

**Women, Letters, and the French Revolution:**

**1790-1795**

**Jihee Kim**

**PhD**

**University of York**

**English and Related Literature**

**January 2019**

## Abstract

This thesis traces British responses to the French Revolution between 1790 and 1795 in the work of three women writers: Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827), Charlotte Smith (1749-1803), and Mary Wollstonecraft (1756-1798). I am concerned with their changing ways of responding to the situations in France between 1790 and 1795, and the choices in genre that they made to express their opinions on the Revolution. These writers continued to publish works related to the Revolution, in defiance of hostile British reactions to the Revolution. This thesis also explores the personal correspondence that Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft exchanged with their friends, and reveals the dynamics of their friendships in relation to the writers' support for the Revolution. By reading their publications and personal letters together, this study aims to tell stories of their lives between 1790 and 1795.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
List of Figures	5
Acknowledgements	6
Declaration	7
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter One: Letter Writing and Friendship in Helen Maria Williams’s First Two Volumes of <i>Letters</i></b>	<b>31</b>
I. Letter Writers and Addressees in Williams’s <i>Letters Written in France</i>	33
II. ‘A Charming Pamphlet, that Shews Me the Sunny-side of the French Revolution’: Anna Seward’s Changing Responses to Williams’s <i>Letters Written in France</i>	42
III. Williams’s Demonstration of ‘French Patriotism’ and English Loyalty in <i>Letters From France</i>	49
<b>Chapter Two: ‘Women it is said have no business with politics. – Why not?’: Charlotte Smith’s Political Voices in <i>Desmond</i> and <i>The Emigrants</i></b>	<b>66</b>
I. ‘Truth was so blended with falsehood’: Truth and Misrepresentation in <i>Desmond</i>	69
II. Charlotte Smith’s Correspondence with Thomas Cadell	83
III. ‘Our Brethren’: Emigrants, Louis XVI, and War in <i>The Emigrants</i>	91
<b>Chapter Three: Mary Wollstonecraft, the French Revolution, and ‘the philosophical eye’</b>	<b>103</b>

I. 'The Attentive Eye of Observation': Wollstonecraft's Philosophical Letters	108
II. Wollstonecraft's Rewriting of the Revolution of 1789 in <i>An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution</i>	117
<b>Chapter Four: Helen Maria Williams's Political Letter Writing</b>	<b>138</b>
I. Dynamics of Williams's Friendships in England and France	140
II. A Vindication of the Girondins in Williams's Third and Fourth volume of <i>Letters</i>	149
III. Female Victims of the Terror in Williams's Fifth volume of <i>Letters</i>	158
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>174</b>

## List of Figures

- Fig.1: Frederick George Byron, *Don Dismallo, after an Absence of Sixteen Years, Embracing His Beautiful Vision!* Published 18 November 1790, by William Holland. BM 7679; British Museum. 21
- Fig.2: Anon., *Don Dismallo Running the Literary Gantlet*. Published 1 December 1790, by William Holland, BM 7688; British Museum. 23
- Fig.3: Anon., *Don Dismallo among the Grasshoppers in France*. Published 10 December 1790, by William Holland, BM 7685; British Museum. 24
- Fig.4: James Gillray, *French Democrats Surprizing the Royal Runaways*. Published 27 June 1791, by Hannah Humphrey, BM 7882; British Museum. 51
- Fig.5: Thomas Rowlandson, *Sergent Recruteur*. Published 1789, by Samuel Fores, BM 7559; British Museum. 129
- Fig.6: Isaac Cruikshank, *The Doctor Indulged with His Favorite Scene*. Published 1790, by Samuel Fores, BM 7690; British Museum. 134

## Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor, Emma Major, who has offered unbounded academic and moral support during my Ph.D. It would have been impossible to complete my thesis without her support and encouragement. I also express my deepest gratitude to Mary Fairclough, who supervised some of the final stages of my research as well as gave valuable advice as a member of my Thesis Advisory Panel. I would also like to thank Jon Mee, who was a member of my Thesis Advisory Panel in my first year of my Ph.D.

I am incredibly lucky to have been part of the University of York's Department of English and Related Literature and Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies. Travel grants from the F.R. Leavis Fund, the English Department at the University of York, and CECS enabled me to undertake research trips to Manchester, Oxford, and the United States. I am thankful for the assistance of staff at the John Rylands Library of Manchester, the Bodleian Library of Oxford, Princeton University Library, New York Public Library, and Yale University Library. I would like to thank Madelaine Schurch, who proofread my thesis and whose hospitality and friendship enriched my time in York.

I am indebted to my parents, Seok Joo Kim and JaeKyung Kim, for their unlimited support and affection. I would not have made it without them. I also thank my sisters, Ji Yeon Kim and Ye Ji Kim, for their constant encouragement.

## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

## Introduction

In his *Life of Johnson* (1791), James Boswell (1740-1795) recounts a meeting between Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) and Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827) on 30 May 1784. He introduces her as an ‘amiable, elegant, and accomplished young lady’.<sup>1</sup> However, in his 1793 edition, he takes ‘amiable’ out of his description of her, and he explains his choice in a footnote:

In the first edition of my Work, the epithet *amiable* [for Helen Maria Williams] was given. I was sorry to be obliged to strike it out; but I could not in justice suffer it to remain, after this young lady had not only written in favour of the savage Anarchy with which France has been visited, but had (as I have been informed by good authority) walked, without horror, over the ground at the Thuilleries [*sic*] when it was strewed with the naked bodies of the faithful Swiss Guards, who were barbarously massacred for having bravely defended against a crew of ruffians, the Monarch whom they had taken an oath to defend. From Dr. Johnson she could now expect not endearment but repulsion.<sup>2</sup>

In two years, his idea of Williams has markedly changed from an ‘amiable’ person into a person who provokes ‘repulsion’ for her continuous support for revolutionary principles. By the time he first published the *Life of Johnson*, Williams was already famous for her *Letters Written in France* (1790), in which she shows her enthusiasm for the Revolution, based on her eyewitness account of France. Her *Letters* did not trouble Boswell then. However, in the 1793 edition he criticized her work for having been ‘written in favour of the savage Anarchy’, and he justified himself by drawing attention to Williams’s insensitive approach to the death of Swiss Guards. His sympathetic account of ‘the faithful Swiss Guards, who were barbarously massacred for having bravely defended against a crew of ruffians’ accentuates her indifference to the butchered guards, and further he insinuates that he suspects her disloyalty to her own king. Moreover, his

---

<sup>1</sup> James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, 2 vols. (London: Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, 1791), 2: 495.

<sup>2</sup> James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, third edition, 3 vols. (London: Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, 1793), 3: 543-544.



claim to be ‘informed by good authority’ refers to the fact that Williams’s friends corresponded with her in France, spread stories about her that was not proven, and even published the stories.<sup>3</sup> As I will show in Chapter Four, while Williams wrote a history of the French Revolution in France, her friends in England were creating a history about her.

Williams’s position became even more precarious when her relationship with her lover John Hurford Stone (1763-1818) was revealed publicly in 1794.<sup>4</sup> Like Boswell, the reviewer in the *True Briton* picks up the rumour about her and uses it to make a double attack: ‘When we hear that Miss HELEN WILLIAMS, on the dreadful tenth of August, walked amongst the dead bodies of the Swiss Guards, and calmly beheld their bleeding wounds; we instantly concluded, that her HEART was turned to STONE!’<sup>5</sup> In Boswell’s version of the story, Williams ‘walked, without horror’ over Tuileries, and here she walked and ‘calmly beheld their bleeding wounds’. The writer criticises Williams for her insensibility on the brutal murders of the Swiss Guards, and metaphorically claims ‘her Heart was turned to STONE!’ The attack on her ‘[h]eart’ is significant here. In the first volume of *Letters*, Williams underlines her understanding of the Revolution based on her heart, saying that ‘my political creed is entirely an affair of the heart’, but the *True Briton* denies her reading of the Revolution.<sup>6</sup> ‘[H]er Heart was turned to STONE’ also of course alludes to her relationship with Stone. This phrase was circulated widely; Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821) also refers to the expression in her letter to Penelope Weston Pennington (1752-1827) of 17 February 1795: ‘The Rival Wits say that Helen Williams is turned to *Stone*, and tho’ She was once Second to nobody, She is now Second to his Wife, who it seems was not

---

<sup>3</sup> Boswell’s footnote was later reprinted in a review of Williams’s fifth and sixth volumes of *Letters* in *St. James’s Chronicle* in 1795, in which the reviewer claimed that ‘had Mr. Boswell lived to peruse this Lady’s present publication, we believe he would not have been tempted to restore the discarded epithet’. *St. James’s Chronicle*, 30 July 1795.

<sup>4</sup> Their relationship may have started between September 1791 and June 1792, during her second trip to France. When she visited England during the summer of 1792, he went with her to visit Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821). In July 1794 he divorced his wife, Rachel Coope, and fled to Switzerland with Williams. See Michael Rapport, “Stone, John Hurford (1763-1818),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, accessed 4 December 2018, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26576/>.

<sup>5</sup> *True Briton*, 4 October 1794.

<sup>6</sup> Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Written in France*, ed. Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2001), 91.

guillotined as once was reported.’<sup>7</sup> The recurrence of this phrase suggests that her relationship with Stone seriously injured her reputation, and that rumours about her circulated, and rendered her the subject of ridicule. These accounts of Williams demonstrate the backlash against a woman who supported the Revolution, and the difficulties of publishing works which supported revolutionary principles.

The period covered by this thesis is 1790 to 1795. It is an important time span that encompasses the critical moments of the French Revolution, and the British reactions to the rapidly changing situation in France. I start my discussion from the year 1790 rather than the year 1789, when the Revolution began, because it is difficult to say that the Revolution debate in Britain started in 1789. British periodicals hurriedly reported what happened in Paris in 1789, but there was not even agreement on the name on this event, and it was referred to in different ways: ‘French Rebellion’, ‘Civil War in France’, ‘Rebellion and Civil War in France’, ‘Commutations in France’, and ‘Revolution in France’.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the polarization between pro- or anti-revolutionary arguments was not apparent. One of the most well-known counter-revolutionary writers, Edmund Burke (1729-1797), greeted the Revolution optimistically November 1789: ‘I shall Rejoice in seeing such a happy order establish’d in France as much as I do in my consciousness, that an order of the same kind, or one not very Remote from it, has been long settled, and I hope on a firm foundation in England’.<sup>9</sup> Burke here drew parallels between the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the French Revolution in 1789. In the beginning of the Revolution of 1789, there was a tendency to consider the French Revolution to be, as Emma Macleod has suggested, ‘an imitation of the Glorious Revolution’.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Hester Piozzi, Letter to Sophia Pennington, 17 February 1795, in Hester Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters: Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1784-1821 (formerly Mrs. Thrale)*, ed. Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom, 6 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 2: 239-240.

<sup>8</sup> *Whitehall Evening Post*, 18-21 July 1789; *London Chronicle*, 16-18 July 1789; *Public Advertiser*, 22 July 1789; *Diary or Woodfall’s Register*, 22 July 1789, and *English Chronicle*, 18-21 July.

<sup>9</sup> Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Thomas Copeland, 9 vols. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958), 6: 44-45.

<sup>10</sup> Emma Vincent Macleod, *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France, 1792-1802* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 31-32. As Douglas Hay and Nicholas Rogers have also shown, ‘many welcomed the events as Continental replication of 1688’. See Douglas Hay and Nicholas Rogers, *Eighteenth-Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 179, and Harry Dickinson, ‘The Political Context,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French*

It was not until the late 1790 that the revolutionary debate in Britain began by Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in reply to Richard Price's (1723-1791) *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789). Unlike his comments in 1789, in his *Reflections* Burke warned of a possible state of anarchy, and predicted the failure of the Revolution. Between 1790 and 1792, supporters and critics participated in the Revolution debate in Britain and, as Charlotte Smith (1749-1803) commented in the preface to her novel *Desmond* on 20 June 1792, this was 'a period when [the French] political situation' was 'the general topic of discourse'.<sup>11</sup> But a series of violent events that occurred in France – such as the attack on the Tuileries on 10 August 1792, and the September Massacres on 2 and 7 September 1792 – undermined pro-revolutionary arguments and disillusioned people who supported the Revolution. Moreover, there was an increasing recognition of the danger of pro-revolutionary texts after Part I of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was published in 1791. The British government imposed censorship and proceeded with the sedition and treason trials in 1794.<sup>12</sup> As Gregory Claeys has shown, 'the publication of radical tracts became more difficult after the *Rights of Man* was proscribed in December 1792, and several printers and booksellers were prosecuted for disseminating it and similar works'.<sup>13</sup> The political situation worsened after the execution of the French king Louis XVI on 21 January 1793, and France declared war on Britain on 1 February 1793. In these circumstances, as Macleod has shown, 'radicals supporting France appeared to be anti-patriotic'.<sup>14</sup> Thus, as British reactions to the Revolution became hostile, British approval of revolutionary principles became dangerous after 1793 because those supporting French revolutionary principles during the war with France could be charged with treason. I conclude my thesis with the

---

*Revolution in the 1790s*, ed. Pamela Clemit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-15.

<sup>11</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*, ed. Janet Todd and Antje Blank (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>12</sup> On the sedition and treason trial see *Trials for Treason and Sedition, 1792-1794*, ed. John Barrell and Jon Mee, 8 vols. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006); John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Jon Mee, *Print, Publicity and Radicalism in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 92.

<sup>14</sup> Macleod, *A War of Ideas*, 125.

year 1795 – a year after the end of the Reign of Terror, by examining the British assessment of the Revolution after the Reign of Terror.

Many women writers participated in the revolutionary debate in Britain and published their opinions on the Revolution in different ways. Catharine Macaulay (1731-1791) critically responded to Burke's *Reflections* in her *Observations on the Reflections of Edmund Burke's on the Revolution in France* (1790). Hannah More (1745-1833) used *Village Politics* (1793) to disseminate anti-revolutionary propaganda. Mary Robinson (1758-1800) showed her sympathy with Marie Antoinette in her poem, *Monody to the Memory of the Late Queen of France* (1793). Scholars of British women's responses to the Revolution have illuminated a fascinating range of writings. Harriet Guest has proposed that 'the language of sensibility' offers women writers the opportunity of expressing their position 'in relation to the broader political identity of the nation' during 'the period of Britain's war with revolutionary France'.<sup>15</sup> Gary Kelly has focused on the writings of Williams, Mary Hays, and Elizabeth Hamilton because 'they challenged discursive, generic, and stylistic orders that subordinated women and their writing, yet they differed in responding to the revolutionary conditions of their time and in negotiating contradictory identities of gender, class, and nation and demands of commerce, career, and political commitment'.<sup>16</sup> Angela Keane has examined the works of Ann Radcliffe, Williams, Smith, Mary Wollstonecraft, and More, and has attempted to outline 'the connection between Romanticism, women writers and the English nation in the 1790s'.<sup>17</sup> Amy Garnai has investigated Smith's, Robinson's and Inchbald's responses to the French Revolution and its aftermath and has given reasons for her choice: 'the pervasiveness of revolutionary and politically-based themes can be found' throughout their works, and they 'continue to valorize independence, equality and the hope for a better, more just world and, significantly, continue to link those values to the vanished possibility of the original revolutionary project'.<sup>18</sup> Building on these studies

---

<sup>15</sup> Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

<sup>16</sup> Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), vi.

<sup>17</sup> Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>18</sup> Amy Garnai, *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1, 4.

on British women writers' responses to the French Revolution, my thesis focuses on women writers' complex and shifting responses to the French Revolution in Britain between 1790 and 1795, by investigating their publications and personal correspondence together.

I have chosen to examine the work of three writers in this thesis: Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith, and Mary Wollstonecraft (1756-1798). One of the reasons behind my decision is their interesting engagement with the epistolary genre. All of them used the epistolary form to show their opinion on the Revolution, but their ways of engaging this genre were divergent. Comparing and contrasting the differences between them, I argue that their different uses of the genre closely relate to what they wished to deliver to their readers. Their actual residence in France is another reason for grouping them together. All of them stayed in France in either the short or long term and witnessed the Revolution. Williams went to France between June and September 1790, and between September 1791 and June 1792. After she left England again in August 1792, she lived in France until her death on 14 December 1827. Smith spent a short time in France from 7 September 1791 until sometime before 25 October 1791. Wollstonecraft stayed in France from December 1792 until September 1795. I discuss how their experiences of witnessing the events in France changed their ideas, influenced their writing style and affected their choice of genre. As we have seen, it was difficult for writers to show their support for the Revolution after public opinion turned against the Revolution. Each continued to publish works where they dealt with topics related to the Revolution, even when pro-revolutionary texts were not welcomed in Britain, and when many people had lost their earlier faith in the Revolution. I propose that the violent situations in France, and the backlash against pro-revolutionary written works in Britain from 1792, had an influence on the strategies that they used to express their opinion on the Revolution. These writers struggled to reconcile their earlier support for the Revolution with the changed situations both in France and in Britain, and used different rhetorical strategies to cope with these different circumstances.

The purpose of this thesis is not to discuss all the works of Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft written between 1790 and 1795, but to trace their shifting opinions on the Revolution. I have decided not to devote a chapter

of this thesis to Williams's *Julia, a Novel* (1790), Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), or Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793), as in these works they paid less attention to the Revolution. I focus mainly on their writings in which they engaged with the debate on the Revolution during these years. As mentioned previously, they used different kinds of letter-writing to show their opinions on the Revolution. However, not all of them stuck to their choices in epistolary genre. By examining why Smith and Wollstonecraft changed from the epistolary genre to poetry and history, respectively, I discuss the relationship between their changing ideas of the Revolution and the choices in genre that they made. Thus, letters form the heart of this thesis, but I also explore relevant poetry and history. I examine Williams's five volumes of *Letters* (1790-1795), Smith's *Desmond* (1792) and her blank verse poem, *The Emigrants* (1793), and Wollstonecraft's epistolary introduction to 'A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation,' in *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) and her only history: *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794).<sup>19</sup> I also set these writers' texts in relation to other relevant publications by their friends and opponents, in particular in relation to Burke's *Reflections*.

As Marilyn Butler has suggested, 'the Revolution debate represents in its totality not discrete texts and not the oeuvres of autonomous authors, but a single series of works which depend for their meaning upon one another [and] upon the historical situation which gave them birth'.<sup>20</sup> Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft knew one another's works; they influenced and were influenced by one another. Wollstonecraft reviewed Williams's first volume of *Letters* and Smith's *Desmond* in the *Analytical Review* in 1790.<sup>21</sup> In her *View of the French Revolution*, Wollstonecraft mentions Williams's 'Memoirs of Mons. and Madam Du F--' which is published in Williams's first volume of *Letters*.<sup>22</sup> There are also many

---

<sup>19</sup> Because Williams used different titles for each volume of *Letters*, I have deliberately used 'Letters' rather than write the full titles of each volume.

<sup>20</sup> Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1989), 7: 431-433, 428-435.

<sup>22</sup> Wollstonecraft writes in her *View of the Revolution* that '[i]f, for instance, the sons of a nobleman happened so far to forget his rank, as to marry a woman of low birth; what

parallels between Smith's *Desmond* and Williams's first volume of *Letters*.<sup>23</sup> Smith mentions Wollstonecraft's response to Burke in the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* in her *Desmond*.<sup>24</sup> In the following chapters, I will compare and contrast the texts to explore the relations between them.

In addition to their published texts, I also examine the personal correspondence of Williams, Smith, Wollstonecraft, and their circles. Throughout the thesis, I have intentionally used the word 'personal' rather than 'private' to refer to these unpublished letters. As Clare Brant has argued, 'personal' is more useful than 'private' in terms of the characteristics of many eighteenth-century familiar letters.<sup>25</sup> She has suggested that familiar letters 'were composed in company, voluntarily circulated beyond the addressee and frequently found their way into print', so "'personal'" is useful in that it recognises the significance of letters to individuals and to relationships'.<sup>26</sup> Susan Whyman's study explores the different ways in which letters were read in the eighteenth century: letters were 'read aloud in family circles' and were circulated among family.<sup>27</sup> The letters that I will analyze in this thesis were not always read only by the addressee; they were sometimes circulated among other friends and were quoted in excerpts in newspapers.

By reading published and personal letters together, I bring the personal letters of Williams, Smith and Wollstonecraft into my analyses of their published works. Their personal letters provide important contexts for their published works. Smith's letters to her publisher Thomas Cadell (1742-1802), for example, show that there were tensions between them in the process of publishing *Desmond*. They also suggest an alternative understanding of Smith's own writing as, in them, Smith refers to *Desmond*

---

misery have not those unfortunate creatures endured! – confined in prisons, or hunted out of the common nest, as contagious intruders'. See Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd, 7 vols. (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 6: 75.

<sup>23</sup> These parallels between both texts are discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 112.

<sup>25</sup> See Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Susan Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers, 1660-1800* (2009. Reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 67,173.

as ‘a political novel’.<sup>28</sup> Personal letters were sometimes used as a source for published works. I will compare Williams’s personal correspondence to her second, published, volume of *Letters* in Chapter One, which will illustrate her deployment of her personal letters in the published *Letters*. I further examine various personal letters written by friends of my writers, and discuss the reception of their published works. Regardless of their political views of the Revolution, they exhibit interest in their friends’ writings, and exchange comments on them through their correspondence. The letters of Williams’s close friend, Anna Seward (1742-1809), are particularly useful in tracing the changes in British responses to Williams’s first volume of *Letters*.

I use the personal letters of Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft in this thesis. Smith’s and Wollstonecraft’s letters are mostly collected and available in scholarly editions, such as Janet Todd’s *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* and Judith Phillips Stanton’s *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*.<sup>29</sup> Many scholars, including Amy Garnai and Harriet Guest, also participated in the discovery of Smith letters.<sup>30</sup> Emily Marie Brewer discovered further letters by Smith, including those to Thomas Cadell, in her Ph.D thesis.<sup>31</sup> These scholarly editions have enabled me to access Smith’s and Wollstonecraft’s personal letters but, unfortunately, there is no edition of Williams’s letters. Many of Williams’s letters written in the 1790s have not survived, but there are eleven surviving letters from Williams to Piozzi in the John Rylands Library of Manchester. One of the letters has been published in *The Piozzi Letters: Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1784-1821*.<sup>32</sup> Deborah Kennedy transcribed and published two letters from 4 September 1792 and 12 December 1792 in *Helen Maria*

---

<sup>28</sup> Smith’s letter to Cadell on 25 March 25 1792, in Emily Marie Brewer, “A Lady Novelist and the Late Eighteenth-Century Book Trade: Charlotte Smith’s Letters to Publisher Thomas Cadell, Sr., 1786-94” (PhD., University of North Carolina, 2013), 200.

<sup>29</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*, ed. Judith Phillips Stanton (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), and Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Harriet Guest and Stanton discovered Smith’s letters in the British Library and transcribed them in “Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell, Sir., and Harriet Lee: Two New Letters,” *Keats-Shelley Journal* 57 (2008), and Amy Garnai, “A Letter from Charlotte Smith to her Publisher George Robinson,” *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 19, no.4 (2007).

<sup>31</sup> Brewer, “Charlotte Smith’s Letters,” 63-292.

<sup>32</sup> Hester Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters: Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1784-1821 (formerly Mrs. Thrale)*, ed. Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, 6 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 1: 371.



*Williams and the Age of Revolution*.<sup>33</sup> My archival research in the John Rylands Library of Manchester has enabled me to access Williams's other letters and her friend Sophia Weston Pennington's letters, which are not published before and I have transcribed them, and analyzed them in my thesis.

The publications of my chosen authors do not exactly fit into the disciplinary boundaries of a modern university. As Paul Keen argues, it is important to recognise that literature in this period was 'a complex field of writing and reading shaped by a range of commercial, political and social factors'.<sup>34</sup> Like Keen, I look beyond the canon and modern-day understandings of the literary to set Williams, Smith and Wollstonecraft in their vibrant and diverse intellectual context, providing an interdisciplinary framework by discussing relevant political, historical, and philosophical texts. An interdisciplinary approach is essential if we are to understand fully the changing responses of these writers to the French Revolution; they were writing in a world which did not differentiate as we do now between 'literature' and historical, philosophical, and political texts. By reading publications alongside their reviews in British newspapers and in the authors' friends' personal letters, I trace how responses to the Revolution became increasingly hostile in Britain. This thesis also aims to demonstrate the important relationship between the published and unpublished texts of these authors. I synthesize the analysis of literary texts with personal letters, some of which are manuscript letters. It enables me to offer in-depth readings of the published texts I discuss in this thesis and to reveal their undiscovered personal voices from their personal correspondence. My thesis contributes to our understanding of these writers' responses to the Revolution, by exploring and comparing their personal and published voices.

### **Responses to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France***

The storming of the Bastille took place in France on 14 July 1789, and this news from France immediately reached Britain across the channel. But the

---

<sup>33</sup> Deborah Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002), 90-93.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Keen, "Preface" to *Revolutions in Romantic Literature* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), xvi-xvii.

French revolutionary debate in Britain took on new momentum after Burke's *Reflections* was published on 1 November 1790. In contrast to his earlier support for the American Revolution, in his *Reflections* Burke strongly opposed the French Revolution, calling it 'the most astonishing [Revolution] that has hitherto happened in the world', and in it, he defended the British constitution and liberty.<sup>35</sup> His pamphlet prompted a massive backlash from many liberal commentators such as Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, Joseph Priestley, and James Mackintosh.<sup>36</sup> His *Reflections*, as Emma Major has shown, was initially considered as 'irrational and extreme in its prophecies'.<sup>37</sup> His prediction did not seem to convincing to Smith, Williams and Wollstonecraft, at least in the early stages, and they contradicted his projections of future events in France.

As Kevin Gilmartin has argued, 'the tendency for literary scholarship to make the ideological disposition of the *Reflections* a simple index of conservatism' is problematic.<sup>38</sup> Burke is not the only person who opposed the Revolution, but Burke's *Reflections* is of considerable importance to understanding of the texts analyzed in this thesis. Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft all reply to Burke's *Reflections* in their works. They engage with concepts that he is famous for discussing in *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and that he draws on in his *Reflections*; they use words such as 'sublime' and 'beautiful' and his famous phrase 'the age of chivalry', and they use the metaphors of building that he employs in his *Reflections*. The arguments that Burke makes in his *Reflections* frequently appear in their writings. All of them place themselves in opposition to Burke's conservatism in their texts published between 1790 and 1792, but their relationships with Burke become complicated, as the Revolution would turn violent. By comparing their initial criticisms on Burke to their later responses, I trace their changing thought on the Revolution. Thus, Burke's conservatism provides

---

<sup>35</sup> Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 92.

<sup>36</sup> Claeys has suggested that 'by the spring of 1791, about fifty replies [to Burke's *Reflections*] had been published'. See Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate*, 71.

<sup>37</sup> Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712-1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Kevin Gilmartin, *Writing against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8.

important context for these women's works. I will discuss how they respond to him differently in different genres in the following chapters.

Responding to Burke's *Reflections*, a radical publisher William Holland (1757-1834) issued a series of satirical prints, between November and December 1790, under the title of *Don Dismallo*. These satirical prints illustrate the initial reaction to Burke's *Reflections*, as well as highlighting the points that were frequently contradicted by his opponents. The titles of these prints - *Don Dismallo* - are reminiscent of the novel *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615), and they suggest Burke's connection to Roman Catholicism through a link to Catholic Spain. As Frederick Lock has suggested, 'Burke, like most prominent politicians, had long featured in these political caricatures, where he is readily recognizable by his thin form and large nose surmounted by prominent spectacles'.<sup>39</sup> Lock has shown that Burke 'is depicted wearing a biretta, the square cap worn by Roman Catholic clerics, an allusion to his supposed Jesuit education and sympathies'.<sup>40</sup> In the first print, *Don Dismallo, after an Absence of Sixteen Years, Embracing His Beautiful Vision!* (18 November 1790) [Fig.1], Burke appears as Don Quixote, dressed in armour, and holds Marie Antoinette in his arms while his wife is weeping behind them. Burke says 'Christ Jasus, what an ass have I been a number of Years; to have doated on an old woman', while Marie Antoinette tells Burke, 'Welcome, thrice welcome to my arms most renowned Dismallo! [...] thou God of Chivalry!' The artist, Frederick George Byron (1764-1792) here refers to Burke's account of Marie Antoinette in his *Reflections*. Burke recalls: '[i]t is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision'.<sup>41</sup> The title of *Don Dismallo* satirises Burke's admiration of Marie Antoinette, by using Burke's own passage from *Reflections*. Byron depicts Burke touching and even embracing the queen, and dismisses him as an old man who prefers a young woman to his wife. Burke's quixotic accounts of Marie Antoinette troubled contemporary

---

<sup>39</sup> Frederick Peter Lock, *Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), 141.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. On satirical images of Burke. See Nicholas Robinson, *Edmund Burke A Life in Caricature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), and Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 169.

commentators including Seward. Seward concedes Burke's arguments in his *Reflections*, but criticises him for 'his nonsensical Quixotism about the Queen of France', in a letter to Mrs. Knowles on 19 May 1791.<sup>42</sup>

Another important aspect of this satirical print is its depiction of Burke as the 'God of Chivalry'. Burke uses the term 'chivalry' in one of the most famous phrases in his *Reflections*, when he bewails the pain of Marie Antoinette during the Women's March on Versailles in October 1789 and cries out, 'the age of chivalry is gone'.<sup>43</sup> For Burke, chivalry is 'has given its character to modern Europe' and 'without confounding ranks, has produced a novel equality, and handed it down through all the gradations of social life'.<sup>44</sup> However, Williams and Wollstonecraft present opposing arguments for the necessity of chivalry. As the first person to publish a printed response to Burke's *Reflections*, Wollstonecraft argues in the *Rights of Men* that 'the spirit of romance and chivalry is in the wane; and reason will gain by its extinction'.<sup>45</sup> Williams also responds to Burke's account of 'the age of chivalry', and uses this phrase to show her support for the Revolution. I discuss this further in Chapter One.

---

<sup>42</sup> Seward, Letter to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, in Anna Seward, *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807*, ed. Archibald Constable, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1811), 3: 75. Seward repeatedly mentions her dislike of Burke's account of Marie Antoinette in her personal letters: 'That splendid Quixotism about the Queen of France, displayed in the newspapers, did not please me at all'. *Ibid.*, 3: 46.

<sup>43</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 170.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>45</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Men," in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. David Lorne Macdonald and Kathleen Dorothy Scherf (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1997), 61.

**Fig.1: Frederick George Byron, *Don Dismallo, after an Absence of Sixteen Years, Embracing His Beautiful Vision!* Published 18 November 1790, by William Holland. BM 7679; British Museum.**



*Don Dismallo Running the Literary gantlet [sic]* (1 December 1790) [Fig.2], features an image of Burke standing half-naked and wearing a clown hat and trousers, presenting him as a target of criticism and ridicule. Helen Maria Williams, Richard Price, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Catherine Macaulay, and Horne Tooke wield whips and attack Burke. Burke, a figure of Justice and a figure of liberty are in the centre of this print; a figure of Justice points the tip of sword towards Burke. She has her weighing-scale turned towards the figure of Liberty, who turns her back on Burke, and walks arm in arm with a man who seems to be a prisoner of the Bastille, implying that Liberty has turned her back on Britain and has found a new home in France.<sup>46</sup> This print shows the critical reception of Burke's *Reflections* by liberal commentators and evidences the criticism that Burke's conception of liberty met with. One of the most controversial points in Burke's *Reflections* is his defence of English liberty. He argues that 'from Magna Charta to the Declaration of Right, it has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity'.<sup>47</sup> As we shall see, Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft respond to his emphasis on a tradition of English liberty in different ways.

---

<sup>46</sup> On the contrast between British liberty and French liberty see Major, *Madam Britannia*, 232-270.

<sup>47</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 119.



**Fig.2: Anon., *Don Dismallo Running the Literary Gantlet*. Published 1 December 1790, by William Holland, BM 7688; British Museum.**



In the last image, *Don Dismallo among the Grasshoppers in France* (10 December 1790) [Fig.3], Burke is again dressed in armour, but the French women, wearing tricolor ribbons, surround him, taking his hat and pulling him to the improvised guillotine, upon which hangs the sign 'BURKE ON THE FRENCH REVOLUTION'. An unknown artist uses Burke's metaphor for 'grasshoppers' in the title. In his *Reflections* Burke criticizes 'certain publications, which do, very erroneously, if they do at all, represent the opinions and dispositions generally prevalent in England' and says that 'half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent'.<sup>48</sup> Here, 'the grasshoppers' in this print refers to half a dozen French women. This print also recalls Burke's description of French women during the Women's March on Versailles. In this satire, the French women he criticized for their political actions turn their wrath on Burke himself.<sup>49</sup> This artist feminises

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 180-181.

<sup>49</sup> Wollstonecraft's complicated responses to Burke's account of the Women's March on Versailles are explored in Chapter Four.

and emasculates Burke, and shows how weak he is in the face of the healthy, strong French women.

**Fig.3: Anon., *Don Dismallo among the Grasshoppers in France.* Published 10 December 1790, by William Holland, BM 7685; British Museum.**



However, responses to Burke's *Reflections* were intertwined with the progress of the Revolution, and his arguments came to gain more favour in Britain. He was actively involved in the French revolutionary debate and published a series of essays, including *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791) and *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791) after his *Reflections*. He significantly influenced British negative images of the Revolution. The writers I examine have complicated relationships with Burke, which is important when looking at their changing responses to the Revolution.

### Women, Letter Writing, and Friendship

Letters were used in different literary genres throughout the eighteenth century. In her famous work of travel writing, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*



(1763), Lady Mary Wortley Montagu uses a series of letters to record her experience in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>50</sup> As the popularity of Samuel Richardson's epistolary novels such as *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) show, letters worked well in the novel form.<sup>51</sup> As Piozzi's use of Samuel Johnson's correspondence in *Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson* (1788) show, letters that were not supposed to be published sometimes appeared in public.<sup>52</sup> As well as these published letters, there were also innumerable unpublished letters, which were widely used as means of communication during the eighteenth century. As Brant has shown, there are 'the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of letters that existed in manuscript' during the eighteenth century.<sup>53</sup> This thesis explores both published and unpublished letters and, in the following chapters, finds out crucial connections between these two different kinds of letters.

In the 1790s, letters became more frequently used as political devices. As Mary Favret has suggested, "[l]ooseness," [...] made the familiar letter the most significant instrument for political propaganda during the years of revolution'.<sup>54</sup> Burke used the familiar letter in his *Reflections* and his supporters or opponents also took this format. Between 1790 and 1791, various people such as Brooke Boothby, Joseph Priestley, George Rous, and Charles Stanhope published works under the same title: 'A Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke'.<sup>55</sup> In this thesis, I examine how the letter form fitted into the culture of debate on the Revolution and how the writers I discuss used the letter form to engage in the Revolution debate in Britain.

Women were considered to be good letter writers in the eighteenth-century, and letters were regarded as a proper genre for women writers.

Amanda Gilroy and Wil Verhoeven have noted that 'the form of writing

---

<sup>50</sup> Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, ed. Teresa Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded*, ed. Tom Keymer and Alice Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985).

<sup>52</sup> Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. During the Late Twenty Years of His Life*, ed. Arthur Sherbo (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

<sup>53</sup> Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters*, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12.

<sup>55</sup> Brooke Boothby, *A Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1791); Joseph Priestley, *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (Birmingham: Printed by Thomas Person: 1791); George Rous, *A Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1791), and Charles Stanhope, *A Letter from Earl Stanhope, to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London: Printed by George Stafford, 1790).

most accessible to and acceptable for women was letter writing'.<sup>56</sup> Barbara Zaczek has also discussed the relation between women and letter writing in terms of their 'natural knack for expressing sentiments'.<sup>57</sup> In the *Analytical Review* in December 1790, Wollstonecraft comments on the clichéd assumption that women are good letter writers before giving her review on Williams's *Letters Written in France* (1790):

Women have been allowed to possess, by a kind of prescription, the knack of epistolary writing; the talent of chatting on paper in that easy immethodical manner, which render letters dear to friends, and amusing to strangers.<sup>58</sup>

Wollstonecraft's account acknowledges that there has been a conventional notion of women's propensity for letter writing. As Brant has suggested, women in the eighteenth century were regarded as 'naturally better' letter writers than men, but 'their gift is always related to familiar letters, not to letters of argument or other forms of published letters'.<sup>59</sup> This shows that there were gendered divisions even within the epistolary form, and 'letters of argument or other forms of published letters' were not appropriate for women writers. Despite the fact that she compliments Williams's *Letters* on 'the interesting unaffected letters', Wollstonecraft's phrase 'have been allowed to possess' demonstrates that she objects to this conventional idea of female letter writing and later shows different uses of the letter form in her epistolary introduction for 'a Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation', which is discussed in Chapter Three.<sup>60</sup> The conventional notion of women's familiar letter writing enabled women writers to publish some works but at the same time served as an obstacle to expressing their political opinion. I will trace the ways in which they appropriate or challenge this gendered notion of letter writing in their published works in the subsequent chapters.

---

<sup>56</sup> Amanda Gilroy and Wil Verhoeven, "Introduction" to *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, ed. Amanda Gilroy and Wil Verhoeven (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Maria Zaczek, *Censored Sentiments: Letters and Censorship in Epistolary Novels and Conduct Material* (Newark, Dela.: Delaware University Press, 1997), 15.

<sup>58</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7: 322-324.

<sup>59</sup> Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters*, 18, 44-46.

<sup>60</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7: 322.

Laetitia Matilda Hawkins (1759–1835), in *Letters on the Female Mind* (1793), criticizes Williams for expressing her opinion on the Revolution in *Letters Written in France*. Hawkins claims that politics is not a proper subject for women and convinces Williams that ‘there is but one side a female can take in politics, without injuring the feminine character’.<sup>61</sup> She further explores the gender divisions of subjects for publication: ‘[m]ale genius fetches its treasures from the depth of science, and the accumulated wisdom of ages: the female finds her’s in the lighter regions of fancy and the passing knowledge of the day’.<sup>62</sup> Hawkins’s account of the genre suggests that the notions of propriety and impropriety were used to judge women’s writing in the late eighteenth century. Ironically, Hawkins herself is very political and transgresses the boundaries she writes about.

As Fiona Robertson has argued, ‘women’s social, political, legal, and intellectual impediments were indeed serious obstacles’ but they ‘respond to the creative persuasive power of ‘impediment’ and ‘their writing seems energized rather than constrained by the declared experience, and rhetorical possibilities, of exclusion’.<sup>63</sup> In this thesis I explore the central role that letters played in the expression of women’s experience, and I examine the ways in which women writers used letters in order to respond to the experience of exclusion.

Both the concept of friendship and actual friendship are important in the epistolary works I discuss in this thesis. Friendship serves as a rhetorical tool to frame the device of the letter form. Letters assume the existence of an addressee, and the writers usually establish friendship between letter writer and recipient in their works. For example, Williams uses the form of a familiar letter to her friend in England to prove the authenticity of her feeling in her first two volumes of *Letters*. By establishing a close friendship between the eponymous protagonist, Desmond, and his friend Bethel, Smith makes Desmond’s accounts in his letters to Bethel trustworthy. Friendship also functions as an excuse of political support for

---

<sup>61</sup> Laetitia Matilda Hawkins, *Letters on the Female Mind*, 2 vols. (London:Printed for Hookam and Carpenter, 1793), 1:5. On Hawkins’s criticism of Williams and her ideas of women’s role see Fiona Robertson, *Women’s Writing 1778-1838: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 129; Major, *Madam Britannia*, 260, and Steven Blakemore, “Revolution and the French Disease: Laetitia Matilda Hawkins’s Letters to Helen Maria Williams,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 36, no.3 (1996): 673-691.

<sup>62</sup> Hawkins, *Letters on the Female Mind*, 1:6.

<sup>63</sup> Robertson, *Women’s Writing*, xvi-xvii.

the Revolution. Throughout all the volumes of *Letters*, Williams justifies her approval of the Revolution through her experience of friendship with French friends by illustrating her friends' suffering from the ancient regime or Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794). This thesis also investigates actual friendships between the writers I discuss and their friends, and explores their unpublished correspondence in order to show these dynamics. These women's continued support for revolutionary principles often endangered their relationships in Britain. Looking at the ways in which their politics rendered friendships precarious provides insights into their perilous social position.

### Thesis Structure

My thesis is structured chronologically, but sometimes covers overlapping time periods. The four chapters of this thesis discuss Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft, tracing the changing strategies that they used to show their responses to the Revolution. Chapter One examines Williams's first two volumes of *Letters: Letters Written in France* (1790) and *Letters Written From France* (1792). I trace her changing uses of the epistolary form between these volumes of *Letters*. In the first section of this chapter, I argue that Williams dramatises the relationship between herself and her recipient to persuade her readers to understand her support for the Revolution. I explore the ways in which she uses sentiment, sensibility and the genre of sentimental novel in the first volume. Between my analysis between her first and second volume of *Letters*, I investigate Seward's personal correspondence, which enables us to trace the ways in which reactions to Williams's first volume changed. In the last section of this chapter, I begin by sketching out the situation in France between 1791 and 1792 and her friends' responses to her stay in France, in order to explore why she changes her strategies in the second volume of *Letters*. I then look at the ways in which Williams attempts to persuade her audience that the situation in France is still promising and examine her responses to Burke's *Reflections* in her second volume.

Chapter Two traces the nature of Smith's political voices from *Desmond* (1792) to *The Emigrants* (1793) by exploring her use of the

different genres between the two texts. I propose that in *Desmond* Smith criticises the ubiquity of misinformation in England. Smith shows how information is easily distorted, and notes how difficult it is to achieve the truth in what she views as a mendacious society, through Bethel's statement that '[t]ruth was so blended with falsehood'.<sup>64</sup> I discuss Smith's use of fictional letters in *Desmond*, specifically compared to that of Helen Maria Williams's *Letters*. I then examine Smith's personal letters to show the dynamics of the relationships between William Hayley, Thomas Cadell, and Smith. By examining the causes of the deterioration in the relationship between Smith and Cadell, I show the difficulties of publishing works which supported revolutionary principles. The chapter concludes with my analysis of *The Emigrants*. I discuss why Smith chose to express her opinions on the Revolution through poetry and how she used William Cowper in her dedication in *the Emigrants*. Tracing her different attitudes toward the French emigrants in *Desmond* and in *The Emigrants*, I analyse Smith's *Emigrants* and the way in which she employs her famous sentimental poetic persona.

Chapter Three traces Mary Wollstonecraft's complicated and changing view of the French Revolution by examining her epistolary introduction for 'A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation' and *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (1794). An introductory letter to 'A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation,' in *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) is written two months after her arrival in Paris in December 1792; it offers her initial responses to France and shows her confusion between her expectations of the Revolution and what she actually witnessed in France. I compare the different ways in which Williams and Wollstonecraft used the epistolary form and investigate why Wollstonecraft discontinued her epistolary project when she started writing the history of the Revolution of 1789. The last part of this chapter discusses her approach to history writing and examines the way in which she reconfigures and reinterprets the Revolution of 1789. There are certain similarities between her history and the passages in *The New Annual Register*. However, I argue that her inclusion of her philosophical reflections on historical facts, and her

---

<sup>64</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 349.

effort to find the cause of the events of 1789, differentiate her history from *The New Annual Register*. By comparing her *View of the Revolution* with *The New Annual Register*, I investigate what was distinctive about Wollstonecraft's account of the French Revolution.

In Chapter Four, I return to Williams and analyze her three volumes of *Letters* written between 1793 and 1795. I argue that Williams uses these three volumes as a political vindication of the Girondin faction and a condemnation of the Jacobins. I also contend that the dynamics of Williams's friendships in England and France are important in understanding her published *Letters*, because they are so central to Williams's political opinion and her self-representation in her published *Letters*. Published anonymously in 1793, the third and fourth of Williams's *Letters* are co-authored with Stone and Thomas Christie (1761-1796). It is uncertain which letters were written by Williams and other collaborators. My research reveals the narrative structure of the third and fourth volumes of *Letters* and finds Williams's voices in these volumes. In the last section of this chapter, I move on to the fifth volume of *Letters*, and demonstrate how she uses her firsthand experience of revolutionary prisons and anecdotes to condemn the Terror. Williams continued to write on the Revolution from 1790 to 1795, and kept writing letters to her friends in England. Her personal and published letters are useful in tracing the changing responses to the Revolution. In this context, I spend two chapters on Williams in this thesis.

## Chapter One: Letter Writing and Friendship in Helen Maria Williams's First Two Volumes of *Letters*

*The General Magazine* complimented Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827) on her use of the epistolary form in her *Letters Written in France* (1790), and stated that 'the familiarity so proper and becoming in epistolary composition, is not a mere flippancy: it is a simplicity which supposes both taste and correctness'.<sup>65</sup> *The General Magazine* considered Williams's use of the epistolary form as 'proper' for a woman writer. Gary Kelly has argued that 'Williams accepts the conventional gendering of intellectual, professional, and public discourse' and 'feminizes the Revolution formally and rhetorically, as well as thematically, mainly through use of the familiar letter'.<sup>66</sup> Building on his idea of Williams's use of the conventional notion of female letter writing to make her support for the Revolution to be compatible with female propriety through her published letters, I focus on Williams's use of the relationship between letter writer and addressee in the first volume, and draw attention to the change of strategies that she uses to show her support for the Revolution in the first two of the eight volumes of her *Letters*, which are titled *Letters Written in France* and *Letters From France* (1792).<sup>67</sup>

This chapter also explores the important connection between published and personal letters, by reading together Williams's published letters and the personal letters written by her and her friends. Williams corresponded with close female friends such as Hester Thrale Piozzi, Penelope Weston Pennington, and Anna Seward. Most of Williams's letters to them do not survive, but there are eleven surviving letters from Williams to Piozzi in the John Rylands Library of Manchester, three of which were written in France during Williams's second trip, undertaken in August 1791 and June 1792.<sup>68</sup> Reading these personal letters alongside the second

---

<sup>65</sup> *The General Magazine and Impartial Review* 4 (December 1790), 541-542.

<sup>66</sup> Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 36-38.

<sup>67</sup> Hereafter referred to the first volume and the second volume of *Letters* respectively.

<sup>68</sup> Edward and Lillian Bloom transcribed Williams's letter to Piozzi written in 12 October 1791, in Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters*, 1: 371-372. Deborah Kennedy wrote down Williams's letters on 4 September 1792 and 12 December 1792 in her monograph, *the Age of Revolution*. See, Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 90-93.

volume of *Letters* illuminates the intriguing relationship between the different voices in Williams's personal and published letters. Seward's letters are also invaluable in terms of showing the changing responses to Williams's first volume of *Letters*. She corresponded with Williams between 1785 and 1793. Williams's letters to Seward do not survive, but some of Seward's letters to Williams were published in *Letters of Anna Seward* (1811).<sup>69</sup> As Claudia Kairoff has argued, Seward's letters to Williams 'trace [Seward's] growing disillusionment with the French Revolution'.<sup>70</sup> However, I propose that they also provide her changing responses to Williams's first volume of *Letters* and Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Seward not only wrote a letter to Williams to comment on her first volume, but also sent letters that contained reactions to both texts to friends, including Thomas Whalley (1746-1828) and Mary Knowles (1733-1807). As I will show, by providing an informed response to publications and events, Seward's letters provide an important source for research on the reception of Williams's first volume.

This chapter opens with my analysis of Williams's first volume of *Letters*. I argue that Williams stages the relationship between her and her recipient. I trace how she persuades her recipient to understand her support for the Revolution, and explore the ways in which Williams uses sentiment and sensibility in the first volume, as she weaves the genre of sentimental novel into her epistolary writing. I then examine Seward's published personal letters to trace the shifting reception of Williams's first volume and Burke's *Reflections*, arguing that Burke influences Seward's change of opinion on the Revolution. In the final section of this chapter, I explore how Williams tries to persuade her audience that the situation in France is still promising, and compare her different uses of literary voice in the first and second volumes. I show the relationship between published and unpublished letters, by comparing Williams's personal letters with the second volume of *Letters*.

---

<sup>69</sup> Archibald Constable edited and published Seward's letters. See Anna Seward, *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807*, ed. Archibald Constable, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1811).

<sup>70</sup> Claudia Thomas Kairoff, *Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 27.



## I. Letter Writers and Addressees in Williams's *Letters Written in France*

Williams's first volume is composed of a series of letters about her trip to France in 1790. In what appears to be a set of familiar letters to her friend in England, she presents herself as a young woman who is travelling through France to visit her friends, Augustin François Thomas du Fossé (1750-1833) and Monique du Fossé. Instead of providing an introduction in her first volume of *Letters*, Williams uses her first letter to establish a framework for the rest of the text:

I shall send you once a week the details which I promised when we parted, though I am well aware how very imperfectly I shall be able to describe the images which press upon my mind. It is much easier to feel what is sublime than to paint it; and all I shall be able to give you will be a faint sketch, to which your own imagination must add colouring and spirit.<sup>71</sup>

Through the promise she makes at the beginning of her *Letters*, Williams insinuates that this publication consists of familiar letters to her friend and implies a close friendship between letter writer and addressee. The way in which Williams establishes the relationship with the recipient is different from that of Burke. He introduces his addressee as 'a very young gentleman at Paris, who did him the honour of desiring his opinion' and takes a patronizing attitude toward his addressee throughout the *Reflections*.<sup>72</sup> As Mary Favret has shown, he portrays himself as 'the experienced mentor instructing a way-ward student' and implies that 'British history should provide the corrective model to the present waywardness in France'.<sup>73</sup> Unlike Burke, she suggests an intimate friendship with the recipient, with whom she attempts to share her enthusiasm for the Revolution throughout the volume. Here, the question of who the addressee is arises. Williams never specifies the addressee, but provides some clues as to what kind of person her recipient is throughout her first volume, conjuring up a female

---

<sup>71</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 63.

<sup>72</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 84.

<sup>73</sup> Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 25-26.

recipient. In her later volumes of *Letters*, she identifies the gender of her recipient, calling her recipient ‘Sir’ but in the first two volumes she just addresses the letters to ‘you’. Given her comment to the recipient that ‘it would be difficult for you, who have formed your calculations of time on dry land, to guess what is the length of four and twenty hours in a storm at sea’, the addressee has less travel experience than Williams.<sup>74</sup> The most obvious example that implies a female addressee is her account of a young man who argued for the abolition of primogeniture in the National Assembly. Williams tells her recipient, ‘if, on the contrary, you have fallen in love with this young Frenchman, do not imagine your passion is singular, for I am violently in love with him myself’.<sup>75</sup> The recipient is able to share her passion for ‘this young Frenchman’, suggesting a same-sex, close friendship. Williams presents her letters as friendly correspondence with her female friend.

The presence of the addressee enables Williams to remain within the boundary of female propriety. By locating her recipient between her and her readers, Williams does not need to speak to her readers directly. Moreover, she stages her relationship with her recipient, who does not share her political sympathies, and resolves conflict with her recipient with different methods. I propose that the ways in which Williams convinces her friend of her views on the Revolution in the first volume are compatible with female propriety. She portrays herself as unable to judge the political situation: ‘I have not been so absurd as to consult my head upon matters of which it is so incapable of judging.’<sup>76</sup> Instead, throughout the first volume of *Letters*, she is careful to deliver her genuine response to the situations in France, as well as her feelings for the French people, based on what she observes.

Williams’s deployment of the terms related to emotion such as ‘sentiment’ and ‘sensibility’ is central to her attempt to persuade her correspondent of the virtues of the Revolution. As Markman Ellis has argued, it is difficult to distinguish between the terms ‘sensibility’ and ‘sentimental’ because they combine ‘freely a large number of varied

---

<sup>74</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 147.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 91. She also says that ‘did you expect that I should ever dip my pen in politics, who used to take so small an interest in public affairs [?]’ *Ibid.*, 109.

discourses'.<sup>77</sup> Yet Harriet Guest has contended that despite the instability of the difference between these terms, 'it seems worth attempting to register the distinction between sensibility as a set of notions which articulate the moral ambivalence of desire, and sentiment as a much more thoroughly moral language which denies desire, or seems to obscure it'.<sup>78</sup> As we shall see, Williams distinguishes between sentiment and sensibility and uses them in different circumstances.

Williams considers sentiment as an integral part of the Revolution and shows her conviction of its positive influence on people. She describes sentiment as shared emotions, and it appears in her description of collective actions such as the Fête de la Fédération, the first festival celebrating the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1790. Williams associates sentiment with moral feeling: 'Half a million of people assembled at a spectacle which furnished every image that can elevate the mind of man; which connected the enthusiasm of moral sentiment with the solemn pomp of religious ceremonies'.<sup>79</sup> This invisible feeling is sometimes shown in collective behaviour: 'when they sing, it is but to repeat a vow of fidelity to the constitution, at which all who are present instantly join in chorus, and sportively lift up their hands in confirmation of this favourite sentiment'.<sup>80</sup> She also suggests the effect of sentiment on the French society: 'forgetting the little considerations of vanity, which have some importance in the ordinary course of human affairs, but which are lost and annihilated when the mind is animated by any great sentiment, they have chosen to become the benefactors rather than the oppressor of their country'.<sup>81</sup> She describes what happened to those whose 'mind is animated by any great sentiment' and shows the benefits of sentiment, which is here conducive to public good.

Unlike sentiment, sensibility is applied to the individual's capacity to feel emotions rather than the shared emotions felt by members of a group. *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines this word as 'a kind of sensitivity or responsiveness that is both aesthetic and moral, showing a

---

<sup>77</sup> Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7-8.

<sup>78</sup> Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 295.

<sup>79</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 64-65.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-109.

capacity to feel both for other's sorrows and for beauty'.<sup>82</sup> But according to Williams, 'common sensibility' enables her to also feel 'general happiness': 'I shall only observe, that it is very difficult, with common sensibility, to avoid sympathizing in general happiness'.<sup>83</sup> She also shows how sensibility works in the mind: 'Fine painting gives me considerable pleasure, but has not the power of calling forth my sensibility like fine poetry'.<sup>84</sup> In contrast to 'fine painting', she claims that 'fine poetry' elicits her sensibility, which can 'convey all those ideas to the mind, and excite all those emotions in the heart'.<sup>85</sup> By describing herself as someone who has sensibility, she also insinuates that she is qualified for recording revolutionary France.

At the beginning of the first volume, Williams attempts to communicate the sentiment of the French people to the recipient. Her description of the Fête de la Fédération demonstrates that her aim is to convey the current feelings of the French people towards the Revolution to her recipient rather than just descriptions of events in France. She maintains that 'I may tell you of pavilions, of triumphal arches, of altars on which incense was burnt, of two hundred thousand men walking in procession, but how am I give you an adequate idea of the behaviour of the spectators? how am I to paint the impetuous feelings of that immense, that exulting multitude?'<sup>86</sup> She acknowledges that conveying the shared feeling of the French multitude to her recipient is more difficult than describing the process of the Fête de la Fédération. To describe this collective emotion, she stages the Fête de la Fédération with many theatrical terms such as 'spectacle', 'theatre' and 'spectators'.<sup>87</sup> Scholars including Favret, Cecilia Feilla and Steven Blakemore have focused on Williams's first volume in terms of theatricality.<sup>88</sup> Blakemore has argued that Williams portrays 'the Revolution as a sublime, theatrical spectacle, stressing the theatricality.'<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, fourth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 329.

<sup>83</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 91.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-64.

<sup>88</sup> See Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 59-74; Cecilia Feilla, *The Sentimental Theatre of the French Revolution: Performing Virtue* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 78-80, and Steven Blakemore, *Crisis in Representation: Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, and the Rewriting of the French Revolution* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), 163-179.

<sup>89</sup> Blakemore, *Crisis in Representation*, 164.

She offers not only detailed accounts of how the French people behaved during the Fête de la Fédération, but also her own feeling toward this event: ‘I acknowledge that my heart caught with enthusiasm the general sympathy; my eyes were filled with tears; and I shall never forget the sensations of that day’.<sup>90</sup> Williams’s own reaction to this sentiment also enables her to provide an example of an emotional response to the event to the recipient.

Williams repeatedly refers to the possibility of her friend’s objection. Constantly making use of the subjunctive, she worries whether her recipient is thinking the same thing that she is: ‘If you are not affected by this circumstance, you have read it with very different feelings from those with which I have written it’.<sup>91</sup> Although she attempts to justify the Revolution, it becomes evident that Williams fails to persuade her recipient with her sentimental expressions:

Yesterday I received your letter, in which you accuse me of describing with too much enthusiasm the public rejoicings in France and prophesy that I shall return to my own country a fierce republican. In answer to these accusations, I shall only observe, that it is very difficult, with common sensibility, to avoid sympathizing in general happiness. My love of the French revolution, is the natural result of this sympathy, and therefore my political creed is entirely an affair of the heart.<sup>92</sup>

Her recipient disapproves of her previous description of the Fête de la Fédération and even predicts she will become ‘a fierce republican’.<sup>93</sup> Williams may have received a letter from her friend and made use of the letter in her publication. Or, as Deborah Kennedy has suggested, the letter writer may anticipate how her critics would criticize her and attempt to disarm them in advance.<sup>94</sup> I think that by invoking the recipient’s opposition, Williams contradicts different understandings of the Revolution in her published work without directly speaking to her readers. The epistolary

---

<sup>90</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 69.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 89. She also writes, ‘[b]ut if you are disposed to think of this gaiety with the contempt of superior gravity for I will not call it wisdom, recollect that these dancers were the very men whose bravery formed the great epocha of French liberty.’ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 62.

friendship allows her to address a wider and possibly sceptical audience in an intimate tone.

Rather than confront her friend, Williams changes her tactic to persuade her recipient to understand her support for the Revolution by conveying her enthusiasm through the story of Monsieur and Madame du Fossé. She explains that her friendship makes her support the Revolution:

With respect to myself, I must acknowledge, that, in my admiration of the revolution in France, I blend the feelings of private friendship with my sympathy in public blessing; since the old constitution is connected in my mind with the image of a friend confined in the gloomy recesses of a dungeon, and pining in hopeless captivity; while, with the new constitution, I unite the soothing idea of his return to prosperity, honours, and happiness. This person is Mons. du F-, whose lady I am come to France to visit. They are friends with whom I wept in the day of their adversity, and with whom in their prosperity I have hastened to rejoice. Their history is most affecting; [...] I will make you acquainted with incidents as pathetic as romance itself can furnish.<sup>95</sup>

She explains how ‘her private friendship’ provides a strong motivation for her support for the Revolution, and she shows that this ‘private friendship’ is translated into the ‘sympathy in public blessing’. The history of Monsieur and Madame Du Fossé conjures bad images of ‘the old constitution’ and positive images of ‘the new constitution’ in her mind. She invites her recipient to sympathize with her friend’s distress and to be delighted with the Revolution.

Scholars have drawn attention to the fictional features of the memoir of the du Fossé family. Favret has pointed out that ‘all the conventions of epistolary romance are here: separated lovers, tyrannic father, confinement and abandonment, followed by the eventual reconciliation and social reinstatement of the loving couple’.<sup>96</sup> Kennedy has noted that the memoir of

---

<sup>95</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 93-94.

<sup>96</sup> Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 70.

the du Fossé includes ‘all the signs of an adventurous love story’.<sup>97</sup> I further build on and develop the imaginary characteristic of the memoir by reading it alongside Laurence Sterne’s (1713-1769) *Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768). Williams was not alone in her taste for Sterne. His *Sentimental Journey* was so popular that, as Joyce Oates has shown, there were numerous imitative literary works of *Sentimental Journey*, reflecting the trend for sentimental travellers in the last thirty years of the eighteenth century.<sup>98</sup> Williams had a strong emotional identification with Sterne and her personal letters provide evidence of her familiarity with Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey*. Sterne’s character, Yorick, categorizes travellers and identifies himself as a ‘Sentimental Traveller’, asking readers ‘to determine his own place and rank in the catalogue [...] if he has been a traveller himself’.<sup>99</sup> Williams identifies herself as a sentimental traveller when in a letter to Piozzi, she listens to Duke of Orléans’s speech in Paris by chance and claims that ‘to hear so singular an harangue was a piece of good fortune which according to Sterne would only happen to a sentimental traveller’.<sup>100</sup> Her fascination for Sterne appears throughout her published letters and particularly in her first volume of *Letters*. Williams associates her trip with Sterne’s *Sentimental Journey* in her first volume, stating that ‘I have been frequently put in mind of Sterne since my arrival in France’.<sup>101</sup> When she sees ‘a Franciscan friar’ entering an inn at Versailles, he reminds her of Sterne’s monk: ‘He had so strong resemblance to Sterne’s monk, that I am persuaded he must be a descendant of the same family’.<sup>102</sup> ‘The first post-boy I saw in jack boots’ also causes Williams to think of ‘the idea of La Fleur mounted on his bidet’.<sup>103</sup> Identifying the people she met in France with Sterne’s characters, she establishes herself as a reader of Sterne’s novel, and shows her deep interest in the novel.

Williams also quotes a couple of passages from Sterne, and the positions of the quotations are significant. The references to Sterne in the

---

<sup>97</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 68.

<sup>98</sup> Joyce Oates, *Shandyism and Sentiment 1760-1800* (York: Printed for the Cambridge Bibliographical Society, 1968), 14.

<sup>99</sup> Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, ed. Katherine Turner (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2010), 65,135.

<sup>100</sup> Yorick says that ‘it was an incident of good fortune which will never happen to any traveller, but a sentimental one’. *Ibid.*, 66. See Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 5 September 1791, Eng MS 570.

<sup>101</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 101-102.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

first volume appear when she deals with political subjects. Telling readers about his misuse of French phrases ‘tant pis’ and ‘tant mieux’, Yorick advises readers that ‘I cannot take a fitter opportunity to observe once for all, that *tant pis* and *tant mieux* being two of the great hinges in French conversation’.<sup>104</sup> She uses this quotation of Sterne and applies it to her understanding of the Revolution: ‘By the way, aristocracie, and à la nation, are become cant terms, which, as Sterne said of tant pis, and tant mieux, may now be considered as two of the great hinges in French conversation’.<sup>105</sup> Williams introduces French culture similar to how Sterne does in his novel, but the implication of this passage is political. She describes the French social change after the storming of the Bastille with the changing connotations of the words ‘aristocracie’ and ‘à la nation’. The former is reminiscent of the ancient regime, but the latter is of the Revolution. She states, ‘every thing tiresome or unpleasant [is] “c’est une aristocracie!” and every thing charming and agreeable is “à la nation.”’<sup>106</sup> Despite no further comments on these phrases, she invokes Sterne to emphasise the pro-revolutionary feeling in France. She also uses Sterne to criticize ‘those who have contemplated the dungeons of the Bastille, without rejoicing in the French revolution’.<sup>107</sup> She claims that ‘Sterne says, that a man is incapable of loving one woman as he ought, who has not a sort of an affection for the whole sex, and as little should I look for particular sympathy from those who have no feelings of general philanthropy’.<sup>108</sup> These references to Sterne serve as shields against criticism for her political opinion.

Williams appropriates Sterne’s sentimental narrative in her epistolary text and the characteristics are apparent in ‘Memoirs of MONS. AND MADAME DU F-’ in her first volume of *Letters*. ‘Memoirs of MONS. AND MADAME DU F-’ is based on this story she heard from Madame du

---

<sup>104</sup> In a footnote of *A Sentimental Journey*, Turner has shown that ‘*Tant pis* means so much the worse, or too bad, and *tant mieux* so much the better.’ See Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, 85.

<sup>105</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 94-95.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 74. Seward shows her sympathy with the plight of Mons. and Madam du Fossé, but she criticizes Williams for making generalization: ‘the present felicity of the injured pair must, from recollection of their past sufferings, acquire a degree of sweetness and poignance which cannot be connected with ordinary happiness, and with the former experience of common calamities’. See Seward, Letter to Williams, 12 December 1790, in Seward, *Letters of Anna Seward*, 3: 45-46.

<sup>108</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 74.



Fossé, but she reshapes their individual histories into a sentimental narrative, and puts herself forward as the narrator of this sentimental history, rather than telling her own story. Like Sterne, she uses the language of feeling to convey her emotion and arouse her addressee's sympathy. Repeatedly intervening throughout the course of the story, the sentimental narrator maximizes her emotional voice. When she describes the tyranny of Monsieur du Fosse's father, she gives full vent to her feelings and tells her friend: 'my mind is overwhelmed with its own sensations. – The paper is blotted by my tears-and I can hold my pen no longer.'<sup>109</sup> Here she shows her sensibility as 'the paper' is wet with her tears. It echoes Sterne's use of a wet handkerchief: 'I sat down close by her; and Maria let me wipe [the tears] away as they fell with my handkerchief.–I then steep'd it in my own—and then in hers—and then in mine—and then I wip'd hers again—and as I did it, I felt such undescribable emotions within me'.<sup>110</sup> Sterne shows Yorick's sympathy for Maria with a soaked handkerchief and, as William Gerard has suggested, presents 'the sentimental communion between Yorick and Maria'.<sup>111</sup> Williams uses the letter as the medium of the sharing of feeling with the addressee and invites her readers to sympathise with her feeling and the situation she describes. In the latter part of this volume, Williams refers to her correspondent's changed reaction: 'I am glad you think that a friend's having been persecuted, imprisoned, maimed, and almost murdered under the antient government of France, is a good excuse for loving the revolution'.<sup>112</sup> By showing how her friend came to understand her support for the Revolution, she guides other readers how to respond to the Revolution.

By staging the relationship between her and her recipient, Williams stages conflict between their different understandings of the Revolution. She resolves the conflict with her addressee using different rhetorical devices. Her success in convincing her friend suggests her confidence in her own understanding of the Revolution and the importance of being an eyewitness to events. However, as I will show later in this chapter, despite her continued use of the epistolary form, Williams does not dramatize the

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>110</sup> Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*, 166.

<sup>111</sup> William Blake Gerard, *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 160.

<sup>112</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 91,140.

relationship between her and her recipient in the second volume of *Letters*, and changes her strategies of showing her political sympathies. Before exploring Williams's different methods in the second volume, however, I will explore Seward's changing responses to Williams's first volume of *Letters*.

## **II. 'A Charming Pamphlet, that Shews Me the Sunny-side of the French Revolution': Anna Seward's Changing Responses to Williams's *Letters Written in France***

Fascinated with the Revolution, Seward discusses important texts on the Revolution such as Burke's *Reflections*, Brooke Boothby's *Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1790), Williams's first volume of *Letters*, William David's *Lessons to a Young Prince* (1790), Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man, Part One* (1791), and Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) in her correspondence with several recipients.<sup>113</sup> Among these texts, she pays particular attention to Williams's first volume and Burke's *Reflections*, and shares her comments on them with her correspondents. Published in the same month – November 1790 – both are about the Revolution in France, but their approaches to this event are essentially opposed. Seward takes note of their differences and compares them in her personal letters. Her personal letters show how her views of these works change, as her ideas about the Revolution become conservative. Seward's letters between 1790 and 1793 are useful in tracing the way in which the reaction to Williams's first volume changed.

It is unknown when the relationship between Seward and Williams started, but they seem to have read one another's poems before they knew each other in person. The oldest surviving letter of Seward to Williams was written on 25 August 1785, but they may have known each other a few years earlier.<sup>114</sup> By the time Williams began her career as a poet, Seward, 20

---

<sup>113</sup> Seward, Letter to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, and Seward, Letter to Thomas Whalley, 26 February 1792, in Anna Seward, *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807*, ed. Archibald Constable, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1811), 2: 76-78, 117.

<sup>114</sup> Anna Seward, Letter to Williams, 25 August, 1785, in Anna Seward, *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807*, ed. Archibald Constable, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1811), 1: 76.

years her senior, had already achieved success with her poems ‘An Elegy on Captain Cook’ (1780), and ‘the Monody on Major André’ (1781).

Williams’s first mention of Seward appears in her second poem, ‘An Ode on the Peace’ (1783): ‘Seward sweeps her plaintive strings’.<sup>115</sup> In the following year, Seward called Williams her ‘poetic sister’ and complimented Williams’s poem, *Peru, a Poem* (1784) in her *Sonnet to Miss Williams on her epic poem, Peru* (1784).<sup>116</sup> As Seward’s request in her letter dated 25 August 1785 shows, ‘I long to see your poetic spectres, whose mournful habiliments will, I am sure be woven by the hand of genius’.<sup>117</sup> Thus, their friendship seems to have developed through their shared interest in poetry and their enjoyment of one another’s poetry.

Seward and Williams shared enthusiasm for the Revolution immediately after the storming of the Bastille. Seward explicitly supports the uprising in her letter of 23 July 1789 in England. She writes to Williams:

What a struggle in France! – while we lament the blood with  
which it streams, we revere the motives that have opened those  
vital sluices. O! that oppression and unjust bonds were banished  
from every government!<sup>118</sup>

Seward’s disapproval of ‘that oppression and unjust bonds’ is important in understanding her fluctuating opinions on the Revolution after 1789. On the grounds of the emancipation of ‘oppression and unjust bonds’, Seward reveres ‘the motives that have opened those vital sluices’. A month later in August 1789, she publicly celebrated the Revolution in her ‘Sonnet to France’, one of the earliest women’s public responses to the Revolution:

English veins  
  
Swell with the tide of exultation gay,  
  
To see thee spurn thy deeply-galling chains.  
  
Few of Britannia’s free born sons forbear

---

<sup>115</sup> Helen Maria Williams, *Poems*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1994), 41.

<sup>116</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 54 (August 1784), 613.

<sup>117</sup> Seward, Letter to Williams, 25 August 1785, in Seward, *Letters*, 1: 77.

<sup>118</sup> Seward, Letter to Williams, 23 July 1789, in *Ibid.*, 2: 297.

To bless thy CAUSE [.]<sup>119</sup>

Seward is appealing to patriotism to encourage her readers to welcome the Revolution, inspiring her readers ‘to bless thy CAUSE’ if they are ‘Britannia’s free born sons’.<sup>120</sup> As an Englishwoman, she is pleased with seeing ‘thee spurn thy deeply-galling chains’. Linda Colley has shown that the British considered the French as those who were suffered under absolute monarchy, while the British were free.<sup>121</sup> Seward attempts to link England and France together: ‘France, we bid thee share / The blessings twining with our civic wreaths’.<sup>122</sup> The layout of *The Gentleman’s Magazine* also suggests favourable responses to the Revolution in 1789. Seward’s ‘Sonnet to France’ is on the same page with poems entitled ‘On the King’s Recovery’ and ‘An Ode on the Birth-Day of Wales, August 12, 1789’.<sup>123</sup> At this point the Revolution was not generally considered a threat to the English monarchy in England.

Seward’s personal letters written between late 1790 and 1791 show the complexity of her attitude towards the Revolution. Despite her initial enthusiastic support for the Revolution in 1789, Seward seems to struggle to reconcile her support for liberty with her fear of a possible state of anarchy. In her letter to Mrs. Mompessan on 10 December 1790, Seward says she is ‘afraid the French carry the spirit of freedom too far’, and she ‘can only wish and hope that they may not abuse the blessings of their emancipation: that the spirit of freedom, which in former times has produced so much public virtue, will render France a bright example, to the surrounding nations, of wisdom, fortitude, temperance, and fidelity’.<sup>124</sup> She still believes in the bright future of France, but worries about the misuse of ‘the blessings of their emancipation’. Seward’s inner conflict is a helpful context for understanding her changing response to Williams’s *Letters*. She wrote a letter to Williams on 12 December 1790 about her reading of Williams’s *Letters* and the extracts of Burke’s *Reflections* which appeared in newspaper. Seward offers contrary images of the sun and clouds to describe Williams’s

<sup>119</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 59 (August 1789), 743.

<sup>120</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 91.

<sup>121</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 - 1837* (1992. Reprint, London: Yale University Press, 2014), 376.

<sup>122</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 59 (August 1789), 743.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Seward, Letter to Mrs. Mompessan, 10 December 1790, in Seward, *Letters*, 3: 43.

and Burke's opinions of the Revolution. Calling Williams's first volume of *Letters* 'a charming pamphlet, that shews me the sunny-side of the French Revolution', Seward shows her agreement with Williams's portrayal of the Revolution. Seward criticizes Burke for manipulating and exploiting the situation in France, by associating his opinion with "[d]arkness, clouds, and shadows" [...] assiduously thrown by national envy, and deepened into a chaotic night by the able pen of Mr Burke'.<sup>125</sup> This connects to the language of darkness used by Williams in her first volume of *Letters*.<sup>126</sup> Williams claims that there are huge differences between what she saw in France and what she heard about France in England. She tells her recipient that it seems that France has been spoken of in England as 'the land which these mighty magicians have suddenly covered with darkness'.<sup>127</sup> Thus, at this point we can see Seward was in sympathy with Williams's view on the Revolution and disapproved of Burke's projections at this stage. The following extract from this letter on 12 December 1790 shows Seward's ambivalent reading of Williams's first volume:

My heart is in unison with its generous and eloquent  
apostrophes to the, I hope, rising state; but great must be its  
difficulties, imminent its dangers. What misfortunes, what woes  
have been the lot of your friends! We can hardly conceive that  
the parental heart was capable of such infernal induration.<sup>128</sup>

Seward's comment that 'my heart is in union with its generous and eloquent apostrophes to the, I hope, rising state', suggests that Williams succeeded in making Seward share her enthusiasm for the Revolution and sympathize with Monsieur Du Fossé's predicament. Nevertheless, Seward points out Williams's overly optimistic view of the Revolution, and further reveals her anxiety about the possibility of the Revolution not succeeding.

In the same month of the above letter, Seward's letter to another friend, Whalley on 19 December 1790 explicitly shows how Seward's response to Burke's opinion on the Revolution was changed after she read his *Reflections*:

---

<sup>125</sup> Seward, Letter to Williams, 12 December 1790, in *Ibid.*, 3: 45.

<sup>126</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 147.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Seward, Letter to Williams, 12 December 1790, in Seward, *Letters*, 3: 46-47.

Unbiased as I profess myself as to my reason, Mr Burke will find difficulty to convince me, that the oppressive and barbarous monarchy of France ought to have subsisted; and I feel inclined to hope, from Helen Williams's interesting epistolary pamphlet, that the clouds, with which [Burke's] imagination seeks to eclipse the sun of liberty, have either no real existence, or that the fervor of its beams will disperse them. [...] Since I finished the last sentence, I have read the Burke – and am, however reluctantly, convinced that the boasted liberty of France is degenerating into coercive anarchy, not likely to end well.<sup>129</sup>

Burke's argument that 'the oppressive and barbarous monarchy of France ought to be subsisted' would not have appealed to Seward, considering her earlier letter to Williams on 23 July 1789. In this letter, which Seward welcomed the Revolution in her support of getting rid of 'oppression and unjust bonds'.<sup>130</sup> By comparing his negative opinion on the Revolution to 'the clouds', Seward uses the images of the sun and clouds again to refute Burke's *Reflections*, and she even associates Burke's arguments with originating in 'imagination'. She rebuts his argument for lack of reason but, after reading his *Reflections*, she comes to agree with him about the possibility of anarchy. Burke's *Reflections* seems to have some effect as in this passage Seward's 'sun of liberty' changes into 'the boasted liberty of France'.

Seward's letter to unknown friend on 10 January 1791 explains her reluctant but increasing belief in Burke's *Reflections*:

I read Miss Williams's interesting little publication before I read Burke; and my whole heart and soul had, previous to appearance of either, exulted in the idea of a great nation liberated from an oppressive yoke. Miss Williams showed me the sunny-side of the prospect, and I gazed with a willing eye. I took up Mr Burke's pamphlet, assured that I should detest it; yet, as I never allow my reason to be wholly blinded by my wishes, I could not resist his statement of facts, or his luminous reasoning upon

---

<sup>129</sup> Seward, Letter to Whalley, 19 December 1790, in *Ibid.*, 3: 48.

<sup>130</sup> Seward, Letter to Williams, 23 July 1789, in *Ibid.*, 2:297.

them. They shew me the national assembly as a band of hot-brained enthusiasts, who are ruining their country, under the pretence of delivering it.<sup>131</sup>

Unlike in her letter to Whalley, she now describes his opinion as ‘facts, or his luminous reasoning upon them’ and particularly concurs with his argument about the members of the National Assembly. While Williams claims that ‘the leaders of the French revolution, are men well acquainted with the human heart’, Burke condemns them for not having ‘any practical experience in the state’.<sup>132</sup> Calling them ‘a band of hot-brained enthusiasts’, Seward expresses her deep distrust of the members. In a later letter to Mary Knowles on 19 May 1791, Seward claims that Williams’s *Letters* ‘do not attempt to reason, they only paint, and shew the illumined side of the prospect’.<sup>133</sup> Seward initially claimed that Burke’s ‘imagination seeks to eclipse the sun of liberty’, but here she criticizes Williams’s *Letters* for lack of ‘reason’ and only showing ‘the illumined side of the prospect’ which used to show her ‘the sunny-side of the prospect’.<sup>134</sup> As her opinion on the Revolution changed, Seward’s responses to Williams’s *Letters* became different.

Despite her disapproval of Williams’s support for the Revolution, Seward kept in close contact with Williams. When Williams briefly came back to England between June and August 1792, Seward sent a letter to her on 26 July 1792, in which she thanked Williams ‘for the kind leave-taking billet with which you favoured me on the eve of your heroic emigration’.<sup>135</sup> Yet Seward publicly placed herself in an anti-revolutionary group by publishing a letter in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, ‘From Miss Seward to Miss Helen Williams at Paris’, dated 17 January 1793, which may have caused a rupture in their friendship. Having earlier celebrated the Revolution, Seward withdraws her support in this letter, and publicly refutes Williams’s continuing approval of the Revolution:

---

<sup>131</sup> Seward, Letter to an anonymous recipient, 10 January 1791, in *Ibid.*, 3: 52-53.

<sup>132</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 90, and Burke, *Reflections*, 128.

<sup>133</sup> Seward, Letter to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, in Seward, *Letters*, 3: 76.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> Seward, Letter to Williams, 26 July 1792, in *Ibid.*, 3: 148.

The fire, which led the French to the brink of that chaos into which they are fallen, you *yet*, my dear friend, call the rising sun of Liberty. So *I* deemed it once, nay, long, and voluntarily and *publicly* hailed its dawn with the best powers of my imagination, and of my heart; but, to my great regret, it proves, “A meteor, flaming lawless through the void;” ominous of spreading strife and misery.<sup>136</sup>

Seward claims that she admits her earlier misunderstanding of the Revolution with a ‘great regret’. It is worth noting that this letter is published in a later issue of the same magazine where Seward’s *Sonnet To France* was published in August 1789.<sup>137</sup> Seward may have purposely published this letter in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* to show her changing view of the Revolution, and to protect herself from the hostile criticism directed against writers who made arguments in favour of the Revolution, which I discuss further in Chapter Two. Here ‘a meteor, flaming lawless through the void’ is from Alexander Pope’s *An Essay on Man: Epistle II* (1733), in which he compares self-love without reason to a meteor.<sup>138</sup> By using the reference to Pope, Seward insinuates that support for the Revolution is not based on reason. Her metaphors also conjure up Williams’s argument in the second volume of *Letters*, that ‘[l]iberty springs as naturally from knowledge, as light from the sun and the liberty which the French have acquired, and are determined to maintain appears to be the deliberate, the noble, the august choice of reason. It has no resemblance to those fiery meteors’.<sup>139</sup> Williams considers liberty as resulting from ‘the noble, the august choice of reason’, which is exactly the opposite opinion to Seward’s.

After the published letter in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, no more of Seward’s letters to Williams survive. But Seward writes about Williams in her letter to Mrs Mompessan on 31 October 1793. She says, ‘when

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. Italics in original.

<sup>137</sup> This letter is directly addressed to Williams, but published in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*. Seward, Letter to Williams, 17 January 1793, in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 63 (February 1793), 109.

<sup>138</sup> Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man, in Epistles to a Friend. Epistle II* (London: Printed for J. Wilford, 1733), 8.

<sup>139</sup> Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France: Containing Many New Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution, and the Present State of French Manners* (1792), third edition (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1796), 70.



conscious of Miss Williams's perilous situation, I saw that she had again published on the affairs of France, I sickened at the intelligence'.<sup>140</sup> Seward worries for Williams's safety but what she describes as 'a charming pamphlet, that shews me the sunny-side of the French Revolution' now angered her, and this negative response demonstrates that their relationship was irreparably damaged.<sup>141</sup> They had a close relationship in the 1780s, which was based on their interest in poetry, but the friendship came to break down as the Revolution was underway.

### **III. Williams's Demonstration of 'French Patriotism' and English Loyalty in *Letters From France***

In the summer of 1791, eight months after her first volume of *Letters* was published, Williams returned to France. This time she intended to stay in France for a couple of years rather than have a short journey. To announce her long trip to France, she published *A Farewell, for Two Years, to England* (1791). However, in the event, she had to come back to England in June 1792 for two months to 'execute some business for my mother'.<sup>142</sup> Her second volume of *Letters* was based on her stay in France, undertaken between August 1791 and June 1792.<sup>143</sup> In this final section, I propose that Williams uses the epistolary form differently in her second volume of *Letters*, moving to a different literary voice. Her different uses of the letter form cannot be easily explained in terms of the events in France that she covered in the second volume, but can be read as related to her relationship with her English friends and English readers. I argue that Williams tries hard to convince her English correspondents that the situation in France is still promising, and explore ways in which she reconciles her continuing support for the Revolution with her loyalty to England. First, I will sketch out the situation in France before her 1791 trip, and her friends' responses to her stay in France, as these are important context for Williams's second volume of *Letters*.

---

<sup>140</sup> Seward, Letter to Mrs Mompessan, 31 October 1793, in Seward, *Letters*, 3: 334.

<sup>141</sup> Seward, Letter to Williams, 12 December 1790, in *Ibid.*, 3: 46.

<sup>142</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 13 June 1792, Eng MS 570.

<sup>143</sup> Piozzi tells Charlotte Lewis, 'Helena Williams begins her French Tour in August'. Piozzi, Letter to Charlotte Lewis, 30 May 1791, in Piozzi, *Piozzi Letter*, 1:353.

The fear and disapproval of the French mob in England was more apparent after the September Massacre in September 1792, but the English opinion of the French mob became increasingly unfavourable in 1791.<sup>144</sup> The French royal family was caught during its flight to Varennes on June 1791, and was forcibly brought back to Paris.<sup>145</sup> Satirical prints about the royal flight were published in London, such as James Gillray's *French Democrats Surprising the Royal Runaways* (1791) [Fig.4].<sup>146</sup> In Gillray's caricature, the 'French Democrats', stampeding through the door, threaten the royal family with a dagger, a sabre, and a pistol. His image emphasises the violence of the French mob and suggests that the possibility of regicide may have been a particular fear for the English, following the English regicide of Charles I in 1649. The newspaper also reported the Parisian reaction to the royal flight to Varennes. In June 1791, the *Whitehall Evening Post* reported that 'the mob, ever ready to exercise the uncontroled Rights of Men, made a mock parade of the King's arms in the market places, and dashing them and the figure of a crown on the ground, they trampled upon them'.<sup>147</sup> These depictions in the press reinforced negative and violent images of the French mob and seemed to confirm Burke's predictions of the Revolution, in particular the possibility of regicide. In the *Reflections*, he suggests that 'the murder of a king, or a queen, or a bishop, or a father, are only common homicide; and if the people are by any chance, or in any way gainers by it, a sort of homicide much the most pardonable, and into which we ought not to make too severe a scrutiny'.<sup>148</sup> The French cruel treatment toward the royal family after its flight trial may have been another evidence of Burke's prophecies.

---

<sup>144</sup> As Marilyn Butler has shown, 'the rational optimism about the Revolution that was common among educated British people before the middle of 1792'. See Marilyn Butler, Burke, Edmund. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 97.

<sup>145</sup> Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989. Reprint, London: Penguin Books, 2004), 470-476.

<sup>146</sup> On Gillray's satirical print see Draper Hill, *The Satirical Etchings of James Gillray* (New York: Dover, 1796) and John Richard Moores, *Representation of France in English Satirical Prints, 1740-1832* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 61.

<sup>147</sup> *Whitening Evening Post*, 25-28 June 1791.

<sup>148</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 171.

**Fig.4: James Gillray, *French Democrats Surprizing the Royal Runaways.* Published 27 June 1791, by Hannah Humphrey, BM 7882; British Museum.**



Williams's friends Piozzi and Pennington, who had never sympathized with the Revolution, expressed concern regarding Williams's journey to France. When her trip approached, Williams visited the sick Pennington to say goodbye to her, but alarmed Pennington with her enthusiasm. On 24 July 1791 Pennington wrote to Piozzi about Williams's visit: '[h]er Enthusiasm is nothing abated. She insists upon it that every thing is going on well in France – nay that all is her feeling Quiet & will remain so there, tho we know that the People are Murdering one another'.<sup>149</sup> Pennington disagrees with Williams's claim that 'every thing is going on well in France', and unlike her friend, regarded the French as people '[m]urdering one another'. In her reply to this letter, Piozzi tells Pennington that 'Helena Williams is a courageous Damsel, and I will I hope never be a distressed one in Consequence of that Conduct, which if anything happens but good to her will be condemned as rashness'.<sup>150</sup> Piozzi regarded Williams's choice to go to France as an impetuous decision. Considering the correspondence between Piozzi and Williams, which is explored later in this

<sup>149</sup> Pennington, Letter to Piozzi, 24 July 1791, Eng MS 566, quoted in Piozzi, *Piozzi letters*, 1: 362.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

chapter, Williams may have recognised that her continued support for the Revolution put her in a perilous social position in England.

At the beginning of the second volume of *Letters*, there are parallels with the first volume. Williams opens her second volume of *Letters* with the celebration of the King's acceptance of the constitution in September 1791, describing the public merriment of that day.<sup>151</sup> Her description of the celebrating French multitude recalls her account of the French crowd in the Fête de la Fédération in the first volume. As in the first volume, Williams portrays the French multitude in a favourable light and stresses the behaviour and feelings of the multitude. In the second volume, she reports that 'the people displayed their joy by crowding the streets with bonfires'.<sup>152</sup> As in the first volume, Williams also uses her own emotional involvement with the French mob as evidence of the contagious characteristic of emotion in the crowd: 'it was impossible to [...] reflect on the greatness of the occasion which had called so immense a multitude together [...] without catching the enthusiasm which beat high in every bosom'.<sup>153</sup> Like the first volume, in the second volume Williams portrays herself as a participant as well as a witness of the event. Similar ways of describing the French multitude across the first and second volumes of *Letters* suggest that to Williams, the situation in 1791 was not significantly different from that of 1790. In the same way that the Fête de la Fédération allowed her to represent the French multitude in a positive light, the celebration of the King's acceptance of the constitution provides Williams another favourable example of the French crowd.

In the second volume, as in the first volume, Williams pays attention to the sentiments of the French people. In the first, she portrays the sentiments of the French people but, in the second, she attempts to clarify further how these sentiments affected people, and how they changed the lives of the French. She remarks

The sentiments of the people also are elevated far above the pitch of common life. All the motives which most powerfully

---

<sup>151</sup> The Constituent Assembly finished the constitution on 3 September, presented this to Louis XVI for acceptance, and the king approved the constitution on 13 September. See William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (1988. Reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 157.

<sup>152</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 3.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

stimulate the mind in its ordinary state, seem repressed in consideration of the public good; and every selfish interest is sacrificed with fond alacrity at the altar of the country.<sup>154</sup>

She insists that ‘sentiment’ enables people to seek ‘the public good’ rather than to serve their ‘selfish interest’ which makes it possible for them to change their behaviour in this new situation. By positioning French sentiments in a positive light, she attempts to share her understanding of the French people with her readers. Williams also positions herself as an important witness for those who are ‘observing the effects of a revolution, so noble in its design, so astonishing in the sudden change produced in the sentiments of a whole nation’.<sup>155</sup> In both the first and second volumes of *Letters*, Williams delivers eyewitness accounts of events in France, but there are differences between these two volumes in terms of authorial voice.

In the first volume of *Letters*, Williams highlights her gender identity, presenting herself as a female who does not want to engage in political debate. She does this through several self-deprecating accounts such as ‘[d]id you expect that I should ever dip my pen in politics[?]’<sup>156</sup> However, the self-effacing remarks disappear in her second volume.<sup>157</sup> Williams foregrounds her nationality and portrays herself as a person who misses her country and friends. In *A Farewell*, she expresses her wish: ‘may I, in foreign realms, her glories hear, / Catch the lov’d sounds, and pour th’ exulting tear!’ as well as displaying her anticipation for being in ‘GALLIA’S state! Where new-born Freedom treads the banks of Seine’.<sup>158</sup> As Kennedy has suggested, this poem shows Williams’s attempt to strike a balance between ‘patriotism and revolutionary enthusiasm’.<sup>159</sup> Williams develops this strategy in her second volume. She boldly states that her mind ‘has strongly caught the contagion of French patriotism’, but at the same

---

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>156</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 109.

<sup>157</sup> In the first volume, several self-effacing remarks appear: ‘I have not been so absurd as to consult my head upon matters of which it is so incapable of judging’ and ‘[h]ow many fine-spun threads of reasoning would my wandering thoughts have broken, and how difficult should I have found it to arrange arguments and inferences in the cells of my brain!’ See Ibid., 91.140.

<sup>158</sup> Helen Maria Williams, *A Farewell for Two Years, to England. A Poem in Letters Written in France*, (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1791), 5,14.

<sup>159</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 77.

time she confesses her homesickness during her trip: ‘I often recollected, in the course of the day, with a tender melancholy emotion, my distance from England’.<sup>160</sup> She also shows her sense of national pride when she describes a ceremony at the Jacobin club. The flags of England, France and America appeared at the hall, and they were fixed above the busts of the famous figures. The busts of ‘Milton, of Locke, and of Hambden’ were placed under the English colours, while their names resounded through the hall. She describes her feeling: ‘I heard with exultation the well-known names of these celebrated persons, and recollected with pride that I had the honour of belonging to the same country’.<sup>161</sup> She shows her sense of her national identity through this episode.

Williams uses her social connections in England to present herself as a person who is missing her friends and, in the second volume of *Letters*, she particularly refers to Piozzi. For Williams, Piozzi was an influential person in the circle she belonged to. Unlike Seward, who welcomed the Revolution in 1789 but became conservative later, Piozzi never approved of the Revolution, and believed that it could not succeed; in her letter on 21 July 1789 she wrote that ‘less than ten Years will scarcely suffice to quiet the Storm which these Commotions have excited in France’ and ‘the French will have fatigued themselves with their own violent Exertion’.<sup>162</sup> Conflict between Piozzi and Williams seemed to be inevitable, though it is evident from their correspondence that Williams attempted to persuade Piozzi to agree with her about the Revolution. Williams wrote three letters to Piozzi during her second trip: a letter written in Normandy on 5 September 1791, another from Orleans on 12 October 1791, and a third from Paris on 26 February 1792. My archival research has revealed that some of the letters in the second volume of *Letters* are actually based on Williams’s personal letters to Piozzi. As I will show, similarities extend beyond shared content: some sentences are exactly the same as those in her personal letters. I investigate Williams’s and Piozzi’s personal letters, in order to understand the dynamics of their relationship, and to show the ways in which Williams persuades her friend to share her support for the Revolution. Then, I explore

---

<sup>160</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 7, 94.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

<sup>162</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Samuel Lysons, 21 July 1789, in Piozzi, *The Piozzi letters*, 1: 306.

the ways in which Williams makes use of her friendship with, and letters to, Piozzi in the published *Letters*.

In her letter to Piozzi of 5 September 1791 from ‘Au Château Du Fossé’ two days after the New Constitution was finished on 3 September, Williams tells Piozzi that Louis XVI

may think himself fortunate in having been stopped in his flight—since had he left his Kingdom he would in all probability have shared the fate of James the 2d, when he left England, and deprived his family for ever of its inheritance by so doing—I hope my dear Madam that you & dear Mr. Piozzi are a little reconciled to my friend the National Assembly on account of their having used their triumph over their King with wisdom and Moderation—I am persuaded that were you to come to France your benevolence (of which quality who has a larger portion than yourself) would reconcile you to the new Constitution which certainly produce but “partial evil” and “universal good” while at the same time your political prudence would now prevent you from wishing that the restoration of the ancient government should be attempted, when the great mass of the people are firmly determined to defend the new Constitution with their lives and fortunes.<sup>163</sup>

Here Williams comments on the royal flight to Varennes between 20 and 21 June 1791. She considers the failure of the flight as being ‘fortunate’, in terms of the fate of James II. She attempts to persuade Piozzi of the validity of the French Revolution by drawing parallels to the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Williams later, in the second volume, claims that even though ‘he has been deprived of despotic power’, Louis XVI ‘is called by the consent of a free people to the crown of the greatest nation in Europe’.<sup>164</sup> She also tries to ‘reconcile’ Piozzi to her friends of the National Assembly by highlighting their treatment toward the King – treating him ‘with wisdom and Moderation’ - despite the royal flight to Varennes. Williams suggests that Piozzi’s

---

<sup>163</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 5 September 1791, Eng MS 570.

<sup>164</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 104-105.

disapprobation of the Revolution would be overcome if she came to France at this point. Williams suddenly changes the subject to her longing for Piozzi and Streatham: ‘my heart sorrowfully clings to my own, and to those friends from whom I am separated—I often my dear Madam, recall with a melancholy pleasure the charming hours I have passed at Streatham’.<sup>165</sup> She uses the pain of being separated from friends as a method to placate Piozzi.

Williams’s next letter of 12 October 1791 suggests that she received a letter from Piozzi that has not survived. However, looking at Piozzi’s letter to Pennington on 18 August 1791, it seems that Williams clearly failed to persuade Piozzi about the flight of the king. Piozzi writes to Pennington:

It does really appear contrary to my Predictions that all Europe will joyn to reinstate a Descendant of that House of Bourbon which when represented by his Ancestor Louis *quatorze* all Europe united to humble: but this should be considered as Justice not Caprice: That last mentioned Prince sought openly to seize the Rights of others, while his wretched Successor has been cruelly deprived of his own: and the World will not look on it seems, while the Crown of France is trampled on; tho none stirred a Step even when the Sacred Head of an English Monarch was severed from his Body by the Democrates of that day.<sup>166</sup>

Unlike Williams, Piozzi considers Louis XVI as being ‘cruelly deprived of his own’ rights. While Williams associates the flight of Louis XVI with that of James II, Piozzi relates Louis XVI with Charles I, who was executed on 30 January 1649, and she raises the possibility of regicide. Piozzi seems to accuse Williams of being too immersed in French politics to think of her friends, and in her letter on 12 October 1791 Williams assures her that she does not ‘feel any pleasure from the Democrats which at all compensates to my heart for this cruel separation from my friends at home’.<sup>167</sup> Her efforts to placate Piozzi failed, and on 26 February 1792, Williams writes ‘I will not

---

<sup>165</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 5 September 1791, Eng MS 570.

<sup>166</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Pennington, 18 August 1791 in Piozzi, *Piozzi letters*, 1: 362.

<sup>167</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 12 October 1791 in *Ibid.*, 1:371.



my dear Madam, talk to you of french politics which I know you dislike further than to answer your enquiry respecting the princess'.<sup>168</sup> Williams may have realized that her efforts to persuade her friend were counterproductive. Instead of persuading Piozzi to support the Revolution, Williams speaks of her yearning for 'the Streatham library' and tells Piozzi that 'ah, when shall I find myself again in that Dear Library?- I recollect every chair and talk it contains with the feelings of an old acquaintance'.<sup>169</sup> The repetition of her longing for her friends and for Streatham suggests Williams's wishes to maintain her friendship with Piozzi despite their different political opinions. Piozzi's responses to her letters may have also provided Williams with the type of response she might expect from the readers of her published letters.

In the published version of her letter, Williams decides to keep her accounts of longing for her friends, but her conflict with Piozzi disappears. In contrast to her use of the conflict between her and her recipient in the first volume, Williams in the second volume does not include her recipient's response to her letters, and does not attempt to convince her recipient to sympathize with her feelings. Instead, she presents herself as a woman who misses her friends in a foreign land, and she expresses her longing for them. In the middle of the second volume, she writes, 'writing upon this subject recalls powerfully to my heart the idea of those friends with whom I passed most of my time in London; of that society which absence can only serve to endear, by convincing me that its loss is irreparable.'<sup>170</sup> Here, the society refers to the Streatham Park society, a group of people who assemble at Piozzi's Streatham Park, a place Williams was particularly fond of and wanted to be invited.<sup>171</sup> As Felicity Nussbaum has shown, Piozzi 'fostered private sociable communities' and people such as Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith gathered at her

---

<sup>168</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 26 February 1792, Eng MS 570.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 99.

<sup>171</sup> She mentioned this place in her personal letters and her second volume of *Letters*. See Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 5 September 1791 and 26 February 1792, Eng MS 570. See also Williams, *Letters from France*, 100.

Streatham estate.<sup>172</sup> For Williams, this place was important for forming social relationships and, as her personal letters to Piozzi reveal, she frequently tells her how much she enjoys staying in Streatham Park. Williams expresses her admiration for Piozzi's eloquence in her published *Letters*: '[t]here are no talents which I feel more disposed to envy than those of wit and eloquence in conversation; than the power of giving it a fresh flow when it grows languid; when, to use the beautiful image of Mrs. Piozzi, "the little stream of prattle ceases to murmur for want of a few pebbles to break its course"'.<sup>173</sup> She then provides an anecdote to exemplify Piozzi's 'wit and eloquence in conversation':

One evening at Streatham Park, some person asked Doctor Johnson, how he would choose to distribute the great offices of state which were at that time vacant, amongst the literary ladies of his acquaintance. [...] "And what place will you give to the lady of this house?" somebody enquired. "We will give her," answered Johnson, "a seat in the House of Commons, and she will rise of herself".<sup>174</sup>

In the same way as Piozzi uses Samuel Johnson's fame in the *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson* (1786), Williams also uses Piozzi's reputation to strengthen her claims to loyalty to England. Kennedy has quoted this anecdote to argue that 'Williams implied that her own pursuits in France were simply an extension of the work of these earlier "literary ladies"'.<sup>175</sup> However, I propose that her claims to be linked to this circle in particular are important given its conservatism. By showing her connections to this circle, she presents herself as someone who can have friendships with people who have different political views, rather than arguing with her friends. Williams is also legitimising women's participation in politics, by

---

<sup>172</sup> Felicity Nussbaum, "Sociability and Life Writing: Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi," in *Women's Life Writing, 1700-1850: Gender, Genre and Authorship*, ed. Daniel Cook and Amy Culley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 58.

<sup>173</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 100.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 84.

providing an example of Johnson approving of Piozzi to the extent that he jokes that she should be in the House of Commons.

I now return to her personal letters, and reveal the relationship between personal correspondence and published material, by comparing these two kinds of texts. The differences between her personal and published letters are shown below:

My dear Madam, you will be surprised to hear that I take up the pen to enjoy the happiness of writing to you, not at Orleans but at Mons. du Fosses Chateau in Normandy – when I got to Paris. I found letters from Madam du fosse urging me so strongly to come and pass a month with her before we pitched our tent at Orleans that I could not refuse the invitation – I stayed a few days at Paris and went to national Assembly – when Mons. Orleans made a speech.<sup>176</sup>

I again take up the pen to write to you at the chateau of Mons. du F-, from which place I last year sent you the history of his misfortunes; those misfortunes which have led me to love, as well as admire, the revolution.<sup>177</sup>

Both her personal and published letters begin to inform her whereabouts, but the time she spent in Paris before Normandy disappears in her published *Letters*. She may have been reluctant to start her book with a political speech by the Duke of Orléans, whose patriotism was subject to suspicion, as she refers to him later in ‘Letter XIII’ of the second volume.<sup>178</sup> Instead, she starts her journey from ‘the chateau of Mons. du F-’, which is an important place in her first volume of *Letters*, and reminds her readers of ‘Memoirs of Mons. and Madame du F-’ in the first volume. She also refreshes her readers’ memory about her statement of her support for the Revolution that ‘a friend’s having been persecuted, imprisoned, maimed, and almost murdered under the antient government of France, is a good excuse for loving the revolution’.<sup>179</sup> However, she does not mention the ‘misfortunes which have led me to love, as well as admire, the revolution’

<sup>176</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 5 September 1791, Eng MS 570.

<sup>177</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 1.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>179</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 140.

in her personal letter to Piozzi. This omission may have been Williams's attempt to avoid conflict with Piozzi, who had a different political opinion from her.

Williams repeats several passages in her personal letters but expands on them for her published *Letters*, to foreground the characteristics of travel writing. She briefly wrote to Piozzi that 'Orleans is a very pretty French Town, with a noble bridge across the Loire, and beautiful environs'.<sup>180</sup> In Letter III, she gives historical and cultural information about Orleans and spends almost four depicting the scenery. She also describes the Lycée, an educational institution, in her personal letter to Piozzi:

Cecilia and I throw aside political discussions at least one hour every day attend the Lycée, where a number of ladies and gentleman assemble to hear lectures from the most celebrated professors of Paris on natural philosophy, chemistry, physiology, history, dramatic literature &c and also receive lessons in the greek italian French & English language- and every Saturday evening by way of recompose for the studies of the week, we have a concert sufficiently good to sooth the mind and give pleasure.<sup>181</sup>

Williams develops this passage into Letter XVIII of her published *Letters*. The start of the letter is similar to her personal letter: 'I am not however, always occupied by these vast political discussions, but spend a part of every day at the Lycée' but she provides further information on the institution.<sup>182</sup> She not only offers the basic information on Lycée such as who established it and its situation after the Revolution, but she also compares the difference of acquiring knowledge between England and France. As these examples show, personal letters provide Williams material to write her published letters. This interrelation between her personal and published letters demonstrates her ability to change her voice according to the situation.

Before concluding this chapter, I want to explore Williams's response to Burke's *Reflections* throughout the second volume of *Letters*.

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>181</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 26 February 1792, Eng MS 570.

<sup>182</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 129.

Unlike writers such as Wollstonecraft and Catharine Macaulay (1731-1791) who directly engaged in the heated discussion provoked by *Reflections* through their works *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1790) and *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (1790), Williams does not openly criticize Burke, and never addresses Burke directly. Instead, she uses subtle methods in her second volume of *Letters* to prove Burke's understanding of the Revolution wrong.

Williams makes use of Burke's famous phrase 'the age of chivalry', 'sublime', and 'beautiful' throughout her second volume of *Letters*.<sup>183</sup> Although she does not agree with his opinions on the Revolution, she presents herself as someone who can show appreciation of Burke's contribution to aesthetics, rather than openly assail him. Using concepts elaborated by Burke in his highly influential *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Williams claims that 'the French Revolution is not only sublime in a general view, but is often beautiful when considered in detail' in the second volume. She combines his notions of sublime and beautiful with her understanding of the Revolution here.

However, for Williams, Burke's idea of 'chivalry' in his *Reflections* is incompatible with her support for revolutionary principles. In *Reflections*, he claims that chivalry 'without confounding ranks had produced a noble equality, and handed it down through all the gradations of social life'.<sup>184</sup> Burke insists that chivalry has a long-standing tradition that has contributed to social stability. Williams rejects Burke's concept of chivalry as having 'erroneous notions of loyalty, honour, and gallantry', and she redefines the term with reference to 'its noble contempt of sordid cares, its spirit of unsullied generosity, and its heroic zeal for the happiness of others'.<sup>185</sup> Williams uses Burke's phrase 'the age of chivalry', but reinterprets the phrase. She is appropriating Burke's ideas, but transforming them to support the Revolution instead of opposing it.

---

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 5,22,71,81,107. Kelley also mentions Williams's appropriation of Burke 'age of chivalry'. See Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution*, 44.

<sup>184</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 170.

<sup>185</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 5.

Williams also uses of Burke's phrase 'the age of chivalry' to describe the changed situation in France. When she describes the changed lives of people in Paris in 'Letter XII', she comments on a cultural change. She begins by saying that 'not that the same gallantry, the same constant attention to women now prevails which existed before the revolution' and then describes the changed attitude of the French men toward women.<sup>186</sup> Before she moves on to introduce changes in French fashion, she claims that 'not only the age of chivalry, but the age of petits-mâîtres is past'.<sup>187</sup> According to Merriam-Webster, petits-mâîtres refers to a dandy or fop.<sup>188</sup> Here she plays on the phrase and dismisses 'the age of chivalry' as being changeable over times like fashion trends.

Williams also directly objects to his opinion on English liberty, and the following passage shows her perspective on Burke's version of English liberty:

In this enlightened period of the world more perfect systems of legislation may perhaps be formed than England can boast. Her Magna Charta [sic] was obtained, not in the illumination of the eighteenth, but in Gothic darkness of the twelfth century. She can never be deprived of the most glorious preeminence among the children of freedom; she, who cherished in her bosom the noble sentiments of liberty, when the nations around her were sunk in the most abject servitude. If those nations now find the path of freedom, it is by pursuing the path of freedom, it is by pursuing the track which England first explored.<sup>189</sup>

Although there is no direct reference to Burke here, Williams criticizes his argument that 'from Magna Charta to the Declaration of Rights, it has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers'.<sup>190</sup> She objects to his claim of the superiority of England's liberty over that of France by highlighting that the 'Magna Charta' was created 'in the Gothic darkness of

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>188</sup> According to Merriam-Webster, petits-mâîtres refers to a dandy or fop. 'Petit-mâître,' *Merriam-Webster's French-English Dictionary*, 2000, accessed 10 November 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/petit-maitre/>.

<sup>189</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 114-115.

<sup>190</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 119.

the twelfth century'. Williams's use of the word 'Gothic' echoes Wollstonecraft's account in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*: 'why was it a duty to repair an ancient castle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials?'<sup>191</sup> Wollstonecraft condemns Burke for his account of English liberty, surprised that he 'recommended our form of government as a model' because 'property in England is much more secure than liberty'.<sup>192</sup> However, Emma Major has suggested that Williams 'keeps some patriotic purchase on British Liberty', through her examination of Williams's use of metaphors: English liberty as a matron, but French liberty as a maiden.<sup>193</sup> Williams admits that English liberty is 'the most glorious preeminence among the children of freedom', but she claims that it should be reformed.<sup>194</sup> She argues that if 'England rectifies the abuses and corruptions which have crept into her government, by wise and temperate reformation', the country may 'avoid those storms and convulsions'.<sup>195</sup> By praising English liberty, Williams makes it clear that she does not think revolution needs to happen in England, but she argues for the necessity of the reformation.

Williams's second volume of *Letters* concludes with her defence against the violent aspects of the Revolution. In the opening sentence of her last letter, she writes, 'I have nothing to relate but what is melancholy and painful' and reflects on the negative side of the Revolution. She remarks

Shall we, because the fanatics of liberty have committed some detestable crimes, conclude that liberty is an evil, and prefer the gloomy tranquility of despotism? If the blessings of freedom have sometimes been abused, it is because they are not yet well understood. Those occasional evils which have happened in the instant state of liberty, are but the effects of despotism. Men have been long treated with inhumanity, therefore they are ferocious.<sup>196</sup>

---

<sup>191</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Men," 75.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>193</sup> Major, *Madam Britannia*, 237.

<sup>194</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, 114.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

She acknowledges an abuse of liberty but she persuades her recipient not to ‘conclude that liberty is an evil’ because of ‘the fanatics of liberty’. She ascribes the abuse of liberty to ‘the effects of despotism’ and she considers the violent events in France as happening ‘in the instant state of liberty’. Her distinction between the principle of liberty and the errors made by people is important in understanding her opinions on the Revolution in the subsequent volumes of *Letters*, which I discuss in Chapter Four.

As we have seen, British public opinion on events in France had not remained positive and, in particular, violent images of the French mob threatened to overwhelm the initially generally positive view of the Revolution. Responding to these unfavourable circumstances, Williams attempted to show signs of hope that the situations in France were still promising. She also persuaded readers that despite her continuing support for the Revolution, she still had affection for England and missed her English friends while she was in France. Williams’s second volume of *Letters* is important in studies on Williams because, among the eight volumes of *Letters*, the second volume shows the strongest connection to her personal letters. As I have demonstrated, she made use of her personal letters in her published letters as a source of material, and she included or excluded the contents of her personal letters in relation to what she wanted to show in the published second volume.

This chapter has explored Williams’s changing authorial voices in her first two volumes of *Letters*. As the situations around her evolved, she shifted her tactics in response to make her support for the Revolution as appealing as possible to her English readers. For Williams, friendship also takes an important role in presenting her opinion on the Revolution. While her friendship with Monsieur and Madame du Fossé is ‘a good excuse for loving the Revolution’ in the first volume, her friendships with her English friends are used to prove her loyalty to England in the second.<sup>197</sup> She justifies her political opinion on the Revolution by politicizing her friendships in her first two volumes of *Letters*. After her second volume of *Letters*, Williams continued to publicize her sympathies with the Revolutionary cause, and her social position in England became more problematic. However, she did not stop writing about the Revolution and

---

<sup>197</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 140.



her support for revolutionary principles despite the increasingly violent situation in France. I will return to Williams in the final chapter to examine other ways in which she uses the epistolary genre in her later volumes, written between 1793 and 1795. In the following chapter, I will discuss Charlotte Smith's uses of the epistolary form to show her support for the Revolution, and the changing political voice in her works between 1792 and 1793.

**Chapter Two: ‘Women it is said have no business with  
politics. – Why not?’: Charlotte Smith’s Political Voices in  
*Desmond and The Emigrants***

At the end of a letter that Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) wrote to Lucy Lowes on 27 November 1791, Thomas Lowes left a note:

I saw a great deal of Charlotte Smith one Autumn at Brixthelmstone & bating a democratic twist (which I think detestable in a woman). I liked her well enough for some time, but she disgusted me completely, on the acct arriving of the Massacre of the Swiss Guards at the Tuileries by saying that they richly deserved it: I observed that they did merely their duty, & if they had not done what they did w<sup>d</sup> have been guilty of Treason & that I thought they deserved the pity of every person who reasoned & felt properly. After this I never w<sup>d</sup> see Charlotte, but she & M<sup>rs</sup> L sometimes met. Not long after this Augusta [Smith’s daughter] married an emigrant French nobleman, & I understand that her style both in her conversation & novels altered considerably.<sup>198</sup>

This note appears to have been written around the time of the marriage of Smith’s daughter, Augusta in July 1793, but he also recalls the autumn of 1792 – the date of the massacre of the Swiss Guards being 10 August 1792.<sup>199</sup> His changing attitude towards Smith recalls James Boswell’s shifting opinion of Helen Maria Williams in his 1793 edition of *Life of Johnson*, as I discussed in the Introduction, Lowes ‘liked her well enough’, but her insensitive remark about the death of Swiss Guards and her support for the actions of the revolutionaries ‘disgusted’ him. His claim that the Swiss Guards ‘deserved the pity of every person who reasoned & felt properly’ differentiates Smith, who said that ‘they richly deserved [the death]’, from him and from other people of reason. Moreover, he makes sarcastic comments about changes in style in her subsequent writings, and ascribes these alterations to her daughter’s marriage to a French emigrant,

---

<sup>198</sup> Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 39.

<sup>199</sup> Anna Augusta Smith was married to Alexandre de Foville in July 1793.

implying Smith's politics are familial rather than cerebral. As Lowes asserts, there are differences between Smith's works written in 1792, and those that she wrote after 1793, but these changes did not arise solely from her daughter's marriage. Smith's style of writing changed as a result of her shifting views of the Revolution, in response to the shifting political climates of both France and England between 1792 and 1793. In this chapter, I trace the differences in Smith's political voice in *Desmond* (1792) and *The Emigrants* (1793), which manifest in her use of different genres in writing an epistolary novel and poetry.

*Desmond* is unusual in comparison with her previous publications. Smith was already known for her poetic work, *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784-1800), and novels such as *Emmeline* (1788), *Ethelinde* (1789), and *Celestina* (1791). She was not explicit about her political views in any of these works, but she revealed her opinion of the Revolution with the publication of her only epistolary novel, *Desmond*, in late June 1792. Contemporary critics were surprised and criticized the liberal political views that Smith expressed in *Desmond*.<sup>200</sup> The *Critical Review*, for instance, claimed that 'connected with the reformers, and the revolutionists, she has borrowed her colouring from them, and represented their conduct in the most favourable light', and condemned the partiality of her political accounts in the novel.<sup>201</sup> One year later, she returned to her poetic persona in blank verse in *The Emigrants* and expressed her sympathy for French emigrants and Louis XVI. Scholars including Harriet Guest and Paula Backscheider have sketched out the change of Smith's political ideas between *Desmond* and *The Emigrants*. Guest has argued that 'by mid-1793, the enthusiasm for the revolution which Smith had expressed in *Desmond* (1792), and more cautiously in the first book of *The Emigrants* (1793), had [...] apparently been tempered by events in a complex process which the two books of her long poem attempted to chart'.<sup>202</sup> Backscheider has claimed that 'reading *Desmond* and *The Emigrants* together suggests Smith's sophisticated understanding and use of genre differences as she develops her own political and social

---

<sup>200</sup> *English Review* pointed out that 'Desmond, the work under present consideration, is not equal to her former productions'. *English Review* 20 (September 1792), 176.

<sup>201</sup> *Critical Review* 6 (September 1792), 100.

<sup>202</sup> Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 26.

critiques and agendas'.<sup>203</sup> My reading of *Desmond* and *The Emigrants* builds on these arguments; combining close reading of the two texts with Smith's personal letters, I argue for a correlation between Smith's choice of genres and her changing views of the Revolution.

Shifts in Smith's voice also occur in her personal letters to her publisher Thomas Cadell (1742-1802). During her long writing career, Smith held contracts with many publishers (including James Dodsley, George Robinson, Joseph Bell, Sampson Low, Longman and Rees, Joseph Johnson, and Richard Phillips), but Cadell published more of Smith's works than any other publisher. Smith exchanged correspondence with Cadell, which have been discovered and collated by numerous scholars.<sup>204</sup> Stuart Curran has shown that Smith's letters to her publishers are 'long on publishing detail – how many sheets to a volume; how many volumes to a novel; how much she would be paid for each' but are 'not just short, but wholly lacking, in any claim to art'.<sup>205</sup> However, her letters to Cadell are suggestive of a complex relationship with him, and are worth examining in detail. I discuss Cadell's issues with the political aspects of *Desmond*, and explore the differences that he saw between her epistolary novel and *The Emigrants*. I also trace why, in spite of his refusal to print *Desmond*, Smith insists on working with him for *The Emigrants*. Furthermore, I explore how Smith takes advantage of an opportunity to publish her poem by Cadell in an atmosphere hostile to supporters of the Revolution.

The works that I consider in this chapter show the transformations in Smith's political voices as a response to the events in France and in England between 1792 and 1793. I discuss Smith's reactions to the changing political situation in France and in England through reading *Desmond* and *The*

---

<sup>203</sup> Paula Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 362.

<sup>204</sup> Judith Stanton offers 'nearly all of the almost 500 surviving letters that Smith wrote to publishers, patrons, solicitors, relatives, and friends' in *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*. "Introduction" to *The Collected Letters*, XIV. Guest and Stanton discovered Smith's letters in the British Library and transcribed them in "Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell, Sir., and Harriet Lee: Two New Letters," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 57 (2008). See also Jacqueline Labbe, "Gentility in Distress: A New Letter by Charlotte Smith (1749-1806)," *The Wordsworth Circle* 35, no.2 (2004), and Emily Brewer who found Smith's letters to Cadell in the British Library and the East Sussex Record Office, and transcribed them in her Ph.D thesis: Emily Marie Brewer, "A Lady Novelist and the Late Eighteenth-Century Book Trade: Charlotte Smith's Letters to Publisher Thomas Cadell, Sr., 1786-94" (PhD., University of North Carolina, 2013).

<sup>205</sup> Stuart Curran, "Charlotte Smith: Intertextualities," in *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, ed. Jacqueline Labbe (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009), 175.

*Emigrants* alongside her personal letters to Cadell. I argue that in *Desmond*, Smith criticizes the information that is disseminated in England about events in France, and suggests that it is manipulated and misrepresentative. She does this by showing how information is easily distorted, as well as by noting how difficult it is to achieve the truth in what she views as a mendacious society. I then go on to explore how Smith's relationship with Cadell is connected to the political patterns I am tracing, as evidenced in her correspondence with him. In the final part of this chapter, I discuss the ways in which Smith uses poetry to resolve the tensions I have identified earlier; I argue that her critical voice is integrated with a conciliatory one in *The Emigrants*.

### **I. 'Truth was so blended with falsehood': Truth and Misrepresentation in *Desmond***

Smith puts aside the style of novel writing she previously favoured in *Emmeline*, *Ethelinde*, and *Celestina*, and uses an epistolary narrative in *Desmond*. In the preface to *Desmond*, Smith expresses her concerns that to readers, 'the political remarks in these volumes may be displeasing'.<sup>206</sup> She claims that

As to the political passages dispersed through the work, they are for the most part, drawn from conversations to which I have been a witness, in England, and France, during the last twelve months. In carrying on my story in those countries, and at a period when their political situation (but particularly that of the latter) is the general topic of discourse in both; I have given to my imaginary characters the arguments I have heard on both sides; and if those in favour of one party have evidently the advantage, it is not owing to my partial representation but to the predominant power of truth and reason, which can neither be altered nor concealed.<sup>207</sup>

---

<sup>206</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 45.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

She attempts to protect herself from potential criticism by implying that ‘the political passage dispersed throughout the work’ came from ‘conversations to which I have been a witness, in England, and France’: she is presenting historical fact, not inventing propaganda. She also appeals to personal testimony to the revolutionary debates in England and France, and both these claims can be linked to her use of the letter form. As Antje Blank and Janet Todd have argued, ‘Smith used epistolary discourse to suggest the letter’s immediacy and authenticity, pitting fictive eyewitness accounts against unfavourable and fake representations’.<sup>208</sup> The epistolary narrative enables Smith to provide her eyewitness accounts of the ‘conversations’ that she has witnessed, through her fictional characters.

The date on which the preface was written – 20 June 1792 – implies that Smith made a visit to France between 1791 and 1792, after her previous trip there to avoid her husband’s arrest for debt in 1784. There has been disagreement over whether Smith did indeed take this trip to France between 1791 and 1792. In *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (1998), Loraine Fletcher has claimed that ‘at some time in the second half of 1791, while she was working on *Desmond*, Charlotte went to Paris to get the feel of events for herself’.<sup>209</sup> However, Blank and Todd have argued that they have not found any support for Smith’s claim to have visited France in 1791 or 1792 in their edition of *Desmond* (2001).<sup>210</sup> But Smith’s letters to Cadell that Jacqueline Labbe discovered in 2004, and those found by Guest and Stanton in 2009 prove that Smith was in France from 7 September until some time before 25 October 1791. On 7 September 1791, she wrote to Cadell: ‘[a]n Opportunity offering for me to go to Paris with less trouble and expence that such journies are usually perform’d with, I shall this evening imbarck at this place with the two elder of the Children I have at home’.<sup>211</sup> She returned to England in October; in a letter to Cadell sent on 25 October 1791 she said that she was ‘detain’d at Paris by an accident a

---

<sup>208</sup> Todd and Blank, “Introduction” to *Desmond*, in *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>209</sup> Loraine Fletcher, *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 142.

<sup>210</sup> Todd and Blank, “Notes” to *Desmond*, in Smith, *Desmond*, 415.

<sup>211</sup> Charlotte Smith, Letter to Thomas Cadell, 7 September 1791, in Stanton and Guest, “Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell,” 39.

fortnight longer than I meant to have staid'.<sup>212</sup> These letters establish that her second trip to France took place while she was writing *Desmond*.

Smith's use of eyewitness accounts in the epistolary form is reminiscent of Williams's first volume of *Letters*. Even though Smith is writing fiction and Williams is not, there are important connections between the two. Both women writers went to France and presented their eyewitness accounts of the situation in France in epistolary form. Modern commentators such as Angela Keane, Nicola Watson, and Blank and Todd have drawn attention to the many parallels between Smith's *Desmond* and Williams' first volume of *Letters*.<sup>213</sup> Blank and Todd argue that both texts are similar in terms of theme. Like Williams, Smith's protagonist Desmond arrives in Paris before the Fête de la Fédération and conveys his ideas on the Revolution to his addressee, Erasmus Bethel.<sup>214</sup> Keane points out that the story of Desmond's French aristocratic friend, Jonville De Montfleuri, and his family, is similar to Williams's 'Memoirs' of her French friend, Augustin François Thomas du Fossé, and she argues that *Desmond* is 'in part a fictionalization of Williams's pro-revolutionary Letters from France'.<sup>215</sup> However, I suggest that although *Desmond* shares these parallels with Williams's *Letters*, Smith's use of the epistolary form differs from Williams's, as Smith herself claims in a letter to Cadell on 7 September 1791: 'the Novel which I have begun is meant to convey in the form of Letters & under the illusion of a Love story, the present state of France not however at all in the style of Miss Williams'.<sup>216</sup> Smith acknowledged that her epistolary novel appeared similar to Williams' *Letters* in terms of the letter form and themes, but Smith differentiated her work from Williams' publication.

As we saw in Chapter One, Williams's letters are based on her personal experiences in France, and stories she has heard from her friends. For Williams, a letter acts primarily as a vehicle for expressing her feelings about what really happened in France, to her recipient. Thus, the

---

<sup>212</sup> Smith, Letter to Thomas Cadell, 25, October 1791, in Labbe, "Gentility in Distress," 92.

<sup>213</sup> Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81-84; Nicola J Watson, *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 36-37, and Todd and Blank, "Introduction" to *Desmond*, in Smith, *Desmond*, 26-29.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>215</sup> Keane, *Women Writers*, 82, 84.

<sup>216</sup> Stanton and Guest, "Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell," 39.

truthfulness of her account is a value underpinning her *Letters*.

Wollstonecraft responds positively to this emotional authenticity in her review of Williams's *Letters* in the *Analytical Review*.<sup>217</sup> Unlike Williams's *Letters*, the letters in the epistolary narrative of *Desmond* are not always reliable, as they do not always deliver facts; they sometimes provide unreliable information and function as a barrier to truth, plunging the characters of the novel into uncertainty. I propose that by presenting letters as a medium to deliver truth, but as a barrier to reaching truth, Smith condemns an English society in which misrepresented information is believed to be true, and demonstrates the necessity of challenging all received information that is presented as truth.

In the first volume of the novel, Smith presents Desmond as a reliable and trustworthy correspondent, and gives his narrative authority. To show the veracity of Desmond's letters, Smith uses the friendship between Desmond and Bethel. Bethel, as Desmond's guardian, managed his fortune until he reached twenty-five, but this guardianship develops into a close friendship.<sup>218</sup> Desmond confides in Bethel, telling his secret that he loves a married woman, Geraldine; he writes to him that 'no other person on earth suspects this attachment, nor do I ever breathe her name to any ear but yours'.<sup>219</sup> Desmond's truthfulness to Bethel in this matter suggests his subsequent accounts are reliable. Even though Smith started the novel with the correspondence between them, Bethel's letters only appear three times, and most of the letters in the first volume are Desmond's, which produces a first-person narrative comparable to Williams's first volume of *Letters*.

Unlike Williams, Smith provides Desmond's observations on English society first, and then his firsthand experience in France. Through Desmond's eyewitness accounts in his letters to Bethel, Smith shows how people in England received news of the events of the Revolution, and how they interpreted news from France. The novel begins with Desmond's determination to follow Bethel's advice to go to France to get over his love for Geraldine. On his way to France, he observes political discussions on revolutionary principles, such as the abolition of nobility and the confiscation of church property in England, and we are given his responses

---

<sup>217</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7: 450-452.

<sup>218</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 53.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.



to these conversations in his letters to Bethel. Smith shows the polarized opinions on these issues, as she has promised in her preface to the novel: 'I have given to my imaginary characters the arguments I have heard on both sides'.<sup>220</sup> However, by satirically describing the conservative, nationalist characters who opposed the Revolution, she clearly positions herself as an advocate for the Revolution.

While Desmond is visiting Bethel's cousin Mrs. Fairfax, General Wallingford, who is a friend of Mrs. Fairfax and is also visiting, brings the post to the people gathered in the room: Mrs. Fairfax, her two daughters, and Lord Newminster. He states: 'I have letters, [...] from my friend Langdale, who was passing through Paris on his way to Italy. [...] his last letter states, that by a decree passed the nineteenth of June, these low wretches, this collection of dirty fellows, have abolished all titles, and abolished the very name of nobility'.<sup>221</sup> Longdale's letter tells of a decree abolishing the nobility, which triggers a discussion on social status amongst these upper-class people. Desmond draws particular attention to the voice of Mrs. Fairfax:

Heavens! how my sympathising heart bleeds, when I reflect on the numbers of amiable people of rank, compelled thus to the cruel necessity of resigning those ancient and honourable names which distinguished them from the vulgar herd! and who are no longer marked by their titles from the canaille with which it is so odious to be levelled. [...] My heart, however, bleeds to a degree for the noblesse, particularly for two most intimate friends of mine, women of the highest rank, who are, without doubt, included in this universal bouleversement.<sup>222</sup>

Her response to the French aristocrats parallels Williams's sympathy for her French friends who suffered under the ancien régime in her first volume of *Letters*. Mrs. Fairfax and Williams make use of their personal relationships with their French friends to show their support for, or opposition to, the Revolution. Yet, Desmond doubts the sincerity of Mrs. Fairfax's concerns, observing that she 'had, in an instant, forgotten the calamities of her foreign

---

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 71-72.

friends in her eagerness to display her own consequence'.<sup>223</sup> Desmond's skepticism about Mrs. Fairfax's sympathy is reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's doubts about Edmund Burke's sincerity in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).<sup>224</sup> In *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), Wollstonecraft claims that 'comparing the sentiments it contains with your conduct on many important occasions, I am led very often to doubt your sincerity and to suppose that you have said many things merely for the sake of saying them well'.<sup>225</sup> Like Wollstonecraft, Smith points to a discrepancy between Mrs. Fairfax's words and actions and criticizes her insincere sympathy toward the French aristocrats through Desmond's voice.

After his visit to the Fairfax family, before he left for France, Desmond happens to observe a political discussion in a library about the confiscation of all church property in France. The Doctor, a churchman, considers this decree as 'the most unjust and wicked of all actions', but 'a plain looking man' challenges his argument. Even though the gentleman posing the challenge speaks eloquently and persuasively on the issue, the Doctor ignores his rebuttals and dismisses him as 'very ignorant and very ill-bred'.<sup>226</sup> The Doctor instead listens to another English man in the library, Mr. Sidebottom, who is depicted as prejudiced against France as a whole. In her preface to *Desmond*, Smith expresses her concerns about those 'who still cherish the idea of our having a natural enemy in the French nation', and who believe that the French 'are still more naturally our foes'.<sup>227</sup> Mr. Sidebottom's views give voice to this prejudice; he claims that 'if the whole race was extirpated, and we were in possession of their country, as in justice it is certain we ought to be, why, it would be so much the better'.<sup>228</sup> Here, Mr. Sidebottom's idea of national superiority is counter to the love of country outlined by Richard Price in *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789). Price argues that the love of the country 'does not imply any conviction of the superior value of it to other countries', and that it is proper 'to distinguish between the love of our country and that spirit of

---

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>224</sup> Thomas Paine also questions Burke's misplaced sympathy in his *Rights of Man*: 'he is not affected by the reality of distress toughing his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird'. See Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, ed. Claire Grogan (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2011), 84.

<sup>225</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Men," 61.

<sup>226</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 78-79.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 80.

rivalship and ambition'.<sup>229</sup> Smith gestures to Price's view here to criticize Mr. Sidebottom's narrow, nationalistic point of view.

Smith differentiates between the conservative characters – the Doctor and Mr. Sidebottom – and the liberal character, Desmond through his encounter with a French woman with children who wants to go back to France, but does not have enough money to return. When she asks a favour of them, the Doctor and Mr. Sidebottom show antipathy toward her.<sup>230</sup> Mr. Sidebottom says 'you had no business that I know of in England, but to take the bread out of the mouth of our own people; and now I suppose you are going to join the fish-women, and such like, who are pulling down the king's palaces'.<sup>231</sup> He sees her as a bread thief, and refers to the Women's March on Versailles in October 1789 to mock her wish to return to France. The Doctor gives her six pence, but scolds her for her solicitation: '[o]ur laws oblige us to provide for no poor but our own'.<sup>232</sup> Their bigotry counterbalances even their humanitarian assistance to a woman and children. In contrast to them, Desmond spends a day helping the French woman and her children 'who must be put into some way of subsistence before I leave them'.<sup>233</sup> Desmond's humane behaviour toward the French people starkly differentiates him from Mr. Sidebottom and the Doctor.

Smith challenges negative representation by the English of the events in France through the eyewitness accounts Desmond gives once he arrives in Paris. His first letter written in Paris is similar to that of Williams in *Letters* in terms of the time and location.<sup>234</sup> However, while Williams focuses on describing the event and communicating what she felt, Desmond attempts to find the reasons for the gap between what he heard in England and what he witnesses in France. He writes to Bethel:

nothing is more unlike the real state of this country, than the accounts which have been given of it in England; and that the sanguinary and ferocious democracy, the scenes of anarchy and confusion, which we have had so pathetically described and

---

<sup>229</sup> Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (London: T. Cadell, 1789), 3-4.

<sup>230</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 82.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-83.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>234</sup> Todd and Blank have noted that like Williams, Smith's hero arrives in Paris when the Fête de la Fédération took place. "Introduction" to *Desmond*, in *Ibid.*, 26.

lamented, have no existence but in the malignant fabrications of those who have been paid for their mis-representations. That it has been an object with our government to employ such men; men, whose business it is to stifle truths, which though unable to deny, they are unwilling to admit; is a proof, that they believe the delusion of the people necessary to their own views; and have recourse to these miserable expedients, to impede a little the progress of that light which they see rising upon the world.<sup>235</sup>

His letter is the antithesis of Lonsdale's, which describes France as 'a scene of vulgar triumph and popular anarchy'.<sup>236</sup> Based on his own eyewitness account, he points out that false information is spread in England; Desmond indicates that the English government is responsible for the misrepresentation, and asserts that those men 'who have been paid for their mis-representation [*sic*]' share the blame.<sup>237</sup> Here, Smith aims principally at Burke, as is evident in Desmond's later portrait of Burke as, 'the champion of the placeman' and the 'apologist of the pensioner'.<sup>238</sup> Through Desmond's letter on his arrival in France, Smith criticizes the intentional misrepresentation of the situations in France.

Desmond also insists that he can depict 'the real state of Paris, and its neighbourhood'.<sup>239</sup> He points out that there are different perspectives that can be taken when considering the Revolution:

Paris will remain, perhaps, deserted, in the eye of those who are described by General Wallingford and Mrs Fairfax – as 'people of fashion' – While the philosopher, the philanthropist, the citizen of the world; whose comprehensive mind takes a more sublime view of human nature than he can obtain from the heights of Versailles or St James's, rejoices at the spectacle

---

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 360. Burke received a pension of £1,200 per annum from the King in 1794 for his writing on the French Revolution. See Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 24.

<sup>239</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 88.

which every where presents itself of newly-diffused happiness.<sup>240</sup>

Desmond aligns himself with ‘the philosopher, the philanthropist, the citizen of the world’ rather than ‘people of fashion’ and claims that his principle concern is ‘human nature’. The phrase ‘citizen of the world’ echoes Williams, who states in the first volume of her *Letters* that ‘it required the common feelings of humanity to become in that moment a citizen of the world’.<sup>241</sup> Both Williams and Desmond, who each identify themselves as ‘a citizen of the world’, celebrate a cosmopolitan identity such as that described by Price, rather than a nationalist one as represented by the Doctor and Mr. Sidebottom who Desmond encountered at the library.

Smith includes the voice of another person – a friend of Desmond, Jonville de Montfleuri – to provide a different perspective on the events in France. Even though he has an important role in the plot of the novel, and his letter is significant in the later part of the novel, Smith does not allow him to deliver his own accounts through his letters at this point, and retains Desmond’s authority as a trusted narrator. In Desmond’s eyes, Montfleuri is a suitable representative of the new society in France. Montfleuri, ‘though born a courtier, is one of the steadiest friends to the people’ and has a ‘liberal and enlightened spirit’.<sup>242</sup> His witness to the American Revolution enlightened him to despotic behaviour and after he inherited an estate, he became focused on ‘softening the harsh features of that *system of government, to which only the poverty and misery of such a country as this could, at any time, be owing*’.<sup>243</sup> Desmond offers a description of the chateau at his estate, which Smith seems to present an allegory for Montfleuri’s revolutionary principles:

The chateau of Montfleuri is an old building, but it is neither large nor magnificent – for having no predilection for the gothic gloom in which his ancestors concealed their greatness, he has

---

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>241</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 69.

<sup>242</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 87, 112.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 106, 107, 112. Italics in original.

pulled down every part of the original structure, but what was actually useful to himself.<sup>244</sup>

Smith's language here evokes Burke's *Reflections* and Wollstonecraft's response to Burke in the *Vindication of the Rights of Men*.<sup>245</sup> Burke draws an analogy between castles and constitutions, claiming that his recipient, 'a very young gentleman at Paris', 'possessed in some parts of the walls, and in all the foundations of a noble and venerable castle. You might have repaired those walls; you might have built on those old foundations'.<sup>246</sup> Despite her criticism on Burke's *Reflections*, Wollstonecraft admits that 'their inherited experience would rather serve as light-houses, to warn us against dangerous rocks or sand-bank, than as finger-posts that stand at every turning to point out the right road'.<sup>247</sup> I think that Smith's ideas here are more radical than Wollstonecraft's. Smith implies that the Revolution would go well despite the demolition of 'every part of the original structure', and that France should completely start over, whereas Wollstonecraft speaks of being guided by the past.

Desmond also observes Montfleuri's management of his estate and 'the mutual attachment that exists between this gay and volatile man, and his neighbours, whom he will not allow to be called dependents'.<sup>248</sup> He notes that 'It is yet only in its first infancy; but, if it succeeds, as I am sure it must, I will establish such an house on my own estate, whenever I settle there'.<sup>249</sup> Once again, Smith reverses Burke's argument through Desmond's determination to follow Montfleuri's example. In his *Reflections*, Burke writes to his correspondent 'a young gentleman at Paris' that 'you might, if you pleased, have profited of our example'.<sup>250</sup> Mary Favret has argued that Burke shows himself as 'the experienced mentor instructing a wayward student', implying that British history should guide 'the present

---

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>245</sup> Blank and Todd have argued that 'Smith incorporated [Burke's] architectural imagery into the ideological argument of Desmond', and have suggested that Montfleuri's act of 'pulling down "original structure" of his ancestral home' is symbolic of 'his break with absolutist rule and aristocratic extravagance'. Blank and Todd, "Introduction" to *Desmond*, in Ibid., 24.

<sup>246</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 84, 121.

<sup>247</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Men," 75.

<sup>248</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 116.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 116, 118.

<sup>250</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 84, 121.

waywardness in France'.<sup>251</sup> In contrast, Desmond, as an English man, attempts to take his model from the Frenchman Montfleuri. Montfleuri's estate is a microcosm of a new France, and Desmond's confidence in the success of Montfleuri's management implies Smith's belief in a promising future for the new government.

After being in France for six months, Desmond returns to the issue of the misrepresentation of the events of the Revolution. He claims that one of the 'causes which ha[s] made many of the English behold the French revolution with reluctance, and even abhorrence' is 'the misrepresentations that have been so industriously propagated'.<sup>252</sup> He writes to Bethel:

how many of the French, with whom we converse in England, are avanturiers, who seize this opportunity to avail themselves of imaginary consequence, and describe themselves as men suffering for their loyal adherence to their king, and as having lost their all in the cause of injured loyalty — We believe and pity them, taking all their lamentable stories for granted — [...] Half the English, however, who hear of these fictitious distresses, [...] are] too indolent to ask even the simple question — 'Is this true?'<sup>253</sup>

In the same way that Williams argues in the first volume of her *Letters* that 'one cause of the general dislike in which the French revolution is held in this country, is the exaggerated stories which are carefully circulated by such of the aristocrats as have taken refuge in England', Smith criticizes these French immigrants for their misleading information, even though she comes to be sympathetic towards the emigrants later fleeing from the Revolution.<sup>254</sup> At the same time, Desmond censures the English for uncritically receiving a false impression of the Revolution, without even asking 'the simple question—“is this true?”'

Smith demonstrates that the English tend to accept information about France without question in the letters by Geraldine.<sup>255</sup> In Geraldine's

---

<sup>251</sup> Favret, *Romantic Correspondence*, 25-26.

<sup>252</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 182.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 149.

<sup>255</sup> Considering the dates of Smith's 1791 trip to France, it is possible that she used her immediate experience of France to produce eyewitness accounts in *Desmond* in Geraldine's

letter to her sister, Fanny, on 16 August 1791, like Desmond Geraldine illustrates the difference between what she heard in England and the actual current situation in France through her own eyewitness accounts. When she first arrives in France, she ‘expected [...] to have seen some symptoms, in the town, of the misery, which I was assured, the revolution had occasioned; but every thing is the same as it was when we passed this way to England, six years since’.<sup>256</sup> Such a tension between what she has heard and what she sees recurs throughout her letter. For example, she meets ‘a procession of priests, chanting solemnly in Latin, [...] carrying the host to some sick person’.<sup>257</sup> By providing an example in which religion still has a role in France, Geraldine strongly argues that ‘All religion, [...] is not abolished in France’. She says ‘they told me it was despised and trampled on; and I never enquired, as every body ought to do, when such assertions are made—Is all this true?’<sup>258</sup> Her question ‘is all this true?’ echoes Desmond’s earlier question.<sup>259</sup> Geraldine seeks the truth of the situations in France, and like Desmond, underlines the need for calling received information into question.

There is a significant shift in the second volume of *Desmond* in terms of the narrative structure. In the first volume of the novel, Desmond, as the main narrator, offers a detailed account of the events he experienced and the people he encountered, regularly sending letters to Bethel. However, Desmond becomes an unreliable narrator, and as he loses his transparency, his narrative authority also weakens. While Desmond remains silent about his whereabouts, other narrators give their version of stories about him, which prompts readers to question whose story is true. From the beginning of the second volume, Smith discourages readers from believing Desmond’s accounts, through a series of suspicious events. Desmond writes to Bethel that ‘I know that I am becoming—alas! am already become unworthy hers.—Do not ask me an explanation; I have said more than I intended’.<sup>260</sup> Even though Bethel asks for an explanation, Desmond refuses to

---

letter to her sister Fanny on 16 August 1791 rather than to inform those of Desmond’s letters written in 1790.

<sup>256</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 323.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.



communicate his secret and keeps something back from Bethel.<sup>261</sup> Desmond's dubious behaviour is further emphasized by his trip to Herefordshire. Bethel informs Desmond of Geraldine's retirement in Herefordshire with her children. She is there while her husband Verney has gone to Germany with his friends, 'who are about to join the exiled French Princes'.<sup>262</sup> As soon as Desmond receives Bethel's letter containing this information, he leaves France, covertly finds her house in Herefordshire and helps her travel to Bath to avoid her husband's request that she travels to France accompanied by a friend, the Duc de Romagnecourt.<sup>263</sup> Desmond intentionally informs Bethel of his trip after it has happened.

Once she arrives in Bath, Geraldine's mother orders Geraldine to follow her husband's request. Desmond clandestinely follows her again. This time, Bethel repeatedly asks him where he is, but Desmond deliberately does not record the date and location of his letters as he usually does.<sup>264</sup> Bethel points out that he reads 'with wonder and concern, a letter not dated, either as to place or time—a letter in which the name of Geraldine is not mentioned; and in which you seem not to know either where you are or where you shall be'.<sup>265</sup> Desmond's reply does not include his whereabouts again.<sup>266</sup> Desmond withholds the information and makes the situation obscure and uncertain.

Smith provides information about Desmond's whereabouts through Danby, Desmond's uncle, and Miss Elford, a friend of Geraldine's mother. These characters are not reliable throughout the novel: Danby is described as a person who continues obstinately in his opinion and has difficulties grasping problems correctly, while Miss Elford used to be a friend of Geraldine but her jealousy of Geraldine gives her 'an inveterate malignity'.<sup>267</sup> From Danby, Bethel hears that Desmond is staying with Geraldine.<sup>268</sup> Bethel writes to Desmond in confusion about what he has heard from Danby about Desmond's whereabouts:

---

<sup>261</sup> His affair with Josephine, Montfleuri's sister, and her pregnancy are the causes of his unhappiness. Desmond does not disclose this information; Montfleuri reveals it at the end of the novel.

<sup>262</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 232.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 250, 282.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 341, 357.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 199.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

I was, as you will easily believe, thunderstruck by a speech in which truth was so blended with falsehood, that while I was compelled to allow some part of it to be true, it seemed hopeless, with such a man, to contend, that much of it was an infamous supposition.<sup>269</sup>

Even though he is well aware of biases in Danby's account, Bethel is forced to admit some part of his account to be true, and is confused by truth 'so blended with falsehood.' Bethel also hears from Fanny about Desmond's whereabouts. Fanny writes to Bethel that Miss Elford sent a letter to Geraldine's mother, which says that Geraldine 'attended by a gentleman, the description of whom answers to the person of Mr Desmond, returned to Bridge-foot about three weeks since, where she was, in a few days, delivered of a daughter'—The gentleman and Geraldine are revealed to be Montfleuri and Josephine.<sup>270</sup> While some, including Geraldine's mother, believe in Miss Elford's and Danby's accounts, the state of being uncertain disturbs Bethel and Fanny. Fanny doubts the integrity of the news, considering Geraldine's 'ingenuous and candid' mind, but she does not have any evidence to refute Miss Elford's 'fabrication'.<sup>271</sup> By creating the rumours about Desmond, Smith describes situations in which it is extremely difficult to grasp the truth and demonstrates how easily information can be distorted.

Smith encourages readers to call into question the authenticity of information they receive, and continues to challenge them about truth and falsehood throughout *Desmond*. She is skilled at depicting a society in which 'truth was so blended with falsehood' in the epistolary novel. By featuring the collisions between two conflicting points of view within a letter, or through letters, she demonstrates how difficult it is to establish truth. However, she did not compose another epistolary work, but returned to her previous style of writing novels, with *The Old Manor House* (1793). I do not examine this novel in my thesis because *The Old Manor House* is set during the American Revolution. Instead, I will explore her blank verse poem, *The Emigrants*, in which she expresses statements about the French

---

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 353.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

Revolution in a poetic form. Before analyzing *The Emigrants*, I look at her correspondence with her publisher, Thomas Cadell, to examine the backlash she experienced.

## II. Charlotte Smith's Correspondence with Thomas Cadell

Smith contracted with George Robinson for the publication of *Desmond*, but she initially wished to sell the book to Thomas Cadell, who had published her previous works. Cadell declined to publish *Desmond* twice, but she urged Cadell to publish *The Emigrants* a year later. His publication of *The Emigrants* reflects Smith's keenness to work with him, and show his different attitudes towards the texts, which varied with their political features. I mainly focus on Smith's correspondence with Cadell, but I also explore her relationship with William Hayley (1745-1820), a literary patron who supported Smith throughout her writing career, because he takes an important role in the exchanges between Smith and Cadell and he was interested in both *Desmond* and *The Emigrants*.

The relationship between Smith and Hayley began when she planned to publish her first work, *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Essays*. To improve her sonnets, she sought advice from Hayley, whom she had never met before, but she sent her manuscripts to him through a mutual friend, John Sargent (1750-1831).<sup>272</sup> After Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* was published, Hayley played a number of crucial roles in her writing career. He sometimes managed financial matters for her, by collecting money from subscribers of *Elegiac Sonnets*.<sup>273</sup> She was able to carve out a market in Ireland with Hayley's connection to an Irish antiquarian, Joseph Cooper Walker (1761-1810), who helped to publish her works in Ireland from 1789.<sup>274</sup> However, his most prominent role was as a proofreader and reviser of her works. Smith continued to send her manuscripts to Hayley and receive his

---

<sup>272</sup> Smith wrote to her publisher James Dodsley that 'I have not courage to address myself directly to [Hayley] & have therefore been oblig'd to wait till his friend, Mr Sarjent, could undertake to prefer my request'. Smith, Letter to Dodsley, 4 May 1784, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 4.

<sup>273</sup> She wrote to Cadell, 'the following persons have paid their subscriptions to Mr Hayely who sent the amount to me'. Smith, Letter to Cadell, 22 September 1787, in Brewer, "Charlotte Smith's Letters," 81.

<sup>274</sup> Smith asked Cadell to send 'a Gentleman in Ireland' fifty copies of *Ethelinde*. *Ethelinde*. Smith, Letter to Cadell, 13 October 1789, in *Ibid.*, 139.

comments. When Hayley went to France in 1790, she wrote to Cadell, ‘M<sup>r</sup> Hayley’s absence in France deprived me at present of a corrector, & I am by no means secure enough of my own powers, flattered as I daily am, to hazard the press without the opinion & correction of a literary friend’.<sup>275</sup> This letter demonstrates that she was highly dependent on his contribution to, and judgment of, her work. As with her earlier works, Hayley engaged with and influenced the pieces I discuss in this chapter: *Desmond* and *The Emigrants*.

Hayley introduced Smith to Cadell when she was working on her translation of *Manon Lescaut* from French into English in 1786.<sup>276</sup> Cadell published her two translations, *Manon* (1786) and *The Romance of Real Life* (1787); her three novels, *Emmeline* (1788), *Ethelinde* (1789), and *Celestina* (1791); her poem *The Emigrants* (1793); and the fifth, sixth, and seventh editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1789, 1792, and 1795). Between *Celestina* and *The Emigrants*, Smith worked with George Robinson and Joseph Bell to publish the two novels *Desmond* and *The Old Manor House* (1793) respectively. However, Smith initially contacted Cadell to discuss the publication of *Desmond*. In July 1791 Smith suggested to Cadell ‘a sort of a Novel in Letters, & contain rather description and character than events’ and asked him whether he would be ‘the purchaser & advance me forty or fifty pounds’.<sup>277</sup> He rejected her request, but that September, she informed him of her trip to France and urged him again to buy her new novel:

I now therefore once more trouble you to enquire whether you will be the purchaser of my present work when it complete—It will contain the poetry I mention’d to you in my last Letter—& some Sonnets. But from my present view of it, tho I have a great fund of character, & some very interesting history to fill it, & most likely shall start infinite variety of subjects in my intended tour: I do not mean to swell it to more than two volumes of 280 pages each, or thereabouts—I have Letters to Mad<sup>me</sup> DeGenlis—to M<sup>r</sup> DeCasaux & many of the French Literati—& shall probably be in a style of company such as is not easily

<sup>275</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 22 August 1790, in *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>276</sup> Fletcher, *A Critical Biography*, 80.

<sup>277</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 27 July 1791, in Brewer, “Charlotte Smith’s Letters,” 192.

obtain'd & have advantages which can hardly fail if properly employ'd to secure the success of such a Book as I am about.<sup>278</sup>

Smith gives a more detailed proposal for her novel, in which she foregrounds her firsthand experience of France, in an attempt to persuade Cadell to publish *Desmond*. Her opportunity to meet 'many of the French Literati' enables her to have confidence in the success of her new novel. She may have thought that her trip to France would sway Cadell's decision in light of the fact that he had published Williams's *Letters Written in France* in 1790. However, Cadell did not accede to Smith's request and a rival publisher, Robinson, published *Desmond* instead.

As Smith understood it, the grounds of Cadell's refusal to publish *Desmond* was a problem that had emerged while she composed *Celestina*. She wrote to Cadell, '[y]ou declin'd the purchase of them I think, because some circumstances in regards to the Printing of *Celestina* had given you uneasiness which you was [*sic*] determined not to hazard again'.<sup>279</sup> By the time she asked him to print *Desmond*, Smith's relationship with Cadell had deteriorated because of issues related to money. Smith's personal financial situation played an important role in the deterioration of their relationship. Smith and her husband, Benjamin Smith, had twelve children, but three sons died before their separation in 1787. Her father-in-law, Richard Smith, had left a bequest to each of her children, but his will was famously too complicated to receive the inheritance easily.<sup>280</sup> During her lifetime, she fought to receive the legacy, but the final settlement of Richard Smith's estate was only made in 1813, after Smith's death, which meant that she was left to bring up her nine children alone by writing poems and novels.<sup>281</sup> When she faced difficult situations, she asked Cadell for advance payments, and sometimes borrowed money from him. Smith's letter to Cadell on 28 June 1789 shows the conflicts between them:

I was much surprised to learn to day that you had refused a draft of fifteen pounds, drawn at a fortnight—I said in my last Letter to you, that I should apply for no more money till I had a right to

<sup>278</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 7 September 1791, in Stanton and Guest, "Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell," 39.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid. By the time, the title was not decided yet.

<sup>280</sup> Fletcher, *A Critical Biography*, 5.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 337.

it—I meant till the whole of *Ethelinde* was deliver'd—. This would have happen'd before that draft could have become due; And tho I know it is not customary to pay any thing till a month after publication—yet I thought so well of your liberality (whatever has been said to me in dispraise of it,) that I could not believe especially on referring to your Last Letter that you would therefore have hesitated—. <sup>282</sup>

As part of her request she acknowledges that it is 'not customary to pay anything till a month after publication', but she confides her difficulties to Cadell and asks for advance payment for *Ethelinde*. This letter also implies that Cadell is reluctant to pay the draft. In a letter the following year, sent in April 1790, Cadell wrote to Smith, 'besides all this much I fear that the 100 £ now required will be only a temporary relief, and that in a few months the same kind of application may be necessary'. <sup>283</sup> This extract of his letter suggests he may have become tired of Smith's constant demands.

While she worked on *Celestina*, Smith's financial situation got worse, and her growing dependence on Cadell had a bad effect on their working relationship. On 7 January 1791, Smith attempted to borrow fifty pounds from Cadell, by highlighting the seriousness of her situation: '[i]t is impossible to write or do any thing situated as I am now, with all my family at home & nothing to support them'. <sup>284</sup> Before she received his reply, she wrote to him again on 12 January 1791, that '[n]ot believing it likely if the worst befell me that you w<sup>d</sup> refuse the fav<sup>r</sup> I ask'd. & being totally without money in consequence of the dispute ab<sup>t</sup> the Trustees accounts which I related to you, I venture'd to draw on you at a long date & the Bankers here promis'd to keep the Bill till I c<sup>d</sup> replace it'. <sup>285</sup> Brewer has suggested that 'Smith is taking great liberty here by drawing money on a tentative agreement with Cadell, [which] may have been the event that alienated Cadell'. <sup>286</sup> Smith's impetuosity may have also affected Cadell's refusal to publish the next novel, *Desmond*.

<sup>282</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 28 June 1789, in Brewer, "*Charlotte Smith's Letters*," 127.

<sup>283</sup> Cadell, Letter to Smith, 13 April 1790, in *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>284</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 7 January 1791, in *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>285</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 12 January 1791, in *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

Labbe has argued that Cadell's decision to publish 'Smith's anti-war political poem *The Emigrants* in 1793' implies that 'perhaps his rejection of *Desmond* had less to do with its content than with his financial disagreements with Smith'.<sup>287</sup> However, despite tensions over money, Cadell printed the sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* with additional pieces of poems and a preface, while she worked with Robinson for *Desmond*. Considering Cadell's acceptance of the later editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*, there are political issues that cannot be ignored; as Fletcher has suggested, '*Desmond* was too radical for Cadell'.<sup>288</sup> Unlike liberal publishers such as Robinson and Joseph Johnson, Cadell had a tendency to avoid publishing political works.<sup>289</sup> Considering that he also refused to publish Williams's second volume of *Letters* (1792), the political aspects of *Desmond* may have discouraged him from publishing Smith's novel.<sup>290</sup> When Smith urged him to publish *Desmond* in July and September 1791, Cadell may have been cautious about the potential risks of publishing political texts: John Barrell and Jon Mee have shown, for example, that '[p]rosecutions for publishing *Rights of Man* seem to have been discussed among the law officers as early as April 1791'.<sup>291</sup>

The political qualities of *Desmond* do not appear to have worried Hayley in the same way as they did Cadell. Smith's letter to Robinson in January 1792 shows Hayley's involvement in deciding on the title of '*Desmond*':

My two literary friends on whose judgment I principally rely; both object to the title of the Wandering Lover – They think from what they have seen of the Work, that it has too much strength, & thought, to pass with propriety under a title which seems calculated only for mere novel readers – I suppose it

<sup>287</sup> Labbe, "Gentility in Distress," 92.

<sup>288</sup> Fletcher, *A Critical Biography*, 152.

<sup>289</sup> Robinson published James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791); Johnson printed Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, and sold Joseph Priestley's *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (1791). See James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae: A Defence of the French Revolution* (London: Printed for G.G. J. and J. Robinson, 1791); Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Men," and Joseph Priestley's *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (Birmingham: Printed by Thomas Pearson; and sold by J. Johnson, 1791).

<sup>290</sup> Robinson published Williams's second volume of *Letters*, as well as Smith's *Desmond*. Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 82.

<sup>291</sup> See "Introduction" to *Trials for Treason and Sedition, 1792-1794*, ed. John Barrell and Jon Mee (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006), 18.

makes no difference to you if another is adopted. What Mr. Hayley has suggested therefore I wish to substitute, which is – “Desmond – the Exile of Honor” [*sic*] – I shall be glad to hear if you approve of this – & if you do you will of course give directions accordingly – [...] Perhaps the title “Desmond” only would be enough.<sup>292</sup>

The title of the novel proposed by Smith was ‘the Wandering Lover’, but Hayley questioned her choice and recommended ‘Desmond – the Exile of Honor’. As Amy Garnai has argued, his choice of title ‘promotes the political awareness in the text by foregrounding the radical hero and his embodiment of both public / Revolutionary and personal virtue’.<sup>293</sup>

According to *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley*, Hayley supported the Revolution; he celebrated the Storming of the Bastille and visited France in 1790 ‘to contemplate the extraordinary scenes then passing at Paris, and to survey the works of art, in that interesting city’.<sup>294</sup> He planned to write a response to Burke’s *Reflections*, but ‘a domestic trouble obliged him to throw the work aside’.<sup>295</sup> According to this biographical information, Hayley and Smith seem to have shared political views on the Revolution, at least in the early stages. Cadell’s and Hayley’s respective responses to *Desmond* suggest that their differences in political views plays a significant role in the differences in their relationship with her.

Although Cadell had distanced himself from her, Smith’s working relationship with Cadell was not totally at an end. She worked with Robinson and Bell between *Celestina* (1791) and *The Emigrants* (1793), but returned to Cadell. In a letter to him on 16 December 1792, she urged him to print ‘a poem in blank verse which will be finish’d in about a Month, and will be corrected by the very first of our present Poets, Cowper’.<sup>296</sup> By using her relationship with William Cowper (1731-1800), she attempts to sell the poem to Cadell. But, more importantly, she describes this poem as ‘not on politics, on a very popular & interesting subject mingled with descriptive &

<sup>292</sup> Smith, Letter to George Robinson, 10 January 1791, in Garnai, “A Letter from Charlotte Smith to her Publisher George Robinson,” 399-400. .

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>294</sup> John Johnson, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley*, 2 vols. (London: H. Colburn, 1823), 1: 407, 410, 411.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

<sup>296</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 16 December 1792, in Brewer, “Charlotte Smith’s Letters,” 206.



characteristic excursions in the way of the Task, only of course inferior to it'.<sup>297</sup> She differentiates her new poem from *Desmond*, which she had earlier referred to as 'a political Novel'.<sup>298</sup> Smith may well have been acknowledging that, following his refusal to print *Desmond*, Cadell would be worried by radicalism, and would only publish works if they were safe.

At this point, it is necessary to sketch out the political climate in Britain between 1792 and 1793. There was increasing recognition of the danger of pro-revolutionary texts after the publication of Part I of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* in March 1791. A Proclamation against Seditious Writing made by the government and printed in newspapers including the *London Chronicle* on 19 May 1792. It states that 'we do strictly charge and command all our Magistrates [...] that they do make diligent enquiry in order to discover the authors and printers of such wicked and seditious writings', and it determines to 'carry the laws vigorously into execution against such offenders'.<sup>299</sup> A publisher of Paine's *Rights of Man*, J.S. Jordan, was charged with sedition in May 1792.<sup>300</sup> Paine was indicted, but his trial was delayed until 18 December 1792.<sup>301</sup> Other publishers were also in trouble in December 1792. The *Bath Journal* reported that William Holland and James Ridgway were taken into custody for having published Paine's *Address to the Addressers* and the second Part of the *Rights of Man* respectively.<sup>302</sup> Thus, for Smith, it was necessary to impress on Cadell that his publication of *The Emigrants* did not pose such a risk, which she does in her letter of December 1792 when she insists that *The Emigrants* is 'not on politics'.<sup>303</sup>

For Smith, working with Cadell may have been a way to protect herself from a backlash against writers who made arguments in favour of the Revolution in England. Her eagerness for Cadell to print *The Emigrants* is clearly illustrated in a letter to him on 2 April 1793:

---

<sup>297</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 16 December 1792, in *Ibid.*, 206-207.

<sup>298</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 25 March 1792, in *Ibid.*, 200. She also writes to Walker that *The Emigrants* 'is not a party book but a conciliatory book'. See Smith, Letter to Joseph CooperWalker, 20 February 1793 in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 62.

<sup>299</sup> *London Chronicle*, 19 May, 1792.

<sup>300</sup> Barrell and Mee, "Introduction" to *Trials for Treason and Sedition*, 18.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>302</sup> *Bath Journal*, December 31, 1792.

<sup>303</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 16 December 1792, in Brewer, "Charlotte Smith's Letters," 206.

Whenever the poem is done if you still continue Your intention of purchasing it on the terms you propos'd to M<sup>r</sup> Hayley, I shall certainly prefer them to better terms from any other person, even if they could be had – which I have never enquired—because I had rather you should publish for me at a less profit, than put the work into the hands of any other publisher.<sup>304</sup>

The contract for *The Emigrants* was negotiated between Hayley and Cadell, but Smith was not happy with the terms. Considering her difficult financial situation, the fact that she is willing to take less profit implies that cooperating with Cadell is important to her. She may have used his reputation as a non-political publisher to prove that her poem was a non-political work.

Despite their strained relationship, Cadell did publish *The Emigrants*. As Stanton has suggested, even though ‘*The Emigrants* is surely political in painting a sympathetic picture of women, children, priests, nobility, and military men’, the fact that ‘Cadell published it in the end’ implies that ‘he must not have found it as politically offensive as *Desmond*, which he refused to publish’.<sup>305</sup> He may have thought *Desmond* and *The Emigrants* were different due to their respective genres. Women writers had been engaging in discussion about the slave trade, by publishing anti-slavery poems; Williams, for example, published *A Poem on the Bill Lately Passed for Regulating the Slave-Trade* (1788), and Anna Letitia Barbauld wrote *Epistle to William Wilberforce* (1791). As Deborah Kennedy has shown, ‘the reading public would have different expectations of a female poet than they would have of a female political commentator’.<sup>306</sup> In this context, Cadell may have thought that he was not running a risk in publishing Smith’s poems because the topic, French emigrants, did not constitute part of the French Revolution.<sup>307</sup>

If Smith’s correspondence with Cadell had not been discovered, we would not have known about Cadell’s refusal to print *Desmond*, or of

<sup>304</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 2 April 1793, in *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>305</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 16 December 1792, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 55.

<sup>306</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 63.

<sup>307</sup> Hannah More and Frances Burney wrote on the French emigrant clergy. See Hannah More, “an Address to the Ladies, &c. of Great Britain and Ireland, in Behalf of the French Clergy,” in *Considerations on Religion and Public Education* (London: Printed for John Francis, and Charles Rivi, 1794). See also Anne Scott, *Hannah Moore: The First Victorian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 147-149.

Smith's eagerness to work with Cadell. Her letters provide an important context in which to understand the tension between her and Cadell, and her publication of *Desmond* and *The Emigrants*. As we have seen in this section, it is difficult to identify one sole reason for their strained relationship. The mixture of financial and political issues affected her working relationship with Cadell, and resulted in his refusal to publish *Desmond*.

### III. 'Our Brethren': Emigrants, Louis XVI, and War in *The Emigrants*

The political situation changed in France shortly after the publication of *Desmond*. In the insurrection of 10 August 1792, the National Guard's attack on the Tuileries Palace resulted in casualties among the defenders of the palace including the Swiss guards, and the royal family was imprisoned.<sup>308</sup> During the September Massacres, the inmates of a prison were slaughtered by the mob.<sup>309</sup> Despite these violent events, Smith continued to support revolutionary principles, as Thomas Lowes's comments on his conversation with Smith, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, indicate. Smith's letter to an American diplomat Joel Barlow (1754-1812) on 3 November 1792 also demonstrates that she did not lose belief in the National Convention.<sup>310</sup> The writing of this letter coincides with her writing the first book of *The Emigrants*, and she deals with the same issues. It is worth examining this letter before looking at *The Emigrants* in more detail, to understand her ideas about the changing situation in France.

Even though Smith and Barlow had a mutual friend, a Church of England clergyman, John Warner (1736-1800), she wrote directly to Barlow without Warner's introduction, being keen to be in contact with him.<sup>311</sup> Barlow engaged deeply in the revolutionary debate in England in 1792, publishing *Advice to the Privileged Orders* (1792), *The Conspiracy of Kings* (1792), and *A Letter to the National Convention of France* (1792). In late

---

<sup>308</sup> Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989. Reprint, London: Penguin Books, 2004), 522.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 527-528.

<sup>310</sup> Smith, Letter to Joel Barlow, 3 November 1792, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 49.

<sup>311</sup> Smith writes to Barlow that 'I am extremely flattered, dear Sir, by your early and very obliging attention to my Letter & indeed have great reason to quarrel with D<sup>r</sup> Warner for neglecting an appointment which would have been the means of introducing me to your acquaintance'. Smith, Letter to Joel Barlow, 3 November 1792, in *Ibid.*, 49.

1792, feeling the potential danger of prosecution facing radical writers, he chose to move to France.<sup>312</sup> When Smith wrote to Barlow on 3 November, she did not know of his decision to go to France and his planned speech to the National Convention, which he would deliver on 28 November; on 18 November she asks whether it is ‘true that you are going or gone to Paris’.<sup>313</sup> However, she may have thought that they shared an interest in the policies of the French National Convention, as she mentions his recently published book *A Letter to the National Convention of France*.<sup>314</sup>

Smith’s letters to Barlow include her opinions on the circumstances of the French emigrants. She shows a different attitude towards them to those in *Desmond*. In *Desmond* she expresses criticism of the emigrants through Desmond’s voice, considering their plights to be ‘fictitious distresses’, but in her letter to Barlow, she shows sympathy towards their situation.<sup>315</sup> She writes to him that she learnt of the situation of the emigrants through the ‘hideous picture’ described to her by a friend, ‘one of the most determined Democrates’ she knows.<sup>316</sup> Smith’s friend describes ‘the condition of the French exiles as being more deplorable even than their crimes seem to deserve’.<sup>317</sup> She claims that the circumstance of the French emigrants even arouses sympathy from ‘one of the most determined Democrates’, which implies that the pity for these people should be approached with a humanitarian perspective rather than a political one. She also criticizes the National Convention for its treatment of the emigrants:

[i]t seems to me wrong for the Nation entirely to exile and abandon these Unhappy Men. How truly great would it be, could the Convention bring about a reconciliation. They should suffer the loss of a very great part of their property & all their power. But they should still be considered as Men & Frenchmen

<sup>312</sup> Michael Davis, “Barlow, Joel (1754-1812),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, accessed December 17, 2018, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/63596/>.

<sup>313</sup> Smith, Letter to Joel Barlow, 18 November 1792, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 51.

<sup>314</sup> She writes to him that ‘I read with great satisfaction the “Advice to the Privileged Orders” and have been, as well as some of my most judicious and reasoning friends here, very highly gratified by the lesser tract, Your Letter to the National Convention Which I cannot I think fail of having great effect not only where it is addressed, but on those who at present consider themselves as less immediately interested in the questions it discusses’.

Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 182.

<sup>316</sup> It is not known who this friend is.

<sup>317</sup> Smith, Letter to Joel Barlow, 18 November 1792, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 49.

[...] and tho I would not kill the fatted Calf, They should still have a plate of Bouille at home if they will take it & now be turned out indiscriminately to perish in foreign Countries and to carry every where the impression of injustice and ferocity of the French republic.<sup>318</sup>

Smith concurs with the forfeit of ‘their property & all their power’, but she proposes that the emigrants ‘should be considered as Men & Frenchmen’. Pointing out that a hostile attitude toward the emigrants gives ‘the impression of injustice and ferocity of the French republic’, she speaks about her hope of reconciliation between the emigrants and the Convention, and her hope of their safe return to France.

On 16 December 1792, Smith contacted Walker and Cadell in order to publish *The Emigrants* in Ireland and in England. She wrote to Walker about an Irish bookseller John Rice’s intention: ‘[w]ould Mr Rice make any agreement for the copy right in Ireland of a Poem in two Books—which I am writing—about 1000 verses I think [?]’<sup>319</sup> On the same day, she informed Cadell of her new project and urged him to print ‘a poem in blank verse which will be finish’d in about a Month, and will be corrected by the very first of our present Poets, Cowper’.<sup>320</sup> She wanted to finish her poem within a month, but it was not until April 1793 that she sent Cadell both parts of *The Emigrants*.<sup>321</sup> This change of plan might have been the result of her cautious responses to the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793 and the declaration of war by France against England in early February 1793. As Guest has noted, ‘Smith was well aware that the pace and unpredictability of events meant that timing was critical in writing on France, and dated her poem accordingly’.<sup>322</sup> Smith chose two different timings for the setting of her *The Emigrants: Book the First*. [...] *Time, A Morning in November, 1792* and *Book the Second*. [...] *Time, an Afternoon in April 1793*. Writing about these two different moments enabled Smith to show the development of thinking about events in France as the Revolution progressed.

---

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Smith, Letter to Walker, 16 December 1792, in Ibid., 53.

<sup>320</sup> Smith, Letter to Cadell, 16 December 1792, in Brewer, “Charlotte Smith’s Letters,” 206.

<sup>321</sup> She sent him the first part of the poem on 14 April 1793 and the second part on 18 April 1793. Smith, Letter to Cadell, 14 April 1793, in Ibid., 219-220.

<sup>322</sup> Guest, *Unbounded Attachment*, 26.

Like her *Elegiac Sonnets*, in which she includes a dedication to Hayley, in *The Emigrants*, Smith inserted a dedication to Cowper who revised the piece alongside Hayley.<sup>323</sup> However, unlike her short dedication to Hayley, in which she expresses her gratitude towards him, she uses her dedication to Cowper to defend herself against her potential critics.<sup>324</sup> This dedication also gives us a hint of why she chose to write poetry, rather than another genre:

I gradually led to attempt, in Blank Verse, a delineation of those interesting objects which happened to excite my attention, and which even pressed upon an heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others.<sup>325</sup>

She reminds Cowper, and her readers, of a motif which recurs throughout her *Elegiac Sonnets*, in which she expresses her own suffering. She claims that her ability to understand suffering from her own experience enables her to articulate ‘the calamity of others’. She also offers herself as a witness to these sufferings. As her suffering in *Elegiac Sonnets* was acceptable to readers, she may have thought that the poetic form was safer as a vehicle to express her sympathy toward the French emigrants than the novel.

In the dedication, Smith reasserted the link she had made with Cowper to Cadell, referring to Cowper’s poem *The Task* (1785):

the very name of Liberty has not only lost the charm it used to have in British ears, but many, who have written, or spoken, in its defence, have been stigmatized as promoters of Anarchy, and enemies to the prosperity of their country. Perhaps even the Author of “The Task,” with all his goodness and tenderness of heart, is in the catalogue of those, who are reckoned to have been too warm in a cause, which it was once the glory of

---

<sup>323</sup> Cowper and Smith first met during her stay at Hayley’s residence in Eartham, in the summer of 1792. Smith’s letters to Cadell show Cowper’s assistance with *The Emigrants*. She informed him that *The Emigrants* ‘will be corrected by the very first of our present Poets, Cowper’. Smith, Letter to Cadell, 16 December 1792, in Brewer, “Charlotte Smith’s Letters,” 206. She wrote, ‘M<sup>r</sup> Cowper however has not yet returned the first part to M<sup>r</sup> Hayley from whom I expect it last night’. Smith, Letter to Cadell, 2 April 1793, in *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>324</sup> Charlotte Smith, “Elegiac Sonnets,” in *Major Poetic Works*, ed. Claire Knowles and Ingrid Horrocks (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2017), 51.

<sup>325</sup> Charlotte Smith, *The Emigrants*, in *Ibid.*, 127.

Englishmen to avow and defend – The exquisite Poem, indeed, in which you have honoured Liberty, by a tribute highly gratifying to her sincerest friends, was published some years before the demolition of regal despotism in France, which in the fifth book, it seems to foretell.<sup>326</sup>

She reminds her readers of Cowper's support of liberty in *The Task*, in which he claims that 'Tis liberty alone that gives the flow'r / Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume, / And we are weeds without it'.<sup>327</sup> She argues that 'even' Cowper is at risk of being called out as a supporter of the Revolution at this time when 'many who have written, or spoken, in its defence, have been stigmatized as promoters of Anarchy, and enemies to the prosperity of their country'. Here, her strategy to protect herself is similar to Thomas Erskine's defense of Thomas Paine during his trial in December 1792. As Barrell and Mee have suggested, Erskine positioned *The Rights of Man* as 'part of a long and respectable British tradition of political enquiry'.<sup>328</sup> Smith situates her poem with Cowper's *The Task*, in a debate on the defense of liberty, alongside one of the most famous poems of the age.

In the first book of the poem, Smith meets a group of people which consists of a group of French clergy, a noble man and a woman with her children. She describes the people who need help, and expresses her sympathy towards them, but her approach is somewhat ambivalent. In her letter to Barlow, Smith claims that the emigrants 'should suffer the loss a very great part of their property & all their power'; similarly she takes a critical view of their past and argues that 'they deserve the woes'.<sup>329</sup> However, at the same time, the depiction of their pathetic situation, in particular the mother and her children, shows her sympathy toward them. In contrast to 'Their Mother, lost in melancholy thought, [...] Of sullen billows, wearied by the task / Of having here', '[h]er gay unconscious children, soon amus'd'.<sup>330</sup> This striking contrast between her melancholic distress and their

---

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>327</sup> William Cowper, *The Task, a Poem, in Six Books* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1785), 204.

<sup>328</sup> Barrell and Mee, "Introduction" to *Trials for Treason and Sedition*, 18.

<sup>329</sup> Smith, Letter to Joel Barlow, 18 November 1792, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 49.

<sup>330</sup> Smith, *The Emigrants*, 137-138.

innocent gaiety highlights the mother's suffering and arouses sympathy for their pathetic situation, which would appeal to Cadell.<sup>331</sup>

Yet, Smith's compassion for the emigrants does not mean that she forsakes her support for revolutionary principles. As Guest has noted, Smith differentiates 'between sympathy for the plight of the emigrants, and support for their politics, and between her initial admiration for the revolutionary ideal, despite the upheaval it might threaten, and her present disapprobation for the violence'.<sup>332</sup> While she expresses her pity for the emigrants, Smith criticizes some of the French people for ruining revolutionary ideals:

But, in the tempest lost, fair Order sink  
 Her decent head, and lawless Anarchy  
 O'erturn celestial Freedom's radiant throne;—  
 As now in Gallia; where Confusion, born  
 Of party rage and selfish love of rule,  
 Sully the noblest cause that ever warm'd  
 The heart of Patriot Virtue—There arise  
 The infernal passions; Vengeance, seeking blood,  
 And Avarice; and Envy's harpy fangs  
 Pollute the immortal shrine of Liberty,  
 Dismay her votaries, and disgrace her name.<sup>333</sup>

She shows her disappointment at the situation in France, depicting France as a scene of 'lawless Anarchy'. The line of 'party rage and selfish love of rule' suggests that Smith ascribes responsibility for the

---

<sup>331</sup> Smith later reworked this scene in *the Female Exile Written at Brightelmstone in November 1792* published later in 1797. In the note, she wrote, 'this little Poem, of which a sketch first appeared in blank verse in a Poem called "The Emigrants", was suggested by the sight of the group it attempts to describe – a French lady and her children'. See Smith, *Major Poetic Works*, 200.

<sup>332</sup> Guest, *Unbounded Attachment*, 31-32.

<sup>333</sup> Smith *The Emigrants*, 142.



current circumstances to people who abandon political principles and are motivated by selfish ambition. She criticizes them for polluting ‘the immortal shrine of Liberty’; they ‘Dismay her votaries, and disgrace her name’. Yet she clarifies her political position: the Revolution is ‘the noblest cause that ever warm’d / The heart of Patriot Virtue’. Here, she adds a note: ‘this sentiment will probably renew against me the indignation of those, who have an interest in asserting that no such virtue any where exists’.<sup>334</sup> She acknowledges the criticism she has already received, and anticipates further criticism of her continuing belief in revolutionary principles, but does not conceal her admiration for the cause of the Revolution.

In the latter part of the poem, Smith attempts to reconcile England and France. In the dedication to Cowper, Smith shows her hope of reconciliation between England and France, and claims that dealing with the emigrant problem may restore this relationship by eradicating ‘reciprocal hatred’ and ‘the prejudices that have so long existed to the injury of both’.<sup>335</sup> She urges her readers to embrace the emigrants:

These ill-starr’d Exiles then, who, bound by ties,  
 To them the bounds of honour; who resign’d  
 Their country to preserve them, and now seek  
 In England an asylum—well deserve  
 To find that (every prejudice forgot,  
 Which pride and ignorance teaches), we for them  
 Feel as our brethren; and that English hearts,  
 Of just compassion ever own the sway,  
 As truly as our element, the deep,

---

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 128.

Obeys the mild dominion of the Moon—<sup>336</sup>

Smith encourages the English to have compassion towards the French emigrants and to consider them as ‘our brethren’ – a similar notion to the cosmopolitan ideas in *Desmond*. In the same way that Desmond, who is represented as ‘a citizen of the world’, helps the French woman and her children to return to France, she in *The Emigrants* suggests that a sense of cosmopolitan identity enables the English to feel sympathy toward the emigrants as though they are ‘our brethren’.<sup>337</sup>

While the first book of the poem mainly operates as a plea for the English to reconcile with the French emigrants, in the second book, dated in April 1793, Smith becomes more vocal in condemning the execution of Louis XVI and the declaration of war. Before Louis XVI was executed in January 1793, in a letter to Barlow Smith called the king ‘the unfortunate Man who could not help being born the Grandson of Louis 15th’. In this letter, she supported his ‘amnesty’, but her argument for the pardon is not based on admiration for the king.<sup>338</sup> She insists that ‘it would be great to shew the world, that when a people are determined to dismiss their King, he becomes indeed a phantom & cannot be an object of fear’.<sup>339</sup> Rather than defending Louis XVI, Smith wants the French people to show their power without violence. In *The Emigrants*, Smith shows her strong criticism of the execution of Louis XVI:

And see the Temple, which they fondly hop’d  
Reason would raise to Liberty, destroy’d  
By ruffian hands; while, on the ruin’d mass,  
Flush’d with hot blood, the Fiend of Discord sits  
In savage triumph; mocking every plea  
Of policy and justice, as she shews  
The headless corpse of one, whose only crime

---

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>337</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 86.

<sup>338</sup> Smith, Letter to Joel Barlow, 3 November 1792, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 49-50.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

Was being born a Monarch—Mercy turns,  
 From spectacle so dire, her swol'n eyes;  
 And Liberty, with calm, unruffled brow  
 Magnanimous, as conscious of her strength  
 In Reason's panoply, scorns to distain  
 Her righteous cause with carnage, and resigns  
 To Fraud and Anarchy the infuriate crowd.—<sup>340</sup>

As in her letter to Barlow, *The Emigrants* depicts Louis XVI as an individual 'whose only crime was being born as Monarch', and she portrays him as a victim of violence.<sup>341</sup> Here 'the Temple' has a double meaning. On the one hand, given that liberty in the first book of the poem is described as 'the immortal shrine of Liberty', the Temple here implies the Temple of Liberty which, Smith suggests, is 'destroy'd / By ruffian hands'.<sup>342</sup> On the other hand, the Temple suggests the place where Louis XVI was imprisoned.<sup>343</sup> Smith describes Louis XVI as the victim of 'the infuriate crowd', and uses an image of his decapitated body to highlight their cruelty.<sup>344</sup>

Smith's anti-war voice emerges in the latter part of the second book of *The Emigrants*, through vivid descriptions of the horror of the war. As Labbe has suggested, Smith's poems, particularly some parts of the second book of *The Emigrants*, are strongly theatrical.<sup>345</sup> I investigate the ways in which Smith uses theatricality to demonstrate her anti-war arguments in *The Emigrants*. Gillian Russell has pointed out that the link between the meaning of 'theatricality' and the notion of 'theatre' or 'the theatre' has become weaker, as the term has been used across a variety of disciplinary

---

<sup>340</sup> Smith, *The Emigrants*, 147.

<sup>341</sup> Smith, Letter to Barlow, 3 November 1792, in Smith, *The Collected Letters*, 50.

<sup>342</sup> Smith, *The Emigrants*, 142.

<sup>343</sup> Louis XVI and his family were confined in the Temple. Schama, *Citizens*, 541. Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 189.

<sup>344</sup> Smith, *The Emigrants*, 147.

<sup>345</sup> Jacqueline Labbe, *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry and the Culture of Gender* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 116.

fields.<sup>346</sup> She has suggested that one of the ways of mentioning ‘theatricality’ outside of theatre is to ‘refer to people using modes of rhetoric, gesture and behaviour in exaggerated, ‘theatrical’ ways’.<sup>347</sup> I adopt this meaning of the term ‘theatrical’ to discuss Smith’s theatricality in *The Emigrants*. This theatrical dimension contrasts with her earlier critique of Burke’s ‘poetical imagery’ in *Desmond*.<sup>348</sup> In *The Emigrants*, Smith attempts to elicit sympathy for the victims of the war by portraying the horror of war in a dramatic way similar to that in which Burke aroused pity for Marie Antoinette in his description of the Women’s March on Versailles in his *Reflections*. Smith vividly describes how desperate a mother was to save her baby: ‘Then, overwhelm’d / Beneath accumulated horror, sinks / The desolate mourner; yet, in Death itself, / True to maternal tenderness, she tries / To save the unconscious infant from the storm’.<sup>349</sup> Her effort is to no avail and ends in the death of both, which makes the scene evoke more sympathy for the innocent victims. She also provides another tragedy – an account of ‘the feudal Chief, whose Gothic battlements / Frown on the plain beneath, returning home / From distant lands’.<sup>350</sup> The tension gradually builds as the poem progresses. In total silence, the Chief searches for his family and

He sees that devastation has been there:

Then, while each hideous image to his mind

Rise terrific, o’er a bleeding corse

Stumbling he falls; another interrupts

His staggering feet—all, all who us’d to rush

With joy to meet him—all his family

---

<sup>346</sup> Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (2007. Reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13-14.

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>348</sup> Desmond writes to Bethel that ‘poetical imagery is not matter of fact’. Smith, *Desmond*, 183.

<sup>349</sup> Smith, *The Emigrants*, 153-154.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

Lie murder'd in his way!<sup>351</sup>

Horrified at the sight of 'a bleeding corse [*sic*]', the Chief found that 'all his family / Lie murder'd in his way'. Smith repeatedly links the image of death with war, and uses the violent scene to show her opposition to the war. These deaths stand for all of the deaths suffered during the war as a whole. By using a form of synecdoche, she makes readers confront the horror of war, and she inspires sympathy for those suffering its effects.

As we have seen, it is difficult to deny that *The Emigrants* is a political poem. Cadell might have been shocked to read Smith's final draft of *The Emigrants* in April 1793. Nevertheless, the fact that he published *The Emigrants* suggests that in this text, in contrast to *Desmond*, her ways of expressing her ideas about contemporary political issues was acceptable. By creating a sympathetic voice, Smith shows sympathy toward different types of sufferers - from the French emigrants in England, to Louis XVI - and to the victims of war and, at the same time, shows her criticism of the changed situations in France. For Smith, poetry serves as a solution to express her political ideas by articulating the pain felt by the victims of war. Smith takes mainly takes private individuals such as women and children as her focus, and articulates their pain rather than selecting a political man as her hero.

In the preface to *Desmond*, Smith states 'But women it is said have no business with politics.—Why not?'.<sup>352</sup> Both *Desmond* and *The Emigrants* were involved in the debates surrounding the French Revolution, but her ways of responding to the Revolution debate are different. In *Desmond* she shows a woman writer can create a politically active and well-informed political hero and provide a politically engaged account of the French Revolution. In *The Emigrants* she uses her feminine poetic persona to give voice to the women and children who are involved in the French Revolution and suffer for it whether they like it or not. Smith's ways of engaging with political events in France also shifted in response to changing political climates both in England and in France. Smith's correspondence to Cadell shows the difficulties that she faced in printing texts that supported revolutionary principles, and reveals her struggle to reconcile her political statements with the hostile political climate in England. In the next chapter,

---

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Smith, *Desmond*, 45.

I will examine Mary Wollstonecraft's philosophical views of the French Revolution as expressed in her texts written between 1793 and 1794. While Smith felt threatened by the hostile reactions toward writers and publishers who supported the Revolution in England, Wollstonecraft was endangered by the violent circumstances of the Reign of Terror during her stay in France. I will discuss the way in which Wollstonecraft uses the epistolary form to express her philosophical opinion on the Revolution, and I will trace why she discontinued her epistolary work and embarked on history writing.

### Chapter Three: Mary Wollstonecraft, the French Revolution, and ‘the philosophical eye’

Mary Wollstonecraft (1756-1797), like Helen Maria Williams and Charlotte Smith, witnessed revolutionary France in person. The time that Wollstonecraft stayed in France, between December 1792 and April 1795, was one of the most turbulent phases of the French Revolution; the Reign of Terror took place between 5 September 1793 and 27 July 1794. She wrote to her sister, Everina Wollstonecraft (1765-1843) on 24 December 1792, when she had just arrived in Paris, expressing difficulty in ‘form[ing] a just opinion of public affairs’.<sup>353</sup> She was confused by the gap between what she expected of France when she had been in England and what she witnessed in France on her arrival. In March 1794, she told Everina:

It is impossible for you to have any idea of the impression the sad scenes I have been a witness to, have left on my mind. The climate of France is uncommonly fine, the country pleasant, and there is a degree of ease, and even simplicity, in the manners of the common people, which attaches me to them—Still death and misery in every shape of terrour, haunts this devoted country—I certainly am glad that I came to France, because I never could have had else a just opinion of the most extraordinary event that has ever been recorded.<sup>354</sup>

She highlights the importance of being an eyewitness, which provides her with ‘a just opinion of the most extraordinary event that has ever recorded’. However, she does not publish her eyewitness account of France as Williams does. Instead of a first-person narrative, Wollstonecraft presents her philosophical observations of the Revolution in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794) and in a text that she wrote intended for publication, ‘A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation’, particularly in the introductory letter dated the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1793, which is a lesser known text among

---

<sup>353</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, Letter to Everina Wollstonecraft, 24 December 1794, in *The Collected Letters*, 214.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 248-249.

Wollstonecraft's publications. As she presents herself as 'a philosopher' and 'a moralist' in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), Wollstonecraft attempts to identify the nature of the Revolution from a philosophical point of view, which differentiates Wollstonecraft markedly from Williams and Smith. This chapter discusses Wollstonecraft's philosophical understanding of the Revolution in her epistolary and historical work, and examines the reasons for her shift between these genres.

Well-known for the first response to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Wollstonecraft warmly welcomed the French Revolution and contradicted Burke's anti-revolutionary opinion in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Two years later, raising the issue of the exclusion of women in the new Constitution of France in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she positioned herself as a political commentator of the Revolution. Wanting to witness the Revolution herself, Wollstonecraft went to Paris in December 1792. At the time of her arrival in Paris, it was becoming increasingly dangerous for the English to stay in France. Louis XVI was executed in January 1793, and the French Convention declared war against England at the beginning of February.<sup>355</sup> In June 1793, Wollstonecraft had to move from Paris to Neuilly-sur Seine, a town west of Paris, to avoid the potential dangers that expatriates faced in the city.<sup>356</sup> After the Reign of Terror began, many British expatriates, including Williams and Thomas Paine (1737-1809), were imprisoned, and Wollstonecraft's French acquaintances were executed by guillotine on 31 October 1793. Registered as the wife of the American Gilbert Imlay (1754-1828), Wollstonecraft fortunately avoided arrest. She did, however, experience the climate of fear of the time, and her writings were coloured by the Reign of Terror. In a letter to her friend Ruth Barlow (1756-1818) on 8 July 1794, she shudders to think 'how many victims fall beneath the sword and the Guillotine!' and tells her that 'my blood runs cold, and I sicken at thoughts of a Revolution which cost so much blood and bitter tears'.<sup>357</sup> In *A Short Residence in Sweden*, she remembers 'the horrors I had witnessed in

---

<sup>355</sup> Schama, *Citizens*, 583.

<sup>356</sup> Janet Todd suggests that British expatriates were in danger after the defeat of the Girondins because 'Robespierre proposed that all foreigners should be expelled'. Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 224-225.

<sup>357</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, Letter to Ruth Barlow 8 July 1794, in *Ibid.*, 255.



France, which had cast a gloom over all nature'.<sup>358</sup> Her disillusionment with the French Revolution seems incompatible with her earlier support for the Revolution in the *Rights of Men*. This chapter traces Wollstonecraft's complicated and changing view of the Revolution by examining her published texts as well as her personal letters written during her stay in France between late 1792 and 1794.

Before publishing *View of the Revolution*, Wollstonecraft wrote and intended to publish 'A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation', and wrote an epistolary introduction for the series dated 15 February 1793. However, she did not continue with this work, and the introductory letter was not published until Wollstonecraft's husband, William Godwin (1756-1836), included it in the four volume *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798).<sup>359</sup> In *Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman'* (1798), Godwin explains that '[h]ere it was that she conceived, and for the most part executed, her *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, into which, as she observes, are incorporated most of the observations she had collected for her *Letters* ['A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation']'.<sup>360</sup> As Godwin mentions, her 'Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation' feeds into her writing of the *View of the Revolution*, and her inclusion of 'most of the observations she had collected for her *Letters*' in her history writing suggests that *View of the Revolution* may not have deviated far from her original plans in writing 'Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation'. I read Wollstonecraft's *View of the Revolution* in the light of Godwin's suggestion that it was closely connected to the unfinished 'Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation' and, even though they are in different genres and written at different times, there are important continuities between these two texts. The introductory letter to 'Series of

---

<sup>358</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, "Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark," in Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and William Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Women,'* ed. Richard Holmes (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1987), 68.

<sup>359</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, "Letter: Introductory to A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation," in *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 6: 444-445.

<sup>360</sup> William Godwin, "Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman,'" in *Mary Wollstonecraft, Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and William Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman,'* ed. Richard Holmes (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987), 240.

Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation', written two months after her arrival in Paris, also provides her initial responses to France, and shows her confusion between her earlier anticipation of the Revolution and what she witnessed in France on her arrival. It is thus worth examining what Wollstonecraft wrote initially in the introductory letter before she produced her historical writing about the Revolution.

Perceptions of history writing in the eighteenth century changed throughout the century. Devoney Looser has suggested that in the early eighteenth century, history was considered 'a literary genre rather than 'a scholarly pursuit', and historical writing was written not by 'professional historians' but by 'the century's most notable literary figures'.<sup>361</sup> However, by the mid-eighteenth century, history writing became 'more scholarly, scientific, and cosmopolitan'.<sup>362</sup> The Scottish Enlightenment thinkers' approach to history contributed to eighteenth century historiography. As David Spadafora has shown, they 'depicted history as a progressive development from rudeness to refinement' and believed that 'a decisive difference existed between barbarous and polished people in morals and manners'.<sup>363</sup> Wollstonecraft's use of language surrounding morals, manners, and civilization throughout her works shows that her sense of history is indebted to that of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers. Previous studies of *View of the Revolution* have focused on the relationship between Wollstonecraft's historical work and the Scottish Enlightenment. Jane Rendall, in her influential article on Wollstonecraft and the Enlightenment, has established that Wollstonecraft 'was eclectically, also engaged in an interesting conversation with leading historians and philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment'.<sup>364</sup> Daniel O'Neill has contended that Wollstonecraft used 'the Scots' underlying notion of a civilizing process' but, at the same time, 'challenged the central claim of the Scottish four-stage historical thesis that extant European manners marked the

---

<sup>361</sup> Devoney Looser, *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 13.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>363</sup> David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 261, 294.

<sup>364</sup> Jane Rendall, "'The Grand Causes which Combine to Carry Mankind Forward': Wollstonecraft, History and Revolution," *Women's Writing* 4, no.2 (1997): 156.

development of a higher level of moral and civil virtue'.<sup>365</sup> Building on these studies of Wollstonecraft's philosophical history, I examine how she uses her historical sources in her history writing, and the ways in which her ideas of history writing engage with those of the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers.

Wollstonecraft was ambitious about her project, calling her history 'a great book', but the *View of the Revolution* was received with less acclaim than her previous two *Vindications*.<sup>366</sup> The *British Critic* attacked her use of *The New Annual Register* for 1791 as a source, dismissing her book as 'an abridgement of the history of the French Revolution given in *The New Annual Register*'.<sup>367</sup> Comparing her *View of the Revolution* with *The New Annual Register* in two columns, the reviewer clearly shows how similar they were, and claims that she attempted to disguise her use of the periodical.<sup>368</sup> Given the similarities between the two texts, it would be hard to deny that she did indeed borrow historical accounts from *The New Annual Register* but, rather than criticizing her for lacking originality, I suggest that in her historical writing, she borrows historical accounts from other sources as evidence to demonstrate her thoughts on the Revolution. Comparing *View of the Revolution* and *The New Annual Register* exposes the differences between the two texts. I argue that she is not merely borrowing historical accounts from *The New Annual Register*, but building on it as one of her sources.

Wollstonecraft's philosophical approach to the French Revolution drew on her thoughts about civilisation, manners and morals. By reading her introductory letter and *View of the Revolution* alongside her two *Vindications*, I seek to examine her changing ideas about the Revolution after she witnessed revolutionary France. Before looking at the introductory letter, I will sketch out Wollstonecraft's familiarity with the epistolary genre, and show Catharine Macaulay's (1731-1791) influence on Wollstonecraft's epistolary work. By contrasting Williams's first volume of *Letters* (1790) with Wollstonecraft's introductory letter, I will discuss the philosophical

---

<sup>365</sup> Daniel O'Neill, "Shifting the Scottish Paradigm: The Discourse of Morals and Manners in Mary Wollstonecraft's French Revolution," *History of Political Thought* 23, no.1 (2002): 90.

<sup>366</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to Eliza Bishop, 13 June 1793, in Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 226.

<sup>367</sup> *British Critic, and Quarterly Theological Review* 6 (July 1795), 29-30.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

features of Wollstonecraft's letter writing. This chapter also traces the reasons why she moved from epistolary works to writing history. I argue that despite the change in genre, *View of the Revolution* has the same aims as the one she expresses for her epistolary work in its introductory letter. In the second half of this chapter, I explore the philosophical nature of Wollstonecraft's historical writing in her *View of the Revolution*. The comparison between her accounts of the Revolution in her history writing with those of *The New Annual Register* enables me to demonstrate her understanding of history writing and her views of the 1789 Revolution. For the final section of this chapter, I return to Wollstonecraft's philosophical investigation into the different stages of the civilization, and her diagnosis of the causes of the Revolution.

### **I. 'The Attentive Eye of Observation': Wollstonecraft's Philosophical Letters**

It is tempting to think of Wollstonecraft as an ardent supporter of the Revolution, but her doubts about the possibility of the Revolution being a success were already evident in 1790. In *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, she expresses concern that 'the glorious chance that is now given to human nature attaining more virtue and happiness than has hitherto blessed our globe, might have been sacrificed to a meteor of the imagination, a bubble of passion'.<sup>369</sup> She considers the Revolution as 'the glorious chance', but highlights the danger of it being the product of 'passion'. She concludes *Vindication of the Rights of Men* with optimism for the Revolution, saying that 'in theory it appears more promising' at this point.<sup>370</sup> Her belief in revolutionary principles did not change, even after the situation in France became violent. As we saw in Chapter Two, in Thomas Lowe's comments about Charlotte Smith, the violent events in France, such as the September Massacre, were much discussed and criticised in England in the autumn of 1792. Like Smith, Wollstonecraft defended the revolutionary principles behind such events, and on 12 November 1792 she wrote persuasively to her friend, William Roscoe (1753-1831), 'not to mix with the shallow herd

---

<sup>369</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Men," 83.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

who throw an odium on immutable principles'.<sup>371</sup> Even though she had her reservations about fully trusting the Revolution, she shows her strong belief in revolutionary principles.

However, Wollstonecraft's first-hand experience in Paris seems to shake her belief in revolutionary principles, and her personal correspondence demonstrates her confusion about how to make sense of the situation in France. When she arrived in Paris in December 1792, the trial of Louis XVI was underway, and he was expected to deliver his defence at the bar of the Convention after Christmas.<sup>372</sup> On 24 December 1792, Wollstonecraft wrote to her sister that 'the day after tomorrow I expect to see the king at the bar — and the consequences that will follow I am almost afraid to anticipate'.<sup>373</sup> On 26 December, she told Joseph Johnson (1738-1809), that 'an association of ideas made the tears flow insensibly from my eyes, when I saw Louis sitting, with more dignity than I expected from his character, in a hackney coach, going to meet death'.<sup>374</sup> She seems confused by her own reaction to seeing Louis XVI just before his trial, and her previous thinking about the Revolution is at odds with what she observed. Like these personal letters, Wollstonecraft's introductory letter is filled with her confusion and frustration at the situation she observed in France, and it elucidates the cause of this inner conflict in more detail.

By the time she wrote the introductory letter, Wollstonecraft was accustomed to using the epistolary genre in publication, as shown by her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, and her various reviews for the *Analytical Review*. The full title, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke; Occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France*, suggests her use of letter form was chosen to respond to Burke's epistolary *Reflections*. Before her trip to France, she worked for the *Analytical Review* for almost four years, from June 1788 until November 1792; she not only reviewed Williams's *Letters Written in France* (1790) and Smith's *Desmond* (1792), but also contributed criticism on different kinds of epistolary works, such as *Letters from Barbary, France, Spain*,

---

<sup>371</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to William Roscoe, 12 November 1792, in Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 207.

<sup>372</sup> Schama, *Citizens*, 554-562.

<sup>373</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to Everina Wollstonecraft, 24 December 1792, in Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 215.

<sup>374</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to Joseph Johnson, 26 December 1792, in *Ibid.*, 216.

*Portugal* (1788), John Holloway's *Letter to the Rev. Dr Price, containing a Few Strictures upon his Sermon* (1789), and John Bennett's *Letters to a young Lady* (1789).<sup>375</sup> This range clearly shows her familiarity with, and understanding of, the epistolary genre. Among them, Williams's first volume of *Letters* and Macaulay's *Letters on Education* (1790) in particular seem to provide Wollstonecraft with models of letter writing. While Williams conveys her enthusiasm and feeling for the Revolution in the form of familiar letters, Macaulay uses her epistolary work to show her approach to education, which Wollstonecraft praised as being coming from a 'mind with no sex' in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.<sup>376</sup>

Williams's first volume of *Letters* offers her eyewitness account of events in France and is replete with her emotional responses to her experience in France while she is there. Wollstonecraft's review of Williams's first volume of *Letters* praises Williams's authentic, genuine displays of feeling.<sup>377</sup> Scholars including Gary Kelly and Karen O'Brien have suggested that Wollstonecraft follows Williams's style of letter writing in the introductory letter to 'A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation'.<sup>378</sup> However, I propose that Wollstonecraft's style of letters in the introductory letter is markedly different from Williams's. Williams's first volume of *Letters* may have been inspiration for Wollstonecraft's later epistolary work, *A Short Residence in Sweden* (1796), but has different characteristics to the introductory letter. There is no evidence to suggest that Wollstonecraft purposely avoided Williams's style of letter writing — Smith, as we have seen in Chapter Two, clarifies that *Desmond* is not 'in style of Miss Williams', when writing to Cadell on 7 September 1791 — but I argue that Wollstonecraft's introductory letter bears more resemblance to Macaulay's *Letters on Education*.

---

<sup>375</sup> Wollstonecraft reviewed fifteen publications which had 'letter' in their titles between 1788 and 1792.

<sup>376</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. David Lorne Macdonald and Kathleen Dorothy Scherf (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1997), 231.

<sup>377</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7: 322-324.

<sup>378</sup> O'Brien has suggested that Wollstonecraft 'may have been planning a work along the lines of her friend Helen Maria Williams's *Letters Written in France* (1790)'. Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 192. Kelly has noted that 'Wollstonecraft first intended to follow Williams with her projected 'Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation'. Gary Kelly, *Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 170.

Macaulay's *Letters on Education* is known as an influence on Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman*, but as I will show, this work also provides Wollstonecraft a model of philosophical letter writing.<sup>379</sup> In *Letters on Education*, Macaulay argues that 'a system of education [...] aims at bringing human mind of such a height of perfection as shall induce the practice of the best morals', and in each letter she discusses subjects relevant to education such as 'public and private education', 'benevolence', and 'sympathy'.<sup>380</sup> Wollstonecraft's review of Macaulay's *Letters on Education* appeared at considerable length in the *Analytical Review* in November 1790, one month earlier than that of Williams's *Letters*. Introducing Macaulay as a 'masculine and fervid writer', Wollstonecraft proclaims that 'this work [...] adds new lustre to Mrs M.'s character as an historian and a moralist, and displays a degree of sound reason and profound thought which either through defective organs, or a mistaken education, seldom appears in female productions'.<sup>381</sup> Macaulay's historical and moral approach to education impressed Wollstonecraft, and Wollstonecraft does seem to adopt Macaulay's perspective in her 'A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation' and in her *View of the Revolution*.

The introductory letter opens with Wollstonecraft's first impressions of France, and her thoughts on the characteristics of French manners. Like Williams, Wollstonecraft positions herself as an observer of the Revolution, but Wollstonecraft's use of observation differs from Williams's. Wollstonecraft writes

When I first entered Paris, the striking contrast of riches and poverty, elegance and slovenliness, urbanity and deceit, every where caught my eye, and saddened my soul; and these impressions are still the foundation of my remarks on the manners, which flatter the senses, more than they interest the heart, and yet excite more interest than esteem.<sup>382</sup>

---

<sup>379</sup> Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120.

<sup>380</sup> Catharine Macaulay, *Letters on Education. With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects* (London: C. Dilly, 1790), 173.

<sup>381</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 7: 321-322.

<sup>382</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 443.

She makes her judgement on ‘the manners’ of the French based on her experience of seeing ‘the striking contrast of riches and poverty, elegance and slovenliness, urbanity and deceit’. In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* she claims that manners ‘should only be the natural reflection of [morals], yet, when various causes have produced factitious and corrupt manners, which are very early caught, morality becomes an empty name’.<sup>383</sup> According to this view of manners, French manners are problematic in terms of their tendencies to appeal to ‘the senses’ rather than ‘the heart’, and to ‘excite’ rather than ‘esteem’. Wollstonecraft displays her observation by attempting to analyze what she has witnessed, rather than by immediately describing what she has seen. Thus, her epistolary work does not aim to offer a sense of immediacy or reportage on events in France, which marks an important fundamental difference from Williams’s first volume of *Letters*.

The introductory letter shows Wollstonecraft’s plan for her project, which indicates the very different approach that she has to the epistolary genre. She announces that:

I shall attempt to trace to their source the causes which have combined to render this nation the most polished, in a physical sense, and probably the most superficial in the world [...] I wish calmly to consider the stage of civilization in which I find the French, and giving a sketch of their character, and unfolding the circumstances which have produced its identity, I shall endeavour to throw some light on the history of man, and on the present important subjects of discussion.<sup>384</sup>

The philosophical persona Wollstonecraft had adopted in the *Rights of Woman*, is evident here as tries to analyze the causes of the present state of France, which she identifies as ‘the most polished, in a physical sense, and probably the most superficial in the world’.<sup>385</sup> She introduces her topics — the causes of the current state in France, French ‘national character’, and ‘the circumstances which have produced its identity’ — which are also subjects in her *View of the Revolution*, and she attempts to examine ‘the

---

<sup>383</sup> Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Woman,” 102.

<sup>384</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:444.

<sup>385</sup> Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Woman,” 144.



history of man' as well as 'the present important subjects of discussion'. As other scholars have noted, Wollstonecraft's approach to the Revolution in this epistolary work is influenced by Scottish Enlightenment history writing, as her reference to 'the stage of civilization' shows.<sup>386</sup> Wollstonecraft's observation forms the basis of her empirical philosophical reflections on her subject in *View of the Revolution*. The very project of identifying and discussing the character of a nation is a philosophical enterprise.

Wollstonecraft confesses in the introductory letter that her continued faith in revolutionary principles was shaken:

Before I came to France, I cherished, you know, an opinion, that strong virtues might exist with the polished manners produced by the progress of civilization; and I even anticipated the epoch, when, in the course of improvement, men would labour to become virtuous, without being goaded on by misery. But now, the perspective of the golden age, fading before the attentive eye of observation, almost eludes my sight; and, losing thus in part my theory of a more perfect state, start not, my friend, if I bring forward an opinion, which at the first glance seems to be levelled against the existence of God!<sup>387</sup>

'The progress of civilization' is a recurring theme in Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Men* and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and her belief that the progress of civilization is accompanied by moral improvement applies to her view of the Revolution. In *Vindication of the Rights of Men* she argues that 'the civilization which has taken place in Europe has been very partial, and, like every custom that an arbitrary point of honour has established, refines the manners at the expence of morals' and she ascribes the obstacle of the progress to 'hereditary property' and 'hereditary honours'.<sup>388</sup> Thus, the French Revolution gave her hope for complete civilization because the French Revolution had disposed of such hereditary property and honours. However, the revolutionary France that she witnesses seems incompatible with what she expected. She calls the morality of the French into question,

---

<sup>386</sup> O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment*, 180.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 444-445.

<sup>388</sup> Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Men," 39. In the *Vindication of Rights of Woman*, she also argues that 'the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial'. See Wollstonecraft, "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," 109.

and speculates that ‘if the aristocracy of birth is levelled with the ground, only to make room for that of riches, I am afraid that the morals of the people will not be much improved by the change’.<sup>389</sup> Her ‘eye of observation’ offers her the evidence that the progress of civilization is more difficult than she had thought.

The introductory letter concludes with Wollstonecraft’s scepticism about the Revolution. She writes ‘it is impossible to avoid hazarding some conjectures, when every thing whispers me, that names, not principles, are changed, [...] when I see that the turn of the tide has left the dregs of the old system to corrupt the new’.<sup>390</sup> She suggests that there is a possibility that the Revolution has not effected a change in principles. Wollstonecraft’s perception of France in 1793, that she expresses in the introductory letter, is similar to Smith’s in *The Emigrants* (1793). Both Wollstonecraft and Smith defended the principles of the Revolution, even after the series of violent events in 1792, but both acknowledged that the events of 1793 in France failed to meet their earlier expectations of the Revolution. Smith, as we have seen in Chapter Two, shows in *The Emigrants* that liberty ‘scorns to distain / Her righteous cause with carnage, and resigns / To Fraud and Anarchy the infuriate crowd’.<sup>391</sup> In the same way that Smith berates ‘the infuriate crowd’ for losing sight of the cause of liberty, Wollstonecraft comments that ‘I think of the blood that has stained the cause of freedom at Paris’.<sup>392</sup> By using the image of the staining of the key principle of the Revolution, both Smith and Wollstonecraft show their disappointment and disillusionment with the current situation in France.

Wollstonecraft stopped writing her epistolary work in favour of historical writing. She did not explain the rationale for embarking on a new project, but Godwin, in his *Memoirs*, claims that the change was ‘as she justly remarks, tinged with the saturnine temper which at that time pervaded her mind’.<sup>393</sup> However, Harriet Jump has proposed that Wollstonecraft’s decision to discontinue writing ‘A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation’ would not have been made as a result of depression,

---

<sup>389</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:444.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:446.

<sup>391</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Major Poetic Works*, ed. Claire Knowles and Ingrid Horrocks (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2017), 147.

<sup>392</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:444.

<sup>393</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs*, 238.

as Godwin insists, but from ‘a more profound disturbance of mind’ which related to the ‘failure of philosophical optimism’.<sup>394</sup> Jump suggests that the reason that this introductory letter was published after her death was Wollstonecraft’s ‘dissatisfaction with its tone and content’.<sup>395</sup> However, I propose that she does not give up her investigation on the Revolution, but continues to undertake her philosophical reflections on the failure of revolutionary ideals in France in *View of the Revolution*, which serves as a continuation of Wollstonecraft’s epistolary project.

One of the possible reasons for changing from letter to history may have been Wollstonecraft’s worries about safety. She had become known as the writer of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which was translated into French and was published in France.<sup>396</sup> The possibility of her ‘Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation’ being translated into French may have made writing and printing it — even in English — too perilous for her while she remained in France.<sup>397</sup> Her personal letters demonstrate her increasing fear about her security in France. During her stay, she regularly corresponded with her sisters, Everina Wollstonecraft and Eliza Bishop (b.1763). In a letter to Bishop on 20 January 1793, Wollstonecraft insinuates that it would be dangerous to mention politics in the letter, telling her that ‘I can only now write about family affairs’.<sup>398</sup> By the time she moved to Neuilly-sur-Seine in June, she had become more anxious about her letters being opened: ‘I write with reserve because all the letters are opened’, and asked Eliza not to ‘touch on politics’.<sup>399</sup> These letters suggest how dangerous it was to write on politics while in France, and provide an important context for understanding the situations Wollstonecraft faced while she worked.

Letters were key to many different genres in the eighteenth century: history, politics, philosophy, religion, education, travel writing, and the

---

<sup>394</sup> Harriet Devine Jump, “‘The Cool Eye of Observation’: Mary Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution,” in *Revolution Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, ed. Kelvin Everest (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 104-105.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>396</sup> Taylor, *The Feminist Imagination*, 25.

<sup>397</sup> Williams published her third and fourth volumes of *Letters* anonymously in 1793, while she was in France. See Helen Maria Williams, *Letters From France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for G.G. AND J. Robinson, 1793).

<sup>398</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to Bishop, 20 January 1793, in Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 217-218.

<sup>399</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to Bishop, 24 June 1793 in *Ibid.*, 226-227.

emerging novel form all drew on the letter form.<sup>400</sup> These different traditions were important to my writers, who read and were influenced by a wide range of letter forms. Catherine Macaulay, much admired by Wollstonecraft, made use of the form of letters to show her philosophical thoughts and observations on education. Jean-Jacques Rousseau often used the epistolary form in his philosophical publications, and the influence of his *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* is evident in Wollstonecraft's *A Short Residence*.<sup>401</sup> In 'A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation', the letter form enabled Wollstonecraft to draw on the tradition of letters in history and philosophy to bring gravitas to her account of the French Revolution. Unlike Williams, she avoids the intimacy of personal letters; she does not produce a breathless personal account of the present state of France, but delivers a philosophical and historical analysis of her subject. As we saw in Godwin's remark, Wollstonecraft 'incorporated most of the observations she had collected for her *Letters*' in her history.<sup>402</sup> Characteristics of this epistolary writing in *View of the Revolution* demonstrate the continuities between the two texts. In Book I of *View of the Revolution*, she explores topics such as 'progress of society' and 'causes of the enslaved state of Europe', which may have been included in 'a Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation'.<sup>403</sup> It was not until the end of Book I of *View of the Revolution* that she started writing on the Revolution, as she claims 'it is from this period, that we must date the commencement of those great events'.<sup>404</sup> Moreover, her voice suddenly shifts from being rational to sentimental when describing her visits to Versailles. While walking a silent empty palace, she finds herself 'weeping

---

<sup>400</sup> Brant provides a useful survey of the different kinds of epistolary writing in the eighteenth century. See Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). On historical letters see Clare Brant, "Love Stories? Epistolary Histories of Mary Queen of Scots," in *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, ed. Amanda Gilroy and Wil Verhoeven (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 2000), 74-98. On political letters see Mary Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and Jane Rendall, "'Friends of Liberty & Virtue': Women Radicals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1789-1848," in *Gender and Politics in the Age of Letter-Writing, 1750-2000*, ed. Máire Cross and Caroline Blend (London: Routledge, 2016), 77-92. On epistolary novel see Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel* (New York: AMS Press, 1980).

<sup>401</sup> On philosophical letters in France see Herbert Dieckmann, "Philosophy and Literature in Eighteenth-Century France," *Comparative Literature Studies* 8, no.1 (1971): 21-41.

<sup>402</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs*, 240.

<sup>403</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 8.

<sup>404</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 42.

– scarcely conscious that I weep, O France!’ and exclaiming ‘Ah! – when will thy government become the most perfect, because thy citizens are the most virtuous!’<sup>405</sup> As Ashley Tauchert has noted, Wollstonecraft’s *View of the Revolution* ‘continues in the third person until the author / narrator enters Versailles, where a sensitive (and arguably sexed) body is seen reflected in the mirrors of the Palace, and returns to the third-person soon afterwards’.<sup>406</sup> In the middle of her account of the history of the Revolution, this emotional element seems unusual, but there are connections with her personal letters; in Wollstonecraft’s letter to Johnson, as we have seen earlier, she tells him that she shed tears when she saw Louis XVI on his way to his trial.<sup>407</sup>

Wollstonecraft’s introductory letter has not received much critical attention, but a close reading of this fragmentary letter is important to understand her changing views of the Revolution and the current stage of civilization. The conflict between what she believed in before she observed the situation in France and her response to the reality of the Revolution, which is clear in this introductory letter, helps us to understand the markedly different views, and differences in tone, between her two *Vindications* and her *View of the Revolution*. Her change of genre does not signal the end of her writing project of ‘A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation’, but shows her carrying on with her project in a different genre. The genre of history enables Wollstonecraft to continue with her philosophical and historical analysis of ‘a Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation’. In the next section, I will discuss the way in which her project is embodied in the genre of history.

## **II. Wollstonecraft’s Rewriting of the Revolution of 1789 in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution***

Instead of producing ‘A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation’, Wollstonecraft began to write *View of the Revolution*,

---

<sup>405</sup>Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 84-85.

<sup>406</sup> Ashley Tauchert, “Maternity, Castration and Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*,” *Women’s Writing* 4, no 2 (1997): 175-176.

<sup>407</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to Johnson, 26 December 1792, in Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 216.

which covers events from prior to June 1789 until October 1789.<sup>408</sup> By using two prefatory materials, the ‘advertisement’ and the ‘preface’, she highlights the philosophical features of *View of the Revolution*.<sup>409</sup> In the advertisement to *View of the Revolution*, she categorises her work as ‘history’ and introduces the characteristics of her history writing:

This history, taking in such a variety of facts and opinions, has grown under my hand; especially as in writing I cannot avoid entering into some desultory disquisitions, and descriptions of manners and things which, though not strictly necessary to elucidate the events, are intimately connected with the main object; I have also been led into several theoretical investigations, whilst marking the political effects that naturally flow from the progress of knowledge.<sup>410</sup>

She presents *View of the Revolution* as a combination of ‘facts and opinion’ on the Revolution, rather than simply as a record of past events.<sup>411</sup>

Wollstonecraft’s willingness to conduct ‘theoretical investigation’ and to mark the ‘political effects that naturally flow from the progress of knowledge’ suggests the philosophical element of her history writing. In the same way as she mentions in the introductory letter that she was ‘losing thus in part’ her theory of ‘a more perfect state’, she seems to re-examine her previous thoughts about ‘the progress of civilization’ in *View of the Revolution*. I will discuss the ways in which she modifies her ‘theory’ in her *View of the Revolution* later.

In the preface to *View of the Revolution*, Wollstonecraft justifies her philosophical approach in terms of the difficulty of writing about the Revolution. Concerned about ‘the rapid changes, the violent, the base, and nefarious assassinations’ in France, she writes

To sketch these vicissitudes is a task so arduous and melancholy, that, with a heart trembling to the touches of nature, it becomes

---

<sup>408</sup> Wollstonecraft informed Bishop that she was writing this book. Wollstonecraft, Letter to Bishop, 13 June 1793, in *The Collected Letters*, 225.

<sup>409</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:5-7.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:5.

<sup>411</sup> The *British Critic* also distinguished between ‘the historical part of this work, and the reflections deduced from it’ and considered each separately. See *British Critic* 6 (July 1795), 29.

necessary to guard against the erroneous inferences of sensibility; and reason beaming on the grand theatre of political changes, can prove the only sure guide to direct us to favourable or just conclusion.<sup>412</sup>

In this context, she argues for the necessity of ‘reason’ and is ‘against the erroneous inferences of sensibility’ in writing about the Revolution, which is reminiscent of her criticism of Burke’s *Reflections* in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*. She dismisses his reason as ‘the weather-cock of unrestrained feeling’ and concludes from ‘the whole tenor of your *Reflections*, that you have a mortal antipathy to reason’.<sup>413</sup> By presenting the example of Burke’s *Reflections*, she warns of the danger of sensibility without reason in *Vindication of the Rights of Men*. Her tendency to emphasise reason appears in this preface. Before beginning her *View of the Revolution*, she explains the nature of her approach, which enables her to present herself as the appropriate person to offer observations of the Revolution, which also suggests the characteristics and value of her observations.

As Ralph Wardle, Wollstonecraft’s twentieth-century biographer, suggested, the *View of the Revolution* is ‘in a sense a second “Letter to Edmund Burke,” a reaffirmation of the rights of men’.<sup>414</sup> There are many similarities between Wollstonecraft’s historical writing and her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*. She begins her history with philosophical reflections on human nature and the progress of the civilisation that she addresses in the *Vindication of the Rights of Men*. She returns to her earlier criticism of Burke’s fondness for the past and his pride in the English constitution in his *Reflections*, saying that this pride ‘leads the people to imagine, that their ancestors have done every thing possible to secure the happiness of society, and meliorate the condition of man’.<sup>415</sup> This first chapter seems to be a continuation of her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*. The question of what differentiates her *View of the Revolution* from the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* is, I argue, her use of historical sources. She attempts to identify the

---

<sup>412</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:6.

<sup>413</sup> Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Men,” 36, 38.

<sup>414</sup> Ralph Martin Wardle, *Mary Wollstonecraft; a Critical Biography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), 206.

<sup>415</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:17.

causes of the current circumstances in France via historical evidence, which places her *View of the Revolution* firmly in the genre of history.

However, as we saw earlier in this chapter, the *View of the Revolution* was attacked for the apparent lack of originality in Wollstonecraft's historical accounts. By the time she started writing the history in 1793, it was extremely difficult to give an original account of the 1789 Revolution. As it had already been several years since the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789, the Revolution had received an enormous amount of exposure in England. Many historical narratives of the Revolution and translations of French texts had been published in England, some of which Wollstonecraft reviewed in the *Analytical Review: Historical Remarks on the Castle of the Bastille* (1789) and *An Historical Sketch of the French Revolution* (1792). Wollstonecraft could have documented what she witnessed during the Terror, as Williams did. Wollstonecraft's choice to write about the early stages of the Revolution, rather than about the time she stayed in France, means that she is reliant on earlier written sources, and this makes her vulnerable to charges of plagiarism. However, for her, it was necessary to examine the Revolution of 1789 in order to trace the origins of the Revolution.

Another problem is Wollstonecraft's dependence on secondary sources rather than on primary materials. Wollstonecraft's use of secondary sources is in contrast to Macaulay's use of primary sources in her *History of England* (1763-1783). As Bridget Hill has shown, Macaulay used British Museum manuscripts and some 'tracts and sermons mainly covering seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' to write her *History of England*.<sup>416</sup> Unlike Macaulay, Wollstonecraft borrows historical accounts from secondary materials to a great extent. Her reliance on secondary historical accounts may have resulted from the difficulty of accessing primary sources while she was writing the *View of the Revolution*. Even though she translated Jacques Necker's *Of the Importance of Religious Opinions* into English in 1788, she did not seem to have a sufficient command of French to use many of the materials written in French in the short time during

---

<sup>416</sup> Bridget Hill, *The Republican Virago: The Life and Times of Catharine Macaulay, Historian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 46-48.



which she wrote the work.<sup>417</sup> Her stay in France also made it more difficult to access materials, and she relied heavily on the specific texts that she was able to access. Even though she received a ‘parcel of books’ from England, which Johnson may have sent her, and despite her attempts to obtain ‘the debates and decrees, from the commencement of that publication’ from Joel Barlow (1754-1812), Wollstonecraft told her friend Ruth Barlow, ‘I daily feel the want of my poor Books – M<sup>r</sup> Imlay laughs at my still retaining any hopes of getting them’.<sup>418</sup> This indicates how difficult it was for Wollstonecraft to obtain the books she needed while she wrote the *View of the Revolution*.

Wollstonecraft does not refer to a list of books in her *View of the Revolution*, but she attempts to distinguish the descriptions of others from her own accounts in several ways, which enables us to identify the sources. Before she elaborates on other people’s thinking, she mentions their names; for example, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Jean Racine.<sup>419</sup> In one case, a footnote is used to identify the source: *Mémoires du Marechal de Richelieu*.<sup>420</sup> She also uses italics for Burke’s accounts in his *Reflections*, and for some of the phrases from *The New Annual Register for 1791*.<sup>421</sup> Apart from these, Wollstonecraft usually places the majority of the accounts she has borrowed in quotation marks. Todd and Marilyn Butler found many of the supposed sources of Wollstonecraft’s history in their edition of Wollstonecraft’s works. The sources they identified include *The New Annual Register*, Thomas Christie’s *Letters on the Revolution of France* (1791), Honoré Riqueti’s *Letters du Comte de Mirabeau*, the Bible, Rabaut Saint-Étienne’s *Précis Historique de la Révolution Française* (1792), Lally-Tollendal’s *Mémoire* (1790) and the *Journal des Débats et des Décrets*, but some sources have yet to be identified. I suggest that she also used Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* (1791) and an English translation of Rabaut Saint-

---

<sup>417</sup> Wollstonecraft confided her difficulty in learning French. Wollstonecraft, Letter to Everina Wollstonecraft, 24 December 1792, in Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 214-215.

<sup>418</sup> Wollstonecraft, Letter to Gilbert Imlay, 30 December 1793, in *Ibid.*, 236. In the footnote of this letter, Todd has suggested that ‘the books were probably from Johnson in London, perhaps to help with the writing of the French Revolution’. Wollstonecraft, Letter to Ruth Barlow, 3 February, 1794, in *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>419</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:16, 18, 19, 25.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:26.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:189.

Étienne's *History of the Revolution of France* instead of the original French text.

Wollstonecraft is highly dependent on historical accounts taken from English texts. Comparing an English translation of Rabaut Saint-Étienne's *History of the Revolution of France* with her *View of the Revolution*, the sentences in quotation marks are exactly the same as in the translation, which implies that she did not translate the French texts herself.<sup>422</sup> She also draws on the translations in Paine's *Rights of Man* in her description of Marquis de Lafayette's address to people when he read 'a copy of [the Marquis de Condorcet]'s declaration of rights' and the article 10 of the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens'.<sup>423</sup> The 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens' was translated into English in different ways. Christie and the translator of Rabaut Saint-Étienne's *History of the Revolution of France*, James White (1759-1799), translated this article into English as: 'no person shall be molested for his opinions, even such as are religious, provided that the manifestation of those opinions does not disturb the public order established by the law'.<sup>424</sup> Paine rendered this as: 'no man ought to be molested on account of his opinions, not even on account of his religious opinion, provided his avowal of them does not disturb the public order established by the law'.<sup>425</sup> Wollstonecraft made use of them in her *Historical and Moral View*, but here she chose Paine's translation. The choice of this specific text demonstrates that she did not include the historical texts without consideration, and that she chose specific works deliberately.

Of the sources mentioned above, the source used most frequently in the *View of the Revolution* is *The New Annual Register*. Published annually from 1780 onwards, *The New Annual Register* described what had occurred in the previous 12 months in a wide range of sections.<sup>426</sup> In particular, *The*

---

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 6:51, 96, 161, 196, 203. Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Étienne, *The History of the Revolution of France. Translated from the French of M. Rabaut de Saint-Etienne*, trans. James White (London: printed for J. Debrett, 1792), 29, 87, 110, 123, 129.

<sup>423</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 90, 155. Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (London: J. Parsons, 1792), 9, 66.

<sup>424</sup> Thomas Christie, *Letters on the Revolution of France* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1791), 42. Rabaut Saint-Étienne, *The History of the Revolution of France*, 361.

<sup>425</sup> Paine, *Rights of Man*, 66.

<sup>426</sup> There are nine sections in the periodical: 'British and Foreign History', 'Biographical anecdotes and characters', 'Manners of nations', 'Classical and polite criticism', 'public papers', 'philosophical papers', 'antiquities', 'miscellaneous papers', and 'poetry'. Godwin contributed to *The New Annual Register* between 1784 and 1791.

*New Annual Register for the Year 1791* was a special issue on the French Revolution, which covered the period from May 1789 until September 1791. For Wollstonecraft, this periodical may have served her historical writing well, considering the similarities between accounts of *The New Annual Register for the Year 1791* and her *View of the Revolution*. The preface to *The New Annual Register for the Year 1791* announces that ‘much of the history which we present to our readers has been collected from [...] the testimony of eye-witness, and the rest is drawn from journals of the national assembly, or from other most respectable sources’.<sup>427</sup> These various sources may have attracted her interest, and her reliance on the periodical implies that she believed in the trustworthiness of the periodical as a source of information.

However, Wollstonecraft’s use of *The New Annual Register*, sometimes taking accounts from the periodical without any quotation marks, seems to be problematic. Much of the account of May 1789 seems to have originally been from *The New Annual Register*. Her narratives are almost the same as those of the periodical, other than omitting specific words, or changing the phrases slightly. For example, ‘[a] temporary sanction to the present taxes and levies’ in the periodical is changed to ‘a temporary sanction to the present levies’ in her *View of the Revolution*, and ‘a regard to the urgent necessities of the state’ to ‘taking into consideration the urgent necessities of the state’.<sup>428</sup> Nonetheless, I have identified some patterns in the way in which she uses *The New Annual Register*. Apart from important figures in the Revolution such as Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, Count of Mirabeau (1749-1791), Wollstonecraft tends to omit the names of small players, and only notes their positions. She changes ‘M. d’Espremeniil proposed, in the chamber of the nobles, an address to the king, beseeching him to dissolve the states-general’ into ‘one of the members of the chamber, which almost arrogated to itself the prerogative of legislation, that of the nobles, proposed an address to the king, beseeching him to dissolve the state-general’.<sup>429</sup> For Wollstonecraft, it was more important to say that the chamber of nobles asked the king to dismiss the states-general than it was to

---

<sup>427</sup> *The New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1791* (London: Printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1792), 4-5.

<sup>428</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:63. *The New Annual Register*, 10.

<sup>429</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:57, 64. *The New Annual Register*, 11.

say that an individual, M. d'Esprennil, did so. Wollstonecraft also tends to shorten the account of the historical events in *The New Annual Register*. While the periodical elaborates on the entire process of 'the séance royale' via a graphic description of the place and the procedure, Wollstonecraft simplifies the series of events. In accordance with her note to her readers that it will not be 'strictly necessary to elucidate the events' in her advertisement, she does not describe every detail of the events of 1789.<sup>430</sup> She provides her readers with what they need to know in order to understand the events of 1789 but, as a historian, she focuses on identifying the causes of the events in *View of the Revolution*.

Wollstonecraft shares an idea of the role of historian with Scottish Enlightenment thinkers. She contends that 'it ought not to be more the object of the historian to fill up the sketch, than to trace the hidden springs and secret mechanism, which have put in motion a revolution'.<sup>431</sup> As a historian, her focus is on finding the causes of events rather than on describing the events that took place. As Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) stated, 'the good historian says not merely what events occurred, but also why they did; not only what a person did, but also what motivated him'.<sup>432</sup> While Hutcheson emphasises determining the causes of events, Adam Smith (1723-1790), in *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters*, also argued that history 'sets before us the more interesting and important events in human life, [and] points out the causes by which those events were brought about'.<sup>433</sup> Like Hutcheson and Smith, Wollstonecraft's objective in her history writing is to trace the causes of the events of 1789.

Wollstonecraft's attempt to determine the causes of the events of 1789 makes her history different from other historical accounts of the Revolution. The comparison between the accounts of the storming of the Bastille and the Women's March on Versailles in the *Historical and Moral View* with those in *The New Annual Register* highlights what Wollstonecraft wanted to tell her readers. She took some sentences from *The New Annual Register*, but focused on different features of the events. While the periodical traces the course of the incidents, Wollstonecraft pays attention to the cause and, in

---

<sup>430</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:5.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:42.

<sup>432</sup> Alexander Brodie, *The Scottish Enlightenment, 1730-1790* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2001), 45.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

particular, to the participants in both events. Her approach to the nature of the crowd shows the quality of her philosophical analysis of the Revolution of 1789.

Wollstonecraft's account of the storming of the Bastille clearly shows her main interest as being in the changing nature of the multitude. Unlike *The New Annual Register*, in which the narrative mainly recounts the acts of the governor of the Bastille, the Marquis de Launay (1740-1789), Wollstonecraft's *View of the Revolution* contains detailed descriptions of the multitude. *The New Annual Register* records the conversation between Launay and 'a deputy of the district of St. Louis de la Culture' concerning the distribution of arms, and describes how he conducted himself throughout the attack.<sup>434</sup> By contrast, Wollstonecraft focuses on portraying the behaviour of the Parisians, and elaborates on the changing face of the multitude. In terms of an interest in the people, Wollstonecraft's account of the storming of the Bastille is similar to that of Williams in her first volume of *Letters*. Williams shows less interest in explaining the process of the event but, by using short anecdotes and colloquial language, she elaborates on the emotions of the men and women who engaged in the taking of the Bastille.<sup>435</sup> For example, she recounts the moment at which 'it was to save themselves the shocking spectacle of their wives and infants perishing before their eyes, that the citizens of Paris flew to arms'.<sup>436</sup> However, Williams's dramatic account of the storming of the Bastille differs markedly from Wollstonecraft's account of the event. Wollstonecraft shows how the Parisians initially united to defend themselves against the threat of military attack:

Defence was the sole object of every person's thoughts, and deriding personal danger, all were preparing to sell their lives at a dear rate, furbishing up old weapons, or forging new. The old men, women, and children, were employed in making pikes; whilst the able bodied men paraded the streets, in an orderly manner, with most resolute looks, yet avoiding every kind of violence: there was, in fact, an inconceivable solemnity in the

---

<sup>434</sup> *The New Annual Register*, 20-23.

<sup>435</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 75.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

quick step of a torrent of men, all directing their exertions to one point, which distinguished this rising of the citizens from what is commonly termed a riot. – Equality, indeed, was then first established by an universal sympathy; men of all ranks joining in the throng, those of the first could not be discriminated by any peculiar decency of demeanour, such public spirited dignity pervaded the whole mass.<sup>437</sup>

As the public good predominates over private interest here, all members of the society contribute to that aim regardless of their rank and sex. She does not argue that the multitude was guided by reason, but that shared feelings, such as ‘an inconceivable solemnity’ and ‘public spirited dignity’, guided the people in her accounts of this uprising. As Mary Fairclough suggested, Wollstonecraft considered the storming of the Bastille as ‘the result of principle rather than instinct’.<sup>438</sup> The tendency of the multitude to avoid ‘every kind of violence’ is also different from the Women’s March on Versailles.

The main cause of the violence during the storming of the Bastille, Wollstonecraft suggests, was the ruling class’ repeated deceptions during the event. She argues that ‘it is necessary to observe, that, if the degeneracy of the higher orders of society be such, that no remedy less fraught with horror can effect a radical cure’.<sup>439</sup> She uses her account of the storming of the Bastille as evidence of ‘a radical cure’, and of the necessity of the Revolution. While *The New Annual Register* simply mentions that a mayor ‘made many promises on this subject; but they all proved, like every part of his conduct, delusive’, she elaborates on how the misconduct of the mayor and a governor of the Bastille aroused the Parisians’ anger.<sup>440</sup> When the mayor sends the Parisians ‘pieces of old candle-sticks’ instead of ‘a number of fusils’, as he had promised, Wollstonecraft describes the changes in the multitude: ‘the impatience of the multitude, whose courage and patriotism had been played with all day, instantly changed into indignation and

---

<sup>437</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:88.

<sup>438</sup> Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 88.

<sup>439</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 46.

<sup>440</sup> *The New Annual Register*, 20.

fury'.<sup>441</sup> She also ascribes the fact that the governor of the Bastille had broken his promise that 'the cannons should not be fired [...] unless they were attacked' to the cause of the violence.<sup>442</sup> She attributes the cause of the Parisians' indignation to the mayor's and the governor's deceptions.

In contrast to the detailed description of the fall of the Bastille, in which the writer in *The New Annual Register* describes how the besiegers attacked the Bastille and how the garrisons defended themselves, Wollstonecraft is silent about the moment at which the Bastille was taken. Instead, she claims that 'the accounts of the slaughter, nevertheless, were certainly very much exaggerated; for the fortress appears to have been taken by the force of mind of the multitude, pressing forward regardless of danger'.<sup>443</sup> Rather than describing the violent scenes, she emphasises the significance of the capture of the Bastille. As Steven Blakemore suggested, 'in Wollstonecraft's writings, the Bastille is the monstrous symbol of royal despotism'; she insisted that 'the enthusiasm of the moment rendered a knowledge of the art of war needless; and resolution, more powerful than all the engines and batteries in the world, made the draw-bridges fall, and the walls give way'.<sup>444</sup> In contrast to the point of view of *The New Annual Register*, in which the storming of the Bastille resulted in an 'imperceptible chain of events which human blindness terms accident or chance', Wollstonecraft attributes the taking of the Bastille to the enthusiasm of the multitude.<sup>445</sup>

Both *The New Annual Register* and *View of the Revolution* convey the violence of the Women's March on Versailles vividly, but their views on the cause of the event differ. The periodical stated that this event was 'enveloped in an almost impenetrable cloud of mystery', but 'the democratic writers assert, that a plot was concerted of immense [missing] for the total ruin of the liberty of France'.<sup>446</sup> Wollstonecraft believed firmly in the conspiracy theory, according to which the Duke of Orleans orchestrated the Women's March on Versailles – a stance unlike that of

---

<sup>441</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 87-88,

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 94-95.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 97.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 98. Steven Blakemore, *Crisis in Representation: Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, and the Rewriting of the French Revolution* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), 120.

<sup>445</sup> *The New Annual Register*, 20.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

Williams, who trusted in his patriotism.<sup>447</sup> In a print of *Sergent Recruteur* [Fig.5] by Thomas Rowlandson, published in 1789, the Duke of Orleans extends his right hand to the fishwives, while holding a pike in his left hand. This caricature proves that he had been suspected of manipulating the fishwives since 1789. Excluding *The New Annual Register*, other contemporary historical works had also raised this point.<sup>448</sup> Rabaut Saint-Étienne, for example, reported that The Châtelet had investigated the Women's March on Versailles and claimed that 'M. d'Orleans and M. de Mirabeau had intended to procure the assassination of the Queen' in his *History of the French Revolution*.<sup>449</sup> Unlike Rabaut Saint-Étienne, Wollstonecraft claims that the Duke of Orleans acted alone, not with Mirabeau, and that his action was motivated by vengeance against the royal family: '[H]e was particularly incensed against the queen'.<sup>450</sup> Thus, for Wollstonecraft, unlike the storming of the Bastille, the Women's March on Versailles resulted from an individual desire for revenge, and she attempts to provide evidence to support the suggestion of the Duke of Orleans's involvement in the Women's March on Versailles throughout her accounts of this event.

---

<sup>447</sup> In contrast to Wollstonecraft, in her second volume of *Letters*, Williams stated: 'Mons.d'Orleans has many enemies, who tell you that his patriotism is all affectation. However, since it has been uniform and constant from the first period of the revolution, I know not on what ground this conjecture is founded'. Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France*, third edition (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1796), 91.

<sup>448</sup> John Moore also claimed that there was 'a Secret Committee, consisting of the Duke of Orleans, Messrs, Mirabeau, La Clos, L'Abbé Sieyes, La Touche Treville' and they had 'a scheme for placing the Duke of Orleans in such a distinguished situation in the government'. See John Moore, *A View of the Causes and Progress of the French Revolution* (Dublin : Printed for J. Jones, J. Halpin, R.M. Butler, P. Moore, P. Byrne, P. Wogan, W. Jones, J. Rice, and J. Moore, 1795), 22-23. In *The Annual Register*, the writers removed Mirabeau's name and referred to 'the Orleans cabal' instead, calling them 'the immediate and principal authors of the present disturbances'. See *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1790* (London: Printed for J. Dodsley, in Pall-mall, 1793), 47.

<sup>449</sup> Rabaut Saint-Étienne, *The History of the Revolution of France*, 179. This claim has been reiterated by several modern historians. Christopher Hibbert has noted that 'among them were several men - some of them dressed as women - agents provocateurs in the pay of Duc d'Orléans'. See Christopher Hibbert, *The French Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988), 97-98. John Holland Rose has also suggested that 'it is thought that the factious Duke of Orleans had instigated the march on Versailles'. See John Holland Rose, *The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era, 1789-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), 48.

<sup>450</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 198.



**Fig.5: Thomas Rowlandson, *Sergent Recruteur*. Published 1789, by Samuel Fores, BM 7559; British Museum.**



For Wollstonecraft, the Women’s March on Versailles demonstrated that the storming of the Bastille was an exceptional situation. She makes the difference between the Women’s March on Versailles and the storming of the Bastille explicit in terms of the causes of the events, as well as the participants:

They were strictly speaking a mob, affixing all the odium to the appellation it can possibly import; and not to be confounded with the honest multitude, who took the Bastille. – In fact, such a rabble has seldom been gathered together and they quickly showed, that their movement was not the effect of public spirit.<sup>451</sup>

She differentiates the mob in the Women’s March on Versailles from the ‘honest multitude’ of the Bastille. For Wollstonecraft, it is ‘public spirit’ that marks the difference between the multitude and the mob. Her analysis of the mob also supports her opinion of the Duke of Orleans’ scheme. She attempts to identify the members of the mob of Versailles and to divide it into several groups, whereas the multitude of the Bastille appears united.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:197.

Wollstonecraft claims that the crowd consisted ‘mostly of market women’, ‘the lowest refuse of the street, women who had thrown off the virtues of one sex without having power to assume more than the vices of the other,’ and ‘a number of men’, who followed the women. Once more, she divides the men into three groups: men ‘disguised in women’s clothes’, ‘men in their own garb armed like ruffians’ and ‘some barbarians, volunteers in guilt’, who were ‘spurred on solely by the hope of plunder and a love of tumult’.<sup>452</sup> Here, she argues that the men wearing women’s clothes ‘was not, as has been asserted, a sudden impulse of necessity’.<sup>453</sup> By dividing people into these groups, she also shows that they were motivated differently: Those who worked for the Duke of Orleans attempted to kill the royal family, those who were instigated by the Duke of Orleans demanded bread, and the criminals wanted to plunder the palace.

For Wollstonecraft, the market women’s susceptibility to the plot demonstrates her earlier argument in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which she contended that ‘women, in general, as well as the rich of both sexes, have acquired all the follies and vices of civilization, and missed the useful fruit [...] their senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses’.<sup>454</sup> In the *View of the Revolution*, she argues that the Duke of Orleans selected the market women specifically in order to manipulate them in the interests of his personal revenge:

At this period [the Parisians] were so orderly it required considerable management to lead them into any gross irregularity of conduct. It was, therefore, necessary for the duke’s instruments to put in motion a body of the most desperate women; some of whom were half famished for want of bread, which had purposely been rendered scarce to facilitate the atrocious design of murdering both the king and queen in a broil, that would appear to be produced solely by the rage of famine.<sup>455</sup>

---

<sup>452</sup> Ibid., 6: 196-197.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 6: 201.

<sup>454</sup> Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Woman,” 177.

<sup>455</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 199.

Wollstonecraft differentiates between the market women and the other Parisians, and describes them as people who were sufficiently ignorant and vulnerable to be manipulated. As Fairclough has noted, ‘rather than show the rioters as possessed of innate if neglected humanity, she suggests they are void of reason, which leaves them open to exploitation’.<sup>456</sup>

Wollstonecraft considers the rage of women as that of those ‘who were supposed to be actuated only by the emotions of the moment’.<sup>457</sup> For her, the *poissardes* show that emotional people are easily provoked, and how dangerous ignorant people are. The way in which the *poissardes* were manipulated shows their lack of reason, and demonstrates some women’s ignorance.

Wollstonecraft describes violent scenes of the October March in detail, which is inconsistent with her earlier condemnation of Burke’s ‘most exaggerated description of that infernal night’ in the *Vindication of the Rights of Men*.<sup>458</sup> In the same way as Burke depicts the scene at Versailles as a place ‘polluted by massacre, and strewed with scattered limbs and mutilated carcasses’, she highlights the violence that erupted at the palace.<sup>459</sup> Many scholars, including Emma Major, Joan Landes and Blakemore have shown that Wollstonecraft’s accounts of the March on Versailles are similar to those of Burke.<sup>460</sup> As Blakemore suggested, there were disputed facts around the October March, but ‘Wollstonecraft accepts Burke’s version’.<sup>461</sup> However, I also compare her *View of the Revolution to The New Annual Register*, which provides another way of looking at her view of the March on Versailles, and demonstrate that Wollstonecraft is clearly contemplating philosophical ideas about motivation, and not merely the events of that day.

One of the interesting moments in her account of the Women’s March on Versailles is the death of guards at the palace of Versailles. *The New Annual Register* relates what happened to two *gardes –du-corps*,

---

<sup>456</sup> Mary Fairclough, “Wollstonecraft and Edmund Burke: Instinct, Improvement and Revolution,” in *The Wollstonecraftian Mind*, ed. Eileen Hunt Botting (London: Routledge, 2019), 195.

<sup>457</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 196.

<sup>458</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Men*, 58.

<sup>459</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 164.

<sup>460</sup> See Major, *Madam Britannia*, 263; Blakemore, *Crisis in Representation*, 133-138, and Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 149-151.

<sup>461</sup> Blakemore, *Crisis in Representation*, 135.

Miomandre de Sainte-Marie and Tardivet Du Repaire, who attempted to halt the invasion of the mob on the staircase. While Tardivet Du Repaire ‘was assailed by thousands, and stretched upon the ground’, he ‘at length effected his escape’. In the queen’s chamber Miomandre de Sainte-Marie shouted: ‘[S]ave the queen, madam, her life is in danger — I am here alone against two thousand tigers’, and then shut the chamber door; ‘after a few minutes resistance was desperately wounded with a pike, and left for dead — though he has since recovered’.<sup>462</sup> Even though she includes some accounts taken from the periodical in her descriptions of the October Days, Wollstonecraft does not agree that two guards survived, but writes about the brutality of the mob instead: ‘[C]atching one unfortunate guard by himself, he was dragged down the stairs; and his head, instantly severed from his body, was mounted on a pike, which rather served to irritate than glut the fury of the monsters, who were still hunting after blood or plunder’.<sup>463</sup> She may have referred to Burke’s *Reflections* to write this scene because he also portrayed the death of ‘the centinel at her door’ in order to highlight the brutality of the mob.<sup>464</sup> Identifying the mob as monsters, Wollstonecraft describes the brutal scene graphically, and adds derogatory comments about their behaviour.

Marie Antoinette’s flight from the mob attracted strong attention from contemporary commentators. Burke, in his *Reflections*, says: ‘[A] band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with [the centinel’s] blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked’.<sup>465</sup> Despite this anti-Price satirical print, in which Price watches the mob’s attack on Marie Antoinette’s chamber and her escape, Isaac Cruikshank reproduced Burke’s famous depiction of this scene in *The Doctor Indulged with His Favorite [sic] Scene* (1790) [Fig.6]. In the print, Marie Antoinette runs away barefoot, while the mob pierces her bed with weapons. *The New Annual Register*’s accounts of the queen characterise her as a worried mother, who ‘dressed herself in haste’, and

---

<sup>462</sup> *The New Annual Register*, 59.

<sup>463</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 205.

<sup>464</sup> Burke offers a dramatic description of the death of the centinel, ‘who cried out to her, to save herself by flight — that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give — that they were upon him, and he was dead’. Burke, *Reflections*, 164.

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

asked every person she met to ‘save me and my children’.<sup>466</sup> Unlike Burke’s *Reflections* and *The New Annual Register*, Wollstonecraft does not devote space to depicting the invasion of the queen’s chamber. While Burke is interested in describing the extent of the danger the queen was in at the hands of the ferocious mob, and the writers of *The New Annual Register* focus on the queen making her way to the king’s chamber, Wollstonecraft’s description of the scene places emphasis on revealing evidence of the Duke of Orleans’s involvement:

But she had been alarmed by the tumult, though the miscreants were not long in making their way good, and, throwing a wrapping-gown around her, ran, by a private passage, to the king’s apartment, where she found the dauphin [...] The promptitude and rapidity of this movement, taking every circumstance into consideration, affords additional arguments in support of the opinion, that there had been a premeditated design to murder the royal family. The king had granted all they asked the evening before; sending away great part of the multitude delighted with his condescension; and they had received no fresh provocation to excite this outrage.<sup>467</sup>

Unlike Burke, Wollstonecraft does not portray the scene in which the mob invades the queen’s chamber. Her main interest lies in revealing the conspiracy of the Duke of Orleans. Wollstonecraft shows how quickly the mob’s entrance occurred, which proved that this invasion was ‘a premeditated design to murder the royal family’. She raises the question of the motivation for attacking the palace, and claims that there was ‘no fresh provocation to excite this outrage’. She also claims that, ‘when we compare the singularly ferocious appearance of the mob, with the brutal violation of the apartment of the queen, there remains little doubt, but that a design was on foot against the lives of both her and the king’.<sup>468</sup> These accounts, which are directed at the Duke of Orleans, shows that she is confident of his involvement in the Women’s March on Versailles. As Wollstonecraft’s accounts of the storming of the Bastille and the Women’s March on

---

<sup>466</sup> *The New Annual Register*, 59.

<sup>467</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 205.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, 6: 206.



Versailles show, she appropriates other historical sources, but reinterprets and reshapes these events to present the causes of the events.

**Fig.6: Isaac Cruikshank, *The Doctor Indulged with His Favorite Scene*. Published 1790, by Samuel Fores, BM 7690; British Museum.**



Despite the short period of composition from May 1789 to October 1789, Wollstonecraft's *View of the Revolution* is a voluminous work, which consists of five books, in which each book has three or four chapters. As her advertisement indicates, she organises the subjects in each book with historical facts and her commentary. Unlike the writing in *The New Annual Register*, she interrupts the historical narrative repeatedly to focus on sharing her philosophical reflections throughout her historical work. Throughout *View of the Revolution*, she continues to perform a 'theoretical investigation', in particular, of the state of civilization. As in the introductory letter, she doubts the truth of the claim that 'strong virtues might exist with the polished manners produced by the progress of civilization'; elaborating on this, she reviews and modifies her idea of the

progress of civilisation and applies this to her understanding of the Revolution in her *View of the Revolution*.<sup>469</sup>

Wollstonecraft begins by addressing the question of why polished manners are not accompanied by strong virtue. She revisits her earlier statement that ‘the civilization never extended beyond polishing the manners often at the expence of the heart, or morals’.<sup>470</sup> She remarks

When, therefore, the improvements of civil life consisted almost entirely in polishing the manners, and exercising the transient sympathies of the heart, it is clear, that this partial civilization must have worn itself out by destroying all energy of the mind. And the weakened character would then naturally fall back into barbarism, because the highest degree of sensual refinement violates all the genuine feelings of the soul, making the understanding the abject slave of the imagination.<sup>471</sup>

In investigating the way that ‘the improvements of civil life’ change humans, she revises her earlier argument and states that ‘polishing the manners’ occurs with ‘exercising the transient sympathies of the heart’, rather than with ‘strong virtue’. In *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she warns of the danger of false refinement: ‘their senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, [and] consequently they become the prey of their senses’. Here she suggests that the consequences of ‘polishing the manners’ without raising virtue are disastrous.<sup>472</sup> As O’Brien has argued, the *View of the Revolution* ‘represents the culmination of her analysis of manners, gender roles and morals, which she now considers in the context of their relationship to the history of political culture’.<sup>473</sup> Wollstonecraft synthesises her idea of the state of civilization with her analysis of the causes of the Revolution.

---

<sup>469</sup> Ibid., 6: 444.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid., 6:110. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft argues that ‘the civilization which has taken place in Europe has been very partial, and, like every custom that an arbitrary point of honour has established, refines the manners at the expence of morals’. See Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Men,” 39. *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* opens with her statement ‘the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial’. See also Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Woman,” 109.

<sup>471</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:111.

<sup>472</sup> Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Woman,” 177.

<sup>473</sup> O’Brien, *Women and Enlightenment*, 191.

In the last chapter of *View of the Revolution*, Wollstonecraft returns to her discussion of the progress of civilization again, but this time she focuses on the French nation. She examines how French society has developed in terms of manners and she traces the characters of the French people, which her epistolary project had aimed to examine. She remarks that ‘we have seen the French engaged in a business the most sacred to mankind, giving, by their enthusiasm, splendid examples of their fortitude at one moment, and at another, by their want of firmness and deficiency of judgment, affording the most glaring and fatal proofs of the just estimate, which all nations have formed of their character’.<sup>474</sup> Even though she admits that ‘their enthusiasm’ made the outbreak of Revolution possible, she makes it clear that the French are not suited to exercising the revolutionary principle because of ‘their want of firmness and deficiency of judgement’. Later, Wollstonecraft softened her criticism of the French national character in *A Short Residence in Sweden*: ‘I should have been less severe in the remarks I have made on the vanity and depravity of France, had I travelled toward the north before I visited France’.<sup>475</sup> However, at this point, she expresses strong disappointment in the French people in her *View of the Revolution*. Her philosophical analysis does not provide an optimistic vision of the possibility of a promising future in France.

The last sentence of *View of the Revolution* is ‘it is only the philosophical eye, which looks into the nature and weighs the consequences of human actions, that will be able to discern the cause, which has produced so many dreadful effects’.<sup>476</sup> She again highlights the importance of a philosophical approach in understanding ‘the cause’ of the Revolution and underlines the philosophical nature of her history writing. The *Monthly Review* recognised Wollstonecraft’s ambitions when it described her as ‘a philosopher’ rather than ‘an annalist’, and suggested that ‘the writer’s object is not to relate fact indiscriminately, but to select such proceedings as may make her readers fully acquainted with the nature of the revolution, and impress them with a strong perception of its importance in the political system of Europe’.<sup>477</sup> The *Monthly Review* concluded that her *View of the*

---

<sup>474</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6:231.

<sup>475</sup> Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence in Sweden*, 172.

<sup>476</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Works*, 6: 235.

<sup>477</sup> *Monthly Review, Or Literary Journal* 16 (April 1795), 393-394.



*Revolution* was worthwhile to read as a philosophical piece, not as an eyewitness or journalistic account. Wollstonecraft is not well-known as a historian but, as we have seen in this chapter, her philosophical approach to the Revolution of 1789 was acknowledged at the time as contributing to its historiography.

Wollstonecraft does not have a straightforward relationship with epistolary writing in *View of the Revolution* but, as we have seen, her history writing had its origins in her epistolary project ‘A Series of Letters on the Present Character of the French Nation’, and some of the features of her epistolary writing remain. She continues to explore the reasons why revolutionary principles failed in France, and re-examines her ideas about the state of civilization and the relationship between manners and morals in the historical events of 1789 throughout her *View of the Revolution*. History may have enabled her to strengthen her philosophical thoughts and to form a ‘just opinion’ of the Revolution.

## Chapter Four: Helen Maria Williams's Political Letter Writing

As we have seen in Chapter Three, Mary Wollstonecraft changed her genre from the epistolary to history to write on the French Revolution during the Terror. In contrast to Wollstonecraft, as she uses the familiar letters to write on the revolutionary France in her first two volumes, Helen Maria Williams kept the letter form to comment on the political situations in France between 1793 and 1795. However, her use of the genre was different in each volume. Published between 1790 and 1795, the titles of each volume of Williams's *Letters* suggest important changes in her use of the letter form. She published volumes using the titles *Letters Written in France [...]* *Containing Various Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution* (1790), *Letters from France: Containing Many New Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution* (1792), two volumes of *Letters from France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information Concerning the Most Important Events that Have Lately Occurred in that Country* (1793), and two volumes of *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the 31st of May 1793 till the 28th of July 1794; and of the Scenes Which Have Passed in the Prisons of Paris* (1795). Her first two volumes are mostly composed of 'Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution' and her eyewitness accounts of her trip. However, in the third and fourth of volumes of *Letters* (1793), instead of using autobiographical accounts, Williams writes on 'Information Concerning the Most Important Events' in France and works with her male collaborators. In the fifth and sixth volumes of *Letters* (1795), she addresses her experience of the revolutionary prisons, the Luxembourg prison and the convent of Les Anglaises, with her political comments on the Terror. As the changes in Williams's titles suggest, all the volumes are political, but her strategy for expressing her opinions has changed across the volumes of *Letters*. In this chapter, I will discuss the different ways in which Williams expresses her political comments on revolutionary France in the third, fourth, and fifth volumes of *Letters*.<sup>478</sup>

---

<sup>478</sup> I do not examine the sixth volume of *Letters* in this thesis because the sixth volume engages less actively with Williams's autobiographical account.

Before focusing on Williams's *Letters*, which were written between 1793 and 1795, it is necessary to define the terms 'Girondins', 'Mountains', and 'Jacobins'. According to Marisa Linton, the Jacobins alludes to 'men who had attended the Jacobin Club, either the mother club in Paris, or one of the network of provincial clubs that grew up from 1789'.<sup>479</sup> Among the members of the Jacobin Club, Jacques Pierre Brissot (1754-1793) and his friends competed with other Jacobin members such as Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794).<sup>480</sup> By promoting war against Austria in early 1792, Brissot and his friends had seized power in the Legislative Assembly.<sup>481</sup> When Brissot was expelled in October 1792 and some of his friends left the Jacobins, they used 'the name of the 'Girondins''.<sup>482</sup> After the Legislative Assembly was disbanded and the National Convention created on 21 September 1792, as Simon Schama has shown, Robespierre and his friends 'took the benches high up against the hall [...] which gave the faction the name of the Mountain'.<sup>483</sup> The Girondins were opponents of the Mountain and were more moderate than their rivals in terms of their treatment of Louis XVI. These two parties disagreed over the treatment of Louis XVI after the Insurrection of 10 August 1792. William Doyle has noted that 'the Girondins were attracted by doing nothing—keeping the king a hostage against future eventualities', but the Mountain attempted to obliterate any possibility of restoring Louis XVI.<sup>484</sup> The Girondins were also allies of most of the English expatriates, including Thomas Paine, Wollstonecraft and Williams.<sup>485</sup> 'Mountain' and 'Jacobin' are overlapping terms, but I will follow Williams's use of them. Williams uses 'Mountain' in her third and fourth volumes of *Letters*, but employs 'Jacobin' rather than 'Mountain' in the fifth volume.

---

<sup>479</sup> Marisa Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 8.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-120.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-126.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, 105, 148.

<sup>483</sup> Schama, *Citizens*, 530, 547. Williams also defined the Mountain as 'the faction at the head of which are Robespierre, Danton, and Marat, [which] has taken the name of La Montagne, because its leaders usually place themselves on the most elevated seats in the assembly'. See Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for G.G. AND J. Robinson, 1792), 1: 22.

<sup>484</sup> Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 194.

<sup>485</sup> Wollstonecraft had known the Girondins' members; when she heard the news about twenty-one members of the Girondins having been executed, she was shocked and fainted. See Cecilia Lucy Brightwell, *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie* (London: Longman, 1854), 49.

This chapter proposes that Williams used letters as a political vindication of the Girondins as well as a condemnation of the Jacobins in her *Letters*. I will focus particularly on the three volumes of *Letters* written between 1793 and 1795, and discuss her different use of the letter form throughout the volumes. Before tracing the uses of her letters from the third to the fifth volume of *Letters*, I aim to show Williams's friendships both in England and in France, by reading Williams's and her friends' personal letters. I argue that a focus on friendship is vital in order to understand Williams's political opinions and her self-representation in her published *Letters*. The final two sections of this chapter trace Williams's different uses of letters and different voices in the third, fourth and fifth volumes of *Letters*. My study reveals the narrative structure of the third and fourth volumes of *Letters* to differentiate Williams's voice from those of other collaborators in these volumes, and to examine her analysis of the September Massacres in 1792 and the execution of Louis XVI on 21 January 1793. I will then go on to the fifth volume of Williams's *Letters*, and demonstrate how she uses her firsthand experience of revolutionary prisons and small anecdotes to condemn the Terror.

### **I. Dynamics of Williams's Friendships in England and France**

As I demonstrated in Chapter One, Williams used her friendships with her English peers to prove her loyalty to England in the second volume of *Letters*, but, during this process, her continuous support for the Revolution had a negative effect on her friendships with Hester Piozzi and Sophia Pennington. This chapter discusses her friendships with Piozzi and Pennington further, and shows the way in which different political events tore their friendship apart. Williams's two unpublished letters to Piozzi written on 4 September 1792 and 12 December 1792, respectively show her alienation from her friends in England as well as her opinion about the September Massacres and the trial of Louis XVI. Thus, to understand her later volumes of *Letters*, I argue that it is important to appreciate Williams's sense of alienation from her English friends and her response to the events, the September Massacres and the trial of Louis XVI as expressed in her personal letters. This chapter also examines her friendships in Paris and her

engagement with the Girondins. As Deborah Kennedy has argued, ‘One cannot hope to understand either the *Letters from France* or Williams’s continuing support for the Revolution without knowing the depth of her loyalties to her executed friends and her commitment to the ideals they shared’.<sup>486</sup> Williams’s personal loyalty to her friends translated into political loyalty, which is evident in the third, fourth, and fifth volumes of *Letters*. Thus, it is important to look at her friendship with the Girondins.

As shown in Chapter One, Piozzi, Pennington, and Williams were close, and Piozzi and Pennington shared Williams’s news through letters during Williams’s absence. Personal letters between Piozzi and Williams, and between Piozzi and Pennington, show conflicts among Williams’s English friends. The friends’ letters illustrate how their relationships progressively worsened and how, particularly after the September Massacres, the conflicts intensified between Williams and Piozzi. The September Massacres took place between 2 and 7 September 1792, not long after Williams arrived in Paris again.<sup>487</sup> Williams wrote a letter to Piozzi on 4 September 1792, during the September Massacres. She does not describe this violent event in detail but instead tells Piozzi, ‘I leave to some other period the discussion of the scenes which have lately been acting at Paris’.<sup>488</sup> Then, she comments that:

the massacre of yesterday has filled my mind with a degree of horror which leaves me scarcely the power of holding my pen.—the people of France have indeed been most shamefully betrayed, most cruelly sacrificed to their enemies, but the proscription of yesterday will for ever cast a dark stain on the annals of the revolution—you will hear accounts of it as if it were the mob—but it is a well-known fact that the plan was laid & the list of the proscribed marked by those to whom the people have been the instrument.<sup>489</sup>

---

<sup>486</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 108.

<sup>487</sup> Williams went back to London from Paris in the summer of 1792 and went to France again before the September Massacres.

<sup>488</sup> In 1793, she composed a letter to discuss the September Massacres in her third volume of *Letters*. Helen Maria Williams, Letter to Hester Thrale Piozzi, 12 December 1792, Manchester, John Rylands University Library ENG MS 570, quoted in Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 93.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

Experiencing horror, Williams shows her strong disapproval of this violent event and considers it ‘a dark stain on the annals of the revolution’. Her attempt to inform Piozzi of ‘a well-known fact that the plan was laid & the list of the proscribed marked’ suggests her concern about the misrepresentation of this event and about Piozzi’s understanding of the September Massacres. Even during the event, Williams made some allegations of conspiracy and later, in her third volume of *Letters*, she revealed the names of the conspirators –Robespierre, Georges Danton (1759-1794), and Jean-Paul Marat (1743-1793) – and attempted to demonstrate their involvement of the September Massacres.<sup>490</sup>

In her letter of 7 November 1792, Piozzi expresses her discomfort with Williams’s continuing support for French republican principles. Piozzi was aware of Williams’s sickness from Pennington’s letter on 4 November 1792.<sup>491</sup> Piozzi is cynical, and says that ‘Helena Williams should not be sick now all goes her own way [...] I will write to her some of these days’.<sup>492</sup> Piozzi suggests that Williams would be pleased because the National Convention had formally put an end to the monarchy, and announced that France was a Republic.<sup>493</sup> Piozzi’s letter to Williams not been found, but considering Williams’s response to the letter of 12 December 1792, Piozzi might have written to her about the abolition of the monarchy and severely criticised Williams for her support for republican principles. Piozzi’s harsh letter elicited the following response from Williams:

You supposed me deeply occupied by the affairs of this world and raging with democratic fury—and on this supposition you write to me (at least I fancied you did) not with your usual kindness, but in somewhat of a harsh tone which cost me some pain—[...] I am sure you feel some affection for me, and why should any difference in political opinions cast even a temporary cloud over our friendship [...] as for myself I never took so little interest in politics as I have done lately—I have been too sick

---

<sup>490</sup> Williams, *Letters From France*, I: 7-9.

<sup>491</sup> Pennington says that ‘I have this moment received a Letter from *Cecilia* Williams, dated Paris and apologizing for Helen’s Silence, who she says has been and is still extremely Ill and confined to her Bed with a Fever’. Pennington, Letter to Piozzi, 4 November 1792, quoted in a note of Piozzi’s letter to Pennington, in Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters*, 2: 83.

<sup>492</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Pennington, 7 November 1792, in *Ibid.*, 2: 82.

<sup>493</sup> Linton, *Choosing Terror*, 137.

and too sorrowful to have the power of considering whether monarchies or republics are best—and at present all my feelings are on the side of Lewis the sixteenth whom whether he be guilty or innocent we know to be unfortunate, which gives him a sufficient claim to pity.<sup>494</sup>

Williams seems hurt by Piozzi's letter and worries that their different 'political opinions cast even a temporary cloud over our friendship'. Piozzi seems to accuse Williams of being 'deeply occupied by the affairs this world and raging with democratic fury'. Williams defends herself, saying 'I have been too sick and too sorrowful to have the power of considering whether monarchies or republics are best'. She attempts to placate Piozzi with her sympathy for Louis XVI, which is consistent with her tendency to present sympathy with suffering throughout her published letters, even when it is the royal family. However, against her wishes, their friendship seems to be irreversibly broken over political differences.

The series of letters sent in 1793 between Williams, Piozzi and Pennington show the progress of this estrangement. Asking Piozzi to send her regards, Williams expresses her longing to be with her friends: 'no revolution has taken place, in my heart – it still clings still "untraveled" turns to the friends I have left behind, and laments the sad the strange transition in my destiny'.<sup>495</sup> By using Oliver Goldsmith's lines of *The Traveller Or, a Prospect of Society* (1764), 'Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see, / My heart untravell'd fondly turns to thee', Williams wanted Piozzi to know that her heart filled with 'the friends' rather than the 'revolution'.<sup>496</sup> However, Williams's longing letter did not seem to change Piozzi's determination to sever the relationship with Williams. Piozzi tells Pennington that she received the previous letter and says that 'I will not write to her' even though Williams gave Piozzi her address in her letter of 21 July.<sup>497</sup> Pennington also, tells Piozzi in her letter of 13 September 1793, 'I have no desire for her address – tho not exactly on the same principles with you – but that circumstanced as she is, tis impossible to write to, or

<sup>494</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 93.

<sup>495</sup> Williams, Letter to Piozzi, 21 July 1793, Eng MS 570.

<sup>496</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *The Traveller, or a Prospect of Society. A Poem. Inscribed to the Rev. Mr. Henry Goldsmith. By Oliver Goldsmith, M.B.* (1764), second edition (London: Printed for J. Newbury, 1765), 2.

<sup>497</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Pennington, 10, August, 1793, in Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters*, 2: 136.

hear from her with that Freedom'.<sup>498</sup> As we have seen in Chapter Three, Wollstonecraft's letters written in 1793 demonstrate that there must have been censorship on letters in 1793. Pennington expresses concern about censorship on letters and refuses to write a letter to Williams. Despite Piozzi's long silence, Williams sent a letter to Piozzi from Switzerland on 10 August 1794, after she fled from Paris to Switzerland with Stone and a political writer, Benjamin Vaughan (1751-1835), to avoid another imprisonment. Williams gave her address again, but she does not seem to have received a reply from Piozzi. In the fifth volume of *Letters*, Williams tells the reader that shortly after she arrived in Switzerland, she sent letters to her English friends, but that they '(with few exceptions indeed!) returned no answers'.<sup>499</sup> Williams seems to have acknowledged that her friendships with Piozzi and Pennington had deteriorated markedly. The correspondence between these three women shows that Piozzi and Pennington could not reconcile their friendship with Williams's different political perspective on the Revolution.

Yet both Piozzi and Pennington struggled to reconcile politics with their friendship with Williams. Even though they did not respond to Williams's letters, they still sought to confirm her safety and read her publications, as their correspondence shows. For Piozzi, Williams was not the only friend to support revolutionary principle. In her letter to Pennington of 19 July 1793, Piozzi shows her determination to alienate herself from her friend, the Reverend Charles Este:

Mr. Este – more Democate than ever – is going to Italy, and asked me for Letters: You may be sure I refused them, tho' so much obliged to him, and so full of personal Good Wishes for his Welfare as an Individual–It hurt me at the moment- but

Beyond or Love-or Friendship's sacred Band

Beyond myself I prize my native Land;

---

<sup>498</sup> Pennington, Letter to Piozzi, 13 September 1793, Eng MS 566.

<sup>499</sup> Helen Maria Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account of the French Revolution by Helen Maria Williams: Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France*, ed. Jack Fruchtman (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 109.



So I refused Letters of Recommendation to a Man whose only Business and Pleasure is the Dissemination of Principles I abhor, and who goes out of England only to return with those principles more firmly adhering to him: he was a delightful Creature before ever he went to France.<sup>500</sup>

For Piozzi, Este used to be ‘a delightful Creature before ever he went to France’ and she still wishes him well ‘as an Individual’. However, she shows her willingness to distance herself from ‘a Man whose only Business and Pleasure is the Dissemination of Principles’ by including a popular poem in her letter.<sup>501</sup> The speaker of the poem prioritizes ‘my native land’ above ‘Love’, ‘Friendship’s sacred Band’, and ‘myself’. Piozzi identifies herself with the speaker and implies that her loyalty to England is more important than her friendship with him. The same applies to Williams. Piozzi wrote in her letter to Este on 26 June 1793, ‘these detestable politics [...] have already forced me to forbear corresponding with Dear Helen Williams whom you know, and whom as an Individual I must ever love’.<sup>502</sup> Piozzi’s repeated references to ‘an Individual’ suggest that she is still fond of her friend aside from her politics, but she could not reconcile ‘these detestable politics’ with her attachment to Williams.

Pennington also struggles with her friendship with Williams and her conflicting emotions toward Williams in her letter to Piozzi on 11 January 1796:

I supposed it will be a long time before I get a sight of Helen Williams’s last Publication which you announce to me; tis but lately I have seen the proceeding one, containing the account of her imprisonment in the Luxembourg, which I read with a strange mixture of sensations! –Disgust of her Principles & contempt of her Conduct, were as sadly combined in my mind, with the Sensibility & Compassion I cou’d not help feeling for the sufferings & dangers of one whom I had so long known, so tenderly Esteemed & so frequently & delightfully associated

<sup>500</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Pennington, 19 July 1793, in Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters*, 2: 128.

<sup>501</sup> In the note of a letter of 19 July 1793, Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom have suggested that Piozzi may have been borrowing the lines from ‘a popular anonymous poem, one line of which reads, “Our Friendship’s sacred bands asunder torn,”’ in *Ibid.*, 2: 129.

<sup>502</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Charles Este, 26 June 1793, in *Ibid.*, 2: 127.

with, as the Xtian Notions she set out with & the Pagan System she seems to have adopted, is blended together in her Writings. – Her Feelings must have become as French as her Principles, or she cou'd never speak with so much Wit & Levity of Situations & Circumstances, that I cannot think of without Horror.<sup>503</sup>

In light of ‘the account of her imprisonment in the Luxembourg’, Pennington may have read Williams’s fifth volume of *Letters*. For Pennington, Williams was ‘one whom I had so long known, so tenderly Esteemed & so frequently & delightfully associated with’ that Pennington could not help feeling compassion for her old friend’s imprisonment. Yet, at the same time, as a Christian she could not accept ‘the Pagan System she seems to have adopted’. She shows a strong aversion to Williams’s continuing support for French republican principles and her publication. However, as her reference to ‘contempt of her Conduct’ shows, Pennington’s antipathy toward Williams also comes from her relationship with John Hurford Stone.

Before Williams’s relationship with John Hurford Stone (1763-1818) was revealed in public, Pennington and Piozzi had recognized that something was transpiring between Williams and Stone. When she visited England during the summer of 1792, Williams went to Piozzi’s Streatham Park with him. Piozzi told Pennington, ‘Helena Williams should mind who she keeps Company with’ and informed her that ‘that fine Man She brought to our house lives in no Emigrant’s Hotel at Paris but a common Lodging, in a Place where Numbers lodge: he carried no Wife over with him, nor Children, they are left at Hackney I am told- her Mother and Sister are at Montreuil’.<sup>504</sup> When she learned that Williams had fled to Switzerland with Stone, Piozzi told Pennington, ‘Sweet Helena’s Defection from the right Path hurts all her Friends exceedingly’.<sup>505</sup> It suggests that her relationship with Stone made her position more problematic.

While she grew distant from her friends in England, Williams fostered her social connections with the expatriates in Paris and the leading Girondin members while she was in Paris. Mary Favret has translated a

<sup>503</sup> Pennington, Letter to Piozzi, 11 January 1796, Eng MS 567.

<sup>504</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Pennington, 15 September 1792, in Piozzi, *The Piozzi Letters*, 2: 68.

<sup>505</sup> Piozzi, Letter to Pennington, 4 August, 1794, in *Ibid.*, 2: 189.

description of Williams's salon in Paris by the French writer, François-René de Chateaubriand (1768-1848) in *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe* (1848-1850): 'it was a rendezvous for the most famous orators, the best-known men of letters, the most celebrated painters, the most popular actors and actresses, the most fashionable dancers, the most illustrious foreigners, the lords of the Court, and the ambassadors of Europe'.<sup>506</sup> Chateaubriand's account of Williams's salon shows that Williams formed a sociable community in Paris. Williams's salon plays a role as a bridge between English emigrants and French Girondins. When Wollstonecraft arrived in Paris in December 1792, she visited Williams and wrote to her sister, Everina Wollstonecraft, 'I shall visit her frequently, because I rather like her, and I meet french company at her house'.<sup>507</sup> Her letter suggests that Williams provides a place for English and French people to meet in Paris.

An event in which took place on 18 November 1792 shows Williams's position among the group of expatriates. According to David Erdman's research, 'The Friends of the Rights of Man associated at Paris', otherwise known as the 'British Club', was formally established in November 1792. Members included Thomas Christie (1761-1796), Paine, and Joel Barlow (1754-1812) and Williams's lover, Stone.<sup>508</sup> Some of the members assembled at White's Hotel on 18 November 1792 to celebrate victory in the battle of Jemappes by Dumouriez on 6 November 1792.<sup>509</sup> They drank thirteen toasts, one of which was for 'the Women of Great Britain, particularly those who have distinguished themselves by their writings in favour of the French revolution. Mrs. (Charlotte) Smith and Miss H. M. Williams'.<sup>510</sup> It is unclear whether Williams attended this event because in a letter to Piozzi on 12 December 1792 she claims that 'I lay almost at the point of death stretched upon a bed to which I have been confined two long months'.<sup>511</sup> However, this toast suggests that Williams and her *Letters* were well recognized amongst the expatriate society.

---

<sup>506</sup> François-René Vicomte de Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, ed. with intro. Georges Moulinier, (Paris:Gillimard, 1951), trans. and quoted in Mary Favret, "Spectatrice as Spectacle: Helen Maria Williams at Home in the Revolution," *Studies in Romanticism* 32, no. 2 (1993): 273.

<sup>507</sup> Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 215.

<sup>508</sup> David Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790-1793* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986), 226, 305.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, 226, 229.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 229-230.

<sup>511</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 92.

Williams was more inclined to engage with the Girondins than she was with the Jacobins, and she fostered personal relationships with important members of the Girondins such as Marie-Jeanne Roland (1754-1793) and Jean-Paul Rabaut Saint-Etienne (1743-1793). The Girondins increasingly lost power because of Dumouriez' desertion and militants finally arrested the Girondins during the Insurrection between 31 May and the 2 June 1793.<sup>512</sup> Williams witnessed the fall of her friends and described the Insurrection in detail in her fifth volume of *Letters*. She took risks to help them when they were arrested and imprisoned; Etienne had been hiding in her house for a while when the Girondins were arrested on 31 May 1793.<sup>513</sup> Williams visited Sainte-Pélagie prison to see Madame Roland and kept some manuscripts that Roland had sent her, but Williams needed to burn them before her own imprisonment.<sup>514</sup> These stories enabled Williams to write unique eyewitness accounts of the events in France in the fifth volume of *Letters*.

Williams's friends may have asked Williams to be a spokeswoman for the Girondins and to criticise the Mountain publicly. Later, in the fifth volume of *Letters*, she announces: 'I had not concealed that I was employed in writing some letters which have since been published in England, in which I had drawn the portrait of the tyrant in those dark shades of colouring that belonged to his hideous nature'.<sup>515</sup> 'Some letters that have since been published in England' may have referred to the letters in Williams's third and fourth volumes of *Letters*. Her friendship with the Girondins provided a strong motivation for writing the third, fourth and fifth volumes of *Letters*. In a comparable way to which she acted as the link between the English and Girondins in her salon in Paris, Williams played a role as a bridge between her readers and the Girondins in her published *Letters*.

---

<sup>512</sup> Linton, *Choosing Terror*, 170-172.

<sup>513</sup> He went to another friend's house to hide himself, but he was discovered. See Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 119.

<sup>514</sup> English expatriates such as Paine, Stone and Williams, who had supported and associated with the Girondins previously, were jailed in October of 1793.

<sup>515</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 107.

## II. A Vindication of the Girondins in Williams's Third and Fourth Volume of *Letters*

Published anonymously, the third and fourth volumes of Williams's *Letters* were co-authored with collaborators whose names were not revealed. Even though the identity of the collaborators is not stated explicitly, the advertisement in the third volume suggests that 'it is only fair, however, to premise that they are not all the production of the same pen. The Letters, Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, in Vol. III. which contain a history of the campaign of 1792, are by another hand [...] The concluding letter is by a third person'.<sup>516</sup> The *Analytical Review* indicates who the collaborators are: '[A]ll the letters, except those respecting the campaign of 1792, which are said to have been written by Mr. Stone, and the concluding one, which is attributed to Mr. Christie, are from the elegant pen of miss Williams'.<sup>517</sup> However, it is still uncertain whether Christie wrote the concluding letters of both the third and fourth volume, or whether he wrote just one of the concluding letters. There has been disagreement regarding the number of letter writers involved, as well as concerning the authorship of each letter. Favret suggested that 'Volumes III and IV hold letters from at least four and possibly five letter-writers, together with an Advertisement by an unknown editor (Williams herself?)'.<sup>518</sup> Kennedy contended that Williams wrote Letter I in the third volume and Letters I, II, III and IV in the fourth volume, while Stone produced Letters II, III, IV, V, and VI in the third volume, and Christie composed Letter V in the fourth volume.<sup>519</sup> However, I propose that Williams only wrote Letter I in the third volume, and Letters I and II in the fourth volume. I suggest that Stone composed Letters II, III, IV, V and VI in the third volume and Letters III and IV in the fourth volume, and that Christie wrote either both concluding letters in these volumes or only one of the concluding letters. I will examine the internal evidence in letters in the third and fourth volumes of *Letters* in order to identify letters written by Williams.

---

<sup>516</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, I: Advertisement, n.p.

<sup>517</sup> *Analytical Review, or History of Literature Domestic and Foreign* 17 (October 1793), 127.

<sup>518</sup> Mary Favret, *Romantic correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80.

<sup>519</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 98.

Because she sometimes has a different understanding of the events in France to theirs, it is important to distinguish Williams's voice from those of her male collaborators in order to understand her ideas. In terms of Stone's voice, it is easier to distinguish his letters from those by other collaborators. As the advertisement shows, one of her collaborators (presumably Stone) wrote Letters II, III, IV, V and VI in the third volume, in which 1792 appears as the 'first year of the Republic'.<sup>520</sup> He wrote the 'First Year of the Republic' rather than '1792', but Williams does not write the year of the republic in this way in any volume of *Letters*. The fact that the year also appears as the 'Second year of the Republic' in Letters III and IV of the fourth volume, and that Williams suggests that she will include the letter of her friend – 'who favoured me with the account you have read of Dumourier's campaign' in Letter II – proves Stone's composition of Letter III and Letter IV in the fourth volume. I also suggest that Williams did not write both concluding letters in the third and the fourth volumes. In the first letter of the third volume, when she explains the need for her friend's letters, she states '[B]efore I give you an account of the trial, it is in the order of time to mention the victories obtained by the French arms'.<sup>521</sup> This implies that she writes about 'the trial' of Louis XVI in her next letter, which appears in the first letter of the fourth volume; thus, it does not appear to be Williams who wrote the concluding letter in the third volume. The concluding letter in the third volume has the note 'Lille, December 12, 1793', but '1793' might have been a mistake because this volume was published before October 1793.<sup>522</sup> According to a letter written by Williams to Piozzi on 12 December 1792, Williams was not at Lille, but was in Paris on 12 December 1792. Christie presumably wrote the final letter in the fourth volume written in March of 1793. The letter writer calls the recipient 'Madam', and expresses different ideas about the September Massacres. While Williams insists upon the Mountain members' involvement in this event, this letter writer claims that 'proofs have not been brought forward'.<sup>523</sup> Thus, it is difficult to consider this letter as Williams's work, as

---

<sup>520</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, I: 30, 61, 86, 119, 159.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>522</sup> A review of Williams's third and fourth volumes of *Letters* in the *Analytical Review* published in October of 1793 proves that these volumes were published before October 1793. *Analytical Review*, 121-127.

<sup>523</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, II: 155, 207.

it draws a different conclusion from the one that she presented in three of the twelve letters in the third and fourth volumes.

Even though her letters only account for one-quarter of the third and fourth volumes, as the second edition of these volumes (1796) with her name on the title page shows, Williams was the central figure in this collaboration, and she seems to have been the editor of these volumes.<sup>524</sup> Except for the attached correspondence between Jean-Nicolas Pache (1746-1823) and Charles François Dumouriez (1739-1823) at the end of the third volume of *Letters*, these volumes contain Williams's letters and those that she received from her friends. Stone's letters are included in these two volumes as a product of Williams's editorial decision. At the end of Letter I in the third volume, Williams says 'I have it in my power to send you a most interesting detail, which I received in a series of letters from one of my English friends [...] who, having had the best opportunities of observation, has not only traced with accuracy, as well as energy, the great leading events of the campaign'.<sup>525</sup> She concludes this letter with the comment: 'the letters I now inclose will convey to your mind, in a high degree, that sort of gratification'.<sup>526</sup> She makes it clear that she attaches Stone's letters as a supplement to 'a history of the campaign of 1792'.<sup>527</sup> In Letter II in the fourth volume, she informs her recipient of another set of attached letters:

The friend who favoured me with the account you have read of [Dumouriez's] campaign, [Stone] has written the history of his desertion of the popular cause in a manner so clear and interesting, that, instead of attempting to trace the event myself, which I should do very imperfectly, I shall subjoin my friend's letter; and content myself with giving you a sketch of [Dumouriez's] character.<sup>528</sup>

She informs her recipient that she is leaving the work of writing about Dumouriez' 'desertion of the popular cause' to Stone, who wrote '[Dumouriez'] campaign' in the third volume. The following letter by him,

---

<sup>524</sup> Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France, Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information* (1792), second edition (London, Printed for G.G. and K. Robinson, 1796).

<sup>525</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, I: 28.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 29.

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid.*, I: Advertisement. n.p.

<sup>528</sup> Williams, *Letters From France*, II: 60.

dated seven days earlier than Letter II, shows what took place between Williams and ‘the friend’. In terms of his remark, ‘you impose a task on me’, Williams seems to have asked Stone to write about Dumouriez’ desertion, which implies her central role in these volumes.<sup>529</sup>

Williams’s letters in the third and fourth volumes of *Letters* serve as an indictment of those responsible for the violent events in France, and as a vindication of those who were against them. She describes important events such as the September Massacres, the execution of Louis XVI and Dumouriez’ defection from the perspective of the Girondins. Letter I in the third volume, dated on 20 January 1793 – four days after the execution of Louis XVI – opens with Williams’s sympathy for Louis XVI. As she shows her pity for Louis XVI in her personal letter to Piozzi on 12 December 1792, in the third volume of *Letters*, she writes:

the feelings of the heart, which run a faster pace than the reasonings of the head, reject for a while all calculation of general good or evil, and melt in mournful sympathy over “greatness fallen from its high states.” But, when we consider the importance which this event may have in its consequences, not only to this country, but to all Europe, we lose sight of the individual sufferer, to mediate upon the destiny of mankind.<sup>530</sup>

As she had told her readers in the first volume, ‘however dull the faculties of my head, I can assure you, that when a proposition is addressed to my heart, I have some quickness of perception’.<sup>531</sup> Williams’s ‘heart’ that is faster than her ‘reasonings of the head’, feels sorrow for his misfortune. She has no choice but to pity Louis XVI but, unlike the first volume, rather than remaining immersed in ‘mournful sympathy’, she here moves on to ‘consider the importance which this event may have in its consequence’. Williams shows that she can have both ‘the feelings of the heart’ and ‘the reasonings of the head’.

Williams opens her letter expressing sympathy towards Louis XVI, but she returns to 1792 and provides her analysis of the September Massacres rather than describing the execution of the king. She attributes

---

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 74.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 1-2.

<sup>531</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 140.



the cause of the September Massacres to a ‘band of conspirators’ including Robespierre, Danton and Marat. Exactly who was responsible for the September Massacres has been a controversial topic among contemporary and modern historians. On 29 October 1792, the leading member of the Girondins, Jean-Baptiste Louvet (1760-1797), attacked Robespierre for his involvement in the September Massacres, but Robespierre contradicted Louvet’s claim: ‘[I]n the midst of this universal turmoil, the approach of foreign enemies awakes a feeling of indignation and of vengeance’.<sup>532</sup> Robespierre denied any involvement in the September Massacres and ascribed the violent event to fear of ‘the approach of foreign enemies’. A French historian, Pierre Caron, has argued that no one was responsible because this violent event resulted from mass fear; Schama has agreed with Caron, but he has also demonstrated the possibility that specific people, such as Danton, were involved.<sup>533</sup> Thus, Williams’s accusation that Robespierre, Danton and Marat conspired to agitate the mob demonstrates that her interpretation of the September Massacres was shared with, as well as being affected by, the Girondist party.

Letter I in the third volume offers details of the September Massacres in the manner of a report documenting the process of this violent event, but Williams’s main interest lies in uncovering the involvement of the conspirators. As can be seen in Chapter Three, in the *Historical and Moral View of the Revolution* (1794), Wollstonecraft shows the Duke of Orleans’ involvement in the Women’s March on Versailles; here, Williams attempts to demonstrate the Mountain’s involvement in the September Massacres. While Williams describes what happened between the 2nd and 4th of September in Paris, she pays attention to revealing the Mountain’s participation in the September Massacres. She insists that ‘the extirpation of priests, of the imprisoned agent of the aristocracy, and proscribed conspirators [...] would certainly have proved insufficient to the accomplishment of their design’.<sup>534</sup> Williams suggests that ‘there is no doubt that the proscription extended to the most distinguished members of the Assembly, and to the most virtuous and respectable men of the

---

<sup>532</sup> Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre, and English Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 43-44.

<sup>533</sup> Schama, *Citizens*, 533-534.

<sup>534</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, I: 10.

executive council'.<sup>535</sup> She may have heard about what happened to Madame Roland during the September Massacres from the woman herself. In the *Memoirs of Madame Roland* (1795), Madame Roland noted that 'a crowd of 200 or so men turned up at the Ministry of the Interior, calling for the minister [her husband Jean-Marie Roland] and demanding weapons'.<sup>536</sup> She told them he was absent and watched them leave, but she saw some people including 'a man [who] in his shirt sleeves waving a sword and yelling out that all the ministers were traitors' on 2 September 1792.<sup>537</sup> Schama suggested that the Girondins, particularly Brissot, used the September Massacres to attack the Jacobins and 'believed [...] that [Brissot] and his friends had also been earmarked for extermination and had only narrowly escaped'.<sup>538</sup> As did Brissot and Madame Roland, Williams considered the September Massacres to be a cunning plan to eliminate political enemies.

Williams's nervousness about the Parisian mob is evident in her account of the September Massacres in the third volume of *Letters*. Williams reveals a friendly attitude towards the Parisian crowd at the Fête de Fédération in July of 1790.<sup>539</sup> However, as Mary Fairclough argued, 'Williams's later accounts exhibit a loss of confidence in such unregulated communication'; this positive impression of the crowd begins to change from the second volume onwards.<sup>540</sup> When she watched 'a fête at Paris', to celebrate the Swiss of Chateau-vieux on 15 April 1792 at the Palais de Bourbon, Williams wrote, 'they could associate no ideas of patriotism with the Palais de Bourbon, and accused us of aristocracy as they approached'.<sup>541</sup> Nothing happened, but she may have been aware of the danger posed by the crowd. Her deprecatory account of the September Massacres in the third volume shows her disillusionment with the Parisian crowd. She comments that:

---

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 10-11.

<sup>536</sup> Jeanne Manon Roland, *The Memoirs of Madame Roland: A Heroine of the French Revolution*, ed. Paul De Roux (Lancaster: Published by Moyer Bell, 1997), 68.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.

<sup>538</sup> Schama, *Citizens*, 538.

<sup>539</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 63-73.

<sup>540</sup> Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 81.

<sup>541</sup> Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France: Containing Many New Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution* (1792), third edition (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1796), 144-145.

They have beheld the inhuman judges of that night wearing the municipal scarf which their polluting touch profaned, surrounded by men armed with pikes and sabres dropping with blood—while a number of blazing torches threw their glaring light on the ferocious visages of those execrable judges, who, mixing their voices with the shrieks of the dying passed sentence with a savage mockery of justice on victims devoted to their rage. They have beheld the infernal executioners of that night, with their arms bared for the purposes of murder, dragging forth those victims to modes of death at which nature shudders.<sup>542</sup>

The above accounts evoke Burke's portrayal of the Women's March on Versailles in October of 1789 in his *Reflections*. Burke described the mob at Versailles as 'a band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with [the centinel's] blood' and their victims as 'with all the parade of an execution of justice, [being] cruelly and publickly [*sic*] dragged to the block and beheaded'.<sup>543</sup> Even though they describe different events, Burke and Williams use similar language to describe the ferocity of the mob. Williams's descriptions of the mob as 'the inhuman judges' and the 'execrable judges' suggest that she condemns the mob for its judgement of whether the prisoners are guilty, and dismisses their behaviour as 'a savage mockery of justice on victims devoted to their rage'.

Williams's other purpose in this first letter of the third volume is to distinguish the Mountain from the Girondins. She not only explains the names of these two parties using a footnote, but also emphasises the way in which each party engages with the people in Paris.<sup>544</sup> She insists that the Mountain 'endeavour[s] to lead the people to the last degree of moral degradation, by teaching that the love of order is the love of despotism, and that the most unequivocal proof of patriotism is to remain in permanent

---

<sup>542</sup> Williams, *Letters From France*, I: 6.

<sup>543</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, 164.

<sup>544</sup> Williams added a long footnote to explain the differences between them: 'the party *Gironde* is so called, because the department of the *Gironde* has proved more fertile than any other in talents; and most of distinguished members of each national assembly have belonged to the *Gironde*, but not all; for La Source is not of that department. The faction at the head of which are Robespierre, Danton, and Marat, has taken the name of *La Montagne*, because its leaders usually place themselves on the most elevated seats in the assembly; and have also heard that the inhabitants of mountains are ardent lover of liberty'. See Williams, *Letters from France*, I: 22.

insurrection'.<sup>545</sup> Her criticism of the Mountain echoes Brissot's address to his constituents in *The Anarchy and Horrors of France, Displayed by a Member of the Convention* (1792). He argued that 'order alone could procure this Tranquillity' and 'all Insurrection could not but be fatal to the People, and to Liberty; that the Doctrine of eternal Insurrection must draw after it pillage and massacres'.<sup>546</sup> Pointing to the dangers of insurrections, Brissot emphasised the importance of order and attempted to persuade people not to be incited by anarchists. Similarly to Brissot, Williams highlights the importance of order and condemns the Mountain strongly for inciting insurrection, which also shows her connection to the Girondins.

This first letter in the third volume is instructive and highly partisan, as Williams argues specifically in support of the Girondins. The letter serves as an introduction to the third and fourth volumes of *Letters* by providing information that is essential for understanding the events in France that she and her collaborators relate. As Kennedy suggested, 1793 was, for Williams 'a transitional period in which she moved towards establishing herself as a serious political commentator'.<sup>547</sup> Unlike her first two volumes of *Letters*, by showing her strong political voice throughout the letter, she indicates that she does not avoid commenting on political events in either of these volumes.

The fourth volume of *Letters* begins with Williams's account of the trial and execution of Louis XVI. As I have mentioned, in Letter I in the third volume, Williams states: '[W]hen we consider the importance which this event may have in its consequences, [...] we lose sight of the individual sufferer, to meditate upon the destiny of mankind'.<sup>548</sup> She documents the trial and the execution of Louis XVI in the first letter in the fourth volume of *Letters* by presenting the description of his personal suffering, as well as by offering an analysis of the political consequences of his execution. Comparing his life as king to his current situation as a prisoner at the bar of the National Convention, she insists that 'when a king undergoes the same

---

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., I: 23.

<sup>546</sup> Brissot Warville, *The Anarchy and Horrors of France, Displayed by a Member of the Convention* (London: Published by and may be had of All the Booksellers in Town and Country, 1792), 10-11.

<sup>547</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 97.

<sup>548</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, I: 2.

punishment as another man, he is in truth punished more'.<sup>549</sup> The climax of Williams's account of the suffering of Louis XVI is the final exchanges Louis XVI has with his family, rather than the day of his execution.

Williams takes an emotional tone and writes:

Alas! when imagination pictured the anguish of such an interview, it was not necessary to look back upon the former elevation of the sufferer, in order to pity the gloomy transition in his fate! It was not necessary to recollect, that he who was the following morning to suffer death upon the scaffold, was once the first monarch of Europe, and would be led to execution through the streets of his own capital! It was enough to consider this unfortunate person as a man, a husband, a father! Ah, surely, amidst the agonies of final separation from those to whom we are bound by the strongest ties of nature and affection!<sup>550</sup>

Williams adopts an emotional tone. These accounts accentuate his individual being rather than his importance as a political figure. She responds to his distress and highlights his separation from the rest of his family. Her use of familial bonds to elicit sympathy is similar to that in the story of Du Fossé in the first volume. In the same way that she shows how the tyranny of the Ancien Regime inflicts pain on Du Fossé and his family in her first volume, she insinuates here that another form of tyranny threatens the royal family.

Charlotte Smith, as we have seen Chapter Three, also shows sympathy for Louis XVI in her letter to Barlow and in *The Emigrants*. She insists that his crime is simply "being born a Monarch", and that he would not be dangerous if he lost power. However, her views about his guilt differ from those of Williams.<sup>551</sup> Unlike Smith, Williams finds Louis XVI guilty, and argues that the execution of the king was necessary. Williams provides evidence of Louis XVI's guilt by relating the testimonies against him, such as 'his having joined the league of despots, in their impotent crusade against

---

<sup>549</sup> Williams, *Letters from France*, II: 5.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*, II: 29.

<sup>551</sup> Wollstonecraft also felt sympathy for the King. She wrote, 'I can scarcely tell you why, but an association of ideas made the tears flow insensibly from my eyes, when I saw Louis sitting, with more dignity than I expected from his character, in a hackney coach, going to meet death, where so many of his race have triumphed'. Wollstonecraft, Letter to Joseph Johnson: 26 December 1792, in Wollstonecraft, *The Collected Letters*, 216.

the liberty and happiness of his people'.<sup>552</sup> Williams's analysis of the execution of Louis XVI illustrates the different potential outcomes of different convictions: 'if Lewis the sixteenth were detained in captivity, the bourgeois of Paris, [...] might demand the restoration of their dethroned monarch'; 'if the king were sent into exile, he would [...] return at the head of a powerful army'; 'the National Convention felt itself reduced to the dismal alternative of leading the king to the scaffold, or of seeing not only himself but his whole family torn in pieces by the enraged populace'.<sup>553</sup> By offering alternative consequences of the different sentences, Williams explains, as a political commentator, why the execution of the king was inevitable, and differentiates carefully between sympathy for Louis XVI and criticism of his crime.

Williams's voices in the third and fourth volumes of *Letters* differ markedly from those in the first two volumes. Using anonymity, she experiments with a new voice in these volumes and shows her critical analysis of the political situations in France. Although her voice is sometimes sympathetic in her account of Louis XVI, she attempts to balance the sympathetic representation of Louis XVI and the analysis of his execution. She develops this sympathetic and critical voice in her following volume of *Letters*. Throughout her letters, Williams shows her political disappointment with the Revolution, saying that "this was indeed the golden age of the revolution — But it is past!"<sup>554</sup> Despite her disillusionment with the Revolution, she may have had hope at the point before the fall of the Girondins. She insists that "upon the whole, the French revolution is still in its progress" and asks "who can decide how its last page will finish?"<sup>555</sup> However, her hope faded following the fall of the Girondins. In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss Williams's response to the Terror and explore how she tells a story about herself and her friends during this period.

### III. Female Victims of the Terror in Williams's Fifth volume of *Letters*

---

<sup>552</sup> Williams, *Letters From France*, II: 8-9. Doyle has shown that 'on the question of the king's guilt there was near unanimity: 693 deputies voted guilty and none voted for acquittal'. See Doyle, *The French Revolution*, 195.

<sup>553</sup> Williams, *Letters From France*, II: 25-27.

<sup>554</sup> Williams, *Letters From France*, I: 6.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*, I: 19.

Williams returns to an intimate tone in the fifth volume of *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the 31th of May 1793 till the 28th of July 1794; and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris*, in contrast to the previous two volumes. As the title suggests, this volume presents the political situation in Paris from the day of the fall of the Girondins, until the death of Robespierre, as well as her experience in ‘the Prisons of Paris’. She was imprisoned with her sister and mother in the Luxembourg prison and the convent of Les Anglaises between October and December 1793, and in June 1794 she fled to Switzerland with Stone to escape the dangers presented by of the Reign of Terror. As in her first two volumes of *Letters*, in the fifth volume she uses her firsthand experience in the prisons, but she also develops the political voice that she had used to describe the Jacobin insurrection in the third and fourth volumes of *Letters*. Thus, her fifth volume of *Letters* synthesizes her eyewitness and political accounts of the Terror in the epistolary genre. Williams combines the immediacy of reporting and feeling with the more reflective tone of the political historian.

The fifth volume contains nine letters, which are divided into four parts: her experience in the Luxembourg prison, her account of the political events related to the insurrection against the Girondins, her episode in the convent of Les Anglaises, and many anecdotes about the victims of the Terror. Williams starts the fifth volume with a letter from Switzerland dated September 1794. In the letter, she looks back on the previous year in Paris, and she describes her experience of the Luxembourg prison in the following three letters. She then records the political events related to the insurrection against the Girondins. Even though the insurrection happened before Williams’s imprisonment, she positions this political account after writing about her private suffering. She emphasises that it was she who suffered Robespierre’s tyranny, to provide justification for writing about related political events. After her political account of the insurrection in 1793, in Letter VII she returns to the time after the fall of Robespierre in 1794 and informs her recipient of her arrival in Paris from Switzerland. She reflects on her escape from the Terror and continues to describe her second imprisonment in the convent of Les Anglaises with a number of anecdotes about the victims

of the Terror. By placing her sufferings first and then giving her criticism of the Terror, she protects herself from a potentially hostile reaction to her and her *Letters*, and establishes her position as a reliable narrator of the Terror.

As we have seen, the first letter of each volume of Williams's *Letters* serves as an introduction to the volume as a whole. In the first letter of the fifth volume, she writes to her recipient that 'the picture I send you of those extraordinary events [...] is at least marked with the character of truth, since I have been the witness of the scenes I describe, and have known personally all the principal actors'.<sup>556</sup> She illustrates 'the character of truth' of her letters through her position as 'witness', as well as via her friendship with 'all the principal actors'. In the first volume, she notes 'a friend's having been persecuted, imprisoned, maimed, and almost murdered under the antient government of France, is a good excuse for loving the revolution'.<sup>557</sup> In the fifth volume, her friendship with French people who 'were dragged to execution' is her justification for her condemnation of the Terror. Williams's own experiences between 1793 and 1794 also give her leave to attack the Terror. In the first volume of *Letters*, she took on the roles of a witness of revolutionary France and a narrator of her friends' suffering under the ancien regime. In the third and fourth volume she was a commentator on the events in France, but, in the fifth volume, Williams becomes an active player in revolutionary France.

Williams uses the narrative of her life, from the time of her arrest to her imprisonments, to represent herself as the victim of the Terror, inviting readers to witness what she has been through in France. Her description of the evening just before her imprisonment highlights the danger she was in as a British subject: she was having tea with a French writer, Jacques-Henri Bernardin de St. Pierre (1737-1814), and listening to 'a description he gave me of a small house which he lately built in the centre of a beautiful island of the river that flows by Essonne',<sup>558</sup> when a friend interrupted, informing the party that 'a

---

<sup>556</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 49.

<sup>557</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 140.

<sup>558</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 50.



degree had just passed in the national convention, ordering all the English in France to be put into arrestation in the space of four-and twenty hours, and their property to be confiscated'.<sup>559</sup> Williams received many visitors at her home in Paris, but at that moment her sociable house became a place of danger. She was arrested that same night at two in the morning. The place that used to be open to many people changed in nature, to become a place of danger and arrest. Ironically, Williams had previously written about the imprisonment of her friend Du Fossé, a man in the Bastille 'who had been confined in a dungeon thirty-five years', and in the fourth volume of *Letters* she had written about Louis XVI when he was imprisoned, but in volume V she became a prisoner of the revolutionary prisons herself. She expresses her fear and agony through depicting distressing scenes in the Luxembourg prison. When she describes 'the beautiful gardens of the Luxembourg', which she sees 'through our grated windows', she associates her 'fortunes' with the fallen leaves.<sup>560</sup> By conveying her sadness, she evokes sympathy from her readers, as she presents herself as a sentimental heroine who suffered under the oppression of Robespierre.

Williams takes advantage of her position as a witness to provide information on revolutionary prisons in her letters. The unique nature of her account, resulting from her privileged knowledge as a prison inmate, received the attention of the press: *The English Review* commented that the way in which *Letters* 'relates to the French prisons [...] is beyond all comparison the most interesting and instructive portion of it'.<sup>561</sup> Williams herself argues that her letters are valuable in terms of the 'scene of calamity which myself and my family were alone doomed to witness, and of which our fellow captives had no share'.<sup>562</sup> She tells us how the prisoners lived, outlining the regulations in the revolutionary prisons, and how the prisoners spent their time.<sup>563</sup> But she particularly focuses on her fellow prisoners Marc-David Lasource

---

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>561</sup> *English Review, or an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature* 26 (October 1795), 241.

<sup>562</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 62.

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.*, 56-57.

(1763-1793) and Charles-Alexis Brûlart de Sillery (1737-1793).

Williams, her sister and her mother could meet Lasource and Sillery at night because their apartments adjoined each other.<sup>564</sup> Sillery composed a history of the Revolution, but he told Williams that he needed to burn the manuscript.<sup>565</sup> She portrays Sillery in anguish:

The old man often turned back on the past and wept, and sometimes enquired with an anxious look, if we believed there was any chance of his deliverance. Alas! I have no words to paint the sensations of those moments!—To know that the days of our fellow-captives were numbered—that they were doomed to perish—that the bloody tribunal before which they were going to appear, was but the pathway to the scaffold—to have the painful task of stifling our feelings.<sup>566</sup>

Her description of Sillery in anticipation of his trial invites sympathy from readers, and his faint hope that he may be saved makes the scene even more distressing. She cannot give vent to her feelings, but she expresses her sorrow only afterwards on paper. She describes herself as the victim of the Terror and, at the same time, as the witness to the other victims.

In letters IV, V and VI of the fifth volume, Williams's voice changes from intimate and emotional to critical when discussing the series of events related to the Jacobin insurrection. She focuses on political material through relating anecdotes about the death of Marat and the execution of Marie Antoinette. Just before concluding Letter III, she says 'let me, before I conduct you to our new prison, give you a short account of the political events'.<sup>567</sup> As we have seen in Chapter One, Williams was concerned about her feminine propriety as a woman writer, and throughout her first two volumes she tries to reconcile her support for the Revolution with normative gender roles regarding women's propriety and with her loyalty to England. Yet, in the third and the fourth volumes, as Kennedy has argued, anonymity 'gave her freedom to publish her pro-Girondin account while the Girondins were still fighting for their political and actual lives in summer 1793'.<sup>568</sup> In the fifth volume, without anonymity, she does not hesitate to write on political topics. She records the history of the fall of the Girondins by including appendices

---

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>568</sup> Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams*, 98.

to provide further information – such as the protest signed by seventy-three Girondin deputies against the arrest of twenty-two of their members – and by using a long quotation from Jean-Baptiste Louvet de Couvray’s *Narrative of the Dangers to which I have been Exposed* (1790).<sup>569</sup> By juxtaposing personal experiences of prison life with political commentary, Williams delivers a firsthand account, as well as producing a historical and political account of the Terror.

One of the features of Williams’s narrative is her use of anecdotes. She combines her account of revolutionary France with several character-based anecdotes, which not only relate stories about historical events, but also reveal the characteristics of the individuals she portrays. Just as in the fourth volume Williams featured many anecdotes about Louis XVI’s trial and execution, in the fifth, Williams relates a series of anecdotes that illuminate characters’ personal information – such as their educational backgrounds – as well as presenting their trials and executions. One of the most striking examples of her use of character-based anecdotes is her account of Charlotte Corday (1768-1793).

Charlotte Corday, who thrust a knife into Marat while he was in the bath on 13 July 1793, represented for many an extreme model of revolutionary violence.<sup>570</sup> In her first volume of *Letters*, Williams appears uncomfortable with violent acts by women during the Women’s March on Versailles, describing ‘the Poissardes; who, with savage ferocity, held up their morsels of bread on their bloody pikes’.<sup>571</sup> The account of Corday shows how Williams deals with Corday’s violent acts and is reconciled to Corday as a revolutionary heroine. Before examining Williams’s descriptions of Corday, I will first show the representations of Corday in France, which will help us identify the different strategies that Williams took to describe Corday in her fifth volume of *Letters*.

Corday caught public attention for assassinating Marat. The fact that a woman had murdered one of the influential Jacobin deputies shocked the Jacobin party and observers at home and abroad.<sup>572</sup> She received ‘three cross-examinations’ by ‘the Revolutionary Tribunal’ and ‘the court’s chief prosecutor’ in which ‘they did all their best to draw from her information

---

<sup>569</sup> From the third volume of *Letters*, Williams includes appendices to offer further explanations.

<sup>570</sup> Madelyn Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 293.

<sup>571</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 99.

<sup>572</sup> Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses*, 328.

that would prove the existence of an extensive Girondin plot to kill Marat'.<sup>573</sup> The Jacobin party also circulated hostile mockeries of Corday in the press, promoting the image of Marat as a martyr and Corday as a monster in France.<sup>574</sup> The *Répertoire du tribunal révolutionnaire* also accused her of being masculine in July 1793:

This woman, who they say was very pretty, was not pretty at all; she was a virago, fleshier than fresh, graceless, unclean like almost all female wits and philosophers....Charlotte Corday was twenty-five; that is, in our mores, almost an old maid, and especially with a mannish demeanor and a boyish stature....This woman absolutely threw herself out of her sex; when nature recalled her to it, she felt only disgust and boredom; sentimental love and its gentle emotions cannot come near the heart of a woman with pretensions to knowledge, wit, strength of character, the politics of nations. [...] Right-thinking, amiable men do not care for women of this type: so the latter make themselves scorn the sex that scorns them.<sup>575</sup>

Corday's feminine countenance is denied, and her body is masculinized: she is described as possessing 'a mannish demeanor and a boyish stature'. The writer also criticises her for neglecting the natural attributes of women, and he mocks her unattractiveness. The main criticism in this hostile attack on Corday is that she did not have feminine attributes both inside and out. Lynn Hunt uses this newspaper account to argue that 'Women who acted in the public sphere of politics would be described as transgressing sexual boundaries and contributing to the blurring of sexual differentiation'.<sup>576</sup> In contrast to Corday's representation circulated by the Jacobins, Williams's

---

<sup>573</sup> Schama, *Citizens*, 629. Adriana Craciun has also suggested that 'the Jacobins also immediately circulated another suspicion, which Corday vigorously denied throughout her trial, that she acted as agent of male Girondin conspirator'. See Adriana Craciun, "The New Cordays: Helen Craik and British Representations of Charlotte Corday, 1793-1800," in *Rebellious Heart: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Craciun and Kari Lokke (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 201, and Sarah Catherine Burdett, "Marital Women in the British Theatre: 1789-1804" (PhD., University of York, 2016), 158-223.

<sup>574</sup> Gutwirth, *The Twilight of the Goddesses*, 328.

<sup>575</sup> *Répertoire du Tribunal Révolutionnaire*, 1793, trans. and quoted in *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>576</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Family Romance of the French Revolution* (1992. Reprint, Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 82.

portrait of Corday is more feminine than the portraits of Corday in France and shows the compatibility of female heroic behaviour with femininity.

Williams offers another representation of Corday, contradicting the widespread portrayal of her. At the beginning of this account, the contrast between the martyr Marat and the monster Corday is inverted. She describes him as ‘a loathsome reptile’, whilst Corday is described as someone who sacrificed her life for her country.<sup>577</sup> Williams also denies the statement that the Girondins were behind her, quoting the Girondin Jean-Baptiste Louvet de Couvray’s statement that ‘I declare and solemnly attest that she never communicated to us a word of her design [...] Did we not know that he was then languishing under a fatal disease, and had but a few days to live?’<sup>578</sup> Underlining Corday’s individual agency, Williams denies the Girondins’ involvement in Marat’s murder.

Williams emphasises the femininity of Corday’s behaviour while she traces her life, from Caen to her death at the guillotine in Paris on 17 July 1793. Williams uses information from the witnesses who met Corday in person to challenge derogatory representations. Quoting an account of Couvray who met her at Caen, Williams refutes the depiction of Corday as masculine: ‘there was in her countenance, which was beautiful and engaging, and in all her movements, a mixture of softness and dignity, which were evident indications of a heavenly mind’.<sup>579</sup> She also provides account of Corday at the revolutionary tribunal, which she heard from ‘a friend of mine who had sat near her during the trial’.<sup>580</sup> As Adriana Craciun has noted, the friend must be Stone, who was one of Corday’s counsellors.<sup>581</sup> When Williams describes Corday during the trial, she claims that ‘there was so engaging a softness in her countenance’ that ‘it was difficult to conceive how she could have armed herself with sufficient intrepidity to execute the deed’.<sup>582</sup> By using other people’s accounts of Corday, Williams contradicts the masculine image of Corday and highlights her feminine appearance.

Williams does not dwell on the murder, simply noting that Corday ‘drew out a knife which she had purchased for the occasion, and plunged it

---

<sup>577</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 91-94.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>581</sup> Craciun, “The New Cordays,” 206-207.

<sup>582</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 92.

into his breast'.<sup>583</sup> Williams focuses more on Corday's motive, which was based on republican principles, such as 'a strong attachment to liberty', and portrays Corday as an embodiment of republican virtue.<sup>584</sup> Williams reconstructs Corday's account in her fifth volume:

It was a duty she owed her country and mankind to rid the world of a monster, whose sanguinary doctrines were framed to involve the country in anarchy and civil war, and asserted her right to put Marat to death as a convict already condemned by the public opinion. She trusted that her example would inspire the people with that energy which had been at all times the distinguished characteristic of republicans.<sup>585</sup>

The language she uses, such as 'duty', 'right', and 'public opinion', as well as her republican ideas, suggests that this self-sacrificing heroine is well qualified to be a republican. Williams attempts to reconcile Corday's sense of republican ideals with her assassination of Marat. Combining anecdotal evidence of Corday's femininity with the account of the assassination of Marat, Williams attempt to rehabilitate images of Corday circulated by the Jacobins.

Yet, in Letter VII of the fifth volume, Williams goes back to the previous sentimental voice, and elucidates the situation she faced in France between her emancipation from the imprisonments and her exile to Switzerland. Even after she was released with her family, she was still in a perilous position. She remarks that

[i]n the mean time the English newspapers came regularly to the committee of public safety, in which passages from my letters were frequently transcribed, and the work mentioned as mine; and those papers were constantly translated into French for the members of the Committee.<sup>586</sup>

For Williams, the fact that the English newspapers, which included excerpts from her letters and her work, 'were constantly translated into French for

---

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> Ibid., 91-92.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid., 92. As Craciun has noted, Williams repeatedly uses the term 'energy', 'which Corday had proudly claimed during her trial'. See Craciun, "The New Cordays," 208.

<sup>586</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 108.

the members of the Committee', was life threatening during the Terror. Williams continued to convey her fear – 'I passed the winter at Paris, with the knife of the guillotine suspended over me by a frail thread' – and she shows her intense anxiety during her journey to Switzerland in June 1794.<sup>587</sup> In this fifth volume, she tells her story herself, and stresses her suffering and fear as a victim of the Terror as well as the sufferer of the criticism of the English newspapers.

Compared to her account of the imprisonment in the Luxembourg prison, Williams's description of her confinement in the convent of Les Anglaises is relatively short. Instead, in the last letters of volume five, Williams offers various anecdotes of the victims of the Terror. Many minor figures who were executed during the Terror appear in these letters. Each anecdote enables her to give her readers evidence for the oppression of Robespierre's tyranny. From among many anecdotes, I would particularly like to highlight Williams's representation of her friend, Madame Roland, as a revolutionary heroine.

Unlike her account of Corday, which consists of information received from other people, in her depiction of Roland Williams makes use of more direct evidence, such as a visit to Roland and Roland's own writing. As the wife of the Minister of the Interior, Roland was an influential figure among the Girondins, and was well known for her assistance to her husband.<sup>588</sup> Roland was arrested on 1 June 1793, and the official charges against her were that she was 'a schemer who had presided over many gatherings of the Girondist faction and who, even while in prison, had secretly corresponded with the proscribed men'.<sup>589</sup> The last charge suggests that 'she had entertained intimate relations with some of her husband's friends'.<sup>590</sup> As Lucy Moore has noted, 'spurious reports about [Roland's] life and last moments leaked out in the years following her death'.<sup>591</sup> By the time Williams wrote about Roland in the fifth volume of *Letters*, she may have already heard about rumours surrounding Roland. By including Roland's own testimony in her appendices, and introducing it by saying that

---

<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-108.

<sup>588</sup> Lucy Moore, *Liberty: The Lives and times of Six Women in Revolutionary France* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 163.

<sup>589</sup> Gita May, *Madame Roland and the Age of Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 284.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>591</sup> Moore, *Liberty*, 255.

‘I shall transcribe a copy of her defense taken from her own manuscript’, Williams allows Roland to speak herself in her fifth volume.<sup>592</sup> Here, there is a parallel between Williams and Roland. Williams’s friends and some of the English periodicals, as we have seen earlier in Introduction and in this chapter, were gossiping about Williams. Williams relates her experiences in the prisons and her escape from Paris with her own voice, and, similarly, she provides an opportunity for Roland to speak herself, by including Roland’s statement in her fifth volume.

Rather than directly contradict the accusations, Williams reveals Roland’s domestic side in anecdotes. Williams’s portrait of Madame Roland in her *Letters* bolsters her virtuous image with several anecdotes about Roland. Williams’s friendship with Roland is key here, as it licences her claims to privileged knowledge of the case. The women’s friendship had flourished since Williams arrived in France in 1790, and they moved in overlapping circles.<sup>593</sup> As Linton has suggested, friendship takes an important role in revolutionary politics during the conflict between the Girondins and the Mountain.<sup>594</sup> Some people used their friendship to attack their friends, who then became enemies; Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794), for example, published his pamphlet, *Jean-Pierre Brissot Unmasked* (1792) to ‘inflict a very personal revenge on the former friend who had slighted him’.<sup>595</sup> Unlike Desmoulins, Williams transforms inside information into a defence of Madame Roland. She presents an image of Roland as wife and mother with an anecdote of her visit to the prison of St. Pélagie. When Williams asks Roland about her daughter, Roland ‘burst into tears; and at the overwhelming recollection of her husband and her child, the courage of the victim of liberty was lost in the feelings of the wife and mother’.<sup>596</sup> By showing that ‘the feelings of the wife and mother’ is stronger than ‘the courage of the victim of liberty’, Williams shows Madame Roland’s affection for her husband and daughter, which coincides with Roland’s own self-presentation in the appendices.

---

<sup>592</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 231. Madame Roland defends herself by putting forward the image of a devoted wife and claims that she retreated to the private sphere. She also completely refuses to admit the allegation of the relationship with Duperret, claiming that ‘I wrote to this deputy, only because I found it difficult to write to any other’ and ‘I belong to the virtuous and persecuted Roland’. See *Ibid.*, 285, 288.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>594</sup> Linton, *Choosing Terror*, 141-142.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>596</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 115.



Williams not only highlights Roland's feminine attributes but also positions Roland as the martyr of liberty and as the ideal of a Republican woman. Remembering conversations with Roland, Williams refers to Roland's 'ardent attachment to liberty' and considers her 'one of those glorious martyrs who have sealed with their blood the liberty of their countries'.<sup>597</sup> Roland is also depicted as the antithesis of Robespierre, who is demonized and depicted as a new tyrant in Williams's publications. Just before her account of Roland, she portrays him as one of those who 'endeavour to hide those emotions of his inhuman soul which his eyes might sometimes have betrayed', whilst Roland is depicted as having 'uncommon sweetness' and eyes that 'beamed with the brightest rays of intelligence'.<sup>598</sup> Roland's 'enlarged sentiments of philanthropy' are the reverse of Robespierre's inhuman brutality.<sup>599</sup> Williams recounts Roland's execution to support her claim. The first person executed is in a privileged position because the others 'feel multiplied deaths at the sound of the falling instrument, and the sight of the bloody scaffold'.<sup>600</sup> Even though Roland was assigned the first execution, she attempts to yield to another person after she 'observed the dismay of her companion'.<sup>601</sup> Roland's compassion and sympathy for others underline Robespierre's brutality. Williams shows Roland's roles of mother and wife as well as presents her as a revolutionary heroine.

In the fifth volume of *Letters*, Williams provides extensive evidence of the brutality of the Terror, but I particularly focus on her depictions of female victims, including herself. Her accounts of Corday and Roland suggest the ways in which Williams sees new types of revolutionary heroines. As Chris Jones has claimed, Williams's female victims are not 'the heroines of sentimental novels, languishing in imagined terrors or prey to mental distraction, but strong women facing the guillotine with the heroic firmness of those dying in a great cause'.<sup>602</sup> However, Williams portrays herself as a sentimental heroine who was imprisoned and needed to escape from the horrors of the Terror. In the same way as she relates her friend's

---

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>598</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> Chris Jones, "Helen Maria Williams and Radical Sensibility," *Prose Studies* 12, no.1 (1989): 12.

suffering in ‘Memoirs of Mons. and Madame du F–’ of the first volume, she narrates stories of her hardship during the Terror. In this context, the fifth volume serves as the memoir of Helen Maria Williams.

It was brave of Williams to use her published letters as a criticism of the Jacobins and as a eulogy to her Girondin friends. By responding to the circumstances she faced, she kept experimenting with narrative form within the epistolary genre, and made active decisions about her epistolary writings. She used her time in prison to comment on revolutionary France from the perspective of a martyr of liberty, becoming one of the prisoners whose stories she had recounted in earlier volumes. I conclude this chapter by examining a review of the fifth volume of *Letters* in the *Critical Review* in August 1795. The *Critical Review* recognizes the changing nature of Williams’s *Letters*:

We could not help remarking also some change in the political sentiments of our author; and from her we may judge that a similar salutary change is wrought upon the inhabitants of France in general. When we say a change, we would not be understood to speak of a change of principles; the principles of Miss Williams remain the same, and she is still substantially as much the friend of liberty as before; but her sentiments are corrected by that great teacher—experience. We no longer discern the wild enthusiasm of democracy, —no longer the same prejudices against aristocracy, which were cherished in France in the first periods of the revolution, and which our author had in some degree imbibed,—no longer the same fond expectation of perfectibility in human affairs, nor the same attachment to political speculation and theory.<sup>603</sup>

The *Critical Review* argues that we need to distinguish between her political principles and her political sentiments. As the above passage shows, Williams’s support of republican principles continued during the Terror, but the enthusiasm for the Revolution that Williams expressed in the first volume of *Letters* does not appear in the later volumes. I do not agree with the reviewer’s argument that ‘her sentiments are corrected by that great

---

<sup>603</sup> *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* 14 (August 1795), 361-362.

teacher—experience’, as I do not think Williams needed correction, but as I have shown, experience did change her sentiments and her voices. As we have seen in Chapter One, Williams presented herself as a naive female witness, claiming that ‘my political creed is entirely an affair of the heart; for I have not been so absurd as to consult my head upon matter of which it is so incapable of judging’.<sup>604</sup> However, after the third volume of *Letters*, she changes her innocent voice to a highly judgmental and critical voice, and gives analysis of political events. After going through all these political events and watching the changing Revolution throughout her years in Paris, Williams developed and established herself as a political commentator of the French Revolution, someone whose opinions were quoted in newspapers and recorded by the offices of the Revolution itself.

---

<sup>604</sup> Williams, *Letters Written in France*, 91.

## Conclusion

This thesis has traced three women writers' changing responses to the French Revolution from 1790 to 1795, and has explored the ways in which they used different genre to express their opinions on the French Revolution. Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft all experienced revolutionary France for themselves, and their witnessing changed their ideas of the Revolution and influenced their choice of genres. By paying attention to the reasons for their moves between genres or within genre, I have shown the many obstacles they faced as women authors publishing on the Revolution, especially as the British response to the Revolution became increasingly hostile. I have also argued that genre was central to these women's attempts to reconcile their inner conflicts concerning discrepancies between what they expected and what they saw.

This study has demonstrated the important role of the published epistolary form across genres in the revolutionary debate in Britain, while highlighting the significant role of personal letters in terms of their connection to published letters. By reading published and unpublished letters together, I have revealed important connections between these two different types of letters. Williams used her personal letters in her published correspondence, while her friends such as Piozzi, Pennington, and Seward commented on Williams's published volume of *Letters* in their personal correspondence. Correspondence between friends also provides crucial context to help us understand not only the circumstances the writers faced but also their friends' reactions to the published works. By using an interdisciplinary approach, I have told undiscovered stories of these writers' lives in the early 1790s and have uncovered the complicated relationship between their engagement in the Revolution debate in Britain and their social interactions with their friends.

Combining close readings of the works of these writers with their unpublished correspondence has enabled me to show that for Williams, Smith, and Wollstonecraft, changes in genre and their uses of the letter form are linked in important ways to their shifting personal and political landscapes. As Williams closes her account of Madam Roland in her fifth volume of *Letters* by announcing that 'her name will be recorded in the

annals of history', I would like to conclude my thesis by proposing that the names of Williams, Wollstonecraft, and Smith are carved in the history of British responses to the French Revolution.<sup>605</sup>

---

<sup>605</sup> Williams, *An Eye-Witness Account*, 117.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

## Primary Sources

### Manuscript Collections

Helen Maria Williams, Letters to Hester Thrale Piozzi, Manchester, John Rylands Library, ENG MS 570

Penelope Sophia Pennington, Letters to Hester Thrale Piozzi, Manchester, John Rylands Library, ENG MSS 566

### Newspapers, Periodicals and Journals

*Analytical Review, or History of Literature Domestic Foreign*

*The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1790*

*British Critic, and Quarterly Theological Review*

*Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*

*Diary or Woodfall's Register*

*English Chronicle*

*English Review, or an Abstract of English and Foreign Literature*

*The General Magazine and Impartial Review*

*The Gentleman's Magazine*

*London Chronicle*

*Monthly Review, Or Literary Journal*

*The New Annual Register or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1791*

*Public Advertiser*

*St. James's Chronicle*

*True Briton*

*Whitehall Evening Post*

### **Printed Texts**

Boothby, Brooke. *A Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*. London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1791.

Boswell, James. *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. 2 vols. London: Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, 1791.

Boswell, James. *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. Third edition. 3 vols. London: Printed by Henry Baldwin, for Charles Dilly, in the Poultry, 1793.

Brightwell, Cecilia Lucy. *Memorials of the Life of Amelia Opie*. London: Longman, 1854.

Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Edited by Conor Cruise O'Brien. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.



—. *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*. Edited by Thomas Copeland. 9 vols. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958.

Christie, Thomas. *Letters on the Revolution of France*. London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1791.

Cowper, William. *The Task, a Poem, in Six Books*. London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1785.

Godwin, William. "Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman.'" In *Mary Wollstonecraft, Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and William Godwin, Memoirs of the Author of 'The Rights of Woman,'* edited by Richard Holmes, 205-273. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1987.

Goldsmith, Oliver. *The Traveller, or a Prospect of Society. A Poem. Inscribed to the Rev. Mr. Henry Goldsmith. By Oliver Goldsmith, M.B.*. 1764. Second edition. London: Printed for J. Newbury, 1765.

Hawkins, Letitia Matilda. *Letters on the Female Mind*. 2 vols. London: Printed for Hookam and Carpenter, 1793.

Macaulay, Catharine. *Letters on Education. With Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*. London: C. Dilly, 1790.

Mackintosh, James. *Vindiciae Gallicae: A Defence of the French Revolution*. London: Printed for G.G. J. and J. Robinson, 1791.

Montagu, Mary Wortley. *The Turkish Embassy Letters*. Edited by Teresa Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2012.

Moore, John. *A View of the Causes and Progress of the French Revolution*. Dublin: Printed for J. Jones, J. Halpin, R.M. Butler, P. Moore, P. Byrne, P. Wogan, W. Jones, J. Rice, and J. Moore, 1795.

- More, Hannah. *Considerations on Religion and Public Education*. London: Printed for John Francis, and Charles Rivi, 1794.
- Johnson, John. *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley*. 2 vols. London: H. Colburn, 1823.
- Paine, Thomas. *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*. London: J. Parsons, 1792.
- . *Rights of Man*. Edited by Claire Grogan. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2011.
- Piozzi, Hester Lynch. *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LLD. During the Late Twenty Years of His Life*. Edited by Arthur Sherbo. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- . *The Piozzi Letters: Correspondence of Hester Lynch Piozzi, 1784-1821 (formerly Mrs. Thrale)*. Edited by Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom. 6 vols. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991.
- Pope, Alexander. *An Essay on Man, in Epistles to a Friend. Epistle II*. London: Printed for J. Wilford, 1733.
- Price, Richard. *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*. London: T. Cadell, 1789.
- Priestley, Joseph. *Letters to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*. Birmingham: Printed by Thomas Pearson, 1791.
- Rabaut, Jean-Paul. *The History of the Revolution of France. Translated from the French of M. Rabaut de Saint-Etienne*. Translated by James White. London: printed for J. Debrett, 1792.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded*. Edited by Tom Keymer and Alice Wakely. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

—. *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady*. Edited by Angus Ross. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985.

Roland, Jeanne Manon. *The Memoirs of Madame Roland: A Heroine of the French Revolution*. Edited by Paul De Roux. Lancaster: Published by Moyer Bell, 1997.

Rous, George. *A Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*. London: Printed for J. Debrett, 1791.

Seward, Anna. *Letters of Anna Seward: Written Between the Years 1784 and 1807*. Edited by Archibald Constable. 6 vols. Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1811.

Smith, Charlotte. *Charlotte Smith: Major Poetic Works*. Edited by Claire Knowles and Ingrid Horrocks. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2017.

—. *The Collected Letters of Charlotte Smith*. Edited by Judith Phillips Stanton. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.

—. *Desmond*. Edited by Antje Blank and Janet Todd. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001.

Stanhope, Charles. *A Letter from Earl Stanhope, to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*. London: Printed by George Stafford, 1790.

Sterne, Laurence. *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. Edited by Katherine Turner. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2010.

Warville, Brissot. *The Anarchy and Horrors of France, Displayed by a Member of the Convention*. London: Published by and may be had of All the Booksellers in Town and Country, 1792.

Williams, Helen Maria. *An Eye-Witness Account of the French Revolution by Helen Maria Williams: Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France*. Edited by Jack Fruchtman. New York: Peter Lang, 1997.

—. *Letters from France: Containing Many New Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution, and the Present State of French Manners*. 1792. Third edition. London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, 1796.

—. *A Farewell for Two Years, to England. A Poem in Letters Written in France*. London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1791.

—. *Letters From France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information*. 2 vols. London: Printed for G.G. AND J. Robinson, 1793.

—. *Letters Written in France: in the Summer 1790, to a Friend in England, Containing Various Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution*. Edited by Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2001.

—. *Poems*. Edited by Jonathan Wordsworth. Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1994.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Edited by Janet Todd. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

—. *A Vindication of the Rights of Men in a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke; Occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. Edited by David Lorne Macdonald and Kathleen Dorothy Scherf. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997.

—. "Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark." In *Mary Wollstonecraft, Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and William Godwin, Memoirs*

- of the Author of *'The Rights of Womam,'* edited by Richard Holmes, 63-199. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1987.
- . *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Edited by Janet Todd. 7 vols. Washington Square, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1989.

### Secondary Sources

- Backscheider, Paula. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.
- Baldick, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Fourth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Barrell, John. *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Barrell, John, and Jon Mee. "Introduction" to *Trials for Treason and Sedition, 1792-1794*. Edited by John Barrell and John Mee, 9-41. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2006.
- Blakemore, Steven. *Crisis in Representation: Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, and the Rewriting of the French Revolution*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997.
- . "Revolution and the French Disease: Laetitia Matilda Hawkins's Letters to Helen Maria Williams." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 36, no.3 (1996): 673-691.
- Brant, Clare. *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

—. “Love Stories? Epistolary Histories of Mary Queen of Scots.” In *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, edited by Amanda Gilroy and Wil Verhoeven, 74-98. Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 2000.

Brewer, Emily Marie. “A Lady Novelist and the Late Eighteenth-Century Book Trade: Charlotte Smith’s Letters to Publisher Thomas Cadell, Sr., 1786-94.” PhD., University of North Carolina, 2013.

Brodie, Alexander. *The Scottish Enlightenment, 1730-1790*. Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2001.

Burdett, Sarah Catherine. “Marital Women in the British Theatre: 1789-1804.” PhD., University of York, 2016.

Butler, Marilyn. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Claeys, Gregory. *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Colley, Linda. *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 – 1837*. 1992. Reprint, London: Yale University Press, 2014.

Craciun, Adriana. “The New Cordays: Helen Craik and British Representations of Charlotte Corday, 1793-1800.” In *Rebellious Heart: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, edited by Craciun and Kari Lokke, 192-232. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.

Curran, Stuart. “Charlotte Smith: Intertextualities.” In *Charlotte Smith in British Romanticism*, edited by Jacqueline Labbe, 175-188. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009.

Davis, Michael. “Barlow, Joel (1754-1812).” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004. Accessed December 17, 2018. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/63596/>.

Dart, Gregory. *Rousseau, Robespierre, and English Romanticism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Dickinson, Harry. "The Political Context." In *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, edited by Pamela Clemit, 1-15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Dieckmann, Herbert. "Philosophy and Literature in Eighteenth-Century France." *Comparative Literature Studies* 8, no.1 (1971): 21-41.

Ellis, Markman. *The Politics of Sensibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Erdman, David. *Commerce Des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790-1793*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986.

Donald, Diana. *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.

Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. 1988. Reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Fairclough, Mary. *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

—. "Wollstonecraft and Edmund Burke: Instinct, Improvement and Revolution." In *The Wollstonecraftian Mind*, edited by Eileen Hunt Botting, 183-197. London: Routledge, 2019.

Favret, Mary. *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

—. "Spectatrice as Spectacle: Helen Maria Williams at Home in the Revolution." *Studies in Romanticism* 32, no. 2 (1993): 273-295.

Feilla, Cecilia. *The Sentimental Theatre of the French Revolution: Performing Virtue*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

Fletcher, Loraine. *Charlotte Smith: A Critical Biography*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.

Garnai, Amy. "A letter from Charlotte Smith to the Publisher George Robinson." *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 19, no. 4 (2007): 391-400.

—. *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Gerard, William Blake. *Laurence Sterne and the Visual Imagination*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Gilmartin, Kevin. *Writing against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790-1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Gilroy, Amanda, and Will Verhoeven. "Introduction" to *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, edited by Amanda Gilroy and Will Verhoeven, 1-28. Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 2000.

Guest, Harriet. *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

—. *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Gutwirth, Madelyn. *The Twilight of the Goddesses: Women and Representation in the French Revolutionary Era*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Hay, Douglas, and Nicholas Rogers. *Eighteenth-Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.



Hibbert, Christopher. *The French Revolution*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1988.

Hill, Bridget. *The Republican Virago: The Life and Times of Catharine Macaulay, Historian*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

Hill, Draper. *The Satirical Etchings of James Gillray*. New York: Dover, 1796.

Hunt, Lynn. *Family Romance of the French Revolution*. 1992. Reprint, Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013.

Jones, Chris. "Helen Maria Williams and Radical Sensibility." *Prose Studies* 12, no.1 (1989): 3-24.

Jump, Harriet Devine. "'The Cool Eye of Observation': Mary Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution." In *Revolution Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, edited by Kelvin Everest, 101-119. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991.

Kairoff, Claudia Thomas. *Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century*.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012.

Keane, Angela. *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Keen, Paul. *Revolutions in Romantic Literature*. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.

Kelly, Gary. *Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.

- . *Women, Writing, and Revolution, 1790-1827*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001.
- Kennedy, Deborah. *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2002.
- Labbe, Jacqueline. *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry and the Culture of Gender*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- . "Gentility in Distress: A New Letter by Charlotte Smith (1749-1806)." *The Wordsworth Circle* 35, no.2 (2004): 91-93.
- Landes, Joan. *Women and the Public Sphere*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- Linton, Marisa. *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Lock, Frederick Peter. *Burkes Reflections on the Revolution in France*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1985.
- Looser, Devoney. *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- Macleod, Emma Vincent. *A War of Ideas: British Attitudes to the Wars against Revolutionary France, 1792-1802*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.
- Major, Emma. *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712-1812*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- May, Gita. *Madame Roland and the Age of Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.

*Merriam-Webster's French-English Dictionary*. 'Petit-maître.' 2000. Accessed 10 November 2018. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/petit-maître/>.

Moore, Lucy. *Liberty: The Lives and times of Six Women in Revolutionary France*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008.

Moores, John Richard. *Representation of France in English Satirical Prints, 1740-1832*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Mee, Jon. *Print, Publicity and Radicalism in the 1790s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Nussbaum, Felicity. "Sociability and Life Writing: Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi." In *Women's Life Writing, 1700-1850: Gender, Genre and Authorship*, edited by Daniel Cook and Amy Culley, 55-70. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

Oates, Joyce. *Shandyism and Sentiment 1760-1800*. York: Printed for the Cambridge Bibliographical Society, 1968.

O'Brien, Karen. *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

O'Neill, Daniel. "Shifting the Scottish Paradigm: The Discourse of Morals and Manners in Mary Wollstonecraft's French Revolution." *History of Political Thought* 23, no.1 (2002): 90-116.

Perry, Ruth. *Women, Letters, and the Novel*. New York: AMS Press, 1980.

Rapport, Michael. "Stone, John Hurford (1763-1818)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004. Accessed 4 December 2018. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26576/>.

- Rendall, Jane. "'Friends of Liberty & Virtue': Women Radicals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1789-1848." In *Gender and Politics in the Age of Letter-Writing, 1750-2000*, edited by Máire Cross and Caroline Blend, 77-92. London: Routledge, 2016.
- . "'The Grand Causes which Combine to Carry Mankind Forward': Wollstonecraft, History and Revolution." *Women's Writing* 4, no.2 (1997): 155-172.
- Robertson, Fiona. *Women's Writing 1778-1838: An Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Robinson, Nicholas. *Edmund Burke A Life in Caricature*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Rose, John. *The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era, 1789-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911.
- Russell, Gillian. *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London*. 2007. Reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Schama, Simon. *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*. 1989. Reprint, London: Penguin Books, 2004.
- Scott, Anne. *Hannah Moore: The First Victorian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Stanton, Judith, and Harriet Guest. "Charlotte Smith to Thomas Cadell, Sr., and Harriet Lee: Two New Letters." *Keats-Shelley Journal* 57 (2008): 32-41.
- Spadafora, David. *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Tauchert, Ashley. "Maternity, Castration and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*." *Women's Writing* 4, no 2 (1997): 173-203.

Taylor, Barbara. *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Wardle, Ralph Martin. *Mary Wollstonecraft; a Critical Biography*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.

Watson, Nicola. *Revolution and the Form of the British Novel, 1790-1825*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.

Whyman, Susan. *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers, 1660-1800*. 2009. Reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Zacsek, Barbara Maria. *Censored Sentiments: Letters and Censorship in Epistolary Novels and Conduct Material*. Newark, Dela.: Delaware University Press, 1997.