Writers and Revolution

The revolution of 1848 has been described as the revolution of the intellectuals. In France, the revolution galvanized the energies of major romantic writers and intellectuals. This book follows nine writers through the revolution of 1848 and its aftermath: Alphonse de Lamartine, George Sand, Marie d'Agoult, Victor Hugo, Alexis de Tocqueville, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Alexander Herzen, Karl Marx and Gustave Flaubert. Conveying a sense of the experience of 1848 as these writers lived it, this fresh and engaging study captures the sense of possibility at a time when it was not yet clear that the Second French Republic had no future. By looking closely at key texts in which each writer attempted to understand, judge, criticize or intervene in the revolution, Jonathan Beecher shows how each endeavoured to answer the question posed explicitly by Tocqueville: Why, within the space of two generations, did democratic revolutions twice culminate in the dictatorship of a Napoleon?

Jonathan Beecher is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California at Santa Cruz. A European intellectual historian, with a special interest in France and Russia, his previous publications include *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World* (1986) and *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (2001). His works have been translated into French, Italian and Japanese.

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Writers and Revolution

Intellectuals and the French Revolution of 1848

Jonathan Beecher
University of California, Santa Cruz

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In memory of three inspiring teachers:
Edward P. Morris
Stanley Hoffmann
Judith Nisse Shklar

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Preface

This is a book that I have been thinking about, imagining and rehearsing for much of my life as a historian. It was in my sophomore year in college that Ted Morris steered me in the direction of 1848: we were reading Fromentin's novel *Dominique*, and he kept asking me to think about the relation between this apparently apolitical work and 1848. Two years later I wrote a senior thesis with Valentine Boss on the critique of political religions developed by Alexander Herzen in 1848. I went on to do several years of graduate work in Russian intellectual history, and my original idea was to study the rise of socialism in the Russia of Nicholas I. But I took a long detour into the life and thought of Charles Fourier and the reverberations of his thought in July Monarchy France. This turned into two large books. It was only when I was well embarked on the present book that I began to see it as part of a single story: a trilogy. The first two parts of the trilogy were my intellectual biographies of Charles Fourier and Victor Considerant. Both of these books were attempts to reach a sympathetic yet critical understanding of the extraordinary flourishing of radical ideas and utopian visions that marked the 1830s and 1840s in France, and the present study of European writers and 1848 is centrally concerned with the collapse of such dreams after 1848.

When I began, I saw myself as writing contextual history. My goal in the first book, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World*, was to get beyond the conventional view of Fourier as a sort of inspired lunatic who lived in a self-contained mental universe. I wanted to look at him and his ideas in relation to his experience and against the background of the various "worlds" that he traversed. My hope was that by grasping the interplay between Fourier's ideas and the circumstances in which he lived, I could present a richer account of his theory than those offered by commentators who saw Fourier as a "precursor" of Marx or Freud and whose main concern was with his "modernity." In the second book, *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism*, my task was different. Victor Considerant was a largely derivative thinker who found an audience for Fourier's ideas in the 1840s but flattened

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them out, turning Fourier's call for the liberation of instinct into a scheme for the organization of labour. It seemed to me that the best way to approach him was to relate him to the larger movement of which he was a part – not the Fourierist movement but something broader and more pervasive: what I called "the rise and fall of French romantic socialism."

I continue to see myself as a contextual historian, but a large part of this book consists of the close reading of texts – inspired in part by the work of Hayden White and by French textual analysis. The book could be described as an exercise in comparative storytelling – an attempt to get at the revolution of 1848 and its aftermath by comparing the itineraries and writing of my nine intellectuals. The point of the book is, as I make clear in the Prologue, to explain what contemporary intellectuals – liberals, republicans, democrats and socialists – understood as a failure.

I have benefitted greatly from the opportunity to present versions of my "book project" to colleagues as it evolved over the years. My thanks go first to George Sheridan and Jeremy Popkin for inviting me to join them in a French Historical Studies conference panel on 1848 at Rutgers. Thanks also to Carol Harrison for a searching comment at that session. A Pierson lectureship at the University of Oregon gave me the chance to work out my ideas more extensively. More recently I have had the opportunity to participate in conferences on 1848 at Cambridge and Paris and to meet so many fine scholars working on 1848. I have greatly enjoyed exchanges growing out of these conferences with Gareth Stedman Jones, Douglas Moggach, Emmanuel Fureix, Sylvie Aprile, Fabrice Bensimon, Romy Sanchez, Jorge Myers, Christopher Clark and Miles Taylor. I want particularly to thank Gareth for the contribution his work on Marx, on early socialism and on the link between socialism and religion has made to our understanding of the history of nineteenth-century European radicalism.

In recent years I have been able to present overviews of and chapters from my book at conferences at Vanderbilt and UN Reno, and talks at Stanford and UC Santa Cruz. I am particularly grateful to my colleagues in Cultural Studies here at UCSC and especially to Gail Hershatter, James Clifford, Donna Haraway, Gopal Balakrishnan and Jerome Neu. Their encouraging response to my Cultural Studies talk a few years ago meant a lot to me. I also thank Keith Baker and Dan Edelstein and J. P. Daughton, generous and welcoming colleagues at Stanford.

Over the years colleagues and friends have generously taken the time to read my chapters as they slowly appeared. I am especially grateful to Gary Miles, Peter Kenez and the late John Dizikes, each of whom read just about everything. I thank Jeremy Jennings for a very helpful reading of

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the finished manuscript. Several of my colleagues have given me much needed critical readings of specific chapters. For this I especially want to thank Ruth MacKay, Dominica Chang, Naomi Andrews, Mary Pickering, Christopher Johnson, Irina Paperno, Joseph Butwin and Mark Traugott. Along the way, Mark has helped me with any number of problems, large and small. And I would like to indicate here how lucky I feel to have had as a colleague for more than four decades as fine a scholar of 1848 and as generous a friend as Mark Traugott. I also want to acknowledge a number of fellow travellers who have encouraged me in various ways and taught me by example, sometimes without knowing it: Terry Burke, Patrice Higonnet, Temma Kaplan, Biliana Kassabova, Lloyd Kramer, Kristin Ross, Bali Sahota, Alan Spitzer, Bruce Thompson, Steven Vincent, John Womack and my dear friend Buchanan Sharp.

My thanks to longstanding French colleagues and friends. I owe a lot to Michèle Riot-Sarcey who has taught me much through both her work and our talks about nineteenth-century French radical thought. I am very grateful to Ludovic Frobert who has organized fascinating colloquia on early French socialism and on the *canuts* of Lyon and has had the kindness to invite me to participate in several of them. Thanks also to Nicole Edelman, Chantal Gaillard, Chantal Guillaume, Philippe Hamon, François Jarrige, Pierre Mercklé, Philippe Régnier, Loïc Rignol, René Schérer and Anne Verjus. I have a particular debt of gratitude to my longstanding Besançon friends – especially to my "brother," Gaston Bordet, who has introduced me to so many different facets of the history of French radicalism, past and present, and to Thomas Bouchet who has written so much and so well about 1848 and social movements of the 1830s and 1840s. Thanks also to my comrade Michel Cordillot and to Marc Veuilleumier whose meticulous scholarship has meant so much to all of us working on 1848. And thanks to Edward Castleton, a Bisontin by adoption, who is now playing a central role in the reorientation of Proudhon scholarship and whose unpublished and about-to-be-published papers have been so helpful to me and many others in our efforts to make sense of Proudhon's thought. Finally, my thanks for numerous kindnesses over the years to my friends of sixty years standing (!), Catherine Vourc'h and Anne Vourc'h and their families, to the late Michel and Colette Cotté, and to my friends-in-Fourier, Philippe and Danielle Duizabo and Jean and Monique Adam for the warmth of their welcome at Paris and Condé-sur-Vesgre.

Closer to home, I am grateful to my university for the award of multiple Academic Senate Research Grants for work on this book. I also want to thank Alice Yang and Alan Christy, provosts respectively

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of Stevenson and Cowell Colleges here at UCSC, for providing me with an office – shared with my friend Gildas Hamel – long after my formal retirement. Given my peculiar study habits and my need to be within walking distance of our wonderful library, it would have been hard – perhaps impossible – for me to complete this book without the office and without all the help I have received from colleagues at the McHenry Library, notably Beth Remak-Honeff, from the Interlibrary Loan staff, and from Jay Olson and Kim Hwe in the Humanities Division. And now that my book has migrated to England, I want to thank Elizabeth Friend-Smith, Atifa Jiwa and Lisa Carter for welcoming the book at Cambridge and for the help and encouragement they have given me as I have attempted to adapt myself to the conventions of publishing in a digital age. Thanks also to Tanya Izzard for a fine index and to Benjamin Johnson, a patient, supportive and resourceful copyeditor.

Unlike my biographies of Fourier and Considerant, which were largely based on archival sources, this book has grown to a significant degree out of my teaching – out of courses in French history, nineteenth-century European intellectual history, and seminars on 1848, on the history of Paris and *Les Misérables*. I have learned much through exchanges with students in these courses, and I want to acknowledge at least a few of them: Naomi Andrews, Bob Andrus, Bob Brauneis, Alexandra Carter, Kukui Claydon, Sarah Johnson Doenmez, Carolyn Eastman, Jennifer Heyneman, Sarah Leonard, Ruth MacKay, Laura Mason, José Orozco, Kathryn Paisner, Grace Phelan, Dianne Williams Pitman, Paul Pitman, Clay Ramsay, Doug Reed, Carina Scott, Amy Stewart, Anthony Von der Muhl, Virginia Ward and Janna Wicklund.

I am dedicating this book to the memory of three people: Edward Morris, Stanley Hoffmann and Judith Nisse Shklar. Although each of them is remembered in many other ways, I knew them first as teachers. Ted Morris got me started in French studies, taught me how to read critically and helped me to acquire a love of French literature that continues to enrich my life. Stanley Hoffmann's amazing lecture course on French Society and Politics, with all the wonderful novels on its impossibly long reading list, opened up new worlds for me. And the experience of meeting with Dita Shklar once a week to discuss a graduate field in Ancient Political Theory left me not only with a deeper understanding of Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides and Polybius, but also with a lifelong admiration for her lucidity and humane skepticism. She remains for me a model of moral seriousness and intellectual generosity.

Finally, I want to thank my family. Over the past decade, Merike and I have both been absorbed by work on ambitious projects – hers even more ambitious than mine. Now she is finishing work on the third

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volume of her translation of Jaan Kross' great historical novel, *Between Three Plagues*, an attempt to recreate the life of Balthasar Russow, the author of *The Livonian Chronicle* (1578), a work regarded by some as the first history of Estonia. As we both worked away on our grand projects, I came to feel a wonderful sense of intellectual comradeship with Merike. Our boys have also become intellectual comrades: David, the historian, with whom I have discussed many of the issues that this book raises, and Lembit, the composer, from whom I am expecting a musical appreciation of 1848 to rival his Oratorio for male chorus, two horns and harp on Fourier's *New Amorous World*.

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Chronology

Political Regimes in France 1789–1848

French Revolution:
Constitutional Monarchy 1789–1792
First Republic 1792–1804
Revolutionary Government by the Convention 1792–1795
Directory 1795–1799
Consulate 1799–1804: Dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte
Napoleonic Empire 1804–1814: Napoleon I
First Bourbon Restoration 1814–1815
Napoleon's Hundred Days 1815
Second Bourbon Restoration 1815–1830
Louis XVIII 1814–1824
Charles X 1824–1830
July Monarchy 1830–1848
Constitutional Monarchy: Orleanist King Louis-Philippe

Second French Republic: February 24, 1848 to December 2, 1851

1848

February 22	Crowds protest cancellation of reformist banquet.
February 23	National Guard defects. Guizot dismissed.
February 23	Protest culminates in shooting on the Boulevard des Capucines.
February 24	Barricades rise all over Paris. Street fighting. King abdicates.
February 24	Insurgents seize Tuileries and Hôtel de Ville.
February 24	Provisional Government formed.

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February 25	Provisional Government proclaims the “right to work.”
February 25	Lamartine defends tricolor flag.
February 26	National Workshops set up.
February 26	Abolition of death penalty for political crimes. Mobile Guard created.
February 28	Luxembourg Commission established to study organization of work.
February 29	Abolition of salt tax and municipal customs duties.
March 4	Abolition of slavery in French colonies. Freedom of press and assembly.
March 4	Lamartine’s Manifesto to the European Powers proclaims non-intervention.
March 5	Proclamation of universal (male) suffrage.
March 8	National Guard opened to all adult males.
March 14	Dissolution of elite companies of National Guard.
March 16	Special 45 centimes surtax on each franc of direct property taxes.
March 16	Demonstration by elite National Guard units.
March 17	Massive republican counter-demonstration.
April 15	George Sand’s *Bulletin de la République* calls for a democratic assembly.
April 16	Worker demonstration dwarfed by massive counter-demonstration.
April 20	*Fête de la Fraternité*
April 23	Election of National Constituent Assembly: Massive conservative majority.
April 27–28	Repression of workers’ protest at Rouen.
May 4	National Assembly meets. Republic proclaimed.
May 10	Provisional Government replaced by Executive Commission.
May 15	Crowd invades Assembly. Abortive coup.
May 16	Luxembourg Commission dissolved.
May 20	Assembly opens debate on National Workshops.
June 4	By-elections to National Assembly: Proudhon and Hugo elected.
June 5–10	Unrest among Paris workers. Arrests.
June 21	Decree on National Workshops.
June 22	Worker demonstrations at Paris.
June 23–26	“The June Days.” Civil War in Paris.

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June 24	Executive Commission resigns. Power to Cavaignac. State of siege.
June 26	Insurrection crushed. Shooting of prisoners.
June 28	Cavaignac forms a ministry. National Workshops abolished.
July–August	Reaction, Red Scare, Emergence of the Party of Order.
July 5	Carnot removed as Minister of Public Instruction.
July 28	Decree on clubs.
July 31	Assembly condemns Proudhon.
August 9–11	Decrees on the press.
August 25–26	Prosecution and flight into exile of Blanc and Caussidière.
September 4	National Assembly begins to discuss the Constitution.
September 17	By-elections. Winners include Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte.
November 4	Constitution approved 739:30. Hugo and Proudhon vote against.
November 24	Pope Pius IX flees into exile with Austrians at Gaeta.
December 10	Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte elected President of the Republic.

1849

April 16	French troops sent to Rome.
April 30	First attack by French troops on Roman Republic.
May 7	Constituent Assembly protests attack on Rome.
May 13	Legislative Assembly elected. Gains for Right but "Red France" emerges.
June 3	French troops begin siege of Roman Republic.
June 11	Assembly rejects Ledru-Rollin's demand for no-confidence vote.
June 13	Paris demonstration against government broken up. Radicals arrested.
June 19	New law banning clubs.
July 3	Roman Republic falls to French troops. Pope can return to Vatican.
July 27	New law on the press.
October	Trial of those implicated in June 13 demonstration.

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1850

March 10	By-elections result in radical victories.
March 15	Falloux Law gives Catholic Church control of education.
May 31	New electoral law eliminates three million voters.
June 9	Law forbidding clubs and public meetings.
July	President Louis-Napoleon tours the provinces.

1851

July 19	Assembly rejects constitutional revision to permit re-election of president.
October–November	Louis-Napoleon fails to restore universal male suffrage.
December 2	Coup d'état of Louis-Napoleon: National Assembly dissolved.
December 3–4	Limited resistance in Paris.
December 5–10	Extensive resistance in the provinces is crushed.
December 21	Plebiscite gives massive approval to Louis-Napoleon.

1852

November 21	Second plebiscite approves Empire.
December 2	Louis-Napoleon becomes Emperor.

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