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Introduction

Utopianism in Practice: The American Front of the French Revolution in England, 1789–1802

> "But the *Americomania*, like the *Hydrophobia*, is not easy to be cured!"
>
> (Philodemus [pseud.], "Plain Letter to the Common People of England and Wales, Giving Some Fair Warning against Transporting Themselves to America," 1783)

> "The historian of utopias . . . is all the more attentive to the profound transformations, both sociological and epistemological, that intervene in the relationship between utopia and politics during the revolutionary period, a period of rapidly accelerating changes, but also of the particularly intense production of hopes and dreams."
>
> (Bronislaw Baczko, *Lumières de l'utopie*)

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of the 1790s to the study of the dawning of political liberty and social equality in modern British society. In particular any account of the period between the fall of the Bastille and the Peace of Amiens must in some way negotiate with the British response to the French Revolution. Although the precise nature of the history of that response is almost as contested today as it was when news of the events in France first reached Britain, there is little disagreement among historians that the coming of the French Revolution provoked "perhaps the most crucial ideological debate ever carried on in English."[1] Ideology essentially involving an encounter between power and signification, the French Revolution debate was, at heart, about the desirability, or otherwise, of the full democratic participation in the production and reproduction of real life, and, hence, of the collaborative making of culture as a network of shared meanings and activities.

[1] Thomas Copeland, *Our Eminent Friend Edmund Burke* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1949), 148.

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The process of political democratization and the drastic leveling of social inequality that had been set in motion in France were now pushing the question of what legitimately constituted the nation's common culture to the top of the political agenda in Britain. For the first time, the plurality of the nation's cultural experience was conducted in a common participatory form. In the words of Andrew McCann, the 1790s stand out as "a decade which saw the emergence of both activist political and cultural practices (bourgeois, proletarian and feminist) in opposition to both the residual forms of courtly culture and the emergent forms of an increasingly homogenized culture industry."[2] It can therefore with some justice be argued, as Gregory Claeys has done, that the French Revolution debate in Britain "marks the birth of political modernity."[3] Certainly, the intense controversy generated by the debate "produced one of the most voluminous and theoretically significant bodies of political literature, indeed the most important debate about democratic principles, in British history."[4] So complex and compelling were the issues at stake that the 1790s' debate on the French Revolution has been described as "perhaps the last real discussion of the fundamentals of politics" in Britain.[5]

Political and historical studies of the Revolutionary decade in Britain, then, have for obvious reasons traditionally concentrated on the French Revolution as the defining event for the emergence of British national identity in the late eighteenth century.[6] *Americomania and the French Revolution Debate in*

[2] Andrew McCann, *Cultural Politics in the 1790s: Literature, Radicalism and the Public Sphere* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 3.

[3] Gregory Claeys, introduction to *Radicalism and Reform: Responses to Burke, 1790–1791*, vol. 1 of *Political Writings of the 1790s*, ed. Gregory Claeys, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1995), 1:xvii.

[4] Ibid., 1:xviii.

[5] Alfred Cobban, ed., *The Debate on the French Revolution, 1789–1800* (London: A. and C. Black, 1963), 31. In a similar vein, David Simpson has argued that "the French Revolution is not 'finished,' and that its legacies, ideological and institutional" are central to "our arguments about ourselves and our opportunities," especially our notions of nationhood, up to the present time (David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory* [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993], 172).

[6] While scholarship on the 1790s continues to be dominated by assessments of the impact of the French Revolution on British society and culture, in recent years new attention has been given to the significance of the American Revolution in the political debate in the Revolutionary decade. See, for instance, Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1992); Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Paul Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); R. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes, *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain, 1780–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

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Britain wants to challenge the conventional representation of that constitutive debate in Britain's political history by shifting the focus away from an almost exclusive concern with the formative role of the French Revolution. Instead, it seeks to recover the abiding role of the American Revolution in that debate. History being ineluctably a perspective on the past, British historians have tended to review the collapse of France's ancient régime and the political instability that followed in its wake in terms of what they meant for Britain's own evolving national identity and ascendance to global colonial supremacy. The immediacy and sheer magnitude of the Revolution in France and the Napoleonic Wars on the wider European Continent by and large caused America to be eclipsed from Britain's historical consciousness – a process that was hardly interrupted by the War of 1812, which for the British was more of a military and diplomatic distraction than a serious geopolitical engagement. For their part, most American historians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have retrospectively assessed the American Revolution and the early republic in terms of an ideal narrative of the rise to nationhood and the consolidation of national sovereignty. If it was hard for British historians to be persuaded that the American Revolution had any significant impact on Britain's key constitutional debate in the 1790s, it was perhaps even harder for American historians to conceive that their Revolution might have materially contributed to the political future of the former colonizer. It is the resulting gap in the historiography of the French Revolution debate in Britain that the present study seeks to fill. This critically involves a reengagement with the way that debate was perceived – or construed – by the participants at the time. Not only was it clear to many observers across the political spectrum that Britain was on the verge of a historic transformation of its entire social and political infrastructure; it was also evident to them that this impending "British Revolution" was inextricably bound up with the unfolding revolutionary process in France, *as well as* with the lingering impact of the groundbreaking rebellion against British rule in the American colonies.[7]

[7] Although not commonly referred to as such, this book aims to demonstrate that there are valid historical reasons for identifying the French Revolution debate and the far-reaching social and political upheaval that accompanied it as the "British Revolution" of the 1790s. Never before had the nation faced such fundamental choices about its core values, social structure and political future in such a short timespan and involving such a wide range of participants from across the sociopolitical spectrum. Nor was this decisive encounter between power and signification limited to England. The emergence in Scotland of "the people" as a political force to be reckoned with had as much impact locally as the popular political movements in England and Ireland had there. If for reasons of space the analysis of the French Revolution debate in this study focuses on the English scene, this is by no means to suggest that the debate was an exclusively English affair. See, for instance, Bob Harris, *The Scottish People and the French Revolution* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008) and Hugh Gough and David Dickson, eds., *Ireland and the French Revolution* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990).

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This book hence takes its initial cue from a prescient observation made by Thomas Paine at the very outset of the Revolutionary debate – in *The Rights of Man* (1791):

> What were formerly called Revolutions, were little more than a change of persons, or an alteration of local circumstances. They rose and fell like things of course, and had nothing in their existence or their fate that could influence beyond the spot that produced them. But what we now see in the world, from the Revolutions of America and France, are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity.[8]

Paine being one of the architects of the American Revolution, his ebullient assessment of the political reality of the day may well have been a matter of self-serving bias or calculated speculation rather than of impartial historical observation; however, his wager that the democratic Revolution in America had fundamentally changed the relationship between the people and the state was accepted by conservatives as much as by reformers. Even William Cobbett, that Tory firebrand and self-appointed scourge of "Gallic liberty," was adamant that the revolutionary force that was rocking the nations of Europe had been generated not in France, but across the Atlantic, in America. "Let it not be forgotten," Cobbett observed in 1800,

> that the opinions and the systems, which have shaken Europe to its very centre, had their rise in America. It is well enough for a man who wants to make money by a book, to attribute the troubles of the world to the conspiracy of a handful of shoeless German philosophers; such a man may trace Jacobinism up to Cain, and to Adam, if he will; but for disinterested men to ascribe the French Revolution to the fooleries of the Free-Masons, and the lack of Jesuits, is a most incredible abandonment of common sense. Not only the principles, but the mode of proceeding also, were copied from the Americans. *Declarations of Rights*, *Committees of Safety*, *Committees of Secrecy*, *Requisitions*, *Confiscations*, *Assignats*, *Mandats*, &c. &c. were they not *all* borrowed from America?[9]

The systemic changes ripping through French society at the time broke the mold of traditional thought patterns in Britain. This epistemological rupture released into the social imagination the possibility of alternative histories and experimental sociopolitical orders. It was as a *symbolic* incarnation of Britain's

[8] Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution* (London: Printed for J.S. Jordan, 1791), 158.

[9] William Cobbett, *Porcupine's Works; Containing Various Writings and Selections, Exhibiting a Faithful Picture of the United States of America; of Their Governments, Laws, Politics, and Resources; of the Characters of Their Presidents, Governors, Legislators, Magistrates, and Military Men, and of the Customs, Manners, Morals, Religion, Virtues and Vices of the People: Comprising Also a Complete Series of Historical Documents and Remarks, from the End of the War, in 1783, to the Election of the President, in March, 1801*, 12 vols. (London: Printed for Cobbett and Morgan, 1801), 12:137.

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possible future society that residual ideas of "America" came to be implicated in the French Revolution debate of the 1790s. The outcome of that acrimonious political debate, and with it the ensuing choices that were made vis-à-vis Britain's societal evolution, were to a significant degree determined by the ideological work effected by the representation of America as a utopian social order.

America's unprecedented experiment in republicanism proved to be as controversial during the French Revolution debate in Britain as it had been during the American Revolution itself.[10] The empire having effectively been cut in half when America gained independence, British society as a whole had yet to come to terms with what precisely it had lost with the Peace of Paris: a transatlantic beacon of social and political justice that would one day enlighten the nations of Europe and dispel the clouds of prejudice and despotism, or the jewel in the crown of Britain's trading empire and hence an important pillar under its global economic and military hegemony. Although in the course of the 1780s the nation had managed to regain some if its former self-confidence under prime minister William Pitt's patriotic leadership, the radicalization of the French Revolution and the start of the war against France in 1793 reactivated Britain's unresolved collective trauma over the loss of the American colonies.

To 1790s' loyalists and radicals alike, then, the American Revolution had by no means ended with the signing of the Peace of Paris Treaty on 3 September 1783. The American Revolution was to them an ongoing political process, indeed a *healing process*, whose relevance to Britain's constitutional crisis had not so much been restarted as *reinvigorated* by the political upheaval that had recently erupted in France. It is therefore hardly surprising that all through the 1790s both friends and foes of American independence would frequently convey the loss of the American colonies in medical discourse. Drawing attention to the nation's mental trauma, William Godwin observed in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) that the recent political "experiment" in America had caused a "concussion" in the "minds of men."[11] The anti-Jacobin press, in turn, described the spirit of emigration to America among reformists as an "American mania."[12] (In America, William Cobbett was concurrently

[10] For discussions of the ideology of liberty in British politics prior to the impact of the French Revolution, see Ian R. Christie, *Crisis of Empire: Great Britain and the American Colonies, 1754–1783* (London: Edward Arnold, 1966); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[11] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (1793; London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1798), [v].

[12] Anon., *Look Before You Leap; or, A Few Hints to Such Artizans, Mechanics, Labourers, Farmers and Husbandmen, As Are Desirous of Emigrating to America: Being a Genuine Collection of Letters, from Persons Who Have Emigrated; Containing Remarks, Notes and Anecdotes, Political, Philosophical, Biographical and Literary, of the Present State, Situation, Population,*

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rejecting the "American sansculottism" of the Jeffersonian opposition as a "*mania reformatio*": a "malady," which, if "not stopped at once, by the help of an hempen necklace . . . never fails to break into Atheism, Robbery, Unitarianism, Swindling, Jacobinism, Massacres, Civic Feasts and insurrections."[13]) Remaining viscerally as well as mentally aware of its imperial loss, Britain evidently continued to experience phantom limb sensations following the partition of the empire. Thus, in contemporary pamphlets and treatises on the subject of the breaking away of the American colonies, the words "amputation" and "dismemberment" were frequently invoked. For instance, the radical Dissenting minister William Winterbotham lamented in his *Historical, Geographical, Commercial, and Philosophical View of the American United States* (1795): "[t]he sad story of Colonial oppression commenced in the year 1764. Great Britain then adopted new regulations respecting her Colonies, which after disturbing the ancient harmony of the two countries for about twelve years, terminated in the dismemberment of the empire."[14] On the other side of the political divide, the conservative novelist Ann Thomas reviled Thomas Paine in her novel *Adolphus de Biron* (1794) for having "incited our Fellow-subjects in America to shake off their constitutional Dependence on the Parent State, and to dismember the British Empire."[15] The upsurge of "Americomania" among Britain's radicals was a particularly painful déjà vu for the loyalists. William Atkinson, for instance, warned in "A Concise Sketch of the Intended Revolution in England" that the republican arguments for emigrating to America proffered by Joseph Priestley in the preface to his 1794 "Fast Sermon" would

Prospects and Advantages, of America, Together with the Reception, Success, Mode of Life, Opinions and Situation, of Many Characters Who Have Emigrated, Particularly to the Federal City of Washington. Illustrative of the Prevailing Practice of Indenting, and Demonstrative of the Nature, Effects and Consequences, of That Public Delusion ([London]: Printed for W. Row, Walker, and J. Barker, 1796), xxiii.

[13] [William Cobbett], *A Bone to Gnaw, for the Democrats; or, Observations on a Pamphlet, Entitled, "The Political Progress of Britain"* (Philadelphia: Printed for the Purchasers, 1795), 21, 5.

[14] William Winterbotham, *An Historical, Geographical, Commercial, and Philosophical View of the American United States, and of the European Settlements in America and the West-Indies*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for the Editor, J. Ridgway, H.D. Symonds and D. Holt, 1795), 1:419. A voracious collector of Americana, Winterbotham may well have gleaned the phrase from Samuel Ayscough's 1783 rebuttal to Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*, in which Ayscough argued that pro-American treatises such as Crèvecoeur's were designed "to produce a total dismemberment from the British empire" (Samuel Ayscough, "Remarks on the Letters from an American Farmer; or A Detection of the Errors of Mr. J. Hector St. John; Pointing out the Pernicious Tendency of These Letters to Great Britain" [London: Printed for John Fielding, 1783], 3).

[15] Ann Thomas, *Adolphus de Biron. A Novel. Founded on the French Revolution*, 2 vols. (Plymouth: Printed by P. Nettleton, for the authoress, [1795?]), 2:66. Elsewhere in the novel, a character by the name of "Monsieur D – laments Britain's late "unfortunate War" with her colonies, which "terminated in the Dismemberment of [its] Empire" (ibid., 2:88).

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result in the "Death or Amputation" of Britain.[16] It was within this specific historical constellation that the battle over "the national mind" came to be dictated in significant ways by the question what America's successful bid for independence should – in retrospect – mean for the social and political future of Britain.[17]

While the "Americomania" debate in the 1790s was thus expressly predicated on the political wrangling surrounding the imperial crisis, this is not to say that it was a mere continuation of the earlier controversy. Certainly, the American crisis debate of the 1760s and 1770s had left a profound mark on British partisan political discourse, which in turn had set the parameters for the later debate. Yet there is no doubt that the rehearsal of the debate on the imperial crisis during the 1790s rode on the constitutional tsunami occasioned by the French Revolution, from which it derived its energy as well as much of its content, direction and discourse. In other words, the reappraisal of the causes and meaning of the American crisis in the wake of the French Revolution inevitably bore the ideological stamp of the cataclysmic events in France. Thus, in the course of this process, the commercial and constitutional arguments that had dominated the debate on the imperial crisis in the 1760s and 1770s were replaced with mainly *ideological* ones. However, by the end of the decade, when the combined forces of Pitt's repressive legislation, the state-sponsored mob and the anti-Jacobin press had effectively gagged the reform movement, "America" – for the time being at least – all but ceased to feature in the British public sphere as an alternative ideological space or ideal "imagined community." It is precisely this specific temporal embeddedness, roughly between the fall of the Bastille and the Peace of Amiens (1802), that is key to understanding the exact nature and significance of the revival of the American crisis debate. Both sides of the political divide were keenly aware of the unique and momentous historical conditions created by the French Revolution; both sides also recognized that British society was facing a constitutional watershed not seen since the Glorious Revolution.

One of the ideological bones of contention most fiercely fought over by the Jacobins and anti-Jacobins in the 1790s was emigration to America. On the one hand, post-Bastille British radicals time and again seized on the prospect of emigration to some socially just utopia in America as a political tool to undermine the power of the privileged classes and to argue for parliamentary reform at home. Charles Pigott reflected the thoughts of many radicals when he defined "America" in his *Political Dictionary* (1795) as "a bright and immortal example to all colonies groaning under a foreign yoke, proving the invincible

[16] [William Atkinson], "A Concise Sketch of the Intended Revolution in England; with a Few Hints on the Obvious Methods to Avert It" (London: Printed for the Author, 1794), 20.

[17] Jackson Barwis, "A Fourth Dialogue Concerning Liberty; Containing an Exposition of the Falsity and Leading Principles of the Present Revolutions in Europe" (London: Printed by T. Spilsbury and Son, J. Debrett, J. Sewell and Scatcherd and Whitaker, 1793), 44.

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energy and virtue of Freedom, and enjoying a state of prosperity, since she has thrown off her dependence on Great Britain, hitherto unknown in the nations of Europe."[18] On the other hand, for anti-Jacobins and other Gallophobic conservatives, a person's stance toward emigration to America was a test of his or her patriotism. Anyone failing that test was considered to entertain sansculotte sympathies and was hence branded a traitor. Thus, at the end of a series of fictitious letters, ostensibly by a "gentleman lately returned from America," John Hodgkinson summarily dismisses the transatlantic emigration rage by observing: "But, it may be asked, ought no description of persons to emigrate? The reply is obvious – The guilty *must*, and the very unfortunate *will*, though the prejudices of the natives are too apt to confound the latter with the former."[19]

Especially after the repressive government reaction had begun to gain momentum in the course of 1794 (which saw the passing of the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act and the Treason Trials) and 1795 (with the passing of the "Gagging Acts"), there was a marked increase in the number of radicals that left Britain and emigrated to America. By the middle of the decade, emigration to the New World had become so popular in radical circles that "America" had become a byword for an asylum for radical emigrants. Charles Pigott provocatively defined the word "emigrant" as "one who, like Dr. Priestley or Thomas Cooper, is compelled to fly from persecution, and explore liberty in a far distant land, probably America."[20] In a similar vein, Pigott annotated the word "refugees" as "English Patriots, as Dr. Priestley and his family, Mr. Cooper, of Manchester, &c. &c. who . . . were obliged to quit a country pregnant with bigotry and persecution."[21] Writing in 1795 in his journal *The Tribune*, John Thelwall reported that the "political and natural calamities," which had recently afflicted the country, had triggered a "rage of emigration" to America.[22] He estimated that in the summer of 1794 alone, some 80,000 people had sought political and economic asylum on "the hospitable shores of America."[23] This figure is almost certainly inflated and would in any case have included only a relatively small number of radical activists, most of whom belonged to the lower-middle classes and often lacked an economic incentive to leave England. Accordingly, William Atkinson pilloried the would-be radical emigrant as "a modern *voluntary exile*, whining

[18] Charles Pigott, *A Political Dictionary: Explaining the True Meaning of Words* (London: Printed for D.I. Eaton, 1795), 3.
[19] [John Hodgkinson?], *Letters on Emigration, by a Gentleman Lately Returned from America* (London: Printed for C. and G. Kearsley, 1794), 76.
[20] Pigott, *A Political Dictionary*, 17.
[21] Ibid., 113.
[22] [John Thelwall], *The Tribune, a Periodical Publication, Consisting Chiefly of the Political Lectures of J. Thelwall. Taken in Short-Hand by W. Ramsey, and Revised by the Lecturer*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for the Author, 1795–96), 1:15.
[23] Ibid., 1:3.

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out [his] grievances to the destruction of [his] honest, zealous, but mistaken countrymen."[24]

Emigration to America being at the heart of the Jacobin/anti-Jacobin controversy, the topic featured widely in the print revolution of the 1790s. Tapping into an already existing body of topographical, natural historical and travel writing about America (mainly from 1783 onward), as well as into an older tradition of Golden Age transmarine utopianism, many of those in the 1790s campaigning for sociopolitical reform developed emigration to America as a central trope in their writings and thought. Even though for most reformers transatlantic emigration may have been an ideological ploy rather than a real-life choice, the conservatives took their pro-emigration stance seriously nonetheless and began to attack it with fervor. The *Gentlemen's Magazine*, for instance, reported in its issue for May 1793 that "[s]everal of our periodical publications have of late abounded with essays written to prove the superior felicity of American farmers, and to recommend our husbandmen to quit their native plains, and seek for happiness and plenty in the Transatlantic desarts."[25] Increasingly fearing massive shortages of skilled labor and dire economic disruption, the anti-Jacobins launched a vicious media campaign against those promoting emigration to America, dismissing emigrants in pamphlets and broadsides as traitors and vagabonds. Underlying these fears was a deeper-seated anxiety that the economic and social mobility of the disenfranchised masses would fatally unravel the entire fabric of British society by destabilizing the time-honored balance between class, property, democratic participation and the division of labor. In response, the dominant orders in Britain sought to consolidate their position on continuity, tradition and "experience" as a way to legitimize their ancient claims to sociopolitical hegemony. Animated by a mixture of disgust and blind panic, the conservative intelligentsia enlisted a host of hack writers, who unleashed a barrage of anti-American and anti-emigration diatribe. In the course of their ideological conflict, Jacobins and anti-Jacobins produced an unprecedented stream of documents relating to North America in general and to travel and emigration to America in particular. Collectively, this body of transatlantic emigration literature represented a significant contribution to an already buoyant and prolific print culture.

Indeed, it is imperative to be aware that the 1790s' "mania of emigration to the United States," as Paine's friend Thomas Clio Rickman once described it, was first and foremost a *discursive* phenomenon rather than a sociohistorical or demographical process.[26] That is to say, even though what was at stake was nothing less than the future shape of British society, the issue of emigration to

[24] [Atkinson], "A Concise Sketch of the Intended Revolution in England," iii.
[25] *Gentlemen's Magazine* 63, II:5 (May 1793): 401.
[26] [Thomas Clio Rickman], *Emigration to America, Candidly Considered. In a Series of Letters, from a Gentleman, Resident There, to His Friend, in England* ([London]: Printed by Thomas Clio Rickman, 1798), iii.

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the New World was overwhelmingly understood and validated through public discourse and debate. The emigration controversy of the 1790s is therefore best rendered as a prolonged and often heated conversation between radicals and conservatives carried on within the wider print culture, rather than a formal political dialogue conducted as part of the Parliamentary process. In the course of this "conversation in print," both sides came to articulate – or invent – a language of partisan politics that enabled them to develop the tenets of their own political creed, as well as to negotiate with those of their opponents. As a result, the expansive body of travel and emigration literature that emerged in the course of the 1780s and, particularly, the 1790s constituted a degree of intertextuality seldom seen before or since in the history of print in Britain. It is this very *printedness* of the 1790s' emigration debate that allows it to be explored and recovered as part of what was an extraordinarily dense network of texts and counter-texts, and of authors and audiences. Mapping the sociology of texts, authors, printers and readers participating in this debate, this book provides an integrated and interdisciplinary analysis of the transatlantic history of the book in Britain during the late eighteenth century.[27]

There is a crucial and direct connection between the print explosion of the 1790s and the process of political democratization that was at the heart of the French Revolution debate. The question that was centrally at stake during the 1790s' print war was which side would win the hearts and minds of the common people. The radicals needed to get the people on their side if they were to swing the political balance in favor of reform, both inside and outside of Parliament. For their part, the governing class and the administrative state knew they could only cling to power *and* simultaneously stave off the threat of a French invasion if they could rely on the people to finance them and to fight for them. Both sides realized that it was at the juncture of the social imagination and reality that the battle would be won or lost. It was for this reason that the medium of the popular novel became one of the most fiercely contested battlefields in the 1790s' print war. Hoping to win over the poor and disenfranchised by offering them utopian systems of perfection aimed at setting them free, the radicals introduced that "monstrous" literary hybrid of the Jacobin "political romance" – a highly captivating crossover between the familiar sentimental novel and the political treatise. Because it went against their deepest instincts to address political issues outside of the confines of Parliament, conservative writers were initially slow to respond. It was the Tories' worst nightmare scenario that by popularizing political discourse, the idea of active citizenship

[27] The present study in this sense markedly distinguishes itself from empirically based sociohistorical studies of real-life transatlantic emigration to North America, such as those by Bernard Bailyn, including *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986) and Michael Durey's *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early Republic* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997).

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