Investigations of the effects of the French Revolution on British theatre used to be rarer than for poetry and prose. In recent years, this has changed. Jeffrey Cox's essay on 'The French Revolution in the English Theater' (1990) now provides a good starting point. In Cox's analysis, engagement with the French Revolution in the British theatre moved 'from the direct representation of actual events to the displacement of revolutionary acts into neoclassical and Gothic parallels and finally to the re-creation of the Revolution in mythic terms'. In other words, under the pressure of censorship, the Revolution was still often incorporated into drama, but increasingly obliquely. Thus, although (according to Kenneth Johnson and Joseph Nicholes, in another useful introductory essay) only one play 'by a major English Romantic writer is set in Revolutionary France' – Coleridge and Southey's *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794) – there are many which deal with Revolutionary questions, but in a displaced setting. The most prominent of these is Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (written 1796-97): 'the dramatized form of Wordsworth's continuing reflections on the revolution in France'. For Cox, the gothic re-writing of the Revolution is epitomised by Matthew Lewis's hugely popular play *The Castle Spectre* (1797), in which the young, optimistic protagonists attempt to escape from a decaying castle which 'seems to symbolize a ruined aristocratic past.' Cox suggests that the neo-classical iterations of the Revolution reached their zenith with Byron's *Marino Faliero, The Two Foscari* and *Sardanapalus* (all 1821).

The first full-length study of the subject, George Taylor's *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805* (2000), follows the same general line of argument. Taylor shows that although smaller theatres had been able to avoid the Lord Chamberlain's restrictions at the time the Revolution broke out, and had therefore been able to exhibit some enthusiastic dramatisations of events in Paris, censorship was quickly imposed across all London theatres. This forced engagement with the Revolution to become more covert. Censorship meant that British radical writers 'had to relinquish the theatre as a means of rational instruction', and political comment was forced into seemingly unlikely theatrical modes: musical entertainments, pantomimes, and above all a new offshoot of the gothic, the melodrama. Throughout the 1790s, Taylor argues, political anxieties and hopes were represented by metaphor, images of
imprisonment, blindness or dispossession being routinely employed as veiled but recognisable references to current events.

The early Revolution plays, which did directly engage with current events, have still not been thoroughly investigated. Plays such as William Preston's *Democratic Rage; or, Louis the Unfortunate* (1793) or John Eyre's *Maid of Normandy; or, the Death of the Queen of France* (1794) were either based wholly on events on France, or included them as part of an invented plot, while others, such as Robert Heron's *St. Kilda in Edinburgh; or, News from Camperdown* (1798) attacked the vice and folly of those in Britain who supported the Revolution. So many such plays exist that Taylor, like Cox in his article 'Ideology and Genre in the British Antirevolutionary Drama of the 1790s' (1992), can provide only a tantalising glimpse of their range and variety. Even very successful plays by celebrated authors – Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *Pizarro* (1799), for example, a very popular adaptation of Kotzebue and an early, well-aimed attack on Napoleon – are still very neglected. Paula Backscheider's book *Spectacular Politics* (1993) goes furthest in investigating the cultural and political significance of the also very neglected gothic plays - a 'popular literary mode' in the 1780s and a 'mania' in the 1790s. In Backscheider's analysis these plays were easily applicable to the politics of the 1790s, over and over again depicting villainous aristocrats violating the sanctity of life, liberty, property and female chastity, and powerful crowds able to overthrow them. But, she quickly adds, 'Year by year, the plays show stronger and stronger strategies of containment.' They characterise mob-rule as being just as inimical as despotism, and they represent the virtuous and legitimate protagonists as able to conquer abuses and restore order though non-confrontational means. Ultimately then, the plays 'propagated a comforting vision of community, of human nature, and of a providential, benignly ordered world'. More powerfully still, they provided a safety valve for a nervous and agitated public: 'By acting out repressed anxieties and hopes in overt and symbolic representations, the plays released tensions and made social contradictions momentarily innocuous. Social antagonism became opportunities to demonstrate the idealized British self-image and to confirm that no revolution was needed in their country. … The aristocrats could be restrained and the poor would be taken care of. … Conflict became spectacle, a containable and consumable product.'
Both Cox and Backscheider emphasise the anti-Revolutionary and conservative nature of much popular drama on the London stage in the 1790s. Other commentators have found certain play texts to be more radical. Ian Haywood has analysed Robert Southey's pro-Revolutionary play *Wat Tyler.* Daniel P. Watkins has examined Joanna Baillie's *DeMonfort* (1798), arguing that the drama is rooted in post-Revolutionary political turmoil, revolving around the transfer of power from the despotic aristocrat DeMonfort to the bourgeois Rezenbelt. Katherine S. Green has discussed Elizabeth Inchbald's *Every One Has HisFault,* the hit of the 1793 season despite its premiere immediately after the execution of the French King and Queen (the performance was postponed in anticipation of the regicide, and when it did open, almost the whole audience was in mourning). The play's thirty-two night run was astonishing, argues Green, since the play 'both supported reformist ideology and engaged critically with the text of William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice.*' Inchbald was required to use sophisticated strategies of deception in order to gain public approval. David Chandler has also investigated the ways in which a dramatist, Hannah Brand, could intrude radical sentiments into a superficially orthodox play-script. Brand's main censor in Norwich was not the Lord Chancellor, but John Brunton, the inflexibly conservative theatre manager whose support she needed if her plays were to be performed at all. In fact, much dramatic writing by women is now held to be radical in various ways, perhaps challenging gender orthodoxies or the national self-image if not always directly contributing to the debate on the French Revolution. A useful survey of recent scholarship on drama written by women is provided by Marjean D. Purinton's review essay, 'Revising Romanticism by Inscripting Women Playwrights' (1998).

Purinton has also written on the politics of romantic drama, drawing particular attention to representations of despotism, in *Romantic Ideology Unmasked: the mentally constructed tyrannies in dramas of William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and Joanna Baillie* (1994). As with their poetry, discussions of plays by the major Romantic writers have focussed on the ways in which the Revolution debates of the 1790s burst forth again in this new form. Another of Purinton's essays, on Coleridge's *Osorio,* fits into this pattern, as does Victoria Myers's 'Justice and indeterminacy: Wordsworth's *The Borderers* and the trials of the 1790s' (2001). Michael Simpson similarly argues that in the plays of Byron and Shelley the 1790s...
debates on revolution were 'materialised' in print form – ensuring, Simpson argues, that they would continue to be merely thought about and debated, rather than ever actually enacted.68 This scepticism, according to Suzanne Ferriss, is most strongly written in Shelley's play The Cenci (1819), which 'casts doubt on the possibility that the revolutionary ideas betrayed in France by the Terror and Napoleon's rise to power may be recuperated either politically or poetically.'69

Jeffrey Cox had commented that 'During the grand and terrible days of the French Revolution, history itself seemed to become theatrical', and many critics, thinking along the same lines, have explored the ways in which British politics came to be enacted as theatre, both in play-houses and outside them.70 Edmund Burke's House of Commons speeches and the treason trials of 1794, to take just two examples, were both deeply theatrical, as, respectively, Gillian Russell and Judith Pascoe have explored.71 And of course, for contemporary theatre-goers, a trip to the playhouse involved much more than merely a rendition of a play's text. Audiences took a full part in each performance, setting the tone for the play and interacting with the actors and with one another in ways that often relegated the play itself to the periphery of the experience. All the activity and all the texts which surrounded the plays contributed to the spectacle: the sets and the seat prices, the advertisements and reviews, the hired audiences and the crowd left outside the building, even the building itself. The performance of politics in the theatre in this fuller sense is the subject of several important books. One of the most accomplished is Gillian Russell's Theatres of War (1995), which considers the spectacle of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars on the stages of public and private theatres as well as the presence of the military in audiences and its consequences. Russell also reveals much about the performance of plays by military personnel, in barracks or on-board ships. There is a substantial investigation of the theatricality of Nelson's funeral too.72 Marc Baer's Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London (1992) also examines the playing out of political tensions in the playhouse and its environs, concentrating on the almost customary phenomenon of the theatre riot.73
The French Revolution Crisis and the Novel

Since the path-breaking mid-1970s work of Marilyn Butler and Gary Kelly, an enormous amount of research has attempted to unearth the ways in which the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century British novel related to, reflected and contributed to the Revolution and the crisis it engendered. Both Butler and Kelly showed how novelists in Britain in the 1790s took a central part in the 'war of ideas', hostilities having been declared almost immediately after the outbreak of the French Revolution. These were not often novels which were directly about the Revolution, but they were certainly of the Revolution. They fully engaged in the debates on rights, liberties and even the possibility of overthrowing a corrupt regime, debates which events in France had prompted. Subsequent scholars have largely concentrated on the radical novelists – the 'Jacobins' as Kelly had called them. Studies have investigated their methods, their convictions and what happened when their initial utopianism was dampened or suppressed. Kelly had concentrated on four radical novelists: Robert Bage, Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin and Elizabeth Inchbald. Others have sought to revise Kelly's survey by including more women writers. Eleanor Ty, Loraine Fletcher, Anjana Sharma and Nancy E. Johnson have variously added Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Hays, Charlotte Smith and Maria Edgeworth in their studies of the Jacobin novel. Chris Jones had already discussed them in a slightly different context in his important study of Radical Sensibility (1993). Pamela Clemit analysed the stylistics of Jacobin novelists and their lasting influence in her The Godwinian Novel (1993). All these commentators have followed Kelly in thinking of the Jacobin novelists as contributing to a coherent genre. The genre has become so well-established in literary studies that scholars are now considering these writers as a group in studies unrelated to the Revolution crisis. Liz Bellamy, for instance, included a chapter on the 'The Jacobin Novel' in her analysis of the representation of society's commercialisation in fiction in her Commerce, Morality and the Eighteenth-Century Novel (1998). On the other hand, R. S. White, in a book that looks at almost all sorts of 1790s writing, has argued that putting the decade's absorption in questions of natural rights at the centre of analysis 'allow us to draw links that challenge categories like "the Jacobin (or Gothic) novel"'.

17
It took longer for conservative or loyalist fiction to become the subject of sustained analysis. This is partly because of what Don Herzog has called the 'balkanization' of literary studies, which means, he regrets, that 'conservatives write on conservatism for conservative readers, liberals on liberalism for liberals, Marxists on Marxism for Marxists and so on.' Since the majority of academics writing on the French Revolution probably fall into one or other of the latter two categories, less scholarship has focussed on the conservative response. It has also been because only since the 1980s have historians recognised that popular politics in 1790s Britain was dominated more by loyalist opinion than radical, at least after the beginning of the Terror and the Anglo-French War in 1793. This historiographical shift, and the influence of new historicist criticism, has done much to destabilise Herzog's 'balkanisation', and more conservative literature is becoming the object of attention from many different standpoints.

Building on brief discussion in two chapters of Marilyn Butler's *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (1975), the first full-length study of conservative fiction, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel*, appeared in 2001. It claimed that anti-Jacobin novels significantly outnumbered their Jacobin counterparts and that they began to appear slightly earlier. It also argued that the literary establishment operated to enforce ideological orthodoxy. Anti-Jacobin novels are therefore crucial documents for understanding 1790s public opinion, the book contended, even if the radical writers were generally more thoughtful and innovative than their conservative counterparts. Also dealing with anti-Jacobin authors as a coherent genre is Lisa Wood's *Modes of Discipline* (2003). Both studies emphasise what Wood calls the 'interarticulation of ideologies', that is to say, the connectedness of the various anti-Jacobin campaigns: anti-Revolutionary, anti-feminist, anti-parvenue, and so on. All these campaigns were shunted together by the anti-Jacobin novelists, so that they became part of a single Jacobin conspiracy, which could then be scorned and satirised in a number of ways. For instance, the novel's conventional seduction plots could be pressed into service to demonstrate proper political behaviour. Thus, the seduction of a British woman by a Jacobin new philosopher character, says Wood, 'figures, at a domestic level, the penetration of French philosophy into the British social formation…. The patriotic woman resists this penetration, by adhering to standards of modest and domestic femininity, and to the doctrines of the established national church.'
Nicola J. Watson's *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel* (1994) also investigates the associations between fictional form and politics. For Watson, novelists on both sides of the Revolution debate realised that there was a clear connection between some major themes of the novel and the political debates of the 1790s. The sentimental novel's depiction of a heroine choosing her own lover in defiance of parental authority, for example, might correlate with disobedience towards political authority, just as an attempted seduction of a heroine could stand for the attempts of insurgents to tempt unwary Britons into sedition. Watson argues that both conservative and radical novelists tried to exploit these metaphorical connections, making the majority of 1790s novels much more political that they might at first appear. Even the very form of the novel, Watson contends, was a political statement in itself. Epistolary novels, for instance, were inherently political because the letter was a deeply suspect article in the 1790s, standing for secret communication between people and connected with espionage, with the evidence used in treason trials and with the radical 'corresponding societies' (established in Britain to communicate directly with the Revolutionaries in France). Gary Kelly has also pointed out the connections between the form and style of these novels and their political orientation. The anti-Jacobins were hostile to first-person subjective narratives, he argues, since this was the technique favoured by the radicals. He adds that the anti-Jacobins relied heavily on several set satirical techniques: contrasting idealised theory with 'real life' as played out in the novels' plots for instance. Two articles by April London expand interestingly upon this same point. According to James Watts' *Contesting the Gothic* (1999), 'nearly all of the romances which actually called themselves "Gothic" were unambiguously conservative.' The conservatism was embedded in their very structures, rather than being deliberately imported by ideologue authors. They tended to have a castle at the centre, which represented 'a stratified yet harmonious society', and they dramatised 'the defeat of dubiously effeminate or foreign villains' and 'the providentially inspired process by which legitimate hierarchies are re-established.' The presence of Jacobin and anti-Jacobin satire in the Oriental tale has been briefly considered in a recent article on 'Orientalism and Propaganda'.

Just as with the Jacobin novel, the anti-Jacobin novel has recently begun to be treated as a coherent literary genre. April London, for example, included a chapter on 'History, romance, and the anti-Jacobins' "common sense"' in her *Women and
Property in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel (1999), and a set of ten anti-Jacobin novels has recently been published by Pickering and Chatto (2005).\footnote{89} No similar set of Jacobin novels has been forthcoming, largely because the work of the best individual Jacobin novelists, in contrast to their conservative antagonists, have often been thought worthy of separate publication. Thus Pickering and Chatto have, or will have, produced, sets of the novels of William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Holcroft, and by the more politically ambiguous Maria Edgeworth and Charlotte Smith.\footnote{90} Individual Jacobin novels have been published separately by more mainstream publishers. The Penguin Classics series, for instance, includes novels by Godwin and Wollstonecraft, as does the Oxford World's Classics series, which adds Hays' Memoirs of Emma Courtney, Opie's Adeline Mowbray, Elizabeth Inchbald's A Simple Story and Frances Burney's The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties.\footnote{91} The increasing scholarly interest in these British novels which engaged with the French Revolution is perhaps best reflected - and served - by the rapidly expanding publication list of the Canadian Broadview Press. They began, in the late 1990s, by publishing, usually for the first time since their original appearance in the 1790s, radical novels such as Charlotte Smith's Desmond, Eliza Fenwick's Secresy, Robert Bage's Hermsprong or, Man as He Is Not and Hays' The Victim of Prejudice, and latterly some even more recondite titles: Mary Robinson's Walsingham; or, the Pupil of Nature and her Natural Daughter (published alongside her A Letter to the Women of England), and Inchbald's Nature and Art.\footnote{92} More recently, and perhaps even more bravely, Broadview have issued a number of wholly neglected novels of a more conservative bent, amongst which are Elizabeth Hamilton's Letters of a Hindoo Rajah and Memoirs of a Modern Philosopher, Charles Lucas' The Infernal Quixote and George Walker's The Vagabond.\footnote{93}

As George Walker made clear at the beginning of The Vagabond (1799), the anti-Jacobin novels were written in open opposition to the Jacobin novels, as 'an attempt to parry the Enemy with their own weapons'.\footnote{94} Contemporary critics and readers certainly recognised the existence of two political schools, fighting out their opinions in the pages of the novel. Scholars have recently begun to argue, though, that the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin dichotomy has been over-emphasised. Claudia Johnson, for instance, asserted that the opposition was more rhetorical than real, and that there was little harmony within the two main camps:
Most of the novels written in the "war of ideas" are more complicated and less doctrinaire than modern commentators have represented. It does not suffice to denominate writers as 'conservative' or 'radical' according to whether they were 'for' or 'against' the French Revolution. By the mid-1790s, with France and England at war and the Revolution and Terror faits accomplis, there were few English 'Jacobins' around, and among professed 'anti-Jacobins', there is far more disagreement than first meets the eye.\(^95\)

Whether one agrees that the terms 'conservative' and 'radical', or 'Jacobin' and 'anti-Jacobin', are or are not useful, it is certainly the case that the shades of meaning, and even contradictions, within these basic positions can be fruitfully explored. As April London noted in a review of novels by Charlotte Smith and Elizabeth Hamilton - two novelists claimed as both radicals and conservatives - 'seemingly incompatible strands of orthodox and iconoclastic opinion can comfortably, and sometimes creatively, coexist in a single work'.\(^96\) This apparently paradoxical idea of radical conservatism (or, for that matter, of conservative radicalism) has been most fully explored in analyses of those novels written by women which might be said to advocate cultural reform, and especially a challenge to patriarchal and anti-feminist views, but which maintain an explicit political orthodoxy.

The key figures to emerge in this debate have been Hannah More, Jane West and Elizabeth Hamilton. These writers were implacably hostile to the French Revolution and British Jacobinism; More and West, at least, certainly regarded them as unforgivably irreligious. Yet it has been strongly argued that behind this explicit conservatism lay a determination to dismantle the sort of restrictive gender roles that Mary Poovey described in her important book on *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (1984).\(^97\) Thus, Gary Kelly's *Women Writing and Revolution* (1993) positions Hamilton, even though she was the author of two politically conservative novels, alongside the much more overtly feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams and Mary Hays as critics of patriarchal gender codes.\(^98\) Eleanor Ty has similarly seen the ostentatiously conservative Jane West as producing a critique of patriarchy in her novels. Her methods, as Ty explains them, were subtle, and may have eluded some contemporaries, but they share a great deal with the strategies employed by more politically ambiguous writers like Mary Robinson and Amelia Opie.\(^99\) And, Ty shows, West can even be likened to overtly radical authors like Wollstonecraft,
Hays and Williams, who had featured prominently in Ty's earlier study, *Unsex'd Revolutionaries* (1993). There, Ty had sought to explain why women writers could position themselves as avowedly conservative while they simultaneously pushed a radically feminist agenda. They were using, Ty argued, what Mikhail Bakhtin had called a 'heteroglossia' or 'double-voiced discourse'. This meant adhering to the orthodox, conservative position, but simultaneously offering a coded endorsement, or at least a re-working, of the ideas that they were superficially denouncing.\footnote{100}

Not every critic has agreed with this kind of analysis. Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace's book *Their Fathers' Daughters* (1991) engaged with the same issues, but argued that Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth were less challenging of patriarchy than they were complicit with it.\footnote{101} Others have taken what we might think of as a middle way, suggesting that a figure such as More was able to challenge the repressive elements of the separate spheres ideology, which confined women to certain restricted roles, but without necessarily attacking the whole paradigm. Mitzi Myers, writing as long ago as 1982, sought to show the similarities between the campaigns of two supposedly antithetical voices, Wollstonecraft and More. For Myers, 'Such alternate (but not mutually exclusive) domestic ideologies as More's model of Evangelical femininity and Wollstonecraft's rational womanhood are parallel, even symbiotic, female responses to political upheaval, attempts to take advantage of national unease to repattern domestic life through new schematic images of social order.'\footnote{102} One could argue that these campaigns might have been waged irrespective of events in France, but Myers is clear that the Revolution was the spur to these repatternings. In Anne Mellor's book *Mothers of the Nation* (2000) Hannah More is again the key figure. She developed a strategy for women's empowerment, Mellor argues, precisely by urging women to assert their dominance of the private sphere, but then pushing those previously depreciated values into the very centre of public and political discourse. More did not advocate women transgressing against traditional gender codes, but asserted that in the crisis after the French Revolution, it was precisely these traditional women's values and virtues that should be put at the heart of the nation. She was utterly successful, says Mellor, and the national self-image that came to the fore in the early Victorian period was founded on the idea of the 'rational, just, yet merciful, virtuous, benevolent, and peace-loving female', the 'New Woman', whom More had helped to invent.\footnote{103}
What is clear from even this brief account is that much of the most exciting work on Romantic-era writing has focussed on the questions of how women wrote in response to the Revolution, and how this writing permanently changed British culture. Excellent introductions to this would be Catherine Decker’s essay on ‘Women and public space in the novel of the 1790s’ in Linda Lang-Peralta’s Women, Revolution, and the Novels of the 1790s (1999) and William Stafford's fuller consideration of the complicated relationships between gender, politics and writing, English Feminists and Their Opponents in the 1790s (2002). A far-reaching and stimulating consideration is Angela Keane’s Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s: Romantic Belongings (2000). Two other thought-provoking analyses of the sexual politics of the Revolution and its depiction in novels are Lucinda Cole's (Anti)Feminist Sympathies: The Politics of Relationship in Smith, Wollstonecraft, and More' (1991), and Julie Shaffer's 'Ruined women and illegitimate daughters: revolution and female sexuality' (2003), which reads illicit female sexual behaviour, tolerated in certain novels, as standing for political acts of class or gender liberation.

All of the studies of the novel discussed so far have examined a group of authors together, but studies of individual authors also provide important, and often less theorised, considerations of the ways in which fiction responded to the Revolution and its aftermath. There are too many such studies to consider them all here, but a representative selection might include Gary Kelly on John Moore, Miriam L. Wallace on Mary Hays, Joseph Roseblum on Thomas Holcroft, Maria Jerinic on Frances Burney, James Whitlark on Matthew Lewis, Tilottama Rajan on Mary Hays and Adriana Craciun on Mary Robinson. Above all others, two individuals authors have drawn most attention in this regard: Jane Austen, because of the widespread interest in all aspects of her work, and Charlotte Smith, because of the very direct depiction of the Revolution in some of her novels. For Austen, the key text remains Marilyn Butler's Jane Austen and the War of Ideas (1975). This was quickly joined by Warren Roberts' book Jane Austen and the French Revolution (1979), and then a spate of relevant books and articles in the late 1980s: Jane Austen and the State (1987), Jane Austen: Women, Politics and the Novel (1988) and 'Jane Austen and the English Novel of the 1790s' (1986). These studies delight in undermining Winston Churchill's claim that all Austen's characters led 'calm lives' with 'No worries about the French
Charlotte Smith's novels can seem to reflect perfectly the changing attitudes to the Revolution of British society as a whole. Her *Desmond* of 1792 is enthusiastic about the Revolution. Her *Old Manor House* of 1793 appears to retreat, being set a decade or so in the past and not mentioning the Revolution. Then the following year's *The Banished Man* returns to the Revolution, apparently recanting the earlier support and depicting post-Revolutionary France as a society fallen into anarchy and barbarity. Smith's two later novels, *Marchmont* (1796) and *The Young Philosopher* (1798), also engage with political issues brought to the fore by the Revolution, both appearing to launch an attack on the anti-Jacobin orthodoxy which was being enforced in Britain by the late 1790s. Naturally, questions of Smith's changing political opinions are addressed in two recent biographies, by Lorraine Fletcher and Carroll Lee Fry. Her representation of the Revolution, and the question of whether these depictions are to be taken at face value, will also be addressed in forthcoming editions of her novels from Pickering and Chatto. A concise analysis of Smith's political fiction is Judith Davis Miller's essay on Charlotte Smith and the French Revolution (2001). Another is by Adriana Craciun, who emphasises the way in which the Revolution and ensuing European wars caused Smith to critique the concept of nationality in her fiction. Her characters find happiness through a proto-Wordsworthian sympathy with nature, and by becoming cosmopolitan 'citizens of the world'. Also interesting is Harriet Guest's investigation of spies and espionage in Smith's fiction.

Smith's oeuvre reminds us that some novels very directly represented the Revolution in France, rather than merely dealing with the ideological controversies which arose from it. Adriana Craciun's essay 'The New Cordays: Helen Craik and British Representations of Charlotte Corday, 1793–1800' (2001) addresses a specific aspect of the Revolution. A chapter on 'Representing Revolution' in Grenby's *Anti-Jacobin Novel* (2001) shows how fictional depictions of events in France quickly became extremely formulaic. A separate essay concentrates on fictional depictions of the 1798 Irish Rebellion, an event which was used to bring the possibility of revolution much closer to home for British readers. In the nineteenth century, the French Revolution continued to be represented in fiction, providing an exciting
backdrop for the protagonists' adventures, but also acting as a crucible for the development of political opinions. Some representative examples of the many studies of the fictional afterlife of the Revolution are Fred Botting’s essay on *Frankenstein* and the French Revolution, David Lodge's on Charles Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, Andrew Sanders' article entitled 'The French are always at it' and Kurt Tetzeli von Rosador's analysis of metaphorical representations of the French Revolution in Victorian fiction. Doris Kadish's *Politicizing Gender: Narrative Strategies in the Aftermath of the French Revolution* (1991) considers how nineteenth-century French and British writers' re-writings of the Revolution differently constructed the roles of women.

For Georg Lukács, writing in the 1930s, the historical novel as a whole had its origins in the French Revolution. It is a thesis which remains largely uncontroversial, although it is now seldom asserted with such confidence. Richard Humphrey, for instance, notes that Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) is a novel ‘of extended journeys and military encounters, of nations in conflict and leaders in contention, of the civilian on the battlefield and of history coming home to him and others – a novel which could understandably be seen as a response to the Napoleonic age’. He also points to Scott’s long-term fascination with Napoleon (culminating in his *Life of Napoleon* of 1827, which begins with a very conservative history of the Revolution). But Humphrey, like most others, stops short of making the claim that Scott’s novels should be seen primarily as responses to the Revolution and its aftermath. This has perhaps largely been due to the emergence in recent years of competing narrative, that Scott's novels find their origin in the Scottish Enlightenment rather than European ideas or events.

**The French Revolution Crisis and Other Genres: Non-fiction, Popular Literature, Children's Literature**

Just as the novel was quickly drawn into the Revolution controversy so were almost all other forms of writing, both fiction and non-fiction. Travel books, for instance, were quickly politicised, most famously with Helen Maria Williams’ enthusiastically pro-Revolutionary *Letters Written in France* (1790), a work analysed in depth in Deborah Kennedy’s *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution* (2002). Also increasing entangled with the Revolution debate was writing about nature and botany,
something investigated by Luisa Calè and Fredrika J. Teute. Texts contributing to the discussion on slavery and the slave trade were quickly pulled into the French Revolution controversy too, although the debate had begun before the Fall of the Bastille and would continue afterwards. Eamon Wright's study *British Women Writers and Race, 1788-1818* (2005) examines treatises and pamphlets as well as novels (by such familiar figures as Austen, Burney, Edgeworth, Smith and Wollstonecraft) and includes a chapter called 'The French Revolution and British Raciology'. R. S. White has looked at both literal and metaphorical descriptions of slavery in many different kinds of literary production, chiefly novels, poetry (especially Blake's) and children's books.

Political tracts, such as those by Richard Price, Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft, provide, of course, the most direct and deliberate contributions to the Revolution debate. They have been studied exhaustively, both in terms of the political content and their formal and stylistic qualities, but not being 'literature' pure and simple, they will not be considered here. However, these political treatises and tracts often had much in common with more obviously 'literary' products of the popular press – chapbooks, garlands, broadsides and so on. Huge numbers of pamphlets were produced in the 1790s by the radicals but more particularly by the anti-Jacobins. They were intended as propaganda, but they were often designed to be effective precisely because they imitated the cheap publications which had for generations been read for pleasure by the poorer sections of society. Ian Haywood has traced the impact of the Revolution on such literature in his *The Revolution in Popular Literature* (2004). It is his contention that it was this collision between popular culture and the politics of the 1790s that caused the transformation of popular literature from a 'plebeian miscellany' to the sort of mass-circulation journalism and fiction which it became in the Victorian era.

Inevitably, Haywood includes a chapter on the Cheap Repository Tracts, started by Hannah More. It was More's enterprise which most famously sought to mimic the chapbooks which, she feared, were retailing radicalism to a mass readership. Her aim was to supplant them with politically and morally innocuous or salutary replacements. Robert Hole, Mitzi Myers and Susan Pederson, as well as Anne Mellor and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace whose books on More have already been mentioned, all interestingly investigate the Cheap Repository. The more scurrilous, and narrowly
political, popular pamphlets published by less religiously-motivated anti-Jacobins in the early 1790s have received less attention. Many of those issued under the auspices of the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property in 1791-92, as well as afterwards, have been reproduced in Gregory Claeys' eight-volume set of *Political Writings of the 1790s* (1995), and have been put into context by Mark Philp.\(^\text{127}\) The loyalist tracts are generally more 'literary' than their radical counterparts, in the sense that their politics is couched in the semi-fictional or dialogue forms familiar from chapbooks. They bear names like *A Whipper for Levelling Tommy; in Which the Modern Doctrines of the Rights of Man are Properly Stated* (1793) or *A New Dialogue between Monsieur Francois and John English on the French Revolution* (c.1793).

Also designed as propaganda during the Revolution crisis, but more overtly 'literary', were the many prose and verse satires which appeared in the 1790s. Although these have been little studied, many have been collected by John Strachan in his five-volume set, *British Satire, 1785–1840* (2003).\(^\text{128}\) Here may be found both radical and conservative satires, such as, respectively, John Thelwall and Daniel Isaac Eaton's prose *King Chaunticlere; or, The Fate of Tyranny* (1793) and Richard Polwhele's verse attack on radical women writers, *The Unsex'd Females* (1798). Also to be found are politically engaged but more ambiguous texts, such as Peter Pindar's 'Song, by Mr. Paine' (1791) and 'Ode to Burke' (1792). Strachan, with Graeme Stones, has produced an annotated edition of the most celebrated compendium of political satire and parody of the age, *The Anti-Jacobin*.\(^\text{129}\) Emily Lorraine De Montluzin has provided an analysis of the more earnest - and even more polemical - monthly *Anti-Jacobin Review* (which, confusingly, succeeded the weekly *Anti-Jacobin*).\(^\text{130}\) Journalism emerging from the other side of the political debate has been examined by Brian Rigby's essay on the *Analytical Review*.\(^\text{131}\) For Stuart Andrews, the greatest achievement of the anti-Jacobin press, was to polarise the nation into two camps, loyalist and 'Jacobin'. This enabled the Administration, and the forces of conservatism more generally, to claim that any Briton who was not in support of the government and its policies must necessarily be a revolutionary. Andrews' examination of British journalism in the 1790s, *The British Periodical Press and the French Revolution* (2000), shows how this was achieved.\(^\text{132}\) It might be supplemented by another book which looks at the means by which a conservative hegemony was established through
the written - and spoken - word, this time through the Church, Robert Hole's *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England* (1989).  

Perhaps more surprisingly, the French Revolution also made a significant impact on the culture of childhood. R. S. White has argued that a debate on natural rights in the 1790s inevitable expanded to include children, as well as the poor, women, slaves and even animals. White suggests that the thinking of Locke, Rousseau and Wordsworth was significant in bringing children's rights into question, but the link with the French Revolution crisis is established by some of the less famous texts he considers. *The Rights of Infants* (1797), for example, by the political radical Thomas Spence, pushed for a fair division of property so that every mother could comfortably tend to the needs of her children. Later, *The Chimney-Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing-Boy's Album*, an anthology compiled by James Montgomery in 1824, was a collection of poems and reports on the appalling conditions of young chimney-sweeps. The best were by Montgomery himself, though Charles Lamb also sent a amended version of Blake's 'The Chimney-Sweeper' from *Songs of Innocence* for inclusion. The book made a powerful case for legislative action. That the campaign was bound up with the Revolution crisis is revealed by Montgomery's background: he had been editor of the *Sheffield Register* in the 1790s and had been imprisoned twice, once for reprinting a song celebrating the fall of the Bastille and once for reporting on a riot. He had also written *Poems on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1809).  

Several writers of the 1790s and 1800s claimed that literature actually for children had been politicised, though their recognition was often part of an anti-Jacobin polemic. Sarah Trimmer, for instance, one of the most important writers of and commentators on children's books, and also an ardent anti-Jacobin, feared that the Revolution in France was part of 'a conspiracy against CHRISTIANITY and all SOCIAL ORDER' and that the Jacobins were committed to spreading their ideas 'through the medium of Books of Education and Children's Books'. It might have been expected that she would try to fight fire with fire, as so many conservative novelists had done, filling her own children's books with conservative polemic, but she did not. The fear of politicising childhood, then being re-invented as a period of innocence which should not be corrupted by adult concerns, was apparently too great. Even William Godwin, who became a writer and publisher of children's books in the 1800s, refrained from politicising his output. Government agents
remained suspicious of his children's publishing enterprise, but even they could find no evidence that he was perverting the young with radical doctrines.\textsuperscript{137}  

One recent article on British children's literature and the French Revolution considers this clash between the newly emerging Romantic construction of childhood and increasingly fraught anxieties about the radicalisation of children's literature, but also discusses several texts which showed none of Trimmer's or Godwin's scruples.\textsuperscript{138} These include history text-books which poured scorn on post-Revolutionary France, and children's novels set amidst the Revolution, such as Mrs. Pilkington's \textit{New Tales of the Castle; or, The Noble Emigrants, a Story of Modern Times} (1800). Just as political was 'The Little Hay-Makers', one of the \textit{Select and Entertaining Stories for the Juvenile or Child's Library} (c.1800), which endeavoured to show the folly of seeking to alter one's place in the social hierarchy. By and large, it was anti-Jacobin and relatively minor authors who were willing to include political opinions in their children's books. On the other hand, close analysis of texts by certain authors who were both radical and well-known can reveal significant political content in their children's books, as for instance in Gary Kelly's examination of Wollstonecraft's \textit{Original Stories}.\textsuperscript{139} For most commentators, however, it is the absence of politics in children's literature that has remained the main focus of attention. Mary Jackson's book on early children's contains a chapter called 'The Propaganda War in Lilliput' which considers many children's books to have been political, but her overall case seems to be that a fear of politicising childhood forced authors and publishers to produce more whimsical books that were further removed from the realities of life.\textsuperscript{140} Alan Richardson has established this argument on a more secure footing, suggesting that Wordsworth, during his conservative years, came to endorse fairy stories and folk tales as the natural reading material for children precisely because it was safely de-politicised.\textsuperscript{141}

Tales and rhymes ostensibly aimed at children were not always a-political though, as Andrea Immel has shown in her study of Baptist Noel Turner's \textit{Infant Institutes} (1797). The \textit{Infant Institutes} is often regarded as the first written record of many nursery rhymes which were, and would remain, standard features of children's oral culture, but Turner's reason for publishing them was entirely political. An ardent anti-Jacobin, Turner printed the rhymes as the excuse for his caustic annotations, which likened the characters and events in the rhyme to notorious British radicals and
members of the Opposition. Thus the woman in 'The old woman tossed up in a basket', for instance, was (he wrote) some 'heresiarch, or philosophical reformer' - William Godwin or Joseph Priestley perhaps - and the basket symbolised his party. That the woman attempts to clean the sky with a broomstick, Turner says, is a sure sign of his folly, insolence and impiety. Curiously, Immel reveals that the reviewers, usually so well-attuned to the political resonances of all kinds of literature, apparently did not recognise Turner's highly political sub-text.

We can learn two things from the Infant Institutes then, which are surely more generally applicable. First, the political turmoil engendered by the French Revolution pervaded absolutely every form of literature. And second, that sometimes our discernment of a glaring political content in these texts was not always shared by those who read them when they first appeared.

1 An earlier version of this essay was first published in French as ‘Révolution française et literature anglaise’ in Annales historique de la Révolution française, 342 (2005), 101-44. I am grateful for help in preparing this bibliographical survey from Mike Rossington, Claire Lamont, Harry Dickinson and Literature Compass's anonymous reviewers. All opinions, errors and omissions are my own responsibility.


15 As Mee puts it: 'Erdman has a tendency to identify the political dimension of the poetry and designs with the representation of historical events. This tendency means that, at its very outset, historicist Blake criticism underestimated the radical significance of the formal dimension of the works. Blake's formal practices have as much political significance as his representation of historical revolutions in poems like The French Revolution and America.' Mee, Dangerous Enthusiasm, pp. 1-2. See D. Erdman, Blake: Prophet Against Empire. A Poet's Interpretation of the History of his own Times (1954; revised third edn., Princeton University Press, 1977).
22 D. Bromwich, *Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth's Poetry of the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) - see especially the chapter 'The French Revolution and "Tintern Abbey"'.


Taylor does provide a brief analysis of *Pizarro’s* multiple political meanings in *The French Revolution and the London Stage*, pp. 172-76.


62 K. Green, 'Mr. Harmony and the Events of January 1793: Elizabeth Inchbald's _Every One Has His Fault_, _Theatre Journal_, 56 (2004), pp. 47-62, p. 62. In fact, on at least two occasions, at Brighton in 1793 and Portsmouth in 1795, performances of the play were greeted with riots in the theatre.


71 G. Russell, 'Burke's Dagger: Theatricality, Politics and Print Culture in the 1790s', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 20 (1997), pp. 1-16; J. Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry and Spectatorship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). The tendency to see all politics as theatrical has become so widespread that Michael Simpson has been provoked to criticise this 'trend in new historicism' which applies 'the notion of "theatre" so widely and metaphorically that it deflects critical attention away from the historical institution of the theatre'. Simpson, *Closet Performances*, p.14.


R. S. White, *Natural Rights and the Birth of Romanticism in the 1790s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2005), p.4. White considers the impact of natural rights thinking on (amongst many others) radical writers such as Inchbald, Bage, Smith, Fenwick and Hays.


102 'Both', Myers continued, 'were part of the larger and eventually successful bourgeois campaign to rehabilitate a degenerate culture through propaganda for enlightened domesticity and social reform.' M. Myers, "Reform or Ruin": A Revolution in Female Manners', Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture, 11 (1982), ed. Harry C. Payne, 199-216., pp. 211-12.

103 A. Mellor, Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England 1780-1830 (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), p.142. Similar conclusions can be found in, Bannet, The Domestic Revolution, and see also K. Sutherland, 'Hannah More's Counter-Revolutionary Feminism', in Revolution in

104 C. Decker, ‘Women and public space in the novel of the 1790s’ in Women, Revolution, and the Novels of the 1790s, ed. L. Lang-Peralta (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999), pp.1-24. This volume also includes essays on Charlotte Smith, Mary Hays, Elizabeth Inchbald and Ann Radcliffe, as well as William Godwin and Matthew Lewis. W. Stafford, English Feminists and Their Opponents in the 1790s (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).


108 Butler, Jane Austen and the War of Ideas; W. Roberts, Jane Austen and the French Revolution (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979); Churchill is quoted on p. 5; M. Evans, Jane Austen and the State (London: Tavistock, 1987); Johnson, Jane Austen: Women,


119 For a concise summary, see Humphrey, *Walter Scott: Waverley*, pp.5-14.


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“Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).


Immel, 'Nursery Rhymes in Anti-Jacobin Satire', p.41.