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978-1-107-13361-7 - Print, Publicity, and Popular Radicalism in the 1790s: The Laurel of Liberty

Jon Mee

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## PRINT, PUBLICITY, AND POPULAR RADICALISM IN THE 1790S

Jon Mee explores the popular democratic movement that emerged in the London of the 1790s in response to the French Revolution. Central to the movement's achievement was the creation of an idea of 'the people' brought into being through print and publicity. Radical clubs rose and fell in the face of the hostile attentions of government. They were sustained by a faith in the press as a form of 'print magic', but confidence in the liberating potential of the printing press was interwoven with hard-headed deliberations over how best to animate and represent the people. Ideas of disinterested rational debate were thrown into the mix with coruscating satire, rousing songs, and republican toasts. Print personality became a vital interface between readers and text exploited by the cast of radicals returned to history in vivid detail by *Print, Publicity, and Popular Radicalism*. This title is available as Open Access at [10.1017/9781316459935](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316459935).

JON MEE is Professor of Eighteenth-Century Studies at the University of York and Director of the Centre for Eighteenth-Century Studies. He has published many essays and books on the literature, culture, and politics of the age of revolutions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He is also author of *The Cambridge Introduction to Charles Dickens* (Cambridge, 2010).

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For

Marilyn Butler

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## Acknowledgements

And nothing starts in the archive, nothing, ever at all, though things  
certainly end up there. You find nothing in the Archive but stories  
caught half way through: the middle of things; discontinuities

(Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*)

My own strain of archive fever has driven this project forward for nearly three decades. The final periods of intensive research were made possible by an AHRC Fellowship that gave me invaluable time at the British Library, the National Archives, Kew, and in the Seligman Collection at Columbia University. I'd like to thank the archivists and librarians at these institutions and also the Bodleian Library, the Henry E. Huntington Library, the John Rylands Library, the Lewis Walpole Library, Nuffield College, Oxford, and Worcester College, Oxford. I am also grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for funding the 'Networks of Improvement' project. My work on associations in the late eighteenth century for the project has fed directly into this book.

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Where manuscripts are reproduced in Mary Thale's *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, then I have used it as a reference to make access easier for the reader. Otherwise I have referred to the original manuscripts in either the British Library or National Archives. See notes and bibliography for details of the individual manuscripts.

Bibliographical references to printed materials are given in short form in the notes with full details in the bibliography, newspapers and periodicals excepted, where details are provided in the relevant note, or sometimes simply by date in the main text in the case of eighteenth-century newspapers.

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Barrell and Mee	<i>Trials for Treason and Sedition, 1792–1794</i> , ed. John Barrell and Jon Mee. 8 vols. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006–7
IKD	John Barrell, <i>Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793–1796</i> . Oxford University Press, 2000
LCS	London Corresponding Society
LT	Thelwall, Mrs [Henrietta Cecil], <i>The Life of John Thelwall, by his Widow</i> . Vol. 1, London: 1837
MPM	<i>Moral and Political Magazine of the LCS</i> . 2 vols. London, 1796–7
SCI	Society for Constitutional Information
Selections	<i>Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792–1799</i> , ed Mary Thale. Cambridge University Press, 1983