

Lighting the Torch of Liberty

The French Revolution and Chartist
Political Culture, 1838-1852

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Summary

From 1838 until the end of the European Revolutions in 1852, the French Revolution provided Chartists with a repertoire of symbolism that Chartists would deploy in their activism, histories, and literature to foster a sense of collective consciousness, define a democratic world-view, and encourage internationalist sentiment. Challenging conservative notions of the revolution as a bloody and anarchic affair, Chartists constructed histories of 1789 that posed the era as a romantic struggle for freedom and nationhood analogous to their own, and one that was deeply entwined with British history and national identity. During the 1830s, Chartist opposition to the New Poor Law drew from the gothic repertoire of the *Bastille* to frame inequality in Britain. The workhouse 'bastile' was not viewed simply as an illegitimate imposition upon Britain, but came to symbolise the character of class rule. Meanwhile, Chartist newspapers also printed fictions based on the French Revolution, inserting Chartist concerns into the narratives, and their histories of 1789 stressed the similarity between France on the eve of revolution and Britain on the eve of the Charter. During the 1840s Chartist internationalism was contextualised by a framework of thinking about international politics constructed around the Revolutions of 1789 and 1830, while the convulsions of Continental Europe during 1848 were interpreted as both a confirmation of Chartist historical discourse and as the opening of a new era of international struggle. In the *Democratic Review* (1849-1850), the *Red Republican* (1850), and *The Friend of the People* (1850-1852), Chartists like George Julian Harney, Helen Macfarlane, William James Linton, and Gerald Massey, along with leading figures of the radical émigrés of 1848, characterised 'democracy' as a spirit of action and a system of belief. For them, the democratic heritage was populated by a diverse array of figures, including the Apostles of Jesus, Martin Luther, the romantic poets, and the Jacobins of 1793. The 'Red Republicanism' that flourished during 1848-1852 was sustained by the historical viewpoints arrived at during the Chartist period generally. Attempts to define a 'science' of socialism was as much about correcting the misadventures of past ages as it was a means to realise the promise announced by the 'Springtime of the Peoples'.

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Introduction

The ‘three glorious days’ of February 1848 dominated Chartist attention in the crucial months leading up to the presentation of the third, and final, petition to Parliament on 10 April that year. Focussing primarily on the insurgency of the working class, the National Guard, and the political demands of republican groups, the main Chartist newspaper *The Northern Star* chronicled the popular uprising and presented the Revolutions of 1848 as an emblem of victory for British radicalism.¹ In seeking to invoke the Parisian rising as a means to mobilise Chartism’s activists, the newspaper described reform in Britain as linked to the victories of republican and democratic movements in continental Europe as a component of a singular, universal Democracy. Chartism, in this narrative, existed as a single arm of a momentous historical movement that transcended national borders and whose opponents were tyrants, despots, and the enemies of the people the world over. Articulated most ably by the indefatigable Helen Macfarlane, a revolutionary feminist who was the first to translate Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* into English, this democratic ‘Spirit of the Age’ drew its power from a bewildering body of historical sources from every stage of world history. The Democratic spirit, she wrote, had passed from the Ancients and Apostles, through the renaissance and the reformation, to be articulated in political form during the European Enlightenment.² However, one part of this chronicle stood apart in terms of its relevance to the followers of Democracy, and that was the French Revolution of 1789-1793. In an arresting article praising the Parisian insurgents for their heroism, the *Northern Star* announced the dawning of democracy’s final triumph. ‘The beginning of the end has arrived’, the article ran, ‘the French Revolution has kindled the torch, and by its light the British People are reading the Charter of their liberties.’³ Read one way, this statement spoke to the rapid influx of support Chartists had witnessed immediately

¹ See chapter 5.

² ‘Democracy’, *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 424-25; *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 34.

³ *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 4.

following the declaration of the Second French Republic; but read another way, it also suggested Chartism's abiding relationship to the principles and symbolism of 1789.

That Chartism following the 1848 revolutions had imbibed the spirit of revolutionary fervour from the Continent is undeniable. Between 1849 and 1852 George Julian Harney, an enthusiastic internationalist with a reputation amongst scholars as the 'Marat of Chartism', expounded the principles of democratic socialism in a series of new journals and newspapers.⁴ As well as extolling the virtues of Continental socialism, the Red Republicanism of these years was nevertheless also expressed in traditional terms. The hero of the new epoch was arguably not the French socialist Louis Blanc whose ideas had characterised the popular aspect of 1848 across much of northern Europe, and still less Mazzini, whose brand of nationalism was wildly popular inside Italy and found reflections in the organisations of Young Europe that flourished in Ireland, Germany, and Hungary.⁵ Rather, it was Robespierre, the incorruptible purveyor of popular rights, re-imagined as a working-class hero, whose 'Rights of Man and the Citizen' spoke to a new age of democracy from the Jacobin past.⁶ When Marx characterised the 1848 Revolutions as a pantomime re-enactment of 1789 in his well-known maxim from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852), he had hit upon an important observation about the Democracy of the mid-nineteenth century.⁷ Dripping with sarcasm, Marx's point about the sense of repetition that pervaded the Revolutions of 1848 was an apt one.⁸ The declaration of the Second French Republic on 23 February 1848 led to a wide-spread belief that Europe's chapter of revolutionary history was about to be reopened.⁹

⁴ *Democratic Review* (1849-1850), *Red Republican* (1850), and *Friend of the People* (1850-1852).

⁵ Jonathan Sperber, *The Revolutions of 1848-1851* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁶ For more, see chapter 8.

⁷ Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in *Marx: Later Political Writings*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 31-127.

⁸ 'Hegel observes somewhere that all great events and characters of the world history occur twice, so to speak. He forgot to add: the first time as high tragedy, the second time as low farce. Caussidière after Danton, Louis Blanc after Robespierre, the *montagne* of 1848-51 after the *montagne* of 1793-5, and the London Constable, with a dozen of the best debt-ridden lieutenants, after the little corporal, with his roundtable of military marshals! The eighteenth Brumaire of the fool after the eighteenth Brumaire of the genius!' Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', p.31.

⁹ Roger Price, *The Revolutions of 1848* (Basingstoke, 1989); Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, pp. 5-55; 109-56.

In an important sense, however, the chapter had never truly been closed. Long after 1789, the ideals of the French Revolution continued to mobilise political radicals across Europe.¹⁰ In Britain from the early decades of the nineteenth century, revolutionary imagery continued to provide important references for radicals vying with the agents of state centralisation and opposing the infamous ‘taxes on knowledge.’¹¹ Conservatives and British government ministers continued to castigate radicals as Jacobins while democracy was dismissed as a foreign, or French, aberration.¹² For their part, British radicals scoured the constitutional heritage in an attempt to locate those indispensable principles that Thomas Paine had elaborated in his *Rights of Man* (1791).¹³ A series of constitutional and historical precedents from Britain’s past seemingly confirmed an indigenous strain of popular constitutionalism, ranging from as far afield as the Chronicles of the Anglo-Saxons and the Magna Charta, through to the Civil War of 1664 and the Whig ‘revolution’ of 1688.¹⁴ Such precedents seemingly invoked the right of the whole of the people to participate in the politics of nation, to elect representatives to a sovereign parliament, and dispense with unpopular or despotic rulers. For some, the politics of the past charted a trajectory for mild reform, while for others it conjured a blueprint for a radical republic.¹⁵ By ejecting the stain of the Norman Conquest and reverting to the ‘pure’ democracy of the Saxons, the most ardent followers of Thomas Paine fought for a national revival.¹⁶

¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, *Echoes of the Marseillaise: Two Centuries Look Back on the French Revolution* (London, 1990).

¹¹ A series of duties on newspapers, newspaper advertising, and taxes on paper that stymied the growth of a radical press during the first half of the nineteenth century.

¹² See Robert Hall, *Voices of the People: Democracy and Chartist Political Identity, 1830-1870* (Monmouth, 2007), pp. 31-32; Peter Gurney, ‘Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 86:3 (September 2014), pp. 566-602.

¹³ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke’s Attack on the French Revolution* (7th ed.: London, 1791).

¹⁴ James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (London, 2014), pp. 1-32.

¹⁵ See chapter 4.

¹⁶ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1976), pp. 84-203; Christopher Hill, ‘The Norman Yoke’, in *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (New York, 1997), pp. 46-111; Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 119-176.

By the Chartist period, the symbol of the French Revolution had become a diffuse and shifting one. It had influenced a broad range of political ideologies, becoming implanted in the newly arisen nationalist doctrines in Italy and Eastern Europe, and fuelling a plethora of liberal, radical, utopian and communist politics.¹⁷ For example, in his *Recollections*, published in 1880, the Croydon Chartist Thomas Frost observed that in the days of his youth

vast numbers of the thinking portion of the working classes throughout the most highly-civilized countries of the world were filled with ideas about the perfectibility of human nature and the reconstruction of society upon the basis of universal liberty, equality, and fraternity.¹⁸

For Frost, the drive to realise the revolutionary trilogy led him first to Owenism, and from there to the messianic utopianism of John Goodwyn Barmby's Communist Church movement, before committing himself fully to Chartism.¹⁹ Joining the international Society of the Fraternal Democrats after its launch in 1845, Frost presented himself as an ardent supporter of internationalist aspirations.²⁰ Caught up in the excitement of the revolutionary moment of 1848, Frost recounted the joyful enthusiasm that gripped the movement for popular reform during the agitation for 'The Great Petition' of that year.²¹ While Frost's political journey was not typical of his fellow travellers in the Chartist Movement his example does, nevertheless, underline the mixed political make-up of those popular radicals who adhered to the six points of the People's Charter. Written during the years between the Second and Third Reform Acts (1867 and 1884), Frost's *Recollections* cast the utopian impulse of the radicalism of the 1830s and 1840s in the tones of the French Revolution. The advance of Liberal reform during the second

¹⁷ See for example, Christopher H. Johnson, *Utopian Communism in France: Cabet and the Icarians, 1839-1851* (Ithaca, 1974); Jacques Godechot, 'The New Concept of the Nation and its Diffusion in Europe', in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), pp. 13-26; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006), pp. 37-82; Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 13-59.

¹⁸ Thomas Frost, *Forty Year's Recollections: Literary and Political* (London, 1880), p. 13.

¹⁹ Frost, *Forty Year's Recollections*, pp. 13-39; 53-76; 96-168; Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1983), pp. 172-80.

²⁰ Frost, *Forty Year's Recollections*, pp. 125-30.

²¹ Frost, *Forty Year's Recollections*, pp. 118-142.

half of the nineteenth century threw a gloomy shadow over the old world of Tory corruption and Whig mis-rule that Frost recounted in the early chapters of his *Recollections*, when the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity provided a ray of enlightened truth that appeared to illuminate the mind's eye to the possibilities of a democratic future.

It was this impulse that Frost also attempted to immortalise in his work on the Illuminati and the European revolutionary underground of the nineteenth century.²² His *Secret Societies of the European Revolution* (1876) described the transmission of the revolutionary impulse from the Illuminists of the French Revolution, through the Carbonari that took root in Italy during the first decades of the nineteenth century, to the republican societies of the Families and the Seasons of July Monarchy France.²³ While his older self, a respectable journalist who plied his trade writing for Liberal and Tory newspapers, regarded the writings of his youth with a restrained distaste, the younger Frost had been a preeminent story-teller writing a number of best-selling novels during the 1840s.²⁴ The sensational fiction that Frost authored was part of a burgeoning literary culture of serialised penny-romances that fed the insatiable appetite of a literate working class. Frost's novels turned on traditional melodramatic themes; his characters were an assemblage of rogues and nobles, fresh-faced young women, gypsies, and magicians. However, while his best-selling work *Emma Mayfield* (1847) exhibited all of these traits, it was nevertheless punctuated by a sense of the political.²⁵

Interspersed between chapters on highwaymen and aristocratic intrigues, this morality tale of the travails of a rector's daughter also turned on the machinations of a secret society of the Illuminati.²⁶ The underground world of conspiratorial politics blended

²² Thomas Frost, *The Secret Societies of the European Revolution*, 2 vols., (London, 1876).

²³ Thomas Frost, *The Secret Societies*, vol. 1, pp. 23-54; 209-65; vol. 2, pp. 1-44; 200-35.

²⁴ In his second volume of memoirs, Frost recalls: 'I was somewhat surprised, and not very well pleased, when I, many years afterwards, found the titles in the catalogue of the British Museum library, with my name affixed as that of the author. I was able to understand how the authorship had been traced to me, but the discovery that rewarded the compiler's search was certainly not worth the trouble he must have taken.' See Thomas Frost, *Reminiscences of a Country Journalist* (London, 1886), pp. 66-67.

²⁵ Thomas Frost, *Emma Mayfield: or, The Rector's Daughter* (London, 1847).

²⁶ Frost, *Emma Mayfield*, pp. 203-208.

seamlessly with the suspenseful and supernatural tendencies of popular romance, shrouding Frost's underlying intention. Through such devices, Frost was able to smuggle politics into his work; the Illuminists of *Mayfield* were internationalists and democrats, while the procedures of their fictional meetings were rendered as mirror-images of Chartist gatherings. Like the work of the popular French author Eugene Sue that he used as a model for his own fiction, Frost's novels were far from being politically neutral.²⁷ Through the covert guise of folk tale, the legacy of the Revolution could be found languishing in its Regency setting.

For Frost, then, the French Revolution provided an important symbol that was not only at the forefront of his politics, but was also enmeshed in the melodrama he produced. However, his adherence to the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity, did not lead him to Jacobinism or to conspiracy, but to utopian projects and to Chartism. Meanwhile, the generic motifs that the history of the Revolution was entangled in provided a natural fit for the forms of fiction that were popular during his lifetime. Both politically as an activist and professionally as an author, Frost could not escape the transnational effects of the revolutions in politics and literature that characterised his age.²⁸ Neither could Chartism. From the beginning of the movement's activities in 1838 until the end of the European Revolutions in 1852, the French Revolution provided Chartists with a repertoire of symbolism and generic tropes that Chartists would deploy in their activism, histories, and literature to foster a sense of collective consciousness, define a democratic world-view, and encourage internationalist sentiment. Challenging conservative notions of the Revolution as a bloody and anarchic affair, Chartists constructed histories of 1789 that not only posed the era as a romantic struggle for freedom and nationhood analogous to their own, but one that was also deeply entwined with British history and national identity. The revolution conducted by the

²⁷ Paul Thomas Murphy, *Towards a Working-Class Canon: Literary Criticism in British Working-class Periodicals, 1816-1858* (Columbus, 1994), pp. 92-93; Berry Palmer Chevasco, *Mysterymania: The Reception of Eugène Sue in Britain, 1838-1860* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 1-14.

²⁸ Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (eds), *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* (Oxford, 2002); Margaret Cohen, 'International Influences', in *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 3: 'The Nineteenth-Century Novel, 1820-1880', eds John Kucich and Jenny Bourne Taylor (Oxford, 2012), pp. 409-24; Nicholas Seager, *The Rise of the Novel* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 118-26; Monika Elbert and Bridget M. Marshall, *Transnational Gothic: Literary and Social Exchanges in the Long Nineteenth Century* (London, 2016).

French was, for moral force writers like William Carpenter (1797–1874) and William James Linton (1812–1897), an extension of the struggle first unleashed by the British during the Civil War years of 1642-1651.²⁹ Transferred first to America and then to France, the ideals of Liberty forged during the Interregnum characterised the Age of Revolution. During 1838 and 1839 both moral and physical force Chartists turned to 1789 as an example of popular revolution, while Chartist newspapers and orators likened the state of Britain on the eve of the Charter with the state of France on the eve of the fall of the *Bastille*.

The *Bastille* in particular retained a powerful symbolism for Chartists. During the eighteenth century, the *Bastille* had become synonymous with torture and arbitrary detention. Imagined as crucible of torment, writers like Voltaire weaved a mythic history around the *Bastille*, providing a framework that other captives would follow. In a blending of autobiography and the gothic novel, by the outbreak of the Revolution the *Bastille* had become synonymous with autocracy and royal excess. Its stature was such that in Britain the fall of despotism's greatest stronghold was re-enacted on stage in London, establishing the *Bastille* as a decidedly un-British institution, and its collapse with a fairy-tale resolution in which Liberty would reign immortal. For the Chartists, the *Bastille* became synonymous with the workhouse and the New Poor Law. It described an alien order of torment and institutionalisation ushered in by the Reform Act of 1832, and became the primary symbol of 'class rule'. Maltreatment in the workhouse was likened to the plight of the 'victims of despotism' interred in the *Bastille*, while fictions based on the French Revolution presented the threat of domestic disintegration that suffused Chartist responses to the New Poor Law as moments of burgeoning social consciousness.³⁰

The 1832 Reform Act also provided a watershed in another sense. The popular agitation that carried the Bill through parliament was in part fuelled by the 'three glorious days' of July 1830 in which the French toppled the autocratic Charles X and replaced him with

²⁹ See chapter 4.

³⁰ See part one.

his liberal cousin the Duc d'Orléans. Whig commentators and historians, along with their counterparts among the French *Doctrinaires*, presented the Revolution of 1830 as the close of France's revolutionary chapter, the French answer to Britain's 1688. A new age of entente between the two constitutional monarchies was interpreted by some as the march of British liberal values across the globe. Yet, the 'betrayals' of 1830 in France and 1832 in Britain created a sense of grievance in both countries that gave rise to contemporaneous movements for electoral reform. During the Chartist period, the struggle for Liberty in Britain was placed in this European context. 'Chartists' in Britain, France, and Germany were all viewed as engaging in a shared struggle for democracy, in which the victory of one represented a victory for all. During the 1840s this European Democracy was given a human dimension by the establishment of internationalist organisations in London comprising of European refugees and leading figures in the Chartist movement. As theatres of internationalism, the meetings of the Democratic Friends of all Nations and the Fraternal Democrats celebrated the fall of the *Bastille* and the establishment of the French Republic of 1792 as shared touchstones of a European revolution.³¹

Long before the outbreak of revolution in 1848, Chartists were already engaged in an abiding interrogation of French Revolutionary history and radical movements abroad. The convulsions of Continental Europe were interpreted as both a confirmation of Chartist historical discourse and as the opening of a new era of international struggle. The euphoria of 1848 gave way to a lengthy period of reflection over the following years, punctuated by fresh 'betrayals'. In the *Democratic Review* (1849-1850), the *Red Republican* (1850), and *The Friend of the People* (1850-1852), Chartists like George Julian Harney, Helen Macfarlane, William James Linton, and Gerald Massey characterised Democracy as a spirit of action and a system of belief. They worked to define and propagate democracy in its revolutionary aspect by exploring the writings and ideas of important historical figures who were viewed as conduits of the essence of the democratic ideal. The democratic heritage was populated by a diverse array of figures, including the Apostles of Jesus, Greek and Roman philosophers, Martin Luther,

³¹ See part 2.

the romantic poets, and the Jacobins of the 1790s. The 'Red Republicanism' that flourished during the late 1840s and early 1850s was not simply a product of the Revolutions of 1848-1851, but was sustained by the historical viewpoints arrived at during the Chartist period more generally. Their attempts to define a 'science' of socialism was as much about correcting what they understood to be the misadventures of past ages as it was a means to distil a purifying liquor from the fruits yielded during the 'Spingtime of the Peoples'.³²

This study presents an interrogation of a variety of uses of the French Revolution in Chartist politics, history, and literature. The Revolution provided the Chartists with a means to think historically and laterally about the status of their own agitation, and the kind of society they envisaged as resulting from the People's Charter. The history they produced was a complex one that drew from a multitude of sources, and which was deployed in a variety of ways. As in the example of Thomas Frost above, the use of French Revolutionary symbolism did not simply relate to a politics of revolution or an embrace of 'Jacobinism'. Rather, prominent symbols of the Revolution were used as a means to mobilise political support and furnish romantic fictions. Its imagery and example played into a multitude of cultural and political forms: it could lend a gothic quality to political writing and journalism, it could be celebrated as a universal symbol of transcendence over Tyranny, and it could provide central elements of a democratic faith. For Chartists, history was a realm in which ideas about liberty and democracy could be tested against universal principles and multifarious contexts. It was explored through an array of mediums, from political journalism and polemic through to poetry and literature. Like the phenomenon explored by Billie Melman in *The Culture of History* (2006), Chartist approaches to the past can be seen as consisting of fragments arranged with little regard to genre or form.³³ However, underlying the assemblage of 'facts and fancies' that often appear to characterise Chartist uses of the past can be found distinct lines of enquiry or genre plays that provide important glimpses into the cultural and

³² See part 3.

³³ Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past 1800-1953* (Oxford, 2006).

intellectual world in which Chartists operated.³⁴ This is the realm in which this study operates: in trying to make sense of Chartist engagement with the French Revolution, it deviates from a historiography that has often drawn too-sharp a distinction between constitutional forms of action and a democratic world-view.³⁵ In engaging with the historical interpretations and the symbols of the Revolution that Chartists deployed, it seeks to uncover how Chartists linked the conflagration of the previous century to their own campaign for constitutional reform.

That the constitutional heritage and the French Revolution were compatible histories has been demonstrated by James Epstein. In his highly regarded work on radical symbolism, Epstein argues that the French Revolution had an immediate and lasting impact on British radical discourse.³⁶ The ‘constitutionalist idiom’ was suffused with a complex web of symbolism and meanings derived from the French Revolution, and a reinvigorated discourse of natural rights that located first principles in the ‘ancient’ or ‘pristine’ constitution of the Anglo-Saxons.³⁷ Indigenous symbols, like the cap of liberty, had been irrevocably altered by the Revolution in France, investing them with ambiguous meanings: they could be used either to affirm a sense of radical libertarianism or to figuratively raise the flag of revolution.³⁸ However, Epstein argues that while the Revolution altered the terms of constitutional discourse, and while certain symbols and phrases might have been used to push the boundaries of political debate, attempts to remove the constitution from its privileged position in the idiomatic landscape of British radical politics were met with more limited success. For Epstein, Thomas Paine and his followers, in particular the radical journalist Richard Carlile, were never able to assail the lofty status of the British constitution, even while ‘The Rights of

³⁴ Robert Hall, ‘Creating a People’s History: Political Identity and History in Chartism, 1832-1848’, in *The Chartist Legacy*, eds Ashton, Fryson, and Roberts (Rendlesham, 1999), pp. 232-254; Hall, *Voices of the People: Democracy and Chartist Political Identity, 1830-1870* (Monmouth, 2007), pp. 31-62; Mike Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 6-37; Margaret Loose, *The Chartist Imaginary: Literary Form in Working-Class Political Theory and Practice* (Columbus, 2014).

³⁵ Matthew Roberts, ‘Chartism, Commemoration, and the Cult of the Radical Hero, 1770-1840’, *Labour History Review*, 78, 1 (2013), pp. 3-32.

³⁶ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 3-32; 83-118.

³⁷ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 4-11; 18-21.

³⁸ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 83-118.

Man' was assimilated into popular political discourse.³⁹ Nevertheless, the works of Thomas Paine and the language of natural rights that are most associated with him, did open British radicalism up to new vistas. Entwined with the constitutionalist idiom were languages of democracy that pointed beyond the national historical experience, and towards a politics shaped by universalism.⁴⁰

The relationship between Chartism and democratic ideas and modes of argumentation has recently become a key site of interest in the historiography of the movement.⁴¹ The publication of Gareth Stedman Jones' pioneering work *The Language of Chartism* (1982) not only represented the entrance of the 'linguistic turn' into the field of labour history, but posed a significant challenge to a social history that in many cases appeared to take class as a historical given.⁴² By highlighting the extent to which Chartists drew from constitutional language, Stedman Jones argued that Chartist appeals to 'the people' occurred less as an expression of class-consciousness than as populist appeal to the nation. These conclusions were further entrenched by the historians Patrick Joyce and James Vernon, whose work has leant heavily on Epstein's notion of the 'constitutionalist idiom'.⁴³ For Joyce, workers only used the language of class in specific contexts and in circumscribed ways, preferring in the main a language of populism, derived from the

³⁹ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 119-176.

⁴⁰ Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 54-56.

⁴¹ See, for example: Miles Taylor, 'The Six Points: Chartism and the Reform of Parliament', in *The Chartist Legacy*, pp. 1-23; Hall, 'Creating a People's History'; Hall, *Voices of the People*; Matthew Roberts, 'Chartism, Commemoration, and the Cult of the Radical Hero'; Benoît Agnes, 'A Chartist Singularity? Mobilizing to Promote Democratic Petitions in Britain and France, 1838-1848', *Labour History Review*, 78:1 (2013), pp. 51-65; Joan Allen, "'The Teacher of Strange Doctrines": George Julian Harney and the Democratic Review, 1849-1850', *Labour History Review*, 78:1 (2013), pp. 67-86; Paul Pickering, 'From Rifle Club to Reading Room: Sydney's Democratic Vistas, 1848-1856', *Labour History Review*, 78:1 (2013), pp. 87-112; Innes, Philp, and Saunders, 'The Rise of Democratic Discourse in the Reform Era: Britain in the 1830s and 1840s', in *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain, Ireland 1750-1850* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 114-128; Joanna Innes 'People and Power in British Politics to 1850', in *Re-imagining Democracy*, pp. 129-146; Peter Gurney, 'The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement', *The Journal of Modern History*, 86:3 (September 2014), pp. 566-602; Malcolm Chase, 'The Chartist Legacy for Parliamentary Democracy', in *The Chartists: Perspectives and Legacies* (London, 2015), pp. 1-13; Michael J. Turner, *Radicalism and Reputation: The Career of James Bronterre O'Brien* (East Lansing, 2017).

⁴² Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Language of Chartism', in *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860*, eds James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (London, 1982), pp. 3-58.

⁴³ See in particular, Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, c.1848-1914*, (Cambridge, 1991) and James Vernon ed., *Re-reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996).

Britain's unwritten constitution, that distinguished not between different classes but between 'the people' or the nation and a corrupt elite.⁴⁴ Rather than developing a language of political critique based upon their economic position, Joyce argues, Chartist rhetoric contained loud echoes of the campaign against 'Old Corruption', of idle and entrenched power, that characterised the previous generation of radicals.⁴⁵ For James Vernon, the constitution became a kind of metanarrative, an overarching system of legitimation that went a long way towards ordering contemporary political thought.⁴⁶ Communicated through melodrama, a mode of writing and speech drawn from the popular stage and popular fiction, the British constitution became a theatre in which contending parties erected their respective platforms.⁴⁷

The reordering of the historiographical landscape of Chartism has had far-reaching consequences. During the 1990s, a rejuvenated Liberal historiography would in essence claim Chartism for William Gladstone, arguing that an unbroken line of popular radicalism stretched from the eighteenth century, through the Chartist period, to be unleashed in the agitation for the Second Reform Act (1867).⁴⁸ The 'currents of radicalism school' have drawn links between the Chartist mass platform, the cult of the gentleman leader, and Chartism's adherence to a language of constitutionalism, to argue for a broad continuity of radical activism that stretched from the eighteenth century to the twentieth.⁴⁹ Where historians once viewed the mid-point of the nineteenth century as representing a distinct schism between the class politics of early nineteenth-century radicalism and the reformism of the late-Victorian period, historians would instead emphasise a history of continuity over change.⁵⁰ A broad array

⁴⁴ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People*; Joyce, 'The Constitution and the Narrative Structure of Victorian Politics', in *Re-reading the Constitution*, pp. 179-203.

⁴⁵ Joyce, *Visions of the People*, pp. 27-84.

⁴⁶ Vernon, 'Notes Towards and Introduction', *Re-reading the Constitution*, pp. 1-21; 'Narrating the Constitution: The Discourse of "the real" and the Fantasies of Nineteenth-Century Constitutional History', in *Re-Reading the Constitution*, pp. 204-238.

⁴⁷ Joyce, 'The Constitution'.

⁴⁸ Eugenio F. Biagini (ed.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991).

⁴⁹ Eugenio F. Biagini and Alastair J. Reid, 'Currents of Radicalism, 1850-1914', in *Currents of Radicalism*, pp. 1-20.

⁵⁰ Margot Finn, *After Chartism*, pp. 1-105; Finn, 'Henry Hunt's Peep into Prison: the Radical Discontinuities of Imprisonment for Debt', in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850*, eds Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 190-216.

of phenomena have been drawn into this re-ordering of the historiographical landscape. Antony Taylor, for example, has argued that radical republicanism, chained as it was to the constitutionalist idiom, was not directed against the monarch as such but targeted the Civil List and the wider aristocracy.⁵¹ Chartists like William James Linton and Ernest Jones, Taylor argues, did not put forward a specifically republican agenda to overhaul the constitution, but instead targeted central authority and aristocratic excess in a broad assault on those in power.⁵² Following on from these debates, Chartist historians have devoted much needed attention to the interaction between Chartism, monarchism and loyalism, while analysis of episodes like the Queen Caroline Affair and the Tichborne Claimant have shown how popular radicalism in the 1820s and the 1860s both drew from a common repertoire of melodrama.⁵³

Running parallel to these developments, the 'melodramatic turn', as it has been described by Rohan McWilliam, has attempted to impart a structure of expression and feeling to radical language.⁵⁴ Providing a voice to the powerless, the melodramatic language used by popular radicals reflected the intense dislocation of working-class communities during the early nineteenth century. It was a form of narrative device rooted in the stage and popular fiction, which turned on a series of generic conventions and devices characterised by a binary opposition between good and evil.⁵⁵ It enshrined female virtue as an archetype, casting working-class masculinity in a paternal mould as the chivalrous protector of the innate vulnerability of women.⁵⁶ Both politicising domestic issues and conforming to a model of separate spheres, the melodramatic language of radicalism has been rightly placed at the forefront of historical enquiry into gender relations during the industrial period.⁵⁷ However, melodrama also operated on

⁵¹ Antony Taylor, 'Republicanism Reappraised: Anti-Monarchism and the English Radical Tradition, 1850-1872', in *Re-Reading the Constitution*, pp. 154-178; Taylor, *'Down with the Crown': British Anti-Monarchism and Debates About Royalty Since 1790* (London, 1999).

⁵² Taylor, 'Republicanism Reappraised', p. 161.

⁵³ Paul Pickering, 'The Hearts of the Millions': Chartism and Popular Monarchism in the 1840s', *History*, 88:290 (April, 2003), pp. 227-48; Rohan McWilliam, *The Tichborne Claimant* (London, 2006); Katrina Navickas, *Loyalism and Radicalism in Lancashire, 1798-1815* (Oxford, 2009); Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual politics of the British Constitution* (Oxford, 2013).

⁵⁴ Rohan McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', *Radical History Review*, 78 (2000), pp. 57-84.

⁵⁵ McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', pp. 57-59.

⁵⁶ McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', pp. 59-66.

⁵⁷ McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians'.

numerous levels, and was deeply impacted by the contexts in which it operated. While historians have provided a series of generalisations that can help locate specific trends in radical thought and expression, less attention has been given to the various species of melodrama that were in existence.⁵⁸

By focussing on Chartist uses of gothic imagery in relation to the movement's campaign against the New Poor Law, this study presents a different way of viewing melodrama's relationship to working-class mobilisation. By casting the workhouse as a 'bastille', Chartists were tapping into a strain of gothic presentation that dated from the eighteenth century. By purposely employing a gothic mode, Chartists sought to construct a narrative of political transcendence by subverting the innate fatalism inherent in the generic motifs of gothic fiction. The workhouse was depicted as an institution of mass torture and extinction that posed an existential threat to working-class communities. Presented simultaneously as a novel manifestation of industrial society and as a remnant of the evils of the *ancien régime*, Chartists blended the *Bastille* myth with opposition to Whig political economy. At the same time, images of female victimhood played a key role in this narrative: as the workhouse regime threatened working-class domesticity, Chartists deployed images of female victimhood to spark an insurgent consciousness.

The notion of consciousness speaks to a broad inter-disciplinary trend that has characterised scholarship on Chartist cultural production. Mike Sanders' work on Chartist poetry and Margaret Loose's recent book on Chartist fiction both interrogate the shared terrain of the 'Chartist imaginary'.⁵⁹ Describing a process through which engagement with imaginative texts could lead to a transformation of consciousness, the 'Chartist imaginary' has been a key guiding principle for how this study approaches Chartist fiction and poetry.⁶⁰ The French Revolution's relationship to ideas about social consciousness provided a perfect device for Chartist authors to attempt to inculcate a sense of social consciousness, while subverting some typical facets of the romance

⁵⁸ McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', pp. 71-78.

⁵⁹ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*; Margaret Loose, *The Chartist Imaginary*.

⁶⁰ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 6-37.

genre. Ideas about domesticity and gender were key to this process, imbuing specific fictions with the anxieties and principles with which Chartists assailed the Whig Bastille.

By analysing Chartist engagement with the French Revolution, this study grapples with a historical model that is often thought to be anathema to Britain's unwritten constitution. However this was frequently not how Chartists actually understood the Revolution. As a symbol of popular liberation, the French Revolution was usually described by Chartists as an event that was complementary, if not deeply entwined, with their own agitation. The Charter was the great point of difference. While the violence of 1789 was interpreted as arising from the sudden release of pent-up indignation, the Charter and the Chartist movement provided a focus and an organisation to channel public feeling. Nor did Chartists declaim the use of the language of revolution, or attached notions of revolution to violence in their rhetoric and analysis. On the contrary, the language of revolution was often deployed during 1838-1842 by moral force Chartists who saw in the French Revolution a precedent for national unity in the face of tyranny. To some extent, this was a result of the conflation of 1789 with the Revolution of 1830. As with their own heritage, Chartists viewed the Revolution as a historical process, consisting of distinct stages, rather than as a static history. The Revolution of 1830 in particular presented an example of a revolution largely devoid of bloodshed, and evincing a unity of national spirit. Although the episode fell short of universal suffrage, it nevertheless resulted in a proliferation of republican civic institutions: an armed people, a reduced taxation, and freedom of the press.

However, this is not to suggest that all Chartists were accepting of constitutional monarchy. The moral force Chartist William Carpenter, for example, viewed the introduction of republican institutions into the heart of state as a stage in a protracted war against the 'hereditary principle'. Furthermore, Louis Philippe's reneging of the Charter of 1830, he argued, had shown the folly of relying on a popular throne to enact the people's will. 'Monarchy must be despotism, or must quickly cease to exist,' he concluded. For Carpenter, as for William James Linton, the French and American republics represented the realisation of the promise of British liberty, and the Charter was understood by them to be a step in the same direction. In this sense, the French

Revolution was actually viewed as being an offshoot of British constitutional history, for the radicalism of the Civil War had transmitted British liberty to America and France. For William James Linton, republicanism was deeply linked to national regeneration. His idolisation of Cromwell and Milton stemmed from his vision of a lost golden age in which Britain led the world in political liberty. Not only was Britain of the 1830s and 1840s a shadow of its former self, he argued, but it had ceased to even be a nation.

This same link between nation and republic can also be seen in the commemorative events Chartists engaged in with foreign radicals. During commemorations of the French Republic of 1792, Chartists celebrated the nationalist movements of Germany, Italy, Hungary and Poland, alongside the advance of communism in France and Chartism in Britain. The Revolution's mixed legacy provided an umbrella for the expression of a broad range of views. That class was among them is linked to the shifting patterns of political thought attached to the Jacobin period of the French Revolution. The Revolution of 1830 in France set in motion a re-conceptualisation of the republican heritage among the French left. A broad range of radical French thinkers, among them the utopian communist Etienne Cabet and the social theorist Louis Blanc, found in the Jacobins an anticipation of socialism. Chartism's engagement with these ideas, aided by the efforts of Bronterre O'Brien, Julian Harney, and Peter McDouall, among others, injected a class-dimension to representations of the Revolution long before the Revolutions of 1848 spelled the entrance of democratic socialism into the British political lexicon. The efforts of Chartists after 1848 to develop a theory, or ideology, of democratic socialism involved a thorough interrogation of an array of democratic precedents and theories. However, 1848 had once again shown France to be the centre of revolutionary politics, and as the class attitude hardened following the defeats of that year, the British constitution lost much of its appeal. Nevertheless, the Charter was not dispensed with, and the culmination of the new programme led to an abortive attempt to launch a new petition. In spite of the avowedly revolutionary goals and language that Chartists harboured during this time, peaceful and constitutional methods were still at the forefront of Chartist tactics and thought.

An analysis of Chartist engagement with the French Revolution reveals that Chartist conceptions of constitutionalism were much broader than has often been assumed. Radical patriotism ran the gamut from loyalism on the one hand to revolution on the other, while a discourse that privileged the nation had ample room for expressions of class. Perhaps more importantly, however, by enshrining a key historical event that existed outside of the British constitutional heritage, Chartists connected themselves to a European, if not global, political context. They viewed their agitation as intrinsically related to the struggles on the European continent, and adopted many of the ideas that sprang from Continental radicalism. The French Revolution acted as a vector for the transmission of foreign ideas, raising a case for historians to consider the Chartist Movement in terms of broader European trends – as a connected history, rather than one tied to a closed constitutional framework. Additionally, in terms of the transnational and internationalist dimensions of Chartism, the movement was novel in terms of the *longue durée* of popular radicalism.

Finally, this study can also be viewed as responding to Peter Gurney's call to reinstate the democratic idiom to its rightful place at the centre of Chartism.⁶¹ As a movement for constitutional reform, it is significant that Chartist language was awash with references to democracy. The term itself is difficult to decipher: Chartists did not by and large pin down its terminology. Rather, democracy was understood broadly as a spirit of action and thought. It underpinned the programme of reform presented in the Six Points of the People's Charter, namely universal manhood suffrage combined with democratic checks on the monopolisation of power, and it characterised Chartist organisation on the local and the national levels. However, it was more usually linked to particular visions of history: no less than the constitutional heritage did democracy find fitting precedents in Chartist thought. At the forefront of this democratic history was the French Revolution. As a resounding symbol of popular mobilisation, and the defining moment of contemporary history, the Revolution tied the language of democracy to a vision of universal Liberty and Fraternity that influenced broad areas of

⁶¹ Peter Gurney, 'The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (September 2014), pp. 566-602.

Chartist thought. While the 'Jacobinism' of Chartist leaders like George Julian Harney and factions like the Democratic Associations of the 1830s provide the most obvious outward signs of the Revolution's influence among some Chartists, its lessons and imagery were deployed in a more diverse range than has usually been considered.

The thesis is structured in three separate parts. While each part can be read as a self-contained study, they nevertheless present inter-related themes and are arranged chronologically. Taken together they trace different modes of engagement with the French Revolution and its legacy, as defined by Chartists themselves, throughout the period of 1838-1852. However, it does not seek to present a comprehensive analysis of Chartist engagement with the French Revolution: there is much that lays outside the scope of this project, and each of the case studies presented below could be expanded in numerous directions.

Part one is concerned with Chartist uses of the symbolism attached to the French Revolution during the early years of the movement's history. Between 1838 and 1842, Chartists deployed the imagery of the *Bastille* in their opposition to the New Poor Law. Drawing together a political narrative based on what Peter Gurney has described as 'the politics of ever day life', with the gothic imagery of the *Bastille* myth, Chartist opposition to the 'Whig Bastille' became enmeshed in a symbolic tale of revolutionary transcendence. While the *Bastille* myth had been used by radicals since the days of Francis Burdett in the early years of the nineteenth century, for Chartists the symbolism resonated in new ways. In their opposition to the institutionalisation of poverty affected by the New Poor Law, Chartists used the *Bastille* as a synonym for the Malthusianism of 'class legislation' and Whig political economy. The suffering of 'inmates' in the bastilles found a parallel with the travails of Latude, one of the 'victims of despotism' of the original *Bastille*, while fiction based on the French Revolution encouraged Chartists to view their agitation as connected to a universal struggle for liberty.

Part two traces the use of commemorations of the French Revolution during the Chartist period as celebrations of international fraternity, linked to conceptions of the Revolution as a touchstone of contemporary European struggles for democracy and

national liberation. Mirroring changing social attitudes to the French Revolution in popular culture in Britain, the struggles on the European Continent were entwined with a constitutional history in which the values of Liberty first espoused during the British Civil War era were exported to America and France during the eighteenth century. The *Charter* (1838-1839) placed European politics within this mould, arguing that continental Democracy was locked in a struggle to realise the ambitions of the Age of Revolutions. The Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834) became an important symbol for popular republicanism, while the figure of Robespierre symbolised changing class attitudes, linked to the history produced by Bronterre O'Brien (1805-1864) and a rehabilitation of the radical phase of the French Revolution (1792-1794). This complex engagement with the history and symbolism of the Revolution had a profound effect on Chartist responses to the European Revolutions of 1848. The *Northern Star* (1837-1852), Chartism's primary newspaper, cast the events in France as a continuation of the historical struggle, placing the Charter within the context of European Revolutions.

Part three provides a survey of the key Chartist periodicals of 1849-1852: the *Democratic Review* (1849-1850), the *Red Republican* (1850), and the *Friend of the People* (1850-1852). Following the initial euphoria of 1848, the year 1849 presented Chartists with the rapid advance of the European counter-revolution. Not only did 1848 provide a vindication of a Chartist history which emphasised the inter-linked nature of the European struggle, but the defeat of the third petition in 1848 was also linked to the changing fortunes in European Democracy. In coming to terms with the failure of democracy at home and abroad, George Julian Harney's (1817-1897) publications provided key forums for the articulation of Democratic Socialism in a period of intense political fracture. A slew of democrats and socialists from Britain, France, and Germany contributed to the discussions in these periodicals, while attempts to revive Chartism were undertaken from within the critique they provided. The anatomy of 'Red Republicanism' found in these periodicals reveals a broad discourse based on an interrogation of European history in which the French Revolution was understood to have anticipated both democracy and socialism. The dwindling fortunes of Chartism during this period was framed as a consequence of the failure of revolution in Europe, while an effusion of poetry based on the theme of martyrdom consigned the struggle

to cultural memory, balancing a sense of fatalism with a belief in the success of future generations.

PART ONE

THE INSURGENT GOTHIC: CHARTISM, GENRE, AND THE FALL OF THE *BASTILLE*

Introduction

The Gothic Frontier

On Monday, about midday, a clumsy cart arrived ... in order to convey a part of the inmates from their former place of abode to Bradford. The sky at this time wore a very gloomy appearance, the clouds dressed the atmosphere in sable garments, yet, notwithstanding the doleful appearance of the elements, yet more melancholy than they appeared the countenances of the persons who were doomed, by the Guardians' *mittimus*, to be taken from the place in which they had resided for a considerable time.

The news of the arrival spread like wildfire, groups of both male and female were soon proceeding in haste to the poor-house (if they could not prevent their being removed) to take a view of those who were leaving their homes.

Sad home, indeed, yet better that than worse.¹

From the loquacious description of the weather, as though the forces of nature were themselves moved to bear witness on the scene unfolding below, to the mournful expression of the victims, torn from their homes by strangers and forced to submit to an unknown fate, the above extract reads as a typical example of gothic fiction. Yet, it does not originate from any known author of the period, nor is it taken from one of the many contemporary romances produced by the Chartists themselves. Rather, this text originates from a piece of correspondence to the *Northern Star* published in June 1840 on the removal of local paupers from the village of Pudsey in West Yorkshire. The author, James Mallinson, would appear to have been a relative unknown. His name is absent both from the principal histories of the movement and those works specifically

¹ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

concerned with the North Riding.² Additionally, he makes only two further appearances in contemporary periodicals: the *Northern Star* records his presence at a North Riding Delegate meeting in 1840, and he provided a correct answer to a competition that ran in *McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal*.³ It seems extraordinary, therefore, that an otherwise unexceptional correspondence should have contained – and, in fact, have been framed by – such distinctly gothic features.

That melodrama permeated much of the rhetoric deployed by Chartists has almost become a truism. References to the melodramatic are a mainstay of scholarship on the subject, a reflection of melodrama's important place in the period and its value as a thematic and conceptual framework for understanding the motives and processes through which historical subjects created for themselves a sense of identity and belonging.⁴ However, melodrama came in a variety of strains. Certainly, a heightened emotional state of rhetoric and discourse could equate to a melodramatic mode or framework of representation, drawing with it a host of assumptions about gender and the theatricality of the political domain.⁵ Nevertheless, elements of melodrama could be used to actually subvert many of these postures. Attention to the gothic quality of important symbols and narratives deployed in Chartist discourse, for example,

² For example, R.P. Hastings, *Essays in North Riding History, 1780-1850* (Northallerton, 1981); Hastings, *Chartism in the North Riding of Yorkshire and south Durham, 1838-1848* (York, 2004).

³ *Northern Star*, 22 August 1840, 1; *McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal*, 19 June 1841, 95.

⁴ See: Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, 1976); Michael Booth, 'The Metropolis on Stage' in *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, vol. I, eds H. J. Dyos and Michael Woolf (London, 1976), pp. 211-24; Louis James, 'Taking Melodrama Seriously: Theatre and Nineteenth-century Studies', *History Workshop Journal*, 3 (1977), 153-58; Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, c.1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 34; 215-38; 310-11; Joyce, 'The Constitution and the Narrative Structure of Victorian Politics' in *Re-reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. James Vernon (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 179-203; Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics: Theatricalized Dissent in the English Marketplace, 1800-1885* (Stanford, 1995), pp. 179-203; Rohan McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1998); McWilliam, 'Melodrama and the Historians', *Radical History Review*, 78 (2000), pp. 57-84; Margaret Loose, *The Chartist Imaginary: Literary Form in Working-class Political Theory and Practice* (Columbus, 2014).

⁵ See for example Martha Vicinus, "'Helpless and Unfriended": Nineteenth-century Domestic Melodrama,' *New Literary History*, 11 (1981), pp. 127-43; Judith Walkowitz, 'Jack the Ripper' in *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London, 1992), pp. 191-228; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (London, 1995), pp. 169-70; 264-72; McWilliam, *Popular Politics*, pp. 7-13; McWilliam, 'Melodrama'; Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones and the Romance of Politics, 1819-1868* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 77-136; Loose, *Chartist Imaginary*, pp. 12-32; 74-110.

potentially highlights the limits to which these sources can be 'read' as conforming to generic models, and suggests, moreover, that generic themes or motifs could be employed to undermine the very assumptions their usage might at first imply.⁶ By creating a sense of fatalism in their political writings, Chartists were able to portray their activism as a transcendence of gothic horror. Published as one of many intelligence reports on the encroachment of the New Poor Law regulations into the industrial North, Mallinson's account of the removal of the paupers of the village of Pudsey to Bradford Union Workhouse is informative in its use of these generic tropes.⁷ In particular, it is in the gothic imagery employed by Mallinson that can be detected a certain framework for understanding Chartist responses to broader political themes.

It should not, perhaps, be entirely surprising that imaginings laced with such gothic tonality should arise from a village like Pudsey. If the gothic was the creation of a society held in the sociological flux of industrialisation (characterised by the sense of being between places), or the discordant soundings of a society which had lost the enduring sense of meaning attached to a sanctified tradition, then the developing townships of the 1830s and 1840s represented the gothic frontier.⁸ In the 1840s Pudsey was a village precisely at that juncture, possessing a rapidly growing population to match the rabid expansion of the woollen industry.⁹ When Simeon Rayner published the first history of the town in 1887, Pudsey had recently lent its name to a newly-created electoral constituency, a sure sign that the locality had outstripped its rather

⁶ A parallel example of this can be seen in Anne Janowitz's argument that the deeply individualist style of romantic poetry, as produced by the likes of Shelley and Byron, was the very feature that made the genre accessible to diverse audiences. In turn, it was this inherent accessibility that allowed romantic poetry to be intelligible as a core component of a broadly-based social activism, linked to communitarian ideals. Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 9-32. See also: Loose, *Chartist Imaginary*, pp.12-23.

⁷ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

⁸ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, pp. 16-20; Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (2nd ed. : Manchester, 2002), pp. 1-45; David Punter and Glynnis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 20-25; David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the present day*, vol. I: 'The Gothic Tradition' (2nd ed. : London, 2013), pp. 1-19; Fred Botting, *Gothic* (2nd ed. : Oxon, 2014), pp. 1-19.

⁹ For example Adrian Randall estimates that the population of Pudsey grew by 33% in the decade after 1820, a period also marked by intense mechanisation and booming productivity in the woollen industry throughout the West Riding and Yorkshire. Randall, *Before the Luddites: Custom, Community and Machinery in the English Woollen Industry, 1776-1809* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 64-68.

humble origins.¹⁰ Rayner's celebration of Pudsey's rapid advance from village to bustling market town, outpacing her sister villages and displacing her 'mother-town' in the space of a generation, underlines the disorienting speed of change such places endured during the nineteenth century.¹¹ In the 1840s, the residents were in the thick of this process of social re-composition: neither fully rural nor yet urban, they were suspended between worlds. It was this state of social being in which the gothic thrived, and it staked out its terrain throughout the nation's industrial heartlands.¹²

Nevertheless, the gothic did not exist only in metaphysical states of being; it was established in the very terrain of industrial Britain. E. P. Thompson's memorable characterisation of living conditions in *The Making of the English Working Class* – the crowded slums and ghettos serviced by contaminated water and teeming with vermin – etched out a physical space, demarcating 'Satan's Strongholds' as a veritable Hell on Earth.¹³ Such characterisations pervaded art and literature: William Blake's invocation of Britain's 'dark Satanic Mills' found an echo in the Victorian moralists who feared the steam engine and mechanisation represented forbidden knowledge, precipitating a second Fall.¹⁴ As if to illustrate the point, the romantic painter John Martin shaded the apocalypse in industrial hues in his work based on John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.¹⁵ Although Martin's rendition of Pandemonium (1825), Milton's capital of Hell, reveals parliament made consummate by the presence of hell-fire, visitors to south Wales fancied they found a better fit in the industrial works that crowned Merthyr Tydfil.¹⁶

¹⁰ Simeon Rayner, *The History and Antiquities of Pudsey* (London, 1887). Pudsey became a parliamentary constituency under the Redistribution of Seats Act 1885.

¹¹ Simeon Rayner, *The History and Antiquities of Pudsey* (London, 1887), p. 1.

¹² Of course the gothic was certainly not confined to industrial settings: urban and rural landscapes, too, concealed innumerable imagined terrors. See for example: Glennis Byron and David Punter (eds), *Spectral Readings: Towards a Gothic Geography* (Basingstoke, 1999); Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford, 2003); Lawrence Phillips and Ann Witchard (eds), *London Gothic: Place, Space and the Gothic Imagination* (London, 2010); James Ridenhour, *In Darkest London: The Gothic Cityscape in Victorian Literature* (Plymouth, 2013).

¹³ See, E. P. Thompson, 'Standards and Experiences' and 'Satan's Strongholds' in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963).

¹⁴ William Blake, 'And did those feet in ancient time' in *Milton: A Poem* (1810); Nicola Brown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 67-68.

¹⁵ Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 197-99; Darran Anderson, *Imaginary Cities: A Tour of Dream Cities, Nightmare Cities, and Everywhere in Between* (Chicago, 2015), p. 531.

¹⁶ Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales: The Observers and the Observed* (Cardiff, 1992), p. 1.

Named ‘the Paradise of Cinders’, the South Wales Valleys presented an enigma for onlookers and overseers who struggled to express the magnitude of the industrial setting in conventional English.¹⁷ The gothic bridged this linguistic divide, naturally lending the terminology of the inferno to a landscape surmounted by flame.

The day the Poor Law Guardians came for the paupers of Pudsey, Mallinson recalls a number of details that laced the events with a gothic tone.¹⁸ To begin with, the rural locale naturally lends itself to a gothic way of seeing, evoking a lost world of faith, order, and superstition.¹⁹ It is an incidental detail, but one which provided the means to introduce an atmosphere of backwardness or timelessness.²⁰ As the ‘clumsy cart’ creaks its way to the poorhouse doors, there is a temporal ambiguity in the sense these details might feature with as much ease in a pre-modern setting. That the weather reflects the mournful nature of the events is a sure sign we are in gothic territory. In fact, Mallinson’s use of the weather might be a more interesting detail than it might at first appear. Its ‘doleful’ appearance certainly indicates that something untoward is taking place, but patterns of weather could also highlight geographic despoliation. It could be a streak of lightning that illuminates the jagged outcrops of a mountainous terrain, or torrents of rain that imbue with an eerie shimmer a sinister castle arising from the ground as permanent a fixture as the ancient and lifeless trees that adorn its approach, or, indeed, a sudden change in weather at the height of summer that bathes the landscape of miserable poverty in sepia tones. This stress on tone accentuates the darker shade of the unfolding events. As the letter reveals, these paupers are not a clutch of anonymous villagers selected to be the playthings of a satanic prince, but ‘the unfortunate companions of our youth, our bosom friends, our grandfathers and

¹⁷ Jones, *Mid-Victorian Wales*, pp. 1-23.

¹⁸ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

¹⁹ William Hughes, ‘Village Gothic’ in *The Encyclopedia of the Gothic*, eds Hughes, Punter, and Smith (Chichester, 2016), pp. 718-20.

²⁰ As Fred Bottling argues, for gothic fiction the past represents ‘a site of struggle between enlightened forces of progress and more conservative impulses to retain continuity.’ Echoes of barbarous or sinister stages of historical development could be invoked to terrorize the present, but the past was in general a site where ideas about continuity or inheritance could be interrogated. Bottling, *Gothic*, pp. 14-25; Fred Botting, ‘In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture’ in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford, 2012), pp.13-24.

grandmothers, our uncles and aunts, and neighbours, with whom we have taken “sweet council together,” in the more fortunate period of our lives.’²¹

It is at this point that Mallinson’s account deviates from the expectations his gothic stylistic flourishes imply. As the paupers are ripped from the embrace of the local community, we do not encounter wails of dismay, or the anguished prayers of women rendered futile by the disinterested gaze of providence.²² On the contrary, Mallinson relates that in fact ‘The principal part of the female sex attended the place for the purpose of hindering their poorer friends from being taken away, which they considered as nothing less than a tyrannical infringement on the rights of the poor’.²³ He goes on to state the villagers’ resolve to keep alight the spirit of resistance by adopting the tactics used by the Whigs during the Reform agitation of 1832 ‘to stop the supplies’ – that is, to withhold taxes – until the local poor would be permitted to remain within the village.²⁴ An addendum to the letter even reveals that when the agents of the Bradford Guardians returned the following day, the bell was sounded at the mill in neighbouring Fartown to summon the villagers to active resistance. ‘It is scarcely possible to conceive the excitement of the minds of the inhabitants on this question’, Mallinson observes, and continues by affirming that, ‘the people generally vow, with one accord, that [the village poor] shall not be taken away, unless they are riven from [the villagers’] grasp by brute force.’²⁵

The response of the villagers of Pudsey seems to reverse the core themes of ‘active evil’ and ‘passive good’ that appear as staple motifs of the gothic genre.²⁶ The narrative that

²¹ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

²² Miles, *Gothic Writing*, pp. 2-3; 31.

²³ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

²⁴ As a political tactic, the stoppage of supplies was not confined to Whig agitation or the period of the reform crisis. The radical newspaper editor T. J. Wooler, for instance, suggested the tactic should be used in conjunction with petitioning in *Black Dwarf*, 11 August 1819. See, Ian Haywood and Zachary Leader (eds), *Romantic Period Writings, 1789-1832: An Anthology* (London, 1998), pp. 15-17.

²⁵ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

²⁶ These terms originate from William Blake’s invocation that in romance as in politics ‘Active Evil is better than Passive Good’. Gothic fiction took Blake’s recommendation to a new level, for example, in its depictions of evil or malevolent creatures preying on the virtuous or ‘pure’. For a discussion of Blake’s original meaning, see David Punter, “‘Active Evil’ and ‘Passive Good’” in *Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing, 1765-1830*, eds Aers, Cook, and Punter (Oxon, 2016), pp. 7-26.

Mallinson's note conjures is not one of a doomed village in which the helpless inhabitants are abandoned to the designs of an unspeakable evil, but one in which the villagers fight back against the horror that seeks to consume them. In fact, in Mallinson's letter can be detected elements of what might be understood as an insurgent gothic, in which melodramatic depictions of victimhood are invoked to galvanise political support. This was an imaginative play on genre in which gothic tropes were specifically utilised to build a narrative framework in order then to subvert it. Thus, descriptions of events or outcomes conformed to a model drawn from popular fiction to urge transcendence from an enveloping horror. Mallinson not only presented Chartism as the means to avoid the kind of static or tragic resolution that might be encountered in a popular romance, but also offered a means to imagine an escape from a historical cycle of oppression. Within this schema, the phantoms of the past could be summoned to a final exorcism, while the grand tragedy of class rule could enjoy its long-awaited finale.

Yet every tale required a compelling cast of villains, and this stylised rendition of class rule was no different. The villagers of Pudsey may have risen in response to the activities of a shadowy cabal of Bradford Guardians, but it was their master the Commission of Somerset House, or the 'Somerset Cerberus', that Mallinson identified as the true source of despotism.²⁷ And, in keeping with the very best examples of gothic story-telling, the forces of evil also required a suitable dungeon or tower within which they might foment their malevolent designs. Such a place was indeed identified. As Mallinson wrote: 'the Bradford Guardians seem bent on dragging our poor away from among us, and intend to immure them within the walls of a horrible bastille.'

²⁷ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

Chapter 1

The 'English' *Bastille*, 1789-1838

Mallinson was not alone in characterising the plight of paupers in such doom-laden terms. Gothic tones ran like a thread throughout Chartist writings on the New Poor Law, weaving a political response to the 1832 Reform Act and 'class legislation' into a compelling melodrama that came close to constituting a genre in its own right. Like Mallinson's text, these writings turned on complex narratives of intense dislocation, conspiracy, and heroic resistance both to summon and ultimately to subvert standard romantic tropes. However, to fully grasp the implications and political dynamics of this insurgent play on fiction, it is first necessary to dissect Mallinson's reference to the 'horrible bastille', a haunting and seemingly permanent fixture that cast a dismal shadow over the industrial landscape. Like the 'Spike' of a later generation, 'the bastille' seemed to confirm a sense of oppression, a pronouncement that human comfort, feeling, and dignity were commodities too dear to be afforded to the poor.¹

Mallinson was referring to the Bradford Union Workhouse, the eventual destination of the Pudsey poor, but 'the bastille' was, for at least the first half of the nineteenth century, a general label applied to the new wave of Union Workhouses then being established across Britain.² The term appeared most frequently in radical periodicals and texts, but it also found its way into realms beyond the boundaries of radicalism. It provided, for example, the title of George Baxter's history of the New Poor Law, *The Book of the Bastilles* (1841) and was frequently referenced by Thomas Carlyle in his

¹ See for example, George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (London, 2001). Lyn Lees' *The Solidarities of Strangers* presents the issue of poverty relief as a realm of constant renegotiation and social conflict. Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge, 1998). For the New Poor Law and consumerism see Peter Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics and Liberal Consumerism in England, 1830-1870* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 65-104.

² Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: The Workhouse System 1834-1884* (Cambridge 1993), pp. 1-4; Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, pp. 77-132; Norman Longmate, *The Workhouse: A Social History* (London, 2003), p. 13; Laura Foster, 'The representation of the workhouse in nineteenth-century culture', (unpublished Cardiff University PhD Thesis, 2014); M. A. Crowther, *The Workhouse System 1834-1929: The History of an English Social Institution* (London, 2016), pp. 30-53.

writings on the condition of England.³ In fact, so wide was the currency of the term that it even made occasional appearances in parliamentary debates.⁴ As historians and literary critics have often pointed out, the bastille referenced was none other than the Parisian *Bastille*, famously liberated by insurgents during the first stage of the French Revolution on 14 July 1789.⁵ On the surface, the name carried an implied meaning as the most notorious historical example of a prison that popular culture could conjure. More sinister than even the Tower of London, the *Bastille* was representative of the systematised corruption of autocracy, a symbol of despotism and revolutionary potential that chimed with an emerging appetite in popular culture for the political grotesquery furnished by Madame Tussauds.⁶ It chimed, too, with a renewed interest in the history of the Revolution, and drew its descriptive power from a symbolism that was rooted in authentic history and gothic representations alike.⁷

The *Bastille's* grizzly stature predated the French Revolution. At the time of the Enlightenment, the *Bastille* earned a reputation in Britain as a political prison, a dank repository where writers critical of the state or the monarchy could be sealed away. Myth mingled with memory as French accounts of imprisonment in the dungeon appeared in British writings on the *Bastille*, establishing its reputation 'as a symbol of punishment for independent political thought'.⁸ Some of these stories, such as that produced by Voltaire, were ostensibly drawn from legend. It was from Voltaire's pen

³ George Baxter, *The Book of the Bastiles. Or, the History of the Working of the New Poor Law* (London, 1841); Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London, 1843), pp. 3-6; 211-12; 297-98.

⁴ See for example: *House of Commons Debate*, 24 February 1837, 36 cc1002-1040; *HC Deb*, 30 April 1838, 42, cc685-689; *House of Lords Debate*, 26 July 1842, 65, cc619-30.

⁵ The term 'bastille' has often been assumed by historians to be a mistaken spelling of the French '*Bastille*'. For example, Elaine Hadley has charged the New Poor Law activists of having 'consistently misspelled' the term. Such responses are reasonable given the tendency of nineteenth-century radicals to present aberrant, and often bizarre, spellings of foreign names, terms, or locations. In this case, however, as Norbert Schürer has shown, 'bastile', 'bastle' and sometimes even 'bastell' were all variant spellings of '*Bastille*' in common English usage from as early as the fourteenth century. It is a minor point, but worth stating nonetheless, that using an established English spelling may have helped to neutralise the 'foreignness' of the institution. See, Norbert Schürer, 'The Storming of the *Bastille* in English Newspapers', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 29:1 (Winter, 2005), p. 53 and Elaine Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, p. 79.

⁶ For the significance of Madame Tussauds in British culture see Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: British Uses of the Past, 1800-1953* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 29-65.

⁷ Melman, *The Culture of History*, pp. 66-91; Hedva Ben-Israel, *English Historians and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 98-164.

⁸ Schürer, 'The Storming of the *Bastille* in English Newspapers', p. 57.

that the story of the ‘Man in the Iron Mask’, the anonymous seventeenth century prisoner widely assumed to have been the brother of Louis XIV, would receive a newfound popularity.⁹ This story of torture, callous betrayal, and depersonalisation provided material for French authors well into the 1840s. Many of their novels were received with acclaim by a British audience hungry for the latest sensations in romance.¹⁰ However, the *Bastille* legend was more tightly bound to a gothic literary canon by the appearance of a series of novelistic memoirs produced by former inmates of the dungeon in the course of the eighteenth century. These publications, many of which received English translations, conformed to a style that Victor Brombert has described as an ‘aggressive realism’.¹¹ Visceral descriptions of torture, cruelty, disease, hunger, and desolation mingled with tales of conspiracy and daring escape, establishing the authors as martyred heroes of their own stories of persecution and betrayal.

Amounting to little more than gothic novels, the memoirs produced by the ‘Martyrs of Despotism’, as they would become known, were the most important sources of the generation of the *Bastille* myth and its symbolism.¹² Strikingly, owing to the near-contemporaneous publication of the most sensational of these texts abroad, they also became a key source of knowledge of the institution beyond France, internationalising the symbol at the point of its very inception.¹³ Constantin de Renneville’s *L’Inquisition Française ou l’Histoire de la Bastille*, for example, was written while in exile in London, printed in Amsterdam in four volumes between 1715 and 1724, and was immediately translated into English and German.¹⁴ A protestant official from Normandy in the

⁹ Voltaire, *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751).

¹⁰ The most notable and direct novelisation was the final instalment of Alexandre Dumas’ d’Artagnan romance, *The Vicomte de Bragelonne: Ten Years Later*, serialised between 1847 and 1850. See Oxford World’s Classics edition of *The Man in The Iron Mask* (2008). For some interesting discussions on the reception of French literature in Britain see: Sharon Marcus, ‘Comparative Sapphism’ in *The Literary Channel: the Inter-national Invention of the Novel*, eds Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Denver (Woodstock, 2002), pp. 251-85; Berry Palmer Chevasco, *Mysterymania: the Reception of Eugène Sue in Britain 1838-1860* (Oxford, 2003); Anne Humphreys and Louis James (eds), *G. W. M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics and the Press* (Oxon, 2016).

¹¹ Victor Brombert, *The Romantic Prison: the French Tradition* (Guildford, 2015), p. 38.

¹² Hans Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of A Symbol of Despotism and Freedom*, trans. Norbert Schürer (London, 1997), pp. 106-18.

¹³ Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, p. 9; Constantin de Renneville, *The French Inquisition* (London, 1715); Renneville, *Entlarvte Französische Inquisition, oder: Geschichte der Bastille* (Nürnberg, 1715);

employ of the French secret police, Renneville turned double-agent for the Dutch government while working in the Netherlands at the end of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ His subterfuge revealed, Renneville was imprisoned in the *Bastille* between 1702 and 1713.¹⁶

Likening the institution to the Spanish Inquisition (another favourite theme of gothic authors), Renneville's memoirs set the tone for many of the *Bastille* texts that would follow.¹⁷ He described his conviction in conspiratorial and satanic terms, the ministers responsible rendered sinister and anonymous by their black attire: 'That Minister was in his Magistrate's Robe, which made me say, *I had seen the Devil*; for if he be not worse than the Devil, he is at least as Black and ugly.'¹⁸ Satanic themes and visions from Revelations were drawn into 'a whole system of mythological references: Polyphemus' cave, Hades, the Archeron, Pluto, Thesius, Ixion, the Harpies, Orpheus', etching out a figurative space beyond the reaches of Heaven, existing at once in the corporeal world and in a zone beyond the human imagination marked by an eternity of living death.¹⁹ Within this space, masked figures moved in secrecy in dank subterranean dungeons as forlorn prisoners tamed the rats that shared their cells and took their own lives out of despair.²⁰ Authors like the journalist Simon-Nicholas-Henri Linguet and the self-proclaimed noble Jean Henri Latude, both of whose memoirs found English translations in the 1780s, would also stress the arbitrary nature of their confinement and the cruelty they endured at the hands of prison guards.²¹ Swept up by a critical journalism, by the outbreak of revolution in 1789, the *Bastille* myth had become firmly lodged in social

Renneville, *L'Inquisition Française ou l'Histoire de la Bastille* (Balthazar Lakeman: Amsterdam, 1715 and Jean & Herm. Verbeek: Leiden, 1715).

¹⁵ Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, p. 9.

¹⁶ Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, p. 9.

¹⁷ Carol Davidson, *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1764-1824* (Cardiff, 2009), pp. 125-34; Diane Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880* (Cardiff, 2014), pp. 147-96.

¹⁸ Renneville, *The French Inquisition* (London, 1715), p. 123.

¹⁹ Victor Brombert, *The Romantic Prison: the French Tradition* (Guildford, 2015), p. 38.

²⁰ Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, p. 10.

²¹ Simon-Nicholas-Henri Linguet, *Memoirs of the Bastille. Containing a Full Exposition of the Mysterious Policy and Despotism of the French Government* (London, 1783); Jean Henri Latude, *Memoirs of Henry Masers de Latude During a Confinement of Thirty-five Years in the State Prisons of France* (London, 1787). See also: Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, pp. 6-37; 106-18; Brombert, *The Romantic Prison*, pp. 30-48.

consciousness even beyond the borders of France.²² As Schürer notes, by the end of the century British writers like Robert Lewis Stevenson and the poet William Cowper were describing the *Bastille* as a place of terror and despair, a perspective underlined by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* description of the prison as serving 'the clandestine purposes of unfeeling despotism'.²³

The fall of the *Bastille* on 14 July 1789 had a profound effect on the development of British radical discourse. Communicated to the British public through daily, weekly, and biweekly newspapers, the event provided a dramatic backdrop to the political debates and pamphlet wars that would come to dominate public discussion of the French Revolution.²⁴ Initially receiving a mixed response from newspapers, particularly marked in London, which tended to denounce the 'mob' while praising the fall of Bourbon despotism, the event quickly lent itself to the purposes of scribblers writing for plebeian playhouses. Within weeks of the fall of the *Bastille*, rival theatres in London began staging sentimental dramas based on the event, in the process ensuring that public knowledge of the fall of the *Bastille* would be tightly bound to theatrical representations. These endeavours were underpinned by commercial thinking: the first simmering of revolution across the channel united loyalists and democrats in celebration, the one seeing the fall of one of Britain's oldest enemies the other the triumph of liberty over despotism. Theatre managers sensed a universal hit, and a slew of productions celebrating the event were produced between 1789 and 1791.²⁵ The most popular of these theatrical outings was John Dent's *The Triumph of Liberty; or The Destruction of the Bastille* which ran for seventy-nine nights from 5 August 1789.²⁶ An overwhelming success by any measure, Dent's narrative of the events and the

²² Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, pp. 181-99; Schürer, 'The Storming of the *Bastille* in English Newspapers'; Rolf Reichardt, 'The French Revolution as a European Media Event' in *European History Online* (Mainz, 2012), <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/reichardtr-2010-en>, accessed 14 August 2017.

²³ Schürer, 'The Storming of the *Bastille* in English Newspapers', p. 57.

²⁴ Schürer, 'The Storming of the *Bastille* in English Newspapers', p. 50.

²⁵ Cecilia Feilla, *The Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution* (London, 2016), p. 93; Matthew Buckley, *Tragedy Walks the Streets: The French Revolution in the Making of Modern Drama* (Maryland, 2006), p. 88.

²⁶ John Dent, *The Bastille: A Musical Entertainment of One Act* (2nd ed. : London, 1790); Buckley, *Tragedy Walks the Streets*, p. 88; Jenna Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty: Slavery, Theater, and Popular Culture in London and Philadelphia, 1760–1850*, (Maryland, 2014), p. 66.

spectacles the theatre deployed to draw in the clamouring London audience presented an unambiguous celebration of direct popular action, tinged with patriotic loyalty.

The plot of Dent's piece was a simplistic affair, but one that conformed to the key motifs of sentimental melodrama.²⁷ The play's hero, Henry, must join the assault on the *Bastille* to rescue the father of his love Matilda. In this way, he hopes to prove his heroism and overcome the misgivings of Matilda's father who disapproves of their match. However, intermingled with this two-dimensional tale are contextual themes that transform the plot into a simultaneous celebration of French national heroism and British constitutional liberty. The play opens with Matilda who, pining for her imprisoned father, is roused from her rumination by a call-to-arms. Her immediate response is not to reflect on the sufferings of her kin, but on the sufferings of her nation: 'That patriot shout proclaims the public voice, And liberty shall make this day her choice; Despotic sway from this day forever fled, Happiness shall on all its comforts spread.'²⁸ The ambiguities are woven even into the core of the plot as Matilda names her father 'a prisoner of the state', condemned by tyranny, so that when she announces her desire that Henry rid her 'heart of grief' she is also demanding that her nation be restored to virtue. Henry's rescue of Matilda's father is the sanction for the two to wed, while the final speech (illegal under contemporary licensing laws) leaves the audience in no doubt to the allegorical nature of the play. At the *Place de Dauphine*, under a vision of 'nymphs strewing flowers', Henry celebrates a love that can only be consummated under the 'sun of liberty'.²⁹

Moreover, the true significance of the piece lay in its dramatization of the events that surrounded the plot. The programme promised a full account of the event, including on-stage re-enactments of: the assault on the fortress, its capture and demolition, the massacre of civilians by the defenders, and the execution of the governor (represented as a gothic monster), all of which were to be placed in the context 'of the Proceedings

²⁷ Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 25.

²⁸ Dent, *The Bastille*, p 1.

²⁹ Dent, *The Bastille*, p. 20.

that gave Freedom to the Empire of France.’³⁰ Together with elaborately designed set-pieces of the famous fortifications, including its dungeons and cells, the production could boast an accompanying score from one of the best-known composers of the capital.³¹ However, the production had one final spectacle in store for its audience. In what must have amounted to an astonishing display, Dent’s play closed with the descent of Britannia, ensconced in her Triumphal Car and bearing portraits of George III and Queen Charlotte. While trampling upon an allegorical depiction of despotism, Britannia then sings the:

From Britannia you caught the Patriot flame,
On Britain’s plan then build your future fame.
Let liberty and reason rule each part,
And form the Magna Charta of the heart.³²

Although undeniably jingoistic in tone, Dent’s *Britannia* served a twofold purpose. On the one hand, a play with significant spoken content ran the risk of enflaming the ire of the authorities. While the minor theatres could usually push the boundaries of licensing laws further than more ‘respectable’ establishments, the content of Dent’s play may have been deemed politically sensitive enough to require an ostentatious declaration of patriotic loyalty.³³ On the other hand, Dent’s play affirmed, with vast dramatic spectacle, the intermingling of romantic love, patriotism, revolution, and British liberty in an outright celebration of the French Revolution.³⁴ In this way, performances of Dent’s play successfully anglicised the Revolution for a British audience, contemporaneously with the events themselves.³⁵ It rendered the spectacle of Britannia stamping on Despotism as a metaphor for the French Revolution itself, casting it as a legitimate realisation of the promise of Magna Charta. From this point forward, the *Bastille* entered the British dramatic imagination and its political language as a

³⁰ Paul Rice, *British Music and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 86; Buckley, *Tragedy Walks the Streets*, p. 88.

³¹ Rice, *British Music and the French Revolution*, pp. 93-96.

³² Dent, *The Bastille*, p. 23.

³³ George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 43; Rice, *British Music and the French Revolution*, p. 95; Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty*, pp. 66-67.

³⁴ Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London*, p. 25.

³⁵ Gibbs, *Performing the Temple of Liberty*, p. 66; Buckley, *Tragedy Walks the Streets*, p. 89.

distinctly un-British and illiberal institution, not only unbecoming a constitutional state but a modern and enlightened one at that.

The descriptive possibilities these early accounts of the *Bastille* realised held obvious potential for opponents of the New Poor Law in the 1830s. As one correspondent to the *Brighton Patriot* noted when discussing the term's salience, although 'bastile' originated as a feudal term referring to a fortress, popular radicals drew from a different etymology in their analysis of the New Poor Law.³⁶ For them, it was the Parisian dungeon, the symbol of unjust state power that was 'destroyed ... by Democrats or Republicans of the French nation', that imbued the term with meaning. 'Professedly ... for state prisoners,' the correspondent continued, the French Bastile

was made subservient to the most abominable acts of despotism and tyranny ... until at length this den of villainy ... could be borne no longer, and on the 14th July, 1789, the people burst open its doors, liberated its inmates, and bringing some cannon to bear against it, razed the walls of this horrid house of oppression ...

While workhouses were not prisons in a conventional sense, the writer argued that they 'assimilate thereto' because the treatment of paupers in the workhouse established a parallel with the French prison. Worse still, the Whig Bastile was doubly damned as an affront both to the nobility of labour and to British sensibilities:

When a person entered the *Bastille* in France, an inventory was taken of every thing about him. So if a person enters ... a Union Poor House, his clothes are taken from him ... and he has to put on—*how* SHAMEFULLY DEGRADING *to a sober, steady, honest, industrious workman, and as an ENGLISHMAN*—the workhouse livery, or dress.

Lack of contact with friends and kin, a system of arbitrary detention without legal recourse, and 'walls of immuration' were the most important similarities between the two institutions. However, the correspondent levelled an altogether more serious charge against the framers of the New Poor Law. They were guilty of transposing the worst example of the excesses of the *ancien régime* to a supposed enlightened and liberal society: 'that horrid den of despotism' had been 'swept from the French nation

³⁶ *Brighton Patriot*, 13 November 1838, 4.

in the *eighteenth* century' and 'the English Parliament ... amidst the enlightenment of the NINETEENTH century, erected ... its bastiles' even 'amidst the "march of intellect"'. This represented, the correspondent assured, 'the utter disgrace of the nation' and 'the destruction of the constitution'.³⁷

This final charge was not a new one, but contained distinct echoes from the radical past. In fact, visions of an 'English' *Bastille* had haunted the radical imagination from the time of the French Wars. The symbol and its attendant myth fed into the narrative deployed by British radicals in the resurgence of popular agitation at the turn of the nineteenth century. The dawning of Radical Westminster was accompanied by cries of 'No Bastille', as the London crowd rallied to Francis Burdett's campaign to thwart state centralisation.³⁸ Not confined merely to criticisms of arbitrary internment, Burdett's campaigns in 1802 and 1806 deployed the image of the *Bastille* as a symbol of state corruption and the tyranny of the law. In 1802, Burdett launched his first bid for Wilkes' old seat of Middlesex. A long-time critic of Old Corruption, Burdett had been an influential campaigner for prison reform, securing in 1799 a parliamentary investigation into the treatment of inmates at the infamous Coldbath Fields Prison, where 16 members of the London Corresponding Society (LCS) were being held on charges of treason.³⁹ Associated with members of the LCS, Burdett had undergone a conversion to radicalism following the outbreak of the French Revolution and sought to mobilise the London crowd with his radical credentials.⁴⁰

Burdett was no Jacobin, although there do appear to have been shady links between his campaign and the Jacobin underground, and his programme was not marked by either Paine or an excess of republicanism.⁴¹ A conventional radical to the end, Burdett nevertheless seized upon an enduring repertoire of symbolism linked to the *Bastille*,

³⁷ *Brighton Patriot*, 13 November 1838, 4. Emphasis as per the original.

³⁸ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p. 174; Marc Baer, *The Rise and Fall of Radical Westminster, 1780-1890* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 21-27; 48-54; 91-93.

³⁹ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge, 1988), p. 16; Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790 - c. 1845* (Canberra, 2010), pp. 51-54.

⁴⁰ Marc Baer, 'From "First Constituency of the Empire" to "Citadel of Reaction": Westminster, 1800-90' in *London Politics, 1760-1914*, eds Matthew Cragoe and Antony Taylor (Basingstoke, 2005), pp. 145-47.

⁴¹ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 17.

successfully implanting the symbol into the very fabric of radical discourse. By 1812, the major centre of radical reform in Britain orbited a coalition of Burdett, Major Cartwright, William Cobbett, Francis Place, and Henry Hunt. It was this coalition, and the popular movements that were established in their wake, that laid the essential foundations of the nineteenth-century mass platform.⁴² Burdett himself would remain popular with the radical crowd in London for the remainder of his career in politics. However, the fundamental imagery he would employ in his campaigns remained essentially unaltered from this earlier period where his efforts on behalf of the Coldbath inmates so forcefully established his reputation. It was this, a high-profile campaign to rid Britain of its own *Bastille*, that ensured his enduring popularity. As E. P. Thompson notes, 'For years London's most popular slogan was "Burdett and no *Bastille*"', a slogan so enduring it was still in currency during Hunt's campaign of 1819.⁴³

Burdett's efforts to carry the hustings in 1802 led him to focus his campaign on the issue of prison reform, to which end he reportedly employed several former convicts of the 'bastile' as election agents.⁴⁴ The campaign was famously satirised by William Cobbett, at this time still a Tory, who lamented in his *Political Register* that Burdett's posturing had released a dangerous impulse amongst the poor:

Though the elections have not produced more violence than formerly, they have served to bring forth a species of malignity, which never before existed, and which is directed against established authority in all its branches. It is not ... a contest between such a gentleman and such a gentleman; but between the high and the low, the rich and the poor. ... The road to Brentford is lined with ragged wretches from St. Giles's bawling out, 'Sir Francis Burdett and no Bastile'.⁴⁵

Cobbett's analysis is revealing, and not only in his sensing of a growing divide between patrician and plebeian politics. As Cobbett appeared to recognise, the symbolism of the bastile lent itself to a campaign that encompassed a broad assault on authority. When the crowds chanted 'no bastile' they were angling their condemnation towards a more

⁴² E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 508.

⁴³ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 174; 629.

⁴⁴ *Cobbett's Annual Register*, 17 July 1802, 54; McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ *Cobbett's Annual Register*, 17 July 1802, 53-54.

vital theme than that of prison reform: they were challenging arbitrary state power and unrepresentative government. Burdett may have based his appeal on his criticism of prison conditions, but his electoral campaigns aimed at more than rectifying the iniquities of the penal system. By condensing a critique of the suspension of Habeas Corpus, the infamous Six Acts, secret courts, policing, and the centralising of government power into an attack on the ‘bastile’, Burdett’s supporters opposed the entire ‘bastile system’ complete with its Peers, magistrates, and justices.⁴⁶ As one campaign song illustrated:

For the traders in justice, in chains and Bastiles,
 Again the vile tools of corruption may struggle,
 And Bow-street its thief-catchers, scamps, alguazils,
 Combine to maintain the political juggle.
 Shall such a vile crew,
 Boys, dictate to you,
 The candidate fit for election?—NO, NEVER!
 Then again, with one voice,
 We’ll unite, by our choice,
 Old MIDDLESEX, BURDETT, and FREEDOM for ever!⁴⁷

Or as the title of an address to his constituents from 1810 had it, he was ‘Denying the Power of the House of Commons to Imprison the People of England.’⁴⁸

From Burdett, the *Bastille* featured as a central concept in the developing critique of arbitrary state power in the years leading up to the Peterloo Massacre, and with greater intensity thereafter. Cobbett’s ‘Letter to all True Hearted Englishmen’ published in 1817 turned on a now-familiar series of conventions.⁴⁹ Writing in response to the government’s tightening of its repressive apparatus in the wake of a resurgence in radical activity, Cobbett (by now a convinced reformer) likened the suspension of

⁴⁶ Francis Burdett, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Francis Burdett* (London, 1810), p. 14.

⁴⁷ *A full report of the speeches of Sir Francis Burdett at the late election* (London 1804), p. 88. ‘Alguazil’ seems to have been a common reference to the Spanish ‘alguacil’ or Portuguese ‘Aguazil’: the title of the office during the period of the Spanish Inquisition charged with locating suspected heretics. See, Juan Antonio Llorente, *The History of the Inquisition of Spain From the Time of its Establishment to the Reign of Ferdinand VII* (London, 1826), pp. 229-30.

⁴⁸ *Sir Francis Burdett to his Constituents* (London 1810).

⁴⁹ *Cobbett’s Weekly Political Pamphlet*, 1 March 1817, 258-63; James Cobbett and John Cobbett (eds), *Selections from Cobbett’s Political Works*, vol. V, (London, 1835), pp. 152-56.

habeas corpus to the system of ‘continental despotism’ that existed at the time of the French Revolution.⁵⁰ On the continent, he affirmed, ‘men are taken up, crammed into prisons, and remain sometimes for years, without ever being told their crime This was the case in France before the Revolution It was the case in Spain and in all countries where the Inquisition existed.’ The chief symbol of this system of arbitrary detention, he explained, ‘was one particular prison, called the *Bastille* in which wretched victims of power used to be confined’. Using the example of a Scottish radical ‘who had been confined in this Bastille *for more than twenty years*’, Cobbett outlined the nature of the institution. The man, he revealed,

had been *forgotten*; and it was by mere *accident* that he had been released People used to be confined in this cruel manner in virtue of what was called a *Lettre de Cachet*, that is to say, a *Secret Letter*, in which the devoted victim was merely *named and ordered to be shut up*.... these *Secret Letters* were at last actually *sold* in the reign of Louis XV. to any individuals who would pay a sufficient sum ... so that, any rich man, or woman, who had a spite against another man, or woman, might get such person shut up in a cold prison for any length of time.⁵¹

Although Cobbett went on to argue that he did not fear such a system being ‘carried to *this length* in England’, the threatening visage of the *Bastille* was evidently employed to suggest the very opposite. Its invocation, alongside that of the Spanish Inquisition, cast a threatening light over government repression, heavily laden with inferred meaning. The Habeas Corpus Suspension Act and the Seditious Meetings Act, intended to ward off a French-style revolution in Britain, was likened to the ‘Continental Despotism’ of the *Bastille*. They represented an oppression so odious that they transgressed against the hallowed status of ‘British liberty’, not only causing the government to resemble the *Ancien Régime* but also legitimising the very opposition they sought to quell. Yet, Cobbett did not pose this situation as a cause for lamentation, rather he argued that state oppression revealed the natural inclination of power unchecked by democratic institutions. In this sense, the *Bastille* was not a foreign aberration, but an ever-present danger in the radical mind.

⁵⁰ Cobbett’s *Weekly Political Pamphlet*, 261.

⁵¹ Cobbett’s *Weekly Political Pamphlet*, 261. Emphasis as per the original.

This was certainly the sense in which supporters of Richard Carlile used the term during the latter's imprisonment at Dorchester Gaol between 1819 and 1825. Convicted on a charge of blasphemy (though arrested for sedition), Carlile was imprisoned at a momentous point for radicalism. His publication of Paine's *Age of Reason* (1794-1807) might have gone unnoticed had it not been for the Peterloo Massacre in 1819.⁵² Carlile, then, became doubly martyred: a victim both of the age of superstition and of the forces of reaction which followed in its wake. In a reflection of this, correspondents to Carlile's *Republican* began addressing the editor in such honorific terms as 'the Illustrious Captive of Dorchester Bastille'.⁵³ An epitaph proposed by one correspondent drew from the theme of social death common to the *Bastille* literature and this was echoed, too, in Cobbett's characterisation of inmates of the dungeon being 'forgotten'.⁵⁴ To be inscribed 'in the Temple of Reason', home to the orphaned Cult of Reason from the French Revolution which now found a new abode in Carlile's shop, the epitaph paid homage to one 'Who for pretended impiety and blasphemy, was buried alive in a dungeon of despotism, in Dorchester Bastille, Nov. 16, 1819.' Not only did this play on the abject terror felt by nineteenth-century society about the prospect of live interment, but Carlile's fate mirrored that of the eponymous protagonist of Mary Wollstonecraft's gothic novel *Maria: or, the Wrongs of Women* (1798). For the audacity of challenging the patriarchal order, Maria is 'entombed' in a madhouse; for challenging the political and temporal order, Carlile was 'buried alive' in a *Bastille*.⁵⁵

Carlile deployed the term himself, defending such usage by comparing the treatment of 'State Prisoners' in Dorchester Gaol to that received by inmates of the *Bastille* of Paris.⁵⁶ 'The prisoners confined in the [French] Bastille, were generally well fed' Carlile argued, 'whilst here, there is no allowance of fire nor food, no friends admitted to see you, nor any means of breathing the open air without a turnkey ... all the time at your elbow'

⁵² Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791-1866* (Manchester, 1974), pp. 33-35.

⁵³ *Republican*, 20 September 1820, 536-39.

⁵⁴ *Republican*, 14 July 1820, 418.

⁵⁵ Caroline Gonda, *Reading Daughters' Fictions 1709-1834: Novels and Society from Manley to Edgeworth* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 157; Ruth Bienstock Anolik, *Property and Power in English Gothic Literature* (Jefferson, 2016), p. 65.

⁵⁶ *Republican*, 19 May 1820, 109-12.

These same themes re-emerged with added vigour in the first half of the 1830s with the waging of the ‘war of the unstamped press’. The bastille awaited editors and distributors of unstamped newspapers, like Henry Hetherington whose *Poor Man’s Guardian* followed the plight of its agents and editor at various ‘bastilles’ across the country. Hetherington himself was imprisoned at ‘Clerkenwell Bastile’, as the notice of publication reminded readers each issue, while letters and intelligence reports noted the arrest of several of the newspaper’s agents and their imprisonment at such locations as ‘Coldbath Fields Bastile’, the ‘Coventry New Bastile’, and ‘Kingston Bastile’.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, at a radical supper following a large demonstration held at St Peter’s Field on 11 July 1832, a toast to a number of ‘brave and true-hearted friends’ residing in ‘Lancaster Bastile’ were met with the same respectful silence reserved for the ‘departed’ Major Cartwright and the memory of Thomas Paine.⁵⁸

For radicalism’s proponents, the image of the *Bastille* provided a model not only for political incarceration, but also as a metaphor for the neglectful treatment of the poor. Henry Hunt’s incarceration in Ilchester Gaol in 1821 prompted the publication of a pamphlet naming the institution a ‘bastile’.⁵⁹ The description made no direct reference to its Parisian namesake, but features of Hunt’s narrative conformed to the *Bastille* symbolism. Hunt described dank subterranean cells, overflowing sewage, poor provisions, negligent guards, and unwashed debtors clad in soiled clothing and forced to share cells with hardened criminals. The absence of arrangements for conjugal visits was not only a cruel and unnatural imposition on ‘honest debtors’, but also led to scenes that made the prison worthy of divine retribution: ‘if all the fire of Heaven had not been spent on Sodom and Gomorrah as an example to future ages, some portion of it would certainly have rained into this gulph of iniquity.’ In one pitiable scene, Hunt related that

⁵⁷ Hetherington, *Cheap Salvation, Or an Antidote to Priestcraft* (London, 1843), pp. 4-6. Additionally, several issues of the newspaper carry a notice of publication registered to ‘Clerkenwell Bastile’. See: *Poor Man’s Guardian*, 19 November 1831 – 10 March 1832, 8. For the agents, see: *Poor Man’s Guardian*, 18 February 1832, 8; 3 March 1832, 6; 24 March 1832, 7; 5 May 1832, 7; 30 June 1832, 4.

⁵⁸ *Poor Man’s Guardian*, 21 July 1832, 6.

⁵⁹ Henry Hunt, *A Peep into Prison; Or Inside of Ilchester Bastille* (London, 1821). See also: Margot Finn, ‘Henry Hunt’s Peep into Prison: the radical discontinuities of imprisonment for debt in *English Radicalism, 1550-1850*, eds Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 190-216 and Christina Parolain, “‘Let us have Truth and Liberty’”: contesting Britishness and otherness from a prison cell, *London 1820-1826, Humanities Research*, 13:1 (2006), pp. 71-83.

the neglect of regulations separating women and men had led to a female inmate falling pregnant. Her 'Bastile bastard', not knowing the identity of his father was left to roam the prison calling any male inmate or visitor 'papa'. The arbitrary nature of confinement and the extreme punishments meted out by wardens was not only a violation of law, Hunt argued, but of 'every principal of humanity, equity, or justice.'⁶⁰

When in 1840 James Mallinson wrote of a dark and pervasive shadow settling over Pudsey, summoned by the invocation of the Bradford Bastile, he was knowingly or otherwise contributing to a culture of writing on the *Bastille* that dated to the second decade of the eighteenth century. Closely wedded to gothic literature and romantic theatre, by the Chartist period the symbolism of the *Bastille* had become deeply embedded in the radical imagination. For almost half a century, British radicals reflexively deployed the mythical associations of the Parisian dungeon to dramatise reform, contest government centralisation, and challenge the reign of ignorance, injustice, and superstition. The *Bastille's* status as the archetypal dungeon and the ultimate symbol of 'Continental despotism' allowed radicals not only to challenge government oppression, but also to claim the language of patriotism. In this way, they could stage reform as a return to authentic British liberty, corrupted by the inherent Bourbonism of the British government. That the French Revolution more broadly, and the *Bastille* specifically, could be entwined in these kinds of discourse at least partially relates to the fact that nineteenth-century melodrama was in important ways a product of the Revolution itself.⁶¹ Emphasising the torment and dislocation of a world in which the sacred had been banished, the gothic became a central means of viewing the world. It stressed an unending torment under the disinterested gaze of providence. Under its

⁶⁰ Hunt, *Peep into Prison*, p. 16.

⁶¹ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, pp. 14-20.

auspices, the forces of darkness ran rampant, impervious to moralism and often aided by science.

The economic and social philosophies that underpinned Whig political economy were drawn into this gothic discourse. Epitomised by the New Poor Law, the policy of the reformed parliament could be portrayed as representing the very essence of gothic terror. Chartists would make greater use of the gothic themes that suffused the original *Bastille* myth, melding anxieties about the precariousness of working-class existence with the terror of social death and the torture of isolation. However, these varieties of usage should not be considered as wholly contrived. Contained within the symbolism, lurking behind its melodramatic structures and gothic framings, were genuine concerns and justified fears. Part tool and part prophesy, the *Bastille* could be invoked to explore and articulate acute feelings of social and political malaise while at the same time supplying a legendary example of resistance and transcendence. Not simply a propaganda tool, it was intrinsic to a sense of radical identity and represented a means to understand the present through what Dwight Culler has described as the 'Mirror of History'.⁶² By seeking a reflection of their own struggles in the past, Chartists did not only attempt to draw parallels with revolutionary France, but also used the symbolic imagery inherent in the toppling of the old regime to articulate their own struggle. By using such analogies, Chartists could entwine themselves within a universal story of revolutionary activity, democratic mobilization, and the overthrow of tyranny, deeply related to ideas about social consciousness.⁶³

To view allusions to the *Bastille* as simply furnishing an oppositional rhetoric is also to miss its essential mnemonic function. The symbol recalled a plethora of historical connections, never far from the radical imagination, and deployed with them the weight of its original historical context. In this way, the *Bastille* emerged from a field of revolutionary symbolism as an artefact of a different nature. As James Epstein has argued, the primary attraction of French Revolutionary symbols for British radicals lay

⁶² Dwight Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (London, 1985), pp. vii-viii; 1-7; 39-73. See also, B.W.Young, *The Victorian Eighteenth Century: An Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 1-37.

⁶³ See part three of this chapter.

in the inherent ambiguity broadcast by their usage.⁶⁴ The Red Cap of the *sans culottes*, for example, already possessed webs of meaning specific to an indigenous context before its relationship with the Jacobinical altered the timbre of its symbolic resonance. British radicals could deploy the symbol to point variously to its original classical roots, the Glorious Revolution, Wilkite radicalism, American independence, or as an allegorical reference to Liberty or Britannia.⁶⁵ In turn, radicals could trade on the ambiguities contained in references to the French Revolution to contest the political terrain, heighten the emotional stakes, and test the limits of public political discourse.⁶⁶ Radicals could parade the provocative tricolour, complete with cap of liberty, or assemble national conventions to contest the symbolic power of government, all the while signalling both revolutionary and loyalist intent.⁶⁷

On the other hand, references to the *Bastille* could draw on no such indigenous contexts or meanings. The very power of the symbol lay precisely in the specificity of its historical reference point. Its unambiguous association with the French Revolution and the crimes of the *ancien regime* ensured that its deployment could only be highly charged with political meaning, providing radical discourse with a model of state terror and despotism capable of mobilizing a broad range of radical inflections by the same symbolic device. For Chartists, opposition to the *Bastille* was able to unify elements of the movement that were otherwise bitterly opposed on tactical, philosophical, or personal issues. Supporters of moral and physical force, followers of Paine and admirers of the British constitution, and feuding leaders could all share a discourse of class oppression, highlighting the precarious nature of working-class existence in the same language as rank-and-file chartists themselves. Not only did the symbol help to mediate the relationship between radical ideology and a campaign based on 'the politics of

⁶⁴ James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbolism in England, 1790-1850* (London, 2014), pp. 83-118.

⁶⁵ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 91-96.

⁶⁶ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 89-91.

⁶⁷ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 18-19; T.M.Parssinen, 'Association, Convention and Anti-Parliament in British Radical Politics, 1771-1848', *English Historical Review*, 88:384 (1973), pp. 504-33.

everyday life', but it also brought in train a repertoire of gothic imagery and romantic connections that added a new level of context and meaning to radical agitation.⁶⁸

However, while the symbol's point of reference was fixed, the broader symbolic associations attached to it were constantly shifting. For decades, the London crowd responded to the accelerating centralisation of the British state by flinging back the cry 'no bastille!'. By the 1820s, the bastille had multiplied, spawning a network of political prisons – representations of a new authority, underpinned by a menacing encroachment on political activity. During the 1830s, bastilles beckoned to radical journalists and their agents who challenged the prohibition on the dissemination of political knowledge. However, following the 1832 Reform Act, the bastille took on an altogether new aspect. In the feverish politics of post-reform Britain, the symbol became a short-hand for class rule and class oppression, manifested in the institution of the New Poor Law. It was the workhouse which became symbolic of this new order. The insecurities of working-class life combined with suspicion of the authorities and hatred of 'class legislation' to create a vision of an immoral order, uninterested in working-class demands for a dignified existence, and underpinned by a malevolent philosophy of political economy that insisted the rights and liberties of the poor could be traded away in the national interest. Thus was born the 'Whig Bastille': a physical deformity of the body politic and the degeneration of public morality manifested in one institution. In this way the symbolism attached to the *Bastille* mirrored the complex, and often rapid, shifts in the political landscape, offering a crucial insight into the continuities and breaks in the language of nineteenth-century radicalism.

As one writer for the *Charter* reflected in 1839, the change of context that separated Chartism from earlier forms of radicalism invited new terrors, scarcely imaginable to preceding generations. Calling themselves Old Style, they reflected on the extreme toll industrialisation had taken on the health and wellbeing of the families and communities of the working class. As they explained:

⁶⁸ Robert Hall, 'Hearts and Minds: The Politics of Everyday Life and Chartism, 1832–1840', *Labour History Review*, 74:1 (April, 2009), pp. 27–43.

I am old enough to remember the condition of the working classes of this country sixty years ago; I am young enough to be able to contrast it with the condition of those who now form the working classes. Oh god! how startling it is! Then, a well-fed, decently clad, comfortably sheltered, happy, conscientious man, was united to one whose body was healthy, and whose limbs were straight—a loving wife, and a careful mother. The children, a test of a nation's prosperity, were blithe, smiling, and happy ones. Each night assembled on the village green, clad in frieze jackets, leather, or grey cloth breeches; stockings whose warmth and lasting properties showed a mother's or grandmother's knitting skill; and their shoes defied summer's dust or winter's snow; carrying in their hands their evening meals—its proportions proved a father's labour required. The old of the village walked forth to see or share the pastime. Such I knew it.⁶⁹

Old Style's narrative of a lost golden age, characterised by a noble patriarchy, artfully captures the deep interrelationship between the gothic and the industrial. In this narrative, a romantic past, characterised by the lightness and gaiety of happy children, is suddenly terminated by a brutal and alien force that establishes in its wake a darkness to eclipse all the horrors found in the annals of human history. The monster of the factory now gorges itself on the blood of children, poisoning the worker with its putrid exhalations. As Old Style continued:

Where is the village-green? That factory covers it! It is about to send forth its busy population. Those are the descendants of your playfellows. Merciful God! how unscrutable your designs! Here are hundreds of those whom the Holiest of Holy once blessed and said, that of such was the kingdom of heaven; consigned to a monster, whose appetite for carnage is insatiable. To the tortures of which, the rack, the thumbscrew, the water torture itself were mercies. Revive ye inquisitorial terrors, for your [auto-da-fés], the fires of Smithfield, the dread bastille, all the horrors of past times generated less misery than the monster of the factory! For nothing less than blood, the sinew, and the marrow of children, extracted by a long, painful process, a torture continuing for years, until merciful death puts an end to their sufferings, is administered to its pampered maw.

This was the context in which Chartist references to the *Bastille* were to feature. From the medieval tyranny of autocratic France, the dungeon now ushered in a dark age of industrialisation characterised by unremitting torture and the wholesale murder of paupers.

⁶⁹ *Charter*, 1 September 1839, 14.

Chapter 2

The 'Whig Bastile', 1838-1842

By the time the New Poor Law came into effect during the late 1830s, the 'bastile' contained a pointed repertoire of symbolism, formed over fifty years of use by British radicals. From the early revolutionary period when the *Bastille* had exemplified the worst crimes of Bourbon excess, it had passed into British popular consciousness to be swept up by the early simmering of radical agitation during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, and was imbued with a distinctly anti-statist message. From there bastiles began to populate the radical imagination to the same degree that reformers populated the nation's prison cells.¹ From around the year of Peterloo, and with added intensity during the 'war of the unstamped press', the bastile gained a renewed significance from the struggle against the 'taxes on knowledge'.² In these circumstances, to oppose the bastile could no longer be reduced to a defence of *habeas corpus* and a celebration of radical libertarianism. Until the early years of Chartism, to write of the bastile was to write of an unjust, political incarceration, sanctioned by state recourse to arbitrary powers contained in the laws against sedition and the Newspaper Stamp Acts. Although the image of the Parisian *Bastille* provided the blueprint for the creation of the 'English' bastiles, its transmission to Britain imbued it with meanings specific to British political and legal contexts. The *Bastille* became intertwined with British political history and radical politics in a way that was at once rooted in the historical experience of the French Revolution, but simultaneously also reflected changing social and political realities in Britain.

¹ Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790 – c. 1845* (Canberra, 2010), pp. 80-82.

² Joel Weiner, *The War of the Unstamped: The Movement to Repeal the British Newspaper Tax, 1830-1836* (London, 1969); Patricia Hollis, *The Pauper Press: A Study in Working-Class Radicalism of the 1830s* (Oxford, 1970); Paul Thomas Murphy, *Toward a Working-Class Canon: Literary Criticism in British Working-Class Periodicals, 1816-1858* (Columbus, 1994), pp. 7-31.

As the 1832 Reform Act created a watershed moment in British political history, so too did it shift the terms of reference in allusions to the ‘bastile’. Before 1832, the image of the bastile was primarily tied to an oppressive legal framework that sought to quell radical dissent; by 1838, it had become symbolic of class rule and of Whig excess. In this way, the image of the bastile paralleled the shift in emphasis of popular radicalism towards a critique of the state and its agencies resulting from the uneven distribution of political power following the passage of the Reform Act.³ A key motivation behind radicalism’s emphasis on the policy decisions of the reformed parliament was to demonstrate that unequal representation made for a skewed state agenda, resulting in the unconstitutional, even despotic, exercise of political power.⁴ But it was also, and arguably more importantly, a defensive posture. After 1832, radicalism’s core constituency was the working class. Workers made up the activists, the politicians, and even many of the intellectuals of the movement of popular radicalism, and it was the cohesion of their communities that were assailed by the twin forces of industrialisation and government policy – assaults that appeared to find single vehicle in the legislative agenda of the Reformed House.⁵

This shift in emphasis was not total; the ‘bastile’ retained its associations with despotism, arbitrary imprisonment, torture, and the gothic grotesquery that depictions of the *Bastille* traditionally enjoyed. In fact, the literary construction of the ‘Whig Bastile’ depended on these motifs, melding this imagery with that of sensationalist melodrama.⁶ Radical authors self-consciously stylised references to the ‘bastile’ with methods derived from popular forms of fiction and representation. It was no longer simply a dungeon, but each bastile contained its own web of abominations – its own

³ Dorothy Thompson, ‘Chartism as an Historical Subject’ in *The Dignity of Chartism: Essays by Dorothy Thompson*, ed. Stephen Roberts (London, 2015), pp. 7-12; Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 2013), pp. 9-26; Dorothy Thompson, ‘The Early Chartists’ in *Outsiders: Class, Gender, and Nation* (London, 1993), pp. 45-76; Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘The Language of Chartism’ in *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860*, eds James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson, (London, 1982), pp. 35-38; 48-52; John Belchem, *Popular Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 64-73; Rohan McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1998), pp. 33-52; Matthew Roberts, *Political Movements in Urban England, 1832-1914* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 38-43.

⁴ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 90-178.

⁵ Thompson, *The Chartists*, pp. 9-26; Robert Hall, ‘Hearts and Minds’.

⁶ Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, pp. 77-132.

veritable Chamber of Horrors. Yet, the stress these accounts placed on issues of gender, family, food, clothing, and routine also mirrored concerns relating to the material and cultural decline of working-class communities. In the bastille was found a concentrated microcosm of class experience.

Chartist writing on the workhouse also tended to stress similar themes to earlier writings on the Parisian *Bastille* and radical criticisms of the arbitrary confinement of political prisoners. To be immured in the Whig Bastille was to take leave of the comforts of home, family, and friends. It was described as an imprisonment characterised by the unrelenting torture of the workhouse regime, which was designed to break the mind, body and spirit of the poor. The working man, 'was always to have before his eyes the tearing asunder of all the closest ties of social life, and the banishment of all ideas of home, of friends of wife and children' ran one editorial in the *Northern Liberator*. It continued:

He would go into the bastille as an isolated and solitary human being, cut off from all social sympathy and regard; and his joys and sorrows were forbidden, by the Commissioners of Somerset House, to be revealed beyond the limits of his own breast. The more we think of [the New Poor Law] ... the more convinced are we that there never was, in any country, a more violent outrage committed on human nature ...⁷

At a meeting in South Shields, Robert Lowery, a distributor for the *Northern Liberator* and Tyneside delegate to the National Convention in 1839, echoed similar themes.⁸ The working man was to labour under the shadow of the workhouse, and when driven out of work by speculation 'or was worn out by constant toil, he had no alternative but to die by the wayside or to live like a slave in a Poor-law bastille, separated from his wife and child.' However, Lowery continued, this was not simply a by-product of the legislation, but represented the very 'spirit of the Poor-law Amendment Act'.⁹

⁷ *Northern Liberator*, 7 July 1838, 3.

⁸ D.J.Rowe, 'Tyneside Chartism' in *Essays in Tyneside Labour History*, ed. Norman McCord, (Newcastle, 1977), p. 68.

⁹ *Northern Liberator*, 28 October 1837, 4. For Robert Lowery, see Brian Harrison and Patricia Hollis (eds), *Robert Lowery, Radical and Chartist* (London, 1979).

Rumours of ill treatment at the Morpeth Union Workhouse in early 1839 elicited similar responses, but this time tinged with accounts of personal horror. Characterised as ‘The Morpeth Hell’ by the *Northern Liberator*, a letter from a correspondent outlined the abuses of the local Guardians.¹⁰ ‘The poor wretches are just famished alive’ the correspondent wrote. A litany of complaints piled up:

A patient is not allowed a morsel of bread to put the taste of medicine out of his mouth; an old woman was choked by ravenously eating a little beef; and another poor creature nearly fell a victim in the same way, from the same cause. A woman, Lydia Berry, by way of correction, has had *two of her teeth knocked out*. A poor girl was put into the *dead-house*, the other day, where a wretched man had just been carried to his grave of typhus fever. An old man, who is troubled with a cough, happened to throw a little phlegm on the floor; he was dragged by the cuff of the neck out of bed, and threatened that if he offended in this way again he would be compelled to lick his own expectoration up again!

Finally, an old man with a bowel complaint had been advised to drink Port by the medical examiner. Port being too dear, the correspondent explained, the Guardians had insisted on the use of British wine instead, a decision that ‘carried off the poor fellow to his grave.’ ‘It is impossible to enumerate the cruelties that are practiced in this infernal place’, the correspondent summarised. ‘Every human creature that enters within the walls of this horrid den is doomed to starvation, disease, or death.’ The example of Morpeth proved, wrote the editor of the *Northern Liberator*, that ‘If the Devil himself had ministerial appointments, he could not send us a worse sample’ than the ministers of the Whig government.¹¹

Responses to institutionalisation drew from the linguistic repertoire of immurement. Like the captives of the *Bastille*, victims of the workhouse regime suffered at the hands of anonymous minders who appeared to delight in tormenting their charges. By preying on women and the elderly, like the nightmarish creatures found in gothic tales, workhouse officials were portrayed as persecuting symbols of virtue and frailty. Chartists drew from melodramatic depictions of female imperilment to characterise a system alien to chivalric notions of idealised patriarchy, rendering physical violence

¹⁰ *Northern Liberator*, 23 February 1839, 2.

¹¹ *Northern Liberator*, 23 February 1839, 3.

visited upon women as an allegory of the threatened status of working-class domesticity. The juxtaposition of a young girl with a corpse and the visceral image of an elderly man licking his 'expectoration' off the ground presented twisted mockeries of the gaiety of childhood and the venerability of old age. The language of the Inferno characterised the 'Morpeth Hell' as place of torment where demons of the state administered a dietary system designed to induce suffering, and where officials would not even spare a little port to ease the pain of a dying man.

The torment that characterised images of the workhouse regime were drawn into depictions of parliament as a demonic cabal. The *Northern Liberator's* likening of the Whigs to agents of the Devil echoed the themes of a mock catechism that was said to have been circulating in the North Riding during 1837.¹² Encapsulating a Chartist critique of class rule, the catechism successfully melds the gothic imagery found in depictions of the New Poor Law with the Jacobin infidelism of the 1790s, satirising the House of Commons's standing as a home to virtue.¹³ 'To be Learned by every Pauper previous to his confinement in the Bastile', the Poor Law Catechism presented the Commons as an outpost of the damned:

Q.—Rehearse the articles of thy belief.

Answer.—I believe in the existence of Harry Bruff'em and of Miss Martineau, and of a host of Whores and Rogues, the makers of the Accursed Poor Law Starvation Act.

And in three lousy Commissioners, their pauper-starving tools; who were conceived by Satan, born in the sink of iniquity, serve under pompous pirates, have crucified charity and benevolence, are dead to every feeling of humanity, and have buried the rights of the poor in the sepulchre of robbery. They descended into Hell, received instructions from their father, and in three days rose again from the rakings of the damned. They then ascended to power on the wings of plunder, and now sit at the right hand of injustice and tyranny, from whence they shall come and be judged according to their deserts.

¹² *Northern Liberator*, 4 November 1837, 3.

¹³ F.J. Kaijage, "'Poor Law Catechism': Religious Parody and Social Protest", *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 42 (1981), pp. 26-30.

I believe in the existence of a common house of thieves, the communion of robbers, the perpetrators of sin; the resurrection of a revolution, and the death of everlasting British slavery. Amen.¹⁴

The dreaded 'Starvation Act' (the New Poor Law) that has been created by a band of 'Whores and Rogues' (Whigs and Radicals) is presented as symbolic of the devilish intent of the 'common house of thieves' (the House of Commons). The 'lousy commissioners' that act as their 'right hand' work to 'bury the rights of the poor in the sepulchre of robbery', which can only refer to the workhouse. However, the catechism does not allow that the tyranny of Hell might reign eternal. Rather, the bastille appears inseparable from the revolution that will be resurrected in its wake. Not only does Catechism suppose that torment breeds resistance, but that the New Poor Law itself would be the locus of insurgent activity, spawning an insurgent opposition which would finally spell 'the death of everlasting British slavery'.

Returning to the example of Morpeth, the scandal did indeed underscore the potential that such coverage possessed for mobilising opposition. A few weeks later, an anti-Poor Law meeting was held by local residents to discuss the abuses at the bastille.¹⁵ The Chartist Robert Blakey expressed his gratitude to the Chartist press in publicising the allegations. Since that time, he explained, the local Guardians had been more lenient in their dietary restrictions. However, complaints remained, and centred on the system as a whole. The workhouse, argued Blakey, operated as 'a place of punishment and suffering, in order that the poor might be deterred from applying for any relief' or that they would be 'obliged to take whatever was offered to them.' Of the criticisms levelled

¹⁴ Harry Bruff'em: Lord Henry Brougham, a leading Whig politician with a keen interest in Malthusian political economy who organised the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1832 and smoothed the path for the resultant Poor Law Amendment Act through the Lords in 1834. Miss Martineau: Harriet Martineau was a journalist and writer in the radical and dissenting traditions who, during the reform agitation of 1832, wrote a series of primers in political economy based principally on the ideas of James Mill and Thomas Malthus. During 1833, at the behest of leading Whig reformers, Martineau published a series of illustrated volumes on the iniquities of the Poor Laws in order to cultivate favourable public opinion ahead of the presentation to Parliament of the bill to amend the Poor Laws the following year. Mark Lobban, 'Brougham, Henry Peter', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn., (Oxford, 2009), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, accessed 20 September 2017; R. K. Webb, 'Martineau, Harriet', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn., (Oxford, 2009), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, accessed 20 September 2017.

¹⁵ *Northern Liberator*, 2 March 1839, 2; *Northern Star*, 9 March 1839, 7.

at the Guardians, one injustice stood apart: the practice of supervised medical treatment, designed so that '[accounts of] miseries were to be stifled if possible.' The meeting resolved that an inquest should be sought into the deaths of two of the inmates at the bastille, an action that appears to have met with success.¹⁶ However, the following month the *Northern Star* revealed the travails of a young single mother who had since been denied outdoor relief by the Morpeth Guardians.¹⁷ Deserted by the child's would-be father, the woman was subjected to the bastardy clause and forced to submit to an invasive physical examination in the presence of the board. To refuse relief following such an ordeal, the *Northern Star* argued, revealed the gothic-like inhumanity of the Guardians, a group who 'rejoice, with a fiendish satisfaction, over the misfortunes of their fellow-creatures; and ... gloat with delight over such indecent examinations, so much in accordance with the impurity of their own minds.' By mid-April opponents on the New Poor Law had established a branch of the Northern Political Union in Morpeth, boasting seventy members, a reading room, and support from the town's 'liberal' Mayor.¹⁸

Local incidents, such as that which occurred at Morpeth, were drawn into a narrative of the workhouse as a cruel and arbitrary punishment for the 'crime' of being poor.¹⁹ A pamphlet produced by the Kettering Radical Association in 1839, epitomises this view:

For ourselves, for our widowed mothers, and for our aged and afflicted relatives and neighbours, we claim that neither we nor they shall find it difficult to obtain relief – that such relief shall be awarded to us as our *right*, not conferred upon us a *boon* – that poverty shall not expose us to incarceration in a prison-workhouse – and especially that those whom God hath joined together, shall not be put asunder, while guiltless of all other crime save that of being poor.²⁰

¹⁶ *Northern Liberator*, 9 March 1839, 2.

¹⁷ *Northern Star*, 6 April 1839, 7.

¹⁸ *Northern Star*, 13 April 1839, 7. See also *Northern Liberator*, 6 April 1839, 4 and *London Dispatch*, 31 March 1839, 3.

¹⁹ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', p. 29; Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, p. 107; Simon Fowler, *The Workhouse: The People, the Places, the Life Behind Doors* (Barnsley, 2014), p. 65; Longmate, *The Workhouse*, pp. 58; 284; Robert Gammage, *The Chartist Movement* (Manchester, 1854), pp. 62-64.

²⁰ Dorothy Thompson (ed.), *The Early Chartists* (London, 1971), p. 110.

Moreover, the social influence exerted by the New Poor Law impacted upon specifically working-class issues. While under the Old Poor Law, only paupers who could not support themselves independently were interned in a workhouse, at least in theory, the New Poor Law established that the majority of those seeking relief would be forced to submit to the 'workhouse test'.²¹ Not only did this impinge on the customary principle or right of the poor to receive relief, it imperilled the status of healthy workers who were themselves subject to cyclical unemployment. A wider fear, however, and one that connected opposition to the workhouse to the campaign for factory reform, was that the New Poor Law would aid unscrupulous employers in reducing wages or compromising on working conditions, secure in the knowledge that their workforce would not risk internment in the dreaded bastille.²² Responses to abuses reveal a wide array of insecurities that drove the radical mobilisations of the 1830s and 1840s. Above all, they politicised the cost and quality of food and sundry items, highlighted justified anxieties about illness and death, and condensed the 'everyday' uncertainties resulting from industrialisation into a politically-charged narrative of class rule, often betraying deep mistrust towards the intentions of the authorities.

A prime example of this latter trend was the Chartist response to the scandal of the dietary provisions at Bridgwater Union Workhouse in Somerset.²³ In summer 1836, following pressure from the Poor Law Commission and over the opposition of the institution's medical officer, the workhouse authorities had switched to a diet of gruel.²⁴ The gruel triggered an outbreak of diarrhoea that exacerbated the ill health of the local paupers, and the Commission's refusal to relax the dietary regulations resulted in a significant death toll (more than twenty paupers died during a single week in 1837).²⁵ In January 1838 a former Tory guardian, John Bowen, provoked a national outcry over

²¹ Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 73; Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp. 17-18; Driver, *Power and Pauperism*, pp. 141-44.

²² Thompson, *The Chartists*, p. 11; Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', p. 32.

²³ In common with many contemporary sources on the case, Chartists tended to style the town as 'Bridgewater'.

²⁴ Longmate, *The Workhouse*, p. 115; Samantha Shave, "'Immediate Death or a Life of Torture Are the Consequences of the System'" The Bridgwater Union Scandal and Policy Change' in *Medicine and the Workhouse*, eds Jonathan Reinartz and Leonard Schwarz (Rochester, 2013), pp. 164-191; Gurney, *Wanting and Having*, pp. 67; 77-79; 83.

²⁵ Gurney, *Wanting and Having*, p. 78.

the scandal when he advertised the crisis in *The Times*.²⁶ The *Northern Star* picked up on the story in mid-February. Under a series of articles with the heading 'Hell Broth', the *Star* reprinted Bowen's letters.²⁷ They detailed the tragedy in stark terms. Inmates were described as having been 'reduced to mere skeletons' while the governor's description of the effect of the gruel was quoted at length:

it ran away from them while they were standing upright as they took it. It affected them upwards and downwards. All the way down the stairs across the hall, and down the garden path, was covered every morning, and the stench was horrible all through the house; making the people ill and sick who had not got the diarrhoea.²⁸

Notwithstanding these reports, the administrators of the institution doggedly stuck to the letter of the regulations passed down by the Commissioners, only excepting the afflicted from the official diet. Thus, Bowen concluded, 'the Board wilfully persevered in sending a regular succession of helpless victims to breath the poisonous atmosphere of that pesthouse, saturated with the effluvia of putrid excrements, and to be GRUELLED in precisely the same manner'.²⁹

For Chartists, the Bridgwater affair was iconic, an example of systemic persecution. For Bronterre O'Brien, when coupled with the abuse of minors at the Amphyll Workhouse, the scandal of Bridgwater represented 'a climax of horrors, to which no country, savage or civilized can furnish a parallel.'³⁰ It was, wrote one correspondent to the *Northern Liberator* an example that should serve 'to set you stirring' in opposition to the New Poor Law and 'the Bastille for the imprisonment of the poor'.³¹ The editor of the *Northern Star* likened the event to 'wholesale assassination' and convincing evidence that nefarious designs were in play.³² While the paper had previously assumed the law's purpose was 'to enhance ... the thralldom of the industrious classes, by compelling them to give their labour on whatever terms the Middle-class Money mongers might choose

²⁶ Gurney, *Wanting and Having*, p. 77; 'To the Editor of *The Times*', *The Times*, 31 January 1838, 5.

²⁷ *Northern Star*, 17 February 1838, 3 and 3 March 1838, 3; 6.

²⁸ *Northern Star*, 17 February 1838, 3.

²⁹ *Northern Star*, 17 February 1838, 3.

³⁰ *Northern Star*, 24 February 1838, 4.

³¹ *Northern Liberator*, 10 March 1838, 4.

³² *Northern Star*, 3 March 1838, 3.

to offer', Bridgwater offered an altogether more 'Malthusian' explanation. The editorial continued:

we have here the most clear and damnable development of the soul paralysing fact, that its object and intention is to provide the means of at once sweeping from the face of the earth the shoals of population, which, having been made redundant by a monopoly of the productive powers of machinery on the part of the rich, come to be regarded as a pecuniary burden by the villains who have robbed them of the means of independence.

This play on Malthusian notions of surplus population was not an isolated case. As Robert Hall has shown, the Malthusian connections between the drafters of the New Poor Law and the operation of the workhouse regime were central to Chartist critiques of the institution.³³

The reason why Thomas Malthus' theory of population should take such a central place in Chartist agitation lay in its relationship to working-class concerns about standards of living and domestic insecurity. Not only did Malthusian notions of population growth lay the blame for urban poverty squarely at the feet of the labouring poor themselves, but they also posited hunger and destitution as positive checks to the growth of a 'surplus population'. According to Malthus, a population that could neither feed itself nor find work had no absolute moral right to exist. Poor relief was simply a well-meaning fallacy, condemned to continue the cycle of dependency and profligacy amongst the destitute.³⁴ Worse than this, state assistance weakened human resolve, removing any incentive for the poor to alter their habits and, in the process, placing a huge burden on ratepayers.³⁵ For Malthus, what was necessary for the reduction of poverty was the reduction of the birth-rate, something that could only be achieved if the pauper were allowed to suffer the hardship necessary to develop moral restraint.

³³ Robert Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', pp. 34-37.

³⁴ Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London, 1798); Mark Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 65-73; Yves Charbit, *Economic, Social and Demographic Thought in the XIXth Century: The Population Debate from Malthus to Marx* (Dordrecht, 2009), pp. 51-92; Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', p. 35; Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, pp. 82-86.

³⁵ Blaug, *Economic Theory*, pp. 66-68; Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p. 17; Elizabeth T. Hurren, *Protesting about Pauperism: Poverty, Politics and Poor Relief in Late Victorian England, 1870 - 1900* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 24-26; George R. Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 56-61.

Only then might paupers learn to plan for the future, refraining from marriage until they could support a family, and, in the process, acquire the drive to better their own condition.³⁶

There are many obvious reasons why Malthus' ideas might have infuriated working-class radicals. Nevertheless, it was the synthesis of these oppositions into a comprehensive narrative that partially accounted for Chartism's success. In fact, by positing that the causes of social ills lay in systemic malfunctions and abuses, it is possible to regard Chartist political argument as a counteraction to deeply-ingrained social prejudices that were contained in the political economy of the age. By arguing that the labouring poor were not responsible for their own destitution, Chartists were deploying an economic and political critique that made a bold statement, and which in any event was closer to the money than the arguments of the good parson himself. However, there were also more practical elements underpinning Chartist opposition to Malthus' doctrines. For example, prevailing notions about the body in nineteenth-century Britain suggested that procreation was not only an enjoyable gift of nature, but that it was positively necessary to remain in good health.³⁷ As Robert Hall points out, not only did Malthusian arguments about the necessity that the poor practice abstinence appear to run counter to the medical knowledge of the age, but it was also morally questionable.³⁸ In fact, they hit at the heart of working-class notions of the family as a healthy and moral expression of sexuality; a symbol of morality that took on added political weight in debates about representation. After all, if liberal arguments for withholding the vote from working people centred on their moral immaturity, perceived assaults on the working-class family became all the more contentious.

In Chartist discourse, these issues transformed the workhouse from an institution for poor relief into one for the management of population and morality. This was a partially accurate representation. In the Poor Law, Benthamite and Malthusian philosophy

³⁶ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, p. 17; Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', p. 35.

³⁷ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', pp. 35-36; Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 216-18; Françoise Barret-Ducrocq, *Love in the Time of Victoria*, trans. John Howe (London, 1991), pp. 7-33.

³⁸ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', pp. 35-36.

merged in the creation of the workhouse. It was to be an institution that regulated the habits and bodies of those seeking state assistance in order to reform the nature of the poor, while also operating as a deterrence for poverty itself. As Margaret Crowther argues, the 'boundless Benthamite optimism' shared by the Poor Law Commissioners suggested 'that malleable human material could be transformed by administrative changes.' The harsh regime of the workhouse was viewed as a catalyst for 'a moral reformation' that would alter the habits and mentalities of paupers, and, in the process, banish poverty by encouraging thrift and moral fortitude.³⁹ However, by separating families, forbidding intimacy, and attempting to control the desires and manners of inmates, the workhouse regime was imagined by Chartists as a Malthusian attempt to manage, or even to exterminate through starvation, Britain's 'surplus population'.⁴⁰ To this macabre symbolism was added another, altogether more gruesome dimension with the emergence in 1838 of an extraordinary pamphlet, authored by a mysterious 'Marcus.'⁴¹

The Marcus pamphlet comprised two related pieces, *An Essay of Populousness* and *On the Possibility of Limiting Populousness*, both of which formed a substantial piece of dark satire on a Malthusian theme. Commonly referred to in the Chartist press as *The Book of Murder*, the pamphlet took as its starting point the moral imperative to limit the suffering of the poor, concluding that this might be achieved in practical terms through infanticide, or in the words of the pamphlet itself: by 'the extinction of superfluous life'.⁴² This was not the first work of satire to play on the theme of infanticide. As Josephine McDonagh notes there is a striking similarity between *The Book of Murder* and Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729).⁴³ Not only do the two works share a central theme, that of child murder as a solution to overpopulation, but there are striking similarities between the arguments of the two pieces that make it unlikely their common features are coincidental.

³⁹ Crowther, *The Workhouse System*, pp. 54-55.

⁴⁰ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', p. 35.

⁴¹ 'Marcus', *On the Possibility of Limiting Populousness* (London, 1838); *An Essay on Populousness* (London, 1838). The Marcus pamphlet has also been reprinted in Gregory Claeys (ed), *The Chartist Movement in Britain 1838-1850* (6 vols., 2001), vol. I, pp. 383-437.

⁴² 'Marcus', *On Limiting Populousness*, p. 43.

⁴³ Josephine McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture, 1720-1900* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 102.

Both works couch their respective arguments in terms of a boon to mothers. Swift's *Proposal* presents impoverished mothers as slaves to circumstance, forced to allot their time to seeking subsistence for their helpless infants only to see them grow into thieves or rogues.⁴⁴ In a similar manner, Marcus writes that while 'the mother of a well-educated and happy foundling' might find just satisfaction in rearing her charges, for others it is a wasted effort or a 'disagreeable intrusion'.⁴⁵ Both pieces argue that the children of paupers place a heavy burden on society, posing their designs as reasonable remedies to social ills whose utility would be self-evident were it not for the undue sentiment attached to children.⁴⁶ In Swift's *Proposal*, the image of a happy couple proudly presenting their fattened infant at the market to be sold for food also finds a parallel in Marcus' suggestion that mothers would reflect with pride that the death of their children contributed to the sum of human happiness. The absurdity of this suggestion is emphatically underlined by Marcus' call for child murder to be associated with festivals of 'munificence'.⁴⁷ The differences between the themes of the two pieces are, then, not especially marked. While Swift's satire presents the murder of infants as a means to provide food and clothing, Marcus' young paupers are sacrificed at the altars of thrift and magnanimity.

These thematic similarities might also be suggestive of the influence of a common genre of satire. They both appear to feed off the same strand neo-Juvenalian irony, presenting sardonic distortions of contemporary mind-sets and written forms. While Swift's *Proposal* is written in the style of a political treatise, elements of Marcus' pamphlet would appear to mirror the style of political economists.⁴⁸ This style suits the deadpan humour admirably, describing the form that the 'extinction' of infants will take in

⁴⁴ Jonathan Swift, 'A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public' in *Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings by Jonathan Swift*, ed. Louis Landa (London, 1965), p. 5. The original text of Swift's *Proposal* has been reproduced in an abundance online. A good example can be found at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1080/1080-h/1080-h.htm>, accessed: 28 August 2017.

⁴⁵ 'Marcus', *Essay on Populousness*, p. 12.

⁴⁶ 'Marcus', *Essay on Populousness*, pp. 4-14; 'Marcus', *On Limiting Populousness*, pp. 3-5; 15-16.

⁴⁷ 'Marcus', *Essay on Populousness*, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁸ McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, p. 101.

strikingly austere tones.⁴⁹ The blending of this form of satire with the stylings of gothic horror reinforces the sense of danger posed by the New Poor Law, playing into an already firmly established mode of representation wedded to the *Bastille* symbolism. Marcus' plan for systematic extermination is presented as the crowning achievement of modern population theory; a veritable revolution in the science of political economy, which for its enactment would require the use of the most efficient systems for the delivery of noxious gas.⁵⁰ The terror of naked science, of gross experimentation and poisonous chemicals, combines with the persecution of helpless innocents to present a twisted apotheosis of a system built on pure logic. This envisioning of science as dark art blends seamlessly with depictions of the workhouse as *Bastille*: the 'unfeeling despotism' of the New Poor Law has spawned a torturous institution in which undesirable elements can be disappeared. However, Marcus' plan exchanges immuration in the *Bastille* as a figurative, social death, with the Poor Law Bastille as mechanised genocide.

While the general trend of Chartism was away from satirical forms of representation and towards melodrama, *The Book of Murder* provides a striking example of a union of the two forms, showing how gothic representations could work on multiple levels.⁵¹ Thanks to the detective skills of Gregory Claeys and the analysis provided by Josephine McDonagh, scholars might be closer to knowing who was behind the publication of the 'Marcus' pamphlet.⁵² Knowledge of the author's true identity might prove incredibly valuable in understanding more about the context of the pamphlet's publication, perhaps even offering a greater insight into the meaning of the text. At the same time, however, the name 'Marcus' itself also provides an enigma of its own. To begin with, the work presents no frame of reference to suggest why the author chose to use this

⁴⁹ 'Marcus', *Essay on Populousness*, pp. 17-25.

⁵⁰ 'Marcus', *On Limiting Populousness*, p. 1.

⁵¹ See Mike Sanders, 'No Laughing Matter: Chartism and the Limits of Satire' in *Nineteenth-Century Radical Traditions*, eds Joseph Bristow and Josephine McDonagh (London, 2016), pp. 21-36; Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁵² Claeys and McDonagh have both put forward the view that the Owenite George Mudie was likely to have been the author of the Marcus pamphlet. See McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, pp. 107; 198; 227 n. 41; Claeys (ed.), *The Chartist Movement in Britain*, vol. I, pp. 383-436; Gregory Claeys, *Mill and Paternalism* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 25 n. 129.

pseudonym, nor does the name Marcus appear in any other Chartist context.⁵³ Nevertheless, historians have long been acquainted with the knowledge that pseudonyms of this kind were often intended to carry meaning. William James Linton's fondness for signing articles as 'Spartacus' or 'Gracchus' were symbolic plays on the Classical antecedents of slave rebellion and agrarian reform; the poet Gerald Massey used 'Bandiera' and 'Armand Carrel' to place his verse within the context of the democratic and romantic awakenings symbolised by the revolutions of 1848-1852; while Julian Harney's alter ego 'L'Ami du Peuple' led the charge against supposed 'traitors' to the Revolutions of 1848 in a re-enactment of the harangues meted out by Marat in his newspaper of the same name during the French Revolution.⁵⁴

Given the inherent difficulties in similarly understanding the symbolic use of 'Marcus', observations can only be made in a tentative fashion, but these may prove useful in understanding the broader contexts in which the pamphlet was intended to be read. McDonagh, for example, notes that the similarity of the names Marcus and Malthus may have served to illustrate the intention of the piece as a satire on Malthusian philosophy.⁵⁵ However, there is one tantalising link that might alter historians' understanding of the significance of the work that has yet to be considered.

The Roman emperor and stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius enjoyed widespread sympathy in nineteenth-century Europe. In Britain, not only was he viewed as being among the most enlightened of the 'five good Emperors', but he was even on occasion considered a pagan precursor to Alfred the Great.⁵⁶ Gibbon's characterisation of Aurelius presented a figure who appeared to epitomise Christian morality and the crusading spirit:

⁵³ With the exception of a series of fictitious lectures in London said to have been held by Marcus. See McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, pp. 102-7.

⁵⁴ See also 'Anonymity and Signature' in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, eds Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (London, 2009), pp. 18-19.

⁵⁵ McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, p. 102. See also, Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', p. 38.

⁵⁶ Lee Behlman, 'The Victorian Marcus Aurelius: Mill, Arnold, and the Appeal of the Quasi-Christian', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 16:1 (2011), pp. 1-24; Amy Richlin, 'The Sanctification of Marcus Aurelius' in *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius*, ed. Marcel van Ackeren (Oxford, 2012), pp. 497-515; Heather Ellis, 'Reconciling classical and Christian culture? Marcus Aurelius and his Meditations in Victorian scholarship', *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies*, 7 (2012), pp. 1-12.

he assumed a steady control over his passions, and considered virtue as the only good, vice as the only evil. ... severe and inflexible towards himself, he was mild to the failings of others Though he regretted the calamities ... of war, he readily exposed himself to the dangers of it; nor was he deterred by the severity of the climate from enduring, on the frozen banks of the Danube, the hardships of eight winter campaigns.⁵⁷

John Stewart Mill would later make a similar claim, stating that Aurelius' 'writings differ scarcely perceptibly, if they differ at all, from the most characteristic teachings of Christ.'⁵⁸ While the ethical dimension of the stoic philosophy Aurelius popularised was likened to Christianity in terms of its key moral principles, it also enshrined the centrality of emotional detachment on the path of virtue. For Mill as for other classical utilitarians, such as its progenitor Jeremy Bentham and his disciple Henry Brougham, Stoicism provided a valuable source of inspiration and contrast in the development of a philosophy that at root would preach a similar adherence to notions of a greater good.⁵⁹ In fact, with Brougham, whose name more than any other was attached to the New Poor Law, can be found a strand of neo-Paganism that particularly valued the stoic resolve.⁶⁰

The Book of Murder works on this level by satirising an emotionally detached, hyper-logical pursuit of social good, while also highlighting the darker aspect of the utilitarian drive. Like Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, the ideas of Bentham, centred as they were on the pursuit of human happiness, sounded positive, even magnanimous. However, behind these platitudes, like the stoicism of Aurelius, utilitarianism perpetrated suffering when put into practice. During Aurelius' reign, the ascent of an enlightened philosophy attuned to the principles of human happiness resulted in an intensification of persecution against Christians in Rome; likewise, the utilitarianism of the New Poor Law perpetrated a persecution of the poor in the name of social progress. Taken together, the theme of persecution by a ruler who was indifferent to suffering would

⁵⁷ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. I, (London, 1862), p. 216.

⁵⁸ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (3rd ed. : London, 1863), p. 49.

⁵⁹ Frederick Rosen, *Classical Utilitarianism from Hume to Mill* (London, 2005), pp. 13; 25; 28; 181-83.

⁶⁰ Colin Pearce, 'Lord Brougham's Neo-Paganism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 55:4 (1994), pp. 651-70.

seem to have much in common with Chartist criticisms of the ‘unfeeling despotism’ of the New Poor Law. That both were motivated by a philosophically-charged pursuit of some ‘greater good’, transforms the Marcus pamphlet from a satire of the New Poor Law specifically into an attempt to subvert liberal philosophy in general. Moreover, by drawing a parallel between the treatment of the workhouse poor and the persecution of Christians in Rome through reference to Marcus Aurelius, *The Book of Murder* could have been intended as a play on the themes of Bunyan’s legendary book *Pilgrims Progress*, in which popular radicalism is equated with ‘true’ Christianity.

Not only does the historical figure of Marcus Aurelius lend itself to the theme of the Marcus pamphlet, but it is also not without precedent. Classical names were very often used as pseudonyms; the example of Linton above is certainly not an isolated case. Indeed, another Chartist who was fond of a Classical alias was the publisher John Watkins, a frequent contributor of prose and letters to the *Northern Star*. Watkins routinely used the pseudonym ‘Junius Rusticus’ to sign his writing: the real-life, first-century Junius Rusticus being the mentor to Marcus Aurelius.⁶¹ Watkins is highly unlikely to have been *The Book of Murder’s* author, however, since he was not known to have produced any satire of note and his prose bears little relationship to the language used in the pamphlet. Moreover, Watkins’ ambition during these years was to establish himself as a leading radical publisher, and was, besides, a flagrant self-promoter who appears to have delighted in courting controversy.⁶² It would, therefore, seem entirely uncharacteristic of him to have published the book under an unfamiliar alias and used a rival publishing house to distribute the text.

Whoever the author may have been, the controversy aroused by the Marcus pamphlet was considerable. The Chartist press routinely referred to the document as *The Book of Murder* and prominent Anti-Poor Law campaigners, chief among them the fiery Chartist orator and Methodist minister Joseph Rayner Stephens, alleged that the work represented a secret manifesto produced by the Poor Law Commissioners themselves

⁶¹ ‘Watkins John’ in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism*, p. 664; Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 117-25.

⁶² Chase, *Chartism*, p. 122-23.

for private circulation.⁶³ In a series of political sermons, Stephens seized upon the Marcus pamphlet as proof of the malicious designs of the workhouse system and a foreboding of the next phase of Whig social policy. So damaging was the affair that one of the Commissioners, Edwin Chadwick, took to *The Times* to strenuously deny any relation to the work. In a scene that stands alone in the annals of social policy, the instigators of the New Poor Law were forced to publicly declare that the intention of the government was not to murder those in their charge.⁶⁴ The response of the Chartist press to these denials was simply to argue that it mattered little whether the allegations were true, for they represented the logical trajectory of Malthusian political economy and a moral discourse that justified the suffering of the poor and infirm in the cause of reducing government expenditure.⁶⁵

Chartist exploitation of the 'Marcus affair' was perhaps the most overtly propagandistic intervention in the workhouse debate, but it is worth reflecting that, as absurd as the charges against the Poor Law Commissioners appear, it was effective because it played directly into a stylised vision of 'class rule'. This was a vision that portrayed the legislative agenda of the Whig government as a means to regulate the bodies, manners, and customs of the poor, and even profit from their cadavers. It drew from the revulsion that characterised working-class responses to the Anatomy Act of 1834, which allowed for the sale of the bodies of paupers in workhouses for medical experiments, and the wide-spread superstitions that notions of death and dissection, particularly those involving children, evoked.⁶⁶ Not only was this a narrative that fed directly into working-class anxieties about the tenuous existence of patterns of life and work, it was sustained by responses to moral arguments that presupposed the life and liberty of the labouring poor were tradeable commodities, to be bartered for the national interest. Moreover, as Robert Hall illustrates, 'Marcus' simplified the debate about political economy into an easily-digestible formula, cloaked in suitably melodramatic tones:

⁶³ McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, pp. 103-12.

⁶⁴ *The Times*, 10 January 1839, 6; Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', pp. 36-37; McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, 107.

⁶⁵ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', pp. 37-38.

⁶⁶ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', pp. 29-33; Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection, and the Destitute: The Politics of the Corpse in Pre-Victorian Britain* (London, 2001), pp. 3-29; McDonagh, *Child Murder and British Culture*, pp. 97-100.

Malthus equalled murder.⁶⁷ This was a formula, moreover, that found its expression in references to the 'bastile.'

The philosophical critique *The Book of Murder*, and the debates surrounding its publication, directed criticisms of the specific question of poor relief towards a broader narrative of despotic government. Within this narrative, the workhouse system itself, and the activities of those administering it, were secondary concerns. They were viewed as mere symptoms of a broader malaise, rooted in the skewed representation of Parliament. The 'workhouse bastile' assumed this broader meaning as the primary symbol of 'class made law'. Within its walls resided the petty injustices and daily dramas of working-class life, institutionalised in monuments to injustice. By expressing opposition to the Poor Law in the language of melodrama, Chartists sought to do more than dramatize reform or to assert the humanity of the poor in an age increasingly characterised by statistics and classification.⁶⁸ Indeed, while the language of melodrama allowed for such themes to be vocalised in tones similar to those found on the stage, by tying them to the imagery of the *Bastille*, Chartists were attempting to give them concrete form. Moreover, appeals to hearts and minds through the language of melodrama may have sought to supersede particularistic arguments over the merits of moral and physical force, but they also rendered those arguments indistinct. By staging Chartism as a 'storming' of the Whig Bastile, writers and activists were attempting to spark an insurgent consciousness.

⁶⁷ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', p. 38.

⁶⁸ Hall, 'Hearts and Minds', pp. 29; 38; Hadley, *Melodramatic Tactics*, pp. 98-100.

Chapter 3

An Insurgent Consciousness:

The New Poor Law and the Melodrama of Revolution

I left Leeds on Friday, the 14th inst., the anniversary of the destruction of the French Bastile; a favourable omen, let me hope, of the destruction of that cursed moral Bastile, in which have been so long immured the rights and liberties of Englishmen; with all its physical adjuncts of prisons, workhouses, and red and blue coat butchers, for the enforcement of its fell regulations.¹

William Hill, *Northern Star*, 29 July 1843.

William Hill's reflection, made while on the road between Leeds and Belper during the dark days that followed the failure of the 1842 petition, is an apt reminder of the broader symbolism that references to the *Bastille* encompassed. Indeed, representations of the 'bastile' did not occur in a vacuum, but were built on frames of reference developed over the preceding half-century of radical agitation in Britain. Anchored to notions of autocratic and unrepresentative exercise of authority, unlawful imprisonment, and transgressions on liberty, the 'bastile' further incorporated personal and social horrors. In writings about the New Poor Law, these injustices, some figurative while others tragically literal, were imbued with a melodramatic tone that elevated the concerns of everyday struggle to issues of veritable life and death. They used the generic motifs of melodrama, such as forced absence and family reunion, in order to figuratively stage the social questions of the age and point to a political resolution to the grand tragedy of 'class rule'.

The image of the *Bastille* was particularly valuable to this critique, for it naturally leant itself to the thematic concerns of radicalism and the dramatic depictions of a nation suffering incarceration in the 'moral Bastile' referred to in Hill's letter. Indeed, as Hans Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt have shown, the *Bastille* represented a 'collective symbol

¹ *Northern Star*, 29 July 1843, 5.

in the widest sense.’² This was a sense that transcended the specific historical circumstances with which it resonated, while simultaneously acting as a metaphor for those circumstances. In this way, the *Bastille* had a dual existence: it was possessed of both a physical dimension, rooted in history, and a broader meaning that could be transferred to other contexts. For example, it provided a metaphor for imprisonment, despotism, abuse, and government tyranny. However, by extension, it was also emblematic of the French Revolution and the triumph of revolutionary struggle against injustice.³ Moreover, the Storming of the *Bastille* was often considered to be the purest example of the genuinely popular aspect of the Revolution, untarnished by the atrocity and party intrigue that would follow, and representative of crowd action at its most virtuous.

The *Chartist Circular* epitomised this view of the Storming of the *Bastille* in a serialisation of the memoirs of Henri Masers de Latude.⁴ Latude was one of the original ‘martyrs’ of the *Bastille*. A barber in the army, he had hit upon a scheme to curry fame and favour by ‘revealing’ an imaginary plot against the life of the King’s mistress, the Marquise de Pompadour. Fatefully, the court took the threat seriously, and once discovering Latude to be its author, secured a *lettre de cachet* for his imprisonment in the *Bastille*, where he languished for most of his thirty-five year incarceration.⁵ Although Latude had been released five years before the Revolution occurred, the Storming of the *Bastille* presented him with a valuable opportunity to gain fame and fortune. The following year, he published his memoirs, *Le Despotisme Dévoilé*, or *Despotism Unmasked*.⁶ In reality, like much of the literature produced by the other ‘martyrs’ of the *Bastille*, Latude’s memoirs amounted to fiction, and not only in the sense that most of the details were plainly invented or obscured. In fact, *Despotism Unmasked* represented nothing less than a gothic novel in which Latude cast himself, complete with an imagined aristocratic lineage and *philosophe*-like bearing, as the

² Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, p. xvii. See also pp. 2-5; 169-99; 241-46.

³ Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, pp. 2-5.

⁴ *Chartist Circular*, ‘The Victim of Despotism’, 9 November 1839, 2; 16 November 1839, 2-3; 23 November 1839, 1-2; 30 November 1839, 2-3.

⁵ Lüsebrink and Reichardt, *The Bastille*, pp. 112-18.

⁶ For more information, see part one of this chapter.

protagonist. Stylised descriptions of ill treatment and neglect filled its pages, including a telling scene in which Latude, deprived of writing implements, drew his own blood and wrote on rags – a story which may have influenced the myth of Ernest Jones’ prison poetry, said to have been ‘written in the blood the author’ during his incarceration between 1848 and 1850.⁷

Focussing on the details of Latude’s escapes, his persecution at the hands of the Pompadours’ agents, the efforts of those who sought to free him, and the misery of confinement in the dungeons, the *Chartist Circular* presented the tale as one of the heroic endurance of humanity. In introducing the memoirs, the newspaper presented Latude as the archetypal prisoner, ‘of whom we believe many children of the last generation must have heard from their nurses, as the solitary, miserable captive, who, in his dungeon, languishing for society and occupation, tamed and made companions of rats.’⁸ It was this long-suffering martyrdom that transformed Latude’s story into a national saga: not only were Latude’s persecutions his own, but they were symbolic of the suffering of the French nation as a whole. Latude’s captivity was portrayed as the ultimate example of the novel and refined cruelties devised by ‘European tyrants’, and alone served to ‘account for the sanguinary character of the first revolution, if not to extenuate very much of its atrocity.’⁹ However, the events were also viewed as emanating from a source beyond the confines of a single nation’s history. In fact, the fall of the *Bastille* was interpreted as an event with universal human significance, in which ‘the yell of gluttoned vengeance with which the mob of Paris ... greeted the overthrow of the walls of the accursed *Bastille* ... was as much the voice of immutable justice, enshrined by God himself in the inmost recesses of the heart of man’. No doubt meant as a warning to its readers, the paper closed its coverage of the memoirs with a quote from Latude himself:

My enemies are the common foes of the [revolutionary] State, and my rights and injuries are become a portion of the public property. Every one owes a sacred debt to his country; it is thus I shall endeavour to discharge mine. I am now proud of all I have suffered, and will exhibit to my fellow-citizens, with just feelings of indignation,

⁷ *Red Republican*

⁸ *Chartist Circular*, 9 November 1839, 2.

⁹ *Chartist Circular*, 9 November 1839, 2.

the marks of the chains I bore for so many years. I will say to them, 'Behold what our common enemies have done! Watch them well, and be convinced that, if they had the power, they would do the same again.'¹⁰

The coverage of Latude's saga was one of the less ambiguous examples of the methods Chartists employed to bridge the gap between personal experience and collective resistance. As with Chartist critiques of the New Poor Law, the dramatization of Latude's suffering emphasised the extent to which his ill treatment had been perpetrated by a despotic system of government. Likewise, in much the same way Latude's injuries had 'become a portion of the public property', so too had those of the inmates of Morpeth and Bridgwater bastiles. Such framing highlighted that Chartist agitation was presented as far more than a quest to correct specific grievances; the personal cruelties meted out by the Poor Law authorities were significant precisely because they were emblematic of a wider framework of social abuse. By connecting these abuses to the symbolism of the *Bastille* and inviting comparison with the travails of Latude, the archetypal 'Victim of Despotism', Chartists were attempting both to forge a consciousness of collective struggle and superimpose their own agitation onto the world-historical stage. By doing so, they subtly subverted the romantic tone of popular radicalism, with its emphasis on private feeling, to create a collective sense of identity defined in relation to a common purpose and a common foe.

These themes also provided the substance to three fictional renderings of the French Revolution, serialised in the *Chartist Circular* during 1840 and 1841. 'The Republican' and its sequel 'The Revolutionist', published between April and August 1840, resemble forms typical of contemporary romance, in which the narrative turns on personal tragedy at the hands of aristocratic manipulations, gendered tropes of gilded and submissive femininity, and supernatural suspense.¹¹ However, behind these staid conventions lay a more complex narrative of the transformative power of personal suffering in the creation of social consciousness. 'A tale of the First French Revolution', published during the summer of 1841, shares many of these motifs in a seemingly

¹⁰ *Chartist Circular*, 30 November 1839, 3.

¹¹ 'The Republican': *Chartist Circular*, 18 April 1840, 2; 25 April 1840, 2-3; 2 May 1840, 2-3; 9 May 1840, 3. 'The Revolutionist': *Chartist Circular*, 20 June 1840, 2-3; 22 August 1840, 3; 29 August 1840, 3.

innocuous story of aristocratic libertinism.¹² However, the protagonist's personal encounter with the realities of social hierarchy is presented as a moment of lasting clarity that tears apart the veil of regal prestige. Moreover, while both series rely heavily on themes of female virtue and victimised womanhood, they do so with a certain allegorical weight. In both cases, the female characters suffer captivity and abuse by the malevolent representatives of aristocracy, and it is in pursuit of their liberation that the male protagonists must transgress against received societal norms. While this gendered element appears to frame womanhood as a mere extension of male domestic status, the narrative function served by these images of women-in-peril is to foreground the question of social liberation. In this respect, the female characters resemble what might be described as allegorical depictions of 'Liberty in chains'.

These features are most clearly detected in 'The Republican' and 'A Tale of the First French Revolution'. 'The Republican' is presented as the recollections of a protagonist named Stuart in his adventures with a French noble and officer, D'Orsey. It opens with Stuart's assessment of D'Orsey's character as a valiant and pure-hearted soul, epitomised by his recent return from fighting in the American War of Independence. His arrival in Paris is treated as an auspicious moment, coinciding with 'a time when reason and common sense had just began to ascend a throne which ignorance and aristocratic prejudices had usurped too long.'¹³ As if to dramatise the point, D'Orsey then reveals himself to be the nephew of the tyrannical Count de Sombrioul, a cruel-hearted lackey of Louis XVI, and on a mission to rescue his sister, Luisette, from his uncle's despotic machinations. His sister's location confirmed through a combination of fate and subterfuge, the two journey to the remote village where Luisette is held captive. They arrive just in time to prevent Luisette's marriage, and, bursting into the church, discover her insensible with grief and faint with misery. In the resulting confrontation between D'Orsey and his uncle, Luisette regains her composure, animated at the sound of her brother's voice. As they embrace she spies a locket gifted to D'Orsey by her true love, an Englishman named Francis Oatt. Correctly divining the

¹² 'A Tale of the First French Revolution': *Chartist Circular*, 26 June 1841, 2; 3 July 1841, 2-3.

¹³ *Chartist Circular*, 18 April 1840, 2.

meaning behind her brother's possession of the trinket (that Oatt had died in America) Luisette once more succumbs to a grief-struck delirium. Stuart and D'Orsey then rush Luisette to safety whereupon they await her recovery.

During this time D'Orsey becomes sullen and withdrawn, lost to dark ruminations triggered by the state of his sister and the confrontation with his uncle. The narrative reveals that at length he draws the conclusion that 'The vicissitudes of his life—the fate of his sister could be traced to one source—that of tyranny and oppression; his enemies were the enemies of his country—both were loud in their demand for redress.'¹⁴ From this point forward, D'Orsey becomes the eponymous republican of the title, devoting himself to the task of ridding France of the 'spirit of tyranny'.¹⁵ The next time the reader glimpses D'Orsey it is at the executioner's block, dressed in the garb of an artisan – the costume of the revolutionary. He faces death with stern resolve, his uncle gloating as the executioner readies the axe above its mark. D'Orsey's final request is that Stuart protect his sister, and, with a cry of '*Vive la Nation*', the axe falls.¹⁶ D'Orsey's death is treated by the narrative as an act of 'legal murder', sustained in the course of rousing the benevolent feelings of the nobility, and as a consequence of the cruel debauchery of unfettered royalty and priestcraft. In a desperate bid to save the now consumptive Luisette, Stuart elects to take her to England, the country of his birth. But as the final vistas of the French shore dwindle into the distance, Luisette throws up her arms with a cry of 'My country! My brother!', and with those words the last of her strength drains away.¹⁷ The narrative ends much as it began, with Stuart's reminiscences of D'Orsey and his 'martyrdom on the altar of blood-stained Mammon'.¹⁸

The narrative of the piece leaves the reader in a state of tension, for there is no resolution to the tale, tragic or otherwise. Even though, with the death of Luisette, D'Orsey's saga appears to reach a sombre end, the injustices they faced remain unavenged. Moreover, Stuart's first-person narration invites the reader to share his

¹⁴ *Chartist Circular*, 2 May 1840, 2.

¹⁵ *Chartist Circular*, 2 May 1840, 2.

¹⁶ *Chartist Circular*, 2 May 1840, 2.

¹⁷ *Chartist Circular*, 9 May 1840, 3.

¹⁸ *Chartist Circular*, 9 May 1840, 3.

sorrow as he forlornly drifts back to England, once more to wander the earth. At no point is Stuart gifted a history of his own; no details of his life are shared. One implication of this is that the reader is invited to imagine themselves as Stuart. However, the narrative also sets up another intriguing possibility. This aged and mysterious Stuart seemingly travels the land, his purpose now only to share his recollections with strangers. The first person narrative is largely constructed in such a way it encourages the reader to half-imagine Stuart sat with them, maybe drawing his tale over a dram in the local inn, itself a standard opening of many a romantic story. In the end, the narrative leaves the initiative with the reader, inviting them to take up D'Orsey's plight themselves, and perhaps, as Margaret Loose suggests of its sequel 'The Revolutionist', even spurring them towards revolutionary struggle.¹⁹

But what of Luisette? Rob Breton certainly makes a persuasive point when he argues that the primary role of victimized women in Chartist romance is as an extension of male domestic privilege.²⁰ Indeed, it is striking that, while no character in the story suffers more than Luisette, the audience is barely encouraged to sympathise with her at all. Rather, D'Orsey stands surrogate for Luisette's peril, her plight a mere component of her brother's story of martyrdom. Yet, conversely, it is solely a quality of Luisette's character that sustains the plot. Her constant state of imperilment, her victimisation by the forces of the state, drives the story on. As Breton argues, the theme of 'victimised womanhood' was a consistent one in Chartist fiction.²¹ In terms of the anti-Poor Law campaign and attempts to link Chartism to working-class domestic concerns, this theme had an obvious utility. If Luisette's character is viewed as a symbol of domestic life, her welfare being threatened by agents of a corrupt state, who attempt to force on her an 'unnatural' domestic servitude (as opposed to the 'natural' servitude of traditional paternalism), parallels the framing of debates surrounding the workhouse and critiques of Whig philosophy.

¹⁹ Loose, *Chartist Imaginary*, pp. 80-83.

²⁰ Rob Breton, *The Oppositional Aesthetics of Chartist Fiction* (Oxon, 2016), p. 105.

²¹ Breton, *Oppositional Aesthetics*, pp. 6; 99-105; 111-17.

Beyond the immediate danger posed to Luisette by state corruption is the question of her liberation: it is this which provides the protagonists with motive, and receives its answer in a shift in consciousness from the personal to the social (seen in D'Orsey's resolution that Luisette's freedom cannot be secured without a change in social relations). Not only does her condition serve to bridge the divide between an identification with personal suffering and that of social strife, she also becomes a symbol of Liberty in a broader sense. It is in her cause that D'Orsey becomes conscious of the true nature of his plight, and in her cause he is martyred. Moreover, it is the death of the revolutionary and republican dreamer that triggers her own decline, terminated fatefully by the severance of fraternal devotion and her removal from the *patrie*, or fatherland. Finally, given that the character of Luisette represents subjugation or incarceration, by extension she necessarily represents its opposite. In this way, she embodies liberty, both in its absence and its application, and symbolises the revolutionary transformation of consciousness that must occur in the transition from the former to the latter.

'A Tale of the French Revolution' presents a similar set of themes.²² The plot follows the attempts of a forester named Ronald to protect his sister from the attentions of licentious young noble. Returning home from tending the forests in the Alps, Ronald spies his sister, Victorine, speaking with a mysterious young man in the woods near their home. Responding to Ronald's questions as to the identity and intent of the stranger, Victorine admits that they had spent several evenings in each other's company. Fearful that the affection with which Victorine regards this stranger foretells a usurpation of Ronald's domestic standing, Ronald takes Victorine to a nearby convent. The narrative clearly sympathises with Victorine, describing the monotony of her days dwelling with the nuns, pining after her brother's affections and the comforts of home. The cloistered atmosphere is finally breached by news of the impending visit of the local noble's son to the nearby town, and the festival that is to be held in his honour. Amidst the gaiety and celebration of that day, the young Count Grenoble and Victorine catch one another's eye, and a spark of recognition is felt between them. The stranger in the

²² *Chartist Circular*, 26 June 1841, 2; 3 July 1841, 2-3. See also: Breton, *Oppositional Aesthetics*, p. 105.

woods was none other than this son of the local lord. The two elope, leaving Ronald struck with grief at the knowledge that young count had whisked a willing Victorine to Paris.

Determined to salvage Victorine's dignity, Ronald elects to visit the count, father of Victorine's lover, and ask that the pair be married. It is here that Ronald undergoes a shift in consciousness. His resolution falters as he steps across the threshold of his master's abode and becomes pointedly aware of the centuries of privilege that imbalances the relationship between the two men, annulling the power of any plea he might make based on the two's shared domestic standing as heads of their respective households. He reflects that, though he is a mere menial, it was the count's son – not he – who had transgressed against the boundaries of social status, a fact that must surely intercede on his behalf. The error of this reflection is shown in stark measure as the count, unmoved by his son's proclivities, nonchalantly shrugs the matter off. He insinuates that before long his son will simply grow bored of Victorine, after which time she will doubtless return home. Ronald, overcome with rage at this humiliation and the Count's patent disregard of his own domestic duty, springs at the count, for which crime he is imprisoned.

Ronald's confrontation with his lord highlighted that there was no shared humanity between ruler and ruled and that emotional pleas rang silent to the ears of power. It was clear from the very moment he entered the *chateau* that he had been transported to a different world, one in which the normal rules that directed human behaviour ceased to apply. It was not that the count insulted his sister's honour that was the significant moment of their exchange, it was the inhuman disdain shown towards the suffering of another being, the revelation of an alien heart that could not be moved by compassion or empathy. This is depicted as an inhumane power, simultaneously impervious both to moral persuasion and physical force. It is this that Ronald discovers to his own peril. His physical rebuke of the count's cruelty is what transports him to prison, but it is his later presentation of a petition to the King that lands him in the *Bastille*. Yet, as the light of freedom is extinguished from his sight, it nevertheless floods his mind. The true face

of power had been revealed to him – not in the form of a personal epiphany, but by the enlightenment of true consciousness, a vision of the social bonds that bind man to man.

Meanwhile, the year is 1789 and Paris is agitated by the drama that accompanies the meeting of the Estates-General and the march on Versailles. In the shadow of dusk, Camille Desmoulins, the famous republican – confidant of Robespierre and Danton – addresses a crowd of workers. He announces that Jacques Necker, the minister of finance, has been deposed by the king and that the aristocracy is poised to regain the privileges the revolution has repatriated to the people. In this retelling of a scene made legendary by histories of the Revolution, it is not Necker's dismissal that sounds the tocsin of revolt, but the situation of the young woman accompanying Desmoulins. Victorine's plight is revealed to the crowd, her treatment by the young Count Grenoble and her brother's petitioning of the king and subsequent incarceration are framed as a profane reflection of a harmonious domestic life. Upon hearing this tale of burning injustice, the excited crowd storm the *Bastille*. Ronald, now freed, accompanies a band of armed revolutionaries as they march on the dwelling of the Count Grenoble. As the siege gets underway, Ronald enters the castle and confronts the Count's son. After a long struggle, Ronald, poised to land the final blow, stabs a page who intercedes between them. As the younger Grenoble and the page both lay dying it is revealed that the page is none other than Victorine. The story closes with a hapless Ronald stood over their bodies as the castle burns around him.

The shock conclusion to 'A tale of the First French Revolution' seemingly confounds the simple revenge narrative the story sets up in its second half. Ronald's quest for justice is fatally undermined by the return of Victorine, who vainly sacrifices herself for the life of the count, in spite of the latter's mistreatment of her. It might be tempting to view her appearance here as a rebuke of the central themes of the plot: that Victorine's 'abduction' amounted to a form of social crime, and that she is herself a victim of a predatory aristocratic libertinism. The problem is complicated further by the fact that the story is not Victorine's own. While her 'abduction' is a central theme, the story is actually that of Ronald's quest for justice. Therefore, the reader simply cannot tell whether Victorine welcomed the freedom offered by her lover from the overbearing

relationship with her brother, and as a salvation from the monotony of her domestic duties. Certainly, it can be inferred from her appearance in front of the crowd in Paris that her relationship with the count was less than ideal. As the narrative portrays her here in the visage of Liberty, mobilising the crowd in pursuit of revolutionary action, the story strongly suggests that a deep injustice has been committed against her. It is only when the story undergoes a shift from the theme of social justice to that of personal revenge that the protagonist is laid low. In this sense, it is not Victorine that undermines Ronald with her surprise appearance, but that Ronald misunderstands the context of his own actions. The story concludes with a simple, but powerful, message: in assuming that his cause is a personal one, Ronald loses everything.

As with 'The Republican', 'A tale of the First French Revolution' uses the themes of personal injustice, female victimhood, and domestic insecurity to dramatise a transformation of consciousness from the personal to the social. While D'Orsey's experience of this revelation accelerates the process of his martyrdom, Ronald's attempt to usurp the revolutionary struggle for his own purposes sees his undoing. However, in both cases it is the plight of women and domestic liberty that motivates the protagonists, providing in the female characters Liberty-figures whose symbolic representations and experiences act as potential catalysts for a transition in thinking about the causes and effects of oppression. Without a doubt, these are heavily gendered tales, composed from a male gaze, and providing little autonomy for female characters. In this sense, they resolutely fail to challenge received gender norms. They do, however, point the way towards a revolutionary state of mind that is suggestive of new possibilities. D'Orsey's refusal to allow his uncle to exercise legal control of Luisette's future, his concern that she be able to choose her own spouse, and the motivation he derives from an oath sworn to her dying lover all create a sacred image of romantic love. Likewise, Victorine's final transgression against her brother sees her breaking antiquated patriarchal bonds, in the process depriving her brother of vengeance.

However, these stories also attempt to place Chartism within a historical context. By superimposing working-class concerns about family, domestic life, and the politics of

every-day living onto the backdrop of the French Revolution, Chartists were actively exploring how their agitation related to world history. These stories break down the complex webs of social structure into personal tales of individuated suffering, textured with gothic motifs in the form of impersonal evils preying on feminised symbols of virtue, to link individual heroism to touchstones of revolutionary history. Such a narrative questions the powerlessness of the oppressed in their struggles against despotism, showing how personal struggle relates to the historical process. Moreover, by viewing their agitation in the reflection of the French Revolution, Chartists could test their principles against universal truths in a creative dialogue with the past. By doing so they were able to reach beyond the constraints of the constitutional heritage, drawing parallels with the *Bastille* and the tensions that led to the Revolution of 1789, to forge an identity imbued with a historically-charged critique of human rights. ‘The Revolutionist’ typifies this play on history.²³ A sequel the ‘The Republican’, the story takes place following D’Orsey’s execution and concerns the activities of a protagonist known only as ‘the Operative’.

Like the previous stories, ‘The Revolutionist’ uses the setting of the French Revolution to dramatise the struggles of Chartism and explore its historical origins. For the Operative, D’Orsey’s martyrdom appears to mark the moment where republican virtues become a mass-phenomenon. As the crowd reels in response to D’Orsey’s death – his bloody corpse still visible on scaffold – the Operative busies himself organising the people. While on the surface it appears that the Operative’s key role is in provoking a riot, the narrative presents a more ambiguous tone:

But what of our hero, the Operative? ... there he is, flying to and fro, amid the dense mass. How well adapted he seems for such an arduous task! he is here, and there, and everywhere—now in front of the instrument of death, facing the soldiery—then, again, forcing his way to the extreme rear ... and, again, returning to the centre ... none so busy, nor yet so conspicuous ... none oppose his endless wanderings—*he must be a favourite.*²⁴

²³ *Chartist Circular*, 20 June 1840, 2-3; 22 August 1840, 3; 29 August 1840, 3. See also: Loose, *Chartist Imaginary*, pp. 80-3; Breton, *Oppositional Aesthetics*, pp. 63-68.

²⁴ *Chartist Circular*, 20 June 1840, 2.

Imbued with a supernatural speed and a spectral ability to melt through the assembled multitude, the narrative presents the Operative not simply as a man but as an energy. This plays into the anonymity that his name confers on him: the Operative is simultaneously a symbolic representation class and of Chartism itself.²⁵ In leading the insurgency and in organising and educating the people, the Operative assumes the historical role accorded to Chartism by its proponents. As the soldiers buckle under the might of the crowd's surge, the Operative apprehends D'Orsery's uncle and finds in the latter's possession an order from Louis XVI legitimising the massacre of civilians. The King's duplicity revealed, the insurrection moves into its next stage: that of consolidating and organising for the revolution which is now inevitable. Here, again, the Operative's role is central. He organises the sentries, arms the crowd, and prepares the ground for the election of the people's leaders. Here, in a tale set on the eve of the French Revolution, what is stressed is the importance and capacity of working-class organisation for the facilitation of democracy.

Before long, royalist troops bare down on the insurgency, but the arrangements made by the Operative and the disciplined conduct of the crowd see the soldiers routed in a major ambush. Towards the close of the battle, the Operative reappears, leading a column of the people, accompanied by a mysterious Corsican. They progress to a large open square, in the centre of which a band of workmen have erected a platform. As the Operative and the Corsican seat themselves atop of the platform, symbolising the enthronement of revolutionary power, a young woman in the guise of Liberty appears, decorating their heads with garlands of flowers and offering a prayer to the divine in thanks for the people's triumph that day. The Operative then stands and exhorts the crowd with a long oration. He pays tribute to their actions, hailing the opening of a new chapter in history, and bids that they continue the struggle against tyranny, remembering the lessons he has taught them. Then, taking the Corsican's hand in his, both leaders depart, swearing their return to lead the people to 'Victory or Death!' The narrative then closes with a lengthy quotation from Las Cases' fictive memoir of

²⁵ Margaret Loose also makes the point that as an allegorical representation of class, the Operative becomes 'less an individual than a category of identity with whom all working people might identify.' Loose, *Chartist Imaginary*, p. 82.

Napoleon in which the emperor pledges himself to republicanism and prophesies the future collapse of the European aristocracies.²⁶

Part historical fiction and part prophesy, the surreal elements of the 'The Revolutionist' accent a historical consciousness that seems less concerned with historical accuracy than with the question of agency. The spectral bearing of the Operative, introduced in the first half of the narrative, becomes overt in the story's close as the protagonist joins with the memory of Napoleon in the mists of time. Both of these characters are clearly anachronistic impositions on the revolutionary history that contextualises the story, however their presence is indicative of the acute sense of historical consciousness that pervaded Chartist writings. In fact, the character of the Operative appears to be a representative of Chartism itself. This is hinted at in his farewell address to crowd where he demands that they swear to unite in brotherhood and remain faithful to the organisational lessons he had delivered, which would assure their victory in future struggle. He concludes with a suggestion that his countrymen and theirs are different people: 'Swear to me, then, that you will obey me in this; for my warm hearted-countrymen demand that you should swear.'²⁷

Not only would it seem that Chartism, here, is linked to the historical narrative of the French Revolution, but it displays some of the ways that Chartists attempted to learn from this history – one that they sought to experience first-hand in the creation of a kind of fictive memory. The Operative, acting as the embodiment of Chartism, does not only observe the Parisian rising, but seeks to alter its form and correct errors of judgement that ultimately led to its historic defeat. Unity and organisation appear to be his chief concerns, points that if mastered, he argued, would eventually lead to the French people's victory over the forces of despotism at some point in the future. This sense of historical purpose is emphasised by the appearance of Napoleon in the guise of the Corsican. Likewise, his presence is anachronistic, but his purpose is to lend the events and the Operative himself, whom he accompanies, the power of prophesy. For

²⁶ *Chartist Circular*, 29 August 1840, 3.

²⁷ *Chartist Circular*, 29 August 1840, 3.

Chartism, as well as for the republicans of France, their historical purpose is to fulfil the promise of the Revolution: to banish monarchy and priestcraft from the European continent. This was a theme that would be returned to in years after 1848, when 'Napoleon's prophesy' appeared to confirm the sense of embattled determination that characterised the revolutionary confrontations of 1849.²⁸ In both of these cases, Chartism is interpreted as existing within a providential schematic that would witness the eventual triumph of republicanism throughout Europe.

A final point worth noting is that the juxtaposition of the nameless Operative with the figure of Napoleon, a name that carried immense historical significance, highlights an interesting dimension to the notion of heroism in Chartism. A feature common to the fictions presented in this chapter are that their protagonists are all largely unexceptional, all of whom, save D'Orsey, are of lowly birth. It is their stories that mark them out, dramas shaded by the dark times in which they lived. Here, the profound shift in consciousness they undergo is in part an enlightenment to these facts. Their treatment, the threats they face, are offensive to the unwritten laws of human dignity, no less severe than the threats faced by working-class communities of Britain in the 1830s and 1840s. These fictions are not simply attempts to understand or discover meaning in the past, but a means to dramatize the struggles of the present. In doing so, they draw a sharp line of continuity and comparison between the French Revolution to Chartism.

In December 1838 an incredible report surfaced in the *Northern Liberator* purporting to be an account of the Prince Louis Napoleon's visit to a workhouse.²⁹ The article related how the nephew of the great Napoleon, having recently arrived in the United Kingdom on his wandering exile, had determined to visit one of Britain's bastilles, curious as to

²⁸ *Chartist Circular*, 29 August 1840, 3.

²⁹ *Northern Liberator*, 1 December 1838, 3.

how the bastion of Paris could lend its name to a British institution. The report was self-evidently a work of fiction, written in a romantic style, but it nonetheless presented a pointed critique of the state of the United Kingdom on the eve of the Charter. Louis Napoleon's fictional tour of the Amptill Bastile, guided by the Lord John Russell, roused in the prince memories of 1793 – thoughts that were only more entrenched as the two made their way through the various wards of the facility. The tale is most notable for its closing remarks, where a visibly disturbed Louis Napoleon confronts the Prime Minister about the scenes of dearth, destitution, and death he has witnessed. 'Why, Lord John Russell, should these things be?', the prince urgently demands; 'What have these people done?'. Russell replied in chilling Malthusian terms: 'There is no room for them and us ... they must take the land, or their bodies must help manure it.' Distressed at this response, Louis Napoleon takes to his carriage, where he proceeds to invoke the spirit of his uncle:

"Shade of my uncle Napoleon," (he exclaimed) "would that thou could'st witness this. I had, till this hour, fondly thought that the miseries of war ended with the war itself. Alas! the blood, the havoc, the carnage, are nothing to this. ... Better to have a Danton or a Robespierre to send their thousands to the scaffold. Better to have the fusillades and Noyades of that first and bloodiest revolution, than see the hearts of a whole nation broken piecemeal, and a tyranny established compared with which 'the reign of terror' was a joke and the guillotine a toy!"³⁰

One of the enduring themes of Chartist writings on the workhouse and the New Poor Law was a gothic texturing that presented these monolithic institutions, viewed by their progenitors as the very height of social science, as backward institutions. By designating workhouses as bastiles, Chartists imagined the institutions as medieval torture chambers, political prisons, or sites of extermination called forth from a previous age. The 'pure science' of utilitarianism and the much lauded political economy of the Whigs superimposed an industrial visage on to the imagery of the *Bastille*, presenting the workhouse as a twisted spawn of mechanisation, designed to exterminate and demoralise the labouring poor. By creating these gothic images, Chartists were self-consciously playing on the themes of genre. Like Mallinson's villagers, the bastiles'

³⁰ *Northern Liberator*, 1 December 1838, 3.

depraved servants tormented the weak, the vulnerable, and the virtuous, making no allowances for the poor and infirm, and no distinctions between honest poverty and idleness.³¹ An affront to working-class morality, the workhouse was a predatory darkness; threatening the very notion of working-class domesticity. It tore at the bonds between man and wife, and, in its darkest representations, devoured the progeny of their union. Inside the bastilles, the poor were poisoned with skilly, suffered the coarse workhouse livery as a cruel replacement for the warmth of personal contact, and if their health failed them their carcasses were thrown into the deadhouse to await dissection on the altar of progress.

However, the stories in which these representations frequently occurred were often stories of triumph and of heroic resistance to tyranny. The revolt of the villagers of Pudsey, the labours of the Chartists of Morpeth, and campaign against abuses at Bridgwater all presented tales of the triumph of virtue over evil.³² The insurgent gothic was defined by the presentation of resistance as a thwarting of gothic terror: tales in which villagers stood firm against the 'Somerset Cerberus', while working men organised to root out their abusers, and champions of the people evangelised the gospel of resistance.³³ Stories of personal tragedy and hardship were likewise drawn into universal histories of revolutionary transformation, showing in the personal struggles of their protagonists how resistance to the poor law could be the very stuff of history. This was a history, moreover, built on the trademarks of the French Revolution. The *Bastille* was the most obvious and significant symbol of the triumph of Liberty over Despotism, but these narratives derived their significance from an overarching narrative. Dramatized by fictional accounts of social awakening, Chartist attempts to elaborate a history of struggle returned to the Revolution as a site in which an insurgent consciousness was formed by the combined suffering of the people, and awakened by heroic acts of martyrdom.

³¹ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

³² See part two of this chapter.

³³ *Northern Star*, 4 July 1840, 5.

Feminised images of virtue pervaded these accounts. Whether in the guise of the single mother whose examination by the Morpeth Guardians was treated by the *Northern Star* as revealing of the deviant inclinations of authority, or in the case of the fictional Luisette of 'The Republican' whose forced marriage is treated as an affront to chastity and honour, women frequently appeared in these accounts as allegories of Liberty in chains.³⁴ Their persecution was held as symbolic of the loss of liberty, while their freedom symbolised the fall of despotism. However, these representations acted on a deeper level, too. Together with tales of the mistreatment of children and the elderly, the gothic narrative associated with the bastilles attempted to expand the terms of political activism. It was not only women and men and the harmony of the domestic idyll that were threatened by the New Poor Law, but the entire fabric of working-class community. This was a fragility that was as apparent as it was allegorical. Concerns about the cost of food and clothing merged with anxieties about disease, death, and loss of status to project the bastille as a kind of waking nightmare: a symbol of the myriad grievances of working people linked to an image of class oppression and systemic corruption.

Time and again in Chartist histories of the French Revolution, France on the verge of turmoil was likened to the contemporary state of Britain. The *Chartist Circular* presented the Revolution as a foretelling of the upheaval that would inevitably befall Britain should the Charter be spurned.³⁵ France groaning under taxation, ruled by unaccountable despots, and a people made subservient to centuries of despotism were explained as the causes both of the French Revolution and of Chartism. In the same paper, a regular series entitled 'Thoughts in the Dungeon, on the French Revolution' told the history of the Revolution in tones similar to a historical romance.³⁶ Faced by a decadent administration, unaccountable and unresponsive to the people's demands, the advocates of 'liberty—if by no *other* means—by the sword!' were compelled to take to clandestine organisation and conspiracy, for which they had since been reviled by the

³⁴ *Northern Star*, 6 April 1839, 7; 'The Republican': *Chartist Circular*, 18 April 1840, 2; 25 April 1840, 2-3; 2 May 1840, 2-3; 9 May 1840, 3.

³⁵ *Chartist Circular*, 22 February 1840, 1-2; 21 March 1840, 1-2; 9 May 1840, 1-2.

³⁶ *Chartist Circular* 21 November 1840 – 29 May 1841.

enemies of liberty across Europe.³⁷ In re-telling the story of the Revolution, the author argued, it was necessary 'to assume language of a very different character, and correct the falsehoods committed upon history'.³⁸ The French Revolution was presented as a living entity, a romance of a nation in which the people had passed through a series of despotisms to stand in 1840 on the precipice of 'the establishment of the Grand Republic.'³⁹

Meanwhile, Britain, roused by the same causes, suffering reincarnations of ancient tyrannies, awaited the arrival of its own revolution. However, in learning from the romance of the French Revolution, the Chartist movement could intercede. If the turmoil of 1793 was caused by the sudden unleashing of undisciplined passions, argued the *Chartist Circular*, Chartism would be the force through which the British revolution would be channelled.⁴⁰ An organised, disciplined cadre of the people, cognisant of the potential for a Robespierre or a Bonaparte to arise from its ranks, could safeguard the transition to democracy. Moreover, by blending the history of the Revolution with the history of Chartism, Chartists were projecting their agitation onto a world-historical stage. Throughout the 1840s, this would manifest in a variety of ways, aiding the creation of internationalist bodies, and drawing Chartism more tightly to visions of a universal Democracy. Central to this understanding of Chartism were attempts to wed Chartism to the history of international struggle and as the benefactors of the eighteenth-century revolutions. By 1848, this discourse could assume a prime position in the movement, anchoring Chartism to the revolutionary struggles of the European Revolutions of 1848-1852.

³⁷ *Chartist Circular* 21 November 1840, 2.

³⁸ *Chartist Circular* 21 November 1840, 2.

³⁹ *Chartist Circular* 21 November 1840, 2.

⁴⁰ *Chartist Circular*, 9 May 1840, 1.

PART TWO

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT OF CHARTIST HISTORY AND THOUGHT, 1838-1848

Chapter 4

The French Revolution as Cultural and Historical Terrain

On 14 July 1844, the Crown and Anchor Tavern, a central venue for radicalism since the eighteenth century and the location at which the People's Charter was first conceived in 1837, played host to a fraternal festival in celebration of the anniversary of the fall of the *Bastille*.¹ In Britain, the Crown and Anchor's celebration of the first two anniversaries of the storming of the Bastille were important loci for radical organisation.² Just as in Germany, oppositional politics in Britain took on the symbol of the *Bastille* during the early 1790s to express solidarity with the French Revolution and as a symbolic attachment to ideas about popular liberty.³ In Britain, however, these commemorations would over the next few years disappear under the shadow of the counter-revolution. Not even in the early years of the nineteenth century, when the image of the *Bastille* was appropriated by the denizens of radical Westminster does there appear to have been a reintroduction of the annual *Bastille* celebrations in

¹ *Northern Star*, 27 July 1844, 6; *Movement, Anti-Persecution Gazette and Register of Progress*, vol. 1: 1843-1845, no. 32, 255-56.

² Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979), pp. 121-25; Roger Wells, 'English society and revolutionary politics in the 1790s: the case for insurrection', in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. Mark Philp (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 205-7; Uwe Böker, 'The Prison and the Penitentiary as Sites of Public Counter-Discourse', in *Sites of Discourse, Public and Private Spheres, Legal Culture: Papers from a Conference held at the Technical University of Dresden, December 2001*, eds Uwe Böker and Julie A Hibbard (Amsterdam, 2002), pp. 225-26; Greg Burgess, *Refuge in the Land of Liberty: France and its Refugees, From the Revolution to the End of Asylum, 1787-1839* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 7-10; Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790-c.1845* (Canberra, 2010), pp. 105-46.

³ Hans Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of A Symbol of Despotism and Freedom*, trans. Norbert Schürer (London, 1997), pp. 181-99.

London.⁴ The permeation of the *Bastille* symbolism into radical discourse during this time does not seem to have led to a return of commemorative events, even where the legacy of 1789 was openly acknowledged. This was to change with the rise of Chartism: not only did Chartists reconvene anniversary celebrations of the fall of the *Bastille* in 1838, but they celebrated, too, other important events and figures of the revolutionary period. Throughout the 1840s, Chartists toasted the establishment of the First Republic of 1792, and from 1849 gathered to mark Robespierre's birthday, the Revolutions of 1848, and the establishment of the Second French Republic.⁵

A new trend marked these celebrations, one that was quite absent from the anniversaries of the 1790s. During the Chartist period, commemorations of the French Revolution were distinctly internationalist affairs. The report of the meeting in 1844, for example, noted the harmonious gathering of 'various elements' of the European nations: 'So many working-men—the representatives it may be said, of the chief continental nations—thus united, as it were in one family meeting'. In a model for the meetings that would follow year-on-year, the report highlighted the sense of faith and cordiality that accompanied the gathering. The attendees sang 'patriotic hymns and songs' and listened to 'patriotic addresses pronounced in the principal European Languages', reserving special applause for 'those sentiments which invoked the union of all nations in the same bonds of morality and fraternity'. It was this latter aspect of the meeting that particularly marked the occasion. As the report stressed:

The evening's proceedings redound to the honour of those true cosmopolitans, who have too much good sense and humanity to permit their government and a corrupt press to foment strifes and jealousies among them, and who have showed evidence of a universality of feeling, which appeared to make the natives of each particular country think he has found his home.⁶

⁴ For more on uses of *Bastille* imagery during the early nineteenth century see chapter one of this thesis.

⁵ See for example, *Northern Star*, 21 September 1844, 1; 28 September 1844, 1; 27 September 1845, 5; 18 July 1846, 8; 18 September 1847, 4; 25 September 1847, 5; 24 February 1849, 5; 14 April 1849, 2; *Star*, 10 April 1852, 8.

⁶ *Northern Star*, 27 July 1844, 6; *Movement, Anti-Persecution Gazette and Register of Progress*, vol. I, no. 32, 255-56.

In September 'a grand democratic banquet' assembled in Islington to celebrate the foundation of the French Republic.⁷ Chaired by the Chartist Peter McDouall, the assembly boasted a broad spectrum of national and political backgrounds. Speakers included the Chartist William Lovett and Charter-Socialists George Jacob Holyoake and Henry Hetherington; a Monsieur Schillman represented the French Democratic Society, and Wilhelm Weitling the German League of the Just. McDouall opened the meeting by praising the principles of 1793, naming the French Revolution 'one of the most glorious events chronicled in history'.⁸ 'Whatever feeling may pervade the despots of Austria, France, Russia, or Prussia', McDouall continued, 'the Chartists of London had this evening to proclaim the fraternity of nations'. Toasts rang out to the 'French Republic', 'the heroes of ... 1789 and the brave and good men of every nation who have struggled in the cause of Liberty', the Scottish and Irish heroes, and 'The Democrats of all nations'. The *Marseillaise* and the Swiss Song of Freedom were sung, while the sentiment, recited in both French and English, 'May we have such a social organization which shall lead to universal fraternity, progress into a Republic, and end in a Community' was roundly cheered. Speakers stood in turn to celebrate the French Revolution as a unifying symbol of Democracy, relating their own activities to the principles of fraternity and equality embodied in the example of the French Republic. A final resolution described a skeletal structure for a new organisation: each of the national groupings who had made up the banquet would promote one member to form a Committee whose mission was to promote 'the principle of National Fraternization.'⁹

Christened the following month, The Democratic Friends of All Nations was a short-lived group, but its aims and ambitions proved strikingly tenacious.¹⁰ It took for its task educating its supporters and subscribers in the national struggles of different European nations, assisting refugees, propagating 'the cause of human liberty' and of 'human brotherhood', and holding open forums for the discussion of 'the democratic opinions

⁷ *Northern Star*, 21 September 1844, 1; 28 September 1844, 1.

⁸ *Northern Star*, 28 September 1844, 1.

⁹ *Movement*, no. 45, 391.

¹⁰ Christine Lattek, 'The Beginning of Socialist Internationalism in the 1840's: "The Democratic Friends of all Nations" in London', in *Internationalism in the Labour Movement: 1830-1940*, eds Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden (Leiden, 1988), pp. 259-82.

of different countries' on a monthly basis.¹¹ In essence, the sentiments expressed in organisation's address made little progress on those aired at the meeting in September. The internationalism defined was one rooted in sentiment, and defined by a belief in the universal applicability of ideas about democracy and support for the aims of radical movements in Europe and beyond. Although the Democratic Friends would barely survive the month, it nevertheless set in motion a strand of international discourse that would mark Chartism as among the most important harbours of internationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century, predating the Working Men's International of the 1860s, which would follow very much in the Chartist tradition.

Yet, as the divisions among the Democratic Friends shows, the internationalist cause was not without its difficulties. However, as Christine Lattek argues, the differences between internationalists of the Chartist period were not based on competing national traditions or ideologies, but instead stemmed from irreconcilable conflicts between moral and physical force Chartists.¹² While A. R. Schoyen and Henry Weisser, two important commentators in the historiography of Chartist internationalism, argue that the physical force orientation of Continental émigrés was incompatible with Chartist reformism, Lattek makes the point that all of the foreign groups involved in the organisation were themselves of a moral force persuasion.¹³ Indeed, like most of their political counterparts in their respective countries, the French republicans and Cabetists of the Democratic Society, the German's attached to the League of Just (excepting Weitling), and even Oborski of the Polish contingent were all persuaded by peaceful means to attain their political goals.¹⁴ It is striking that in their adherence to notions of

¹¹ *Movement*, no. 46, 397-98.

¹² Lattek, 'The Beginning of Socialist Internationalism', pp. 277-82.

¹³ Henry Weisser, *British Working-Class Movements and Europe, 1815-48* (Manchester, 1975); A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958), Lattek, 'The Beginning of Socialist Internationalism', pp. 260 n.2; 276.

¹⁴ For more on exile groups in Britain before 1848, see Peter Brock, 'Polish Democrats and English Radicals, 1832-1862: A Chapter in the History of Anglo-Polish Relations', *Journal of Modern History*, 25:2 (June, 1953), pp. 139-56; Peter Brock, *Polish Revolutionary Populism: A Study in Agrarian Socialist Thought from the 1830s to the 1850s* (Totonto, 1977), Margaret C. Wicks, *The Italian Exiles in London, 1816-1848* (New York, 1968); Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany: Exile and Asylum in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1989); Sabine Freitag (ed.), *Exiles From European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian England* (Oxford, 2003); Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840-1860* (London, 2006); Caroline Emily Shaw, 'The British, Persecuted Foreigners and the Emergence of the Refugee Category in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Refugees and Cultural Transfer to Britain*, eds Stefan

the peaceful revolution, the Continental émigrés in Britain during the 1840s displayed a greater level of unity among each other than Chartists did among themselves.

In spite of the very short span of its existence, the Democratic Friends was not a fruitless endeavour. It marked the first point at which the internationalism of British radicalism attempted to move beyond the realms of personal association, and effect an organisational approach to internationalist politics. To be sure, it did not mark the onset of internationalist thinking among British radicals. In fact from as early as 1836, the London Working Men's Association (LWMA) displayed a concern for the progress of democracy abroad.¹⁵ Within months of its formation, the association released an international address to the workers of Belgium which was subsequently re-published by Belgian, French, and German newspapers.¹⁶ Recognising the shared interests of 'producers' throughout the Europe, the address urged the formation of a democratic 'federation of the working classes of Belgium, Holland and the provinces of the Rheine', and the dissemination of democratic principles through education in the belief that emancipation was contingent on the international development of working-class consciousness.¹⁷ In language strikingly similar to that used by Marx a decade later, the combined international addresses of the LWMA made a direct link between working-class organisation and the insipient forces of democracy.

Notwithstanding the stress placed by the LWMA on international organisation, the chief impetus behind the drive towards internationalism in the latter half of the 1830s was the underlying personal relationships between various leaders of the movement with foreign radicals.¹⁸ The LWMA's concern for the plight of Belgian workers provides an

Manz and Panikos Panayi (London, 2013), pp. 119-42; Debra Kelly and Martyn Cornick (eds), *A History of the French in London: Liberty, Equality, Opportunity* (London, 2013); Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, *Victorian radicals and Italian Democrats* (Woodbridge, 2014).

¹⁵ Weisser, *British Working-Class Movements*, pp. 66-78; Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 226-28; Iorwerth Prothero, 'Chartists and Political Refugees', in *Exiles from European Revolutions*, pp. 209-16.

¹⁶ William Lovett, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett, in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom* (London, 1876), pp. 98-100, *London Dispatch*, 23 October 1836, 5; 13 November 1836, 1; 1 January 1837, 3; 22 January 1837, 1.

¹⁷ William Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, pp. 98-99; *London Dispatch*, 13 November 1836, 1.

¹⁸ Iorwerth Prothero, 'Chartists and Political Refugees', pp. 209-16.

interesting case in point. The Belgian government's crack-down on workers' organisations which provided the context for the address went largely unrecorded in the British press of the time. The LWMA's declaration of solidarity may well have been occasioned by personal ties forged between two of its leading members and Belgian radicals dating from the revolution of 1830. The American-born Beaumont brothers, Augustus and Arthur, displayed enormous appetites for insurrectionary activity. Not only did they fight against the July Monarchy in Paris in July 1830, joining the French National Guard, they also crossed the border into Belgium to join the popular uprising in Brussels the following month.¹⁹ They subsequently became deeply entwined with French republican societies: Arthur's role as treasurer for the Society of the Rights of Man, for example, led to his imprisonment by the French authorities, and his plight was recorded in the London radical press.²⁰ On return to Britain, both brothers became active in radical agitation: Augustus founded the important radical organ the *Northern Liberator* while Arthur took over editorship of the *London Democrat* in 1837.²¹

Similar, though decidedly less dramatic, ties can be found existing between numerous Chartists and foreign radicals. Peter Murray McDouall befriended the utopian socialist Etienne Cabet in 1837 while the latter was visiting London. McDouall later fled to France following the failed petition in 1842 whereupon he appears to have worked for Cabet's newspaper.²² On his return he translated Cabet's important text *Voyage en Icarie* (1839) which was published by the veteran radical Henry Hetherington.²³

¹⁹ Keith McClelland, 'Beaumont, Augustus Hardin (1798–1838)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (Oxford, 2009), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, accessed 20 August 2017

²⁰ McClelland, 'Beaumont, Augustus Hardin', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 20 August 2017.

²¹ McClelland, 'Beaumont, Augustus Hardin', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 20 August 2017.

²² Fabrice Bensimon, 'Introductory Exposition: French Republicans and Communists in Exile to 1848', in *A History of the French In London*, p. 160.

²³ Peter Murray McDouall, *The Adventures of Lord William Carisdale in Icaria* (London, 1845). No copies of the work survive today, but advertisements for part one can be found in several newspapers. See: *Morning Star*, 17 May 1845, 19; *Movement*, vol. II, no. 68, 116; *New Moral World*, 10 May 1845, 372. It is likely that this is the unfinished translation that Harney ascribed to Henry Hetherington in his letter to Engels. See, 'Harney to Engels', in *The Harney Papers*, eds Renee Métivier Black and Frank Gees Black (Assen, 1969), p. 241. See also, Owen Ashton and Paul Pickering, *Friends of the People: Uneasy Radicals in the Age of the Chartists* (London, 2003), pp. 17; 26; Fabrice Bensimon, 'British Workers in France, 1815-1848', *Past & Present*, 213:1, (November 2011), p. 172; Bensimon, 'French Republicans and Communists in Exile', p. 160. For Cabet and his followers, see Christopher H. Johnson, *Utopian Communism in France: Cabet and the Icarians, 1839-1851* (Ithaca, 1974); Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution*

McDouall was not alone in his respect for the ideas of the eminent utopian: on their way to establish an Icarian settlement in Texas, Cabet and his followers stopped on route to pick up a band of British sympathisers, among whom were a group ex-Chartists and followers of Bronterre O'Brien.²⁴ The leading Croydon Chartist Thomas Frost had been introduced to Cabet through the eccentric Charter-communist Goodwin Barmby, and sought to infuse the latter's ideas into the popular fiction he wrote during the 1840s.²⁵ Cabet's ideas also influenced Julian Harney, whose contacts included a diverse range of foreign radicals, including the leading French socialists Ledru-Rollin and Louis Blanc and prominent German communists, like Karl Schapper and Wilhelm Weitling. Harney's relationship with Engels, and, to a lesser extent, Marx has been widely commented upon.²⁶ Through his editorship of the *Northern Star* he provided an important node of influence for Engels who during the 1840s wrote as foreign correspondent for a number of European radical papers, including the French *La Réforme*.²⁷ Marx and Engels also courted Ernest Jones, who would become leader of the movement after 1852. Jones had met the two while engaged with international organisations in the 1840s, which attracted a range of Chartist support. Through these organisations, personal relationships were established and reinforced among Polish, German, and French radicals and Chartists like William Lovett, Henry Hetherington, and Thomas Cooper.

From around the mid-1840s, these personal ties became important components of attempts to accommodate internationalist impulses within the organisational structures of Chartism itself. Commemorative activities were important to this process. They formed the backbone of international fraternisation and forged enduring links of solidarity. They did so not only through the social activities of members, but by giving platforms to foreign speakers they both advertised foreign causes and celebrated unifying principles. Commemorations of the fall of the *Bastille*, for example, could

and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France Since the Eighteenth Century (Oxford, 2011), pp. 394-400.

²⁴ Gary R. Entz, *Llewellyn Castle: A Worker's Cooperative on the Great Plains* (Lincoln, 2013), pp. 11; 38-40.

²⁵ Thomas Frost, *Forty Years' Recollections: Literary and Political* (London, 1880), pp. 56; 61-62; 87-91.

²⁶ See for example, A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958); Bensimon, 'French Republicans and Communists in Exile', Iorwerth Prothero, 'Chartists and Political Refugees'.

²⁷ William Otto Henderson, *The Life of Friedrich Engels*, vol. 1, (London, 1976), pp. 93; 102-3.

become veritable theatres of solidarity as British, French, German, Swiss, Scandinavian, and Polish radicals joined together in remembrance of a touchstone of an international history that bound their respective causes together, and celebrated the enduring sentiments that maintained those bonds through contemporary struggles. This internationalist element also proved important in shaping the character of Chartism over the course of the 1840s, linking the Charter to the radical activity that was simultaneously organising across Continental Europe. In fact, Continental radicalism was itself already fairly well-represented in Britain by the end of the 1830s. London in particular contained a large international community of radicals-in-exile, including the remnants of the proscribed Society of the Rights of Man, led by the mysterious Berrier-Fontaine, which had reconvened in London, joining with followers of Cabet to form the French Democratic Society.²⁸ Furthermore, the intransigence of the Prussian authorities to radical agitation also ensured a sizeable contingent of German radicals in London, clustered around the working-class quarters of the city.²⁹ Notable figures, like Karl Schapper and Heinrich Bauer of the German League of the Just, the insipient Communist League whose manifesto would be written by Marx during 1847, rubbed shoulders with Chartists, and émigrés from France, Poland, and Italy.³⁰ It was out of this tightly-knit group of exiles and metropolitan Chartists that the internationalism that so marked the Chartist Movement after 1848 was incubated during the late-1830s and throughout the 1840s.

A year after the failure of the Democratic Friends, a new organisation rose from its ashes. The Society of the Fraternal Democrats was launched in September 1845, but remained a loose and undefined affiliation until 1847 when it issued a manifesto in the *Northern Star*.³¹ The brainchild of Julian Harney, an inveterate internationalist with close personal ties to many of the luminous names in the underworld of European radical politics, the Fraternal Democrats became the primary vehicle within Chartism for the expression and organisation of international solidarity. Like the Democratic

²⁸ Lattek, 'The Beginning of Socialist Internationalism', pp. 259-82.

²⁹ Bensimon, 'French Republicans and Communists in Exile', pp. 158-160.

³⁰ Maurizio Isabella, 'Italian Exiles and British Politics before and after 1848', in *Exiles*, pp. 59-8; Ashton, *Little Germany*, pp. 107-8; 141-42; Lattek, *German Socialism in Britain*, pp. 90-100.

³¹ *Northern Star*, 2 October 1847, 1. See also, Prothero, 'Chartists and Political Refugees', pp. 221-24.

Friends which preceded it, the organisation's primary purpose was the dissemination of information about foreign radical causes and organising expressions of support and monetary aid to reinforce links of solidarity and provide a safety net for European exiles, many of whom were working class or else lived in poverty. Although the Fraternal Democrats appear to have remained a relatively small metropolitan grouping, the organisation punched high above its weight.³² As Malcolm Chase points out, in terms of membership, all principal Chartist leaders were associated with the organisation from the moment of its formation, including Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones.³³ By the outbreak of revolution in Europe in 1848, the organisation was the natural vehicle for expressions of international unity. Tellingly, for young democrats like the Croyden Chartist Thomas Frost, William Adams who would later become editor of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* (1864-1900), the poet Gerald Massey, and the future member of the International Working Men's Association John Bedford Leno, the Fraternal Democrats appeared to be charting an ascendant spirit of politics.

The Fraternal Democrats' early activities provide a minor mystery. Uncertainty over both the legality of foreign exiles associating with a political organisation and about how the Chartist executive might respond to the body ensured that the Fraternal Democrats would be born in secrecy. Nevertheless, it is likely that first meeting held under its auspices was a Democratic Banquet in celebration of the French Republic held during the same month that the group was formed. The meeting possessed all of the hallmarks that would define the organisation over the coming years, and marked, too, a notable absence of the majority of the moral force wing of Chartism from its proceedings.³⁴ As with the commemoration of the previous year, the Banquet of 1845 presented a diverse array of political opinions and a seemingly muddy definition of international brotherhood. The latter no doubt reflected the former; in attempting to forge a unity of sentiment, specific differences melted into a generalised form of political association. The key unifying principle was support for Democracy, but, as the gathering showed,

³² See, for example, Lattek, 'The Beginning of Socialist Internationalism', pp. 278-80; Prothero, 'Chartists and Political Refugees', pp. 224-27.

³³ Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 286-89.

³⁴ *Northern Star*, 27 September 1845, 5.

this was nevertheless connected to a shared celebration of the role of the history of the French Revolution in providing a common heritage.

Thomas Cooper opened the meeting with '*the only proper first toast for all really Democratic assemblies, and ought to be placed in contrast to the introductory loyal toast of monarch-worshippers "The People, the only source of power"*'. The second speaker praised 'the masterminds [of communism] belonging to labour's class', followed shortly by the Chartist version of *Rule Britannia* and a toast to 'the solemn memory of the honest and virtuous French Republicans of 1792'. The theme of this toast led Julian Harney to reflect on Robespierre's and Babeuf's bequest to 'the working, veritable Democrats.' Joseph Moll of Young Germany next led the gathering in a rendition of the *Marseillaise*, after which a toast was made to Young Germany and 'the universal triumph of equality'. Wilhelm Weitling of the League of the Just next spoke of international brotherhood. Dr Berrier-Fontaine, founder of the French Society of the Rights of Man, described the spread of republican communism in France, followed by cheers to Young Europe and a toast to 'The Immortal memory of Thomas Paine'. Ruffly Ridley, a veteran of London Chartism, next spoke of Paine's attitude to Priest and Kingcraft, whereupon a toast was made to the memory of Washington and Franklin ... William Tell, Hofer, and Kosciusko, and all departed but immortal patriots of other lands'. Toasts followed to dizzying array of British patriots, including: Wat Tyler of the peasant revolts; Civil War parliamentarians; the romantic poets Milton, Byron, and Shelley; the British radicals Cartwright, Cobbett, Hunt, and Shell ('the hero of Newport'); the Irish patriots Robert Emmett and Wolfe Tone; the Chartist prisoners (hailed as 'suffering exiles'); and 'the people's representatives' (Duncombe and O'Connor). Finally, the meeting closed with three cheers for the triumph of Young Europe.

With such a wide mixture of political and national traditions present, it is perhaps unsurprising that the political content did not offer clear divisions between class politics and romantic nationalism. Indeed, the celebration of the spread of communism in France and cheers for Young Europe presents an intriguing juxtaposition given that

Mazzini, the founder of Young Europe, was famously hostile to communism.³⁵ It seems that, in the main, Chartist Internationalism, as with Chartism more broadly, often hesitated in drawing clear distinctions between the claims of romantic nationalism and those of class. In this sense, it may have been a product of its age: not until after the Revolutions of 1848 would a class-based narrative begin to displace the romanticised or utopian visions of the communitarianism of the 1840s. Nevertheless, class undertones were entrenched these interpretations of history, as indeed they were in Chartism at large, and it was primarily in the legacy of the French Revolution they could be found. At the above meeting, for example, Harney denounced Lafayette as a Whig and a 'constitutionalist' for siding with Louis XVI, foreshadowing his condemnation of Lamartine in 1848 as a traitor to the working class for siding with the conservatives during the June Insurrection.³⁶ Meanwhile, the genius of labour could be celebrated while radicals toasted the nationalist movements of Ireland, Italy, Germany, Hungary, and Poland.

However, these were not competing claims. At least in the narrow sense of internationalism, 'the people' of Europe could be presented as a singular unit, smoothing over the doctrinal differences of various political groupings. This was done in the name of combatting national prejudice, which was denounced time and again in the Chartist press and at international celebrations as a social evil. If, through the popular press and elite politics, foreigners became othered as excitable political beings, incompatible with a British sense of respectability, these gatherings presented defiant spectacles of unity.³⁷ However limited their immediate impact, confined as they were to London, a national Chartist and radical press provided these gatherings with a national audience, repeating the speeches and toasts to reading groups, factory dormitories, workshop floors, and dinner tables across the country.³⁸ In response, rank-and-file activists from diverse backgrounds and locations sent in subscriptions for the

³⁵ William Roberts, *Prophet in Exile: Joseph Mazzini in England, 1837-1868* (New York, 1989), pp. 77-78.

³⁶ *Northern Star*, 27 September 1845, 5.

³⁷ Leslie Mitchell, 'Britain's Reaction to the Revolutions', in *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction*, eds Robert John Weston Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (Oxford, 2002), pp. 83-98.

³⁸ See, Aled Jones, 'Chartist Journalism and Print Culture', in *Papers for the People: A Study of the Chartist Press*, eds Joan Allen and Owen Ashton (London, 2005), pp.1-24.

Polish refugees and funded the organisations that provided support for impoverished emigres. However, equally important to this process was the general understanding that the foundational basis of politics was the nation, and that it was towards the national state that the forces of history were inexorably drifting. The Democracy, therefore, was usually imagined as a European order characterised by a confederation of free nations. In this, radicals had imbibed a theory of history that stemmed from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, lodged at the very heart of the vision emanating from the French Revolutionary tradition.³⁹ Nationalism and internationalism were not viewed as opposing forces, but actually constituted through each other: a true patriot was imagined an internationalist, a supporter of universal liberty, and conscious of the interdependence and claims to nationhood of all of humanity.

Along these lines, a generalised interpretation of history was emerging from the organisation that viewed the European struggle as operating on two or three tiers. For British and French radicals, the serious blow dealt to absolutism over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had resulted in the realisation of the national state. Radicalism in these nations were at similar level of advancement, vying for the realisation of popular sovereignty in a struggle for equality. Meanwhile the 'subject nations' of Ireland, Italy, Hungary, and Poland were fighting for national independence from imperial domination, imagined as a struggle for fraternity. Germany stood slightly apart from this general trend: a fragmented nation, Germany was viewed as seeking national unity. However, free from foreign domination, German radicals were simultaneously also engaged in a struggle with their own elites for popular sovereignty. In this sense, Germany embodied both the struggle for equality and for fraternity. It was the duty of radicals in Britain to support the claims to nationhood of other European peoples, and oppose the forces of imperialism. This view became more clearly expressed during 1848-1849, the most intense period of the European Revolutions. In

³⁹ See Otto Dann's introduction to *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, eds Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London, 1988), pp. 1-12; Jacques Godechot, 'The New Concept of the Nation and its Diffusion in Europe', in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, pp. 13-26; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006), pp. 37-82; Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 13-59.

the *Democratic Review* a slew of writers, including Julian Harney and Helen Macfarlane (both of whom were joined by W. J. Linton in the *Red Republican* the following year) urged support for the independence of Italy and Hungary as furthering the goal of a European union of sovereign republics. The importance of this goal was not simply expressed in terms of the natural right to self-government for the peoples of Europe, but also as a means to break the established European order, the hated Holy Alliance, which was described in terms of an international conspiracy against democracy.⁴⁰

That some of this view had already taken root during the mid-1840s can be seen in the manifesto issued by the Fraternal Democrats in 1846.⁴¹ Outlining the state of Europe, the manifesto described an inter-woven European struggle. France, suffering under the heel of a corrupt monarchy, was hurtling towards a new revolution, one which could not be but republican in character. Likewise, the Prussian King's hostility to liberal reforms had set the aristocracy on a collision course with the German bourgeoisie. This was viewed as a struggle in which the 'proletarians' of Germany would play a decisive role, seeking to substitute 'class rule' with a system 'based upon equality of labour and rewards.' Spain, Portugal, Greece, Poland, and Switzerland, at the mercy of foreign interventions and illegal annexations, provided living truths of the evils of national avarice fostered by the international order and the terms of the Treaty of Vienna. Meanwhile 'Muscovite despotism' cast an ominous shadow over 'the free soil of the Caucuses', a menace that could only be expelled by the victory of Democracy in other European nations. The agitated state of Italy fostered new hopes for the union of the Italian people and liberty from Austrian despotism, but the manifesto warned ominously of British support for Italian liberalism. 'We bid them remember that the aristocracy and middle classes of England have always been on the side of despotism', the manifesto ran, and that the British government's support for Italian nationalism was only a fig leaf for their real interests: combatting French influence in the Peninsula, and as a means to influence the Papacy in relation to Ireland. The only means by which the

⁴⁰ For more on this, part three of this study.

⁴¹ *Northern Star*, 2 October 1847, 1.

people of Europe could challenge the ‘congresses of kings’, the manifesto declared, was by forming a ‘congress of nations’.

While it might seem that this internationalist worldview had very little to say about class, there was nevertheless an identification of the working class’ special relationship to democracy that can be found even the addresses of the LWMA of a decade earlier.⁴² In terms of economics, while the free flow of goods was affirmed as a means of breaking down national borders and lowering the cost of living by eroding protectionism, the free market was also identified as a social menace. The adverse effects of fluctuating international markets, national competition, and mechanisation were of particular concern to ‘producers’ or ‘proletarians’ regardless of nationality. In contrast to the liberal internationalism that emerged from around 1847, the radical democracy voiced by the Democratic Friends and the Fraternal Democrats was deeply embedded with notions of natural rights and popular sovereignty. While the People’s International League, associated with parliamentary radicalism and more tightly bound to Mazzini’s Young Europe, also championed the right of national self-determination, peaceful co-existence between nations, and free trade, it fell far short of supporting universal suffrage and the political rights of the working class as central components of the international agenda. What arose from the Chartist internationalism of the 1840s, then, was a radical-liberal democracy that incorporated checks on free trade, supported co-operativism and trade unionism, popular sovereignty, and which was strikingly open to socialistic and communitarian ideas.⁴³

That the French Revolution became symbolically linked to the democratic cause is attested to by the yearly commemorations of the fall of the *Bastille* and the establishment of the French Republic that continued into the 1850s.⁴⁴ While the

⁴² William Lovett, *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett, in his Pursuit of Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom* (London, 1876), pp. 98-100, *London Dispatch*, 23 October 1836, 5; 13 November 1836, 1; 1 January 1837, 3; 22 January 1837, 1.

⁴³ For the Democratic Friends’, Fraternal Democrats’, and the People’s International League’s differences on these matters, see Lattek, ‘The Beginning of Socialist Internationalism’.

⁴⁴ See *Northern Star*, 21 September 1844, 1; 28 September 1844, 1; 27 September 1845, 5; 18 July 1846, 8; 18 September 1847, 4; 25 September 1847, 5; 24 February 1849, 5; 14 April 1849, 2; *Star*, 10 April 1852, 8.

Fraternal Democrats would also mark other events, particularly the Polish Insurrection of 1830, celebrations attached to the history of the French Revolution were particularly prominent. In part, this was due to the flexibility of the symbolism the Revolution evoked. It incorporated nationalism, political equality, and a powerful discourse of international fraternity that chimed deeply with a spirit of romantic nationalism and support for popular rights.⁴⁵ Moreover, in seeking a political union between democrats of different European nations, the French Revolution possessed a symbolism that was universally relevant to democrats, and as a truly European event it also tapped into a history shared across national divides. At the commemorations described above, a wide range of national traditions could be celebrated under the symbol of an international example of popular liberty and national liberation. What was celebrated at these festivals was a recognisable democratic heritage that continued through the 1840s to influence political thought across the European continent.

However, the re-emergence of radical commemorations of the French Revolution also provide an outward symbol of the changing historical attitudes connected to the event in Britain. The French Revolution of 1830 went some way towards naturalising the notion of revolution as a political and historical force: it implanted the notion of revolution as a legitimate political expression in the minds of a new generation, while also establishing a new historical precedent alongside 1789, which blunted the First Revolution's reputation as a calamitous novelty.⁴⁶ The 'three glorious days' of July 1830 presented a revolution in a 'respectable' guise. It was conservative in intent; devoid of republicanism and Terror, the 'mob' remained at bay and property retained its sacrality.⁴⁷ The worst predictions of conservative historians, like Alison, that revolution always brought dark democratic forces in its sway appeared to have been disproven.⁴⁸ Moreover, the revolution of 1830 was interpreted as existing within the tradition of 1789, marking revolution in France as a historical process that, much like the British Civil

⁴⁵ Michael Broers, *Europe After Napoleon: Revolution, Reaction, and Romanticism, 1814-1848* (Manchester, 1996), pp. 96-105; Jonathan Sperber, *The Revolutions of 1848-1851* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 89-108; Serhiy Bilenyk, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations* (Stanford, 2012), pp. 103-81.

⁴⁶ Hedva Ben-Israel, *English Historians on the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 98-164.

⁴⁷ Ben-Israel, *English Historians*, p. 98.

⁴⁸ Ben-Israel, *English Historians*, pp. 99-102.

War, had worked itself out over time. France in 1830, then, stood like Britain in 1688: the revolutionary energies of the previous generation had been capped by the appearance of a popular throne and a constitutional system. This image was further entrenched by its attachment to the Reform Bill agitation of 1831 and 1832. The revolution in France not only provided an important stimulus to reform in Britain, but it also imbued the 1832 Reform Act with a revolutionary aura of its own. 1830 in France and 1832 in Britain spoke to new age in Europe characterised by the ascent of liberal values, crowned by an *entente* between the two nations, and affirming a renewed faith in the politics of progress later immortalised in Macaulay's *History of England* (1848).

Yet, Whig and radical commentators were not alone in characterising the July Monarchy in terms of the Glorious Revolution. French liberals, like François Guizot, likened the deposed Bourbons to the Stuarts and the liberal House of Orléans to the Hanoverians.⁴⁹ In a similar process of historical allusion to that undertaken in Britain, the moderate phase of the French Revolution (1789-1792) was presented as bearing the seeds of the July Monarchy. In both nations, moderate revolutionaries like Mirabeau and Lafayette were imagined as foretelling France's future as a constitutional monarchy in a British mould.⁵⁰ For liberal authors and politicians in France there was a pressing need to indulge in such mythologizing: by courting republicanism and draping themselves in the *tricolore*, French elites recognised that they were treading a path fraught with danger.⁵¹ The revolutionary tradition was a fractured one; the same symbols that were used to celebrate constitutional monarchy also called forth memories of republicanism and Bonaparte. By effectively disowning the Jacobin and Bonapartist periods of the Revolution, French liberals sought to delegitimise their modern heirs, presenting the July Monarchy as the crowning achievement of the Revolution and the realisation of the authentic ambitions of 1789.⁵² In mutually reinforcing and parallel dialogues, elites and

⁴⁹ Ben-Israel, *English Historians*, pp. 98-99.

⁵⁰ Clare A. Simmons, *Eyes Across the Channel: French Revolutions, Party History and British Writing, 1830-1882* (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 71-80

⁵¹ Ceri Crossley, 'History as a Principle of legitimation in France (1820-48)', in *Writing National Histories: Western Europe Since 1800*, ed. Berger, Donovan, and Passmore (London, 1999), pp. 49-56.

⁵² Aurelian Crăiuțu, *Liberalism Under Siege: The Political Thought of the French Doctrinaires* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 57-86.

historians in both France and Britain, though never completely and with varying degrees of emphasis, sought to close the book on France's romance with revolution.

The attempt proved unsuccessful. In France, disillusion with the promise of reform under the July Monarchy quickly led to a reinvigoration of the republican impulse.⁵³ By the end of the decade, Louis Phillippe's regime had been mortally wounded by assaults from the republican left, the legitimist right, and the Bonapartists. Savaged daily by a hostile press, a new regime of censorship attempted in vain to stem the tide of politicisation, while the King himself survived numerous attempts on his life.⁵⁴ More sinister still, the 1830 revolution marked the opening of a political renaissance of republican, socialist, and utopian politics which would last until Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 1851 drove opposition parties into the Bohemian worlds of exile and *café* counter-culture.⁵⁵ By appropriating the moderate Revolution for the July Monarchy, oppositional politics found their voice in the radical Revolution of 1793; icons of the fragmented history of the first Revolution became political weapons in the hands of vying parties, each contesting one species of legitimation with another.⁵⁶

In Britain, the limited rehabilitation of the French Revolution of 1789 had its own unique set of consequences. If 1789 and 1830 provided analogies for the Reform Act of 1832, they proved very poor ones. Conservative critics lambasted the Whigs for inviting the Terror of 1793 to British shores, citing 1789 as the authoritative example of how political revolution fed demagogic democracy. They pointed to the disenchanting radical opposition that now mobilized in opposition to Whig 'betrayal' as evidence. For their

⁵³ Harsin, *Barricades*, pp. 39-64.

⁵⁴ Harsin, *Barricades*, pp. 145-208.

⁵⁵ Phillip G. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth Century France* (London, 1995); W. Scott Haine, *The World of the Parisian Café: Sociability Among the French Working-Class, 1789-1914* (Baltimore, 1999); Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (New York, 2002); David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (London, 2006); Freitag, *Exiles*; Thomas C. Jones, 'French republican Exiles in Britain, 1848-1870', (unpublished University of Cambridge PhD thesis, 2010); Thomas C. Jones and Robert Tombs, 'The French Left in Exile: *Quarante-huitards* and Communards in London, 1848-80', in *A History of the French in London*, pp. 165-92; Françoise Kunka, 'French émigrés from the Revolutions of 1848 and British Radicalism', (unpublished University of Aberdeen PhD thesis, 2014).

⁵⁶ For an example of this contested heritage, see Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France 1789-1880* (Cambridge, 1981).

part, radicals could also trade on such fantasies, citing a revolutionary history that had been legitimised by elite politicians. By drawing analogies between 1664 and 1688 and the revolutions of 1789 and 1830, Whig commentators, historians, and politicians set precedents for the integration of the French Revolution into British political history. While radicals of many different stripes had been drawing on the French Revolution for decades, the 1830s provided a context and political current that allowed a convergence between the revolutionary and the constitutional to become more mainstream, knitting together narratives of the British and French Revolutions. By the late 1840s Cromwell and Robespierre would become bedfellows in a symbolic fusion of British and French Republicanism.⁵⁷

This assimilative process was by no means uniform, and nor did it spring from a single source. Since the dawn of the Revolution itself, British culture flirted with the historical legacy of 1789. It provided material for the playwrights of the London stage, imbued gothic romance with new repertoires of Terror, and provided the cultural backdrop for the flourishing of Romanticism in European literature and philosophy. This shared cultural terrain created new literary vistas; French authors like Hugo, Balzac, and Dumas imbibed Shakespeare, translating the core elements of British drama for the Romantic Age, and impregnating the 'social novel' in nineteenth-century literature with a generic and cultural attachment to the enduring conflicts in French society.⁵⁸ The transnational creation of the novel as a literary form opened a window into a shared culture of melodrama and social critique, which for conservative commentators in Britain spelled the opening of something akin to a cultural war. In a debate that merged literary criticism with political commentary, writers like John Wilson Croker imagined these new literary imports as a threat to British decorum: a literal moral contagion that rose miasma-like from the page, infecting their readers with a debauched, French, world-

⁵⁷ See for example William James Linton's history of republicanism in his journal *English Republic*, vol. 1, 1851, 330-34 and Margot Finn's discussion of the *Democratic and Social Almanac for 1850* in *After Chartism*, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁸ Margaret Cohen, 'Women and Fiction in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to the French Novel: From 1800 to the Present*, ed. Timothy Unwin (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 59-66; Maurice Samuels, *The Spectacular Past: Popular History and the Novel in Nineteenth-Century France* (London, 2004), pp. 195-232.

view.⁵⁹ This was imagined as a cultural degradation that, heedless of temporal restraints, reached out from the Revolution to implant its disease in the French psyche, and transmit its moral effluvia through the printed word.

By the 1840s the intermingling of history, genre, politics, and literature found an array of outlets in British popular culture. Madame Tussaud's waxwork museum stood as the only museum to the French Revolution in Europe, providing the populace with a physical proximity to the event clothed in a terrific visual experience.⁶⁰ Channelled through narrow dungeonesque pathways, visitors to Madame Tussaud's were assailed by a history of the Revolution that played on modern and pre-modern forms of representation. Delight and terror mingled in the evocation of a sensuous novelty that rendered the political crimes of the Revolution's architects as harmless spectacles.⁶¹ The guillotined heads of Robespierre and Danton spoke of a crippled leviathan, while the assemblage of relics related to Napoleon effused a sense of awe for the heroic and worthy opponent of British military and commercial might. As Billie Melman argues, Madam Tussaud's presented the French Revolution as a constitutive part of British identity, anglicising the history of the event for popular audiences and transmitting a history of the Revolution in novel cultural forms and visual spectacles.⁶² The Revolution as an urban domain, punctuated by gothic presentations likewise seethed through Carlyle's history. The shadow of the event punctured the Peterloo Massacre, while Carlyle's depiction of the *sans culottes* haunted Britain's urban landscape, a sinister harbinger of monstrous democracy.⁶³ The dark, murderous visage of the Revolution was imagined as a grim omen of the revolutionary potential of the urban masses, diffusing through cultural narratives a social fear of the working class and its political potential.

⁵⁹ 'French Novels', *Quarterly Review*, 56, April 1836, 65-131. See also, Sharon Marcus, 'Comparative Sapphism', in *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel*, eds Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever (Oxford, 2002), pp. 251-85; Berry Palmer Chevasco, *Mysterymania: The reception of Eugène Sue in Britain, 1838-1860* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 61-98; 139-236; Sara James, 'G.W.M. Reynolds and the Modern Literature of France', in *G.W.M. Reynolds: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Politics, and the Press*, eds Anne Humpherys and Louis James (Oxford, 2016), pp. 19-32; Juliette Atkinson, 'Continental Currents: Paris and London', in *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Joanne Shattock (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 230-33.

⁶⁰ Pamela Pilbeam, *Madame Tussaud's and the History of Waxworks* (London, 2003), pp. 97-130.

⁶¹ Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past, 1800-1953* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 29-66.

⁶² Melman, *The Culture of History*, pp. 13; 32.

⁶³ Melman, *The Culture of History*, pp. 66-122.

For Carlyle, the adjacent past effused a cultural experience that not only mirrored 1789-1794, but was constituted within it.

This broad and variegated diffusion of the history of the French Revolution found a lasting presence in Chartist political, historical, and intellectual culture. However, rather than imbibing the stereotypes that presented the Revolution as synonymous with violence, conspiracy, and Jacobinism (although this was undoubtedly present to an extent), Chartist engagement with the historical legacy of the French Revolution tended to be framed as attempts to challenge 'official' notions of history and recover suppressed historical truths. The Revolution provided affirmation of key principles and displays of profound heroism; as a historical example, it contained all the key elements of a fictional drama, framed by a narrative of a virtuous people challenging the authority of corrupt and malevolent elites, and provided a commentary on the international dimensions of radical agitation. In these guises, the example of the French Revolution was not limited to Paineite reasoning or debates on the merits of physical force, but provided material for poetry, fiction, allegory, and allusion that sustained the mainstream of Chartism, texturing the artistic, intellectual, and historical dimensions of Chartist politics.

One of the earliest and most articulate Chartist versions of this strand of history emerged from a surprising source. It was not from the 'Jacobin' pen of a Bronterre O'Brien or Julian Harney that a narrative of universal democracy was first articulated, but from the editor of the moral force newspaper the *Charter*. Launched at the end of January 1839, the *Charter* was established by a coalition of members of the LWMA and London trade unionists to function as the official newspaper of the former organisation and to promote the cause of working-class education. When the Chartist Convention met the following month to organise the Chartist petition of that year, the newspaper also positioned itself as the official paper of record for its deliberations.⁶⁴ The paper's

⁶⁴ See, Joel H. Wiener, *William Lovett* (Manchester, 1989), pp. 74-75; 'Lovett, William (1800-1877)', in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, eds Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (London, 2009), p. 38; 'Carpenter, William (1797-1874)', in *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism*, pp. 97-98; Chase, *Chartism*, pp. 57-58.

editor William Carpenter, rightly positioned by historians on Chartism's moderate and constitutional wing, wrote a long series of reflections on European democracy during 1839 and 1840 triggered by the revolutionary atmosphere that appeared to be gripping France.⁶⁵ Across the Channel, opposition to Louis Philippe and the settlement of 1830, which had expanded the franchise from 0.3% to just 0.5% of the population, had been brewing throughout the decade. Widespread dissatisfaction with the regime had been further exacerbated by the July Monarchy's reliance on censorship and, from 1837, an economic downturn.⁶⁶ For Carpenter, not only did the state of France correspond with that of Britain, but it highlighted the international dimensions of reform.

Carpenter began these interrogations by reflecting that the state of Europe in 1839 was one of such turmoil that it would inevitably overflow into a European conflagration.⁶⁷ His foresight was apt, even if his timing out by some years. The upsurge of political dissent in much of Europe at the turn of 1840 resulted in an awkward and fraught period of social stability. The underlying weakness of this relative social peace would be laid bare nine years later. However, Carpenter's assessment shared much with that produced in the *Northern Star* during the Revolutions of 1848, and in particular with the assertion that Chartists should look to events on the Continent as a guide to their own agitation. The dissemination of democratic ideas amongst the French people, Carpenter argued, had a profound effect on the balance of the international struggle for Democracy of which the Charter formed a part.⁶⁸ He went further still, arguing that a renewal of revolution in France would spell the death of Monarchy in Europe and the success of reform in Britain.⁶⁹ The appearance of this kind of analysis so early into the development of Chartism suggests that the idea of watching the Continent for signs of upheaval was not a curiosity associated only with the years of revolution between 1848 and 1852, or with the physical force wing of Chartism, but a consistent detail of Chartist analysis and thought. Moreover, Carpenter's analysis was built on similar historical

⁶⁵ See for example: *Charter*, 31 March 1839, 15; 7 April 1839, 5; 6 June 1839, 11; 27 October 1839, 7.

⁶⁶ Peter Sahlin, *Forest Rites War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-century France* (Cambridge, 1994); Amy Wiese Forbes, *The Satiric Decade: Satire and the Rise of Republicanism in France, 1830-1840* (Lanham, 2010); Harvey, *Paris*, pp. 23-92.

⁶⁷ *Charter*, 7 April 1839, 5.

⁶⁸ *Charter*, 31 March 1839, 15; 12 May 1839, 242; 19 May 1839, 266-67; 13 October 1839, 600.

⁶⁹ *Charter*, 19 May 1839, 266-67.

foundations to those offered by Harney, Macfarlane, and Linton: Democracy in his view was not a foreign aberration, but an inherent component of British political history, dating from the period of the Civil War (1642–1651).⁷⁰

For Carpenter, as for Linton, the first simmering of Democracy could be located in the period of the English Republic.⁷¹ It was here that the ‘seeds of liberty’ were first implanted in human political consciousness, but, as Macfarlane would echo in 1850, ‘the mass of the people were entirely unenlightened on the subject of the natural, inalienable, and indestructible right of the people to possess political institutions of their own’.⁷² It was only in the contemporary epoch that the people as a whole had become conscious of the democratic inheritance forged by past ages. While Carpenter in 1839 was offering a similar insight to Macfarlane’s notion that the ‘Democratic spirit of the age’ had manifested itself in the political programmes and revolutionary movements of Europe, he did not locate its emergence and dissemination in a spiritual awakening, nor did he chart the democratic impulse back to the apostles.⁷³ Rather, as in Linton’s historical writings, Carpenter argued that the English Republic provided the fount of republican virtue.⁷⁴ As he wrote, ‘A few brave men then planted in North America the seeds of liberty which had once flourished in this country; and by skilful cultivation they reared it up to be the most perfect specimen of constitutional liberty that has ever existed in the world.’⁷⁵ Carpenter’s view of the United States was not all gloss and shine, however. He stressed that although the form it took was necessary for the current age, he nevertheless saw in it imperfections.⁷⁶ Yet, the flourishing of European democracy, he argued, was itself owed to the American Republic. As he wrote: ‘Lafayette tried to introduce the same system into his native country ... but the gardeners in France did not understand the proper culture of the plant, and the soil was, besides, ... preoccupied by ... all the despotisms, all the aristocracies’.⁷⁷ The task of the

⁷⁰ *Charter*, 7 July 1839, 376-77.

⁷¹ *Charter*, 7 July 1839, 376-77.

⁷² *Charter*, 7 July 1839, 376-77; for Macfarlane, see chapter seven of this study.

⁷³ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 423; May 1850, 449-452.

⁷⁴ *Charter*, 7 July 1839, 376-77; *English Republic*, 1-5.

⁷⁵ *Charter*, 7 July 1839, 376.

⁷⁶ *Charter*, 7 July 1839, 376.

⁷⁷ *Charter*, 7 July 1839, 376.

present age of reform would be to restore that liberty, 'that self-government', to its purest form.⁷⁸

Carpenter's discussion provides a useful model of history for interpreting broader notions of democracy proffered by the Chartists. The overwhelming feature of Chartist democratic discourse was its basis in history: whether, like Harney and O'Brien, the France of 1792 provided the historical vantage-point from which to view the present, or, like Linton, the English and American republics offered the shining historical examples, the politics of the past provided precedents, examples, insights, and symbols that were intrinsically valuable for the generation of the 1830s and 1840s.⁷⁹ While the historical precedents for democracy mattered a great deal to the character of the politics that were derived from them, there were nevertheless considerable areas of overlap. While Harney and Linton, for example, bitterly disagreed on the question of socialism, Linton nevertheless enshrined Robespierre, who during the 1840s had come to symbolise democratic socialism, as an important forefather of democratic thought, placing him next to Luther in terms of historical significance.⁸⁰ Thomas Cooper's fondness for Athenian democracy did not appear to moderate his political opinions: according to Stephen Roberts, Cooper was among the stauncher voices to emerge from Chartism in the 1840s.⁸¹ Finally, neither Carpenter nor Linton were led by their fondness for the democratic heritage of the British past to an easy accommodation with the lineage of the constitution. Romantic nationalism, visions of an ancient constitution, and 'Jacobinical' republicanism could be entwined within the same model of history as that presented by Carpenter in 1839. In essence this represented a revolutionary triangle in which the 'English' republicanism of the seventeenth century was adapted and remoulded by the revolutions of the eighteenth century, before being fed back to Britain in the form of Thomas Paine and the new struggles of the nineteenth century.

⁷⁸ Charter, 7 July 1839, 376.

⁷⁹ Innes, Philp, and Saunders, 'The Rise of Democratic Discourse in the Reform Era: Britain in the 1830s and 1840s', in *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain, Ireland 1750-1850* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 114-128; Peter Gurney, 'The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement', *The Journal of Modern History*, 86:3 (September 2014), pp. 566-602.

⁸⁰ *English Republic*, 330-34.

⁸¹ Stephen Roberts, *The Chartist Prisoners: The Radical Lives of Thomas Cooper (1805-1892) and Arthur O'Neill (1819-1896)* (Oxford, 2008). See also, Gurney, 'Democratic Idiom', pp. 574-576.

Britain may have given the idea of Liberty to the world, but in order to achieve liberty for herself, reformers had to draw from the universal corpus of democratic ideas that were enmeshed in a history that paid scant regard to the national state.

What emerges from the foreign news reports in the *Charter* during 1839 is not only a concern with the links between French democracy and Chartism, but a discourse on Aristocracy that was at root a melodramatic rendering in which the Democracy represented the forces of reform throughout Europe, the conduits of popular liberty, while Aristocracy was a blanket term to refer not only to aristocratic or monarchical systems but all those factions within society – the millocracy, the shopocracy, or the moneyocracy – that sought an accommodation with, or buttressed, the existing form of social organisation.⁸² Within this formulation, the Democracy represented enlightened forces of good while the aristocracy was described in terms of a tyrannous evil. This did not preclude a class-based discourse, but, rather, tended to highlight a dawning spirit of political awakening that was described both in general terms and in ones defined by social structure. While definitions of the Democracy may have been blurred by romantic imagery, the denizens of Aristocracy were articulated with greater clarity. The foundation of its evil was the ‘hereditary system’, a system that according to Carpenter could never be reconciled with Democracy.⁸³ This was not a discourse of mere anti-monarchism or one motivated by a concern for Old Corruption. Rather, the monarch was himself both beneficiary and figurehead of the hereditary system. ‘There is no middle course’ he argued: ‘Monarchy must be despotism or quickly cease to exist.’

For Carpenter, the task of reform was to construct free republican institutions to combat or confine monarchy and erode the entrenched power of the ‘hereditary principal’. Europe provided the perfect example of the flaws inherent in a system based on monarchy. As a letter from a correspondent outlined, monarchy was seen to invite revolution and civil war by creating disputed successions that led to internal unrest and

⁸² *Charter*, 9 June 1839, 215; 16 June 1839, 333; 7 July 1839, 377; 13 October 1839, 600; 1 December 1839, 712.

⁸³ *Charter*, 9 June 1839, 215; 1 December 1839, 712.

international conflict.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the correspondent argued, republics operated by diplomacy and smoothed over internal divisions. Free from the hereditary principal, a republic was motivated by a civic spirit, not one of monopoly. Such sentiments highlighted that for Chartists republicanism represented much more than simply a state without a monarch. What was being articulated was a general consciousness of democracy that sought civic institutions for its political manifestation. Like Lafayette, who was quoted to at length in the *Charter*, Carpenter envisioned the victory of liberty as the first stage in the struggle for republican democracy. The experience of France was instructive to this end: not only did 'the spirit of democracy [walk] openly abroad in France without disguise, and seemingly without let or hindrance' but the republicans of France were also engaged in a parallel and comparable struggle to that of Chartism.⁸⁵ Moreover, the revolution of 1830 had made significant progress, establishing in its wake the arming of the nation, election of officers in the National Guard, and, in the words of Lafayette, a 'popular throne, surrounded with republican institutions'.⁸⁶ The French Charter of 1830 represented a flawed model of popular sovereignty, falling short of installing universal suffrage it nevertheless established a monarchy that was not only responsive to the people, but that ruled only at their bequest. This was not an idealised vision of popular monarchism, but one underpinned by a view of social struggle in which the hereditary powers of state were held hostage by the encirclement of republican institutions at the heart of government, and the threat of direct popular action by an organised and enlightened populace.

Yet, by 1839, the actions of Louis Phillippe in eroding the Charter of 1830 provided an example of the corrosive influence of Aristocracy. There existed throughout Europe a 'War against Democracy' which threatened reform in Spain, kept Poland in chains, thwarted reform in the Holy Roman Empire, and empowered the *Doctrinaires* in France and the Whigs in Britain.⁸⁷ Intervention in Spain during the Carlist War (1834-1839), attempts by foreign powers to intervene in the French Revolution of 1830, and a history

⁸⁴ *Charter*, 20 October 1839, 1.

⁸⁵ *Charter*, 12 May 1839, 242; 13 October 1839, 600.

⁸⁶ *Charter*, 28 April 1839 242.

⁸⁷ *Charter*, 7 April 1839, 5; 16 June 1839, 331.

rife with examples of 'ruinous foreign wars', evidenced the interlinked nature of European politics. It was this international backdrop that provided a shared context for the activities of 'Chartists' in Britain, France, and Spain, and the victory of one would likewise empower the others.⁸⁸ By placing Chartism in an international context, Carpenter was offering a view of reform in Britain that did not merely seek to link it to comparable foreign movements, but asserted that Chartism was itself at the forefront of a European struggle against tyranny. The similarities between this analysis and those provided by Chartists during the revolutionary years of 1848-1852 are striking. In both cases, the successes and failures of Democracy abroad were treated as crucially important moments for Chartism itself, but, more significantly, the international context provided an opportunity for Chartists to learn and to adapt.⁸⁹ Constitutional history could provide important principles and precedents, but the history of international struggle could also show its shortcomings and provide correctives. For example, by comparing the July Monarchy with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, both of which witnessed the ascent of popular monarchs to the throne empowered by agendas for reform, Carpenter was able to show that a change in the ruling house was in itself insufficient to guarantee popular sovereignty.⁹⁰ Rather, the answer lay in the organisational power, political consciousness, and determined efforts of an agitated populace not only to force republican institutions on the state, but also to be constantly vigilant against the corrosive influence of entrenched hereditary power.

Carpenter's fondness for the revolutionary republic was further reinforced by his championing of the Marquis de Lafayette. Not only did the *Charter* make frequent references to Lafayette's speeches and actions, but it also presented Lafayette's words as important maxims.⁹¹ Carpenter, however, was not alone in his adoration for the legendary revolutionary. The Scottish *Chartist Circular* carried Lafayette's famous dictums 'FOR A NATION TO LOVE LIBERTY, IT IS SUFFICIENT THAT SHE KNOWS IT; AND TO BE FREE, IT IS SUFFICIENT THAT SHE WILLS IT' across its masthead, just as Chartist demonstrators blazoned

⁸⁸ 13 October 1839, 600.

⁸⁹ See Margot Finn, *After Chartism*, pp. 60-105.

⁹⁰ *Charter*, 9 June 1839, 215; 1 December 1839, 712.

⁹¹ See, for example *Charter*, 14 April 1839, 182; 9 June 1839, 215.

the phrase across their banners.⁹² The maxim, as the figure of Lafayette himself, was a shared reference point for Chartists: as Innes, Philip, and Saunders notes, when O'Connor used the phrase to launch the National Charter Association in 1840 he noted, too, Paine's support for its sentiment.⁹³ Lafayette shared a historical and symbolic terrain with the likes of Paine and Jefferson, both of whom were also highly regarded figures in Chartism. It is also no coincidence that all three were involved in the production of the constitution of the American Republic, and it is in this sense that they provided foundational figures for popular constitutionalism.⁹⁴ They were entwined within a romanticised history of the eighteenth-century revolutions, and stood as examples of the struggle for popular sovereignty.

Invocation of Lafayette brought with it a historical context that united the revolutionary histories of Britain, the United States, and France, and blurred distinctions between these national histories while also contesting the language of the nation. It fed into a romantic narrative that posed the state in the role of occupying power, such as that which can be found in the story of General Francis Marion, published in the *Chartist Circular*.⁹⁵ The fable of Marion's guerrilla campaign against the British during the American Revolution provided an analogy for Chartist agitation, as Marion's forces received support and succour from the local population which enabled them to stand against a better equipped and highly trained enemy. A British officer sent to entreat with the general replied in the following terms when asked why his manner seemed agitated:

On the officer's return to George-town, he was asked by Colonel Watson why he looked so serious? 'I have cause, sir' said he, 'to look serious.' —'What! Has General Marion refused to treat?' —'No, Sir,' —'Well, then, has old Washington defeated Sir Henry Clinton, and broke up our army?' —'No sir, not that, but worse.' —'Ah! what could be worse?' —'Why, sir, I have seen an American General and his officers, without pay, and almost without clothes, living on roots, and drinking water—and all for *liberty!* What chance have we against such men?'⁹⁶

⁹² Paul Pickering, *Chartism in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke, 1995), p. 163.

⁹³ Innes, Philip, and Saunders, 'The Rise of Democratic Discourse', p. 124.

⁹⁴ Innes, Philip, and Saunders, 'The Rise of Democratic Discourse', p. 195.

⁹⁵ *Chartist Circular*, 7 December 1839, 3-4.

⁹⁶ *Chartist Circular*, 7 December 1839, 4.

Stories like these combined with reports of insurrection in France during 1839 which noted that the King's apartments were guarded as if in the 'presence of the enemy', while soldiers patrolled with loaded weapons and networks of spies and informants moved among the people. In this way the forces of Aristocracy could be portrayed in the same terms as colonial oppressors.⁹⁷ This had an obvious utility for sections of radicalism that adhered to the theory of the Norman Yoke: the expropriation of Saxon lands by the Norman invaders and the corruption of the 'pristine' constitution of the age of Alfred the Great could be read in terms that posed the British ruling class itself as a foreign power.⁹⁸ However, these associations were not necessarily contingent. The stress placed in Lafayette's phrase on knowing liberty and willing freedom also spoke to the notions of political consciousness and democratic awakening that can be found elsewhere in Chartist texts. In such a case, the tale of D'Orsey's alienation in the tale of 'The Republican' introduced in the previous chapter, finding a nation ruled by a hostile caste after serving with Lafayette in the American Wars of independence, describes the 'foreignness' of feudal institutions to the democratic mind.⁹⁹

However, Lafayette's presence in the corpus of Chartist heroes is also revealing of an enduring conflict in Chartist uses of history. Lafayette, like the symbol of the *Bastille*, could be used to champion the French Revolution while side-stepping the vexed issue of the Terror. The Jacobin period of the Revolution haunted the nineteenth century, in part determining the authorities' hostility to reform.¹⁰⁰ It was not only Carlyle who saw shadows of the *sans culottes* in the byways of the urban landscape, but the epithet of Jacobin applied to reformers by conservatives spoke to an enduring sense of social fear. Marx's scathing quip likening the Revolution of 1848 to a pantomime re-enactment of

⁹⁷ *Charter*, 8 December 1839, 722.

⁹⁸ Christopher Hill, 'The Norman Yoke', in *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (New York, 1997), pp. 46-111; Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 82-83; Finn, *After Chartism*, pp. 40-41; 84; Mike Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 123-24; Chris Vanden Bossche, *Reform Acts: Chartism, Social Agency, and the Victorian Novel, 1832-1867* (Baltimore, 2014), pp. 12; 39-42; Peter Gurney, *Wanting and Having: Popular Politics and Liberal Consumerism in England, 1830-70* (Oxford, 2015), p. 28.

⁹⁹ *Chartist Circular*, 18 April 1840, 2; 25 April 1840, 2-3; 2 May 1840, 2-3; 9 May 1840, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Adam Zamoyski, *Phantom Terror: The Threat of Revolution and the Repression of Liberty 1789-1848* (London, 2015).

1789 is belied by such sources as the memoirs of Charles de Rémusat, in which the count recalled the sombre moment he had to inform his children that the world they had known was at an end and their future could no longer be guaranteed.¹⁰¹ In this climate, Chartists were conscious of the deleterious effect of Jacobin imagery on their case for reform. Julian Harney's argument that the London Democratic Association should act as a 'Jacobin club' to superintend the Convention of 1839, along with his praise for Robespierre in the speech he made to that body, was met with an attempted censure.¹⁰² However, the rejection Harney faced was not based on the principles of his argument, but on the imagery he employed. By invoking the Jacobins he risked, to borrow James Epstein's term, prematurely 'raising the emotional stakes' at a crucial moment in the Chartist agitation.¹⁰³ Clearly, context mattered, and the tactical use of Jacobin imagery as a means to provoke opponents was a consistent feature of the Chartist period, becoming a near art-form by the 1850s.

Nevertheless, the hostility towards the Jacobin, and primarily towards the figure of Robespierre, was keenly felt by wide sections of the movement. In particular Robespierre stood for the avarice of leadership, a figure who diverted the noble ambitions of the Revolution to feed his own monstrous ego. This was the sense in which Thomas Attwood, the chair of the Birmingham Political Union invoked the name during his speech at the great demonstration at Birmingham in 1838. 'We shall have no blood—no blood', Attwood declared: 'Far from me be the ambitions of being a Robespierre—far from me be such a feeling.'¹⁰⁴ The association of Robespierre and blood evidently flowed from the 'reign of terror' of 1792-1794. For moral force Chartists like William Carpenter it provided an example of the errors of physical force, detected in his re-printing of Cobbett's ominous warning in his 'Letter to Labourers' (1816) to beware of a second Robespierre arising in midst of Reform.¹⁰⁵ An echo of this can also

¹⁰¹ 'Charles de Rémusat, *Memoires de Vie*' in Roger Price (ed.), *Documents on the French Revolution of 1848* (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 47.

¹⁰² James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (London, 2014), p. 21.

¹⁰³ James Epstein, *Radical Expression*, p. 21; 89-91.

¹⁰⁴ *Northern Star*, 11 August 1838, 6.

¹⁰⁵ *Charter*, 5 May 1839, 230; William Cobbett, 'To the Journeymen and Labourers of England', 2 November 1816, in *William Cobbett: Selected Writings*, vol. 3, ed. Leonora Natrasspp (London, 1998), pp. 363-64.

be detected in the charge by the Rev. Patrick Brewster in a meeting at Glasgow in November 1841 that O'Connor was 'another Robespierre' – a traitor to the people seeking to profit personally from the radical cause.¹⁰⁶ Beyond its use as a term of abuse, the invocation of Robespierre existed as a kind of warning from history, an example of how the pent-up indignation of the masses could find violent and anarchic outlets. For the *Chartist Circular* the People's Charter provided the means to channel public opinion away from such a calamity as that which was produced in France:

[The People's Charter] is the great point of difference; and this alone affords a well grounded hope that a British revolution will be free from the inhuman horrors which occurred during that of France. The state of France showed a people, whose opinions, for want of direction, swerved into the furious raging of unguided passion. Britain presents a people whose opinions are guided by a definite course of action Nothing else could avert the horrors which afflicted France; nothing else could bring about a bloodless revolution. If the present extent of grievances and disconnect existed, without some accurately defined remedy for their removal, we would be in precisely the same situation ... and there would be the same opportunities open amongst us as called forth the inhuman passions of a Santerre, a Marat, and a Robespierre.¹⁰⁷

It is notable that in the vast majority of cases, Chartist discussions of the French Revolution did not attach violence to national character, political ideals, or to the act of revolution itself, but most often to circumstance. Moreover, during 1838-1840 the notion that circumstances in Britain were comparable to those existing in France in 1789 were fairly common occurrences in the Chartist press.¹⁰⁸

From the early 1840s, however, Robespierre's reputation underwent a degree of rehabilitation. As has often been remarked, the primary impetus was the publication of James Bronterre O'Brien's biography *The Life and Character of Maximilian Robespierre* (1838) and his frequent interjections in the Chartist press on the subject of the French Revolution. This was not O'Brien's first biography of a political figure. A year earlier he also published a biography of Gracchus Babeuf, whose 'conspiracy for

¹⁰⁶ Alexander Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 1970), p. 171.

¹⁰⁷ *Chartist Circular*, 9 May 1840, 1.

¹⁰⁸ See for example, *Chartist Circular*, 22 February 1840, 1-2; 21 March 1840, 1-2; 9 May 1840, 1-2; 21 November 1840, 2.

equality' was a foundational event in the genesis of utopian communism. This latter work was largely a translation of Buonarroti's biography (1828), a contemporary of Babeuf and central guiding figure of the Neo-Babeuvians, also called Neo-Jacobins, clustered around the revolutionary Auguste Blanqui. While Buonarroti's work, and by extension also O'Brien's translation, is usually considered in reference to its influence on this sectional grouping of Neo-Babauvians, its impact was far more generalised. Its publication marked the beginning of a general repatriation of the constitution of 1793 and of the Jacobins in French historical and political culture. For all its failings, Buonarroti argued, the constitution of 1793 represented the highpoint of the Revolution by recognising and enshrining the sovereignty of the people and greater economic equality.¹⁰⁹ Buonarroti's description of the attempt by Babeuf to overthrow the constitution of 1795 and replace it with a revolutionary authority that would set out the beginning of a programme for a new social order contained loud echoes of the Jacobin Committee of Public Safety (1793-1794). This blurring of the lines between Babeuf and the Jacobins coincided with an intense period of renaissance for republicanism in France, stemming from the opposition to Charles X and the July Revolution of 1830. The fractured tradition of republicanism became the natural vehicle for the development of socialism in a period of intense social distress and political turmoil.¹¹⁰

The French Revolution had not been socialist and neither had the Jacobins, but, as Michael J. Turner and Gwynne Lewis both argue, the former had sought to link property to labour, while the latter's dedication to the cause of the people had pointed the way to greater equality.¹¹¹ Babeuf's contribution had been a blueprint for the reign of *égalité* which Buonarroti and later writers (among them Cabet, Pierre Leroux, and Louis Blanc) would entwine with both Jacobinism and popular Christianity. By the 1840s the two fathers of French socialism were Robespierre and Jesus Christ. O'Brien's biographies presented this idealised vision of Robespierre to a British audience, stressing his

¹⁰⁹ Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 388-95.

¹¹⁰ See Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 388-439.

¹¹¹ Gwynne Lewis, 'Robespierre Through the Chartist Looking-Glass', in *Robespierre*, eds Colin Haydon and William Doyle (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 194-211; Michael J. Turner, *Radicalism and Reputation: The Career of Bronterre O'Brien* (East Lansing, 2017), pp. 111-48.

'incorruptibility' and egalitarian designs. It was Robespierre, argued O'Brien, that sought to divest power away from central authority and into primary assemblies, and it was the constitution of the Jacobins that marked the truly democratic aspect of the French Revolution. For O'Brien, it was this latter development that marked the moment that 'the machiavelism of the English government' made intervention on behalf of the French aristocracy inevitable, sensing in that document the seeds of its own demise.¹¹² It also accounted for the calumnies visited upon the character of Robespierre by the 'aristocratic' historians of France and Britain. At root, O'Brien's biography, along his voluminous journalism on the subject, was an attempt to correct the historical record and defend the reputation of Democracy from the poisoned quills of aristocratic scribblers. As advertisements of the work in the *Northern Star* stressed, Bronterre's biography was intended as a means to offer a counter-narrative to the "'History" [that] has belied his character, vilified his talents, and blackened his memory.'¹¹³ By claiming Robespierre for British democracy, Bronterre did more than simply provide the theoretical foundations for the 'Red Republicanism' of Chartism after 1848. He helped to integrate the Revolution into Chartist historical consciousness, providing explanations for the Terror and the vilification of Jacobinism in a narrative that stressed the link between democracy and class.

For O'Brien, Lafayette was 'an execrable tyrant', an aristocratic traitor to the people, who delivered the French nation into the hands of Louis XVI.¹¹⁴ The author of the massacre of Republicans at the Champ de Mars in 1791, Lafayette was no friend of the people but among their worst enemies. On the other hand, Robespierre not only 'suffered more for the cause of humanity, during his brief career, than any other statesman ... to be found in the whole circle of history' he also 'laboured to prevent all of LAFAYETTE'S tyrannies.' It was further wrong to attribute the Reign of Terror solely to Robespierre; the horrific violence of 1793-1794 was a symptom of the maelstrom of passions unleashed by the sudden collapse of a centuries-old despotism.¹¹⁵ For the main

¹¹² James Bronterre O'Brien, *Life and Character of Maximilian Robespierre* (London, 1838), p. 308.

¹¹³ *Northern Star*, 17 February 1838, 1.

¹¹⁴ *Northern Star*, 25 August 1838, 4.

¹¹⁵ *Northern Star*, 25 August 1838, 4.

part, Robespierre '[evinced] the utmost repugnance to blood' Bronterre argued, 'except on those fatal occasions when counter-revolutionary plots or the rage of parties rendered the shedding of some guilty blood indispensable'.¹¹⁶ More guilty than he were the factions, such as the Herbertists, whose constant denunciations raised the clamour for vengeance amongst the people to irresistible levels. That Robespierre's reputation came to bear these crimes, argued O'Brien, was a result of his stature at the time and the work of historians since, whose interests laid in blackening the name of democracy's greatest advocate. The 'reign of terror' was 'so called, because, for the first time in the history of the human race, the rich were made afraid of the poor, and vice afraid of virtue.'¹¹⁷ The root of this fear was not, according to O'Brien, the denunciations and bloodshed in Paris, but the fact that the Constitution of 1793 did away with the 'Bourgeois Constitution of 1791', which enshrined a constitutional monarchy and indirect elections to the legislature, in the process extending the rights and privileges of sovereignty to the 'proletarians'.¹¹⁸ It was in enfranchising the working class that Robespierre ran afoul of middle and upper-class opinion in Britain and France, and for this temerity was he accredited with all the horrors of the Revolution.

O'Brien's analysis of the Terror did not amount to an apology, although it did at points waver across the line between moral equivalency (pointing to the White Terror of the Directory) and justification (the destruction of inhumanity as service to God).¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, this analysis, further transmitted by reviews and extracts in Chartist newspapers linked the French Revolution to democratic reform and the Jacobins to the political aspirations of the working class. This was a telling of history, moreover, that fed into broader Chartist suspicions about 'official' histories and their own attempts to produce a people's history in which the claims of the movement were central features. In 'recovering' a lost past of struggle, in which the champions of 'the people', and of the working class, not only featured in the conflicts of the previous century, but actually shaped their character, Chartist histories of 1789 offered incredibly powerful

¹¹⁶ O'Brien, *Life and Character*, p. 10.

¹¹⁷ O'Brien, *Life and Character*, p. 384-85.

¹¹⁸ O'Brien, *Life and Character*, p. 277.

¹¹⁹ O'Brien, *Life and Character*, p. 81; 384.

illustrations of heroism and force of will. As features of a counter-history, they also provided enduring symbols of opposition, which, especially in the case of Robespierre, had the power to confront Whiggish and conservative opinion in a broad cultural assault on ascendant political narratives. Popular history could be used in this way to subject the contradictions inherent in the cults of respectability and constitutionalism to question and ridicule.¹²⁰

While this version of history was by no means universally accepted, it was nevertheless weaved into diverse sets of narratives deployed by both moral and physical force Chartists, and constitutionalists and Painite republicans. For example, while Carpenter drew on a republican mythology that he located in the Revolutions of Britain, America, and France, the London Democratic Association, formed in 1837, styled itself a 'Jacobin Club', linking the example of 1793 to Painite values; while the *Brighton Patriot* drew from the French Example to call for a 'moral revolution' to return the constitution to a state of purity, the *Western Vindicator* used the same precedent to urge the destruction of the 'so-called English constitution' entirely. Even among Chartist Internationalists, who otherwise valued the European revolutionary tradition, various readings of history emerged which were neither straight-forward nor necessarily complementary. William James Linton's merger of the British republican tradition with the French Revolution during the 1840s led him into conflict with Julian Harney, who used the very same historical precedents to reach different ideological conclusions. In this case, the conflict was fuelled by inflection; for Linton, Robespierre was less attractive a character than Cromwell, who embodied a distinctly British republicanism, and recalled an age where Britain resided at the very pinnacle of democratic progress. Harney, on the other hand, saw in Robespierre the antithesis of national arrogance and the forefather of democratic socialism. Harney valued the French Revolution as the crowning achievement of a universal democratic history, which enshrined, too, a trenchant class-based narrative; for Linton, although his *English Republic* (1851) showed that his views on socialism had mellowed over time, the Revolution was chiefly important as a

¹²⁰ Robert G. Hall, 'Creating a People's History: Political Identity and History in Chartism, 1832-848', in *The Chartist Legacy*, eds Ashton, Fyson, and Roberts (Rendlesham, 1999), pp. 232-254.

refinement and parallel of a national republican struggle, and as the ideological fuel for national regeneration.

The variety of political and historical narratives that featured the French Revolution speaks to its enduring presence in Chartist thought, and its power as a creative symbol of democracy and revolution. Support for its legacy was not confined to the physical force wing of the movement, nor was this support simply expressed in terms of Jacobinism. Although there were distinct differences between aspects of the movement that celebrated the popular and republican aspects of the Revolution, 1789 could be entwined with moral force narratives. The episode was perfectly compatible with a discourse that emphasised a defensive use of violence over conspiracy and insurrection. In fact, the defensive nature of the popular insurrection in July 1789 chimed more closely with moral force arguments than those used by the supporters of physical force, and both wings of the movement freely used the language of revolution to describe the ambitions of Chartism. Lodged in a broad and far-reaching history of popular sovereignty, the French Revolution provided a diverse range of symbols and precedents for Chartist mobilisation. Throughout 1841, *McDouall's Chartist and Republican Journal*, an important locus of Chartist regeneration and reflection following the defeat of 1839 and during the transition to a new agitation, not only presented readers with regular letters from Bronterre O'Brien on the French Revolution and extracts from his work on Robespierre, but it also placed the event alongside the Magna Charta and American democracy in numerous historical reflections. British, French, and American democracy were viewed as complementary stages in the history of republicanism that stemmed from the ancient Roman Republic. In a universal history of democratic progress, the French Revolution took its place alongside ancient Anglo-Saxon liberty and American Independence in the onward march of freedom; a thoroughly entwined corpus of ideas, symbols, and precedents for use by 'the fustian jackets' in their battle against the factory system, the bastille, and the wider struggle between labour and capital.

Chapter 5

The European Struggle:

The Revolutions of 1848 in the *Northern Star*

There had been an old fraternity reigning over the earth—the fraternity of tyrants—the fraternity of priests and their younger brethren, Kings and conquerors. It was raised by fraud, it was supported by violence, it has clothed itself with glory, honour, and fame. ... It was reserved for the present age to produce a far nobler fraternity—the *fraternity of nations*. ... The French revolution has taught kings a lesson, though as well as nations They know, that if they once raise the nations up in arms, those arms will not be wielded as of old. The people will use them in their own defence ... for their own rights The people of earth are stirring. ... Yes! great spirits have been abroad—the apostles of liberty have gone from land to land, and the seeds they have sown, are fast ripening to the harvest—a harvest we yet shall live to reap.

Ernest Jones at the 1846 anniversary of the fall of the *Bastille*.¹

By the time the Revolutions of 1848 rocked the European powers, Chartists had developed a critique of the international struggle for democracy that not only attempted to explain the process, but also the character that revolution was likely to take. The histories and analyses of European politics devised during the 1840s merged nationalist and social interpretations, echoing the division between romantic and class visions of revolution in Continental radicalism. During the 1846 commemoration of the fall of the *Bastille*, Ernest Jones articulated a vision of history that celebrated the nation as the incubator of democracy, while also privileging the working class' role in guaranteeing universal rights and liberties. Much like William Carpenter had six years earlier, Jones celebrated the inevitable substitution of the fraternity of Kings with a fraternity of free nations in which the rights of labour would be enshrined. The internationalism fostered by the Democratic Friends of all Nations and the Fraternal Democrats appeared to conform a sense of universal struggle, which, while not

¹ *Northern Star*, 18 July 1846, 8.

producing shared political platforms or central party architecture, nevertheless provided invaluable cultural exchanges and reflections on the applicability of historical lessons to contemporary politics. Even before the declaration of the Second French Republic on 23 February 1848, Chartist discourses on European politics stressed the centrality of movements in Continental radicalism to Britain, sensing in the victories of European Democracy a forward march for reform at home.

This general vision was underlined by the foreign news sections in Chartist newspapers. From its earliest surviving issues, the *Northern Star* presented foreign news alongside domestic coverage. Over the course of its lifespan, the newspaper increased the volume of foreign news items, creating relationships between readers of its columns with radical newspapers abroad. Even before Harney took over editorship of the paper in 1844, the *Northern Star* already carried expansive coverage of foreign politics, and routinely quoted the French newspaper *La Réforme* (founded in 1843) – the mouthpiece of French social-republicanism whose principal writers would take up government positions following the 1848 revolution. In this, the *Northern Star* conformed to a general trend in radical news reporting. During the 1830s, the *Poor Man's Guardian* and the *Brighton Patriot* had both attempted to provide their readers with a basic awareness of European politics on a somewhat ad-hoc basis. The *London Dispatch*, founded in 1836, went much further, presenting a foreign intelligence section as a regular feature of the newspaper. This trend was followed over the next few years by the *Northern Liberator* (1837) and the *Charter* (1839), as well as the *Northern Star* (1838).

Privileging politics over culture, the foreign news sections of these papers tended to reflect the concerns of the Chartist Movement, closely following the struggle for universal suffrage and democratic rights abroad. Moments of revolution, insurrection, and civil war tended to focus news coverage: the Polish Insurrection of 1832, the persecution of Belgian trade unionists in 1836, the Canadian Rebellion of 1837-1838, and the attempted insurrection in France in 1839 were all issues that dominated radical and Chartist reportage during the 1830s, the plights of Poland and Canada particularly marking the early Chartist period. However, foreign news coverage also provided a

persistent narrative on European events and trends. Through their newspapers, Chartists could learn of the disputes in the Spanish succession that led to lasting differences in the country, contextualising the Carlist Wars of the 1830s and the second half of the 1840s; the divisions in Switzerland that led to the Sonderbund War of 1847, resulting in the ascendancy of liberal constitutionalism; the struggles between Prussian liberalism and autocracy; and the state of political parties in France. By the late 1840s, the *Northern Star* was providing a mature and sustained commentary on international news, familiarising its audience with foreign radicalism within an overarching narrative of the inevitable advance of democracy. By doing so, the *Northern Star* provided an international context for Chartist struggle, and an articulation of an emergent 'spirit of democracy' which would come to dominate discussions of the Revolutions of 1848.

In the year leading up to the outbreak of revolution in Europe, the *Northern Star* provided a detailed coverage of the French Banquet Campaign, a movement for electoral reform which began during the summer of 1847. Uniting moderate politicians and republicans, the Campaign provided a popular reformist platform that fractured a tenuous political deadlock in parliament. However, the tense political atmosphere created by the court party's continued truculence in the face a serious and enduring economic crisis ensured that more radical voices would come to fore. Shortly after the Campaign began, the reformist platform became an outlet for voices whose calls for universal male suffrage and a return of the republic proved popular among working class and peasant audiences. It was for this reason that, as the parliamentary session of 1848 drew imminent, the authorities responded by prohibiting a grand banquet in Paris planned to coincide with George Washington's birthday. It was the prohibition of this banquet which provided the trigger for the mass protests on 22 February 1848, resulting in the flight of Louis Phillippe and the declaration of the Second Republic two days later. The new government, elected by acclaim at the *Hôtel de Ville*, the traditional harbour of republicanism in Paris, was principally made up of members of the two leading reformist newspapers in France, representing the two tendencies that had dominated the debates of the Banquet Campaign the previous year: the moderate *Le National* and the democratic *La Réforme*.

During 1847 and early 1848, while the Chartist Movement was undergoing a revival of its own following Feargus O'Connor's successful election campaign, the *Northern Star* followed the debates of the French Banquet Campaign with interest, even interjecting itself into disputes between the *National* and *Réforme* tendencies. At the opening of 1848, the paper reviewed the progress of 'Democracy at home and abroad', contextualising the nascent Chartist agitation through reference to the rising tide of disaffection that appeared to be sweeping Europe.² With impressive foresight, the paper predicted that the reform campaign in France spelled 'the beginning of the end' for Louis-Phillippe. It argued that government intransigence would lead to attempts to prohibit the gatherings, causing the Banquets to become a focal point of revolutionary activity. The central role the *Northern Star* accorded to the campaign was further underlined by the detailed commentary that would follow in the coming weeks. For example, on 8 January 1848 the *Northern Star* added its voice to a running dispute between *Le National* and *La Réforme* over statements made by Garnier-Pages, the champion of moderate republicanism, during a series of speeches the previous month. Garnier-Pages had consistently argued that class divisions were simply an illusion orchestrated by Prime Minister Guizot to divide the people.³ *Le National* had come out in support of its hero, while *La Réforme* remained deeply critical, and the papers aired their disagreements over a series of polemics. The *Northern Star's* position on the affair was unambiguous, arguing:

We can only declare our full adhesion to the part the REFORME has taken in this affair. It has saved the honour ... and strength of French democracy It has maintained the principles of the Revolution It has asserted the rights of the working classes It has unmasked these bourgeois radicals—who would make the people believe that no class oppression exists—who will not see the frightful civil war of class against class in modern society—and who have nothing but vain words for the working people ... the REFORME, we say, has well merited of Democracy.

With a style of invective that foreshadowed the heated debates that would consume Chartism over the next four years, the *Northern Star* condemned Garnier-Pagès for

² *Northern Star*, 1 January 1848, 4.

³ *Northern Star*, 8 January 1848, 7.

having a flawed understanding of the state of society. The article derided his notion that the 'desperate struggle now going on in all civilised countries of the world between Labour and Capital', the gruelling reality of which 'is testified by the death of proletarians shot at Lyon, at Preston, at Laugenbielau, at Prague' could be 'carried on upon no better grounds than a lying assertion of a French Professor!' It went on to argue that Garnier-Pagès' intention was to deceive the working class into giving up their claim to the right of suffrage, and, in doing so, the opportunity to 'give to the entire people the command of the productive powers of the country and do away with all individual "employers!"'. 'The REFORME', declared the *Northern Star*, 'was perfectly right in styling this honourable gentleman a *bourgeois* radical'.

The *Northern Star's* response to the debate between these two leading Parisian dailies is revealing. Not only did it place the democratic struggle within a European framework, noting the international character of the fight for the suffrage, but it also appears to have anticipated the divisions amongst moderates and radicals within the reformist party that would be amplified over the summer months. In championing *La Réforme*, the *Northern Star* positioned itself on the radical-wing of this struggle, a stance that it would continue to uphold after the outbreak of the February Revolution. Moreover, its coverage revealed a class-dimension to Chartist interpretations of democracy that not only echoed the pronouncements of the internationalist organisations formed in the mid-1840s, but which would also sustain Chartist analysis during the period after 1848. By deploying these arguments, the *Northern Star* was describing the primary divisions in reform between class and nation, revealing in the process that the divergence of these trends were already recognisable before the advent of Red Republicanism in the 1850s. While the stage of 'late Chartism' has usually been interpreted as a categorical break in the movement, a deviation from the norm of British radicalism, the key concepts that underpinned this transformation were in fact drawn from an earlier period, perfectly in keeping with broader narratives about history and democracy that can be found in the journalism of the late-1830s. These historical and internationalist interpretations of democracy provided a framework for the interpretation of the Revolutions of 1848. In the process, the universal struggle between Democracy and

Aristocracy commenced in the seventeenth century would be lent a new set of contexts and imperatives by its re-awakening in 1848.

The *Northern Star's* coverage of the revolution did not approach the events as a novel set of circumstance, but as a confirmation or re-opening of a historical chapter in which the people of France had initiated an advance for all of humanity. The 'Heroic Citizens' of France, ran the address of the Executive of the National Charter Association (NCA), had 'consecrated the sacred right of insurrection', in the process rendering 'a glorious service' to mankind and providing 'an example to all the enslaved nations of earth'.⁴ The Chartist leadership further hoped 'the fire that consumed the throne of the royal traitor and tyrant will kindle the torch of liberty in every country of Europe.' A piece quoted from the *Edinburgh Weekly Express* rendered the same sentiments more concisely: 'All hail! the Parisian phalanx of Democracy', the article declared, describing the revolution as a permanent step on the path to 'popular integrity, justice, and social and political redemption.'⁵ The Chartists of Manchester joined the chorus, celebrating in a public address the revolution's abolition of 'hereditary legislation and monarchical institutions.'⁶ By this act, the Manchester Chartists viewed the French people as fulfilling their historical role: 'France has, as of yore,' they argued, 'led the van in the onward march of undying freedom.' For the *Northern Star*, the revolution in Paris did not simply provide a means to boost to morale, but was viewed as the recommencement of the revolutionary chapter of European history. For the Chartists of the metropolis, its meaning for Britain was clear. Gathering to celebrate the 'glorious victory' in France, they also met 'to advocate the right of every man to the elective franchise.'⁷

The recommencement of the European struggle was also articulated through romantic narratives, on one level conforming to the romanticised image of 1789 in Chartist histories, and on another providing Chartists with an idealised image of popular action that articulated their own hopes and aspirations. Drawn from French newspapers,

⁴ *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 1.

⁵ *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 2.

⁶ *Northern Star*, 11 March 1848, 5.

⁷ *Northern Star*, 11 March 1848, 1.

particularly *La Réforme*, an account of the throne at the *Palais-Royale* being thrown on a bonfire by the victorious crowds was counterpoised by the description of a ‘majestic barricade’ constructed on the *Rue de Valois*.⁸ This image of the sovereignty of the people culminated in a narrative of the final sitting of the Chamber of Deputies in which the proceedings were interrupted by an invasion of workers and militia of the National Guard.⁹ These representatives of ‘the people in arms’ applauded the prominent members of the opposition, Ledru-Rollin (editor of *La Réforme*) and the romantic poet and historian Lamartine, for opposing a regency of the King’s grandson. Ledru-Rollin’s speech was presented as the climax of the event. Turning to the gallery, he declared his objection:

I protest ... in the name of the citizens whom I see before me—who for the last two days have been fighting, and who will if necessary, again combat this evening. (From every side cries of ‘yes, yes,’ cheers, with brandishing of arms, and in some cases raising of muskets to the shoulder; indescribable tumult.) I demand in the name of the people that a provisional government be formed. (Great applause).

The defeat of vested interests by the intervention of the people created a powerful image of popular sovereignty, and a romanticised narrative of crowd action forcing the issue of reform onto the heart of government. The events at the *Hôtel de Ville* provided a fitting postscript to the exiting scenes in the French Parliament. Standing before a throng of workers and to ‘immense applause’, the socialist theoretician Louis Blanc announced the Provisional Government’s intention to form a republic at the behest of the people of Paris.¹⁰

However, the coverage of the events at the *Hôtel de Ville* appear largely as an afterthought. The importance placed on the scenes in the Chamber of Deputies would seem to encapsulate an idealised narrative of mass-mobilisation forcing the issue of reform on the people’s representatives. With the Charter due to be presented to Parliament in April, the stress accorded to individual events of the revolution in Paris appears to have been determined by the Chartist mobilization. This was the case in the

⁸ *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 5.

⁹ *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 5.

¹⁰ *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 5-6.

report of the delegation dispatched to Paris the following week.¹¹ Comprising of members of the Chartist executive and leading émigrés of the Fraternal Democrats, the delegation expressed admiration for a democratic government ‘surrounded by the love of the people’. As an example of this esteem, the report stressed the idyllic nature of civic democracy that the delegates observed. ‘[T]heft and outrage are unknown’, they reported, while the French people were animated by one spirit:

‘on the palaces of kings, over the doors of churches, and the monuments of war, are written those magical words that shall regenerate the world:—LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY! and better still, on the hearts of every Frenchman they are written—in every act of Government they are exemplified.’

Not only did such passages serve to highlight the peaceful nature of the transition to democracy, but they also elaborated a kind of post-Charter utopia: as the report stressed, ‘the *Charter* is the basis on which they have formed their government’.

The democratic nature of the 1848 revolution provided a window into a different world-view. As an addendum to the report of the delegation to Paris, the *Northern Star* printed a summary of a meeting held by European radicals at the *Salle de Valentino*.¹² The old concert hall had been repurposed in the 1840s to serve as a venue for Red Republicans in Paris, and on this occasion German exiles and French democrats had assembled to discuss the ‘position of Germany’ in light of the revolution in France.¹³ Ernest Jones represented the Chartists, sharing a platform with the poet Georg Weerth and Karl Marx. The most important feature of the meeting was the general belief that the dawning ‘springtime of the peoples’ represented a democratic epoch, one which was awash with new possibilities for Europe. Not only did Chartist participation see British democrats taking their place among continental radicals, but celebration of the imminent approach of the ‘European Republic’ suggests that conceptions of Europe, what it meant and represented, were in a profound state of flux. Indeed, American observers, viewing the events through the prism of the American Revolution, also

¹¹ *Northern Star*, 11 March 1848.

¹² *Northern Star* 11 March 1848, 5.

¹³ For the *Salle de Valentino*, see Jonathan Beecher, *Victory Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (London, 2001), pp. 108-9.

viewed 1848 as a movement towards a united states of Europe along the American model. As Timothy Mason Roberts suggests, 'many Americans anticipated America and Europe growing together as democratic republics.'¹⁴ At the very least, this meeting, held in the throes of revolutionary excitement, spoke to a history of shared struggle in which the peoples of Europe were considered bound together by a common destiny.

As a more concrete example of the possibilities opened by the new democratic age was found in the Provisional Government's establishment of a Labour Commission, tasked with investigating solutions to the Labour Question and arbitrating industrial disputes.¹⁵ Staffed by workers and overseen by Louis Blanc and the socialist Alexandre Martin (popularly known as Albert l'Ouvrier), a veteran of the Parisian secret societies and one of the editors of the working-class journal *l'Atelier* (1840-1850), provided an important forum for the generation of socialist programmes. Not simply a talking shop, the Labour Commission issued a radical manifesto for reform. In March, the initial deliberations of the Commission urged the introduction of such measures as nationalising and imposing workers' control on all failing commercial establishments, uniting workshops of the same trade into associations, and establishing a system of market control to ensure that prices were kept low. Blanc hoped that the 'state would arrive at the realisation of this plan by successive measures', producing 'a model, by the side of which the private associations and the present economical system may live.'¹⁶ By May, however, the Commission's line had hardened. Its final report, in line with Blanc's own theory espoused in his famous work *Organisation Du Travail* (1839), demanded the abandonment of the economic system in favour of one entirely based upon workers' associations, to be democratically organised and run by workers themselves. It advocated such measures as a state-driven expansion of industry, an immediate reorganisation of transport networks and the mining and agricultural sectors, and the wholesale nationalisation of banks and insurance companies, so as to enable a speedy

¹⁴ Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* (Virginia, 2009), p. 15.

¹⁵ Officially named the *Commission du Luxembourg pour l'Organisation du Travail*, and often referred to as the 'Luxembourg Commission' after the name of its illustrious meeting place, the Luxembourg Palace.

¹⁶ *Northern Star*, 1 April 1848, 6.

transition to a new economic model that would break the stranglehold of Capital and enshrine 'the right to labour'.¹⁷

Although the Labour Commission had no legislative authority (the introduction of a Ministry of Labour was rejected by the majority of the Provisional Government), it nevertheless came to symbolise the working-class gains of the 1848 revolution, and the hope of social transformation. After a conservative majority was returned to the Constituent Assembly by the April elections, the Commission became a focal point of the conflict between moderates who argued for a process of normalisation to bring the revolution to a close and radicals who sought to continue the struggle for social reform. The dismissal of the Commission in May, together with the disbanding of National Workshops with which it was linked, provoked the Parisian uprising of 23-26 June. The June Insurrection widely marked the cleavage between liberal and class politics in France and beyond. During 1849, for example, Julian Harney would place his new journal the *Democratic Review* within this schema, describing it as means to continue the struggle begun by the workers of June. Although immediate reactions by Chartists to the June uprising were much more circumspect, the *Northern Star's* focus on the Labour Commission and discussions of 'The Organisation of Labour' reveal both that the dual-nature of the 1848 Revolution in France was well-understood and that Chartists placed a great deal of value and hope in the deliberations of the body.

Speaking in March 1848, the radical MP for Finsbury, Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, hailed the establishment of the Labour Commission as 'the harbinger and advent of our own deliverance', for the findings of the Commission were sure to overturn the 'false doctrines of political economy'. He called for the establishment of a 'Labour league of the nations' to safeguard the revolution, to 'emancipate its sons from their intolerable yoke', and to ensure that the "'organisation of labour" be henceforth the question of the age'.¹⁸ In an address from the Fraternal Democrats to the people of Great Britain

¹⁷ *Northern Star*, 20 May 1848, 3. Louis Blanc, *Organisation du Travail* (Paris 1839). The first English translation, *The Organisation of Labour* was published in London during 1848 by H. G. Clarke. See also Leo A. Loubere, 'The Evolution of Louis Blanc's Political Philosophy', *The Journal of Modern History*, 27:1, (March, 1955), pp. 39-60.

¹⁸ *Northern Star*, 25 March 1848, 5.

and Ireland, the establishment of the Commission for the Organisation of Labour was declared to be ‘the most momentous of all’ the Provisional Government’s measures. So significant were these developments to the workers of Britain that the address demanded of Chartists that they

applaud in all the circles in which you move, the acts and intentions of the Provisional Government in reference to the rights of Labour. Every success gained by your brethren of France in the acquisition of those rights is a battle won for you. Show yourselves, then, worthy of the victory. In your meetings—your workshops—your homes—everywhere, defend the brave French working classes against the vile aspersions and foul calumnies heaped against them by the prostituted press of England—the salaried apologists of the rapacious capitalists and soulless shopocracy.¹⁹

For Chartists, these ideas also presented an alternative to the Poor Law and the Workhouse. The *Northern Star* expressed the hope that

The [French] Government may take all those for whom the present system does not find work and wages, and set them to work upon reproductive and self-supporting principles and plans. It is a mere question of Poor Laws in the first instance, and it is only necessary to ask whether the English system of spending some seven millions or eight millions annually, in forcibly keeping our poor idle in misnamed workhouses, or spending that or such sum as might be required in setting them to work, is the most rational and likely to be the most beneficial to all classes in the long run.²⁰

Or, more succinctly: ‘Query—how does [toil in the workhouse] harmonise with “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”?’²¹

As the date of the petition drew nearer, allusions to the continental revolutions were more often made. A report of a Republican Banquet that was convened by the French exile community in London, and which was attended by ‘a considerable body of Englishmen’, recorded that the gathering sang revolutionary songs and made toasts to the French Republic, the Provisional Government, to *Liberté*, and to the English

¹⁹ *Northern Star*, 25 March 1848, 5.

²⁰ *Northern Star*, 18 March 1848, 4.

²¹ *Northern Star*, 1 April 1848, 8.

People.²² A speech on Europe from Julian Harney exemplified the prevailing sentiment of internationalism: ‘One feature distinguishes the present revolution—I will not say French, but European Revolution—(great applause), that the people of every nation are of the same mind ... one aspiration arises from the hearts of the long oppressed millions—the aspiration for Equality, Liberty, Fraternity.’²³ The petition was seen as the first stage in a ‘*peaceful Revolution*’, which would re-mould Parliament to fit the new ‘spirit of the age’. That spirit in turn was defined by the ‘storm of revolution’ abroad. Chartists were urged to ‘look seriously to your political and social amelioration’, for ‘the liberty-seeking German, the emancipated Italian, the struggling pole, and the proud French Republican will regard you with an eye of disdain, if your aim be not to demolish *oligarchic usurpation*’.²⁴

The overt and enthusiastic celebration of internationalism that characterised Chartist responses to the revolutions for the first half of 1848 was not simply manifested of momentary excitement, but appeared to confirm an interpretation of the internationalist character of revolutionary struggle that had been hallmark of popular radical movements in Britain since at least the mid-1830s. 1848 was not viewed in terms of a sudden democratic awakening, but the culmination of generational fight for liberty. For a short moment, the French Second Republic appeared to usher in new age of democracy; its dedication to peace and moderate policy initially signalled new possibilities for a politics of consensus. The eruption of a new revolutionary epoch appeared to confirm messianic predictions of the inevitability of the democratic republic, while also vindicating Chartism’s own radical strategy. The wave of revolution that swept across Germany, Austria, Italy, and Hungary was interpreted as the final realisation of democracy, which would assure the success of the Chartist agitation commenced at the beginning of the year. In April, as the first elections held under universal male suffrage in the history of the French nation was successfully conducted without violence, they nevertheless revealed a deeply divided nation. For Chartists assembling at Kennington Common, the disunity of the British nation was displayed in

²² *Northern Star*, 1 April 1848, 8.

²³ *Northern Star*, 8 April 1848, 2.

²⁴ *Northern Star*, 8 April 1848, 1.

stark colours, as the procession to Parliament was prohibited and the Thames lined with special constables, recruited primarily from the enfranchised classes and organised by a state determined to see off any challenge to the constitutional settlement. While 1848 has often been portrayed as a fiasco, the lack of direction shown by Chartists mirrored the general impasse found across Europe. In the moment of euphoric victory, romanticised imaginings of the inevitable advance of democracy hit hard against the material reality of state power. Lack of organisation and foresight left the popular movements reeling. In France it led to a spontaneous resurgence of violence with no defined target; in Britain the Chartist Movement was left marooned, riven by division, crippled by arrests, and lurching towards conspiracy.

After the 10 April demonstration at Kennington Common and the subsequent rejection of the petition by Parliament, coverage of France once more became an important means of processing Chartist experience. At the beginning of the month, the *Northern Star's* regular foreign news section was transformed into a chronicle of the Second Republic's history.²⁵ The mood of confrontation carried through its reports were aptly underlined by the editor, Julian Harney's, adoption of the pseudonym 'l'Ami du Peuple' in his editorials two weeks later.²⁶ While historians have often noted that the origin of the penname stemmed from the vociferous newspaper of the French Revolution authored by the Jacobin sympathiser Marat, *l'Ami Du Peuple* is also notable for its high subscription-rate among urban craftsmen during the Revolution.²⁷ The voice of the *sans culottes*, *l'Ami Du Peuple* was a fierce proponent of popular rights, an enemy of perceived traitors to the Revolution, and, under its subsequent editor R. F. Lebois, an ally to Babeuf. While *l'Ami du Peuple* has been best remembered as a promulgator of terror, it was this former element of its heritage that chiefly attracted Harney. Through the foreign news section and the letters from *l'Ami du Peuple*, the *Northern Star* began to highlight and champion the growing resistance to the counter-revolution in France, publishing radical manifestos, placards, and speeches, particularly from communist and

²⁵ *Northern Star*, 13 May 1848, 3.

²⁶ *Northern Star*, 27 May 1848, 3.

²⁷ Max Fajn, 'The Circulation of the French Press during the French Revolution: The Case of R. F. Lebois' *l'Ami du Peuple* and the Royalist *Gazette Française*', *The English Historical Review*, 87:342 (January, 1972), pp. 100-105.

socialist groups.²⁸ The stalled progress of Chartism was likened to the setbacks in France, and although the word defeat was not uttered, it appeared clear that European democracy was in deep trouble. By internationalising Chartism's own setbacks, the *Northern Star* sought an explanation for the failure of the petition and for the dark turn that the revolution had taken. It was the June Insurrection in France that provided this explanation: a rising by the working-class districts of Paris that was brutally repressed by the conservative-led government. Although the *Northern Star's* coverage of the event was somewhat guarded, it nevertheless provided confirmation of the hardening class line that the newspaper had taken since April. The June Insurrection and the failure of the 1848 petition were drawn into a narrative of class 'betrayal' that stemmed from the Revolution of 1830 in France and the reform agitation of 1832 in Britain.

²⁸ *Northern Star*, 8 July 1848, 7; 9 September 1848, 5; 16 September 1848, 3; 30 September 1848, 5; 28 October 1848, 2; 4 November 1848, 5.

PART THREE

THE HEART OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY, 1849-1852

Chapter 6

Taking the Part Fully and Fearlessly:

The *Democratic Review*, June 1849—September 1850

Although the *Democratic Review* was billed as the organ of the ‘men of the future’, the journal was intrinsically tied to the past. In one sense the journal reveals a great deal about the extent to which radical democrats attempted to come to terms with the events of 1848; in another, it reveals how their view of the future transformation of European society was tied to the notion of France as the mother of revolution. The first issue, published in June 1849, came a year after the failed working-class insurrection in Paris, a calamitous event in the revolutionary’s calendar that signalled two important junctures. The first was the beginning of the proletarian revolution; the second was the beginning of the European reaction. In the journal, these two phenomena were seen to be fundamentally tied to one another. In the first instance, heralding the revolutions as the cause of ‘men not College-bred, but taught in the school of suffering’, the journal asserted working-class ownership over the revolutionary struggle.¹ The opposition to the revolutionaries, invariably characterised as industrialists, capitalists, and aristocrats were represented as a class whose commercial and political interests were hostile to proletarian emancipation. Aided by their financial control over the daily press, this cabal of élite interest groups prosecuted the counter-revolution on these grounds. For the *Democratic Review*, in combatting the ideological machinations of the ‘speculators of the press’, the European reaction was presented foremost as a battle of

¹ ‘To the Working Classes’, *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 4.

ideas; a battle where defeat on the ground merely deferred the victory of the revolution until the next great struggle.²

That victory was certain was without doubt, for in one sense the Red Republicans were preaching holy principles. Their system represented the institution in the form of material law of 'The divine precepts of Jesus Christ'.³ That their principles were true was obvious to all 'thinking men', for they had been developed by the foremost 'friends of the human race': men like the French socialist Louis Blanc, 'to whom Eternal Justice will assign the crown of a well-deserved and imperishable fame.'⁴ Their theories, ideas, and pronouncements were to be respected above all because they were buttressed by 'the zeal and intelligence of honest hearts and enlightened minds', and drawn from historical experience – an experience preserved in the revolutionary tradition.⁵ That this tradition was primarily considered to be a French one was determined by a particular reading of history:

It is sixty years since we came into a Revolution. The Spirit of Liberty, of Fraternity, of Equality has been in the world for 1,800 years, breathed into the human soul by Jesus Christ.

Repressed by Feudalism, perverted by Theocracy, resuscitated by Science, and by the Philosophy of the last century, it broke forth on civil and political society in '89.

Since that memorable epoch the new world, the world of Justice and of Liberty, has extricated itself from the old world ...

It continues to extricate itself by an inevitable fate. ⁶

Written by Victor Considerant, an eminent French Fourierist, this interpretation of the Revolution haunted the writings in the *Democratic Review*, and surfaced by degrees even in Harney's editorials and Helen MacFarlane's polemics. Although the ideas of Marx and Robert Owen also found accommodation in the *Democratic Review*, they co-habited with, and often appeared married to, this notion of revolution as an ongoing process, rooted in the past and guided by the eternal hand of providence. In viewing

² *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 3.

³ 'Elections in France', *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 13.

⁴ 'Social Reform', *Democratic Review*, August 1849, 109.

⁵ 'Louis Blanc's Appeal', *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 13.

⁶ 'The "Thirteenth of June"', *Democratic Review*, October 1849, 161.

the revolution as the manifestation of providential designs that found expression through the will of the people, the present was understood in terms of a continual engagement with both the past and the future, which in turn often lent an eternal quality to the journal's vision of European politics and history.

This vision was by no means a tidy one. Indeed, Harney's opening editorial in the first issue highlighted that the purpose of the *Democratic Review* was to represent European and American Democracy and to be open 'to men of "ultra opinions," and "extreme principles"'.⁷ In the same manner that the *Westminster* and *Edinburgh Reviews* provided forums for the discussion and formulation of élite ideology, the *Democratic Review* would be home to an array of interpretations loosely based around the concepts of 'democracy', 'socialism', and 'republicanism'. However, since the revolutions of 1848 many of these ideas were in the process of formation or re-formation. Amongst the 'catholicity of selection' that Harney's biographer notes so upset Marx and Engels, there was evidently an attempt to synthesise out of these diverse opinions a general model that, while at times more-or-less 'scientific', exuded a romanticised vision of the French revolutionary destiny.⁸

This was by no means only due to the prevalence of French writers in the journal, as noted by Harney's biographer, A. R. Schoyen.⁹ Although, as Schoyen notes, much of the content from French authors eschewed political moderation, romanticism, and 'utopianism', it was, nevertheless, generally proletarian in sympathy. The romanticism of the French contributors was also mirrored in Harney's editorials and the manifesto from the German 'Reds', both of which were stridently militant in their proletarian identity. Additionally, the primacy attached to direct and immediate revolutionary action, found in the writings of mainstream French republicans and of Harney himself, provided an interesting contrast to both the more openly utopian tracts as well as to the contributions of Marx. While some of the utopian writings, as exemplified in the above quotation from *Considerant*, characterised the Revolution as embodying a

⁷ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 4.

⁸ A. R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958), pp. 186-87.

⁹ Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, pp. 187-88.

spiritual dimension that would renew itself at an appointed time in the future, Marx's articles also pointed to a future period of revolutionary renewal. The implication of both of these interpretations was that the revolutions of 1848-51 were essentially thought to have already ended by 1850.¹⁰ This was certainly not the main thrust of the *Democratic Review's* narrative, which saw Europe as still engaged in an active revolutionary struggle. Yet in spite of this disparity, what all the contributors shared was a view of France as the epicentre of the revolutionary struggle.

The beginning of the European Revolution was traced from the Parisian rising of February 1848, but the French influence reached even further into the past. The annals of the European revolution also included the French Enlightenment, whose climax and point of fruition was held to be the revolution of 1789. The truths of '89 were most accurately illuminated by 'the immortal and incorruptible Maximilian Robespierre': 'may his bright example inspire us with energy to the accomplishment of the triumph of the good cause of Democratic and Social Equality, for which he lived, laboured, suffered, and died.'¹¹ It was a tradition that first awakened the rest of Europe through the revolutionised cadres of the French army during the revolutionary wars. It made itself felt once more in 1830, when revolution in France again sparked uprisings and agitations throughout the continent. The interim, between 1830 and 1848, transformed the revolutionary creed with new insights. 'Men such as Louis Blanc, Proudhon, Considerant, and Lamennais', all writing in the 1830s and the 1840s infused the revolutionary tradition with 'social theories'.¹² During 1848 it was hoped that in

¹⁰ 'Two Years of a Revolution', *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 426-432; May 1850, 458-61; Vol. II, June 1850, 20-24.

¹¹ 'Birth-day of Maximilian Robespierre', *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 463.

¹² 'Louis Blanc's Appeal', *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 34. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was a popular philosopher in France during the 1840s, and was one of the founders of anarchist thought. He was most notable for his work *What Is Property?* which contained the well-known phrase 'property is theft'. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété? ou Recherche sur le principe du Droit et du Gouvernement* (Paris, 1840). See also, Stewart Edwards (ed.), *Selected Writings of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, trans. Elizabeth Fraser (London, 1970). Lamennais was a leading figure in the development of 'social Catholicism' in France. A one-time Catholic priest, Lamennais' philosophical works and journalistic writings were popular during the 1830s, when, following the Polish Insurrection of 1831, he renounced organised religion and embraced democracy as a Christian calling. Edward Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France, 1830-1852* (Princeton, 2014), pp. 49-51; Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2014), p. 221; David Lee, 'Lamennais, Félicité de 1782-1854' in *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era, 1760-1850*, Vol. II, ed. Christopher John Murray (London, 2004), pp. 638-39.

France these new theories would be put to the test. It was for this reason that the Labour Commission, a body set up by the French Provisional Government and installed at the *Palais du Luxembourg* was imbued with a special significance. Although lacking any legislative power, the Commission had been authorised as a compromise measure, in lieu of a government Ministry of Work, to investigate problems affecting workers.¹³ Chaired by the socialist Louis Blanc, whose work the *Organisation of Labour* advocated the construction of a state economy around the principle of association, the Commission symbolically embodied working-class hopes and aspirations for the republic.¹⁴ For the Chartists, during 1848, France stood alone in Europe as the only example of a revolutionary power, bristling with the potential to become the living embodiment of a 'true' Republic.¹⁵

However, 1849 presented a rather different set of conditions than 1848. During 1849, France was held in the grip of counterrevolutionary forces. By June, conditions were such that Harney could announce that, barring universal suffrage, 'the liberties won by the victors of February have been utterly destroyed' and the Republic, by now only such in name, was fighting an intense struggle.¹⁶ A year later, even universal suffrage was threatened with extinction.¹⁷ On one side of the struggle were arrayed what the *Democratic Review* identified as the 'reactionary tendencies': a 'conspiracy' involving Bonaparte, monarchists, 'sham-republicans', and the moderates of the Assembly led by Odilon Barrot;¹⁸ on the other was a loose association of democrats and socialists: 'Reds',

¹³ Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment, 1848-1852* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 37-38; William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 251-55.

¹⁴ Louis Blanc, *L'Organisation du travail* (Paris, 1840); Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*, p. 253.

¹⁵ See, for example, the coverage of French news in the *Northern Star* during March-April 1848; Margot Finn also discusses Louis Blanc's reputation among English workers: Margot Finn, *After Chartism: Class and nation in English radical politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 68-70.

¹⁶ 'Continental Europe', *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 61.

¹⁷ 'To the Working Classes', *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, June 1850, 1-9.

¹⁸ Odilon Barrot was a lawyer and politician, a key figure in the Dynastic Opposition under the July Monarchy, and an advocate for a moderate extension of the franchise. He came to accept the Second Republic only reluctantly, supporting the plan for a regency following the abdication of Louis Philippe. He became Prime Minister twice during Louis Napoleon's presidency, first in December 1848 and again in June 1849. Roger Boesche (ed.), *Alexis de Tocqueville, Selected Letters on Politics and Society*, trans. James Toupin (London, 1985), p. 159.

militant workers, and the Mountain faction led by Ledru-Rollin.¹⁹ While the last of these consisted mostly of ‘a fraction of the bourgeoisie’ not yet advanced enough in their opinions to adopt the principles of ‘true democracy’, it was hoped they would be guided by the spirit of revolution emanating from the French people.²⁰ Circumstances had forced on them the position of the agents of revolution – the only faction in French politics strong enough to challenge Bonaparte and the growing power of the reaction. As for Ledru-Rollin, the *Democratic Review* hoped he would ‘lay aside the Man of Power, and be only the eloquent Tribune of the People’. With the politicisation of the countryside underway, lending buoyancy to the republican movement in France, the friends of republicanism ‘hope to recognize in’ Ledru-Rollin ‘the character of the first orator of the democracy.’²¹

Although France had lost the revolutionary initiative – Hungary, in the words of the *Red Republicans* of Germany, had ‘relieved France of its post in the history of the world’ – it was nevertheless in France that signs were sought for the next great rising.²² The elections to the legislative assembly in May 1849 were presented as a *cause célèbre* for European Democracy:

Of all the events of ... May, 1849, the French General Election ... promises to be in its consequences the most important to Europe. The risings in Germany, the gallant defence of Rome, and the glorious victories of the heroic Hungarians though of vast interest to mankind, still must be regarded as of secondary importance compared with the elections of the 13th and 14th of May. Roman virtue and Hungarian valour though efficient to obstruct the march of the forces of Reaction, might of themselves be found inefficient to complete the final overthrow of Tyranny. But to the new Legislative Assembly we look forward with hope—hope that it will give the signal for that sublime combat between the peoples of Europe on the one hand, and all the European tyrants

¹⁹ *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 61. Alexandre Ledru-Rollin was a radical lawyer, a celebrated leader of left-republicanism, and an editor of the notable radical newspaper *La Réforme*. He supported manhood suffrage during the reform agitation of 1847, and served as Minister of the Interior in the Provisional Government after February 1848. Jonathan Sperber, *The European revolutions, 1848-1851* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 300; Boesche (ed.), *Alexis de Tocqueville*, p. 200; Ansgar Reiss, ‘Home Alone? Reflections on Political Exiles Returning to their Native Countries’, in *Exiles from the European Revolutions of 1848: Refugees in Mid-Victorian England*, ed. Sabine Freitag (Oxford, 2003), pp. 306-307.

²⁰ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 12.

²¹ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 12.

²² ‘Manifesto of the Red Republicans of Germany’, *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 68.

on the other, the result of which cannot fail to be the destruction of the oppressors, and final emancipation of the oppressed.²³

While the overall number of social republicans elected to the legislative assembly represented a minority, 'the minority possess the all-daring virtue of energy ... and are sure of the sympathy of the army.'²⁴ This new alliance ensured the opening of a 'mighty future':

The liberticide expedition to Italy will be recalled or its mission entirely changed from that originally designed by its projectors. The Republicans of Germany will be supported by their French brethren. The gauntlet thrown down by the Russian Autocrat will be taken up by the chivalrous sons of France, and the flag of the Red Republic will be victorious throughout Europe, because it is the flag of hope to the nations, and of doom to their tyrants. Honour to the French Democrats! Honour to the French Army!²⁵

A similar reading of events was put forward by the French correspondent, who concluded that the elections were proof that 'France has recommenced her march of progress': 'Democrats of all countries, let us take courage! Before long, the French Republic will complete its mission.'²⁶ Even the events of June did not dispel this optimism for a renaissance of the French Left.

On 13 June 1849, a peaceful demonstration in favour of the Roman Republic was met with force by the French authorities. The response of the French National Assembly to the demonstration was to introduce a range of laws whose combined effect was that

²³ 'Continental Europe', *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 22.

²⁴ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 24.

²⁵ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 24-25.

²⁶ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 13. There is a certain amount of ambiguity surrounding the identity of the French correspondent. For example, Schoyen writes that although these articles were unsigned, it is likely that the roles of French and German correspondents during 1850 were both fulfilled by Engels. Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, pp. 202-203. Meanwhile, John Saville has argued that only two of those articles can be categorically linked to Engels, but does not rule out the possibility that he authored others. John Saville, 'Introduction', *The Red Republican and The Friend of the People, 1850-51*, 2 vols (London, 1996), I, xi. Joan Allen, on the other hand, has categorically accepted Engels's authorship of these articles based on Harney's correspondences with Engels and the latter's prolific activity in the radical press in Europe at the time. Joan Allen, "'The teacher of strange doctrines': George Julian Harney and the *Democratic Review*, 1849-1850", *Labour History Review*, vol. 78, no. 1, 2013, p. 75. While Harney certainly wrote to Engels in the Spring and Summer of 1849 to solicit the young German's help with the new venture, no response from Engels appears to have survived. G. Julian Harney to Frederick Engels, 19 March 1849 and 1 May 1849 in Frank Gees Black and Renee Métivier Black (eds), *The Harney Papers* (Assen, 1969), pp. 248-50; 253-54.

Paris was placed under a state of siege. Democratic journals were suppressed and the leaders of the Mountain faction were either arrested or forced into hiding. Ledru-Rollin himself escaped, but his faction in the Assembly was 'decimated'.²⁷ The *Democratic Review* received this dreary news with obvious dejection:

Never was France reduced to such a state of abject slavery as she is at the moment. There is no opposition in the Assembly, for the Mountain ... is powerless. The Press is crushed Ledru Rollin and the principal leaders of the Democracy are fugitives or in prison One hundred and fifty Proletarians were shot down in the streets of Lyons on the 15th and 16th²⁸

Yet for all these set-backs, assured the *Democratic Review*, the 'doom of the betrayers of the Republic ... is as certain as death':

Be it remembered that excepting those in prison, the 130,000 Socialist Democrats who voted for Ledru Rollin, are still in Paris. Be it observed, too, that that patriot was elected for five departments. *Red Republicanism* is rife throughout France, and the materials are surely gathering for another revolution, which will not be confined to Paris only, but will cover France; everywhere (we trust) purging the land of the assassins who at present trample upon humanity.²⁹

Writing in June, Claudius Johannes, a radical member of the Mountain faction and politically to the left of Ledru-Rollin, reminded readers of the *Democratic Review* that the Revolution was an entity in its own right. While it acted through the people, 'the Revolution will develop itself The day is not too distant; for Socialism progresses rapidly.'³⁰ The 'holy doctrines of fraternity and equality' were being 'propagated with indefatigable zeal'. Their effects were attested to by the huge print run of socialist pamphlets and the expansion of working men's associations throughout France, spreading even across the frontier with Belgium.³¹ Writing again in August, Johannes insisted that in spite of the 'apparent defeat on the 13th of June, Socialism has lost none of its strength.'³² Referring to new legislation proposed by Napoleon III to support Working Men's Associations and asylums, Johannes insisted they were rude imitations

²⁷ *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 63.

²⁸ *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 63.

²⁹ *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 63-64.

³⁰ 'Present Political Aspect and Prospects of France', *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 47.

³¹ *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 47-48.

³² 'The French Republic', *Democratic Review*, September 1849, 127.

of the proposals drawn up by the Labour Commission in 1848. They were ‘delusions’ and ‘an ill-contrived snare’ drawn up by ‘a government founded on the tyranny of capital’ and dominated by ‘the royalist conspiracy’ bent on sapping socialism of its strength and intended to create the conditions favourable for a restoration of the monarchy.³³ Nevertheless, Johannes concluded, ‘we anticipate a thorough failure of all these conspiracies, for the present generation is intensely democratic, and we have faith in the future of the French Republic.’³⁴

It was a recurring pattern throughout the life of the journal that political developments in France were privileged above news of events elsewhere. This was the case even when circumstances elsewhere might reasonably be considered to have had a far greater intrinsic significance, offered radicals and socialists more cause for cheer, or possessed more value for the purposes of social propaganda. For example, the ‘risings in Germany’ and ‘the glorious victories of the heroic Hungarians’ that the *Democratic Review* relegated to secondary importance next to the French election results, alluded to the establishment of revolutionary governments in Dresden and Baden and the capture of Budapest by the Hungarian revolutionaries, signalling an advance on Vienna.³⁵

At times, the inflated importance given to events in France appears to reveal a sense of desperation lurking behind the narrative, as in the case of the French ‘Drink Tax’. Writing in December 1849, the French correspondent asserted that the restoration of the tax on ‘potable liquors’, essentially a tax on wine, would ‘convert the remainder of the millions who, twelve months ago, voted for that ambitious blockhead, Louis Napoleon.’ France would then be ‘won for social democracy’.³⁶ The reasoning behind this assertion was that the tax had its roots in feudal society, weighed disproportionately on the poor, and its restoration by the Assembly signalled the legislature’s royalist character (and by extension its designs). Yet this explanation,

³³ *Democratic Review*, September 1849, 127-128.

³⁴ *Democratic Review*, September 1849, 128.

³⁵ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 25-26.

³⁶ ‘Letter from France’, *Democratic Review*, December 1849, 315-317.

earnest as it appears to have been, betrays the degree to which democrats were straining to hold together a model of the European Revolution that, while based on the events of 1848, was profoundly influenced by an interpretation of history that enshrined France as the birthplace of democracy and the heart of the European revolutionary struggle.

In a lengthy preface to a collection of extracts from the French émigré journal, the *Nouveau Monde*, this model was explained and justified:

France is, without doubt, at present the most interesting country in the civilized world. Because all the revolutionary elements, as yet latent in other European countries, have been set free in France, and exist there in a state of fierce activity. All the other European nations are struggling in the various stages of the revolutionary movement, but France has passed through all these preparatory stages, and is now entering upon the last phasis of her *revolutionary career*, viz., the battle between the proletarians and the financial aristocrats. This battle must be fought out before society can be remodelled in accordance with the principles of Socialism.³⁷

The position of France was at once unique and universal. The only nation to have passed through the penultimate stages of human development, and shorn off the yoke of feudal heritage, France was now resting on the brink of profound social change. Yet, crystallised within the French historical experience was the past and present state of European society. The present state of Europe was France's revolutionary past; the present state of France was Europe's revolutionary future. The secrets of human progress lay interred in the French revolutionary struggle, and it was only by studying the conflicts of 1848 and 1849 that they could be exhumed. In the meantime, the rest of Europe was still labouring at a point of development that France had already transcended:

By the revolution of 1790-93, France was freed from the superincumbent weight of monarchy and feudality. A weight which, at present, compresses the revolutionary elements at work in the rest of Europe; and which retards, though it cannot ultimately prevent, their expansion.³⁸

³⁷ 'Universal Suffrage and the Ordermongers', *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 453-54.

³⁸ *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 454.

This was the position of the nationalist revolutionaries; their endeavours, though significant, were limited only to the first stage of revolution alone. The republican spirit that animated their fight for national self-determination would in the end only succeed in clearing the path to the next realm of struggle:

As in France, this burden will everywhere be thrown off at last, by the united efforts of the proletarians and the middle-class reformers. Only after that can the final settlements of accounts, between these two classes of society take place. Such a settlement cannot be long delayed in France.³⁹

Here was the significance of February 1848. The Banquet Campaign, begun in 1847 to pressure the government for a reform of the franchise, had united the working and middle-class elements of the revolution against the monarchy. After the flight of Louis Philippe and the establishment of the Provisional Government during the February days of 1848, the two wings of the revolution quickly stratified into polarised camps. The political struggles of April and May bore witness to the growing antagonism between the two classes, revealing a conflict that existed on a level so basic that it could only be resolved by re-commencing the revolution. The June Insurrection marked the beginning of this new revolutionary era: the titanic struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Although the reaction had triumphed in that battle, the war continued to be fought throughout 1849. According to this interpretation, France represented an active revolutionary entity possessed of a profound transnational reach:

Paris has been called ‘the centre of European civilization.’ Very justly so. For it is the centre—the heart—of modern democracy; and every movement there sends the red revolutionary life-blood—in healthy pulsations—to the remotest extremities of Europe.⁴⁰

So central was Paris to the revolutionary struggle that it was thought a new outbreak there would have far-reaching effects. Portions of the journal were therefore dedicated to predicting when these events would occur. For the contributors of the *Democratic Review*, the process of prediction was in part an act of hope and of faith, for, while Paris was on the cusp of another great rising, their efforts, and the efforts of revolutionaries

³⁹ *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 454.

⁴⁰ *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 454.

on the continent, would not be in vain. Additionally, in tying the success of the European Revolution to France, they were in effect also binding themselves to the conclusion that the failure of the revolution there would also herald the failure of revolution everywhere. The French people's revolutionary past was used as proof of their credentials in the present. In effect, this telling of history showed that the future of the revolution was safe in the hands of the French, the natural custodians of political renewal. However, if the essence of renewal flowed from the heart of Paris, to build morale in periods when the 'pulsations' weakened or slowed, it was felt necessary to manually stimulate the ventricles of revolution. The authors of the *Democratic Review* felt bound by a sense of duty to sustain the spirit of struggle in the midst of counter-revolution. They were likely here also to have been influenced by the mood of the continent in general, and of France in particular. Even a casual observer of French news would have been alerted to the changeable nature of politics of this period. The reaction had not yet found a sure footing and, as France lurched from one political crisis to the next, paranoia found a genial playmate in the polarised political atmosphere.⁴¹

One of the most striking features of the *Democratic Review's* political writings is that 'social' revolution and 'Red Republicanism' make their appearance fully-formed and needing no general explanation. As Schoyen notes, nowhere in the *Democratic Review* was 'socialism' defined; presumably, either it needed no introduction, or the *Democratic Review* was to be the very vehicle of its formulation into a general set of principles.⁴² However, the *Democratic Review* was also building on a critique whose formulation had begun in the *Northern Star*, particularly during the years 1847-1848. At key points over the course of that period, the *Northern Star's* foreign news section was dominated by reports of the 'Banquet' campaign in France.⁴³ This campaign, initiated by a combination of opposition groups in France to press the government for

⁴¹ See, for example, Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, pp. 85-93; Roger Price, *The French Second Republic: A Social History*, (London, 1972), pp. 246-62; Roger Price, *The Revolutions of 1848*, (Basingstoke, 1990), pp. 85-95; Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, pp. 236-54.

⁴² Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, p. 186.

⁴³ For notices of the banquets see 'Foreign Intelligence', *Northern Star*, 17 July 1847, 7; 'Colonial and Foreign', *Northern Star*, issues: 27 July 1847, 7; 21 August 1847, 7; 9 October 1847, 7; 20 November 1847, 6; 27 November 1847, 7; 4 December 1847, 7; 7 December 1847, 7; 1 January 1848, 7; 8 January 1848, 7; 15 January 1848, 7; 12 February 1848, 7; 19 February 1848, 7; and 'France', *Northern Star*, issues: 8 January 1848, 7; 22 January 1848, 7; 26 February 1848, 4.

electoral reform, began in July 1847 and served as a focal point for the mobilisation of radical and republican groups.⁴⁴ The *Northern Star* paid a great deal of attention to the speeches of the principal leaders of the republican faction, Lamartine, Garnier-Pagès and Ledru-Rollin, in particular.⁴⁵ Their speeches, pronouncements, and policies were not passively passed over either. In fact they were accompanied by a great deal of critical evaluation that betrayed a telling level of familiarity with French politics.⁴⁶ In one issue, for example, Louis Garnier-Pagès received a heavy reprimand for lacking the energy and courage of his older brother, Étienne, a republican deputy and famed orator who had gained the attention of radical journalists in Britain during the early 1830s.⁴⁷ The article went on to announce that the ‘ultras’ were the only faction of the French Left that warranted working-class support.⁴⁸

Additionally, following the revolution of February, the writing in the *Northern Star* revelled in the popular nature of the uprising. While reports of the happenings in the French Chamber were contrasted with an inactive British parliament, the primary focus rested on the experience of mass action and republican politics.⁴⁹ In particular, the *Northern Star* highlighted as moments of special interest those points at which popular politics and republican culture converged to form the democratic socialist (*démoc-soc*) movement. Thus, pride of place was accorded to: the invasion of the French Assembly

⁴⁴ Price, *The Revolutions of 1848*, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁵ Alphonse de Lamartine was an aristocrat and popular poet who entered into French politics after the 1830 revolution, becoming an elected deputy in 1833. Lamartine played an important role in galvanising the people to the ‘Banquet’ campaign, and became leader of the Provisional Government following the revolution of 1848. Gregory Claeys (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-century Thought* (Oxon, 2005), pp. 266-69. Louis-Antoine Garnier-Pagès, was a member of the group clustered around the ‘liberal’ newspaper *Le National*, a deputy during the July Monarchy, and finance minister of the Provisional Government in 1848. Boesche (ed.), *Alexis de Tocqueville*, p. 199.

⁴⁶ See, for example, ‘The Reform Movement in France’, *Northern Star*, issues: 20 November 1847, 6; 4 December 1847, 3; 18 December 1847, 2; ‘Progress of Democracy at Home and Abroad’, *Northern Star*, 1 January 1848, 4; and ‘The Democratic Movement in France’, *Northern Star*, 5 February 1848, 7.

⁴⁷ Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 53. Suzanne Lindsey, *Funerary Arts and Tomb Cult: Living with the Dead in France, 1750-1870*, (Farnham, 2012), pp. 46-47. While Étienne appeared to be quite the moderate in the *Poor Man’s Guardian* (‘March of Republicanism in France’, 11 May 1833, 151-54), the *Morning Chronicle* – a Whig publication – found him to be of the ‘Extreme Gauche’ (‘France’, 13 March 1852, 2). He was also likely to have been the fiery ‘M. Garnier Pages’ whose haranguing at Guizot in the French Chamber was recorded in the *Northern Star* as a ‘bellow ... with an accord and zeal only to be equalled by the *claqueurs* of a French pit’ (19 January 1839, 3).

⁴⁸ *Northern Star*, 8 January 1848, 7.

⁴⁹ ‘Parliamentary Review’, *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 4.

by workers and soldiers on the eve of the revolution, a dramatic and physical example of 'the people' taking control of the fate of a nation;⁵⁰ the announcement of the republic from the balcony of the Hotel De Ville, replete with the symbolism of the radical stage of the first French revolution;⁵¹ the Provisional Government's declarations, particularly the 'Right to Work', and the establishment of the Labour Commission, symbolised by the figure of Louis Blanc, a body akin to a labour parliament, whose debates in the vacated royal palace sought to find a means to end the sufferings of their class.⁵² All of these were ardently popular and working-class aspects of the revolution. Through its reportage, the *Northern Star* was evidently tapping in to the early manifestations of popular French Democratic Socialism.

However, in the *Democratic Review* these events did not merely shape the coverage of foreign politics. In fact, the way the revolutions were framed in analyses of domestic politics reveals a notion of class struggle. Beyond the frequent appeals to 'working men' and 'proletarians', support for the revolutionary projects of the continent was viewed as being a distinctively working-class position. In the opening address of the first issue of the *Democratic Review*, Harney described the hostility of the English press toward the revolutions in the following terms:

From the 24th of February, 1848, to the present hour, nine-tenths of the Newspapers (Daily and Weekly), Magazines, and Reviews have unceasingly misrepresented the revolutionary movements on the continent, and calumniated the men who as true Democrats, striving for Justice to all, have taken part in those movements.⁵³

'The secret of the bitter and unscrupulous hostility of the English press', it was further explained, 'is to be found in the fact that the Press is the slave of Wealth and Privilege.' Negative press coverage of the continental revolutions was understood as a politically motivated defence of class interests on the part of newspaper proprietors, a symptom of what Harney termed the 'class domination' that operated over the popular

⁵⁰ 'The French Revolution', *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 5.

⁵¹ *Northern Star*, 4 March 1848, 5-6.

⁵² *Northern Star*, 4 March 188, 8.

⁵³ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 1.

journals.⁵⁴ This 'domination' was buttressed by a regime of economic censorship, symbolised by the penny stamp, which priced newspapers and journals out of the reach of the working class, thereby retarding the growth of a democratic and revolutionary press in Britain.⁵⁵

Opposition to the continental revolutions was not understood in narrow terms of ideology: whether a Whig or Conservative administration, the nature of 'class domination' operated as a '*régime* of corruption and fraud'. Under this regime, newspaper editors were motivated by profit, and as a consequence serious political discussions were limited to those causes that furthered the interests of the 'speculators' of the press:

Hence the sickening accounts of royal rareeshows, and the routs and revels of aristocratic flunkeydom. Hence the columns, the pages devoted to the service of stock-jobbers, railway-gamblers, and the rest of the race of money grubbers whose name is 'Legion.' Hence the total omission, or, worse still, the *travesties* of meetings, and proceedings of the poor and unprivileged classes. Hence the contempt, the scorn, and lies poured upon Chartism, and the fiendish persecution waged against the advocates of Equal Rights, and Equal Laws. Hence the conspiracy to misrepresent the glorious *Red Republicans* and Communists of the Continent, and the encouragement given to royal, aristocratic, and bourgeois assassins to wage a war of extermination against the champions of Equality, Freedom, and Justice.⁵⁶

In contrast, the cause of the revolutionaries of the continent was also the cause of 'men not College-bred, but taught in the school of suffering'.⁵⁷ While this 'cause' was never defined in any kind of structured, leave alone formulaic, way it was explored through a number of articles by key continental figures and reviews of their works. Lamenting that translations of the works of these figures were only slowly arriving in English, Harney wrote in the first issue that

the fact that the writings of such men as Louis Blanc, Proudhon, Considerant, Lamennais, &c., are almost, or entirely unknown in England, is a fact to be regretted. Sound knowledge will make but slow progress in this country as

⁵⁴ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 2.

⁵⁵ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 2.

⁵⁶ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 3.

⁵⁷ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 4.

long as the writings of the Continental Social Reformers are untranslated and, consequently, unknown to the British masses.⁵⁸

It is no coincidence that those authors were all French. Among them, however, the *Democratic Review's* reception of Louis Blanc's own writings far outstripped the others.

The first of Blanc's articles to appear was a letter to Armand Barbés, a renowned 'ultra' radical and revolutionary – a letter that was also printed in that month's *Northern Star*.⁵⁹ Puzzling over its inclusion, Joan Allen wonders whether the decision to publish the letter in the *Democratic Review* was part of a failed strategy to secure Blanc's regular contribution to the journal.⁶⁰ While this was quite likely the case, Blanc's presence in the journal remained a significant one. At least one article based on Blanc's work, either authored directly by Blanc or a discussion of his writings and ideas, appeared in eight of the eleven issues of the *Democratic Review*, Volume I. With ten such articles, Louis Blanc was behind only Julian Harney and the French correspondent (assuming that the same correspondent was used for every issue) as the third largest individual presence in the journal during this period.

However, as well as an attempt to secure Blanc as a correspondent for the *Democratic Review*, the decision to include his letter to Barbés was also likely to have been driven by political commitments. The letter in question was concerned with Barbés' imprisonment for the invasion of the Assembly in May 1848, an action used by the French government as a pretext to arrest leading republicans. In the same issue was published a review of Blanc's 'Appeal to Honest People', an article that also dealt extensively with 15 May. The editorial to the review concluded: 'the hour is approaching when the flag of the Red Republic will be victorious ... Louis Blanc and Barbés will be hailed as the saviours of France, and the founders of Europe's true liberty and happiness.'⁶¹ Contained within the issue for June 1849, it is entirely possible that together these two articles were a means of marking the anniversary of the *journée* of

⁵⁸ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 33-34.

⁵⁹ 'Louis Blanc to Armand Barbés', *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 27-29; *Northern Star*, 9th June 1849, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Allen, 'George Julian Harney and the *Democratic Review*', p. 77.

⁶¹ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 37-38.

15 May – an event which saw both Barbés and Blanc receiving heavy judicial sentences, resulting in the latter's exile. By siding with the 'wronged' of May 1848, the *Review* was making a statement of allegiance, as well as commemorating the first action in a series of events that had led to the working-class uprising of 1848.

While most of the key articles by Blanc dealt with an exposition of his political theories and critique of the capitalist system, one of the most interesting inclusions was his 'History of Socialism'. Appearing in two parts, this work was a translation of lectures Blanc had given to French workers in London that first appeared in the émigré journal *Nouveau Monde*.⁶² Far from an innocuous piece, the inclusion of the transcript of a lecture from an important émigré was somewhat risky given that the Alien Act forbade émigrés from engaging in domestic politics.⁶³ Here, the *Democratic Review* was giving readers a glimpse into the politics of the émigré community as well as providing publicity and access to the type of lecture that the authorities had strictly forbidden. More significantly, however, it provided the historical context for Blanc's critique that fed into a general notion of a European socialist heritage. Blanc asked his audience to consider the following provocative question: 'Are servitude, inequality, hatred, preferable to liberty, equality, fraternity?'⁶⁴ An answer to this question, he insisted, was of 'vital importance'.⁶⁵ On the one side lay a society that had thrown off the shackles of slavery only to impose a civilization based upon naked selfishness, a system governed by the intolerable 'anarchy' of laissez-faire,⁶⁶ on the other were the fundamental precepts of socialism – the root of the Revolution of '89 – buried in the depths of an 'immense tradition' that connected socialists to 'one of those primordial indestructible ideas, which the hand of God has engraved in human consciences': *fraternité*.⁶⁷

This 'immortal heritage' included such figures as Lyceus and Plato from the ancient world; the ideas of the early Christians and their most faithful of latter-day followers,

⁶² 'The History of Socialism', *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 296; April 1850, 418.

⁶³ See, for example, Bernard Porter, 'The Asylum of Nations: Britain and the Refugees of 1848', in *Exiles from the European Revolutions*, p.46.

⁶⁴ *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 296.

⁶⁵ *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 296.

⁶⁶ *Democratic Review*, August 1849, 109.

⁶⁷ *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 296.

the Anabaptists; Thomas More for his conception of *Utopia*; Robespierre, Roussau, and Saint Just, 'in whom the French Revolution became incarnate'; and 'a Socialist who was nailed on the cross, and who was called Jesus'.⁶⁸ While each of these forefathers had made a great advance, each, save Jesus, had been coloured by the conditions of his own society: hence the acceptance of slavery among the Ancients and hence, too, the Jacobin Terror. The new century, however, had freed man from the shackles of the past, and in doing so had provided an opportunity to perfect the creed. The Enlightenment had liberated the peoples of Europe from lord and tithe; the rise of industry had the potential to eliminate want. The persistence of scarcity was to be found in the artificial condition of capitalism, a system characterised by greed and competition where only the wealthy could prevail, and then only at the expense of the poor. Importantly, it was a system that was no more natural than the machines that had allowed it to spring into being, and from this unnatural state of society had emerged the alienation of the proletariat and the poor. Socialism would reconcile the whole of the people with itself through the institution of a system based on French revolutionary principles, in which Fraternity and Equality would at last find their rightful emphasis, and the family would be elevated to its rightful place in the realm of the sacred.⁶⁹

Although it was his discussion of peaceful revolution that caused Harney to accuse Blanc of being something of a utopian (incidentally, Blanc's position of eschewing violence was also shared by a majority of French and British radicals), Blanc's views about the nature of the family were passed over without comment.⁷⁰ Yet, it is in this that Blanc appears at his most idealistic. Describing the marriage rites of Ancient Rome, Blanc asserted:

These formalities, at once noble and touching, the symbolical dress of the bride, the worship of chastity reconciled by invocations in common with that of love, those beautiful children perfumed with essences to whom the torches of Hymen were given, the keys offered to the wife as a sign of domestic sovereignty reserved for her sex, all this ... impressed a kind of sacred character on the family. Unhappily, they had only the patricians in view. Marriage was forbidden to the Romans of the lowest tribes, and was replaced by a sort of

⁶⁸ *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 296-99.

⁶⁹ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 421-22.

⁷⁰ *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 69-70.

regular concubinage. Accordingly, what was the result? That the corruption lodged in the heart of society, penetrated the whole of it to the surface.⁷¹

In Blanc's estimation, this legalised 'concubinage' had been allowed to degrade the status of women, and in doing so had also 'falsified the family'.⁷² Having degraded the status of the sacred core of human existence, it was no wonder that there had existed so many ill-fated 'national races': 'whence comes the depopulation of Turkey? Whence the impoverishment of the Turkish blood? Whence the fact that the East has seen so many ephemeral races?'⁷³ The solution was to protect 'the virgin's modesty, the wife's dignity, the mother's tenderness, all that constitutes the family'.⁷⁴ For Blanc, socialism was intrinsically a male affair. All of the socialist forebears were men; the qualities necessary to instil in the army of socialism's advocates – courage, solidarity, and chivalry – were masculine values. The only benefit of the latter was that it represented an 'impassioned respect for weakness', or, in other words, for femininity.

Yet, for all his idiosyncrasies, Blanc's assertion that the task for socialists of the nineteenth century was to compile from this mixed historical experience an exact 'science' of socialism chimed not only with the aims of the journal but also with the opinions of Harney, Macfarlane, and even Marx. In Blanc's view, the experience of 1789 had shown that the bourgeoisie was successful because the core principles and programmes of the new order had reached maturity well in advance of the Revolution. This too would need to be the task of the proletariat and its allies. The failure of social revolution in 1793 was due to the immature development of socialist principles and their poor propagation so that, in the confusion of struggle, the people had been abandoned to directionless rage and the whirlwind of passion, ultimately resulting in 'the catastrophe of Thermidor'.⁷⁵ Insofar as his analysis focussed on the dualism of the revolutionary spirit on the one hand and social conditions on the other, Blanc had an ally in another powerful contributor to Harney's journals: the Red Republican and Chartist-feminist, Helen Macfarlane.

⁷¹ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 421.

⁷² *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 422.

⁷³ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 421.

⁷⁴ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 422.

⁷⁵ *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 297.

Chapter 7

'The Tree of Life and of Liberty':

Helen Macfarlane, Universal History, and the Frightful Hobgoblin

First appearing in the *Democratic Review* as the signed author of a serialised polemic on the Victorian literary giant Thomas Carlyle, published between April and June 1850, Helen Macfarlane was one of the most volatile writers engaged in the 'late' Chartist press. Macfarlane was initially brought to the attention of scholars by Albert Schoyen, whose 1958 biography of Julian Harney brought Macfarlane out of obscurity, and revealed her to be a writer of some significance. It was while ruminating on the identity of the equally mysterious figure of Howard Morton, a writer for the *Red Republican* and author of, amongst other things, the first English translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, that Schoyen made a breakthrough: Howard Morton was likely to be little more than a pseudonym.¹ Morton, of whom Schoyen found no trace in the Chartist press before 1850, or in the records of correspondence between Marx and Engels, was actually more likely to Helen Macfarlane, whose articles on Carlyle appeared in the *Democratic Review*.² If this association was indeed correct, Schoyen suggested, it would have some important implications. As he went on to note:

Of MacFarlane, almost no contemporary reference is to be found, though from her signed articles in the *Democratic Review* it is possible to gather that she was a remarkable person – an ardent feminist, thoroughly emancipated and advanced in her expression; well-read in philosophy and an admirer of Hegel; and evidently a travelled woman as well, having witnessed the Vienna revolution in 1848. If her identity as 'Howard Morton' is accepted, it is evident that one of the most vigorous minds in the last period of Chartism was a feminine one.³

Even so, it was not until 2004 that the identity of this mysterious author was settled beyond doubt.⁴

¹ Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, pp. 202-204.

² Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, p. 203.

³ Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, p. 204.

⁴ John Saville mentions Macfarlane briefly in his introduction to the Merlin Press facsimile of *Red Republican*, but simply re-iterates Schoyen's suggestion, writing that 'the hypothesis is not unreasonable'.

David Black's biography, *Helen Macfarlane*, was the first work to lift Macfarlane from Marx and Harney's shadow and to appreciate her as a powerful intellectual force in her own right.⁵ His more recent work, an edited collection of Macfarlane's key articles, has taken this a step further.⁶ Black, through a comparison of Macfarlane and Morton's style, has settled her identity beyond question and, through a consideration of the limited biographical material available, has pieced together some important parts of Macfarlane's life story.⁷ Importantly, having spent much of her formative years in Germany, Macfarlane represents a figure who successfully mediated national divisions, and, as a result of her experiences, was able to bring powerful transnationalist insights to bear in her journalism. Writing in three of the most important Chartist press ventures in the immediate aftermath of 1848, in Macfarlane's journalism can be found some of the budding red shoots that would bloom into the Charter-socialism of the 1850s.

Macfarlane's journalism contained a potent concoction of religious and political influences, superimposed on a fiery Hegelian philosophy. As David Black has shown, Helen Macfarlane, a Chartist and red republican feminist, can perhaps be credited with the first native translation and application of Hegel's thought in English. It is therefore no exaggeration when Black writes that Helen Macfarlane's 'writings ... constitute a lost prehistory of "British-Hegelian" thought.'⁸ Along with representing a lost dynamic in British-Hegelianism, however, Macfarlane can also be credited with much more. No

He goes on to suggest that, given the religious content of much of Macfarlane's writings, she would have been the first revolutionary Christian Socialist and 'an early predecessor of Conrad Noel and the Christian revolutionaries of the twentieth century.' John Saville (ed.), *The Red Republican and The Friend of the People* (London, 1966), pp. xi-xii.

⁵ David Black, *Helen Macfarlane, A Feminist, Revolutionary Journalist, and Philosopher in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2004).

⁶ David Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican. Essays, articles and her translation of the Communist Manifesto* (London, 2014). The collection is almost complete, only missing Macfarlane's reviews of Louis Ménard's, 'February and June, 1848,—The Prologue of a Revolution' which appeared in the *Red Republican*. While the reviews are not signed by Macfarlane, the style of the pieces leave no doubt as to her authorship. For example, a passage in the first instalment reads: 'For the kingdom of Thought is governed by laws, quite as regular and beautiful as those which obtain in the kingdom of Matter; and universal history is the rehearsal of those intellectual and spiritual laws—it is the development of the divine idea of the universe.' *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 6; 29 June 1850, 14; 6 July 1850, 22-3; 20 July 1850, 30-1.

⁷ Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, pp. 41-45; Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, pp. v-xxix.

⁸ Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, p. 72.

blind follower of Hegel or Marx, Macfarlane's writings in the *Democratic Review*, the *Red Republican*, and the *Friend of the People* reveal a strident and independently-minded freethinker who drew from the collective heritage of European radical politics and Enlightenment philosophy. This philosophy was not limited to German thought, either. Important, too, was Macfarlane's conception of the socialist ancestry, which in many ways mirrored Louis Blanc's.

Like Blanc, Macfarlane traced a line of continuity from the French Revolution to 1848, and drew extensively from the popular memory of Robespierre. Additionally, Helen Macfarlane's writings show signs that she was also inspired by the ideas of Babeuf and his latter-day disciple, Louis Auguste Blanqui, the intransigent and notorious nineteenth-century French revolutionary. Crucially, however, Macfarlane married these ideas to notions of time and historical agency that, while at times appearing to be deeply personal to her conceptions of the physical and spiritual worlds, also echoed forms of popular discourse on the French Revolution. Indeed, it may not have been chance alone that determined the subject-matter of Macfarlane's polemical debut in the *Democratic Review* – her approach shared some striking similarities with another nineteenth-century author.

In 1837, the first great revolution was the subject of a work of history that would elevate Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish essayist and satirist, to the level of public intellectual and celebrity.⁹ In *The French Revolution*, Carlyle's panoramic vision of the revolutionary events of 1789-95 blended an asynchronous vision of history with a contemporary love of spectacle, with disorienting results.¹⁰ So chaotic was this revolutionary landscape that the book left the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, reviewing the work for *The Times*, yearning for the comfort of a more 'homely prose' tempered by a 'sober gait' – something closer in style and pace to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*.¹¹ This allusion to the great history of the Classical world was fitting, for, while Carlyle's dramatic and literary

⁹ Hedva Ben-Israel, *English Historians on the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 127.

¹⁰ Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: English Uses of the Past, 1800-1953* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 68-77.

¹¹ *The Times*, 03 August, 1837. See also: Jules Paul Siegel (ed.), *Thomas Carlyle: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1995), pp. 69-75, and Gary Simons, 'Thackeray's Contributions to *The Times*', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Winter, 2007), p. 334.

style was very much the opposite of Gibbon's stately tone, his work was, in a sense, also a commentary on Antiquity.

In *The French Revolution*, myths, legends, and stories from the Ancient world surfaced in Carlyle's prose to be mangled by the revolutionary convulsion into twisted shadows of Enlightenment ideals. For example, Carlyle imparted on his allegorical depiction of democracy the quality of an unchained monstrosity by casting it as a 'wild Hippogryff'.¹² Meanwhile, the episode of Democracy's *magnum opus*, the establishment of the First Republic, was re-told as a version of the Ancient Greek story of Semele, the mortal whose encounter with Zeus proved fatal:

It is a change such as History must beg her readers to imagine, *undescribed*. An instantaneous change of the whole body-politic, the soul-politic being all changed Say perhaps, such as poor Nymph Semele's body did experience, when she would needs, with woman's humour, see her Olympian Jove as very Jove;—and so stood, poor Nymph, this moment Semele, next ... Flame and Statue of red-hot Ashes! France has looked upon Democracy; seen it face to face ... the wreck and dissolution must *reshape* itself into a social Arrangement as it can and may. ¹³

In looking upon the face of a god, the mortal Semele had been incinerated, and, in flirting with a 'god' of the Enlightenment, France had shared her fate.¹⁴

Such passages, however, left Thackeray at a loss. In his review, he insisted that readers should give the book time, for 'the real beauty ... lurks among all these odd words and twisted sentences, living, as it were, in spite the weeds'.¹⁵ By carefully studying the text, he insisted, a reader would be rewarded with insights into the futility of the revolutionary saga, as well as vital lessons in the virtues of political moderation. However, in interpreting the *French Revolution* as a work promoting moderation, Thackeray had only partially understood Carlyle's meaning. By focussing his study on the *sans culottes*, Carlyle was also trying to show how social malaise, born of industrialisation, could be set on a collision course with authority. For Carlyle, the

¹² Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: a History*, Vol. I (London, 1837), p. 203.

¹³ Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, Vol. III, pp. 91-92.

¹⁴ Robin Hard (ed.), H. J. Rose, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London, 2004), pp. 170-72.

¹⁵ *The Times*, 03 August, 1847.

Revolution represented, above all else, the ‘Victory of disimprisoned Anarchy against corrupt, worn-out Authority’.¹⁶ The barbarism that characterised the most horrific episodes of the Revolution, such as the September Massacres of 1792, was instinctive, ‘a reflex of human nature against redundancy and injustice’.¹⁷ Hence, moderation could itself be dangerous if it failed to reform a corrupt and stagnant system.

Moreover, Carlyle’s Revolution could not be confined to a linear narrative of events in France during 1789-95. Rather, the magnitude of the French Revolution was so enormous that for Carlyle the event had become embedded in the fabric of the urban environment itself. It was also an omnipresent and active social force that operated outside the normal constraints of time. In Carlyle’s history, the great chapters of the French Revolution – the convocation of the Estates General and the outbreak of revolution in 1789, the establishment of the Republic in 1792, the Terror of 1793-4, and the Napoleonic Wars – occurred simultaneously with the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 and the Great Reform Act of 1832.¹⁸ In presenting the past in this way, Carlyle was attempting to anglicise the French Revolution for use as a ‘prophylactic’ against the seething discontentment emanating from England’s own *sans culottes*.¹⁹

Middle-class reviewers were hardly alone in imposing alien meanings onto the work. As Billie Melman has argued, the response of the working class to Carlyle’s anti-revolutionary writings was deeply complex, and anything but intended.²⁰ While *The French Revolution* received mixed responses from working-class readers, many praised the work for its moral tone and its scathing contempt for authority.²¹ Yet, like Thackeray, working-class women and men also struggled to understand Carlyle’s prose. For many workers, the search for meaning in the *French Revolution* became a process of self-discovery that profoundly changed the moral of the text for them.²² Working-class readers read into it their own hopes and aspirations, transforming Carlyle’s

¹⁶ Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, vol. I, p. 295.

¹⁷ John Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle* (London, 2006), p. 172.

¹⁸ Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, vol. I, p. 189.

¹⁹ Melman, *The Culture of History*, p. 69.

²⁰ Melman, *The Culture of History*, p. 87.

²¹ Melman, *The Culture of History*, pp. 87-88.

²² Melman, *The Culture of History*, p. 88.

warning of the coming apocalypse into a promise of future liberation. Because they mediated their interpretation of the text through their own experiences, Carlyle's work had the unexpected effect of promoting amongst English workers 'a "positive" and even sympathetic view with the ordinary people of France.'²³

In the end, however, Carlyle's public career was bookended by the French Revolution. His commentary on the first great event occasioned his meteoric rise to the status of accomplished historian, while his work on the third convulsion, the revolution of 1848, saw Carlyle's fading from public fame.²⁴ In both instances he viewed the Revolution as a European phenomenon, but while Democracy had only featured as a side-show in *The French Revolution*, she was promoted to the role of leading lady in the first of his *Latter-Day Pamphlets*.

The *Latter-Day Pamphlets* were a series of eight works published between February and August 1850.²⁵ The first, an essay entitled 'The Present Time', represented Carlyle's analysis of the Revolutions of 1848. In it, he attacked both hereditary aristocracy and democracy, believing the former to have largely deserved its fate in 1848, having brought about the social convulsions through a toxic combination of mismanagement, corruption, and greed.²⁶ Democracy, on the other hand, was not the answer but a quasi-utopian ideal, unworkable and ultimately heralding complete social collapse. In summarising the year of revolutions, Carlyle likened the state of Europe to a leaderless anarchy:

Everywhere immeasurable Democracy rose monstrous, loud, blatant, inarticulate as the voice of Chaos. Everywhere the Official holy-of-holies was scandalously laid bare to dogs and the profane Kings everywhere ... stared in sudden horror, the voice of the whole world bellowing in their ear Not one of them turned round, and stood upon his Kingship, as upon a right he could afford to die for Democracy, on this new occasion, finds all Kings

²³ Melman, *The Culture of History*, p. 88.

²⁴ Siegel (ed.), *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 5.

²⁵ Carlyle (ed.), *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London, 1850).

²⁶ Although drafts for an unpublished article on the revolutions might suggest that Carlyle's initial response to 1848 was more nuanced, and vastly more enthusiastic, than the analysis in 'The Present Time' would suggest. See: Catherine Heyrendt 'Autour d'un inédit de Carlyle sur la Révolution de 1848,' in *La France et l'Angleterre au XIXe siècle : Echanges, représentations, comparaisons*, eds Sylvie Aprile and Fabrice Bensimon (Paris, 2006), pp. 519-40.

conscious that they are but Play-actors. ... And everywhere the people ... take their own government upon themselves; and open 'kinglessness,' what we call anarchy,—how happy if it be anarchy plus a street-constable!—is everywhere the order of the day Since the destruction of the old Roman Empire by inroad of the Northern Barbarians, I have known nothing similar.²⁷

Writing for the *Democratic Review*, Macfarlane responded not by challenging Carlyle's main themes, but by reorienting his perspective and highlighting the logical inconsistencies in his argument. While Carlyle wrote of the revolution from above, Macfarlane challenged him from below. In doing so she drew from Carlyle's earlier work *The French Revolution* and framed her discussion in a similar way. In Macfarlane's writings, as in Carlyle's earlier piece, the Revolution was set within a discourse of universal history, directed by providence. However, while Carlyle's providential stream emanated from a Judaeo-Christian source, Macfarlane's sprang from an egalitarian vision rooted in pantheism.

For Macfarlane, the correct path was that trodden by the 'Northern Barbarians', and the Red Republicans were their modern-day equivalent. They had experienced the toppling of the old order with unbridled joy, and

spring up, as if by magic, 'the enemies of order, the Anarchists, Socialists, Chartist vagabonds'—men, who now, as in the olden time, refuse tribute to Caesar, denounce the Scribes and Pharisees, and preach the gospel to the poor; men who are 'followed by great multitudes, and gladly heard by the common people.'²⁸

His inability to understand the nature of democracy, Macfarlane wrote, stemmed from the fact 'that Mr. Carlyle distrusts the tendency of the present age'.²⁹ Beneath his customary satire and wit, Macfarlane fancied that she saw a man suffering with an 'artistic temperament'. 'Perhaps like Goethe' Macfarlane mused, 'he would go the length of preferring injustice to confusion.'³⁰ Carlyle, like Goethe, appeared to find the nature of revolutionary democracy deeply dismaying, and each volume of Carlyle's *The*

²⁷ Carlyle (ed.), *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, pp. 8-9.

²⁸ 'Democracy', *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 424-25.

²⁹ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 422-23.

³⁰ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 423. This quotation from Goethe came from his report on the *Siege of Mainz* (1792). The full quotation runs: 'I would rather commit an injustice than tolerate a disorder'. Peter Boerner, *Goethe* (London, 2005), p. 67.

French Revolution was inscribed with quotations from Goethe's poetry.³¹ For Macfarlane, Carlyle's 'artistic temperament' was the cause of his obsession with 'heroic' figures like Cromwell or Bonaparte.³² But aside from the glory such figures could endow on a nation, there was a strikingly authoritarian dimension to Carlyle's hero-worship. As he wrote in 'The Present Time':

I say, it is the everlasting privilege of the foolish to be governed by the wise; to be guided in the right path by those who know it better than they. This is the first 'right of man;' compared with which all other rights are as nothing³³

For Carlyle, ordinary people had but one right: the right to be ruled over by those who possessed superior intellect and sagacity.³⁴

However, for Macfarlane, this was no more than despotism. Rather than dictating what people should believe, as she argued Carlyle's heroic leadership necessitated, the democracy preached by the Red Republicans was in tune with the 'spirit of the age': 'the thing which the soul of the world, the universal reason incarnate in man, is tending to do at a given historical epoch'.³⁵ Indeed, the democratic idea was invulnerable to Carlyle's criticisms, because, as he even acknowledged, it was the 'fact of the present'.³⁶ Disdainful of 'Old Corruption', the Carlyle of 'The Present Time' shed no tear for the fall of aristocracy, but, shorn of those old certainties, he also shied away from the alternative. For Macfarlane, Carlyle was raging against the tide of history, and in the process had become the perfect caricature of an old romanticist, disoriented in the wake of unfolding events. And if Carlyle was confused, Macfarlane would do her utmost to enlighten him.

In 'The Present Time', Carlyle had asked:

³¹ For Goethe's view of popular democracy and revolution see: Boerner, *Goethe*, p. 67. Carlyle's *The French Revolution* Vols. I and III carried quotations from Goethe's *Venetian Epigrams* (1790), while Vol. II carried a verse from *The Soothsayings of Bakis* (1798).

³² *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 422-23.

³³ Carlyle (ed.), *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 28.

³⁴ See: Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (London, 1840).

³⁵ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 424.

³⁶ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 423.

What *is* Democracy; this huge inevitable Product of the Destinies, which is everywhere the portion of Europe in these latter days? There lies the question for us. Whence comes it, this universal big black Democracy; whither tends it; what is the meaning of it?³⁷

Macfarlane responded that if democracy had no clear form then this was because it had yet to be realised:

Democracy is an idea, which is *still seeking* an *adequate* mode of expression; a soul in want of a body; an ideal hitherto deemed a chimera—but which is rapidly tending towards realization in the phenomenal world.³⁸

In the meantime, it existed in the realm of thought: a sublime idea that merely awaited the age of its realisation amongst the mass of humanity. The Revolutions of 1848 represented the first universal awakening of the democratic spirit, a spirit that had historically animated only a few enlightened individuals, and a long struggle remained before its promise could be totally realised. The democratic revolution would be a long process, but an inevitable one, for modern society was based on contradictory and ancient principles, ‘fragments of an earlier world, a confused jumble of Jewish, Teutonic, and Roman laws, usages, and superstitions’, that were utterly incompatible with the new spirit of democracy.³⁹

For Macfarlane, the suggestion that mere reform was enough to guarantee democracy’s political realisation was an illusion:

Are we foolish enough to expect an El Dorado—a paradise created by ‘Acts of a reformed parliament,’—(a fool’s paradise, in such a case, I think) lying open to us? That we have nothing to do, but to march in and take possession? Alas! we know that the battle between the old and the new epochs—between falsehood and truth, selfishness and love, despotism and freedom,—will be long, bloody, and terrible. ⁴⁰

At the heart of Macfarlane’s conception of democracy was a kind of spiritual revivalism that offered a conception of mankind that could not be accommodated within capitalist society with all its ‘pagan’ trappings. The essence of democracy was

³⁷ Carlyle (ed.), *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, p. 13.

³⁸ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, p. 423.

³⁹ ‘Democracy’, *Democratic Review*, vol. II, June 1850, 11.

⁴⁰ ‘Democracy’, *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 452.

*Pantheism ... the doctrine that the soul and nature, thought and existence, the absolute and the conditioned, the infinite and the finite, God and man, are identical. Upon this doctrine alone, rests that holy religion of freedom and love, of the divinity and brotherhood of man, in which we, the communists, socialists, and 'republican vagabonds' of the 19th century, rejoice*⁴¹

This, the ultimate expression of fraternity, was predicated upon the recognition of human kind's common divinity. 'If we acknowledge and respect the presence of this power in ourselves' Macfarlane explained, 'we are as much bound to acknowledge and respect its presence in others.' Then, finally, by '*virtue of our common nature*, we are bound to do to others, as we would they should do to us.' For as Jesus taught, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the father.'⁴²

Pantheism, in Macfarlane's view was not merely the root of Red Republicanism and the democratic idea, but also the true spirit of Christianity. The common divinity of man and the fraternal devotion of which 'the Sansculotte Jesus' spoke led one to naturally oppose 'invading the personality of my brother man' and of '*using him up in any way; from murder and slavery downwards.*'⁴³ Red Republicanism, then, was '*a protest against this using up of man by man*', an attempt 'to reduce the golden rule of the Syrian master to practice.' As she explained:

Modern Democracy is Christianity manifested in a form adapted to the wants of the present age; it is Christianity divested of its mythological envelope; it is the idea appearing *as pure thought, independent of history and tradition.*⁴⁴

Having been readied by the Lollards, Luther, Kant, and Hegel, the way was now clear for 'the reconstruction of society in accordance with the democratic idea.'⁴⁵ All that remained was the 'pulling down of the old rotten framework of society' to clear the way for the creation of a new heaven and a new earth where future generations might rest in the shade of 'the tree of life and of liberty'.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 449.

⁴² *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 449.

⁴³ *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 34; *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 450.

⁴⁴ *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 450.

⁴⁵ *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 450.

⁴⁶ *Democratic Review*, May 1850, 452.

Naturally, this social reconstruction would also be a historical endeavour, requiring a reassessment of the basis of society. Here, Macfarlane parted ways with Louis Blanc. For, while both authors traced a similar lineage for socialism, idealised Jesus ‘the proletarian’ and the first Christians, and believed that socialism was in need of a scientific expression, Macfarlane was by far the more radical of the two. Blanc viewed the Republic as the first step towards socialism, and the ‘organisation of labour’ its final destination.⁴⁷ In contrast, Macfarlane regarded the ‘organisation of labour’ as itself a mere step in a much broader political project: the total transformation of both social and spiritual relations. For Macfarlane, Red Republicanism was a holy crusade, as well a political one: ‘We socialist-democrats are the soldiers of a holy cause; we are the exponents of a sublime idea; we are the apostles of the sacred religion of universal humanity.’⁴⁸

The spiritual dynamic of socialism was further examined in the *Red Republican*. In discussing ‘Chartism in 1850’, Macfarlane wrote that

The holy spirit of truth, which the Nazarean promised to his followers as a guide on their weary pilgrimage towards the promised land ... the golden age sung by the poets and prophets of all times and nations, from Hesiod and Isiah, to Cervantes and Shelley; the paradise that is never lost, for it lives ... in the future ... This spirit ... has descended now upon the multitudes, and has consecrated them to the service of the new—and yet old—religion, of socialist-democracy.⁴⁹

In Macfarlane’s view, the message of the ‘Sansculotte Jesus’ had been perverted by the ‘paganism’ of organised religion, even in its nonconformist or dissenting guise. According to Macfarlane, the true message of Jesus was that man and God were as one, and that the freedom of each individual was necessarily predicated on the acknowledgement of the sacred in all. Crucially, however, this pantheistic vision was to form the heart of a civic religion of socialism:

But the new religion, that of unlimited spiritual freedom—whose dawn is now visible, whose banner bears the sacred inscription, Equality, liberty, Fraternity,—

⁴⁷ François Furet, ‘Blanc’ in Furet and Ozouf eds *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, (London, 1989), pp. 900-901; Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p. 401.

⁴⁸ *Democratic Review*, vol. II, June 1850, 19-20.

⁴⁹ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 2.

will also find a befitting secular mode of expression. It will bring in its train corresponding institutions and social forms.⁵⁰

Quoting from Blanqui's speech at his trial at the high court in 1849, this was to be:

'A republic without Helots;' without poor; without *classes*; ... without *slaves*, whether chattel or wages slaves A society, such indeed as the world has never yet seen,—not only for free *men*, but of free *women*; a society of equally holy, equally blessed, gods.⁵¹

In Macfarlane's view, Protestantism was merely a transitory religious state, and the nineteenth century required a new Reformation – one that would complete the transition from Catholicism to pantheism, and that would complement the new democratic 'spirit of the age'.

In his biography of Macfarlane, David Black argues that in her pantheism Helen Macfarlane was inspired primarily by the ideas of Hegel.⁵² Indeed, as Black has shown there is much in common between the themes of Macfarlane's writings and 'Hegel's view of Christianity as: "the doctrine that the whole human race is equal in the sight of God, redeemed from bondage, and introduced into a state of Christian freedom ... independent of rank, birth, cultivation and the like."'”⁵³ In this, the significance of Macfarlane's articles can hardly be over-stated.⁵⁴ However, there is also another factor at work in Macfarlane's philosophy. The new age, the dawn of which had been heralded by the 1848 revolutions, was, for her, comprised of both political and religious dimensions. For the material and the spiritual world to attain harmony, Macfarlane saw republicanism's goal as nothing short of complete social transformation. In this way, Macfarlane was applying Hegelian notions about pantheism in a manner strikingly similar to Jacobin notions of moral and social rebirth. Additionally, this vision differed entirely from the moralism of the 'liberal' tradition. Indeed, Macfarlane had no truck with the ministrations of such 'Rose-coloured political sentimentalists' as Charles

⁵⁰ *Friend of the People*, 28 December 1850, 19.

⁵¹ *Friend of the People*, 28 December 1850, 19.

⁵² Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, pp. 70-71.

⁵³ Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, p.71.

⁵⁴ Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, p.72.

Dickens – as she made clear in a response to an article published in his weekly magazine *Household Words*.⁵⁵

In *Household Words*, Dickens had argued that that universal education was the ultimate remedy for social ills; Macfarlane responded that this education would be undermined by the iniquities of the capitalist system. Such high-minded wrangling, she argued, was blind to the harsh realities of daily life for the working class. This was implicit in her question: ‘How are the people of this country to be *fed*?’ Against this reality, ‘lessons in *morality* will do much for men who must either starve or steal, for women who must go on to the streets’.⁵⁶ In contrast, Red Republican ideology was infused with the virtues of Robespierre and the teachings of Rousseau’s *Contrat Social* and *Emile*.⁵⁷ Red Republicans, therefore, recognised the need to transform society from an injurious order into a moral one before humanity could be reshaped from isolated units into citizens. In this endeavour, the Red Republicans were guided by the hand of ‘Universal History’. As Macfarlane explained:

We, the veritable people, the Proletarians, desire a Social Revolution; that is a *radical change in our social condition* Who is to do it? The Red Republicans ... for the Genius of Universal History has at length resolved, that the Gospel of Equality and Fraternity, hid under the ruins of eighteen centuries, shall be brought to light in the nineteenth *Chartism under the red flag*, is a vindication of the claims of labour; it is the enunciation of the ‘Gospel of Work;’ the assertion, that the Fustian Jacket and the paper caps are infinitely more honourable emblems than the ermine robe and the coronet.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ “‘Fine Words (Household or Otherwise) Butter No Parsnips’”, *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 34. ‘The Great Penal Experiments’, *Household Words*, 8 June 1850, 250-53. The particular passage Macfarlane highlighted ran: [Quoting the *Globe*] “‘BOW-STREET POLICE-COURT.—This day, two little children, whose heads hardly reached the top of the dock, were placed at the bar before Mr. Jardine, charged with stealing a loaf. ... In defence, the prisoners said they were starving. Mr. Jardine sentenced them both to be once whipped in the House of Correction.” These children were without means, friends, or any sort of instruction. They were whipped then for their ignorance and want The authorities tell us, that five-eighths of the juvenile criminals ... have not received one spark of moral or intellectual training! These ... induce us to recommend one other “great experiment” It has the advantage of being a preventive as well as a cure—it is—compared with all the penal systems now in practice—immeasurably safer, more humane, and incalculably cheaper. The “great experiment” we propose, is NATIONAL EDUCATION.’

⁵⁶ *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 34.

⁵⁷ *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 35.

⁵⁸ *Red Republican*, 13 July 1850, 27.

For Macfarlane, 'Chartism under the Red Flag' represented a new departure for British radicalism. The experience of the Revolutions of 1848 had led Chartists away from the notion that a solution to social problems could be found through political reform alone. Instead, Chartists had come to the realisation that

Society, in the exercise of political rights and possessing a monopoly of social advantages,—is defined by the gigantic fiction of a 'glorious British constitution,' and time honoured humbug of our ancestors, to be 'Kings, Lords, and Commons.'⁵⁹

Any attempt to find accommodation within this constitutional system was futile, for the constitution itself was not only contradictory, but had also been arrived at through a reading of British history that had created a dangerous illusion of consistency and continuity.

'In my opinion', wrote Macfarlane in the opening to the final issue of the *Democratic Review*, 'one of the chief uses of history is, as an antidote to humbug', and no greater humbug existed in Britain than that of constitutionalism.⁶⁰ When subjecting the constitution to historical analysis, Macfarlane reasoned, it should first be asked 'When did this boasted constitution make its first appearance?' For, by asking who wrote it, the people would come to learn who it served. In Macfarlane's view, a study of history revealed that the common notion of the constitution as the distillation of the 'wisdom of our ancestors' simply had to be false. Assuming that the constitution was a fixed entity, and unassailable because it had the distinction of being old, neatly side-stepped the difficult fact that each set of ancestors contradicted the previous generation. As Macfarlane wrote, the idea that each generation was equally wise had to be mistaken:

The wisdom of *which* set of ancestors? Of the Saxons? Then we shall make sad havoc in the wisdom of the Anglo-Normans, whose opinions ... were wildly different again from those entertained by ... the Tudors. The wisdom of the Puritans? Perhaps, all things considered, the most logical and least stupid of all our multifarious ancestors; yet I shudder to think what would then become of the *Stuarts* ... not to mention the 'worldly and profane' wisdom of Dutch William, and the treacherous ... aristocrats who placed him on the throne. The wisdom of George III and Lord North? *Such* wisdom is questionable, seeing that the most

⁵⁹ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 2.

⁶⁰ 'A Bird's eye View of the Glorious British Constitution', *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 121-25.

memorable deed accomplished by *these* respected ancestors was the loss of the American colonies Amid this chaos of conflicting ‘ancestor-wisdom,’ one is lost in admiration!⁶¹

At its root, the constitution was a Norman creation – the foundation of the feudal oppression of the Saxons as ‘*serfs, villains, and colons*’. First serving as the foundation of the Norman occupation, the constitution later evolved under Edward I into ‘the sacramental and sacred formula, “King, Lords, and Commons”’.

For Macfarlane, the appearance of the Commons was

very scurvy and scaly ... —one of the scurviest recorded in universal history; for these burgher deputies were summoned before the supreme court of aristocracy merely for the purpose of declaring how much the inhabitants of their respective townships could pay without being utterly ruined.⁶²

For two centuries, ‘the Commons of England, in the sacred and inviolable formula descriptive of our glorious constitution,’ existed only at the behest of the king. It finally ‘took courage to express an independent opinion’ in 1509, by refusing to grant the crown a subsidy.⁶³ ‘In subsequent centuries, down to our own time’, Macfarlane continued, ‘I can find no trace whatever of a *constitution*’, merely ‘despotism exercised by one or two classes’.⁶⁴ The constitution was thus a ‘Chimera, a nonentity, existing only in the imagination of ... brainless gulls’ – what was called the constitution was, in effect, simply another name for ‘the glorious British Joint Stock Company for fleecing the starving producers’.⁶⁵ ‘So-called’ reforms merely amounted to ‘quarrels between the two ruling classes—between the “landed and manufacturing interests”—as to who should have the greater share of the plunder.’⁶⁶ Drawing from Thomas Paine, Macfarlane reasoned that, had a constitution existed in Britain, there should have

⁶¹ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 121-22.

⁶² *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 123.

⁶³ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 124.

⁶⁴ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 124.

⁶⁵ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 124.

⁶⁶ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 124-25.

existed in the historical record some form of constitutional convention where the whole of society had been asked its consent.⁶⁷ As she explained:

If the idea of a constitution be opposed to despotism, I presume it is so, because a constitution means a form of government which is based on the *assent of the governed*, then history ought to present traces of this assent having been attained: in other words, *the whole community*, being now under operation of this precious constitution, must in past ages have concurred in its fabrication.⁶⁸

For Macfarlane, then, a constitution was a contract for the prevention of tyranny, while the British system was a vehicle for its operation.

Not only was this vision of a constitution influenced by Rousseau's notion of a 'social contract', but Macfarlane's critique also echoed Rousseau's warning that a false compact could conjure the illusion of social equality to conceal the workings of an abusive system:

Under bad governments, this equality is only apparent and illusory; it serves only to keep the pauper in his poverty and the rich man in the position he has usurped. In fact, laws are always of use to those who possess and harmful to those who have nothing: from which it follows that the social state is advantageous to men only when all have something and none too much.⁶⁹

The British constitution, then, ensured that the fortunes of the people had remained stagnated throughout the ages, or as Macfarlane phrased it: in reality 'the position of the wages slaves, even with the advantage of an invisible but glorious constitution, are ... no better than that of any other kind of slaves who proceeded them.' Instead, 'from the first formation of society among the Caucasian races of man, we see nothing else going on than the struggles between classes or castes'.⁷⁰

Helen Macfarlane is not an easy character to assess. From her articles in the *Democratic Review*, through to her final polemical salvo in the *Friend of the People*, Macfarlane

⁶⁷ Duncan Kelly, 'Reforming republicanism in nineteenth-century Britain: James Lorymer's *The Republican in context*,' in *Republicanism in Theory and Practice*, eds Iseult Honohan and Jeremy Jennings (Oxon, 2006), pp. 46-47.

⁶⁸ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 122.

⁶⁹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, I, IX. See also: Christopher Betts (trans.), *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Discourse on Political Economy and The Social Contract* (Oxford, 1994), p. 93.

⁷⁰ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, September 1850, 125.

combined a quasi-Jacobin temperament with a Hegelian vision of history and divinity, to produce a narrative of historical evolution that challenged 'official' conceptions of constitutionalism and revolution. French theories and ideas, even in their mid-century configurations, were perfectly compatible with Hegelian pantheism, and, as Macfarlane's writings show, could lend to it a militant programme and socialist vision. Indeed, the Hegelian theorist Heindrich Hein, from whom Black argues Macfarlane derived some of her ideas, wrote that 'The political revolution which is based on the principles of French materialism will find no enemies in the pantheists, but rather allies'.⁷¹

From this heady mixture of European influences also sprang Macfarlane's Marxist verve. As Black has shown, Macfarlane echoed many of Marx's ideas. Like Marx and Engels, Macfarlane had travelled through the rigorous world of Hegelian thought, and had arrived at strikingly similar conclusions, inevitably raising the question as to whether Macfarlane had been directly influenced by Marx's early writings.⁷² Striking similarities also appear between concepts that Macfarlane employed in her essays and those found in Marx's own work.⁷³ Therefore, whether directly influenced by Marx or not, it would appear that Macfarlane was at least acquainted with his ideas. This, together with the fact that Macfarlane moved in the same circles as Marx, Engels, and Harney, and not to mention that Marx admired her writing, is all highly suggestive that Macfarlane was the obvious choice of author for the first English translation of the *Communist Manifesto*.⁷⁴

'A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe': this, the infamous opening line to Macfarlane's translation of Marx's most well-known works, has proved troubling for

⁷¹ Heindrich Hein, 'The New Pantheism' (1835), cited from: Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, p. 110.

⁷² For example, Black notes that Macfarlane may have read Marx's critique of Hegel. Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, p. xxi; p. 9; Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, pp. 27-30.

⁷³ See, for example, Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, pp. 56-57; 37-38. Black also argues that Macfarlane's essay on the British constitution represents 'a Marxian critique of what was to become known as the "Whig Theory of History"', Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, p. 29.

⁷⁴ Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, pp. 113-120; Black, *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, p. x.; Joan Allen notes that in a letter to Engels in 1851, 'Marx described [her] as "the only collaborator ... who had original ideas".' Allen, 'George Julian Harney and the *Democratic Review*', p. 81.

scholars.⁷⁵ Macfarlane's decision to settle on 'hobgoblin' as the translation of '*gespenst*' from the original German version of the *Communist Manifesto* (rather than the more obvious 'spectre' or 'spirit'), does appear fairly puzzling, or, as Black puts it, 'unfortunate'.⁷⁶ A 'hobgoblin stalking' certainly does not read with the same kind of easy elegance as a 'spectre haunting', and it conjures some peculiar images for the modern reader. However, as Black argues, the choice of the phrase did carry with it a certain amount of contextual logic:

Macfarlane tries to give Ein Gespenst a double meaning. It is not just the ghostly apparition that haunts the castles of Shakespeare's Macbeth and Hamlet It is also the scary sprite that country folks tell their children lurks in the woods, in order to discourage them from wondering off on their own.⁷⁷

As Black has argued more recently, in 1850 'it would have been taken as sound literary currency.'⁷⁸

Indeed, the 'hobgoblin' does seem to have enjoyed a fairly regular usage, at least in radical circles. This is evidenced by its frequent appearance in the *Northern Star*. Whether describing how Thomas Atwood, the founder of the Birmingham Political Union, set 'the hobgoblin of revolution and disorder at defiance'; or in complaining that philosophers' dreary predictions of Chartism's fortunes dwelt on 'the hobgoblin of failure in former struggles' rather than the context of modern times; or in descriptions of 'conspiracy', 'physical force', and the memory of the 'bugaboo of Jacobinism and republicanism'; the hobgoblin appears to have also stalked through the pages of the Chartist press.⁷⁹ In the *Northern Star* during 1848, the term was used variously to describe poverty, the vision of Young Ireland in the imagination of state authorities, the

⁷⁵ 'Manifesto of the German Communist Party', *Red Republican*, 9 November 1850, 161; 16 November 1850, 170; 23 November 1850, 181; and 30 November 1850, 189.

⁷⁶ Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, p. 94. Mark Cowling has gone further, calling Macfarlane's translation 'chiefly notable for the awful opening sentence'. Mark Cowling, *The Communist Manifesto: New Interpretations* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 62.

⁷⁷ Black, *Helen Macfarlane*, p. 94.

⁷⁸ Black also points out that the American transcendentalist, Ralph Emerson, whose work Macfarlane happened to have read, used the term, as did Jeremy Bentham. Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, pp. xxii-xxiv.

⁷⁹ 'Mr. Attwood—Universal Suffrage', *Northern Star*, 2 June 1838, 4; 'Ancient and Modern Agitation', *Northern Star*, 15 September 1838, 3; 'The Billing and Cooing', *Northern Star*, 8 May 1841, 4; 'Glorious Doings at Greenock', *Northern Star*, 16 October 1841, 4; 'Developement (*sic*) of the New "Holy Alliance." France, Spain, and Ireland', *Northern Star*, 30 September 1843, 4.

image of the Second French Republic as portrayed in the conservative press, the ‘Labour question’ in the minds of capitalists, and ‘the system of indirect taxation’ itself.⁸⁰ With these examples in mind, Macfarlane’s usage does not seem quite so out of place.⁸¹ Indeed, *Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary* for 1841 listed ‘hobgoblin’ as ‘a sprite’ or ‘an apparition’ and ‘goblin’ as ‘an evil spirit’ or ‘a phantom’, while a contemporary dictionary on the Scottish language had both ‘bugaboo’ and ‘hobgoblin’ listed as terms that were simply ‘expressive of terror’.⁸² It would seem, then, that David Black is quite correct when he states that Macfarlane ‘is evoking a *real* hobgoblin to terrify the established order.’⁸³ And ‘Terror’ is certainly the correct term to use *here* – and for more reasons than one.

From 1802 Madame Tussaud began touring the United Kingdom with her collection of waxworks, finally setting up a permanent establishment in London in 1835. As Billie Melman has argued, Madame Tussaud’s was quickly established as the first museum to the French Revolution, and her early collection essentially represented ‘a museum of the Terror’.⁸⁴ Wax likenesses of the leading figures of the First French Republic – including Robespierre, Danton, and Marat – were interred in the Chamber of Horrors, alongside sculptures of notorious criminals.⁸⁵ In the experiential context of the museum’s display, this juxtaposition of history with crime divorced the Terror from its historical grounding and rendered the ‘revolutionary experience as a history of crime and retribution.’⁸⁶ As with Carlyle’s work, Madame Tussaud’s both domesticated the French Revolution for a British audience and presented the revolutionary saga in a distinctly negative, not to mention terrific, light. While Hevda Ben-Israel has shown how successive revolutions, particularly that of 1830, normalised the revolutionary

⁸⁰ ‘Resurrection of Birmingham’, *Northern Star*, 29 January 1848, 1; ‘Ireland’, *Northern Star*, 12 February 1848, 6; ‘To the Imperial Chartists’, *Northern Star*, 1 April 1848, 1; ‘Labour, the Source of All Wealth’, *Northern Star*, 9 September 1848, 4; ‘Richard Cobden’s Budget’, *Northern Star*, 30 December 1848, 1.

⁸¹ While ‘hobgoblin’ and ‘goblin’ were often used interchangeably, in Victorian usage ‘poltergeist’ and ‘goblin’ could also be synonymous terms, for goblin simply implied a ‘malicious’ fairy creature. Jacqueline Simpson & Steve Roud (eds.), *A Dictionary of English Folk Law* (Oxford, 2000), p. 180; 282; 146.

⁸² *Johnson’s Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1841), p. 109; 100; John Johnston (ed.), *A Dictionary of the Scottish Language by John Jamieson* (Edinburgh, 1846), p. 104

⁸³ Black (ed.), *Helen Macfarlane: Red Republican*, p. xxiv.

⁸⁴ Melman, *The Culture of History*, p. 37.

⁸⁵ Melman, *The Culture of History*, pp. 41-42.

⁸⁶ Melman, *The Culture of History*, p. 38.

experience, and that contemporaries saw the events of 1830 and 1848 as repeats, or extensions, of 1789, the horrific view of revolution persisted in conservative circles.⁸⁷ For example, in 1848, the *Illustrated London News*, ‘repeatedly invoked the great revolution of 1789-95’ to demonise popular democratic mobilizations, and, in the process, represented the French people as the *sans culottes*.⁸⁸

Such fear was not confined to conservatives either. Rather, the horror felt for the historical memory of the sans-culotte became displaced and reflected onto the British working class. During the year 1848, particularly in light of the acrimonious atmosphere surrounding the Chartist mobilization at Kennington Common, middle-class ‘liberals’ rallied to the defence of the state for fear of anarchy and mob rule.⁸⁹ For sure, not all viewed events as a Carlyle-esque apocalypse, but, as Margot Finn has shown, social fear was nevertheless pervasive.⁹⁰ The *Red Republican* and *Friend of the People*, together with Macfarlane’s translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, entered into the midst of this social polarisation with scant regard for the niceties of public discourse – in fact, they appear to have revelled in playing on middle-class fears of revolution and terror. Hence why Macfarlane, in responding to the charge by the weekly journal the *Leader* that ‘the writers in the *Red Republican* are “violent, audacious, and wrathfully earnest”’,⁹¹ wrote:

For my part I am proud of the epithet—violent, and wrap myself in audacity, as in a mantle. Wrathfully earnest! I should think we are. ... We will go forth on the byeways—by the roadside—in every mill and workshop we will preach the Rights and Wrongs of labour And should we be imprisoned or sent beyond the seas, we will console ourselves ... that the work will not stand still ... we will rejoice that we have been found *worthy to suffer* for this divinest idea of Liberty, Equality,

⁸⁷ Ben-Israel, *English Historians*, pp. 98-110; 148-65.

⁸⁸ Melman, *The Culture of History*, p. 40.

⁸⁹ John Saville, *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 102-29.

⁹⁰ Finn, *After Chartism*, pp. 70-82.

⁹¹ *Leader*, 29 June 1850, 328. The *Leader* was a broadly radical and ‘progressive’ weekly newspaper founded by George Lewes and Thornton Hunt. Both Lewes and Hunt were associated with the Christian Socialist movement, and Hunt would go on to edit the *Daily Telegraph*. Lewes was also the lover of the novelist Marian Evans (George Eliot), who contributed to the paper whilst also writing for the *Westminster Review*. See: Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (eds), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 2009), pp. 351; 209; 361-62; 297-98.

Fraternity—to be joined to its Martyrs and Apostles, that glorious band, gathered from all ages and nations ... the best and noblest of the human race.⁹²

And hence why, in the *Red Republican* and the *Friend of the People*, Harney and Macfarlane, émigrés and Chartists – frightful hobgoblins of all nationalities – traced the contours of the new Chartist platform by playing on the public memory of Jacobinism.

⁹² *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 34-35.

Chapter 8

The Red Republican and *The Friend of The People*, June 1850– July 1851

From the first issue, published on the second anniversary of the June insurrection, Harney's objectives in founding the newspaper the *Red Republican*, later renamed to the *Friend of the People*, were ostensibly to report on matters affecting labour and to propagate in favour of social and democratic reform.¹ In practice, however, the commentary contained within its pages would build on the ideological positions developed in the *Democratic Review*, and enmesh them in a language and analysis based on the working-class experience. This rhetoric was both influenced and reinforced by a strident commitment to internationalism and by a particular reading of the memory of Jacobinism. While the memory of the first French Revolution informed the newspaper's understanding of the contemporary revolutionary moment, it also acted to reinforce the vision of a shared revolutionary heritage, which anchored the future of Britain to that of continental Europe. In locating the Chartist Movement within this nexus of interlocking cultural codes, the *Red Republican* aimed at more than keeping the democratic fire alight during this period of chilling political inertia. Rather, it represented an attempt to explicitly re-found British democracy on class terms, to project the future of reform as a universal revolutionary experience, and to harness the common experience of defeat to draw ties between reformers of the United Kingdom and those of continental Europe. Furthermore, in its struggle for the future of the

¹ Harney changed the name of the *Red Republican* in December 1850, re-launching the paper as the *Friend of the People*. In explaining the necessity for this, Harney bemoaned the tendency of newsagents either to refuse to stock the paper, or to refuse to advertise it, and their complaints that its title deterred the custom of more 'respectable' clientele. Furthermore, he explained that it had come to his attention that the title also put off many workers who had not 'progressed even the length of Chartism'. Since it was no use preaching to the choir, Harney decided to change the name to one that was more innocuous-sounding, but that was still draped in French revolutionary imagery, being the translation of *L'Ami Du Peuple* – the famous newspaper of his hero, Marat. 'To the Readers of the *Red Republican*', 30 November 1850, 188-89.

Revolution, the *Red Republican* and the *Friend of the People* were bound to three mutually reinforcing commitments: education, class, and unity.

For the *Red Republican*, the principal task was that of political education. In the assessment of the paper, radicalisation of the European Revolution of 1848 had been stalled because the people were inadequately versed in the knowledge of their social rights. As the Chartist leader George White wrote in a letter to the editor, the example of France had shown how the franchise ‘might be rendered a nullity’ if ‘a thorough Social and Democratic Propagandism’ was not carried out. White spoke for the rest of the Red Republicans when he expressed his hope that ‘with a full knowledge of their social rights, the people might advance on the road of happiness immediately after the enactment of the People’s Charter.’² In essence, this stance was a continuation of the preoccupations of the *Democratic Review*. The sense that France was on the cusp of another great rising had been disappointed during 1849. By 1850, although this theme still ebbed into the narrative, particularly from articles reprinted from American sources, the difficulties faced by the French socialists during 1849 reinforced the perception that republicanism had been inadequately propagated.³

Appearing at the beginning of the first editorial, and returning intermittently throughout the year, a quote from the romantic poet Robert Southey provided the paper with one of its many mission-statements:

If it be guilt—
To preach what you are pleased to call strange notions;
That all mankind as brethren must be equal;
That privileged orders of society
Are evil and oppressive; that the right
Of property is a juggle to deceive
The poor whom you oppress;—I plead me guilty.⁴

² *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 3. See also Stephen Roberts, *Radical Politicians and Poets: the voices of six Chartist leaders* (Lampeter, 1993).

³ From the *Weekly Herald*: ‘The Special President—The Forthcoming European Revolution’, *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 3; *New York tribune*: ‘France—The Suffrage—The Next Revolution’, *Red Republican*, 24 August 1850, 75-76.

⁴ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 1.

While, by 1850, the notions that Harney and his fellow journalists on the paper would preach were not quite so strange, the *Red Republican* and the *Friend of the People* were explicitly evangelical in their attempts to spread the socialist faith, and prepare the way for the future revolution.⁵ As Harney stated when announcing his intention to change the paper's name:

Anxious to establish the reign of EQUALITY, LIBERTY, and FRATERNITY, Republicans cannot be content with their present position. They must make converts—they must cause their principles to become the political religion of the masses. To effect this, all honourable means are not merely allowable, but indispensable. If need be, Republicans must 'stoop to conquer.'⁶

1848 had also shown how this education would need to be based on the working-class experience. It was likely to be no coincidence that, as Harney announced, 'Our first number appears on the eve of the anniversary of the Insurrection of June'⁷ – just as the *Democratic Review* had coincided with the first.

The working-class uprising of 23 June 1848 was discussed in the *Democratic Review* as the beginning of the proletarian phase of the European Revolution, but June 1848 was also memorialised in the *Red Republican* as an intrinsic part of the newspaper's identity. In discussing the *Red Republican's* 'Name and Principles', Harney wished, 'Forever venerated be the proletarian martyrs of that terrible struggle'.⁸ Against the 'martyrs' of June were arrayed middle-class reformers, who, Helen Macfarlane warned, would mislead workers, as had been the case in France. While workers might commit to help the middle class 'to satisfy their ancient grudge against the hereditary aristocracy', workers should make the Charter the condition of that support.⁹ Malden Servo, a writer for the *Friend of the People* echoed similar sentiments. 'The working classes have always been used for the purposes of others', Servo opined. 'Without them, Magna Charta would not have been signed', he argued, and, if not for the intimidation the working

⁵ Finn, *After Chartism*, pp. 82-92.

⁶ 'To the Readers of the Red Republican', *Red Republican*, 30 November 1850, 188.

⁷ 'Our Name and Principles', *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5

⁸ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.

⁹ 'Chartism in 1850', *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 3.

classes provided, 'the reform bill would not have been carried'. However, the Charter alone was 'the gate-way of independence and social amelioration' for the 'producers'.¹⁰

The Charter was also the true test of honesty for any reform movement, and demanding its implementation in return for co-operation with the middle-class was the surest way to avoid re-making the mistakes of 1848. As Harney explained, the 'duty of every true *Friend of the People*' was to guard against false friends. If their programmes did not include worker participation or the Charter, they should be deemed 'enemies, rather than the friends, of the people'.¹¹ In this way, the proletarians would be able to unify into a disciplined class-based party, and evade the betrayals of 'the LAMETHS, LAFAYETTES, and LAMARTINES' who were interested only in 'the profit of the *bourgeoisie*'.¹² Such discussions also betrayed the extent to which radicals adapted traditional language and infused it with class-based meanings. While for Macfarlane, the enemies of the proletariat were 'all the other classes of society put together' and the entire edifice of the English constitution, Harney's view was more nuanced.¹³

In a discussion of Feargus O'Connor's attendance at a meeting of the National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association, Harney explained how the old Chartist leader had earned himself much disapproval when he declared that 'as society was now constituted the upper classes cared only for themselves'. For the 'shopocracy' whether 'the labourers starved or not' had become a mere question of profitability: 'in fact they would rather they died, in order that the poor-rates might be lessened.' For Harney, the outcry that accompanied O'Connor's speech was evidence of the stark divide that had opened between bourgeois and proletarian reformers. As he explained:

In vain does the member for Nottingham assure the genteel reformers of his holy horror of 'physical force,' and that 'he is not, nor never has been a revolutionist;' they keep him at arm's length. Their toleration goes only to the extent calculated to save themselves from Chartist submersion But the taint of Chartism is on the honourable member; and the genteel reformers who

¹⁰ 'To the Ernest and Thoughtful of all Classes', *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 161.

¹¹ 'Inadequate Remedies for Social Evils', *Red Republican*, 12 October 1850, 129

¹² *Red Republican*, 12 October 1850, 129.

¹³ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 3.

‘look so neat, and smell so sweet, and talk so like to waiting gentlewomen,’ regard him as they would regard the personification of the plague.

The Financial Reformers, while they had accepted three points of the People’s Charter and supported the principle of household suffrage, were, in Harney’s estimation, ‘unworthy of serious opposition’. Going somewhat further than Chartists had earlier in the 1840s when the Anti-Corn Law League threatened to syphon away Chartist support, the *Red Republican* advocated a step beyond “the Charter and Nothing Less”.¹⁴

Returning to O’Connor’s speech, Harney explained that the gentleman had, ‘with pathetic simplicity’, bemoaned the disunion of classes in Britain when compared with the continent. For Harney, what O’Connor did not comprehend was that class union on the continent was only possible because the ‘*bourgeois* ascendancy is not yet as consolidated as it is in this country’. In Britain, the conditions of class life had created distinct differences in class politics, epitomised by the political divide between ‘the *bourgeois* and the democratic reformers’. ‘The former’, wrote Harney, ‘avowedly seek ... to amend and bolster up our institutions’ to ‘establish the political and social supremacy of the *bourgeoisie*’, which, in effect, meant ‘only substituting for the existing oligarchy, a bastard aristocracy composed of such as ROTHSCHILD and COBDEN, MOSES, and BRIGHT.’¹⁵ The latter, however, sought *the* Charter for the purpose of superseding those institutions’. To abridge “the barbaric splendours of the throne,” or even ‘abolish the throne itself’, oppose aristocracy – both feudal and financial – ‘to revolutionise taxation, to appropriate the wealth of the Church to national purposes, and to abolish landlordism and make the land national property’. In this way, democrats sought to

¹⁴ Chase, *Chartism: A New History*, pp. 158-83.

¹⁵ Richard Cobden was a manufacturer and radical-liberal politician. Cobden founded the Anti-Corn Law League with fellow radical-liberal John Bright in 1839. ‘Moses’ refers to Elias Moses, the founder of the firm Moses and Son, a bespoke tailor’s in London’s East End. The firm earned notoriety during the 1840s because of the poor working conditions of tailors contracted to work for it. The emporium also marked an early example of a department store, with fixed pricing and deferent staff. In the *Red Republican*, Moses and Son seems to have epitomised the enemy against which cooperative association would need to struggle. It was Harney’s belief that only with the aid of ‘National resources’ could workers defeat such foes. Miles Taylor, ‘Cobden, Richard (1804–1865)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn (Oxford, 2009), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, accessed 5 March 2015; Miles Taylor, ‘Bright, John (1811–1889)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 5 March 2015; A. C. Howe, ‘Anti-Corn Law League (act. 1839–1846)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 5 March 2015; Andrew Godley, ‘Moses, Elias (1783–1868)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 5 March 2015; *Red Republican*, 10 August 1850, 59; 12 October 1850, 130; 16 November 1850, 170.

‘abolish the system of classes and make the worker “the only king and lord,” ... and through the Sovereignty of the People establish the rightful, the glorious, the happy SOVEREIGNTY OF LABOUR!’¹⁶

This play on the traditional critique of aristocracy was also voiced by the exiled French *démoc-soc* leader Ledru-Rollin. Reviews of his work *The Decline of England* carried excerpts from Rollin’s critiques of British politics and commerce.¹⁷ ‘The monopoly of Capital’, Rollin wrote of England, ‘plays here the same game as feudal privilege does in agricultural production’. It aimed to absorb ‘all the riches of industry, of commerce, and of manufactures’ in the same way that ‘feudalism would exhaust all the juices of the landed domain.’¹⁸ Britain’s ‘commercial aristocracy’ was epitomised by the East India Company, which was ‘more feudal, more tyrannic than the landholder’ in the manner that it operated, causing ‘by the atrocious greediness of the company ... ten millions of inhabitants [of India] to perish in less than a month.’ This aristocracy of commerce reigned together with the ‘aristocracy of the crown’ and that of the land in ‘an oligarchy under three different faces’. This ‘political aristocracy’, united by self-interest ‘to resist the flood which else might drown them’ had secured their reign by subverting those institutions that might challenge their supremacy – most notably the press. ‘Who’, Rollin asked, ‘will seriously dare to say that the press in England exists for the people?’ For sure, during periods of tranquillity, he argued, the press was ‘virtually free’, but the conditions it operated under had nevertheless rendered it toothless. As he explained:

Assuredly a journal, which for each number has a price almost equal to a day’s wages, cannot agitate the people. It is with this view that the government has loaded the press with such heavy shackles, that it has been compelled to become a monopoly, a living source of revenue and patronage in the hands of a few rich families. ... Generally speaking, it is remarkable that in France the press should be an apostleship, while in England it is a business.

¹⁶ ‘The “Little Charter” Versus “The Charter and Something More”’, *Red Republican*, 26 October 1850, 145-46.

¹⁷ Ledru-Rollin, *The Decline of England*, (London, 1850).

¹⁸ ‘The Decline of England’, *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 7.

While ‘honourable men’ may sometimes be found on a newspaper’s staff, they were compelled to alter their way of thinking: ‘the opinion of the people’ thus consisted ‘of but one sort of truth’.¹⁹

In opposing this oligarchic aristocracy, and the dubious truths it expounded, the *Red Republican* placed itself in a different journalistic tradition. Despite its base in the metropolis, the paper took as its heritage the legacy of journalists persecuted under Charles II and the provincial press that had sprung up under Queen Anne.²⁰ Its immediate forebears were those journalists who resisted the government during the 1790s and the first three decades of the nineteenth century.²¹ Men like Thomas Spence, William Cobbett, Richard Carlile, William Hone, W. Sherwin, and, of course, Henry Hunt.²² It was the spirit of these earlier agitations that Harney attempted to appropriate when he recalled the struggle of his former mentor during the ‘battle of the unstamped’ of the 1830s:

When Henry Hetherington brought out his first unstamped publication he entitled it ‘*The Poor Man’s Guardian*.’ Finding that the enemies of the poor man denounced those whose simple demand was for ‘justice to each and to all’ as ‘destructives,’ [Hetherington] ... boldly determined to beard the prejudice excited by his enemies. Accordingly a second unstamped publication he entitled ‘*The Destructive*.’ We pursue the same course.²³

Not exactly the same course, however, for the *Red Republican* made landfall on a rather different coast. Its masthead conveyed this sense of departure at a glance.

¹⁹ ‘The Decline of England’, *Red Republican*, 29 June 1850, 15.

²⁰ ‘The Fourth Estate’, *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 119; 5 October 1850, 127-28.

²¹ *Red Republican*, 19 October 1850, 142-43.

²² *Red Republican*, 26 October 1850, 151-52.

²³ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.



As Aled Jones has noted, its essential ‘design is a conventional one’, but it ‘is overwhelmingly French in sentiment.’²⁴ However, if the use of the *bonnet rouge* did, as Epstein has argued, raise the stakes by ‘intensifying meanings’, there is little to suggest that this was in a direction that was markedly constitutional in nature.²⁵ Frank Prochaska has argued that the republicanism preached by Harney et al fitted into a tradition of viewing Britain as a ‘crowned republic’.²⁶ Indeed, this is one reading of Harney’s attempt to link the *Red Republican* with Richard Carlile’s famous newspaper the *Republican*.

In the opening issue of the *Red Republican*, Harney invoked the precedent of Carlile’s publication to argue that in Britain there was ‘nothing politically heterodox in connexion with the title “Republican.”’ Furthermore, he claimed, that Britain itself could even represent ‘a Republic—of a sort’. This was because in Britain, the primacy of the House of Commons resulted in a similar set of arrangements to those that operated in a republican government.²⁷ It is tempting to view this statement, as Prochaska does, as a moment when the mask of the *enfant terrible* slipped to reveal a more disciplined and deferent domestic republicanism lurking behind the red rhetoric.²⁸ However, while

²⁴ Aled Jones, ‘Chartist Journalism and Print Culture In Britain, 1830-1855,’ in *Papers for the People: A Study of the Chartist Press*, eds Joan Allen and Owen Ashton (London, 2005), p. 4.

²⁵ Aled Jones, ‘Chartist Journalism’, p. 12; James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (Oxford, 1994), p. 75.

²⁶ Frank Prochaska, *The republic of Britain, 1760–2000* (London, 2000).

²⁷ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.

²⁸ Prochaska, *The republic of Britain*, pp. 87-89

Prochaska correctly states that Harney announced that ‘every Englishman may, if he will, term himself a Republican’ he over-emphasises Harney’s position.²⁹ Rather, what Harney was attempting to do was to link the status of Britain to that of France and, with it, the domestic republican tradition, exemplified by Carlile, to the new direction that republicanism had taken abroad. In the same article, Harney went on to state that

our readers need not be told that there is all the difference in the world between a real, and a sham Republic. For an example of the latter, our friends have only to look across the channel. From any such Republic may we be saved! Let us add another prayer—from the *res publica* of England—“a state in which the power is lodged in more than one,” *but not in all*, good Lord deliver us! We protest against all sham Republics, whether with a “Sovereign lady,” or a “special” president for a head. Still more emphatically we protest against the rule of land-lords, and usurers; no matter how they may attempt to disguise their sway, whether under republican or monarchical forms.³⁰

For Harney, a sham-republic represented a good deal more than power being lodged somewhere other than the whole of the people.

The equivalency that Harney drew between Britain and France – and between Victoria and Bonaparte – and the huge significance he levied upon the operation of interest groups – namely, land-lords and usurers – indicates that there was much more to *red* republicanism. It also indicates the operation of a class-based analysis that was more concerned about the forces operating behind the ‘Sovereign Lady’ than the status of the crown itself. 1848 in France had shown that, even should the monarch be removed and universal suffrage be instituted, there was no guarantee that social change should naturally follow. In France, the ‘sham’ republic was being propped up by the same forces that propped up the monarch of England: the ‘class domination’, the ‘*régime* of corruption and fraud’, and the ‘stock-jobbers, railway-gamblers, and the rest of the race of money grubbers’ that Harney had identified a year earlier in the *Democratic Review*.³¹ Yet, elsewhere Harney was more explicit about his lack of regard for the monarchy.

²⁹ Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain*, p. 89

³⁰ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 4.

³¹ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 3.

In discussing the crimes of monarchy at home and abroad, Harney observed that 'natural progress of this country towards a recognition of the principles of just and wise government, may be greatly accelerated by the progress of events on the continent.' Once the peoples of the continent exacted justice from their 'regal rulers', 'in accordance with the law of nature and of truth, which proclaims that "TO REIGN IS ITSELF A CRIME"', who then, he asked, 'will venture to affirm that a single king will be left on the soil of continental Europe? And who will dare to guarantee the stability of our "glorious institutions," when continental Europe shall be a vast theatre of a glorious confederation of democratic Republics?'³² If Harney and the Red Republicans stopped short of attacking the monarchy directly, this was at least in part because the fall of monarchy was understood to be a natural culmination of the democratic struggle, and therefore something of an irrelevance. Before them was a different question, and that was how to effectively lay the groundwork for the revolution that was destined to accomplish this. As Harney noted in October 1850:

The Editor of the *Free-thinkers Magazine* lately observed, with great truth, that 'The road to true society, or useful extended, and practicable association, lies through THE REPUBLIC. There is no *royal* road.' I will only add that the road to THE REPUBLIC, lies through UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE.³³

And universal suffrage, in turn, laid through the Charter. However, the basis of the Charter itself would need to be reoriented. Bundled with the *bonnet rouge* on the paper's masthead was an ideological inclination that, following 1848, had come to resonate with a new repertoire of symbolic meanings. While the political battle now being entered into was viewed as possessing a long lineage, a continuation of that fought by Hetherington and the reformers in the age of George III, and, indeed, the struggle that the Christians had waged against Nero, the flag of the Red Republic represented something quintessentially new.³⁴

³² "Bringing Royalty into Contempt", *Red Republican*, 10 August 1850, 61.

³³ 'The Alleged "Prosperity" and "Immorality" of the Working Classes', *Red Republican*, 5 October 1850, 122.

³⁴ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.

The Red Flag, under which, as Macfarlane wrote, the Chartists had now gathered to vindicate the claims of labour, represented 'the blood of our martyrs'.³⁵ Those

who have died upon the cross and the racks,—who have perished under the axe of the headsman, and the dagger of the assassins,—who have consumed their own hearts in dungeons, or withered away under the pangs of hunger and wretchedness.

And those who had 'poured out their heart's blood for the salvation of humanity.'³⁶ Chief among these martyrs were the workers of June 1848 who, through their insurrection and their sacrifice, had revealed the polluted legacy of the *tricolore*. Sullied by Napoleon, Louis Philippe, and the treachery of Lamartine, the *tricolore* was no longer the flag of Revolution. The Red flag, 'dyed in the life-stream of the martyrs of June', was now the only flag capable of representing European democracy.³⁷

The French origins of the Red Flag were examined in a short piece the following month, printed in response to questions from correspondents querying the origins of the symbol. Quoting from Louis Blanc's *Historic Pages from the French Revolution of February, 1848*, the piece explained that, as an amalgamation of the royalist and Parisian colours, the *tricolore* seemed an anachronism after the revolution of 1848, for: 'From the ruins of all the old castes was about to arise the one family of the French nation; why then have a flag which ... seemed to revive the difference of classes?' The Red Flag was a natural choice to symbolise unity after the revolution. It had ancient roots, being the banner of the alliance against Rome, and was also associated with Joan of Arc and the struggle against the English. However, Blanc explicitly denied that it represented anything more than national unity, arguing that 'Such were the feelings that animated the people with respect to this flag, whatever images of bloody times might be seen in it by some; or however it might have been revered, as the flag of martyrs, by others.'³⁸ Blanc overstated here the political innocence of the Red Flag, one not shared, or recognised, by the Chartist contributors to the paper. For instance, Macfarlane had a very different view of its symbolism, equating the Red Flag with 'Bread

³⁵ 'The Red Flag in 1850', *Red Republican*, 13 July 1850, 26-27.

³⁶ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.

³⁷ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.

³⁸ 'The Red Flag', *Red Republican*, 27 July 1850, 43.

and work', 'the Organisation of Labour', and the radical socialism of the French revolution of 1848. For her:

'Chartism in 1850'—is the cause of the veritable People of England; it is the cause of the producers, and the battle of this one enslaved class is the battle we fight, but it must be fought under the *Red* flag, for that is the symbol of the new epoch, 'the banner of the Future.'³⁹

For Harney, the Red Flag was intimately connected with the June Insurrection and the 'socialism' of the Jacobins.

As a summary of the principles and aims of the *Red Republican*, and as a 'profession of faith', Harney cited Robespierre's 'Report upon the principles of political morality', 1794.⁴⁰ With the following, Harney committed the journal 'to the stormy waters of political strife':

We desire an order of things, in which ... distinctions shall spring but from equality itself; ... in which the country shall ensure the prosperity of every individual ... in which every soul shall be elevated by the continual intercommunication of Republican sentiments ... and in which commerce will be a source of public riches, and not the monstrous opulence of a few great houses only ...⁴¹

However, to view the meanings of these principles as remaining static between the years 1794 to 1850 would be a mistake. In October 1850, Harney posited his own re-working of the Jacobin mantra:

But I say for the Proletarians, of whom I am one, 'It is not any amelioration of the condition of the most miserable that will satisfy us; it is justice to all we demand. It is not the mere improvement of the social life of our class that we seek; but the abolition of classes and the destruction of those wicked distinctions which have divided the human race into princes and paupers, landlords and labourers, masters and slaves. It is not the patching and cobbling of the present system we aspire to accomplish; but the annihilation of that system, and the substitution in its stead of an order of things in which all shall

³⁹ *Red Republican*, 13 July 1850, 27.

⁴⁰ Full title: *Report upon the principles of political morality: which are to form the basis of the administration of the interior concerns of the Republic. Made in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, the 18th pluviöse, second year of the Republic* (Paris, 1794).

⁴¹ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.

labour and all shall enjoy, and the happiness of each guarantee the welfare of the entire community.'⁴²

As Holyoake observed in a revealing article in the first issue of the *Friend of the People*, 'ultra' Chartists 'demand year after year to have the *expanding* cause of liberty advocated and served in the same words and the same way', blind to the fact that, in order to serve the struggle for democracy, ever-changing social realities required a 'new language and new modes of political warfare.' In Holyoake's view, the French Red Republicans were the most forward-thinking movement in Europe and Harney's efforts to 'lead the English party up to the French mark' had resulted in a programme that 'has expanded and grown, and requires an expanding and growing advocacy.'⁴³

While education and propagation would play a role in an expansion of Chartism's advocacy, important, too, was the overarching international dimension, which was often implicit. The *Red Republican*, like the *Democratic Review*, looked to Europe for the reawakening of the revolution. For example, Harney's re-working of Robespierre's *Report* concluded:

Have the majority of the Proletarians authorised me to speak for them? No! Am I sure that I speak for the sentiments of even a minority formidable in numbers? No! Sneer not, thou doubter. My words herald the future. The mutterings of the present but presage the hurricane-roar of the coming time!

44

But when would that time arrive? This was the most pressing question for European democrats, and yet the one that they appear to have found most difficult to answer. 1848 had erupted onto the scene of world history with little to announce it, and had then quickly given way to period of reaction. During 1849, the *Democratic Review* had looked in vain to France for signals of a renewed revolutionary activity. By the summer of 1850, there were, the *Democratic Review* reported but two opportunities remaining: either the abolition of universal suffrage, or the abolition of the Republic itself. After May 1850, only the latter remained.

⁴² *Red Republican*, 12 October 1850, 131.

⁴³ 'Ultra-Chartists', *Friend of the People*, 7 December 1851, 1.

⁴⁴ 'Inefficient Cures for Social Evils', *Red Republican*, 131.

On 31 May 1850, an electoral law was passed in France that, in practice, abolished the principle of universal suffrage by extending the residency qualification for entitlement to vote from six months to three years. Coming on the back of *démoc-soc* successes in the elections of March, the electoral law was designed to thwart the progress and retard the momentum of the French left in time for the two important elections of 1852: the elections to the assembly, and the elections for the presidency. While the law made the greatest impact in urban centres, it also had a notable effect in the poorer rural areas. Indeed, it is a measure of how dependent on mobile labour and internal migration the French economy had become by 1850 that the law disenfranchised a third of voters.⁴⁵ For the French left, this was a critical moment, and the question was whether to gamble all the gains they had made since 1848 in an uprising in defence of the constitution, or to continue the job of organisation.⁴⁶ This sense of unease was tapped into by the *Democratic Review* for June and July 1850. Here, attempts by the government to undermine the basis of the Republic were treated as a conspiracy.

Démoc-soc victories in the elections of March and April against the backdrop of profound hostility from the Parisian newspapers were thought to be directly responsible for the attempts by the government to withdraw universal suffrage.⁴⁷ Following the passage of this legislation, the by-line for the opening address in the July issue of the *Democratic Review* was '*Europe under the Heel of Reaction*'. The article went on to explain:

The worst anticipation entertained by the friends of France and Freedom ... have been realised. In that country as in all the other states of Europe, revolutionised and counter-revolutionised, since the beginning of the year 1848, Universal Suffrage exists no more. Democracy is struck down, and the brigands of royalism and usury are triumphant.⁴⁸

The passage of the electoral law in France was viewed as the final victory of the reaction. 'All save the *name* of the Republic is lost' the *Democratic Review* declared. 'Everywhere

⁴⁵ Peter McPhee, *A Social History of France 1780-1914* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 180-82.

⁴⁶ McPhee, *A Social History of France*, p.181.

⁴⁷ 'To the Working Classes', *Democratic Review*, vol. II, June 1850, 1.

⁴⁸ 'To the Working Classes', *Democratic Review*, vol. II, July 1850, 41.

the *reaction* is victorious.' Yet, the Revolution was not at an end. The passage of the electoral law was viewed as a violation of the founding principles of the Republic. This treason would be punished by the resurrection of the 'sacred right of insurrection'. All that was lacking was a fitting moment to appeal to it.⁴⁹ However, as the French correspondent admitted in the regular letter from France, there was no movement from the French people, despite the law making them 'again what they were under Louis Philippe: political Pariahs without recognised rights, without votes, without muskets.'⁵⁰ The citizens of Paris had squandered the perfect opportunity for a rising in favour of universal suffrage and in support of the Republic. The next chance would come only when the Republic itself was assailed, which, the *Democratic Review* announced, must come soon – either by a restoration of the monarchy or a move by Louis Bonaparte to secure his power when the term of his presidency ended in 1852.⁵¹

However, in the *Red Republican*, the general message was somewhat different. While extracts from American newspapers predicted that the destruction of universal suffrage in France would precipitate a universal uprising, the tenor of the mainstay of the newspaper was more sombre, though no less urgent.⁵² As an article related in December 1850, 'When we look on the doings and vauntings of continental rulers, and reflect on the many hopes which the last two years have dispelled ... there creeps over our minds certain feelings of irony and cynicism.'⁵³ In 'trampl[ing] out in blood the overt revolutionary fire of Europe', the Party of Order had 'abundantly proved ... that in their hands order is alone compatible with dishonour.'⁵⁴

The paper also drew from the memory of Europe's previous period of reaction, the Thermidor years of 1794-5 and posited the reaction of the early 1850s as a shared European experience. Quoting from the Jacobin leader Saint-Just, the revolution of 1848 was understood as a 'half-revolution':

⁴⁹ *Democratic Review*, vol. II, July 1850, 43-44.

⁵⁰ *Democratic Review*, vol. II, July 1850, 77.

⁵¹ *Democratic Review*, Vol. II, August 1850, 118.

⁵² *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 3; 24 August 1850, 75.

⁵³ 'Order and Honour', *Friend of the People*, 7 December 1850, 2.

⁵⁴ *Friend of the People*, 7 December 1850, 2.

‘Those who make half revolutions, dig a grave for themselves!’ The truth of these sad and solemn words, uttered by the immortal St. Just, was only too faithfully exemplified in the tragic end of that martyr, and the party of whom he was so glorious a leader.⁵⁵

The youngest member of the Jacobin Club, Louis Antoine de Saint-Just was, for Harney, among the most energetic of the French revolutionaries. A close friend of Robespierre, he ultimately suffered the same dismal end, guillotined on 10 Thermidor, the personification of the energy of the Jacobin period of the Revolution, and the ultimate example of his own prophesy. This quotation from Saint-Just was regularly used at the beginning of Harney’s opening editorials. It served to elaborate the paper’s general stance on the revolutionary state of Europe – namely, that 1848 had been a ‘half-revolution’ and its failure had heralded a reaction comparable to the Thermidor of 1794-5. The ‘Thermidor’ of 1850 was characterised by the martyrdom of ‘patriotic heroes’ during the revolutionary struggle of 1848-9.

However, the *Red Republican* martyrology did not limit incorporation to the ‘Hungarian Patriots’, whose executions were recounted in gory detail in the *Democratic Review* and the *Friend of the People*, nor to martyred heroes like the German revolutionary Robert Blum.⁵⁶ Rather, the living were also venerated as symbols, or representations, of martyrdom. For example, the trials of ‘French Patriots’ at Versailles in 1849 and the escape from prison of the German revolutionary student Gottfried Kinkel, a left-democrat in the Frankfurt Assembly, were treated as occasions for reflection.⁵⁷ While the news of the trials of French revolutionaries, printed in the *Democratic Review*, excited the same reference to Saint-Just that accompanied Harney’s editorials, news of Kinkel’s safe arrival in Britain occasioned a dramatic description of his sufferings that highlighted the righteousness of his character. Written by the poet Gerald Massey, the article related how Kinkel, speaking at his own trial, ‘overpowered every heart. Even the soldiers guarding him were affected to tears.’ Then, when Kinkel’s wife, ‘brutally

⁵⁵ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 1.

⁵⁶ ‘Horrible Murder of Hungarian Patriots’, *Democratic Review*, November 1849, 213-215; ‘Portrait of Bem’, *Friend of the People*, 5 April 1851, 130; ‘General Bem’, *Friend of the People*, 26 April 1851, 175-76; ‘Robert Blum the Martyr’, *Democratic Review*, December 1849, 279-80.

⁵⁷ ‘The Trials at Versailles’, *Democratic Review*, December 1849, 269-276; ‘German Students: Gottfried Kinkel, and the Martyrs of 1848-49’, *Friend of the People*, 14 December 1850, 3.

driven back by her husband's gaolers', was denied the right to speak to him and 'was about to retire in despair', a stoic Kinkel cried out: "'Jane, come to me: it is thy husband who calls thee!'" Thereupon the soldiers lowered their arms, permitted her to approach, and she shed bitter tears on the bosom of her husband.'⁵⁸ But Kinkel's freedom was also an occasion to mourn. As Massey continued:

Kinkel is free: and our hearts beat higher.... Yet our joy is dashed with grief at the thought of the thousands of political prisoners who are pining in the dungeons of France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland, Hungary, and Siberia. Men of England! ... For us, they have sacrificed heart, love, and fond affection; home friends, everything! ... Then think about those who have gone down in blood—who have laid down their bodies as barricades for freedom, and can no more answer when the trump of liberty shall sound its next summons.⁵⁹

Stylised renditions of suffering and persecution were not limited to continental dissidents, but was also reflected in discussions of Chartists who were convicted of sedition in 1848. The release of Ernest Jones's 'Prison Poetry' in particular was greeted with much fanfare by the *Red Republican*. These columns stressed the hardship imposed on the Chartist 'martyr', likening his cell to a 'dungeon', and explaining how, being deprived of writing implements 'by his pitiless jailors', 'Ernest Jones *drew blood from his own veins*'.⁶⁰ The 'Sacred Hymns' that were printed in the paper were thus '*written in the blood of their author*'.⁶¹ The *Friend of the People* also carried a petition from Ernest Jones, complete with a lengthy description of the privations he suffered, seeking an investigation into his 'barbarous' treatment while incarcerated.⁶² These were paralleled with articles from the French republican and physician Francois-Vincent Raspail.⁶³ The paper stressed that Raspail's tracts on utopianism, socialism, and republican government had been 'written in the dungeon of Vincennes, 1848' – a state

⁵⁸ *Friend of the People*, 14 December 1850, 3.

⁵⁹ *Friend of the People*, 14 December 1850, 3.

⁶⁰ 'Ernest Jones', *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 37.

⁶¹ 'Sacred Hymns', *Red Republican*, 20 July 1850, 37; 27 July 1850, 48; 3 August 1850, 56.

⁶² 'The Barbarous Prison Treatment of Ernest Jones', *Friend of the People*, 7 June 1851, 225.

⁶³ François-Vincent Raspail was a physician and a revolutionary republican who made his name in the secret societies and the struggle for a free press in France during the 1830s. He also ran a clinic for the poor in Paris. See: Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 49; 52; Dora B. Weiner, 'François-Vincent Raspail: Doctor and Champion of the Poor', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1959), pp. 149-71.

he languished in for his role in the *journée* of 15 May that year.⁶⁴ Lending the Chartist prisoners the same level of mystique as continental dissidents highlighted that not only were the revolutionary events of 1848 a shared enterprise, but so too was the counter-revolution. Ernest Jones in particular occupied a distinguished place in these discussions, alongside the ultra-republicans Armand Barbés and Blanqui; while the Irish confederate and republican John Mitchel, who was sentenced in 1848 to fifteen years transportation to Bermuda, was celebrated alongside the European exiles.⁶⁵

This attitude towards suffering and martyrdom also possessed a religious dimension that was revealed in a powerful article from Lamennais, entitled ‘The Sufferers for Freedom and Right’. The article concluded:

Eighteen centuries ago in a city of the East, the priests and kings of that time nailed to the cross ... one who they called a Seditious and a Blasphemer. But on the day of his death, there was in hell an exceeding terror, and in heaven great joy: For the blood of the just had saved the world.⁶⁶

The poet Gerald Massey reached similar conclusions. ‘Persecution and Martyrdom’, he wrote, was only ‘the natural inheritance of those that do battle for the deliverance of humanity’.⁶⁷ It was something to be expected, or even embraced, as democrats marched into political battle. The historical experience of counter-revolution showed that, while brothers might fall by the wayside, next to ‘the bleached bones of those who in other days have striven to pass’, they had the future to win. As exemplified by the year 1800, when ‘Church and State mobs ... could be hounded on by the money-lords and priests and State-savages to burn in effigy the celebrated Dr. Priestly and the immortal Thomas Paine’, martyrs bequeathed their sublime ideas to future ages.⁶⁸ Armed with these ideas – ‘Thoughts mighty as the pangs of their torments ... ploughing as with a fiery plough-share the seed furrows in the hearts of men’ – democrats should prepare for the arrival of the future revolution.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ ‘Raspail “The *Friend of the People*”’, *Red Republican*, 7 September 1850, 92; 14 September 1850, 104; 19 October 1850, 144; 2 November 1850, 154.

⁶⁵ ‘Persecution and Martyrdom’, *Red Republican*, 29 June 1850, 10.

⁶⁶ *Friend of the People*, 26 April 1851, 177.

⁶⁷ *Red Republican*, 29 June 1850, 11.

⁶⁸ *Red Republican*, 29 June 1850, 10.

⁶⁹ *Red Republican*, 29 June 1850, 11.

While governments were intent of delaying the arrival of revolution, they could not postpone it indefinitely. The *New York Tribune* reported that the initiative had passed from the politicians to the masses, and that France was now alive with ‘Secret meetings and societies, conspiracies and plots, by-and-by to end in barricades and deadly volleys of musketry’. The government was keeping order with a huge mobilization of troops that inflated the tax bill, and, in turn, simply fuelled the growing discontentment.⁷⁰ Macfarlane expressed similar ideas when she wrote that

I agree with Mr. Cobden that ‘the possession of enormous military power will not prevent revolutions.’ But what cannot be *prevented* may be *postponed*. That is precisely what ‘governments and kings’ are now doing. Postponing the revolution by any and every means; and thereby prolonging their own lives. But the longer the next outbreak of the European Revolution is delayed, the more terrible it will be when it does come. God grant it may be the last.⁷¹

In April 1851, it was announced that the strength of the militarised regimes of Europe that had, following 1848, ‘trodden down an undisciplined democracy’ was beginning to wane in the face of an upwell of popular agitation.⁷² Again, it was to France that radicals looked to take the lead in a new revolutionary outbreak:

France, ever foremost in the struggles for right, is again striking in her chains. We know not how soon she may burst her fetters, and stand boldly forth as the liberator of the world. ... Nothing is wanting but the signal from the MARTYR NATION to kindle the blaze of revolution in every part of Europe.⁷³

A copy of a report from *The Times* further warned that a fresh economic downturn there threatened to precipitate agricultural strife, and that risings were predicted to soon break out in the provinces.⁷⁴

In the meantime, the *Friend of the People* reported that rumours were surfacing of radical members of the Mountain organising themselves into a ‘Central Committee of

⁷⁰ *Red Republican*, 24 August 1850, 75-76.

⁷¹ ‘Proceedings of the Peace-at-any-Price Middle-Class-Humbugs’, *Red Republican*, 14 September 1850, 103.

⁷² ‘The Progress of Revolution’, *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 161.

⁷³ *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 160.

⁷⁴ ‘State of France’, *Friend of the People*, 19 April 1851, 168.

Resistance' and were preparing for a rising to coincide with the elections in 1852.⁷⁵ Quoting a report from the *Morning Chronicle* that '*Socialist doctrines are spreading rapidly, even to the rural districts; and the peasantry ... are going over in vast numbers to the Reds*', the *Friend of the People* concluded: 'Bravo! Wait a little longer!'⁷⁶ Predictions for the next revolution became more exact the following month. Occurring by the side of renewed calls for public pressure in favour of the Charter, news from France indicated that tensions between the government and the people were at a new high.⁷⁷ The following issue brought 'A Gleam of Light on the Actual Situation in France' in the form of an unsigned correspondence.⁷⁸ The Correspondent related that the popularity enjoyed by conservatives and Bonapartists was at an all-time low, while the vitality of republicanism was soaring:

You now hear the workmen and shopkeepers cry, 'Let these rascals amuse themselves for another year—these men of bad faith—who have disgraced every government. In 1852, we will extinguish them—and as they declare that France is not republican—they shall taste its republican energy!' ... The republican journals sell more than ever Throughout the provinces the propaganda is worked with great vigour—Poor Louis Napoleon! When you speak of him people say 'He is finished—used up!' I trust that on the 4th of May, 1852, England will be prepared by the reform of her own House of Commons, for the majestic impulse which France will again give to all oppressed continental nations.⁷⁹

A conscious preparation for revolution also animated a change in response to the 'land question'. Responding to an article in the *Leader* that recommended a transfer of power in Ireland from landlords to tenants, Harney warned that it would only affect 'to increase the number of landlords'. This, in turn would 'postpone indefinitely agrarian revolution', without 'which there can be no salvation for the people.' Responding to O'Connor's assertion that land ownership helped the cause of reformers, Harney, drawing comparisons with France, asked: 'Why were the French peasants of '89 revolutionists? Because they were landless. Why were those of '48 conservative? Because they were landowners A radical revolution in the ownership of land is more

⁷⁵ '1852!', *Friend of the People*, 29 March 1851, 126.

⁷⁶ *Friend of the People*, 29 March 1851, 126.

⁷⁷ 'Wanted: Pressure from Without', *Friend of the People*, 10 May 1851, 192; 'State of France', *Friend of the People*, 10 May 1851, 193.

⁷⁸ 'A Gleam of Light on the Actual Situation in France', *Friend of the People*, 17 May 1851, 201.

⁷⁹ *Friend of the People*, 17 May 1851, 201.

difficult in France than in England' for that very reason. Therefore, reform had to be all-or-nothing – 'private property in the soil', Harney argued, must be abolished, for 'the terrible evils afflicting the body-politic are not to be cured by "infinitesimal doses" of social reform.'⁸⁰

1848, or, more precisely, the June Insurrection, had opened a door. Through it would step those who were described in the *Democratic Review* as 'the men of the future'.⁸¹ As Harney expressed it, 'Our mission is to popularize the principles of Red Republicanism, to unfurl a banner, announce a faith, and clear the way for those more powerful who will follow.'⁸² This vision of the future was understood in avowedly class terms. A neo-Babeuvian edge tinged many of these discussions, most notably in reference to more liberal elements within the reformist movement.⁸³ Targeting the *Leader*, Harney dismissed the concerns of their correspondents who argued 'that the suffrage is not a natural right, and that to invest the working classes with the franchise would be to give them domination over other classes', responding that '*other classes have no right even to exist*'.⁸⁴ The parallel with ideas about property and labour that had developed in French socialism during the 1830s and 1840s was strikingly revealed in the paper's understanding of the respective roles of the classes in the production of wealth. As Harney argued:

The national income is supposed to amount to about Five Hundred Millions sterling. Of this amount the seven millions *who produce nothing* appropriate about two-thirds, leaving only one-third to be divided amongst the twenty-one millions *who produce everything!* ... Yes, thou art right PROUDHON, 'thou

⁸⁰ *Red Republican*, 12 October 1850, 130-31.

⁸¹ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 4.

⁸² 'The "*Red Republican*" and the "*Leader*"', *Red Republican*, 6 July 1850, 20-21.

⁸³ A sanitised re-telling of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality was authored in 1828 by fellow conspirator Philippe Buonarroti. It was immensely influential both within and outside of France. The political programme elaborated in the work enshrined labour as 'the constituent activity of the new [republican] order.' Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p. 391; pp. 390-95; Philippe Buonarroti, *Conspiration Pour l'Egalité, Dite du Babeuf* (Brussels, 1828). Buonarroti's work was translated into English in 1836 by the 'School-Master of Chartism' Bronterre O'Brien. Bronterre O'Brien, *Buonarroti's History of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality* (London, 1836). See also Alfred Plummer, *Bronterre: A Political Biography of Bronterre O'Brien, 1804-1864* (London, 1971), pp. 59-66. For Bronterre's influence on Harney in his early years in the radical milieu, see: Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, pp. 1-53.

⁸⁴ *Red Republican*, 6 July 1850, 21.

reasonest well!' 'Property is theft.' PROPERTY, as acquired under the present System, IS ROBBERY!⁸⁵

In defining the class character of its politics, the *Red Republican* appealed to the 'veritable people', which it defined as 'the agricultural labourers, small agricultural occupiers too poor to hire labour, artisans, and all kinds of town operatives, labourers, servants, sailors and soldiers, "paupers," and their families'.⁸⁶ This was used interchangeably with 'proletarian', a term that had also been routinely employed in the *Democratic Review* during 1849.⁸⁷ In the *Friend of the People*, the term was explicitly defined with reference to Bronterre's *History of Babeuf*: 'Proletarians ... means the multitude, who, possessing no fortune or property, have only their offspring ... to offer as a guarantee for their attachment to the state'.⁸⁸ At least one historian has underlined the importance of this, claiming that, during this period, Harney actually introduced the word into the radical lexicon.⁸⁹ However, 'proletarian' was also understood in a revolutionary context. As the article went on to explain, 'Proletaire, or Proletarian, is now throughout Europe, the generally accepted revolutionary designation of the vast mass of workers, who, dependent on wages, are at the mercy of landlords, usurers, and the rest of the mischievous classes of society.'⁹⁰ This class character was further buttressed by the inclusion of sections on 'Trades Movements' and 'Labour's Struggles', which carried notices of strikes and industrial disputes.⁹¹ These articles were accompanied by requests for information from trades' union secretaries, and, by November 1850, had morphed into a 'Labour Record', which became a regular feature of the *Friend of the People*.⁹²

⁸⁵ 'The Rich and the Poor', *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 114.

⁸⁶ *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 114.

⁸⁷ In fact, the *Democratic Review* had been dedicated 'To the Proletarians'. See 'Dedication', *Democratic Review*, Vol I.

⁸⁸ "'Proletarian'", *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 160.

⁸⁹ Patricia Hollis, *The Pauper Press: A Study in Working Class Radicalism in the 1830s* (Oxford, 1970), p. 288. Although, 'proletarian' had been used as early as 1838. See, for example, the address from the London Democratic Association, signed by Bronterre O'Brien, in *Northern Star*, 24 March, 1838, 4.

⁹⁰ *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 160.

⁹¹ 'Trades Movements', *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 116; 9 November 1850, 165-66; 'Labour's Struggles', *Red Republican*; 31 August 1850, 85; 19 October 1850, 141-42.

⁹² 'To the Secretaries of trades' Unions, and all other industrial Associations', *Red Republican*, 2 November 1850, 156; 9 November 1850, 164.

The first appearance of the 'Labour Record' coincided with the second part of Macfarlane's article 'Labour *versus Capital*', and the first instalment of Macfarlane's translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, 'Bourgeois and Proletarians'.⁹³ This chapter of the *Manifesto* did not only focus on the nature of class struggle, but also the international nature of capitalist production. As Macfarlane transcribed:

The need for an ever-increasing market for their produce, drives the Bourgeoisie over the whole globe—they are forced to make settlements, to form connections, to set up means of communication everywhere. Through their command of a universal market, they have given a cosmopolitan tendency to the production and consumption of all countries. To the great regret of the Reactionists, the Bourgeoisie have deprived the modern Industrial System of its national foundation.⁹⁴

Moreover, the trades' news carried by the paper was expressly adopted with the intention to encourage and nurture the cosmopolitan quality of organised labour. This quality was most evident in the paper's coverage of the London type-founders' strike.⁹⁵ The attempt by the employers to break the strike by drafting foreign labour was foiled by an international effort.⁹⁶ The *Red Republican* followed the dispute carefully and carried notices of the addresses and the correspondences passed between the English and continental workmen. The case was also presented as a living example of international fraternity that went beyond written declarations of support to included notices of subscriptions raised by French workers for the London strikers.⁹⁷

Closely allied to these articles was the newspaper's response to the announcement of the visit to England of the Austrian general Haynau. Haynau had been instrumental in the suppression of the revolutions in Italy and Hungary, and his reign of terror had earned him the epithet 'The Hyena of Brescia'.⁹⁸ The *Red Republican* received the news

⁹³ 'Labour Record', *Red Republican*, 9 November 1850, 168; 'Labour versus Capital', *Red Republican*, 9 November 1850, 162; 'Manifesto of the German Communist Party', *Red Republican*, 9 November 1850, 161-62.

⁹⁴ *Red Republican*, 9 November 1850, 162.

⁹⁵ See: 'Strike of the Typefounders', *Red Republican*, 17 August 1850, 65; 'The Type-Founders' Strike', *Red Republican*, 14 September 1850, 101; 134; 'The Type-Founders', *Red Republican*, 5 October 1850, 126; 157; 'Conclusion of the Typefounders' Strike', *Friend of the People*, 1 February 1851, 60.

⁹⁶ See also, Iorwerth Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France 1830-1870* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 116.

⁹⁷ *Red Republican*, 2 November 1850, 157.

⁹⁸ Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848-1914* (Baltimore, 2000), pp. 91-100.

by calling for a demonstration against the general. Harney appealed to the people ‘who but twelve months ago met in their thousands to express their sympathy for the gallant Magyars, and to execrate HAYNAU and his brigand bands ... to assemble once more to protest against England being outraged by the presence of the Austrian Hyena.’⁹⁹ And protest they did. The following issue of the *Red Republican* reported that the general had been set upon by workers during his tour of the Barclay and Perkins brewery in Southwark London. The *Red Republican* reported the incident with obvious glee, recounting that

News of the Marshal’s infernal presence ran like wild-fire over the vast works. Immediately, inspired by one holy sentiment of hatred towards the whole-sale man-butcher, the brewers, draymen, and labourers turned out, crying, ‘down with the Austrian Butcher!’ His assassinship ... remembering that his brutal battalions were not at hand to enable him to play the ‘hero,’ concluded discretion to be the better part of valour, and proceeded to beat a hasty retreat. This he found a somewhat difficult task.¹⁰⁰

After having a bundle of hay dropped on his head and showered with grain and dirt, the general managed to escape the premises, only to find on his exit an assembled crowd of local workers – ‘coal-heavers, wharf labourers, lightermen &c.’ – along with ‘a great number of women, who naturally were foremost in assailing the shameless woman-flogger’.¹⁰¹ Through the crowd, the general ran, ‘literally taking to his heels along Bankside’, until he found momentary refuge in a dustbin at a public house.¹⁰² Upon being discovered there, he beat a hasty retreat upstairs, where he locked himself until ‘a strong body of police enabled him to get into a police-galley’ that rowed him across the Thames to safety.¹⁰³

Harney hailed the workmen of Barclay and Perkins as heroes, concluding that ‘those who took part in the anti-Hyena manifestation, deserve honour and applause; *because*’, quoting from *Buonarroti’s History*, ‘Those who make war on a people, to arrest the progress of Liberty, and to annihilate the Rights of Man, ought to be pursued

⁹⁹ ‘Expected Arrival of a Celebrated Hyena’, *Red Republican*, 7 September 1850, 93.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Haynau Hunted!—A Lesson to Tyrants’, *Red Republican*, 14 September 1850, 97.

¹⁰¹ *Red Republican*, 14 September 1850, 97.

¹⁰² *Red Republican*, 14 September 1850, 97.

¹⁰³ *Red Republican*, 14 September 1850, 97.

everywhere, not as ordinary criminals, but as assassins and brigand rebels.¹⁰⁴ Such manifestations of internationalism underpinned the paper's international coverage of labour movements, including the progress of workers' co-operatives and associations in France. Coverage of French associations would be a regular feature of the 'Labour Record' in the *Friend of the People*, where it acquired its own sub-column.¹⁰⁵ However, the *Red Republican's* relationship with co-operative organisations was a mixed one. While the paper appears to have been happy to urge their expansion, both at home and abroad, there was a great reluctance to recognise in them the same kind of emancipatory promise as was the case in French socialism.

For French socialists, workers' associations had carried a profound radical currency since at least the revolution of 1830, when there developed in France what William Sewell has described as a political 'idiom of association'.¹⁰⁶ Socialists, in particular those engaged with the Saint-Simonian movement and those influenced by Fourier, encouraged workers to combine their efforts, their labours, and their capital, to overcome 'the tyranny of private property' by becoming 'associated owners of industrial enterprises'.¹⁰⁷ Both Louis Blanc and Proudhon sought to build on the concept of the producers' association during the 1840s. For both Blanc and Proudhon, producers' associations held an intrinsic political, as well as economic, value. In Blanc's conception of socialism, associations would be funded, underpinned, and directed by the state to out-compete and assimilate private enterprise, resulting in an economy based around the principles of co-operation. The social republic, thus founded on the twin principles of associated labour and universal suffrage, would, Blanc hoped, be a truly democratic and communitarian society in its political, social, and economic structures.¹⁰⁸ For Proudhon, on the other hand, association played a key role in his idea of 'mutualism'. By embracing association, workers would be in a position to liberate

¹⁰⁴ *Red Republican*, 14 September 1850, 100; O'Brien, *Buonarroti's History*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ *Red Republican*, 23 November 1850, 194; *Friend of the People*, 28 December 1850, 24; 8 February 1851, 72; 22 February 1851, 88; 8 March 1851, 104; 29 March 1851, 128; 5 April 1851, 136

¹⁰⁶ Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*, pp. 201-18.

¹⁰⁷ Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France*, p. 202; Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 410-13; David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (Abingdon, 2006), pp. 74-76.

¹⁰⁸ Sewell, *Work and revolution in France*, pp. 232-35; Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 401-405; Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, pp. 78-80.

themselves from all social and political pressures and, by banding together, secure their right to personal liberty. Proudhon also viewed mutualism as intrinsic to his ideas about localism and federalism. Contra Blanc, whose *Organisation of Labour* sought to invest the state with social legitimacy, Proudhon viewed associations as vehicles to fatally undermine state authority and social control.¹⁰⁹ Yet, despite obvious differences in purpose, in all these cases the principle of association was located and discussed within an enduring discourse with the French Revolution and socialist conceptions of republicanism.

For French socialists, then, associated and co-operative labour was not only valued for its economic potential, but was also imbued with innate political significance and revolutionary meaning, while some even saw in it an incipient form of social organisation. Harney was certainly not blind to these developments, and nor was the *Red Republican* hostile to the burgeoning co-operative element within the labour movement in Britain. In fact, the very purpose for the inclusion of a 'Labour Record' was to highlight that 'labour's struggles' represented a continuous resistance to 'the grasping attacks of conspiring capitalists and plundering profitmongers.'¹¹⁰ It was significant in that it can be viewed as something of a 'labour turn' for Chartism, attempting to unify political and work-place struggles under the banner of democracy. Guided by the example of 1848, Chartists and Red Republicans urged not only political, but also class unity. Yet, while the Chartist programme developed to include the Organisation of Labour alongside the nationalisation of land and the six points of the Charter, the founding of associations was not understood to be a priority.¹¹¹

Partly, this reluctance can be understood by into taking account national differences between the co-operative movements of England and France. As Prothero has shown, co-operation in England was a decidedly different animal to that which existed in France.¹¹² The English co-operative movement tended to be based around consumer

¹⁰⁹ Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 417-19.

¹¹⁰ *Red Republican*, 9 November 1850, 165.

¹¹¹ See: *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 158-159; Chase, *Chartism: A New History*, p. 339.

¹¹² Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, pp. 145-46.

co-operatives that sought to offer fellow workers cheaper and more trustworthy sources of goods than private tradesmen. They aimed to tackle profiteering and the rife adulteration of goods, usually common foodstuffs like bread or flour, by purchasing in bulk directly from suppliers.¹¹³ French associations, in contrast, were typically producer co-operatives, existing particularly among skilled trades like tailors and shoemakers.¹¹⁴ They sought to combat poor working conditions, and the trend towards sweated labour, by physically displacing private employers. In France, Producer associations could even be used as a means to weaponise labour during industrial disputes.¹¹⁵ In each case, the co-operative or associational movements tended to occupy different spheres within the system of production and exchange. In France, it was easier to view associations of producers, based around traditional artisanal crafts, as embodying the potential to liberate workers from exploitation than the English consumer-based equivalents, which offered no direct challenge to Capitalist production.

More significantly, however, the *Red Republican* viewed the move towards co-operation as premature. Britain's deficit of democratic institutions, and the strength of English capital, hindered attempts to found the workers' movement on an associational footing. As the Paris Correspondent of the *New York Tribune* reported, 'Association is the highest stage of Democracy. That must come first.' The article continued:

A mass of hereditary pride and privilege ... of hypocritical free trade, such as England presents, must crush Association. ... How can a people without the huge hammer blows of a cheap Daily Press be made to associate after being kept apart by tyrants—by prisons, hulks, swords, and scourges? Each man has been taught to look upon his brother as a disguised robber—a social vulture. When we perceive that no daily press exists in London by which he can read as the rich read, or advertise his wants as the rich advertise, what daily food of reformation can he have.¹¹⁶

As with Helen Macfarlane's writings, this vision of what a democratic society entailed pointed beyond the acquisition of universal suffrage, and towards the nature of public

¹¹³ Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, pp. 146-51.

¹¹⁴ Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, pp. 155-56.

¹¹⁵ Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, pp. 156-57

¹¹⁶ 'Associated Labour—England and America', *Red Republican*, 3 August 1850, 56.

discourse itself. In particular, the domination of the public sphere by middle-class voices was understood as essentially cheapening the value of public discussion. The oligarchic tendencies of capitalist production and the persistence of monarchical or aristocratic forms of government were viewed as poisonous to the development of democracy, in that they fundamentally shaped social relations in their own image. Furthermore, the culture of capital and the crown resonated more widely than the court or the exchange. Aided by the press, they also dictated the tenor and temperament of workplace and community relationships. For Harney, the stamp tax, together with the operation of the sedition and libel laws, represented a 'fetter' on 'the right of speech and publication' (comparable with continental censorship). They were also mechanisms that were deliberately manipulated to maintain the press, symbolised by *The Times* – 'The most infamous journal on the face of the earth' – as 'a monopoly in the hands of capitalists ... devoted to the interests of the rich'.¹¹⁷ To combat the normalizing tendencies of élite culture, the people required a press of their own – a daily newspaper that operated within, what Peter Gurney has recently called, 'The Democratic Idiom'.¹¹⁸

In the meantime, however, while Harney admitted that associations were unquestionably of aid to workers, allowing them to ease the burden of poverty, he was unequivocal in his view that they could not be employed as political instruments.¹¹⁹ In Harney's estimation, associations were unable to effectively compete under '*existing political arrangements*', and until workers captured political power, they would remain too poor to buy themselves out of the system. Additionally, the strength of British capital showed that associations had not been proven to be effective weapons in the workers' struggle, either. As Harney observed, 'the greatest enthusiast, if he will but open his eyes, must see that neither Regent-Street nor Oxford-Street exhibit any signs of decay. On the contrary, a walk along New Oxford-street will show the pedestrian

¹¹⁷ 'Absolute Freedom of Opinion', *Friend of the People*, 21 December 1850, 9-10.

¹¹⁸ Peter Gurney, 'The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (September 2014), pp. 566-602.

¹¹⁹ As Harney stated: 'do I believe that these associations can be made instrumental to redeem the great body of the people from their bondage to the capitalists? Nothing of the sort.' *Red Republican*, 12 October 1850, 130.

that the profit mongers' palaces are amazingly multiplying.'¹²⁰ Rather, the solution lay in the Charter and the political and social reorganisation of society that was expounded by the new Chartist platform, and was inextricably linked to an international context.

This internationalist agenda had become explicit by December 1850. The opening issue of the *Friend of the People*, included the following in its mission-statement:

'Believing that all the peoples of the earth are brethren, we shall labour to promote the active fraternity of nations. The voice of our brother democrats of continental Europe will be heard through our columns, and an effort will be made to counteract the evils of the diplomatic system of our rulers, by appealing to the people to perform their part in the grand drama of European politics. The renewal of the great conflict between the nations and their tyrants cannot be far distant, and to point out the course that the British people should take in connection with that conflict, will be one of the duties of the *Friend of the People*.'¹²¹

But what was this course to be? This was exactly what one correspondent had asked earlier in the year. John Rickards, a Chartist from Newtown in Wales, wrote approvingly of Macfarlane's article 'Chartism in 1850', but stated that the democrats of the town nevertheless believed it to be deficient 'inasmuch as the article does not give a definition of social rights'. He further suggested that 'your able correspondent ... take the matter up again' and produce a plan of action that might be discussed prior to the convening of the next Chartist conference. The result of such a discussion, Rickards hoped, would be the creation of a pamphlet or document – similar to the People's Charter – that would set out some comprehensive aims.¹²²

Macfarlane responded that 'the object of all *real*, that is, of all Social Reformers ... is to improve the social condition of the producers.' This should be done, Macfarlane argued, in line with the natural rights as set out by Robespierre. As she explained: 'The Rights of one human being are precisely the same as the Rights of another human being, *in virtue of their common nature*.' The whole system of rights was built on the framework of equality – 'one of the primitive and inalienable Rights of Man' – that, quoting Blanc,

¹²⁰ *Red Republican*, 12 October 1850, 130.

¹²¹ 'Our Mission', *Friend of the People*, 14 December 1850, 5.

¹²² 'Democratic and Social Propaganda', *Red Republican*, 27 July 1850, 44.

determined 'To every one according to his wants, from every one according to his powers'. She reasoned that it could not be realised without a thorough-going reform of the system that substituted 'the principle of *Association* for that of *Competition*'. This led Macfarlane to

'two propositions:

- I. The soil and capital are collective property;
- II. These instruments of labour being common to All, should be used for the benefit of All, that is, used on the principles of *Association* and *Universal Solidarity*'.

Both of these, Macfarlane insisted, arose from the 'natural and unalienable Rights of Man, and are common ground upon which all sections of Social Reformers can meet.' As for a more specific programme, Macfarlane pointed Chartists to a few examples of the ideas that continental socialists had derived from those two propositions: compulsory and 'gratuitous' education; 'Justice ... administered gratuitously'; a right to state support for unemployment, sickness, and old age; private banks to be 'replaced by a single national bank'; indirect taxation substituted by 'a single direct tax'; the practice of usury to be 'replaced by a system of gratuitous national credit'; and the institution of paper money.¹²³

However, Macfarlane quickly moved from the objects of reform to the means of attaining it – this, she announced, was the most pressing concern – and required a union between all of the factions of social reformers, 'whether Owenites, National reform Leaguers, Fraternal Democrats, Red Republicans, Socialists, or Chartists,' into a single organisation. In this way, social reformers could pool their resources to combat the machinations of the Financial Reformers and carry out the extensive social propaganda that 1848 had shown was lacking.¹²⁴

Strikingly, Macfarlane posed the question of organisation as a subject of ongoing discussion – a conversation to be had between those whose training had, as hers,

¹²³ 'Democratic Organisation', *Red Republican*, 17 August 1850, 67-68.

¹²⁴ *Red Republican*, 17 August 1850, 68.

‘chiefly been amongst books and literature’ and those ‘whose education has been one continuous battle with the stern realities of life.’¹²⁵ In other words, the new Chartist programme, directed from below, was envisioned as a means to adapt socialist principles to the working-class experience itself. The conversation was duly taken up by two other correspondents to the *Red Republican*, Richard Marsden and James Williams – both of whom had been energetic activists for the Charter in the early days of the movement, but had since ceased their active affiliation.¹²⁶ Marsden, writing of organisation, asserted that any union had to be built on a foundation of solid principles – general propositions were not enough. ‘When Robespierre brought forward his “Declaration of Rights,”’ Marsden wrote, all assented, ‘but the instant it was attempted to bring those principles into working order, all was confusion.’¹²⁷ What social reformers should aim at, Marsden continued, was a programme that did away with all ‘class made law’ – or in other words, the Charter, pure and simple.¹²⁸ Williams, perhaps still wincing at memories of the acrimony that accompanied his abandonment of the Charter in 1842, declared that while ‘the consolidation of the democratic mind of the country’ into one body was ‘most devoutly to be wished’, it was hampered by but one thing.¹²⁹ With prescience, William argued that the ego of individuals would prevent any movement for the greater good. Until ‘the desire to be the great I AM ... is conquered, the union of the democratic mind of the country is hopeless.’¹³⁰

‘The union of all honest reformers into one grand consolidated body,’ Harney replied, ‘has been zealously and eloquently advocated by several contributors of this journal ... and we have reason to believe is earnestly desired by the great majority of the British

¹²⁵ *Red Republican*, 17 August 1850, 68.

¹²⁶ Richard Marsden was a weaver and union activist from Preston, a ‘physical force’ Chartist, and supporter of the general strike in 1839. Like many activists, after 1848 he became disillusioned and supposedly ceased his political activity. J. E. King, ‘Marsden, Richard (1802/3–1858)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 17 March 2015; J. E. King, *Richard Marsden and the Preston Chartists, 1837–1848* (Lancaster, 1981). James Williams was presumably the Sunderland bookseller whose partnership with George Binns helped to inject the North-east with some of its early vitality during the Great Northern Union of 1838. In the disillusion that followed the failure of the 1842 petition, Williams joined the Anti-Corn Law League. Chase, *Chartism: A New History*, pp. 31; 236–38.

¹²⁷ ‘Popular Organisation’, *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 114.

¹²⁸ *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 115.

¹²⁹ *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 115. For the acrimony of 1842 see: Chase, *Chartism: A New History*, pp. 236–38.

¹³⁰ *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 115.

Democracy.¹³¹ While he agreed that ‘there is too much of truth’ to Williams’s remarks, the degree of ‘self-sacrifice and true fraternity’ that had accompanied early moves by leaders of the democratic groupings to attain a united organisation should ‘entitle them to plead not guilty’.¹³² As for Marsden’s argument that the Charter must be the result of any democratic agitation, Harney agreed, ‘but with this difference, that we would have the people instructed in a knowledge of their social rights while struggling for the obtainment of political power.’ While the Charter was to be the first step, Harney argued, any union of reformers must refrain from restricting the education of first principles and of socialism. For Harney, the ultimate end of any agitation had to be ‘the Charter and the ultimate establishment of the Republic—Democratic and Social!’ With Chartism’s decline failing to abate, Harney’s ambition was to preserve an independent class party by merging elements of the reform movement together under the banner of democratic and social reform.¹³³ Convening in August 1850, a Democratic Conference, containing delegates from the National Charter Association; the Social Reform League, a union of socialist and co-operative organisations that included Owenites and Christian Socialists; Bronterre O’Brien’s National Reform League; the Fraternal Democrats; ‘advanced’ members of the Parliamentary Reform Association; and supported by trades organisations, sat to discuss the formation of a united party.¹³⁴ While the initiative seemed to make good progress early on, it had stalled by the end of the year, ultimately faltering on the ideological clefts carved by years of ceaseless agitation.¹³⁵

However, the Conference was not entirely fruitless. The initial programme, drawn up in October 1850, contained the People’s Charter; measures to enable the easier association of workers; nationalisation of land; the replacement of the Poor Law with paid work for the unemployed; payment for the relief for the old and infirm; freedom

¹³¹ ‘Union!’, *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 116.

¹³² *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 116.

¹³³ Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, pp. 218-19.

¹³⁴ Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 276-283; Finn, *After Chartism*, p. 132; Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, pp. 207-208.

¹³⁵ For example, while letters from Holyoake and Thornton Hunt, printed in October 1850, displayed that in principle the different representatives involved in the Democratic Conference could agree to union, there remained several questions that ignited hostility, most notably on the inclusion of the Charter. ‘On the Past Failures and Future Policy of Democratic Politicians’, *Red Republican*, 5 October 1850, 123-24; ‘Proposed Union of the Popular Forces’, *Red Republican*, 5 October 1850, 125-26.

of speech; and the founding of a system of secular education.¹³⁶ By year's end, a resolution was adopted, stating: 'That to accomplish an effective union of the democratic and social reformers, it is the opinion of this conference that the basis of such a union must be the fusion of existing democratic and social reform bodies into an association "one and indivisible"'. It passed with a large majority – Chartists voting unanimously in its favour. The name delegates chose for their new association was 'the National Charter and Social Reform Union' and its objectives included: 'securing for Great Britain and Ireland a just, wise, and good government and such an equitable distribution of the fruits of industry, as may be conducive to the best interests of all members of the commonwealth.' Harney was particularly pleased that 'The nonsense about "peaceful and legal" [means] ... was very properly struck out.'¹³⁷ Macfarlane, writing of the Democratic and Social Republic, added that any organisation of this sort should also include equality, liberty, fraternity as its central tenets.¹³⁸

Disunity plagued the proceedings. Harney reported in mid-November that the Chartists were to be short-changed in terms of the number of votes allotted to each faction within the society, and the removal of one section of reformers – Bronterre's National Reform League – for Harney, symbolised the futility of the whole endeavour. While his resolution at the conference that aimed to suspend proceedings was voted down, little else about the Conference was reported in the *Red Republican* or the *Friend of the People*.¹³⁹

By the end of 1851, Chartism had been re-composed, and while it operated on a much narrower basis, it had absorbed all of the propositions developed by the Democratic Conference. Moreover, the programme of reform that it developed was essentially unchanged from that discussed in the *Democratic Review* in 1849. The 'Charter and Something More', adopted by the National Charter Association in May 1851 had, in essence, been developed in full by 1850. Not only, then, was its development directly

¹³⁶ *Red Republican*, 5 October 1850, 123; 126; Claeys, *Politics and Anti-politics*, p. 278; Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, 208.

¹³⁷ *Red Republican*, 19 October 1850, 141.

¹³⁸ *Red Republican*, 12 October 1850, 131.

¹³⁹ *Red Republican*, 16 November 1850, 173.

related to the 1848 revolutions, but, by the time of its adoption, it had also become standard radical currency beyond Chartist circles. More significantly, however, this programme was interpreted and discussed within an internationalist, revolutionary, and European idiom.

Chapter 9

'Cossack Supremacy'

At the end of 1848, the *Northern Star* ran a seemingly innocuous piece entitled 'Napoleon's Prophecy'.¹ 'Before fifty years', Napoleon confided to the author Las Cases, who had accompanied the emperor on his exile to Saint Helena, 'Europe will be Republican or Cossack.'² Thought to be 'now in course of fulfilment' Napoleon's prophecy would make a regular appearance in the *Democratic Review* throughout 1849. In his first editorial, Harney complained that the prophecy would have been realised during the year of revolutions had it not been for

the half-and-half measures of LAMARTINE and the majority of the French Provisional Government, followed by the counter-revolutionary acts of the National Assembly, the sabre rule of CAVAINAC, and the treason of BUONAPARTE the Second, Europe would, ere now have been Republican from the Baltic to the Mediterranean—from the Bay of Biscay to the Black Sea.³

'The republican cause' had 'been betrayed by professed Republicans' and now a 'grand struggle between Western Progression and Northern Barbarism' was in the making, the outcome of which would settle, once and for all, 'NAPOLEON'S prophecy; "Europe will become Republican or Cossack."⁴

For Harney, writing in June 1849, it was obvious which side of the struggle would prevail: 'The French will fling off the bourgeois night-mare and trample in the dust their deceivers and betrayers.'⁵ However, in September, news of Hungary's capitulation to Russia and Austria prompted the following response:

The prediction of Napoleon is being rapidly fulfilled ... by the victory of Despotism. ... The *bourgeois* terrorists reign in France, the *monkish* terrorists rule in Rome, the *royal* terrorists are masters of Germany; and now Hungary

¹ *Northern Star*, 28 October, 6.

² Las Cases published his recollections of the time he spent with Bonaparte in the famous *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène*. An English edition was published in London in 1823.

³ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 5.

⁴ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 5.

⁵ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 5.

lies writhing, bleeding at every pore, crushed under the heel of the Cossack. ... But defeat, ruin, despair lends new force to our hatred of the tyrants, against whom we invoke the vengeance of the Human Race. By our frustrated hopes, by our proscribed and slaughtered brethren, and by the hatred we cherish towards their destroyers, we cry ONWARDS!⁶

Gerald Massey picked up the theme for the first issue of the *Red Republican*. Writing in June 1850, Massey announced that the peoples of Europe were forming into two great armies, between which there could be no compromise. The gulf that separated them

will be filled with blood and corpses. The question for us is whose blood? whose corpses? Hitherto it has been the corpses of the best and the bravest of men. Hitherto it has been such workers for holy Liberty as Christ and Robespierre, the brothers Bandiera and Robert Blum ... but the sea saw of power ascends at our end now.⁷

The Times, and its fellow newspapers, spoke with ‘the language of the Cossack, of the Court, the Quirinal, and the Bourse.’ June was the ‘real’ revolution of 1848, the beginning of the war on ‘the Cossack of competition – this spirit of trade, of mammonism, of profit-mongering—which in the shape of an exchangeocracy is killing us ... with a tyranny more atrocious than the deadly, blind, and opaque oppression of feudalism.’⁸ For the proletariat, the only question to be answered was: ‘Cossack or Republican? All minor questions for us working men must be merged into this grand one.’⁹

By the end of the year, Harney, writing in his final editorial for the *Red Republican*, drearily related that ‘Looking at the present state of continental Europe, one is almost led to anticipate the fulfilment of the black, not the brilliant, side of the Corsican’s prediction.’¹⁰ Almost, but not quite. For, while the Cossacks dominated Europe, keeping Italy ‘impotent’ and Hungary in chains; while the leaders of France colluded with Russia; and while ‘The rulers of England’, busy emasculating the nation, ‘are the fettered tools of ... liberticidal classes’, revolution in Europe could still ignite the ‘Holy War’.¹¹ A ‘war

⁶ ‘Political Postscript’, *Democratic Review*, September 1849, 160.

⁷ ‘Cossack or Republican’, *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 5.

⁸ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 6.

⁹ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 6.

¹⁰ ‘Cossack Supremacy’, *Red Republican*, 30 November 1850, 185.

¹¹ *Red Republican*, 30 November 1850, 185-86.

against kings and tyrants of every description' that could only result in the final victory of republicanism.¹² It was 'the cause of all nations' and whenever it might arrive, 'the hour must come when freedom's sons will march on the Great Crusade for the overthrow of the Cossack, to the cry of "VIVE LA REPUBLIQUE UNIVERSELLE, DEMOCRATIQUE ET SOCIALE!"'¹³

In the *Friend of the People* the Cossack foe had morphed into the 'Party of Order', the common short-hand for the union of conservative powers that were prosecuting the European reaction. For Louis Blanc, it represented the 'Genius of Evil' which, 'while busily employed' in waging the counter-revolution, would be ultimately undone by the advancement of socialism – 'the gospel in practice'.¹⁴ In May 1851, news from France brought a prediction that 1852, the year of the presidential elections, would witness those suffering 'prostration ... beneath the Cossack yoke' beginning the 'decisive struggle between the French democracy and their enemies.'¹⁵ Pierre Leroux, the French socialist and artisan-philosopher, voiced a similar thought when he declared that socialism was the antithesis of reaction.¹⁶ It was a product of the 'Divine Will' that had animated humanity since the primordial age; it was lodged in the Enlightenment, 'the spirit of the 18th and preceding centuries'; and the followers of socialism were nought but 'the disciples of the Christ of Nazereth'.¹⁷

They were also Chartists, who were called upon in May 1851 to mobilize for the Charter.¹⁸ 'Men of Britain!' they were urged, 'why should it not be your mission to give freedom to the world? Why should our land not be in the van of that glorious army, which shall yet root out every tyranny, and abolish every injustice?'¹⁹ While Britain had faltered in 1848, and while the nation simply watched the struggle rage across the continent during 1849-1850, the time to awake and to fight was now. For, 'there is no

¹² *Red Republican*, 30 November 1850, 186.

¹³ *Red Republican*, 30 November 1850, 186.

¹⁴ 'Order, Family, Prosperity', *Friend of the People*, 14 December 1850, 5; 'Socialism', *Friend of the People*, 5 July 1851, 257.

¹⁵ 'The Time for Action', *Friend of the People*, 3 May 1851, 182.

¹⁶ 'Socialism versus Reaction', *Friend of the People*, 31 May 1851, 218.

¹⁷ *Friend of the People*, 31 May 1851, 218.

¹⁸ 'The Chartist Convention', *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 157-58.

¹⁹ 'To the People', *Friend of the People*, 3 May 1851, 183.

middle path—*Europe* must be Republican or Russian.²⁰ The convention, meeting in London in late March and early April 1851 delivered the most comprehensive programme of reforms of any previous Chartist mobilization.²¹ It announced that in order to carry the Charter, a new mode of organisation would be instituted. While the Charter would remain paramount, not only would Chartists now ally themselves with social reformers generally, but the movement would also consciously prepare itself to take on the role of agent of the revolution.

Funds and manpower allowing, the new programme determined that Chartist representatives should stand at every constituency in the United Kingdom during the general election of 1852; that Chartists, where the local organisation was able to support them, should also contest municipal elections; that agitation should aim to unite Chartism and the trades; that a mission should be undertaken in the countryside, and that ‘special missionaries be sent to the Irish people, and also to the colliers, miners and railway labourers’.²² Beyond measures for organisation, the new convention saw Chartism ‘as the UNITER of these isolated, but in fact homogenous interests’ and a means ‘to wield the millions into one compact mass—to evoke the dormant mind of the century’. The principles of the Charter were to be carried by ‘continuous and universal agitation’ in all of these spheres and regions.²³

The Charter, too, had been transformed – amended to include ten additional points, many of which bore the hallmarks of the struggles of 1848 and the intervening years: ‘THE LAND’, ‘the inalienable inheritance of all mankind’, was to be nationalised, with tracts divided amongst the poor and administered by the state – a result of Chartism’s convergence with Owenism, its participation in the Democratic Conference in 1850, and a position advocated by Terrigenous, a regular contributor to the *Democratic Review*; ‘THE CHURCH’ was to be transformed, separated from the state, and denied a continuation of its historical role in education; ‘EDUCATION’ was asserted as a right –

²⁰ *Friend of the People*, 3 May 1851, 182-83.

²¹ ‘Programme of Agitation’, *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 158-59.

²² *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 158-59.

²³ *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 158-59.

schools and universities, the convention argued, should be opened to all, an education 'in the common branches of learning' should be compulsory, and the state should be obliged to establish industrial schools for the teaching of trades and professions; a 'LABOUR LAW' should be introduced, enshrining co-operation, and effectively establishing the Organisation of Labour along the lines laid out by Louis Blanc and the French Labour Commission in 1848; the 'POOR LAW', an affront to 'the duty of every man to work' should be reformed to establish the state's obligation to support all those who could not work with remunerative labour or a weekly allowance from the national revenue; all 'TAXATION' to be 'levied on land and accumulated property'; 'THE ARMY' and 'THE NAVY' to be gradually wound down, as standing forces 'are contrary to the principles of Democracy, and dangerous to the liberties of the people' – in particular troops should no longer be isolated from the citizen, subjected to physical punishments, and all officers should be elected from the ranks; and, finally, 'As it is the right of every individual to bear arms' in defence of the state and in defence of liberty, every male citizen who was able 'should be afforded the opportunity of military training' and service in 'THE MILITIA'.²⁴

Ultimately, however, this new phase of Chartism was an anti-climax. The national organisation had frayed to the point where it was unable, from lack of funds and manpower, to agitate for a new petition. Over the following months, personal rivalries, particularly between Julian Harney and Ernest Jones, flared up over questions of leadership and strategy, weakening the movement still further. Though unrepentant in his 'Jacobinism', Harney bowed out of the race – the *Friend of the People*, he explained, had failed to pay its way.²⁵ While one further run of issues was attempted, as Saville notes, it belonged to a different stage of Harney's career. By this point, he had given up on the Charter.²⁶ The final issues of the Chartist stage of the *Friend of the People* ran a series on Marat and Robespierre, as well as a series on socialism by Louis Blanc.²⁷ In

²⁴ *Friend of the People*, 12 April 1851, 158-59.

²⁵ 'To the Readers of the Friend of the People', *Friend of the People*, 12 July 1851, 264-65

²⁶ Saville (ed.), *The Red Republican*, p. xv.

²⁷ 'Marat and Robespierre', *Friend of the People*, 21 June 1851, 237-239; 'Robespierre', 28 June 1851, 245-247; 5 July 1851, 253-254; 12 July 1851, 261-262; 'Socialism', 5 July 1851, 257-258; 19 July 1851, 270-71.

Harney's farewell address in the final issue of the Chartist *Friend of the People* on 26 July 1851, he once more looked to France.²⁸ Following 'the triumph of the RED REPUBLIC across the Channel', Harney announced:

will come to pass the struggle predicted by BUONAPARTE at St. Helena, the struggle which will determine whether Europe shall be Republican or Cossack. The salvation of the nations will then depend upon their union and their fraternity. The success of the revolution will depend upon its extension. ... The question is put to Europe: 'Cossack or Republican?' and the hour draws nigh when this question must be answered, once and for ever. The issue for the millions of Europe—this country included—will be death or life, slavery or freedom, misery or happiness. ... I adjure you to shake off your apathy, to fraternise with your continental brethren, and to labour with them for Europe's regeneration. I exhort you to employ all the means at your command to hasten the glorious time when ... the *Reign of Justice* shall be inaugurated to the jubilant cry of '*Vive la République Universelle, Democratique, et Sociale!*'²⁹

Ultimately, this prophesy did not come to pass. 1852 did not see the Red Republic established across the Channel, rather, it witnessed Louis Napoleon's Eighteenth Brumaire: the inauguration of the Second French Empire. The next great revolutionary upheaval in France occurred during the Paris Commune of 1871 and radicalism, on both sides of the Channel, had transformed into something new. So too had Harney, whose writings in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* during 1890s, following his return to Britain after a lengthy emigration in America, revealed a man who had become deeply disillusioned.³⁰ And it is little wonder. Writing in his ill-fated newspaper the *Vanguard* in 1853, Harney was to look once more to 'Europe's Destiny' and the revolutionary renewal he was certain it encompassed:

Certain it is, that the European nations have a common destiny, be that destiny what it may. That it will be Republican or Cossack is undoubted Republican or Cossack? which of these two principles shall rule the Europe of the future? ... Let those who still cling devotedly to the cause of justice and truth but continue to uphold their banner pure and unsullied—to spread their principles of equality, of liberty, [of] fraternity—be the veritable VANGUARD of the

²⁸ 'The Republic—Democratic—Social—and Universal', *Friend of the People*, 26 July 1851, 277-79.

²⁹ *Friend of the People*, 26 July 1851, 279

³⁰ For a full discussion of Harney's views during this time see David Goodway (ed.), *George Julian Harney: The Chartists Were Right. Selections from the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 1890-97* (London, 2014).

conquering army of the future, and Britain will be greater than she has yet been, and will aid in working out Europe's glorious destiny.³¹

However, in no small part due to his own tireless efforts, during the 1840s and 1850s, Chartism had become equipped with an important internationalist dimension. Initially existing in the form of a small group called the Fraternal Democrats, in 1848 this group became a central pillar of the Chartist organisation. Furthermore, from this internationalist organisation sprang the early efforts to repatriate and integrate the European exiles who fled to Britain during 1848-1852, following the onset of the European reaction.

³¹ Julian Harney (ed.), *Vanguard: A Weekly Journal*, (London, 1853), 37-38.

arrived fresh from stirring up controversy in Uxbridge, where the 'ultra' newspaper they had co-founded in 1849, the *Uxbridge Spirit of Freedom*, had some success in rousing the sleepy suburb with provocative articles signed by the likes of 'An Ouvrier', 'A Democrat', and 'A Proletarian'.⁵ Their efforts had been conducted independently, without the aid of the NCA, and the grass-roots nature of the publication was praised in both the *Democratic Review* and the *Northern Star*.⁶ In joining the ranks of Harney's democratic and social missionaries, Leno and Massey lectured throughout London, an activity which would secure their leading positions in the Christian Socialist and co-operative movements over the coming years.⁷ It was, according to Leno, in their socialist seminaries, lodged in a Holborn pub, that some of the next generation of trade union leaders would receive their first political instruction.⁸ During the 1860s, Leno himself would serve on the council of the First International.⁹ However, it was internationalism of a different kind that would occupy activists like Leno and Massey during their tenures in the Chartist Movement.

As members of the Fraternal Democrats, Massey and Leno were front and centre in delivering fraternal assistance to the émigrés of the European revolutions who were now beginning to cluster around Soho and Leicester Square. During the years 1849-52, thousands of émigrés arrived on British shores, but, for Chartism's activists, the period was also notable for another reason. It was during these years that hopes were briefly raised by the renewal of the revolutions in Italy and Hungary, and then quickly quashed

Democrats. See *Democratic Review*, 'Editorial Explanations—The Political Martyrs', October 1849, 198-200, 'To the Working Classes', November 1849, 201-7 and December 1849, 241-7, and 'Fraternal Democrats', November 1849, 240. See also Joan Allen, "'The teacher of strange doctrines": George Julian Harney and the *Democratic Review*, 1849-1850', *Labour History Review*, vol. 78, no. 1, 2013, p. 79.

⁵ *Northern Star*, 5 May 1849, 3.

⁶ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, p. 204. For Harney's review, see *Democratic Review*, July 1849, 79-80. For the reviews in the *Northern Star* see the following issues: 7 April 1849, 3, 5 May 1849, 3, 9 June 1849, 3, 7 July 1849, 3, 4 August 1849, 3, 8 September 1849, 3, 13 October 1849, 3, 17 November 1849, 3, 8 December 1849, 3.

⁷ Along with his regular columns in the *Red Republican*, Massey also wrote for Christian Socialist periodicals. His Chartist sympathies were not endearing qualities to the editors of these journals, so Massey signed his articles for Harney's publications 'Bandiera' and 'Armand Carrel'. See Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, p. 205, Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge*, p. 203n, and Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (eds), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 400. For details on the kinds of circles activists like Massey and Leno moved in during the early 1850s, see Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge*, pp. 218-19; 226.

⁸ Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge*, p. 200.

⁹ Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge*, p. 200.

by the decisive intervention of counterrevolutionary powers. Chartists' emotional responses to these events were captured in the poetry columns of their remaining journals and newspapers.¹⁰ As Chartists began to digest the implications of defeat, they also valorised those who took part in the revolutionary struggles of the continent. As living symbols of the revolutions of 1848, the emigres were naturally swept up in this process. Descriptions of their predicament and discussions of their legacy were suffused with rhetoric borrowed directly from the poetry of these years. As was so often the case with Chartism, the historical and the poetical were indivisible from the political – they fused together to form three different dimensions of a Chartist epistemology.

However, poetry was in much shorter supply in the post-1848 period than it had been during the Chartist heyday. The *Northern Star*, which had always given the movement's poets pride of place, struggled to fill its poetry columns – a situation that was deepened by Harney's editorial departure in 1850.¹¹ It is hard to disagree with Mike Sanders' view that this contraction in the volume of Chartist poetry in the movement's leading periodical represents a repudiation of poetry's central importance in the culture of Chartism.¹² However, poetry was nevertheless significantly employed in the journals and newspapers that appeared in the wake of the *Northern Star's* protracted demise. While the events of 1848 had caused a new wave of minor publications to rise and fall with the prospects of the movement, the period 1849-50 witnessed something of a modest revival of Chartist print.¹³ Periodicals like the *Democratic Review* and the *Uxbridge Spirit of Freedom* would provide a new creative outlet for Chartist poets.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, this was also the key year that the poetical search for meaning in the revolutionary experience began.

One reason why this search could not be conducted from within the pages of the *Northern Star* (leaving aside its falling circulation rate and the decline in Chartist membership) was that the political centre of Chartism had shifted in a complex and

¹⁰ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 205-6.

¹¹ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 83-4.

¹² Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, p. 84.

¹³ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, p. 83.

¹⁴ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, p. 83.

fragmented way that could not be contained in a single newspaper, no matter how broadly it was made to appeal. While Chartism had weathered its fair share of schisms in the past, members had generally been united behind the programme of reform embedded in the six points of the People's Charter. This consensus had allowed for an indefinite editorial line to be drawn, representing and appealing to a broad spectrum of opinion. After 1848, not only was the basis of the Charter itself questioned, but with the collapse, too, of traditional means of agitation, it is difficult to conceive of a line drawn so loosely that it could encompass the variety of Chartist opinion. The closest that any periodical came was Harney's *Democratic Review* where revolutionary, democratic, and Socialist elements of British and European radicalism found a generally indiscriminating editor.

Excepting the *Northern Star*, Harney's *Democratic Review* was one of few Chartist periodicals with a national circulation to weather the storm of 1849.¹⁵ Not only does his journal reveal the intense suffusion of continental thought in 'late' Chartism, but by 1850 it was also one of very few journals in Europe providing a forum for democratic socialism.¹⁶ Yet, while the *Review* wrestled with the theoretical questions raised by the revolutionary experience, it nevertheless combined this with more cultural fare. Harney never disguised the financial difficulties he encountered in running the journal, and lamented on a number of occasions of having to leave out more than he could print. In the crush and crowd that accompanied the tightening of editorial space, Harney made a special effort to ensure that the *Review's* poetry column made a regular appearance. The poetry section of the *Review* carried an idiosyncratic mixture of original Chartist verse, poems from famous authors, and reprinted pieces from American and Australian sources. Yet, although they contained a seemingly ad-hoc mixture of concerns and causes, the majority of the poems nevertheless provided a commentary on the revolutionary struggles. Taken together, they provide a glimpse into the emotional

¹⁵ When considered alongside his substantial weekly contributions to the *Northern Star*, Harney's journalism covered the entire period of the European Revolutions (1848-1852) – the only Chartist to have consistently been in print over this period. The only other national publication that could make similar claim was *Reynolds's Political Instructor* (November 1849 – May 1850), which morphed into *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* after May 1850.

¹⁶ Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge*, p. 186.

trajectory of Chartism during the key years of 1849-50, as activists came to terms with the defeat of revolution abroad and of agitation at home. They also set the tone for the poetry that was to appear in the *Red Republican* and the poetical renderings of pro-émigré prose. Appearing in the *Red Republican* for 1851, Massey's 'Men of "Forty-eight"' were actually forged in the mental crucible of 'forty-nine' and 'fifty'.

The first poem in the *Review*, published in June 1849, would seem to urge an expression of unity among democrats – whether domestic or foreign; Chartist, émigré, or republican. William James Linton's 'For Rome!' effortlessly conflates the nationalist revolutions in the Italian states and the Habsburg Empire with universal freedom and liberty:

For Rome! for Rome! ay, for the world!
 Our quarrel is the same,
 Where'er a flag may be unfir'd,
 Or beacon summons flame.¹⁷

Whether fighting side-by-side with the Hungarian patriots in the wooded knolls of distant Buda, or marching arm-in-arm with Chartist brothers in the cobbled streets of York, 'For Rome!', so the poem urged, was the catch-all cry of freedom:

Beneath the gleam of Kossuth's sword,
 Or in our darkened streets,
 'Tis freedom's sacred battle word,
 Our cry, our hope repeats.

The final stanza forms an emotional crescendo. It begins by likening the Roman cause to the universal and timeless struggle of Right against Tyranny, before ending with a rallying cry that is punctuated by a play on the familiar republican trope of 'liberty or death':

For Rome! for Rome! for human right;
 For liberty and growth!
 Our words foredoom Oppression's might:

¹⁷ *Democratic Review*, June 1849, 113.

Our lives fulfil that oath.
 “For Rome! for Rome!” Come weal or woe,
 Maintain the Roman cry;
 And every heart be Roman now!—
 We will be free or die.

‘For Rome’ carries with it a certain finality that is not present in typical mottos associated with the movement, such as ‘the Charter and no Surrender’. While the latter seeks to emphasise resolve in the terminable struggle for liberty, the former shows its republican colours in its demand for immediate results – or oblivion.

As Linton urges, the maintenance of radical morale was of the utmost importance, but the notion, too, of words holding power over oppression was a familiar theme, and one that was to be repeated over the next few years. While Chartist hopes for a revival seemed increasingly fantastical, and the revolution on the continent was decisively quashed, Chartism began to fragment and factionalise. But during 1849-50, an uneasy unity settled upon the republican segment of the movement. For example, the relationship between Linton and Harney could be described as being somewhat fractious during 1848, with Linton setting out a rival internationalist approach and sending a separate delegation to Paris from that endorsed by the Chartist leadership.¹⁸ For Linton, Harney’s attacks on the ‘moderates’, particularly Lamartine, and his praise for the most radical portion of the French revolutionaries, bordered on support for physical force. Linton’s republic, as his journal *The English Republic* (1851-1855) would set out, was defined by its celebration of the memory of Cromwell above that of Robespierre.¹⁹ Yet, over the next two years it was in Harney’s periodicals that Linton was able to publish his poetry – alongside translations of articles by his two greatest heroes: Mazzini and George Sand.²⁰

¹⁸ Fancis Smith, *Radical Artisan: William James Linton, 1812-97* (Manchester, 1973), pp. 71-84, Edward Royle, ‘The Cause of the People, the People’s Charter Union and “Moral Force” Chartism in 1848’ in *Papers for the People: A Study of the Chartist Press*, eds Joan Allen and Owen Ashton (Monmouth, 2005), pp. 146-67.

¹⁹ See for example Linton’s introduction to the first volume of the journal: *English Republic*, vol. I (1851), 3-5.

²⁰ Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 73.

The remaining poetry in the *Review* meandered through a number of complex themes, but tended to hinge on the rhetorical opposition of freedom and death. 'The Glorious Fourth of July', carrying no author but dedicated to 'everybody', celebrates the vastness of the United States.²¹ It likens the physical geography of the nation to an image of an enormous 'bird of freedom', an eagle stretching its wings between the Pacific and Atlantic oceans:

One wing flaps o'er the Atlantic wave and one o'er the Pacific,
His tale o'ershadows Mexico, and, vision beatific!
He holds within his specie claws, so big and broad and horny,
The goose that lays the golden eggs—immortal Californy!

Interestingly, there is little allusion in the poem to laws or rights – and only one reference to the constitution:

Then would I execrate Lord North, and ban the stamp and tea-tax,
And put it into George the Third as savage as a meat-ax.
...
Extol the deeds of Washington and all the patriot signers,
And show how Marion cleared the swamps in both the
Carolinas.

Instead, the struggle for independence and the rugged endeavour of national expansion thematically play on one another to give a conjoined sense of spatial and personal liberty. 'Shall the Foot of the Slave Again Tread on Our Shores?', from the Australian journal *The People's Advocate, and New South Wales' Vindicator*, similarly invoked the dualism of space and struggle.²² The author calls out to shepherds grazing their flocks on the distant mountains and to those enjoying the comforts of home to fight for freedom against colonial authority. The author instils in the image of Australia notions of arable beauty, bounty, and plenty alongside a feeling of spatial disparity. The vision of Australia is what unites the patriots of the poem, rather than explicit questions of justice or freedom. In fact, the slaves of the title make no actual appearance, but the

²¹ *Democratic Review*, September 1849, 153.

²² *Democratic Review*, October 1849, 188.

threat of their treading Australian soil is viewed as an affront to the bounty that Liberty has already showered upon the nation:

Oh! haste from the plains where your white flocks are grazing;
 Come down from the mountains where roam your free
 herds;
 Oh! leave the clean hearths, where your home fires are blazing;
 Nor heed ye, young men, soft Love's honied words.
 Leave the plough and the harrow, the anvil and spade,
 Oh! leave for a time all endearments of home;
 The tyrant is coming, and slavery's his trade,
 Arise in your strength, and say—Shall he come? —
 No, never! no, never!
 While we've hearts, and we've hands.

Yet, although diverse and disparate, the nation is rallied into a patriotic unity to fight against the imposition of slavery. The importance of rallying for a cause is a unifying theme. 'The Place Where Man Should Die', while as sombre as its title would suggest, poses death as a release from earthly suffering.²³ It asks the question that, if all men are destined to die, is it not better to die as a martyr to human freedom?

'Twere sweet, indeed, to close our eyes
 With those we cherish near,
 And wafted upwards, by their sighs,
 Soar to some calmer sphere,
 But, whether on the scaffold high,
 Or in the battle's van,
 The fittest place where man can die,
 Is where he dies for man!

Freedom's cause was also posed as the enlightened cause, as 'The March of Intellect' would suggest.²⁴ But this intellect also possessed a spiritual dimension – indeed, the two are inseparable. For, so the poem argues, to know the nature of Freedom is to understand that it emanates from a divine source. The Revolution is understood in a literal sense – as a return to a natural heritage, ordained by God. After the fight against tyranny is won, and freedom inevitably arrives though the sacrifice of its partisans,

²³ *Democratic Review*, October 1849, 189.

²⁴ *Democratic Review*, October 1849, 190.

‘Then a voice, fierce and awful, will echo aloud; / That “Freedom, the Birthright of man, is restored.”’ Announced by the divine, the restoration of freedom returns mankind to its natural state, inviting reflection on the themes of the previous two poems (that appear sequentially). Nature, plenty, unity, and freedom – these themes were intrinsically tied to both the struggle for the Charter and to the European revolutions. These causes were conflated and universalised as a singular quest for human freedom – one which encompassed key principles that could be supported from a radical, revolutionary, socialist, or republican position. These would include notions of the land as a common inheritance, the principled opposition to slavery (which also incorporated serfdom), and death for the cause as an honourable end. In this final sense, however, the whiff of defeat appears to already haunt the poetry, for there are few visions of victory provided beyond depictions of martyrdom. Rather than escape the fray, the poems insist that the bounty is worth the struggle. They attempt to rouse the audience from their homely comforts and argue that youthful death in the service of humanity is a divine calling – or at least one infinitely nobler than that arising from an old age steeped in compliance, ignorance, or apathy.

While the previous entries appear as somewhat abstract celebrations of martyrdom and national struggle, most of the remaining poems from 1849 were far more specific and were mostly directed at the revolution’s enemies on the international stage. ‘To Pius IX’, copied from an American paper *The Liberator*, reads as an ode to the revolutions in Italy, declaiming priesthood and kingcraft as false expressions of the divine.²⁵ ‘The Song of the Cossack’, translated from the French poet Béranger, would seem to flesh out this theme, casting a ravaging Cossack as the agent of the twin pillars of crown and religion.²⁶ Published in 1823 and written with the Napoleonic Wars in mind, the third stanza carried contemporary resonance following Russian intervention in Hungary. Additionally, the poem chimed with the recurring image of the battle between Cossack barbarism and Republican civilisation that was deployed in Chartist journalism of the period:

As in a fortress, princes, priests, and peers,

²⁵ *Democratic Review*, November 1849, 238-9.

²⁶ *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 307-8.

Besieged by their own subjects sore oppress'd,
 Cry to us— Come, be masters, end our fears;
 We will be serfs so tyrants we may rest.

Immediately following, 'On Fallen Hungary' cast shame on the other European powers for failing to act to halt the Cossack surge.²⁷ Yet, although broken, the Hungarian republicans emerge victorious in the end, for this tragic episode, the poem claims, throws stark light upon the bloody reality of Kingship:

Alas! that insects vile as these should stain
 The royal honour, and make Kings abhorr'd!
 Alas for Europe, which can ne'er again
 Know loyal love, or trust a monarch's word!
 Republicans, rejoice! the bloody game
 Though Russia rave, wins victory for you.
 Kings from ten thousand sulphurous lips proclaim,
 Kings are wild beasts, whom blows, not oaths, subdue.

Rounding off the first volume of the *Review* appeared the 'The Red Flag', an air by Alfred Fennell to be sang to the tune of Byron's 'Dark Lochnagar'.²⁸ Fennell's poem effectively represents a poetical valedictory to the European revolutions, summarizing the dramatic rising and dashing of hopes for the epic struggles rendered in its verses. The yearning for a new world, and the grasping for meaning, evident in the poems earlier in the year are less detectable in 'The Red Flag'. Rather, Fennell's poem announced a day of triumph mingled with vengeance:

'Tis in the Red Flag true Republicans glory;
 Red is the emblem of Justice and Right—
 By martyrs blood dyed, whose names live in story;
 The victors, though fallen, in Liberty's fight.
 Fast flow our tears for the fetter'd and slaughter'd;
 And exiles who wander o'er valley and crag.
 Too long has the earth by tyrants been tortured;
 They shall crouch yet, and cower, before our Red Flag!

²⁷ *Democratic Review*, January 1850, 308.

²⁸ *Democratic Review*, April 1850, 434-5.

Fennell's verse contains some familiar tropes – the Red Flag, for instance is dyed by the blood of martyrs, just as in Jim Connell's famous anthem of 1889. However, rather than representing a generational struggle, and one in which past martyrs imbue the standard with an honorific aura, Fennell's martyrs lay in victorious repose. Their deaths appear vindicated by the inevitable victory of Liberty, as they have consecrated the future struggle with the sacrifice of their own lives. There is a specificity in the remembrance of the fallen – the poem promises that their names will be chronicled and future generations will tell tales of their exploits. These martyrs are actively mourned and their sacrifices are keenly felt by those they leave behind. The tears that flow in grief quickly sour as the poem moves to reflect on the ongoing suffering of the exiles, forced to flee their tortured homelands. Finally, the promise looms of future restoration – yet a restoration that is temporally displaced.

Importantly, victory here is not divinely inspired, nor does the poem make a vague promise of future bounty. Rather, victory is won by the resolve of those who carry the fire of struggle within them – the betrayals and sufferings of which appear raw as an open wound:

Away to the winds with the cant "moderation!"
 Mercy is not with king, tiger, or snake,
 Crush to the dust as they've crush'd each nation—
 In the day of our triumph, kings tremble and quake.
 "Mercy!" yes, *Mercy* such as *they* gave us
Such we'll return, and throneless we'll drag
 From their high places those who enslave us,
 To bow—mean and abject—before our Red Flag!

The deep schisms in the revolutionary movement play out starkly in the second and third verses. While Fennell does not go as far as Harney and others in branding moderates with the stamp of 'traitor', 'moderation' is nonetheless regarded as a foolish and hypocritical course. It is also insufficient when weighed against the just demand for retribution. Compared to the crimes perpetrated by the despots of the reaction, to be moderate is to be merciful. To hoist the Red Flag is to reject and scorn any

Marseillaise' and 'Chorus of the Girondists'.²⁹ As Mike Sanders has noted, Fennell's 'Tricolour' was motivated by a desire in 1848 amongst many of Chartism's poets to help popularise 'Anglo-Irish unity'.³⁰ By merging 'The red, the white, with Erin's green' Fennell's earlier poem is one of several that mark attempts to create space within the discourse of British radicalism for an articulation of Irish national independence. Additionally, Fennell's first published poem in the *Northern Star*, 'A Song' (1846) pledged the author to moral force Chartism. The use of reason, not arms, was the sole moral course in the defiance of tyranny ('With reason's weapons in our hand; / All tyrants we'll defy').³¹ Yet, as 'The Red Flag' clearly shows, the appeal of both positions – that of a moderate tricolour (as distinct from Irish independence) and that of moral force – had become shaken by the events of 1848.

The sense of injustice and the veneration of martyrdom that characterised Fennell's 'Red Flag' also suffused Gerald Massey's poems in the *Red Republican*. As Mike Sanders illustrates, Massey's poetry conforms to Walter Benjamin's model of messianism, described in his 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History'.³² For Mike Sanders:

Massey conceives of past and present as containing 'temporal indices' which refer to redemption, and that his task as a poet is to produce a 'constellation', a meaningful temporal alignment (of past and present) which allows those scattered 'chips of Messianic time' to be gathered together, thereby endowing the present with sufficient power 'to blast open the continuum of history' and usher in a new, just, social order.³³

Yet, rather than representing a linear progression of time, Massey's poems present a 'truly reciprocal relationship between past and present', wherein the former 'has a claim' on the latter.³⁴ In effect, in Massey's verse history moves through a conscious struggle for a vision of the future lodged in the past and transmitted to the present by a messianic impulse. While the future victory of democracy is assured, its actual nature

²⁹ *Northern Star*, 8 April 1848, 3.

³⁰ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 175-6.

³¹ 'The Feast of the Poets', *Northern Star*, 27 June 1846, 3.

³² Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 203-24.

³³ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 203-4.

³⁴ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, p. 209.

is never fixed allowing it to transcend limitations of its historical context. In his poetry, Massey's goal is to 're-activate past acts of resistance and fuse them with current struggles' and create the 'temporal conditions which will inaugurate the redeemed future'.³⁵ Hence, in the final verse of Massey's 'Song of the Red Republican' – presented on the opening page of Harney's newspaper – the contemporary struggle is represented as occurring simultaneously with that of the past:

Great spirits of the heaven-homed Dead—take shape, and walk our mind!
 Their glory smites our upward look: we seem no longer blind!
 They tell us how they broke their bonds, and whisper "so may ye!"
 One sharp, stern struggle, and the slaves of centuries are free!
 The people's heart, with pulse like cannon, panteth for the fray!
 And brothers, gallant brothers! we'll be with you in that day!³⁶

The past described here is an active one that mediates with the present through the voices of martyrs – the very same victorious dead of Fennell's 'Red Flag'. As such, Massey conceives of the Democratic martyrology as a living pantheon that drives the present struggle onwards. Massey's martyrs do this not simply by providing the next generation with a rousing example, but their legacy also issues activists with the mental tools to carry the struggle forward. They provide a tortured soul with the clarity of enlightened truth – a truth that tyrants ever seek to rend from the human mind:

Still, as on Christ's brow, crowns of thorn for Freedom's martyrs twine,—
 Still batten on live hearts, and madden o'er the hot blood-wine!
 Murder men sleeping; or awake—torture them dumb with pain,
 And tear with hands all bloody-red Mind's jewels from the brain!
 ...
 Oh, but 'twill be a merry day, the world shall set apart,
 When Strife's last sword is broken in the last crown'd pauper's heart!
 And it shall come—despite of rifle, rope, and rack, and scaffold:
 Once more we lift the earnest brow, and battle on un baffled!

It is a richness of mind and spirit that sets the democratic martyrs apart from kings and emperors, who are impoverished by their paucity of heart. What these crowned

³⁵ Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*, pp. 223-4.

³⁶ *Red Republican*, vol. I, 'Index'.

'paupers' fail to see, however, is that mind's enrichment is both experiential and historical – and becomes, thus, immortal. The suffering of 'Freedom's Martyrs' is reflected here in the image of Christ, and they are likewise crowned with the thorny symbol of an unjust and imperishable end.

Similar themes are presented in a more martial tone in 'The Red Banner'.³⁷ Readers are impelled to continue the battle for 'liberty', 'freedom', and 'Right', and to avenge 'a million wrongs' with holy zeal. The imagery of martyrdom is again fused with that of Christ in a call-to-arms that summons the spirit of past glory and an undying death through heroic redemption:

They deem that we strike no more like the old hero-band—
Martyrdom's own battle-hearted and brave;
Blood of Christ! brothers mine, it were sweet, but to see ye stand
Triumph or tomb! welcome! glory or grave!

Yet, clearly, glory can also emanate from the grave. Martyrdom is presented as a distinguishing characteristic which, while open to all 'patriots', is earned by only a few ('And few, few may enter the proud promise-portal, ... We stand, by the coming events, shadow-crowned'). In turn, the fruits of martyrdom pass on the seeds of struggle to any generation that will but reap the harvest:

Fling out the Red Banner! the patriots perish!
But where their bones moulder the seed taketh root—
Their heart's-life ran red the great harvest to cherish,
Then gather ye Reapers, and garner the fruit.
Victory! victory! Tyrants are quaking,
The Titan of Toil from the bloody thrall starts,
The Slaves are awaking: the dawnlight is breaking!
The footfall of Freedom beats quick at our hearts!

³⁷ *Red Republican*, 22 June 1850, 8.

However, as in 'A Red Republican Lyric', such unbridled optimism for the triumph of the messianic calling could lead to maudlin reflections on the apathetic mood of the nation.³⁸ Massey bemoans the quiet suffering of the poor:

But cowards, ye cringe to the deathfullest wrongs,
 And answer with never a spurn.
 Then, torture oh, Tyrants! the spiritless drove,
 Old England's helots will bear,

Quiescence in the face of Tyranny might be likened in this verse to cowardice, but in turn Massey interprets this timidity as arising from a corrosive dearth of spirit: 'There's no hell in their hatred, no God in their love / Nor shame in their death's despair.' The messianic struggle has not yet been internalised by the masses, and, in consequence, the Golden age of martyrs is made to appear distant and remote:

They were few, those grand, hero-hearts of old,
 Who played the peerless part!
 We are fifty-fold, but the gangrene gold,
 Hath eaten out Hampden's heart.
 With their faces to danger, like freemen they fought,
 With their daring all heart and hand!
 And the thunder-deed, followed the lightning-thought
 When they stood, for their own good land—

Yet, even remote and 'few' the importance of martyrdom is never diminished. On the contrary, the deeds of martyrs appear electric and dynamic – a fuller expression of humanity when set against the apathy of 'Old England's helots'. In 'The Last of the Queens and the Kings' martyrs unknown ('Ye might not tell where the brave blood ran like rain') combat the dank stain of monarchy, which is described in terms of an environmental pollutant:

Like one in torture, the weary world turneth
 ...
 She gathers her strength up to crush the abhorred,
 Who murder her poor heart and drain her life's springs;—³⁹

³⁸ *Red Republican*, 17 August 1850, 72.

³⁹ *Red Republican*, 28 September 1850, 120.

While nature has reclaimed the graves of the fallen, their mark on the Charter is clear to be seen ('But the footprints all red upon Liberty's Charter / Still burn in our souls with indelible stain'). Massey returns to the theme of nature in 'Our Land' where the land of Britain is itself imbued with meaning by the tread of martyred heroes upon its surface ("Tis the Land our stalwart Fore-sires trode").⁴⁰ The history of the nation is recounted as a battle against slavery and despotism enlisting as diverse figures as Cromwell and Shakespeare ('Cromwell is of us! and Shakespeare's thought / Be-kings us all crowns above!'). Culture is celebrated as a universal inheritance, an agent of the messianic transmission that is imbued by poets like Milton with an innate love of freedom (And Freedom's faith fierce splendours caught, / From our grand old Milton's love!).

Martyrdom was by no means defined solely by national culture or heritage. Rather, it was a universal vocation. In the immediate aftermath of 1848, it was in the struggle on the continent that new martyrs were to be found. Like the student Gottfeid Kinkel, the renowned general Bem, the captured 'Hungarian Patriots', the defenders of the Roman Republic – all these glorious tragedies conjoined and intermingled with the historical fight for liberty, 'Feeding the world's soul like a river gushing from God's heart'.⁴¹ Thus, Massey's 'Men of "Forty Eight"' emerged 'Like giants roused from wine!', imbued with the essence of God ('And in their hearts, and in their eyes, / The God leapt up divine').⁴² 1848 was a momentous historical moment enlivened by 'Freedom's rare sunrise' and characterised by a righteous war of ideas: 'Strength went like battle with their words'. Although the revolutionary tide had ebbed, Massey continued to interpret the events of 1848 as a living history:

Dark days have fall'n! yet in the strife,
 They bate no more sublime,—
 And bravely works the fiery life,—
 Their hearts' pulse thro' the time.

⁴⁰ *Friend of the People*, 21 December 1850, 16.

⁴¹ 'Song of the Red Republican'.

⁴² *Friend of the People*, 25 January 1851, 56.

It was in this rare glimmer of a dawning golden age that past acts of martyrdom could be properly conceived and adapted, before being transmitted into the future. The example of their righteous struggle had become a living heritage, while the terrible suffering they had endured conferred nobility upon their memory:

As grass is greenest trodden down,
So suffering makes men great;
And this dark tide shall grandly crown
The men of forty-eight.

Conclusion

The intellectual debt that this study owes to numerous historians is vast, so it seems fitting to end with an acknowledgement to those works which have been at the forefront of the development of this thesis. At the very least, it is hoped that by laying open the intellectual framework on which the research has been constructed, its relationship to the historiography may be more keenly judged. Of particular importance have been the entries in the Merlin Chartist Studies Series. Ashton Fyson, and Roberts (eds), *The Chartist Legacy* (Rendlesham, 1999) and Stephen Roberts (ed.), *The People's Charter: Democratic Agitation in Victorian Britain* (London, 2003) contain some of the most interesting developments in the study following the debates sparked by the 'linguistic turn'. Taken together, they provide a useful manifesto that no work on Chartism can ignore, as well as a means of reviewing the varied directions of research into the movement, much of which has since been fleshed out.¹ In terms of this study, the searching analyses of Chartist notions of democracy, the transnational elements of the movement, the interests in poetry and people's history, and attention to analysis of the press and autobiography have indelibly stamped this research.² Joan Allen and Owen Ashton (eds), *Papers of the People: A Study of the Chartist Press* (London, 2005) does not only contain an array of invaluable contextual information, but the careful dissection of Chartist newspapers presented by the contributors to the volume have provided a general model for the extensive analysis of periodicals that appears in this thesis.³

¹ For example, in the case of Jamie Bronstein, *Land Reform and Working-Class Experience in Britain and the United States, 1800-1862* (Stanford, 1999), Robert Hall, *Voices of the People: Democracy and Chartist Political Identity, 1830-1870* (Monmouth, 2007), Paul Pickering, *Feargus O'Connor: A Political Life* (Monmouth, 2008), Stephen Roberts, *The Chartist Prisoners: The Radical Lives of Thomas Cooper (1805-1892) and Arthur O'Neill (1819-1896)* (Oxford, 2008).

² See for example the essays by Miles Taylor, Joan Hugman, Jamie Bronstein, Timothy Randall, Kelly Mays, Robert Hall, and Antony Taylor in *The Chartist Legacy* and the articles by Paul Pickering, Eileen Yeo, Chris Yelland, Malcolm Chase and Robert Hall republished in *The People's Charter*.

³ To the above should also be added the two superb special issues of *Labour History Review* devoted to Chartism (74:1, 2009 and 78:1, 2013), which were the first, and most fervently pored over, forays into reading that was conducted early in the thesis.

Outside of the Merlin series, John Saville's momentous *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement* (Cambridge, 1990), Margot Finn's masterly *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 1993), Malcolm Chase's landmark volume *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007) and his valuable essays in *The Chartists: Perspectives and Legacies* (London, 2015), and the engaging debates in Allen, Campbell, and McIlroy (eds) *Histories of Labour: National and International Perspectives* (Pontypool, 2010), have all been utterly instrumental in providing an overarching context (historical and historiographical) in which to place this study, and in awakening a greater sensitivity to the broader narratives that helped shape ideas and identities. It is also hoped that this study adds a longer-term dimension to both Saville's and Finn's work; specifically, that the deep interest in continental affairs both authors identify with 1848, and the struggle for European republicanism that Finn suggests was a feature of post-Charter radicalism, were actually embedded in the movement from its inception.

Mike Sanders' *The Poetry of Chartism* (Cambridge, 2009) and Margaret Loose's *The Chartist Imaginary* (Columbus, 2014) have provided consistent intellectual nourishment, most notably in the ways that both authors foreground the wider imaginary landscape on which Chartist politics was built. This sense of the 'imaginary' holds huge potential, not least in opening up some of the more constricting historiographical approaches to radicalism that have been erected in the wake of Gareth Steadman Jones' *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1984).⁴ While we can take the constitutionalism of the Chartist platform somewhat for granted, we can now begin to think in terms of the broader cultural landscape on which this mode of politics was situated.⁵ James Epstein's *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in*

⁴ For example, in the notion of the constitution as a political master-narrative that can be found running through James Vernon (ed.), *Re-Reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁵ See especially John Belchem, '1848: Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform', in *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-60*, eds James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (London, 1982), pp. 269-310, John Belchem and James Epstein, 'The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited', *Social History*, 22:2 (1997), 174-193 (also reprinted in Epstein, *In Practice: Studies in the Language and Culture of Popular Politics in Modern Britain* (Stanford, 2003), pp. 126-146. , John Belchem, 'The Waterloo of Peace and Order: the United Kingdom and the Revolutions of

England, 1790-1850 (London, 1994) and *In Practice: Studies in the Language and Culture of Popular Politics in Modern Britain* (Stanford, 2003) have not only been invaluable resources for thinking about how to interpret the symbolism of popular radicalism and the changing meanings of language over time, but have also provided a general methodological framework which this thesis has attempted utilize (particularly in the first half). It has been in engaging with Epstein's work on radical constitutionalism that this research generated its earliest and most enduring questions, and it is hoped that the results might contribute to our understanding of how symbols transfer between national and political contexts.

As Epstein notes, constitutionalism and democracy were two connected strands within radical thought.⁶ While his work was mostly interested in understanding the extent and limitations of the former, the latter, the democratic dimension of popular radicalism, has enjoyed fruitful research of its own. Together with Finn's work, Robert Hall's contribution to the Merlin Chartist Studies series, *Voices of the People: Democracy and Chartist Political Identity, 1830-1870* (Monmouth, 2007), Ella Dzelzainis and Ruth Livesey (eds), *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776-1914* (Farnham, 2013), Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (eds), *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Age of Revolutions: America, France, Britain, and Ireland 1750-1850* (Oxford, 2014), and Peter Gurney's article 'The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement' represent something of a core around which discussions about democracy and cultural transfers can be built.⁷ The transmission of ideas beyond national borders is by no means a novel arena of historical study, and transnational history as an attempt to move beyond nation-centred historiographies have flourished in many contexts over at least the last two decades.⁸ Axel Körner (ed.)

1848', in *Europe in 1848: Between Revolution and Reform*, eds Dowe, Haupt, Langewiesche, and Sperber (Oxford, 2008), pp. 242-258.

⁶ Epstein, *Radical Expression*, pp. 3-14.

⁷ Gurney, 'The Democratic Idiom: Languages of Democracy in the Chartist Movement', *The Journal of Modern History*, 86:3 (2014), 566-602.

⁸ For some good overviews, see Eckhardt Fuchs and Benedikt Stutchty (eds), *Across Cultural Borders: Historiography in Global Perspective* (Oxford, 2002), Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History: The Past, Present, and Future* (Basingstoke, 2013), and Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History* (Basingstoke, 2013).

1848: A European Revolution? International ideas and National Memories of 1848 (Basingstoke, 2004) provides the most relevant example in terms of the research questions posed by this study, and is further buttressed by the observations in Clare Simmons, *Eyes Across the Channel: French Revolutions, Party History and British Writing, 1830-1882* (Amsterdam, 2000) and Robert & Isabelle Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy: the French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (London, 2007).⁹ Drawing from these approaches, what the current study presents is a different sense of the democratic heritage Chartists drew from, one that emerged from a deep cultural engagement with the French Revolution and the traditions of European republicanism.¹⁰ Whether it is the case that we may speak of two distinct spheres of international democracy, the Atlantic and the European, or one unified concept, underpinned by a broad and penetrating engagement with the seventeenth and eighteenth-century revolutions spanning Europe and the Atlantic, will necessarily provide much detailed study in the future. Suffice it to say that the research contained here leans heavily towards the latter.

The current study also draws from the work of Dorothy and Edward Thompson, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), Hobsbawm's *Worlds of Labour* (London, 1984), David Goodway's *London Chartism, 1838-1848* (Cambridge, 1982), David Jones' *The Last Rising: The Chartist Insurrection of 1839* (Oxford, 1985), and Paul Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke, 1995). Far from being a mere list of honourable mentions, this

⁹ It was also while reflecting on the essays in Stefan Berger (ed.) *Writing the Nation: A Global Perspective* (Basingstoke, 2007) and Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke, 2008) that the early genesis of this study took place, and the central problem of attempting to use a national history to reach beyond the framework imposed by the national historiography was jostled with.

¹⁰ Not to mention the widespread contacts between Chartists and foreign radicals as meticulously detailed in Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany: German Refugees in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1986), Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854', in *Journal of British Studies*, 28:3 (1989), 225-261, Sabine Freitag (ed.), *Exiles from the European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian England* (Oxford, 2003), Christine Lattek, *Revolutionary Refugees: German Socialism in Britain, 1840-1860* (London, 2006), Marcella Pellegrino Sutcliffe, *Victorian Radicals and Italian Democrats* (Woodbridge, 2014), Thomas Jones, 'French Republican Exiles in Britain, 1848-1870' (unpublished Cambridge University PhD thesis, 2010), Françoise Kunka, 'French Émigrés from the Revolutions of 1848 and British Radicalism' (unpublished University of Aberdeen PhD thesis 2014), and Debra Kelly and Martyn Cornick (eds), *A History of the French in London: Liberty, Equality, Opportunity* (London, 2013).

latter contingent has necessarily shaded the work in less immediately tangible ways. Hopefully, a flavour of their influence can be detected, for if we stand on the shoulders of giants there are surely few more towering than these. Recent shifts in British historiography has been perhaps unkindest to Edward Thompson, whose *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963) has garnered an underserved reputation for adherence to a dogmatic Marxism. Teaching this text to undergraduates over five years has led to an intimate relationship with the book, which has coloured the thesis in innumerable ways. Taken together with his *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), E. P. Thompson's legacy remains a formidable one to live up to. Yet, there are few that can claim greater erudition than his wife and scholastic partner Dorothy, whose *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1984) and *Outsiders: Class, Gender and Nation* (London, 1993) represent two of the most underrated texts of social history. Her essays, which have recently been republished in Stephen Roberts (ed.) *The Dignity of Chartism* (London, 2015), show her not only to have been ahead of her time, but, in all probability, ahead of ours as well.

This thesis represents, I hope, a natural evolution of much of the recent work on Chartism and popular radicalism detailed above. It adopts a 'post-linguistic turn' sensitivity to language and genre, while attempting to avoid some of the shortcomings of previous attempts to do likewise.¹¹ In particular, it owes a vast debt to the enormously rich work on Chartist culture, poetry, fiction, and thought that has flourished since the 1990s. By adapting many of the approaches pioneered elsewhere, it pays specific attention to Chartist uses of the symbolism associated with the French Revolution in various contexts between 1838 and 1852. For example, in analysing the shifting meanings associated with the *Bastille* symbolism, it attempts to present the evolution of its uses in a way that avoids reductionism. The symbol's links to gothic themes and narratives was both imbedded in the term itself, owing to a wide proliferation of the *Bastille* mythology in Britain since 1789, and apparent in its deployment by Chartists. Not only is it striking that a symbolism derived from the late-

¹¹ For useful discussions of this, see Richard Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 2001), Epstein, *In Practice*, Joan Allen and Malcolm Chase, 'Britain: 1750-1900', in *Histories of Labour*.

eighteenth century still held such cultural value during the Chartist years, but its use as a term with specifically working-class overtones is instructive of the ways in which industrialising societies adapted the language and themes of the eighteenth-century revolutions to express the problems of their own times. Not only, then, does this research suggest that Chartists owed more to the French Revolution than has commonly been thought, but, because these links were also entrenched in radical discourse prior to the appearance of Chartism, sensitivities to the history of the French Revolution may have been deeply imbedded in popular radicalism over a broader period.

Parts one and two grapples with the ways in which this this history had been read in the light of subsequent events, and chief among them was the French Revolution of 1830. In many cases, Chartists themselves seem to have made little distinction between 1789 and 1830, a reflection, perhaps, of a wider popular opinion that imagined 1830 as a development or reprise of 1789. For many contemporaries, both episodes merged into a singular revolutionary scenario in which the political currents unleashed in the first revolution continued to flow through European culture. Such an approach can be detected in the *Chartist Circular's* romanticised presentation of this history, detailed in chapter three, in which the newspaper imagined popular risings that could have been derived from either event. In France, where a broadly similar view of the 1830 revolution's lineage to 1789 was present, both revolutions formed part of a distinct republican or revolutionary tradition.¹² It hardly needs to be said that the French revolutionary tradition encompassed much more than this, and contained many elements that Chartists only engaged with in certain circumstances. O'Brien's biographies of Babeuf and Robespierre, for example, were attempts to engage with one aspect of this tradition: the emergence of democratic and revolutionary socialism from

¹² For a forensic study of the republican tradition, see Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2011). See also, Pamela Pilbeam, *The 1830 Revolution in France* (London, 1991), Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (Basingstoke, 2002), Jeremy Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France, 1830-1835* (University Park, Pa, 2002), Robert Alexander, *Re-Writing the French Revolutionary Tradition: Liberal Opposition and the Fall of the Bourbon Monarchy* (Cambridge, 2003), and Mark Traugott, *The Insurgent Barricade* (London, 2010).

the Jacobin heritage.¹³ The problem can best be understood by considering the figure of Lafayette. Lafayette's revolutionary activities spanned the American War of Independence, the French Revolution of 1789, and the July Revolution of 1830. How, then, are we to interpret Chartist's invocation of his name and character, and their appropriation of his ideas and maxims?

For William Carpenter, there was little difficulty in ascribing Lafayette's significance. Carpenter's Lafayette articulated a strand of republicanism that had its roots in the English Civil War, and which had subsequently been transferred to America, and then to France. There was, for Carpenter, nothing essentially 'foreign' about this version of democracy, for it had its roots in British history. For him, democracy was necessarily a transnational force, with universal application. His reflections, published in the *Charter* during 1839 (and covered in chapter four), provide an insight into how these historical symbols and associations could be placed within specific political contexts. Appearing almost exclusively within the foreign news sections, Carpenter's writings provided an international perspective for Chartist activities. The timing was important: founded as the paper of record for the Chartist Convention, which met to deliberate on the strategy of the presentation of the first Chartist petition, the *Charter* sought to contextualise this momentous occasion by entwining it within an international perspective of political history.¹⁴ The resulting analysis stressed the role of popular democratic movements within a long-term struggle against aristocracy, extending through the English Civil War, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution of 1789, to the French Revolution of 1830 and the 1832 Reform Act in Britain. Underscored by a generalised view of French revolutionary history that identified commonalities between stages of political developments in Britain and France, Carpenter could present Chartism and French republicanism as essentially equivalent movements, both seeking to envelope the thrones of their respective nations with the institutions of civic democracy.

¹³ See Gwynne Lewis, 'Robespierre through the Chartist Looking Glass', in Robespierre, eds Colin Haydon and William Doyle (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 194-212, and Michael J. Turner, *Radicalism and Reputation: The Career of Bronterre O'Brien* (East Lansing, 2017).

¹⁴ See the declaration of the paper's principles in *Charter*, 27 January 1839, 1.

By paying close attention to the international dimension of Chartist writings, what emerges is a sense of a gradualist republicanism that responded dynamically to contemporary affairs, rather than one based on a static constitutionalism. Moreover, Chartist writers recognised that the international political climate had a bearing on the fortunes of their own agitation. The Reform Act of 1832 may have impressed on popular radicals the potential of suffrage reform, but the French Revolution of 1830 did much to create a receptive political climate for the passage of reform. The July Revolution left a lasting mark on British diplomatic politics and political thought. As Hedva Ben-Israel and others have argued, the inauguration of a constitutional monarchy from the barricades of insurrectionary Paris marked a thawing of relations between Britain and France.¹⁵ Liberally-minded politicians and whiggish historians began to appraise the Franco-British relationship in a new light. For them, the French Revolution remained a lamentable political episode, but it increasingly became rationalised through reference to Britain's own political past. In this context, reflections of Britain's constitutional development were found in France's revolutionary path to parliamentarianism, offering a conditional and hazy legitimisation to the supposed antithesis of Britain's celebrated political heritage.

The 1830 revolution also bore another legacy. In France, widespread disillusionment with the July Monarchy became particularly evident from around the middle of the decade, leading to a resumption of calls for reform. The hardening of the regime's attitude towards opposition and its reliance on the middle class fostered a growing sense of betrayal, especially among workers and artisans. By 1836, French radical and republican groups were condemning the 'bourgeois monarchy' and loudly calling for political reform – most notably in the form of manhood suffrage.¹⁶ At least on a surface level, radicals in both Britain and France articulated a sense of middle-class betrayal following the reforms of the early 1830s, and both sought a common remedy. It was in this context that notions of a European democracy could be fostered.

¹⁵ See for example Hedva Ben-Israel, *English Historians on the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 98-202, Simmons, *Eyes Across the Channel*, pp. 33-135, Robert and Isabelle Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy*, pp. 307-45.

¹⁶ See for example Pamela Pilbeam, *The Constitutional Monarchy in France, 1814-48* (Oxon, 2014), and Harsin, *War of the Streets*.

This sense of shared endeavour was further underlined by the arrival of political refugees during the 1830s and early 1840s, particularly from Poland, France, and Germany. The international organisations the refugees formed with Chartists, also covered in chapter four, are interesting not necessarily because they heralded a prototype workingmen's international, but because in the records of their meetings are left fragments of shared political beliefs or outlooks. The lack of specificity in their doctrines, along with the prevalence of romanticised readings of past and present politics, might suggest a certain level of immaturity.¹⁷ But it was precisely on this level that the specificity of national contexts and the rival claims of different ideological groups could be translated into a common cause. Their methods and interpretations may have been at odds, but the general direction was certain.

With the advent of the 'linguistic turn', historians became more sensitive to how Chartists expressed themselves through language, and has opened space for a more transnational approach to studying the movement. However, the immediate effect of Stedman Jones' landmark intervention *Languages of Class* (1984) was to more tightly bind the study of Chartism to a national historiographical framework. By seeking to explain Chartism's debt to an eighteenth-century British radicalism, and, by extension, its influence on later British movements, the framework employed by historians following in Jones' footsteps has been motivated by discrete questions about political philosophy from a strictly national perspective.¹⁸ The battle to distance the study of political radicalism from a Marxian vision of class conflict has necessarily taken the form of exploding the notion of class-consciousness. In this view, it is wrong to adopt a structural view of class when approaching Chartism. While class could sometimes be employed in specific circumstances to galvanise support or explain structural oppression, in the main working-class radicals were far more likely to identify themselves as 'the people', as subjects, or in gendered terms – none of which can be

¹⁷ See Christine Lattek, 'The Beginning of Socialist Internationalism in the 1840's: "The Democratic Friends of all Nations" in London', in *Internationalism in the Labour Movement, 1830-1940*, eds Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel der Linden (Leiden, 1988), pp. 259-82.

¹⁸ The primary example of this is Eugenio Biagini and Alastair Reid (eds), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour, and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge, 1991).

satisfactorily reduced to clear associations with class.¹⁹ The default assumption, however, tends to be that these identities can all be reduced to an association with the nation, in essence locking out discussion of the universalist, transnational, or international dimensions of Chartist political thought and expression.

This outlook has been further buttressed by the turn to melodrama, which has focussed on the sensationalist language employed by popular radicalism, and has shown just how potent traditional images of supplicant wives or mothers could be in the popular consciousness. No less powerful was the image of the perverse and maniacal aristocrat, a popular villain of folk-tales whose seduction of the village beauty represented a threat to a father or husband's domestic status. It is little wonder that radicals turned to such popular and universally-known images to present their agitation – it was an instantly-recognisable language of short-hand inferences that transformed political arguments into emotional appeals.²⁰ By the Chartist period, melodrama had become something of a structural mechanism within popular constitutionalism itself. As the standard means to translate political action or thought to wider constituencies, it was indelibly wedded to constitutionalist rhetoric. It does not follow, however, that this was the only use of melodrama. As a popular linguistic model, it touched almost every aspect of political life, and could be turned to abundant political uses.

In fact, melodrama, as a form of popular political discourse across Europe, possessed a flexibility and universality that had the potential to facilitate different historical examples or contexts into political thought. While this never threatened to displace a politics of the nation, it did texture the national agitation in ways that made it at least amenable to imagining a politics beyond institutions, and as an antidote to the narrow terms of constitutionalism. By invoking the French Revolution, for example, Chartists were broadening the historical scope of the movement, placing their politics firmly in the realm of community action and popular liberty. As discussed in part one, this

¹⁹ See in particular Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), and James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge, 1993).

²⁰ For more, see part one.

created a kind of dual personality for Chartism: it was simultaneously a movement sanctioned by the constitution, drawing legitimacy from British political history, and a popular mass-movement that aimed at transforming society. It was concerned, on the one hand, with the immediate questions of tactics and strategy, while on the other projecting Chartism's aims beyond the petition. In this way, the past provided a means to access the future.

In February 1848 the future seemed to have finally dawned. As early as 1839, a broad selection of Chartist periodicals serving regions of England, Scotland, and Wales, had likened the conditions of Britain to those of both the France of 1789 and the France of the July Monarchy.²¹ In terms of economic and social conditions, papers like the *Northern Liberator* and the *Scottish Chartist Circular* used the similarities between Britain and pre-revolutionary France to posit the Charter as a revolutionary solution that would both surpass the French Revolution in its effects, while avoiding the bloody confrontations that undermined the cause of democracy in France and spiralled into European war. As discussed in part one, representations of the *Bastille* served to illustrate this critique. Enmeshed in a gothic mythology that predated 1789, the legend of the *Bastille* was used by Chartists as symbolic representation of class rule. The myth absorbed critiques of state power, social and economic precarity, and the political isolation of the working class, and redeployed it with a new set of meanings gathered from reactions to industrialism. The 'Morpeth Hell', discussed in detail in part one, was not simply regarded as a failure of administration, but as a symptom of the evils of industrial society and of entrenched systems of authority, protected from, and unaccountable to, those placed in their charge. In this context, Malthusianism and utilitarianism alike were viewed less as serious philosophies, and more as symbols of the state's disregard for the poor. The unemployed, the infirm, the aged, the widowed, the vulnerable: the workhouse appeared to announce that all were burdens to society, to be immured or disappeared for the 'greater good'.

²¹ See chapters three to five.

The Revolutions of 1848 appeared to confirm a long-held belief in the inevitability of democracy's realisation. The sense of European crisis had been felt for a number of years, and intersected with the rival of Chartism during 1847.²² While historians have usually noted the effect of the continental revolutions as a spur to the activities of the Chartists, most have drawn distinctions between Britain's 1848 and that of the rest of Europe.²³ This chimes with the traditional historiography of 1848, which has generally struggled to explain a continental-wide revolution through a framework of national history, and led to a view of 1848 as a series of discrete national events.²⁴ In each nation, revolution and reform operated within particular national political and historical contexts, and these contexts should be understood and examined. Yet, understanding these differences has come at a cost, and the European dimension of the revolutionary years has been diluted. While the publications that marked the 150th anniversary appear to show a shift in the direction of scholarship towards an understanding of the revolution's transnational nature, the British 1848 still seems to be held as something distinct. Britain, it is true, did not suffer an upheaval on a scale comparable to other European nations. Indeed, that the Kennington Common demonstration was largely, though not exclusively, peaceful is used as a justification to present 1848 as a moment that confirms British exceptionalism. While Paris was a fortress of barricades, Vienna awash with violence, nationalist partisans mobilizing in southern and central Europe, and Frankfurt tugging the locus of German power westwards, the Chartist demonstration was profoundly anti-climactic, and the petition itself mired in controversy.

'Respectable revolutionaries' the Chartists may have been, but it is the respectability of the Chartist 1848 that has typically dominated the historiography.²⁵ Much valuable

²² See Saville, *1848*, pp. 58-79, Finn, *After Chartism*, pp. 60-105, and Chase, *A New History*, pp. 271-340.

²³ For example see Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851* (Cambridge, 1994) and R. J. W. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann (eds), *The Revolutions in Europe, 1848-1849: From Reform to Reaction* (Oxford, 2000).

²⁴ For a good discussion of this, see Axel Körner, 'The European Dimension in the Ideas of 1848 and the Nationalization of its Memories', in *1848: A European Revolution?*, pp. 3-28.

²⁵ Chase, *A New History*, p. 312. See also John Belchem, 'The Waterloo of Peace and Order: the United Kingdom and the Revolutions of 1848', in *Europe in 1848: Between Revolution and Reform*, eds Dowe, Haupt, Langewiesche, and Sperber (Oxford, 2008), pp. 242-58.

work has been done over the last two decades to facilitate a new understanding, and, as a result, we can speak more certainly of Chartism's deep connection with the continental revolutions. The second half of this study takes up this theme, and seeks to understand how Chartists viewed their agitation in relation to European politics. By necessity, it has been written in a different format to the earlier chapters: three of the most significant periodicals of the period 1849-1852 have never been systematically studied. This research seeks to correct this by providing a survey of the *Democratic Review* (1849-1850), the *Red Republican* (1850), and the *Friend of the People* (1850-1852). The significance of these publications has often been overlooked by historians; emerging from a sectional metropolitan grouping, attracting a limited audience, and edited by a dyed-in-the-wool Francophile, they have been considered representative only of the 'red tendency' of the later years of Chartism. This reputation is undeserved on a number of grounds.

Metropolitan the periodicals may have been, but sectional they were not. In the former quality, they reflected the decline of Chartism in the years after 1848. While the movement retained a significant presence in some northern strongholds, Chartism as an organisation became based primarily in the metropolis.²⁶ Nevertheless, the *Red Republican* and *Friend of The People* made efforts to reach out to a wider audience, and the correspondence sections of the newspapers reveal that they could claim a limited success. Turning to the issue of sectionalism, it should also be noted that contributors to the newspapers were drawn from a broad section of the internationalist wing of Chartism, presenting a surprisingly heterogeneous array of voices. Distinctively 'red' commentators like Helen Macfarlane were joined by liberal nationalists, like Linton and Holyoake, and Owenites. Indeed, the only faction not represented was the O'Connorites, whose decision to form the rival National Charter League in 1850 was viewed as apostasy.²⁷ While the League sought rapprochement with middle-class reformers, the metropolitan Chartists instead tried to forge links with Owenism, the trades, and O'Brien's National Reform League. It was this project that in part motivated

²⁶ Chase, *A New History*, pp. 312-40.

²⁷ Chase, *A New History*, pp. 335-6.

Harney: he saw his periodicals as an important tool in renewing popular radicalism on a class base, linked to labour organisations. The experience of 1848, both at home and abroad, seemed to highlight the extent to which politics had been fractured along class lines. The June Insurrection of Paris in 1848, where a working-class uprising had been met with a determined and overwhelming armed response, became the preeminent symbol of this class divide. The politics of the periodicals of 1849-1852 reflected the political state of Europe, and were characterised not by a dogmatic adherence to socialist principals, but a search for meaning and orientation.

While John Saville's characterisation of Harney as 'a Jacobin in an English setting' would probably tend to be an acceptable one to most scholars (or contemporaries for that matter), the term 'Jacobin' needs to be interrogated more carefully.²⁸ It is certainly not the case that Harney was a supporter of the Jacobin Club of the French Revolution, or even of the Mountain of 1792. While he credited these men (and Robespierre above them all) with being the most advanced faction of the French Revolution, Harney's politics was a mixture of British radicalism and French democratic socialism, mediated by O'Brien's histories of Babeuf and Robespierre and a sympathy for Mazzinian republicanism. That this politics clothed itself in Jacobin attire is not particularly strange, given that since the 1830s Robespierre and the Jacobins had been repatriated as forebears of the 'red' democracy across the Channel.²⁹ The use of the language and emblems of 1793 in the democratic socialism of 1850 was pervasive, and the 'Jacobinism' of 'red' Chartism reflected this. But it also gave a strikingly militant tone to its politics that had been fashioned during 1848 as a kind of rhetorical response to the supposed middle-class 'betrayal' of the European revolutions. In this sense, Robespierre represented the antithesis of respectable middle-class politics. Behind the façade, however, was a political creed that was deeply humane, but uncompromising in its opposition to the tragic injustices then being committed against revolutionaries and reformers across Europe.

²⁸ Saville, *1848*, p. 56.

²⁹ Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, pp. 388-439.

The *Democratic Review* is probably most deserving of the status of a marginal periodical, and it might justly be asked why it warrants the attention it has received in this study. Primarily, the object was to subject the journal to a rigorous and systematic analysis, which has so far been missing in the historiography. Having done so, and in taking stock of the comments made on the journal by historians over the years, it became clear that no analysis of the period after 1848 could justly avoid discussion of this publication.³⁰ It is here that the philosophical bones of Red Republicanism can be found; the periodicals that followed its demise in 1850 did not only owe their politics to the intense historical and ideological soul searching conducted in the journal, but can be understood as elements of the same project. Its readership may have been modest, but its ambitions were anything but. In attempting to use the pages of the *Review* to develop a 'science' of socialism, Harney understood his task to be a service not only to Chartism, but to European democracy. He might justifiably have done so. As both Albert Schoyen and Joan Allen note, in the context of 1849, by supporting democracy and giving voice to the revolutionary emigration, the *Review's* significance can hardly be overstated.³¹

There is, however, another element worth considering: if our ambition is to understand the inner workings of the movement, the ways in which ideas are generated and placed into a useable context, it is often smaller publications that hold the key to a richer engagement with our subjects. McDouall's *Chartist and Republican Journal* (1841), published during a comparable period of impasse, is a case in point. This periodical has been credited with providing the political nourishment for the revival of 1842, and has, therefore, been absolved by hindsight.³² While the *Democratic Review* has not been so

³⁰ In particular the careful commentary by Albert Schoyen in his biography of Harney, *The Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London, 1958) and Joan Allen, "'A Teacher of Strange Doctrines": George Julian Harney and the *Democratic Review*, 1849-1850', *Labour History Review*, 78:1 (2013), 67-86.

³¹ Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge*, pp. 171-98, Allen 'George Julian Harney and the *Democratic Review*', 75-85.

³² See, for example, 'The 'People's Advocate': Peter Murray McDouall (1814-1854)' in Owen Ashton and Paul Pickering, *Friends of the People: Uneasy Radicals in the Age of the Chartists* (London, 2002), Anthony Smith, 'The Strike for the People's Charter in 1842' (unpublished London School of Economics PhD thesis, 2002), pp. 47-9.

fortunate, it nevertheless remains an important publication in understanding Chartism's intellectual engagement with the Revolutions of 1848.

It was also in the *Review* that Helen Macfarlane was to publish a series of blistering articles in defence of democracy. Macfarlane is known, if she is known at all, for her translation of the *Communist Manifesto*, printed in the *Red Republican*. While her biographer, David Black, has highlighted her intellectual debt to Hegel, her translations of whom marks her as the first British Hegelian, and her links to Marx, there has remained a cloud of ignorance about her writings among scholars. It is this that this study hopes to puncture. Building on the valuable work of Schoyen, Saville, and Black, this study presents a summary of her writings which, while admittedly insufficient, locates her within an intellectual current based on readings of the French Revolution.³³ In formulating a history of democracy, Macfarlane's accounts of the transmission of the 'true' principles of Christianity from the phenomenal to the material world offered pride of place to Robespierre, a view that was shared by James Linton, a staunch enemy of socialism. But it is in her characterisation of democracy as 'the spirit of the age' that probably best encapsulates Chartist readings of events, and it is here that a crucial point can be made in regard to Chartism's terminal decline. It has been asked why Chartism did not recognise its defeat in 1848; it can be answered that 1848 was interpreted not as an end, but as a new beginning.³⁴

As John Saville noted thirty years ago, 1848 seemed to announce the realisation of decade's long agitation.³⁵ While historians have characterised the year as 'the year of revolutions', 1848 was simply the beginning of a process, and one which took until 1852 to be finally, and tragically, resolved. During this time, the history of Europe's revolutionary past was brought to the fore in vivid detail, and images of an empowered people reading their rights amidst the toppled thrones of Europe proved difficult to dispel. Dispelled, however, they were, and with a force so dramatic that it would take

³³ See chapter seven.

³⁴ For example Keith Flett, *Chartism After 1848: The Working Class and the Politics of Radical Education* (Monmouth, 2006), pp. 80-97.

³⁵ Saville, *1848*, p.57.

decades for popular radicalism in Britain, and beyond, to recover something of its former spirit.

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