Transatlantic Nationalisms and Parallel Performances: Afterlife Texts of the Revolutionary Era

by

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the rise to public prominence of Major John André, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, and Mary Robinson during the American Revolution, and it examines the ways in which they each inspire an afterlife legacy that takes on public dimensions in Britain and America well into the twenty-first century. My argument is that André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson—in life, and during their extraordinary afterlives—are used in Britain and America for restorative purposes. Their public personas and works (literary and extraliterary) inspired the transatlantic publics of Britain and America, and they did so at a crucial time in the evolving identities of both nations. Afterlife analysis facilitates an understanding of how their personas and works are used in response to the varied crises brought on not only by the American Revolution, but by subsequent historical moments that have exposed deep uncertainties regarding national identity, good citizenry, male and female propriety, and sensibility. By tracing their afterlives as that which are informed by their wartime utility, I am able to identify patterns (as well as notable deviations) in terms of how, why, and by whom their personas and works are appropriated, reimagined, and remade. This dissertation enriches studies of how eighteenth-century celebrity culture both reflects and responds to periods of national unrest, and it sets out to contribute to the expanding body of afterlife scholarship that focuses on figures of the period and the lasting impact of their works. This dissertation is also concerned with the intersection of celebrity and nationhood—that is, with how the celebrity functions as a mechanism through which national sentiments are negotiated and fostered among a diverse range of people. As such, my contribution to afterlife studies is to illustrate how the afterlives of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson reflect the mobilization of imaginations in the process of nation-(re)making.

Table of Contents

Introduction

On 7 April 1778, William Pitt, otherwise known as the Earl of Chatham, was assisted inside an overcrowded House of Lords by his two sons, William and James, and his son-in-law Mahon. Wrapped in flannel and supported by crutches, Chatham's appearance on the day did little to dispel rumors that his lifelong affliction of gout had reduced him to a grave condition.[1] So severe were his symptoms that he had been unable to attend the Lords earlier in the year. But this was a session he refused to miss. Charles Lennox, the Duke of Richmond, had proposed a motion to George III for the withdrawal of troops from America, and Chatham was desperate to stop it.[2]

Richmond's position was that Britain had to recognize American independence in order to wage war with France. Descriptions of Chatham's response on the day suggest that he reveled in the opportunity to adopt the role of the infirm but resolute patriot. He rose slowly when it was his turn to speak and, in dramatic fashion, he took one hand from his crutch and raised it, along with his eyes, towards heaven. He thanked God, not only for the stage upon which he could speak, but for being granted the chance to fulfill his patriotic duty in the face of death: "I have

[1] Pitt's health was far more serious than gout, but his rheumatic issues were commonly described as such. He was in chronic pain by the 1770s, and he also had heart and kidney problems. He likewise suffered from seizures and periods of severe depression, which prostrated him for months on end. See Stanley Ayling, *The Elder Pitt: Earl of Chatham* (London: Collins, 1976), 416-17.

[2] Chatham clung to the hope that Britain could reconcile with the American rebels. For years, Pitt had promoted an approach of moderation and understanding, and by many he was considered a friend to the Americans. As prime minister, Pitt successfully led the effort to repeal the Stamp Act in 1766. Following the Boston Tea Party in December 1773, he advised the government "to proceed like a kind and affectionate parent over a child whom he tenderly loves." Americans, he argued, were Englishmen abroad and thus the brethren of those at home: "The principal towns in America are learned and polite, and understand the constitution of the empire as well as the noble lords who are now in office." See Pitt to Shelburne, 6 March 1772, in *Chatham Correspondence*, vol. 4, W.S. Taylor and W.H. Pringle, eds. (London: A. Spottiswoode, 1838), 345. As late as 30 May 1777, following an address to the House of Lords, Chatham continued to underestimate the American desire for independence; he publicly maintained a conciliatory position, to which he was labeled "a stranger to American politicks." See L.H. Butterfield, ed. *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 410.

one foot, more than one foot in the grave. I have risen from my bed to stand up in the cause of my country—perhaps never again to speak in this House!"[3]

Chatham made quick work of dismissing the likelihood of a French invasion, arguing that any such fears were unfounded. Over the next ten minutes, his speech grew increasingly impassioned and erratic, and his rhetoric suggests that he was motivated not by researchable knowledge but instead by feeling. He argued, for instance, that Britain could wage both wars, if necessary, at once—but he did so while also confirming his own lack of expertise on the subject: "I am not, I confess, well informed of the resources of this kingdom."[4] His was the sentiment, one not unfamiliar to an audience of British patricians and lawmakers, that *Britishness* as an identity was under assault, and that the nation's reputation in Europe and abroad had to be protected, even in the face of possible military defeat: "Any state is better than despair. Let us at least make one effort; and if we must fall, let us fall like men!"[5] At stake was not merely how the British imagined themselves, but rather how a weakened Britain would be imagined by its colonial subordinates. The empire, Chatham warned, could collapse: "[If] American independence was allowed by Parliament . . . the same spirit might soon pervade both the Indies; it might catch Ireland, and at length reduce the empire to the small island of Britain."[6]

In the aftermath of Chatham's speech, excerpts or entire transcripts would be reproduced in British periodicals and discussed privately in letters.[7] But not even the content of the speech, with its conjuring of an idealized yet vulnerable Britain, resonated most with the public—rather,

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[3] William Stanhope Taylor and John Henry Pringle, eds., *Correspondence of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, vol. 4 (London: John Murray, 1838), 518.

[4] Ibid., 520.

[5] Ibid., 522.

[6] Ibid.

[7] For examples of published excerpts, see *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 9 April 1778; see also *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 10 April 1778. For examples of private correspondence concerning Chatham's final speech, see Lord Fitzmaurice, *Life of William, Earl of Shelburne*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1912), 21-2.

it was the tragic but symbolic manner by which it abruptly concluded that proved most influential. As he stood once more to respond to Richmond's rebuttal, a pain seized Chatham. He pressed his hand to his chest, his legs buckled, and he collapsed to the floor, unconscious. He would die on 11 May 1778, nearly a month later. In response to his death, hundreds of panegyrics appeared in print.[8] Members of both political parties voted unanimously for a monument in Westminster Abbey as well as a public funeral. The House of Commons approved the discharging of Chatham's debts in the form of a £20,000 grant, and his heirs were likewise awarded an annuity of £4,000.[9] The *London Chronicle* estimated that when all the expenses were counted, some £30,000 was spent on the funeral and the monument.[10]

The rallying rhetoric of Chatham's address was amplified by his abrupt collapse, and the collapse itself served as a succinct and tragic culmination of his service to Britain. Despite lavish efforts to memorialize him, an inspired British public still wanted more. City merchants initially sought to have Chatham interred in St. Paul's, and one commentator suggested placing his remains under glass in Leicester House, home to Sir Ashton Lever's new museum of natural curiosities.[11] Finally, a contest among artists was suggested, with a substantial reward for the winning design. Chosen was a design by John Singleton Copley, and he would produce *The Death of Chatham* in 1781. Copley's treatment of Chatham's collapse, which would encompass a canvas over ten feet long and seven feet high, reflects the public's expectation that Chatham's gesture of self-sacrifice be preserved in grand style. The painting, particularly in its title, also reflects the manner by which myth swiftly intruded upon reality. *The Death of Chatham*

[8] Representative examples include *General Evening Post*, 12 May 1778; *London Chronicle*, 12 May 1778; and *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 12 May 1778.

[9] Albert von Ruville, *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham*, vol. 3, trans. H.J. Chaytor (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 345.

[10] *London Chronicle*, 2 June 1778.

[11] *Morning Post*, 2 June 1778.

answered a need of the British people, and Copley's title signals a calculated revision of lived events, one that produced a symbol around which the public could unify and rally. The work influenced an inaccurate conception of the event, which was that Chatham's seizure and collapse led to his immediate demise, when in reality he continued to suffer from additional seizures in the final weeks of his life.

Copley's painting, which would be reproduced in engravings by Francesco Bartolozzi in 1791, features an unconscious Chatham, who is cradled, Christ-like, by those positioned nearest him.[12] The intimacy of the moment is framed by an epic scene of stunned spectators inside the Lords, each drawn in individual likeness. The *General Evening Post* reported that "no less than fifty portraits of noblemen" featured in the finished product.[13] The work was a sensation, and the *London Courant* reported that by 8 June 1781, "nearly twenty thousand persons had paid a shilling to see [it]."[14] That Copley had the confidence to display *The Death of Chatham* in a single-picture exhibition speaks not only to the enduring quality of the work, but also to its mass appeal.[15] Viewing Copley's painting became such an event that Angus Williams captured the experience in a 1781 engraving, which features a crowd of onlookers at Spring Gardens as they admire the work; a gentleman can also be spotted as he studies the key on the adjoining wall.[16]

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[12] Bartolozzi's engraving then inspired Abraham Raimbach, who produced an engraving called *Key to the Death of the Early of Chatham* (1791). Raimbach numbered each individual in Copley's original work, identifying them by name and seating position.

[13] *General Evening Post*, 30 October 1779. The work actually included fifty-five portraits. For a detailed account of Copley's creation of the work, his strategies of self-promotion, and popular and critical receptions, see Jane Kamenksy, *A Revolution in Color: The World of John Singleton Copley* (New York: Norton, 2016), 295-316.

[14] *London Courant*, 8 June 1781.

[15] The exhibition took place at the Great Room in Spring Gardens, concluding in late June; it then moved to a venue above the Royal Exchange. There it remained a hit during the hottest months of late summer, even as the elite sought refuge at their country estates. Kamensky, *A Revolution in Color*, 305-6.

[16] Williams' 1781 engraving (*Angus Williams after Copley*) currently resides at London's British Museum. The key referenced in the engraving was likely provided by Copley himself, for Abraham Raimbach's key would not be available for another ten years.

Chatham's display of resolute patriotism at the House of Lords, and especially his dramatic collapse, inspired expressive reimaginings, most notably in the form of Copley's painting and its subsequent reproductions. Death masks of Chatham were likewise produced, and these function as further evidence of a cultural desire to preserve his image and to extend the range of feelings he inspired in defense of British ideals.[17] Chatham's afterlife is deeply connected to the British public's need to reconstruct the details of his death during a period fraught with uncertainty.

Broadly, this project is a study of afterlives, and it is one concerned with the restorative impact of the celebrity during periods of national unrest. Such is partly why I have begun with the example of Chatham's final public act. His heightened, patriotic emotionalism appealed to a broader populace, and it inspired how his persona would be used following his death.[18] But its timing also makes Chatham's immediate posthumous reception so pertinent to this particular project, as it signals a tipping point during the American Revolution, in which the British public began to use celebrities as restorative symbols in light of possible military defeat.[19] As British defeat becomes increasingly likely, the usage of celebrities for restorative effect becomes all the more necessary and apparent.

Chatham's afterlife indicates the manner by which lived experience may be pushed aside in service to more rhetorically resonant "truths." Such is the case of the fictional liberties

[17] After Pitt's death, several prominent sculptors were chosen to create busts of him. These included Joseph Wilton, Joseph Nollekens, John Bacon, and the American Patience Wright. See Anthony Sigel, Claire Grech, and Katherine Eremin, "Harvard's First Sculpture," in *The Philosophy Chamber: Art and Science in Harvard's Teaching Cabinet, 1766-1820*, ed. Ethan W. Lasser (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Art Museums, 2017), 237-248.

[18] Of course, not everyone responded positively to Chatham's argument or to his remarkable show of vulnerability. The House of Lords failed to pass a motion that they should attend the funeral, and the absence of George III was noted, among others, by the press. See Ayling, *The Elder Pitt*, 425.

[19] Linda Colley suggests that Chatham's final speech also prefigures public displays of heightened emotionalism by the British elite in the latter decades of the eighteenth century. See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 153-4.

employed by Copley in *The Death of Chatham*, which were then adopted and further legitimized by other artists in subsequent engravings. Chatham's posthumous utility during the American Revolution and then in the years afterwards, as Britain had no choice but to recalibrate following the severing of the American colonies, also reflects certain guiding principles of this project: that a celebrity's persona is made and, if necessary, also remade to satisfy the shifting demands of culture; that the utility of the celebrity may extend into a rich and varied afterlife, emerging especially during periods of national unrest; that *afterlife* as a term signals much more than a shadow-life, one drawn of its former color and vigor—rather, as Anna Holland and Richard Scholar have argued, it may instead reveal "an astonishingly vital sequence of incarnations or lives made anew."[20] Afterlives are as diverse as they are intertextual, and as sites of expression, they may take on the form of material objects, cultural practices, events, or locations. Mikhail Bakhtin's metaphor for the novel genre as a still-growing "skeleton," as one that has yet to fully reveal all of its possibilities, is particularly apt for afterlife studies[21]—for the afterlife gestures towards an extended and open-ended legacy, towards "new openings" and "new chances."[22]

Specifically, this project traces the rise to public prominence of Major John André, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, and Mary Robinson during the American Revolution, and it examines the ways in which they each inspire an afterlife legacy that takes on public dimensions in Britain and America well into the twenty-first century. From a critical perspective, the grouping of a British officer, an "American" farmer and author of letters, and a British stage actress remembered perhaps more for her notorious romantic affairs than her remarkable

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[20] *Pre-Histories and Afterlives: Studies in Critical Method for Terence Cave*, eds. Anna Holland and Richard Scholar (London: Legenda, 2009), 5.

[21] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 3.

[22] Terrence Cave, *Mignon's Afterlives: Crossing Cultures from Goethe to the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 36.

achievements as a literary figure, may appear indiscriminate at first glance. But they are linked in crucial ways. My argument is that André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson—in life, and during their extraordinary afterlives—are used in Britain and America for restorative purposes. Their public personas and works (literary and extraliterary) inspired the transatlantic publics of Britain and America, and they did so at a crucial time in the evolving identities of both nations. By examining their afterlives, one can unpack how their personas and works are used in response to the varied crises brought on not only by the American Revolution, but by subsequent historical moments that have exposed deep uncertainties regarding national identity, good citizenry, male and female propriety, and sensibility. Their afterlives, as such, reflect an ongoing process of negotiation, modification, and resistance. As sites of expression and ideological contestation, afterlives stage a collision of forces; these are spaces where tensions intersect, and where meaning is made and continuously remade to accommodate the evolving needs of social groups.

In addition to my argument regarding the transatlantic utility of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson, I am advocating for a flexible understanding of their restorative impact. As their afterlives indicate, they are often exalted, and it is through their posthumous power that they are used to reinforce dominant values. Such afterlife expressions work restoratively; they function to maintain dominant values, particularly amidst periods of national unrest, as emergent and/or rival forms of thought are more likely to be considered by the populace. However, within the afterlives of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson, also revealed is their utility as objects of denigration, for they may also be singled out as emblematic threats to the preservation and vitality of the very same dominant values. In either case, the afterlives still function restoratively by evoking a range of feelings around which like-minded communities can rally.

This project considers how the afterlives of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson are shaped by their relationship with the publics of Britain and America, and it traces the manner by which the characters of their afterlives have evolved to meet the shifting needs within each setting. Already in place is a vast body of work that has located the eighteenth century as a period in which celebrity culture fully emerges as a force in the public sphere. Joseph Roach has lucidly demonstrated, for instance, that during the eighteenth century the transfer of social energy from religious to secular enchantments occurs.[23] Alongside analyses of the self-fashioning strategies adopted by celebrities-in-making, scholars have likewise contextualized innovations in the period's theater culture as vital to the development of the stage performer as the secularized object upon which spectators may gaze, imagine, and ultimately exalt as celebrities.[24] Scholars have also examined the correlation between the rise of the celebrity and a sudden expansion of literacy, one aided by an explosion of the kinds of materials that appeared in British print media—daily newspapers, provincial weekly newspapers, and periodicals, among others.[25] A

[23] For representative examples of Roach's work on the subject of celebrity culture's resonance in the eighteenth century, I suggest starting with Roach's *It* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2007) as well as "Celebrity Culture and the Problem of Biography," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 65.4 (Winter 2014): 470-81. Others, of course, have produced excellent studies of celebrity culture in eighteenth-century Britain. See Jason Goldsmith's "Celebrity and the Spectacle of Nation" as well as David Higgins' "Celebrity, Politics, and the Rhetoric of Genius," both featured in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850*, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 41-60.

[24] Numerous excellent resources are available for studying eighteenth-century stage culture and its impact on celebrity-making, but I suggest starting with the following: Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody, eds., *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity: 18th-Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image-Making* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2011); Julia H. Fawcett, *Spectacular Disappearances: Celebrity and Privacy, 1696-1801* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016). Performance studies are also integral to the scholarly conversation of celebrity-making, and for an overview of key performance theory, perhaps start with Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2003). See also Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph Roach, eds., *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

[25] For more on the print revolution in Britain and its impact on British culture and taste-making, I would start with Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). See also Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 180-1.

similar story can be told about eighteenth-century America, which experienced its own boom in literacy rates along the Atlantic seaboard and was thus newly amenable to the potential impact of the celebrity.[26]

By focusing on the public lives and transatlantic impact of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson—three figures whose celebrities emerge out of the American Revolution—I am to locate and explore the specific needs, desires, and anxieties that surface as a result of the war. By tracing their afterlives as that which are informed by their wartime utility, I am further able to identify patterns (as well as notable deviations) in terms of how, why, and by whom their personas and works (whether literary or extraliterary) are appropriated, reimagined, and remade. The pursuit of afterlives as both a topic of study and as a methodological approach is beneficial for cultural studies, for it provides a lens through which *structures of feeling* can be examined and yet also compared, even over great distances of time and space.[27] Afterlives facilitate discovery, and it is through their intertextual and creative transformations that they reveal patterns and deviations in meaning-making as they may apply to a wide range of social groups.

This project aims to enrich studies of how eighteenth-century celebrity culture both reflects and responds to periods of national unrest, and it likewise sets out to contribute to the expanding body of afterlife scholarship that focuses on figures of the period and the lasting impact of their literary and extraliterary works.[28] Afterlife studies generally address the

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[26] For more on the contexts of literacy and print culture in America, see Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). See also Catherine E. Kelly, *Republic of Taste: Art, Politics, and Everyday Life in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

[27] The concept of *structures of feeling* comes from Raymond Williams, and it is generally meant to signify lived experience in a culture during a specific time period. See Williams, "The Analysis of Culture," in *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 41-71.

[28] Some representative examples include David A. Brewer, *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); *Pre-Histories and Afterlives: Studies in Critical Method for Terence Cave*, eds. Anna Holland and Richard Scholar (London: Legenda, 2009); Linda Hutcheon with Siobhan

modification of fictional works and their re-presentation in different textual states, often occasioned by anthologization, abridgement, serialization, and continuation, the latter of which may include such creative responses as fan fiction, scripted melodramas, and graphic novels. Afterlife studies are not limited, however, to textual boundaries, and they may also consider performative (film, opera, and theater) and visual (caricatures, illustrations, portraits, and photographs) boundaries, or possibly extend to other facets of modern living—for instance, the adaptation of fictional works in marketing, tourism, and merchandise.[29]

This project offers a full range of afterlife exploration, incorporating reimaginings of the personas and works of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson across boundaries and into the terrain of *synthetic experience*, which signals a process by which a consumer's market is created for spun-off products inspired by the celebrity.[30] *Synthetic experience* is an integral aspect of afterlife studies because facilitates for the consumer the illusion of proximity to the ultimately unavailable object of fascination. Examples in this project include, among many others, a purchased lock of André's hair, a dramatic Independence Day stage performance of the most anthologized excerpts of Crèvecoeur's 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer*, and items of clothing inspired by Robinson's most iconic theatrical roles and her studied taste in fashion (the "Perdita Hood," the "Robinson hat for Ranelagh," the "Perdita handkerchief," and the "Robinson gown").

O'Flynn, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013); and Devoney Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

[29] Devoney Looser's work on Jane Austen illustrates how an afterlife has the potential to take on a life of its own, transcending textual, performative, and visual boundaries to become ubiquitous. See Looser, *The Making of Jane Austen* (2017).

[30] For more on the term *synthetic experience*, as well as examples of it, see Roach, *It*, 25-30, 51-55, and 68-77.

But this project is also explicitly concerned with the intersection of celebrity and nationhood—that is, with how the celebrity functions as a mechanism through which national sentiments are negotiated and fostered among a diverse range of people.[31] As such, my contribution to afterlife studies is to illustrate how the afterlives of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson reflect the mobilization of imaginations in the process of nation-(re)making. As I have previously suggested, their extraordinary afterlives may simultaneously reinforce and oppose dominant values. Celebrity is a way of embodying power, and it is both analogous to—and generative of—the diverse needs of the nation. If one recalls Benedict Anderson's broad yet invaluable definition of a *nation* as an "imagined political community," as one of many possible "networks of social sympathy," such insights help to better understand the restorative utility of the celebrity during times of deep national unrest.[32]

This project argues for the importance of afterlife studies to an understanding of the specific needs of British and American citizens during times of national unrest, thereby uncovering how the evolving personas of celebrities and their works (literary and extraliterary) are used by the public for restorative effect. Each chapter centers upon an afterlife case study within a large temporal frame, beginning amid the American Revolution and extending into the twenty-first century; accordingly, each chapter explores afterlives that are broad in scope but explicit in the meanings generated within the cultures of Britain and America.

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[31] Scholarship concerning the relationship between media and nation-making has a rich history. I would start more recent works by the following: Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, eds., *Framing Celebrity* (London: Routledge, 2006); P. David Marshal, ed., *The Celebrity Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006); Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002); and Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Nation: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London: Profile Books, 2010).

[32] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

Chapter One examines the posthumous transatlantic impact of Major John André, whose afterlife was largely influenced by the sentimental mythologies that sprang up in Britain and America following his arrest and execution as a British "spy." I show that both nations needed André during and after the American Revolution.[33] André's posthumous treatment in Britain, which began in the aftermath of his 2 October 1780 execution in Tappan, New York, resulted in his exaltation as a hero and martyr to the British cause. Such treatment includes a reconfiguration of historical events: not only did André fail in a crucial military mission, but his doing so led the British army to lose its best chance to take West Point by complete surprise, thus also losing the chance to ambush George Washington himself. But the British public would know nothing of the failed plot, and the press used André's execution to rally a divided public at home. Anna Seward, like many others, contributed to André's mythologization. In her case, she produced *Monody on Major André* (1781), an ambitious work that remakes André into the ideal sentimental hero. So pressing was the need to appropriate André—and so effective were the efforts to do so—that in 1821, his body was exhumed and transferred to Westminster Abbey, home to England's heroes and most honored dead.

In Revolutionary-era America, André's posthumous reputation boosted the morale of Patriot soldiers who imagined his collusive efforts as evidence of an unmanly code of conduct, and likewise as proof of their own moral superiority to the British army. But in the days preceding his public execution, and certainly on the day itself, André's remarkable performance as a model of masculine sensibility in the gentleman-officer mode swayed even his most fervent

[33] In relation to his theory of the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin posited that genres emerge (or re-emerge) to fulfill a need of the culture. Thus, as I argue that André in his afterlife fulfilled particular needs of Britain and America, I am thinking of Bakhtin and reimagining André not as a person but rather as a "text." For more on Bakhtin's treatment of genre, see Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 258-422, and especially 288-300.

enemies. Continental officers empathized with him; his American burial site became the setting of rituals and reenactments; he inspired biographies, posthumous legal defenses, "authentic narratives," plays, novels, and so much more. I argue in Chapter One that André can be understood as a lens through which *structures of feeling* regarding national identity, masculinity, and sensibility are expressed, confronted, and in some cases, reconstructed. By examining representative "texts" (material items, cultural practices, events, and locations) related to his afterlife, I demonstrate how André is used by communities in Britain and America to help stabilize the crises of national identities brought on by the war.

In Chapter Two, I contend that the transatlantic afterlife of Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur is acutely informed by the author's own politics, his troubled relationship with factionalists during his lifetime, and the literary reception to his 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer*. I consider key components of Crèvecoeur's background—those such as his French aristocratic upbringing and his New York-based arrests on suspicion of espionage, first as a Loyalist and then as a Patriot. I show that the arrests are a microcosm of subsequent disagreements about how to "read" Crèvecoeur, not only in terms of his intentions, his core values and political identity, but also in correlation to the body of literature he produced and its transatlantic impact during and following the American Revolution. I likewise provide representative examples of transatlantic reviews inspired by his 1782 *Letters* to demonstrate its restorative influence upon the wartime anxieties of factionalist readers. And finally, I examine Crèvecoeur's afterlife through the aforementioned lenses, each of which provide critical evidence for his lasting utility as a site of patriotic reaffirmation.

My argument in Chapter Two is that Crèvecoeur's 1782 *Letters* is used by communities in Britain and America as a space for ideological negotiation, modification, and resistance, where

anxieties concerning national identity and good citizenry are expressed and confronted.[34] Britain and America needed Crèvecoeur during a Revolutionary period that threatened to dismantle values imagined as integral to both nations. His emergence at such a time reflects his ongoing utility as well as the prolific appeal of his *Letters*. Given the restorative influence of *Letters*, it is also no coincidence that Crèvecoeur's rich afterlife aligns with traumatic periods of unrest, as demonstrated, for instance, by his appropriation in mid-twentieth-century American exceptionalist projects. Crèvecoeur's restorative influence can also be explained by the fact that his 1782 *Letters*—far more than those which followed it, the 1784 and 1787 French editions—generated widespread disagreements concerning the author's ideological underpinnings and how they informed the rhetorical ambitions of the work. Secondary to my argument about Crèvecoeur's transatlantic utility is that because of the rhetorical ambivalence of his 1782 *Letters*, he becomes the target of willful (mis)readings that position him as a corrective, factionalist reference point. Both the initial reception to *Letters* and Crèvecoeur's afterlife are shaped by the needs of readers who perceived in the work the values that either aligned with their own or served as convenient opposition.

The final chapter of this project, which explores Mary Robinson's restorative utility during the American Revolution and then afterwards, considers the correlation between Robinson's appropriation as the "lost" Perdita by the British public, her strategies of resistance and self-fashioning in a variety of social roles, and her transatlantic afterlife. I trace the manner by which Robinson's public persona is appropriated, beginning in 1780 with her high-profile

[34] Benedict Anderson argues that nations must be "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." My use of the phrase "imaginative communities" is indebted to Anderson's conception of how nationhood is formed and put into practice. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Books, 2006), 7.

affair with the Prince of Wales, and extending until the time of her death in 1800. I also show that Robinson's restorative utility surges during periods of national unrest. Appropriated as "Perdita" to the Prince's "Florizel," Robinson becomes a corrective object and a source of ridicule in a wide range of texts—those such as Tête-à-tête columns, caricatures, and satirical pamphlets. Her lambasting by the British press was a political act, an attempt to restore morale and to deflect from Britain's failures in America and at home by reaffirming its power to subjugate and punish "fallen" women.

Key to this chapter is the argument that Robinson resisted her appropriation. She was fully aware that she could never entirely escape the looming shadow of Perdita—and so she used it. She repurposed the most appealing parts of the Perdita persona and re-presented them as a form of resistance and as means of reclaiming her agency. Beginning in 1780 at the height of Robinson's celebrity as Perdita, she began to reconfigure the persona. She did so gradually, first testing the public as an innovator and icon of fashion. As of 1782, she commissioned a series of portraits, each designed to cast her in different social roles. During the 1790s, she remade herself into a prolific and respected literary figure, and she would continue to use the traces of her past as Perdita to network and to attract a wider audience of readers. She would also allude to Perdita in her written works. My argument in the chapter is two-fold: first, that Robinson, both in life and during her afterlife, is appropriated as a site where anxieties regarding female propriety and good citizenry are expressed and confronted; and second, that Robinson's self-fashioning projects function as strategies of resistance, and that they play a key role in shaping her transatlantic afterlife into the twenty-first century.

Robinson's afterlife contains a voluminous body of cultural history, and I provide representative examples, whether expressed in terms that are textual (anthologization,

abridgement, and creative continuation), performative (theater), or visual (caricatures and illustrations). There are lessons to be learned from how Robinson continues to be appropriated and reimagined, namely that as late as the twentieth century, the public continued to reduce her to the notorious figure of Perdita when, in fact, she was so much *more*. There were exceptions, of course, but these were infrequent and most often short-lived, such as the temporary boom of readers based in New York City who were interested in Robinson in the years immediately following her death. It was not until the latter decades of the twentieth century that serious scholarly efforts were made to reconfigure Robinson's literary contributions.

The personas and works (literary and extraliterary) of Major John André, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, and Mary Robinson were appropriated by British and American publics because they struck a chord with a wide range of social groups during the American Revolution, and then afterwards—most notably, at moments when both nations became unsettled by challenges that exposed deep uncertainties regarding national identity, good citizenry, male and female propriety, and sensibility. The afterlives of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson, as such, reflect a collision of competing forces where meaning is made and continuously remade, thus illustrating the diverse range of needs they each satisfy.

Chapter One: The Extraordinary Afterlife of Major John André, the "Common Spy"

On the evening of 1 October 1780, Major John André addressed George Washington for the final time in a letter. Accepting by then that execution was an inevitability, André pleaded to the American general for death by firing squad. Such was the only approved method of execution fitting for an officer who was, in André's own self-described words, "a man of honor."[35] As noon approached on the following day, André was escorted from his holding cell at the Mabie Tavern in Tappan by two subaltern officers.[36] The prisoner, who was allowed by Washington to dress in the scarlet tunic of his regimental uniform, was taken arm-in-arm by the men up a steep hill, one that very gradually ascended toward a large open area.[37] André would have been pleased by the grandiosity attended to his death march: at the front of the cortège rode General John Glover, his four aides, two colonels, and two majors; they were preceded by a fife-and-drum army band who played the slow, solemn strains of the "Dead March;" a flatbed wagon on which lay a coffin painted black rolled behind the band and was in direct sight of André and his guards, who followed it; and at the tail-end of this spectacle were ranks of soldiers four abreast who filled the entire length of the street. When André reached the top of the hill, he was met by a huge crowd of men, women, and children, all of whom were kept back by five hundred soldiers ordered to form a makeshift square. At the center of the square, André finally got a glimpse of where, and more importantly, *how* he would die. Much to his dismay, what André saw was a gallows.

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[35] See *Proceedings of A Board of General Officers Held by Order of His Excellency Gen. Washington . . . Respecting Major John André* (Printed by the order of the U.S. Congress, Philadelphia, 1780), 43.

[36] Tappan is in New York near the boundary between New York state and New Jersey.

[37] Historian John Walsh attempted to reenact André's last walk. Walsh contends that it likely took twelve to fifteen minutes, the majority of which was taken on a gradual ascent. For more, see John Walsh, *The Execution of Major André* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 212.

The sentimental mythologies that sprang up in Britain and America after André's death were partly inspired by his performance on the day of his execution. André's bravery on the scaffold has been well documented,[38] and his behavior in the hours preceding his execution have been described as nothing short of remarkably calm and genteel. According to certain eyewitness accounts, only once did André lose his composure, and that was in the immediate moment of learning he would be ignominiously hanged rather than shot.[39] Major Benjamin Tallmadge describes André's response with theatrical effect, in which the prisoner recoiled and then involuntarily gasped, "How hard is my Fate!"[40] Another eyewitness to the scene recalls the same event differently. Startled but still in command of himself, André allegedly stated, "I am reconciled to my death, but I detest the mode"[41]—a perhaps more plausible account given the diligence with which he cultivated the persona of a gentleman-officer during his captivity. From Washington's perspective, the mode of execution had legal precedent in that death by hanging was customary for anyone convicted as a common spy. From André's perspective, such a death

[38] One such example comes from army physician John Hart, who recalled, "Such fortitude I never was witness of, nor had I such disagreeable feelings at an execution, to see a man go out of time without fear but all the time smiling," Flexner quoting Hart's letter. See James Thomas Flexner, *The Traitor and the Spy* (New York: Little, Brown, 1975), 391.

[39] Death by hanging would have been viewed as shameful to André. Not only did it confer with his classification by Americans as a "common spy," which in kind collided with his practiced values as a gentleman-soldier, but such a death also had cultural meaning beyond the military. Hanging was a civilian punishment typically used against the poor and the marginalized. One can imagine how André viewed this as a double insult. Born to wealthy Huguenot parents, André was well educated and well cultured. Bruce A. Rosenberg describes André as "Henry Peacham's Compleat Gentleman" due to his prolific talents in mathematics, languages (he could speak French, Italian, and German), and the arts (music, painting, illustrating, music, dance, as well as writing). To be aligned with any "common" person was likely antithetical to André's self-perceived identity. For more on his upbringing and his education as a gentleman, see Rosenberg, *The Neutral Ground: The André Affair and the Background of Cooper's 'The Spy'* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 19-27.

[40] Benjamin Tallmadge, *Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge, Prepared by Himself at the Request of His Children* (New York, 1858), 56. Walsh calls attention to Tallmadge's questionable motives regarding his friendship with André. While several scholars have noted Tallmadge's repentance for his role in André's execution, and accordingly, his high admiration for André, Walsh is unique in suggesting that Tallmadge's account of the execution might be overblown, and for rhetorical effect—that is, to exaggerate André's victimization in order to both solidify André's legacy as a gentleman of sensibility, and to characterize the execution event as an avoidable tragedy. See Walsh, 213.

[41] James Thatcher, *Military Journal of the American Revolution* (Boston: Richardson and Lord, 1823), 273.

was a cruel injustice, for it denied him one final opportunity to assert his status as a gentleman-officer who embodied the values of sensibility and honor embraced by British officers.[42] The form of execution was itself deeply political, a site of ideological contestation between Britons and Americans for how André should be remembered, as either a most unfortunate gentleman-officer or a common spy.[43]

This work does not engage the debate over André's legal culpability as a "spy" for the simple reason that other scholars have convincingly argued he was one.[44] Indeed, the bulk of André scholarship existing today focuses on the circumstances of his espionage, his relationship

[42] Sarah Knott argues that by the 1770s the "man of sensibility" embodied the latest modes of gentlemanly refinement in Britain, and that this value system was commonplace among higher-ranking British officers. She further considers that André may have served as a model for male sensibility to a male audience, which helps to explain André's talent for endearing himself not only to women (his good looks are well-documented) but also to his male adversaries and prosecutors, most notably among them Benjamin Tallmadge, Major-General the Marquis de LaFayette, and Alexander Hamilton. For more on André as a model of sensibility, see Knott, "Sensibility and the American War for Independence," *American Historical Review* 109. 1 (February 2004): 19-40. Also see Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2009).

[43] To be labelled a "spy" during this period had highly pejorative connotations. There was not yet even a term for "counter-intelligence" in 1780, so to be a spy was unambiguously dirty work. Espionage was covertly practiced on both sides but was considered a violation of gentlemanly combat—that is, of fighting in a chivalric mode. According to Maurice Keen, chivalry holds up an idealized image of armed conflict in defiance of the harsh realities of warfare. Linda Colley likewise notes that chivalry reaffirms the vital importance of custom, hierarchy, and inherited rank. To be labelled a "common spy" was thus to imply of the guilty party an absence of chivalry in the martial sense but also in terms of social and national identity. See Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), 237. See also Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2012), 149-50.

[44] Scholars have pointed to well-established facts discussed at length during his trial. On 29 September 1780, André claimed in court (held at The Old Dutch Church in Tappan, NY) that he had been caught out of uniform owing to extraordinary circumstances, and that he wore civilian clothes against his desire; he further claimed that he had proceeded under a flag aboard the *Vulture*, and that he had been caught between enemy lines—in "the neutral ground"—and not within American-held territory. The Board of General Officers, who were appointed by Washington and which consisted of six judges (all major-generals) and eight brigadiers, agreed that the evidence against André was too egregious to pardon: André was indeed in civilian disguise; he was using an alias (John Anderson); in case he was caught on American territory (he was), Arnold also carried a military pass written by General Benedict Arnold, which stated his business as a New York merchant on Arnold's behalf. Most seriously, André had concealed in his stockings six incriminating papers, all in Arnold's handwriting, which consisted of vital details concerning Arnold's military post at West Point. For more on André 's trial, his argument, and the counter-arguments presented in court, see Walsh, *The Execution of Major André*, 23-49; Rosenberg, *The Neutral Ground: The André Affair and the Background of Cooper's 'The Spy'*, 41-50; and Kenneth A. Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors: American Intelligence in the Revolutionary War* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2014), 145-170.

to the infamous traitor Benedict Arnold, his trial, and the public spectacle of his execution.[45] For historians, André is often treated as a kind of excavation project suitable for an intriguing but nonetheless marginal figure whose story has been lost in the much larger epic of the American Revolution. Of course, there are notable exceptions to this trend. Other scholars have observed that in death André captivated the imaginations of Britain and America.[46] It is with this latter conversation that I wish to engage, and a central objective of mine is to determine what issues were at stake in André's death for the warring nations of Britain and America at the time of his execution on 2 October 1780, and in the months and years afterwards. A second objective is to measure André's transcultural impact both during and after the war. My contribution to André-related scholarship will include consideration of his afterlife that is broad in scope but explicit in its analysis of the meanings generated within the cultures of Britain and America.

My strategy for interpreting André's transatlantic cultural significance begins with Stuart Hall's observation about the interrelationship between meaning and production: "Meaning is

[45] For a survey of the literature on André and the events surrounding him, I suggest beginning with John Walsh's accessible and engaging *The Execution of Major André*. Other useful sources include Kenneth A. Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors: American Intelligence in the Revolutionary War* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, 2014); Brian Wages, "Officer, Poet, Spy: the Many Lives of John André ," *Swiss American Historical Society Review* 49.2 (June 2013): 10-20; Alexander Rose, *Washington's Spies: The Story of America's First Spy Ring* (New York: Bantam, 2006); Judith Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 90-105; Caleb Crain, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2001), 1-15; Andy Trees, "Benedict Arnold, John André , and His Three Yeoman Captors: A Sentimental Journey of American Virtue Defined," *Early American Literature* 35 (2000): 246-73; Robert McConnell Hatch, *Major John André : A Gallant in Spy's Clothing* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986); Harry Stanton Tillotson, *The Beloved Spy: The Life and Loves of Major John André* (Caldwell: Caxton Printers Ltd., 1948).

[46] For further scholarship that examines André's meaning(s) within the cultures of Britain and America, start with Jared S. Richman, "Anna Seward and the Many (After) Lives of Major André: Trauma, Mourning and Transatlantic Literary Legacy," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 48.2 (Winter 2015): 201-19. See also Claudia Thomas Kairoff, *Anna Seward and the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2012), 71-91; Knott, "Sensibility": 19-40; Michael Meranze, "Major André 's Exhumation," *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America*, eds. Nancy Isenberg and André W. Burstein (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 123-35; Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), 203-08; Andy Trees, "Benedict Arnold, John André, and His Three Yeoman Captors: A Sentimental Journey or American Virtue Defined," *Early American Literature* 35 (2000): 246-73.

social production, a practice. The world has to be made to mean."[47] For Hall, a "text" is not the locus of meaning but is instead a site where meaning can be made. The same "text"—and let us imagine this concept as broadly as possible, not merely as a material item but as a cultural practice, an event, a location, or a person—can generate different meanings in different contexts and in order to fulfill a variety of needs, whether at the micro-level of the individual or at the macro-level of a nation as a collective body.

At least nine other British officers were executed for espionage by the American army during the war,[48] and yet none came close to achieving André's level of posthumous fame.[49] André's keen self-awareness of his own appeal explains to some degree the origins of his legacy. It is a legacy that has extended into an extraordinary afterlife, and one that has generated a voluminous body of cultural history, or "texts," whether preserved in print (poetry; drama; largely fictionalized, "authentic narratives"; biographies; letters; journalistic accounts; illustrations; broadsides; paintings; posthumous legal defenses) or expressed in everyday life (in stories told by mouth; in rituals enacted at his burial sites, first at Tappan and later at Westminster Abbey; in songs; and even in what resulted in a market for André collectibles such

[47] Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of Ideology: The Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," *Subjectivity and Social Relations*, eds. Veronica Beechey and James Donald (Milton Keynes: Open Univ. Press, 1985), 34. Hall describes emotions along with other discursive formations, institutions and social practices, as constitutive of culture and therefore as integral to the processes of meaning production. He suggests that culture is a space of interpretative struggle; further, he argues that media, for instance, not only reflects reality but also "produces" it while "reproducing" the dominant cultural order.

[48] Knott, "Sensibility," 23.

[49] Nathan Hale is the closest equivalent to matching André in this regard, due in part to his famous, patriotic last words at the stage of his hanging by the British in 1776: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." Hale is notable also because he was an American spy whose capture and execution was covered up by Washington for fear of undermining morale. His last speech was recreated in the form of two ballads, both of which were written in the year of his death: the first, written anonymously, was entitled "The Ballad of Nathan Hale;" the second, by Eneas Munson Sr., is entitled "To the Memory of Capt. Nathan Hale." Statues of Hale have since been erected in Connecticut and Chicago, and he has also been the subject of scholarship in several works about early American history and espionage. For a representative example, see Alexander Rose, *Washington's Spies: The Story of America's First Spy Ring* (New York: Bantam, 2006).

as locks of his hair, his sketches, the chairs he sat on, and the books he owned).[50] But André's extraordinary afterlife was not simply a product of his own design. My argument is that Britain and America needed André during and after the war.[51] André was appropriated by both nations to mask national anxieties and to perpetuate dominant values. André can thus be understood as a lens through which structures of feeling regarding national identity, masculinity, and sensibility are expressed, confronted, and in some cases, reconstructed.[52] By examining representative "texts" related to his afterlife, one can unpack how André was used in Britain and America to help manage the crises of national identities brought on by the war. Foremost, it is for this reason that André-related scholarship should be reconfigured and amended in the contexts of both transatlantic cultural studies and that of the story of the American Revolution itself.

❖ Execution as Theater and the Debate for How André Should Be Remembered

André, disguised as a New York merchant in civilian dress, was discovered and arrested by three militiamen in American territory on 23 September 1780. [53] Coincidentally, on the same

[50] For more on the market for André -inspired items collected by Americans, see Colley, *Captives*, 205.

[51] In relation to his theory of the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin posited that genres emerge (or re-emerge) to fulfill a need of the culture. Thus, as I argue that André in his afterlife fulfilled particular needs of Britain and America, I am thinking of Bakhtin and reimagining André not as a person but rather as a "text." For more on Bakhtin's treatment of genre, see Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981), 258-422, and especially 288-300.

[52] The concept of *structures of feeling* comes from Raymond Williams, and it is generally meant to signify lived experience in a culture during a specific time period. See Williams, "The Analysis of Culture," in *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1961), 41-71.

[53] He called himself 'John Anderson' and his uniform was concealed under civilian dress. The three men who captured André —John Paulding, Isaac Van Wart, and David Williams—shared similar background as yeoman farmers who became militiamen. Many scholars speculate that André despised the men, not so much because they were his captors, or even because they doubted his claims of being a New York merchant working on Arnold's behalf. Rather, it was that his plot was foiled by three men of a substantially lower class than André himself. The three men were rewarded for their role in thwarting André's plot. In September 1782, they were publicly honored by Congress, receiving medals from Washington himself, who also presented them with a sword and a brace of pistols. Congress also promised them each $200 a year for life. And in 1783, they each were rewarded up to five hundred acres of farmland of their choosing anywhere in the state of New York. In 1817, Paulding filed a legal request to have his annual pension increased. He was the father of seventeen living offspring and needed money, and nearly after forty years his annual pension had lost half its purchasing power. His legal request was denied due to Tallmadge's intervention. Tallmadge, who was still eager to preserve André's legacy, had served multiple terms in the House and was outspoken in his opposition to increasing the pension. He went on record to claim that the

day of his arrest, a New York-based Tory newspaper, the *Royal Gazette*, printed *Canto III* of André's *The Cow-Chace*,[54] a satirical ballad commemorating General Anthony Wayne's failed assault on American Loyalists at a blockhouse located on the Hudson River. No explanation is offered for why the work was printed,[55] but in its topicality, it is likely that subscribers to the *Royal Gazette* would recognize the allusiveness of the event and would revel in the author's propagandistic descriptions of a recent skirmish that proved disastrous for the American rebels.[56] While *The Cow-Chace* was published anonymously, the American public would soon learn André's name and also participate in the debate that André himself influenced from the moment of his arrest—the debate for how he should be remembered.

three men discovered the six letters written by Arnold in André's stockings only because it was their aim "to search for plunder." For more on the pension and Tallmadge's intervention, see Walsh, *The Execution of Major André*, 152-160. For Tallmadge's address to Congress, see *Annals of Congress*, 1817, 474-75.

[54] The Patriots throughout America referred to the Royal Gazette as "[James] Rivington's Lying Gazette," owing to its skewed battle reports, false reports of quarrels among Continental leaders, the supposed "financial collapse" of the American rebels, and the great strength of the British forces. For more, see Todd Andrlik, "James Rivington: King's Printer and Patriot Spy?" *Journal of the American Revolution*, *Vol. 1* (Entel Publishing, 2013).

[55] Three days prior, only a single-line notice offers that the work would be printed in a future edition. See the *Royal Gazette*, 20 September 1780.

[56] On 20 and 21 July 1780, Wayne led two brigades against a contingent of American Loyalists led by Thomas Ward. The Loyalists held firm even though Wayne had four artillery pieces to bombard the blockhouse. During the battle, a unit of light dragoons under Major Harry Lee drove many cattle from the vicinity—thus, the origins of the work's title. The cattle were kept for use by the British Army stationed at New York City. For more, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 224-25.

On 11 October, nine days following André's execution,[57] a patriot paper called the *Providence Gazette and Country Life* broke the story of Benedict Arnold's betrayal.[58] Word had arrived from General Nathanael Greene, who describes Arnold's actions as "Treason of the blackest Dye."[59] Greene condemns British forces for "practicing every base Art" and contrasts their methods of warfare with the "manly Way[s"] of the American army. His assignation of gendered identities to either side reflects a structure of feeling concerning the intersection of normative codes of masculinity, class, and that of martial conduct in the unique social spaces of war. Greene's assertion that espionage is dishonorable, an "unmanly" mode of conduct, is an effort to claim the moral high ground for the American army, and one can imagine the efficacy of such rallying, self-actualizing rhetoric as an audience of patriot readers encountered it amidst

[57] Reportage was quite slow during this period. Several factors help to explain this, but most obvious are two: a relative shortage of papers and staff to produce them, and the realities of revolutionary-era printing technology and distribution. But that is not to say that such papers did not exist, circulate, and both reflect and influence the values of contemporary readers.

Some further context: The colonial era newspaper was a weekly—it was not until 1784 that a daily was published, *The Pennsylvania Packet*. Generally, the newspaper was a four-page folio about ten to fifteen inches in size with few headlines and no illustrations. Both advertisements and personals were common. Newspaper distribution was aided by mail delivery, and many early newspaper publishers were also local postmasters. Literacy was comparatively high in the thirteen colonies and papers were read and reread at meetings and rallies, in legislative and militia gatherings, at church services, and passed by hand, which ensured wider circulation. Of approximately seventy newspapers published during the revolutionary era, well over fifty were the product of patriot printers. Theirs were propaganda tools and they were aware that readers sought news about the American army and its wartime progress. There existed also a handful of loyalist printers, mostly in British-occupied New York, who published papers such as James Rivington's *New-York Gazette*, James and Alexander Robertson's *Royal American Gazette*, High Gaine's *Gazette and Mercury*, and William Lewis's *New York Mercury*. Among the more influential patriot newspapers were the *Massachusetts Spy*, the *Connecticut Courant*, the *Boston Gazette*, *Boston Independent Chronicle*, the *Providence Gazette*, the *Pennsylvania Packet*, *New York Journal and Packet*, *Newport Mercury*, *Maryland Gazette*, *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Benjamin Franklin's paper, which was considered by many to be the best in the colonies), and the *South Carolina Gazette*. For further reading on early American periodicals, see Todd Andrlik, *Reporting the Revolutionary War: Before it Was History, it Was News* (Napierville: Sourcebooks, 2012); Carol Sue Humphrey, *New England Newspapers During the American Revolution, 1775-1789* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1992); and Frank L. Mott, *American Journalism; A History of Newspapers in the United States Through 260 Years: 1690-1950* (New York: MacMillan, 1950).

[58] How the story "broke" is a tricky subject. Eyewitness reports were shared sooner, but this report is the earliest example I can locate that reached an American reading public otherwise out of reach from the events at Tappan.

[59] Greene grasped the severity of Arnold's treachery from a military perspective, calling it "a dangerous, if not a fatal Wound" had the West Point plot succeeded. See *Providence Gazette and Country Journal*, 11 October 1780.

the looming possibility of defeat.[60] André is mentioned a handful of times by Greene and is unambiguously labeled a "Spy," whose crime is verified by the unmanly work of espionage. Greene concludes his report with the unfeeling statement that André is executed "in the usual Way" at five o'clock on 1 October 1780. On 13 October, *The Maryland Gazette* published a letter of similar sentiment, one sent by a soldier at Tappan.[61] The letter offers a brief explanation of André's interception, his attempts to bribe his captors with up to "400 guineas if they would dismiss him," and its author likewise characterizes him as a "Spy."[62] During the remaining months of 1780, other patriot papers joined in the collective outrage against both Arnold and André.[63] In the case of a few, the story culminated with the publication of orders by Congress to "erase" Arnold's name from official military record and also to reward André's captors for their "virtuous and patriotic conduct."[64]

The tide of American opinions vilifying André began to turn, and it did so still in the infancy of his extraordinary afterlife. A striking example is a conflicted letter published in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on 25 October 1780. Its author, a self-identified "Gentleman at Camp,"

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[60] The American cause was on the brink of collapse by September 1780. Congress pleaded for nonexistent funds, separate states were defying governmental authority, and battles were increasingly lost or avoided. After nearly five years of warfare, many Americans were ready to negotiate for peace, one which perhaps would allow for new concessions but would certainly mean they would reassert their allegiance to the Crown. For more, see Walsh, *The Execution of Major André*, 76-77.

[61] The letter was dated 18 September 1780. However, in consideration of reliable historical accounts that André's arrest occurred on 23 September 1780, one must conclude this was a misprint.

[62] *Maryland Gazette*, 13 October 1780.

[63] Several newspapers reprinted excerpts and, in some cases, the entirety of the letter printed in the 11 October 1780 edition of *Providence Gazette and Country Life*. Two examples include the 16 October 1780 edition of the *Boston Gazette* as well as the 20 October 1780 edition of the *Maryland Gazette*. As Carol Sue Humphrey notes, the vitriol aimed at Arnold in newspapers included such epithets as "Judas" and "unparalleled traitor." In November of 1780 the *Boston Gazette* published an acrostic of Arnold and predicted his name would live in infamy, and that his soul would be damned to hell. For more on Arnold's treatment in the American press, see Carol Sue Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press: The Promise of Independence* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 2013), 148-149.

[64] On 4 October 1780, the language adopted by Congress is a telling instance of America's attempt to conclude the story of Arnold: "Resolved, That the Board of War be and hereby directed to erase from the Register of the names of the officers of the army of the United States the name of Benedict Arnold." For more, see *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 15 November 1780.

sends to a friend in Philadelphia an intricate account of Arnold's treason along with André's role in the plot, from the time of his covert meeting with Arnold up to the moment of his arrest. This is information only a high-ranking military officer could possess, and scholars have since uncovered the author as Alexander Hamilton.[65] Like other continental officers, Hamilton personally "prided himself on his open-mindedness and emotional delicacy," [66] thus his position on André's conviction and the mode of his execution is expressed in both hyperbolic and sympathetic terms: "Never, perhaps, did a man suffer death with more justice, or deserve it less."[67] Hamilton's remarks side with the legal verdict, and yet his admiration for André represents a stark contrast from earlier reports by American rebels. Caleb Crain contends that one explanation for André's appeal to Hamilton is the sympathy the Briton generated in the revolutionary moment. [68] The practice and expression of sympathy during the Revolution functioned as a unifying political force for soldiers. Thomas Paine, for instance, explains that rebel soldiers "had no other protection than the temporary attachment of one man to another."[69] The young Hamilton actively expressed this sentiment of homosociality: he was close to André during his imprisonment, and upon witnessing the British officer's execution, he confessed that his "feelings were never put to so severe a trial."

[65] Alexander Hamilton sent the letter to Lieutenant John Laurens on 11 October 1780. It was sent as an enclosure by Hamilton to Elizabeth Schuyler on the same day. The original letter sent to Laurens was likely intercepted, for there is a copy with three minor notations by Sir Henry Clinton in the William L. Clements Library of the University of Michigan. How excerpts of the letter surfaced in *The Pennsylvania Gazette* on 25 October 1780 remains unclear. It later resurfaced with relatively insignificant deletions in the *New York Evening Post*, 23 July 1802. The letter serves as an example of what Knott calls the "sentimental project," or what she identifies as a "set of practices of self among members of the long revolutionary generation." These include demonstrations of sympathetic friendship as well as a valence of patriotism. Hamilton's letter signals both. See Knott, *Sensibility*, 19-20.

[66] Crain, *American Sympathy*, 5.

[67] *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 25 October 1780.

[68] Crain, *American Sympathy*, 4.

[69] Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1995), 124.

The subject of André's appeal to Hamilton, and likewise his appeal to several of Hamilton's fellow officers, is significant in terms of clarifying how his rich afterlife in America was inspired in the first place. André's brand of masculinity reflects values reminiscent of an older "politeness" movement, one that became increasingly important in the latter half of the seventeenth century and developed into a set of practiced techniques—modes of sociability—that formed a "unifying rubric" for a diverse range of activities.[70] Sarah Knott extends this idea, noting that André's masculinity reflects the "old-fashioned" virtue of polite manliness, and his charm "[rests] on an elite ideal of masculine gentility: propriety, elegance of manners, social ease."[71] As with General Greene's take on Arnold, a preoccupation with masculinity resurfaces in Hamilton's letter, only in this instance André is praised for his "manly gratitude" in his dealings with the Board of Officers at Tappan. André's masculinity is further characterized by his "becoming sensibility" as well as his "candor and modest firmness." Hamilton includes a story of André's open letter to General Henry Clinton, in which the doomed prisoner pleads to his commanding officer not to feel a "sting in his mind" concerning his fate. That André is then described to "[burst] into tears in spite of his efforts to suppress them" speaks to his performative powers and to his adept sensitivity at detecting the values his audience most championed. André was modeling the idealized role of the masculine gentleman-officer whose loyalty reinforced the esteemed virtue of serving one's superiors. While his status as an enemy to the revolutionaries was confirmed by his execution, his performances during captivity commanded such a powerful effect that they compelled witnesses like Hamilton to discuss and preserve in writing the news of this captivating Briton.

[70] For more on the eighteenth-century politeness movement, see Lawrence Klein, "The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 18.2 (Winter 1984-1985): 186-214.

[71] Knott, *Sensibility*, 159-160.

André's afterlife in America affirmed his status as a model of masculine sensibility in the officer-gentleman mode. On 15 August 1781, the *American Journal* presented "Arnold; or, A Question Answered," a poem previously printed in several London papers.[72] The poem assigns what would prove to be defining traits that distinguished between the disloyal Arnold and the most unfortunate André:

> Our troops by Arnold thoroughly were bang'd,
> And poor St. André was by Arnold hang'd;
> To George a Rebel, to the Congress Traitor,
> Pray what can make the name of Arnold greater?
> By one bold treason more to gain his ends,
> Let him betray his new adopted friends.

Arnold is portrayed at once as traitor and executioner of the charismatic Briton, who is exalted here as a saint. The poem is representative of André's growing appeal, one which extends beyond American military circles. For instance, William Dunlap's *Andre: A Tragedy, in Five Acts*, first produced in 1798 at the fashionable locale of New York City's Park Theatre, portrays an American soldier "so blinded by his love" for André that he wished to desert.[73] Dunlap sidesteps the ambiguity of the soldier's "love," but he demonstrates in André's sympathetic characterization that masculine sensibility, sentimental friendship, and more broadly, an appreciation for propriety and elegance of manners all continued to resonate with active and engaged spectators.[74] Here André's imagined persona influences public taste, one linked to gentility and moral character. The public's ongoing disgust at Arnold's treachery is paired with

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[72] See, for example, Thomas Digges to Benjamin Franklin, 13 November 1780, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Leonard W. Labaree, et al., eds (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 33: 528; *London Chronicle*, 11-14 November 1780; *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, 14 November 1780 and 18 November 1780; *British Mercury and Evening Advertiser*, 17 November 1780 and 23 November 1780.

[73] William Dunlap, *André, a Tragedy in Five Acts* (New York: Dunlap Society, 1887), xxx.

[74] The play was not a big success, but this has little to do with feelings about André.' Audiences were offended by a scene in which Bland, the soldier whose admiration of the Briton becomes central to the plot, tosses his cockade to the ground after learning of André's impending execution. Such defiance offended audiences as an indictment of the Revolution itself.

André's self-loathing for his collusion with the American general. That André was in fact proud of his role in the military scheme reflects not only the didacticism of Dunlap's drama but also the cultural need for historical revision in the interest of preserving André as an emblem of idealized masculine sensibility.

Dunlap's André is guilt-ridden but loyal to the orders of his superior, General Clinton. This is unlike Philip Freneau's earlier, more ambivalent depiction of André in *The Spy*—an unfinished fragmentary drama in verse begun in the fall of 1780,[75] in which André is presented as a martial prodigy who inspires Britain's successful 1780 April attack at Charleston, and who also masterminds the West Point plot. The difference in André's characterization does not absolve him of his status as an enemy or a spy, but Freneau is careful to create notable distance between André and Clinton. This revisionist version of André serves to discredit Clinton's military prowess, making a mockery of his status as a high-ranking officer, and it also allows Freneau to typecast the British general as one motivated not by patriotism but by social and economic greed. In this respect, Freneau aligns Clinton not with André, whose motives are to serve his country and win the war, but with Arnold, who hardly flinches in his betrayal when offered the sum of ten thousand guineas and the assurance of fame in England. Clinton gleefully reflects that he is "high in royal favor" following British victory at Charleston.[76] He also instructs André to credit him alone for the West Point plot, provided it proves successful: "Let the world imagine it was Clinton / Who schemed, who plotted, and seduced the villain; / That by his deed more honour I may gain / Than if I had defeated Washington . . . on yonder Jersey

[75] The manuscript was written shortly after Freneau's "Prison Ship" in 1780, a poem that echoed his own harrowing experiences as a captive aboard a British prison ship. *The Spy* had yet to be published until 1963. For access to the unfinished work, see *The Poems of Philip Freneau*, *Vol. II*, ed. Fred Lewis Pattee (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 39.

[76] Ibid., 42.

plain."[77] Clinton abuses his status as André's superior by shielding himself from any possible risk. André understands what is at stake if he is to work as a spy, and if caught, that he "may meet an ignominious death."[78] Clinton's response is telling of Freneau's moral indictment of the high-ranking British officer: "Consider what it is you owe your country."[79] The general is made into an opportunistic manipulator, one who exploits André's earnest patriotism for self-gain.

Freneau would become known as "The Poet of the American Revolution," [80] but his portrait of André suggests unresolved feelings, perhaps sympathy and even admiration for his unwavering patriotism. When recounting to Clinton his success in turning Arnold, André laments, "O Britain, Britain / That one descended from thy true-born sons / Should plot against the soil that gave him birth."[81] So sincere is his patriotism, André suggests here that it is both unthinkable and unnatural for any Briton to commit treason. Because André's arrest does not appear in the fragment—Freneau completed only three of the five acts—there is no way to determine if the author intended to represent with accuracy the events leading to up to it; it is nonetheless likely that he would have read written accounts and learned of André's culpability in his capture.[82] Notably, the first act concludes with a warning from Clinton: "Be not found within

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[77] Ibid., 47.

[78] Ibid., 47.

[79] Ibid., 48.

[80] Freneau's anti-British politics were customary in works as early as 1774, when he began to publish satirical pieces and political burlesques that ridiculed the King, Royalists, and neutrals. For more, see Jay Milles, "Introduction," *Some Account of the Capture of the Ship 'Aurora' by Philip Freneau* (New York: M.F. Mansfield & A. Wessels, 1899), 11.

[81] Freneau, Philip. *The Poems of Philip Freneau*, *Vol. II*, 43.

[82] For instance, a narrative describing André's arrest was printed in the *Maryland Gazette*, 13 October 1780. This narrative likely came from André's captors, John Paulding, Isaac Van Wart, and David Williams, who gave testimony of their arrest of André at the trial of Joshua Hett Smith. Smith was André's guide to the covert meeting place with Benedict Arnold inside the lines at West Point, and afterwards, when he took André on 23 September 1780 to a location he thought was outside of American control. Hett was arrested later in the early hours of 25 September and charged with treason. He was later acquitted.

No single source offers the entire body of testimonials, but excerpts from the trial can be found in the following: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, vol. 2, 1779-1781*, ed. Harold C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 450-54; Jared Sparks, *Life and Treason of Benedict Arnold* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 223-26; Jeptha R. Simms, *History of Schoharie County and Border Wars of New York* (Albany: Munsell &

their lines; / Remember still to keep on neutral ground."[83] This may foreshadow Freneau's intent to depict the actual, lived events of the arrest, those which include André's discovery in enemy lines, away from neutral territory; but considering the previous liberties taken by Freneau to make André heroic, it is not far-fetched to imagine the author modifying this unflattering moment and assigning blame elsewhere. André's casting as a chivalric lover also situates him in the role of hero, albeit as a tragic one. Lucinda, André's fictitious lover, predicts his death in a dream, warning him against idolatrous extravagance for king and country.[84] If André has a fault, it is that his patriotism borders on self-destructive zealotry: "Had I a thousand lives, I would lay them all down for Britain and my king."[85] His patriotism is juxtaposed with Arnold's disloyalty, and Freneau is able to avoid villainizing André as the corruptor of Arnold because the American general is already corrupt. Arnold—not André or even Clinton—is Freneau's villain, and his characterization reflects the needs of a culture still reeling from Arnold's treason. *The Spy* begins, for instance, with a conversation between two of Arnold's servants regarding his loyalty to the American cause. They gossip over witnessing Arnold's "sneers" when entertaining fellow American officers; they also note his expressed hatred of the French, with whom the Americans have formed an alliance.[86] The work's title infers that it is Arnold who is the real spy. Freneau makes a careful distinction between wearing a mask in the service of a nation and wearing one to commit treason.

Tanner, 1835), 646-52; *Historical Magazine I*, 293-95, *VIII*, 366-68 (1857); and Egbert Benson, *Vindication of the Captors of Major John André* (New York: Joseph Sabin, 1865), 13-21. See also footnote 19 for further details of the capture.

[83] *The Poems of Philip Freneau*, *Vol. II*, 48.

[84] Lucinda sings of a British officer's death: "[He] was as great an idolater to his king and country as most English gentleman." Ibid., 54-55.

[85] Ibid., 53.

[86] Ibid., 40.

The production of André-related texts in America is remarkable in number and variety, and cumulatively this reflects his enduring cultural capital.[87] André's Tappan, New York burial site, for instance, is itself an afterlife text, one that signals the rich history of the Briton's symbolic power. The burial site is a kind of habitus in which different structures of feeling are enacted and contested.[88] There is an obvious discord in consideration of the rhetorical polarities existing between the ceremonial pomp of André's death march and execution, and the fact that no headstone was erected at his burial site. The American military made a spectacle of his

[87] Representative American plays include *The Spy* (1780), Philip Freneau's unfinished work; Dunlap's *Andre: A Tragedy, in Five Acts* (1798); and George Henry Calvert's *Arnold and André: A Historical Drama* (Boston: Lee and Shepherd, 1864). Representative poetry includes Anna Seward's "Monody on Major André" (1781) and Freneau's "On Sir Henry Clinton's Recall" (1782). In Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1820), Ichabod Crane refers to "Major André's tree." It is at this tree that Ichabod Crane first spots the Headless Horseman, suggesting Irving's parallel of one ghost with another. See Irving*, History, Tales and Sketches* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 1081. For more on Irving's representation of André, see Crain, *American Sympathy*, 1-15. Other notable examples of representative fiction include James Fenimore Cooper's *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821) and Herman Melville's *Billy Budd, Sailor* (1924). Crain presents an intriguing argument which suggests that Melville's novella is an angry revision of André's ghost. See Crain, *American Sympathy*, 238-270. For folk ballads referencing André, see John Anthony Scott's *The Ballad of America: The History of the United States in Song and Story* (New York, 1966), 85-87.

Representative letters and personal accounts are wide-ranging. Among them, I would like to highlight two. First, in Fanny Wright's letters, particularly one written July 1819. Wright describes André as one "unpractised in deceit [who] incautiously betrayed himself." André is cast as the unwitting victim of circumstance in the West Coast saga. See Fanny Wright's *Views of Society and Manners in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 87. Second, in 1855, Nathaniel Hawthorne visited André's burial site at Westminster Abbey. His response to the monument is striking: "An American has a right to be proud of Westminster Abbey; for most of the men, who sleep in it, are our great men, as well as theirs." See Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks*, edited by Randall Stewart (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1941), 198.

Numerous biographies on André have been published, but for its didacticism I suggest William Abbatt's *The Crisis of the Revolution: Being the Story of Arnold and André* (New York: William Abbatt, 1899). Abbatt uses revisionist biographical history to teach lessons about treachery (Arnold) as well as honor and sensibility (André'). A similar rhetorical strategy is also employed by Winthrop Sargent in *The Life and Career of Major John André* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1861). A representative broadside is *Major Andre's Farewell* (1820), now in possession of the West Point Library. For André-related paintings, I suggest Asher B. Durand's "The Capture of Major André'" (1833-34), an oil painting featuring a romantic landscape and André's attempt to bribe his captors. This rare negative portrayal of the British soldier suggests that while he was largely embraced by Americans, his legacy was still being negotiated.

[88] "Habitus" is Pierre Bourdieu's concept, and it refers to a social environment in which we live. A "habitus" contains the meanings of habitat and the processes of habitation. It may also refer to "taste" in the context of those who possess different levels of cultural and economic capital. For more on the concept, see Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Space," *Practical Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1-13. For more on how "habitus" applies to the culture of everyday life, see also John Fiske, "Cultural Studies and the Culture of Everyday Life," *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (London: Routledge Books, 1992), 154-165.

death—it was public and gruesome, and there can be little doubt that Washington, as symbolic figurehead and military leader of the American revolutionaries, was sending a message to his British counterparts that André's hanging was retaliation for Arnold, who had fled upon word of André's capture and was still under the protection of the British military. Leading up to the hanging, in what signaled both a political move and the desire to satisfy a larger social need for revenge,[89] André's name, his crimes, and his affiliation with Arnold (who was already unanimously despised by civilians and American soldiers alike) were heavily publicized.[90] As with the hanging itself, the deliberate omission of André's name at his graveside was certainly an act intended to outrage and insult the British. Both can be understood as an effort to control the narrative about André—that he *was* a spy; that spies deserve a shameful death and are owed no commemoration. Such acts spoke louder than words as expressions of unresolved anger, even if that anger was conflated with Arnold's treason.

Conversely, the unmarked grave can be viewed as a revisionary effort by the American military to deny André's impact on an increasingly sympathetic public. Washington failed to anticipate how adept André would prove at endearing himself to the public at Camp Tappan,

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[89] On the evening of 30 September 1780, an effigy contrived by local artist Charles Willson Peale, was taken through Philadelphia, where Arnold had once been an unpopular governor. The satirical effigy consisted of Arnold, who is depicted with two faces. Arnold holds a black mask, presumably signifying his self-deception. Behind him stands the Devil, who holds in one hand a bag of gold and in the other a pitchfork, which he uses to prod Arnold. A lengthy inscription on the front of the cart detailed Arnold's crimes. André was not yet publicly known as "the spy," so he is not depicted here directly. But the Devil could be read as his stand-in, particularly because he holds a bag of gold. Bribery was suspected on 30 September, and it is well known now that Arnold was bribed by André on behalf of the British. For a successful turnover of West Point, with or without the capture of Washington, Arnold would receive a lump sum of 20,000 Pounds (or approximately half a million U.S. dollars today). Arnold would also get indemnification for loss of various properties and the rank of brigadier (one step below his American rank) in the British army. For more on the effigy and Peale's woodprint, see *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family*, Ed. Lillian B. Miller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 1: 354. For more on André's bribery of Arnold, see Walsh, *The Execution of Major André*, 73.

[90] The Arnold- André affair was the second-most cited event of the Revolution by veterans around New York City. Approximately one in three soldiers from this region mentioned it in their pension applications. See Judith Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 91.

thereby turning public favor in his direction and inciting, at least among some, a backlash aimed at the American general. The burial site functions as a text purporting André's guilt, but it also functions as a space for expressive contestation in the form of symbolic, counter-hegemonic activity. For witnesses of the execution, André's legal culpability was not so much the issue, but rather it was the problem of hanging a figure whose masculine sensibility and aristocratic stoicism were so pronounced that surely, he deserved a less shameful death since a pardoning was out of the question. Any visible act of protest aimed at Washington or the decision of the court was a risk,[91] but in the days following André's burial, two cedars and allegedly a peach tree were planted by some unknown persons at the burial site, and there the cedars and (depending on the first-hand account) the peach tree remained until André's exhumation in the summer of 1821.[92] William Abbatt's 1899 description of the burial site as a sacred ground illustrates André's symbolic power:

> For forty years the grave on 'Andre's Hill' remained undisturbed. Soldiers of the Revolution who dwelt in Tappan, and peaceful citizens who had witnessed the death of its inmate, told the story to the generation born after the second war with Great Britain. No spot in the county, indeed in the State, was better known.[93]

As for the trees, no one is certain of what they were originally intended to signify, but the afterlife texts of two enduring oral legends point to the contested authority of Washington, to

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[91] Washington and the Board he appointed to decide André s fate were well-respected authority figures. Moreover, Washington was already a hero of the Revolution. To outwardly defy his orders would be viewed as an insult to Washington himself and would be ill-received by the majority of Tappan residents.

[92] In 1818 a visitor to Tappan, Captain Alden Partridge, wrote in his journal that André's burial site was "distinctly marked at a distance by two small cedars about 8 feet high." No mention of a peach tree was made. See Partridge, "André's Grave at Tappan," *Magazine of American History V*, 1880, 58. During André's exhumation in 1821, however, a first-hand account vividly recalls a peach tree. See Brian Richard Boylan, *Benedict Arnold: The Dark Eagle* (New York: Norton, 1973), 249-51. Similarly, J. Buchanan writes that a "small peach tree was "planted at the grave . . . the roots [of which] had completely surrounded the skull, like a net." For a first-hand account of the exhumation, see Buchanan's "Narrative of the Exhumation of the Remains of Major André," 1833, 307. Abbatt claims also that the peach tree "was dug up and taken to London" following the exhumation, and there it was replanted in the king's garden. The cedar trees, apparently, were also transported, "and from the wood of one the Duke of York had a snuff box made." See Abbatt, *The Crisis of the Revolution*, 83.

[93] Ibid., 82.

dissatisfaction regarding the mode of André's execution, and to doubts about the moral leadership exhibited by the Board of General Officers appointed by Washington. The legends likewise speak to André's performative powers and reveal that the culture of sensibility was keenly felt in the everyday consciousness of Americans.

The first legend relating to André's burial site is that local women covered André with garlands and flowers once he was cut from the gallows and laid in his black coffin. Locals then marked his grave with stones and rocks, and they planted two cedar trees alongside it. Eventually a peach tree sprouted from the head of the grave, possibly taking root from a peach handed to André on his way to the gallows by a young Tappan girl. A second legend is that this same girl planted a peach tree over André's grave.[94] The message most clearly embedded in the afterlife texts of either burial legend is an idolatrous reverence for André. For André to be decorated with garlands and flowers reflects the popular perception that he was a man of sensibility, of good taste and good manners. The symbol of the sprouted peach tree conjures the mythical and messianic, as if André was endowed with virtue so miraculous that he inspired life and growth even in death.

The legends are highly romantic and sentimental, and reports of what immediately followed the hanging suggest an overwhelming urge to get closer to André. The huge crowd present formed itself into long lines to view the body. An eyewitness claimed that by the time he reached the coffin, "[André's] coat, vest, and breeches were taken off, and his body . . . [was] covered by some underclothes."[95] This unnamed soldier further claimed that he noticed a young

[94] For more on the legends affiliated with the burial site, see Boylan, *Benedict Arnold*, 247-54.

[95] See John W. Barber and Henry H. Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey* (New York: S. Tuttle, 1844), 77. Also, in Buchanan's account of the exhumation, he explains that he "did not find a single button, nor any article, save a string of leather that tied his hair in perfect preservation." Buchanan believed the regimentals were stripped and he chastised "those who permitted this outrage." See Buchanan, "Narrative," 307.

man in "gaudy dress" who had André's missing clothes hanging on his arm. This individual, he learned, was André's servant whose job at that moment was to preserve his clothes.[96] One cannot know precisely what motivated each person to wait so patiently in line, or how he or she might have felt upon seeing "the greatly swollen [and] very black face" of André.[97] But if the legends are any indication, their immediate sympathies were with the convicted British spy rather than with their own government.

The encomiums André inspired among Americans signal the efficacy of his double-performance as an ancient stoic and a modern man of feeling. André had good reason to put on a performance—after all, he had abjectly failed in the mission granted to him by General Clinton. Had André succeeded in his plot with Arnold, West Point would have fallen and likely with it the already waning morale of the American revolutionaries.[98] During André's meeting with Arnold, it was agreed that he would urgently send to Washington for reinforcements. Washington would almost certainly lead troops in the direction of West Point, where they would be ambushed by British troops lying in wait. With West Point captured and Washington imprisoned or dead, the outcome of the war might have been entirely different. André's failures to follow Clinton's explicit instructions were egregious. Clinton told him not to enter American lines, and by no means should he wear civilian clothes. André did both. If Arnold were to offer him any incriminating evidence, he was advised to dispose of it and memorize the information. What ultimately led to André's arrest was his foolish decision to store in his stockings Arnold's six

[96] The servant was almost certainly Peter Laune, who had traveled to Tappan to assist André on the day of his execution. See Walsh, *The Execution of Major André*, 139.

[97] Barber and Howe, *Historical Collections*, 77.

[98] John Walsh argues that by the fall of 1780, the Americans were faltering. Congress needed nonexistent funds; separate states were defying government authority; battles were being lost or avoided; and all the while British regiments swarmed everywhere. See *The Execution of John André*, 72-3.

letters, all of which were in the general's handwriting. Had he disposed of them, the arrest very well may have been avoided altogether.

André's masterful double-performance began upon arrival at Camp Tappan on 28 September and ended at his public execution, and both served to deflect his failures and ultimately allowed him to revise his public image. First-hand accounts by Continental army officers recalled that in the minutes preceding his hanging "[André] had the appearance of Philosophy & Heroism,"[99] and that "no person [met] his fate with more fortitude and equal conduct."[100] His legend grew with second-hand accounts. In a letter to General Nathanael Greene, Thomas Paine wrote that "[André] died like a Roman."[101] Henry Lee, Jr., an American soldier from a distinguished military family, idolized André: "I would rather be André than be alike to nine-tenths of the sentimental world."[102] André's rhetorical appeal was amplified by his calculated dress on the day of his execution. Peter Laune, André's personal servant of several years, was allowed to visit him at his holding cell that morning.[103] Laune shaved André, dressed and powdered his hair, and in military fashion he tied a leather ribbon to a re-braided piece of André's hair. André then pulled on his stockings, followed by britches, polished boots, a clean ruffled shirt, his vest and neckcloth, and finally his scarlet, gold-trimmed regimental jacket.

[99] Joel Barlow to Ruth Baldwin, 2 October 1780, quoted in Kenneth Silverman, *Cultural History of the American Revolution* (Ann Arbor, MI: T.Y. Cromwell, 1976), 380.

[100] Anonymous account, 2 October 1780, in *Pennsylvania Packet*, 10 October 1780; also printed in *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 11 October 1780; *New Jersey Gazette*, 18 October 1780; and *Continental Journal*, 26 October 1780.

[101] Thomas Paine to Nathanael Greene, 17 October 1780, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, Ed. Richard K. Showman (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1991), 6: 404.

[102] Henry Lee, Jr. to Thomas Sim Lee, 4 October 1780, in Major Henry Lee, "Capture of Major André," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 4 (1880), 65.

[103] Walsh, *The Execution of Major André*, 139.

André looked the part of the dignified British gentleman-officer,[104] and with great acumen he worked the gallows as an actor would a stage.[105] He exchanged farewells with several of the men who had roles in his captivity, but to his three captors he said nothing. First-hand accounts recall that as André walked up to the scaffold, he grasped Benjamin Tallmadge's hand and bid him a warm farewell. From Tallmadge's perspective, this was especially generous given that it was he who was responsible for guarding André when he brought him to Camp Tappan as a prisoner. André repeated the same action with Alexander Hamilton and Joshua King.[106] André looked ahead and waved to an audience already captivated by the spectacle of the event; he projected his voice and, in a masterful rhetorical move, he expressed his wishes to offer *them* comfort rather than dwell on his own imminent suffering: "It will be but a momentary pang," he declared.[107] André pulled himself up to the surface of the wagon, followed by a hangman whose identity was hidden by soot on his blackened face. He surveyed the crowd once more and made a request: "Only this, gentlemen, that you all bear me witness that I meet my fate like a brave

[104] An eyewitness recalls, "All eyes were upon him; and it is not behoved him that one officer in the British army, placed in his situation, would have appeared better than this unfortunate man." See Barber and Howe, *Historical Collections*, 77.

[105] André was something of a novice producer and designer already, having staged an entertainment called the "Mischianza" in response to the criticism of William Howe's command in the fall of 1777 and the winter of 1778. General Howe was under scrutiny for putting social matters ahead of military ones—while in New York and later Philadelphia, officers under Howe's command established a successful run of theatrical entertainments. They were subsequently held in contempt by some Britons and rebel colonists alike. The Mischianza was held on the eve of Howe's departure from occupied Philadelphia on 18 May 1778, and its purpose was to serve as a counter-discourse to the escalating criticism he was receiving. The Mischianza combined a regatta on the Delaware River with a faux-medieval tournament at Philadelphia's Knight's Wharf. During the tournament, Howe's officers masqueraded as either Knights of the Blended Rose or Knights of the Burning Mountain. They flirted with fashionable Philadelphia women, all of whom were costumed by André in the style of Turkish dress. The festivities progressed to an elaborate dinner and ball and concluded with fireworks. Colley notably argues that the Mischianza is a symptom of patrician martial psychology; see Colley, *Britons*, 148. See also Daniel O'Quinn's *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770-1790* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 146-185.

[106] Walsh, *The Execution of Major André*, 144.

[107] This account is available in the form of a pamphlet; see Alexander Hamilton, *The Fate of Major André* (New York: Charles F. Heartman, 1916), 17.

man."[108] The hangman asked if he wished for a blindfold, but André was prepared: from his own pocket he produced a large silk handkerchief, which he placed over his eyes and tied at the back of his head. The silk handkerchief worked as a material signifier of his gentlemanly status, a prop in his farewell performance. André's preparation also signaled the control he wished to wield at the final moments of his life. This was made more apparent by his resistance as a noose was placed around his neck—André insisted on doing it himself.[109] Then came a call to bind his arms. André produced a *second* silk handkerchief, which the hangman used to fasten his arms at the elbows. When Colonel Alexander Scammell finally drew his sword and the blade came down, André's body fell. It writhed for several seconds but gradually became still, and there it reportedly remained hanging for twenty to thirty minutes.

André's execution and the sympathy he inspired among officers and enlisted soldiers alike are remarkable given the complex social dynamics existing within and between each military sphere. John A. Ruddiman notes that the unity of purpose in the Revolutionary cause was hardly immune to the mutual dislike among officers and their subordinates. This tension, no doubt aggravated by class difference, "created parallel performances of their military identities."[110] Enlisted soldiers resented the authority of junior officers, some of whom were as young as seventeen years of age. Sensitive to their perceived lack of credibility, junior officers

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[108] Ibid., 17. James Thatcher, however, recalls André's words with slight but significant differences: "I pray you to bear me witness that I meet my fate like a brave man." See Thatcher, 274. Hamilton emphasizes André's use of "gentlemen," which could very well mean that he looked at the crowd first and then turned his head back in the direction of the high-ranking officers, or that he addressed the entire crowd in this manner. If he did the former, he was aligning himself as a gentleman among other gentlemen. The expression is elitist but one he would own. If he did the latter, perhaps it was a final move to win over his audience. The sincerity of such a gesture, however, is as irrelevant as it is unlikely. Thatcher's recollection of "I pray you" evokes God and religion rather than social rank. And further, it sounds more like a plea rather than a request.

[109] "André took off the handkerchief from his neck, unpinned his shirt-collar, and deliberately took the end of the halter . . . and placed the knot directly under his right ear, and drew it snugly to his neck." See Barber and Howe, 77.

[110] John A. Ruddiman, *Becoming Men of Consequence: Youth and Military Service in the Revolutionary War* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 77.

had a point to prove to the hierarchy above and below them. Senior officers, as figureheads in the military, were also keen to distinguish themselves but as a separate and more powerful tribe. This was a culture of competition, bitterness, and performance. Hamilton viewed rank and promotion without merit, for instance, as traditions deserving of his contempt; he imagined André as the rare exception. Junior officers compensated for their mid-level status by using methods of military discipline to teach obedience to enlisted subordinates. Such discipline was "harsh, violent, humiliating, and capricious,"[111] a reflection of frustrated officers whose severity worked to normalize absolute control over the enlisted soldier's body.

The active role of performativity in the daily lives of Continental soldiers helps to clarify André's versatile appeal. The regulation of disciplinary "body projects," including the practice of uninterrupted, constant coercion, facilitated two parallel performances, each tied to the politics of power and discipline. First is the enlisted soldier who adeptly performs his docility (for Foucault, a "docile body" is a fully transformed, regulated, and obedient subject);[112] it is he who is most likely spared from his superior's punishments. Second is the junior officer who distinguishes himself as an effective disciplinary subject, and who creates distance from his less committed peers. Even when disciplinary technology is exposed as faulty, therein lies an opportunity for a teaching moment, one that reinforces disciplinary values with brute utility. An example is the diary entry of a Continental soldier, who explains, "We found that one of the men that was flogg'd Yesterday was not Sentenced by the Court Martial but Receiv'd his Punishment through

[111] See Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 81.

[112] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1995), particularly "Docile Bodies," 135-169.

Mistake."[113] The spectacle of military discipline illustrates that even those who may not deserve punishment are never free of its threat.

André's appeal to enlisted soldiers, despite his own rank and nationality, can be understood through the common experience of suffering. Such men would have recognized in André's courage at the hour of his death an unshakeable spirit, one forged by mental and physical toughness. Further, they would have found kinship in André's fortitude amidst institutional forces that had determined his fate. André's performative accessibility allowed him to occupy several competing spaces at once, and his liminality in this regard reflects not the man he was (an unapologetic classist) but rather the social needs of his audience. His masculine gentility spoke to the aristocratic ideals of senior officers who would have had a similar classical education as André. Junior officers who felt anxiety about their unstable status recognized in André's calmness and measured self-control something special—the quality of self-confidence—and to which they could aspire. Members of each military sphere found André's loyalty to the higher cause of nationhood worthy of respect, even if his was in service to Britain.

- André's Utility as a Maintaining Force

Analysis of local civilian reactions to André's performance at the gallows and to his gruesome hanging requires a closer look at why the national mood altered so abruptly in 1780. The public's interest in the war and its revolutionary zeal steadily declined between the years of 1778 and 1780, and the country remained split between rebels, loyalists, and those still uncertain of where to direct their allegiances. There are several possible explanations for the decline during this period, perhaps none more obvious than the likelihood that Americans had grown tired of the

[113] *Orderly Book and Journals Kept by Connecticut Men While Taking Part in the American Revolution*. 1775-1778. In vol. 7 of *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society* (Hartford, CT: Published by the Society, 1899), 292.

war.[114] Many revolutionaries believed victory was near as early as 1778, when the British withdrew from Philadelphia to New York and the Americans formed an alliance with France. An American victory appeared so imminent in October 1778 that Lieutenant William Thompson reported to his regimental commander that the Pennsylvania Executive Council refused money for soldier recruitment: "They again hinted that the war would be shortly finished, and there was no need for throwing the State to farther Expences."[115] By the time of André's execution in October 1780, morale in the Continental army had reached a low point. This was aggravated by supply problems, deserters, regiment mutinies over poor conditions,[116] as well as three disasters between May and October 1780: the devastating April defeat by the British at Charleston; the loss of Horatio Gates's army at Camden, South Carolina; and, of course, Arnold's defection to the British. Comparatively little discussion of the war in newspapers was made between 1778 and the early months of 1780, but from June until the end of the year, there began an expeditious influx of articles that called for revolutionaries to awaken from their torpor and reinvigorate their efforts to support the army. It was during this period of reflection caused by the looming realities of defeat that civilians once again became desperate to preserve their revolutionary ideals. They

[114] This is partly due to the growing disparity between prewar revolutionary ideals and that of wartime realities. For instance, Americans began to abandon the ideal that the war would be fought by citizens of all kinds. Enlistment rolls and civil records show that soldiers were disproportionately men in their late teens or early twenties, poor, and usually unmarried. As the war progressed, recruitment even among such men lagged because they wanted more money for their service. Further, able-bodied men who prioritized wealth and social mobility over patriotic service could find better alternatives than joining the Continental army. Privateering, farm labor, brief work as a militia substitute all offered more pay, food, and physical comfort.

[115] William Thompson to Richard Butler, 5 October 1778, Hazard et al., eds., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st Serv., VII, 65.

[116] There were three mutinies during the first six months of 1780—one at West Point in the Massachusetts Line on 1 January; another in the Connecticut Line at Morristown on 25 May; and another in the New York Line at Fort Schuyler in June.

worked to boost the army with new recruits and reenlistments; they offered increased pay and supplies as well as the additional assistance of militia.[117]

Word of André's capture in Tappan added further impetus to the locals' revolutionary zeal, but none were prepared for the sympathy the Briton would generate. André's performance on the day appealed to citizens who believed in liberty as a moral right earned only by the virtuous. This core value can be traced to the rallying rhetoric of the Revolution as early as 1774 and 1775, as resistance was formed with the certitude that God had chosen America as a model for virtuous self-governance. A typical example of such rhetoric is expressed by a soldier whose rallying patriotism was printed in the *New Jersey Journal*: "We ought to rejoice that the Almighty Governor of the universe hath . . . planted us the guardians of liberty, while the greatest part of mankind rise and fall undistinguished as bubbles on the common stream."[118] The rhetoric of fulfilling God's will is indeed nothing original during this period of exploration and empire, but notable is the assertion that American virtue was imagined as encompassing restraint, material sacrifice, and for the able-bodied, a spirited readiness for combat. The virtuous citizen lived modestly and contributed what he or she could to the revolutionary cause; the virtuous soldier, as duty to both his nation and to the citizens who supported him, was expected to be unflappable and determined. Newspapers featured some of the earliest and most common public expressions of combat readiness as well as the pressing social expectations of soldiers, in which stories were shared of mothers, wives, sisters, and belles who sent their loved ones to fight the British. Single women stressed their refusal of men who avoided service; mothers with multiple sons claimed to send them all to the army at once, for it was better all should die in

[117] For more on civilian responses to possible British defeat, see Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*, 277-294.

[118] *New Jersey Journal* (Chatham), 29 March 1780.

warfare than one should return home a coward.[119] The spectacle of combat readiness served a social function in that citizens enjoyed the stories, repeated them privately, and it assured them of American readiness.

André's sympathetic performance at the gallows worked to obscure his role as a British spy and occasioned in public memory his status as a model of patriotic virtue. In André was a soldier whose courage was God-given and whose willingness to sacrifice himself for his nation echoed American revolutionary ideals of virtuous citizenry. By 1780, the same qualities of virtue were feared to be beyond recovery if independence was lost. Royster suggests that the revolutionaries' alarm following the martial disasters of 1780 reflected more than a fear of losing the war, but that it also signaled a determination to prove that public virtue was still thriving.[120] It is likely that André's execution greatly complicated such resolute self-perceptions of American character. The culture of warfare demanded the execution of an enemy spy, thus absolving the punishers from any moral wrongdoing—and yet the subsequent Tappan burial legends suggest a pressing and continuous social need for public atonement.

British reactions immediately following André's hanging were predictable in that he was nearly canonized. In fact, several newspapers referred to him as "Major St. André,"[121] a slip that ironically revealed what little was actually known about him just as it also inadvertently prophesied the character his legacy would soon take on. A comparison among first-hand accounts of his final words at the gallows reveal slight inconsistencies in phrasing, but reports of the very same moment in Britain were unalike in content and sentiment, some remarkably so.

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[119] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 12 June 1775; *Virginia Gazette*, 24 June 1775, quoted in Frank Moore, ed., *Diary of the American Revolution from Newspapers and Original Documents* (New York, 1858), Vol. 1, 71. *New York Gazette*, 12 August 1776; *Connecticut Courant, and Hartford Weekly Intelligencer*, 19 February 1776.

[120] See Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*, 277.

[121] See footnote 72.

For instance, the *General Evening Post* claimed that André s last words were as follows: "As I suffer in the defence of my country, I must consider this hour as the most glorious of my life—Remember that I die as becomes a British Officer, while the manner of my death must reflect disgrace on your Commander."[122] This, of course, has since proven to be egregiously fictitious propaganda, but that it was published at all is telling of the British mood and its particular needs during the formative weeks of André's extraordinary afterlife. Britain needed a new hero, and the nation clearly sensed in André's death an opportunity to create a romantic ideal of one.

The jingoism of this imagined speech is punctuated with a jab at Washington, whose "disgrace" implicitly extends beyond the alleged criminality of André's execution. Linda Colley argues that with the American Revolution, Britons "had been deprived of a part of themselves, and now had to re-examine their own identities and boundaries."[123] It seemed they also had to re-examine the identity of Washington, who still commanded respect in Britain prior to André's execution.[124] That he was now becoming an emblem for anti-Americanism marked a shift in how many Britons were perceiving the war. Similar to opinions in America regarding the war, opinions within Britain were deeply fractured, only in this case between conservative support, radical opposition, and those who harbored less certain and mixed feelings.[125] The public's reception of the André story was less divisive; his execution outraged supporters of the war, but his broader appeal reflected the public's belief that he was more than a soldier. Thus, another

[122] *General Evening Post*, 14 November 1780.

[123] Colley traces the trauma felt by Britons during and after the American Revolution. Britain had to renegotiate its status as the world's foremost imperial power once it lost the colonies. And further, the colonists, who were overwhelmingly Protestant and largely British in origin, rejected their mother country despite shared religion and ethnicity. This was a rejection of Britishness, in other words, and Britons had to contend with this new reality. See Colley, *Britons*, 149-197.

[124] Washington was celebrated as much for his refined taste as a gentleman as he was for his legendary exploits as a patriotic hero in the French and Indian War. See Troy Bickham, "Sympathizing with Sedition? George Washington, the British Press, and British Attitudes during the American War of Independence," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 59.1 (2002): 101-22.

[125] Colley, *Britons*, 139-147.

shift in British perceptions of the war was facilitated by André's overnight rise to an icon of Britishness as an officer *and* a gentleman, particularly because André had not achieved his new status on the merit of his military contributions to the British war effort. After all, his military failure regarding the West Point scheme was colossal. But the British public would not have known about the failed plot; all it knew was that a handsome, genteel thirty-year-old British officer had been hanged, and at the orders of Washington no less. The British government did nothing to discourage the unifying pride that André's death generated because it provided impetus when the nation's identity and its leaders were vulnerable.

The fictitious quote published by the *General Evening Post* on 14 November 1780 provided for the nation a center point around which it could unify and rally during a period of great uncertainty. It accelerated André's legacy and helped to inspire his extraordinary afterlife in Britain. Most notably perhaps, André's famous false words are echoed in Anna Seward's *Monody on Major André* (1781):

> Oh Washington! I thought thee great and good,
> Nor knew thy Nero-thirst for guiltless blood!
> Severe to use the pow'r that Fortune gave,
> Thou cool, determin'd murderer of the brave!
> Lost to each fairer virtue, that inspires
> The genuine fervor of the patriot fires!
> And you, the base abettors of the doom,
> That sunk his blooming honors in the tomb,
> Th' opprobrious tomb your harden'd hearts decreed,
> While all he asked was as the brave to bleed![126]

Seward's *Monody* is a work animated by André's newly defined British legacy, and it worked to extend and preserve that legacy. At the time of his death, Seward was a popular poet and critic who was acquainted with the young André in the years prior to his enlistment in the British

[126] Anna Seward, *Monody to Major André, to Which Are Added Letters Addressed to Her by Major André, in the Year 1769* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1781), lines 381-390.

army.[127] And despite its representation of America as a site of violence, the work would prove popular on both sides of the Atlantic.[128] Constructed in the form of a Greek ode, *Monody* unites form with content in order to elevate contemporary "reality" to the level of the mythical. Seward *made* André —that is, she sought to mythologize him into the form of "the perfect sentimental hero;" to transform him into "a recognizable and desirable icon, the man of feeling."[129]

The passage is significant in part because Seward mythologizes Washington as the archetypal anti-hero. Seward aligns Washington with the tyrannical and sadistic Nero who "fiddled while Rome burned."[130] One wonders if Seward was familiar with Philadelphia artist Charles Wilson Peale's 1780 satirical woodprint of Benedict Arnold, who was depicted as having two faces while behind him stood the Devil.[131] Washington is depicted by Seward as having two faces as well—not literally, but the speaker (whom the author announces as herself)

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[127] Jared S. Richman notes, "André had fallen in love with Seward's foster-sister, Honora Sneyd, in the Lichfield literary salon over which Seward presided." See Richman, "Anna Seward": 203. Claudia Thomas Kairoff argues that Seward recognized in the British public's resentment over André's death an opportunity to capitalize on it, and that she wished not only to do that but to use her personal acquaintance with André as a major selling point. Indeed, Seward devotes over one hundred lines of verse to their early friendship and to André's courtship of Sneyd. For more, see Kairoff, *Anna Seward*, 83-97.

[128] That it sold well in America is complicated and demands consideration of what Americans might have identified with in the poem in the years after André 's death. It helps to remember that André was admired by so many in America. First and second-hand accounts of his behavior at Camp Tappan attest to such a fact. Further, Americans who responded to André's performance as a gentleman-officer would likewise respond to Seward's similar characterization of André.

André received celebrity treatment in American editions of *Monody*, which also included his light satirical work *The Cow Chace*. Attached to three American editions of *Monody* was an untitled "sonnet" written by André, allegedly composed during his captivity at Camp Tappan. The poem recalled his love for Honora Sneyd (here called "Delia") and it laments their separation due to the war. This same poem was set to music and sold as a broadside in American print shops under the title, "Major André's Complaint: A Favorite Song." The editions of *Monody* that include the sonnet are Philadelphia 1781/82 and New York 1792. For more on the broadside, see Richard J. Wolfe, *Secular Music in America, vol. II, 1801-1825* (New York: New York Public Library, 1965). Wolfe lists five separate imprints for the song.

[129] Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 260; Kairoff, *Anna Seward*, 85.

[130] Upon hearing about Seward's highly negative depiction of him, Washington dispatched one of his aides across the Atlantic to deliver a letter to Seward defending his actions. Later editions of *Monody* reflect the epistolary exchange in the form of an author's footnote. Seward nonetheless remained critical of Washington for allowing André to hang rather than granting him death by firing squad. See Richman, "Anna Seward": 207.

[131] Based on my research, it appears that no one has considered the possible influence Peale's woodprint might have had on Seward's *Monody*, or if the British poet was even aware of it.

points to a respected public persona who masks his "Nero-thirst for guiltless blood."[132] A comparison of Arnold from an American perspective to that of Washington from a British one reveals the powerful role national ideologies play in the process of myth-making. The two-faced Arnold of Peale's work gets the same treatment as Washington from Seward, and yet today such a comparison would seem extreme from either national perspective. The notion that Arnold and Washington could ever be conflated as two-faced anti-heroes is one unique to this transatlantic cultural moment as it was experienced in the aftermath of André's hanging.

Further inspection of the *Monody* passage reveals certain similarities with the burial legends linked to André's sentimental receptions in America. That the similarities exist in the first place reemphasizes André's transatlantic appeal. The burial legends signify reverence for André's exhibited courage at the gallows, and Seward accordingly casts "bravery" as an integral component of his character.[133] "Blooming honors in the tomb" signals André's still-blooming youth, a promising life and military career cut short; the phrase also echoes the garlands and flowers with which André was covered by adoring women as he lay in his coffin. The immediate image of "blooming" (and in a "tomb" no less) is reminiscent of the peach tree said to have taken root and then sprouted from the coffin's interior. The similarities are so pronounced that one again wonders if Seward could have been made aware of either legend and if she incorporated

[132] The *Monody* was the first instance in which a poet in either Britain or America sought to challenge Washington's public image. Richman explains that the only previous mark upon Washington's esteemed military career was his involvement in the death of a French soldier, Joseph Coulon de Villiers, Sieur de Jumonville, during the Seven Years War. Washington was twenty-two and in command of a small regiment of British troops in what is now Unionville, Pennsylvania. His men surprised a French party and shots were fired; among several other French regulars, Jumonville lay dead. Antoine-Leonard was one of several French writers to immortalize the incident in his epic poem *Jumonville* (1759). For more, see Richman, "Anna Seward": 206; 217. See also David A. Bell, "Jumonville's Death: Nation and Race in Eighteenth-Century France," *Eighteenth-Century Research: Universal Reason and National Culture During the Enlightenment*, eds. David A. Bell, et al. (Paris: Honore Champion Editeur, 1999), 227-51.

[133] Seward, *Monody*, line 384.

them into her own work.[134] The heroic couplet of the last two lines speaks directly to André's request to die an officer's death and to Washington's subsequent denial. The ten-line excerpt from *Monody* gets to the bottom of the moral crime expressed in the two American-derived burial legends: André, as an ideal model of masculine sensibility, deserved far better than a hanging fit for a "common spy."

Seward condemns Washington for his lack of feeling, and she juxtaposes the American general with André, whose excess of feeling is presented as the correct model for masculine sensibility. André's "virtue" is defined in part by his "refin'd" taste, his "pointed Wit," as well as his talent for the expressive arts of poetry, music, and painting.[135] Tied to his characterization are two other integral qualities which stress his masculine sensibility: he is heroic, and he is in love. At the center of the love story is Honora Sneyd, Seward's foster-sister, whom André did court in his early adulthood. Seward would have known that Honora rejected André's marriage proposal and that she not only married Richard Edgeworth but birthed two children (and raised a third, a child resulting from Edgeworth's first marriage), and died of consumption nearly five months to the day *prior* to André's hanging[136]—and yet in *Monody* the author revises history to transform André into a tirelessly devoted man of feeling. First Seward imagines that it was the war and not Honora's rejection that separated the two young lovers, and that her attachment dissipated as a result: "The fair-one's sighs / Disperse like April-storms."[137] Honora's marriage to a rival in the

[134] The legends are difficult to trace, so any link to Seward is speculative. Boylan describes the legends but offers no information on how he learned of them save for that they were among local Tappan folklore. Partridge offers a first-hand account of André's burial site when he visited in 1818, well after Seward's 1781 *Monody*. He mentions a pair of cedars but no peach tree at the site. Rather bizarrely, when André's body was exhumed in 1821, a first-hand account of the event recalls, "The roots of the small peach tree had completely surrounded the skull like a net." See Boylan, *Benedict Arnold: The Dark Eagle*, 249-51.

[135] Seward, *Monody*, lines 46-58.

[136] For more on Seward's fictionalized representation of the André -Sneyd courtship, see Kairoff, *Anna Seward*, 84-5; see also Richman, 210-11.

[137] Seward, *Monody*, lines 109-110.

poem makes André more sympathetic since he remains hopelessly devoted. André commemorates Honora by wearing around his neck her "enchanting Portrait," and as a grand gesture of his fidelity the literary André is depicted as risking his life to preserve the miniature.[138] Seward's treatment of André and his tragically thwarted romance with Sneyd would continue to inform and influence his afterlife.[139] With *Monody* one encounters yet another example of how mythologies about André came to displace the reality of actual, lived events.[140]

Just as Seward was mythologizing André as the eternally devoted lover, André was self-mythologizing in the same manner during his captivity at Camp Tappan. It is believed that André learned of Hamilton's recent engagement during their visit on 30 September 1780. In a last-ditch effort to save his own life, André claimed the war had disrupted his future with Sneyd.[141] On the next day, after which André had discovered from prosecutor Colonel John Laurence he was to be executed (though he had yet to learn of the mode), he nonetheless harbored hope of being used in an exchange for American prisoners held captive by the British army.[142] He was visited that

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[138] Ibid., lines 71, 259-84.

[139] Many authors on both sides of the Atlantic either centered on or referenced the André -Sneyd love story. For American literary examples, see Philip Freneau's unpublished play, *The Spy* (1781); William Dunlap's *André : A Tragedy in Five Acts* (New York: T&J Swords, 1798); James Fenimore Cooper's *The Spy* (1821); Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1819); Winthrop Sargent's "John André and Honora Sneyd," *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1860); Sargent's biography on André , *The Life and Career of Major John André* (1861); and George Calvert's *Arnold and André: An Historical Drama* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1864). For British literary examples, see William Hayley's "To Miss Seward" (1781) and Helen Maria Williams' *An Ode on the Peace* (London: T. Cadell, 1783).

[140] *Monody* was often given the weight of historical authenticity due to Seward's former association with André, which helps to explain why Joshua Hett Smith attached Seward's poem to the end of his war memoir, *An Authentic Narrative of the Causes Which led to the death of Major André* (New York: Evert Duyckinck, 1808). See Richman, "Anna Seward": 211.

[141] Walsh, *The Execution of Major John André*, 59-61.

[142] The Americans wished to trade André for Arnold, whom Washington himself had desperately wanted to make a public example of as a deserter. A covert meeting was arranged in which Sir Henry Clinton sent Lieutenant-General James Robertson and two other gentlemen to meet Alexander Hamilton and Nathanael Greene, who were sent by Washington. It was well known that British policy was to never give up deserters, but Washington had hope that Clinton's men could be persuaded. On the morning of 1 October, they all met at Sneden's Landing, located east of Tappan. On principle, the British would not give up Arnold; but if the Americans let André go, Robertson promised he would deliver several important civilian and military members, among them the President of the U.S. Congress, Henry Laurens. Greene and Hamilton refused, and the deal was off. Of course,

morning by Major Tallmadge who soon fell under André's captivating spell. The men spoke for an hour or two, and in a letter Tallmadge later admitted to feeling "attached" to the prisoner; he also added, "I can remember no instance where my affections were so fully absorbed in any man."[143] André would not have known at this point that his hopes for extrication were in vain, but his strategy was clear. If he could continue to play the roles of gentleman-officer and sentimental hero and make an impression on enough insiders among Washington's camp, perhaps he still had a chance of escaping Tappan with his life.

Within three days of the news of André's execution as it arrived in London, there was a call for a House of Commons motion for a monument at Westminster Abbey.[144] In 1782 a monument was erected at the expense of George III, but of course there was no body. André's body remained buried in Tappan and without a headstone until 1818, when an unknown person rolled a small boulder to the site that included an inscription of his execution date. Three years later in 1821, André's remains were finally exhumed and transferred to Westminster Abbey, home to England's heroes and most honored dead. For over forty years André's Tappan burial site signaled his ignoble death and his shameful classification as a "common spy." As an afterlife text, it told a specific narrative about André —and yet as André 's transatlantic legacy grew in the months, years, and decades following his burial, the site proved increasingly inadequate for a man whose sensibility and stoicism were so well known. That André had in reality botched a crucial military assignment was hardly relevant, and the same could be concluded of his famous love-affair, which was in truth nothing more than a brief, failed courtship. The myths intruded upon reality until what remained were only small traces of the actual past. André's relocation to

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André would not have known that his last hope for extrication was now gone. For more, see Walsh, *The Execution of Major John André*, 50-64.

[143] Tallmadge, *Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge*, 57.

[144] *British Mercury and Evening Advertiser*, 17 November 1780.

Westminster Abbey was fitting for what he had become over the course of his extraordinary afterlife.

André's bones were transported to London in a large, square sarcophagus which had been supplied by the duke of York, uncle of the future Queen Victoria. It was fashioned of smooth mahogany and with exterior panels of crimson velvet edged in gold;[145] the design was intended to match the regimental tunic worn by André on the day of his death. As afterlife texts, the exhumation and the elaborate sarcophagus reflect Britain's adoption of an unambiguous moral and intellectual position, one that works to both express and maintain power. The public position of Britain was always that André was a victim of violence committed by Americans, and his crude burial was further evidence of a body grossly mistreated. Now Britain had corrected the wrongs committed by the Americans and returned André to where he belonged. In the summer of 1821, André's remains were deposited in a grave contiguous to the 1782 monument. The Westminster burial site was finally complete.

André's Westminster burial site is an afterlife text in its own right. The marble monument is ornate and beautiful, a fitting testament to the figure of masculine sensibility that André became in his afterlife and to the adeptness with which he performed the same role while at Camp Tappan. In the middle of the bas-relief sculpture panel is a depiction of André on the day of his execution: André—tall, handsome, and dressed in the mode of a British officer—is being pushed by two men and in the direction of the gallows. His arms are both out as if he is reaching for someone, or perhaps toward the mother country of England, stationed beyond the scene itself. At the far left in a tent is George Washington, who has received a letter but has ignored it. At the far right is a woman and her child, both crouched in horror for what is about to come. As with all

[145] Walsh, *The Execution of Major John André*, 148.

of André's afterlife texts, the details of actual, lived events are rather unimportant. It is the range of feelings created by the monument that resonate and matter most: that of loss and impending tragedy; that of a man who has been pulled away from a happier destiny, and by sinister forces beyond his control. One last example of André's extraordinary afterlife speaks directly to the exalted and mythical status that he achieved in death; and by extension it speaks also to his appropriation by a nation which needed him at a time of war, and afterwards also, when that same nation was forced to contend with the loss of its American colonies: at the top of the monument is a mourning figure of Britannia, equipped with her shield and accompanied by a lion.

Chapter Two: (Mis)Reading Crèvecoeur: Imaginative Communities and the Afterlife of an "American Farmer"

At the annual business meeting of the American Historical Association, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., delivered a presidential address called "What Then is the American, This New Man?"[146] This took place on 30 December 1942 in Washington D.C., and Schlesinger used as his central motif a lyric passage from J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer* concerning the transformative impact of American society on its immigrant newcomers, its "melting" of all persons into "a new race of men."[147] The address was one of several contributions to wartime morale projects in which studies of national character were becoming ubiquitous in response to the second World War and the catastrophic upheavals that had occurred in Europe—among them, the revolutions of Russia, Italy, Germany, and Spain; the collapse of 1940s France; the bankruptcy of Britain; the instabilities of central and southern Europe. Schlesinger, Sr., argued that due to its "distinctive national character," America had the capacity to "defy the erosion of time and circumstance."[148] It was not merely that American character was different, but that it was *better*, so much in fact that it could "defy" the existing current of historical motion.

As Schlesinger, Sr., demonstrated, hyperbole was a key ingredient in the rhetoric of American exceptionalism, as was an advantageous disregard for how America achieved its distinctive national character or why other nations did not also possess the same qualities: "The American character . . . abounds in courage, creative energy, and resourcefulness and is

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[146] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., "What Then is the American, This New Man?" *The American Historical Review* 48.2 (January 1943): 225-244.

[147] J. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*, ed. Dennis D. Moore (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 29. Unless otherwise noted, all references to *Letters* are from this edition.

[148] Schlesinger, Sr., 226, 244.

bottomed upon the profound conviction that nothing in the world is beyond its power to accomplish."[149] The rhetoric of American exceptionalism, itself reflective of a central strategy to combat mid-century wartime anxieties, aimed to naturalize the belief even among historians that America was uniquely suited to avoid the disasters of the Old World.[150]

Exceptionalist rhetoric was hardly a twentieth-century phenomenon, however. It had deeper roots in American history, beginning with the earliest Protestant Americans who had devised their own law of historical motion from which a special people were chosen, a nation "elected" by God.[151] John Winthrop envisioned the fulfillment of a providential quest— "a city upon a hill" that would serve as a corrective model to Europe.[152] William Bradford, certain he and his fellow "pilgrims" of New England were God's chosen people, credited God's special providence at moments of starvation and near death as evidence of their righteous path.[153] In the revolutionary atmosphere of the 1770s and 1780s, Americans were physically distant but still culturally close to Europe, and American exceptionalism worked to rally and stabilize anxieties regarding a fractured national identity. Exceptionalist rhetoric promised that in its relative

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[149] Ibid., 244.

[150] By the 1940s, the historiographic mood had altered considerably, so much in fact that Daniel T. Rodgers contends that historians of this generation were "the first to take exceptionalism as an American given." See Daniel T. Rogers, "Exceptionalism." *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, eds. Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 26. For more on the rhetoric of American exceptionalism, see Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); see also Karen Ordahl Kupperman, ed., *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

[151] I am borrowing the phrase "law(s) of historical motion" from Karl Marx. Marx used it to describe a world historical movement toward more intense forms of capital accumulation, immiseration, and class conflict that would lead to the collapse of capitalism altogether. America, of course, did not lead the way toward proletarian class-consciousness, but it is useful amidst claims of American exceptionalism to consider Marx's term more broadly, as a reference for major historical trends. An aspect of writings about America, beginning with early colonial texts, includes imagining America as the exception to such historical trends. See Karl Marx, *Capital*, ed. David McLellan, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[152] John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections* (1838): 33-48.

[153] William Bradford, *Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation*, *1606-1646* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920).

newness, America was better and freer than Europe and could usher in a new era of social and political relations unknown to history, a "new order of the ages."[154] John Adams, like his Puritan predecessors, imagined America's utopic potential in providential terms, "as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."[155] Unshackled from the chains of European hegemony, America's brave contrarians would do God's work in inspiring others to seek liberty on their own terms.

The rhetoric of American exceptionalism extended to Crèvecoeur's 1782 *Letters* as well, which helps to explain both the author's appeal to Schlesinger, Sr., and his afterlife resurgence in America during the mid-twentieth century. It is Farmer James, the narrator of *Letters*, who describes America as an "asylum" for the poor of Europe:

> [America] is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one, no great manufactures employing thousands, no great refinements in luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other . . . We are a people of cultivators scattered over an immense territory . . . united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws without dreading their power, because they are equitable (29-30).

Crèvecoeur's depiction of an idyllic pre-Revolutionary America signals a structure of feeling, a yearning for proof of America's own uniqueness and, specifically, of America's exemption from the legacy of European tyranny and oppression. Schlesinger, Sr., was responding to a similar wartime need as 1942 was coming to an end. It is, therefore, no surprise that he concentrates only

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[154] For more on the role of American exceptionalism during the American Revolution, see Gordon S. Wood, "The Relevance and Irrelevance of American Colonial History" in *Imagined Histories*, 144-163.

The Latin phrase "*Novus ordo seclorum*" is the second of two mottos that appear on the back side of the Great Seal of the United States. The Great Seal was first designed in 1782.

[155] John Adams, "Dissertation on the Feudal and Canon Law" (1765), in Gordon S. Wood, ed., *The Rising Glory of America, 1760-1820* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990), 31.

on Crèvecoeur's earliest letters, those which favor Farmer James's glowing optimism about the American experiment over his eventual despondency regarding its failure, one precipitated by the outbreak of the American Revolution.

The evidence Schlesinger, Sr., provides of America's exceptionalist status exists not in any singular historical moment but rather in platitudes about the archetypal American character. He borrows heavily from Crèvecoeur, whose composite portrait of the American, this "new man," includes the qualities of industry, sobriety, self-reliance, a desire for self-improvement, and an appetite for exploration.[156] In particular, Schlesinger, Sr., romanticizes a "national psychology," one indebted, he argues, to the character-making process that occurs during prolonged, exhaustive labor."[157] He alludes to Crèvecoeur's industrious Farmer James and cites the earliest of colonists who cultivated boundless stretches of interior country: "To the farmer a tree was not a symbol of Nature's unity but an obstacle to be reduced to a stump and then quickly replaced with a patch of corn or vegetables."[158] Cultivation of the land allows for expansion and progress, and the "gospel of work"—a phrase that echoes the Puritans' certainty about their role in God's providential design—has the effect of "removing ancient inhibitions, freeing latent energies, revamping mental attitudes."[159] Work creates virtuous men and helps to form "a new condition of mind," one radically unlike that of the European, whose "ancient inhibitions" are an obstacle to self-betterment and spiritual transcendence.[160] America, with its race of virtuous laborers, could thrive amidst the challenges of industrialization and the rise of the city, and could likewise withstand the looming threats brought on by the second World War.

[156] Schlesinger, Sr., 226.
[157] Ibid., 232.
[158] Ibid., 233.
[159] Ibid., 244.
[160] Ibid., 244.

References to Crèvecoeur's *Letters* in exceptionalist projects were not anachronistic even though some scholars mistakenly believed that the eighteenth-century French expatriate and author had disappeared from cultural memory since the American Revolution, only to emerge in the 1940s.[161] *Letters* served as a useful tool in the rhetoric of American exceptionalism long before Crèvecoeur's mid-twentieth-century resurgence. In his descriptions of an idyllic pre-Revolutionary America as the virtuous exception to tyranny—as being akin to the fulfillment of the providential quest imagined by Winthrop in his "city upon a hill"—Crèvecoeur became a site of patriotic reaffirmation, a source used to maintain the nationalist fantasy of America as a society uniquely blessed. Crèvecoeur's impact in Britain was also considerable, and his 1782 *Letters* was referenced during periods of civil unrest as well.

Crèvecoeur's utility exists within a pattern of appropriation during his lifetime, first exhibited by the reception of his 1782 *Letters*. But the appropriation of Crèvecoeur's public personas and literary works continued during his afterlife, and is as far-reaching as the twenty-first century. Crèvecoeur's afterlife, which began following his death on 12 November 1813 in France, is animated by the legacy of his portrayals of both pre-Revolutionary America and the American farmer, the latter of which was adopted as an emblem of masculine virtue. Such a legacy generated a voluminous body of cultural history, or "texts," whether in print (obituaries; nineteenth-century literary reimaginings of *Letters*; posthumous scholarship and literary reviews; early American literature anthologies that worked to establish his twentieth-century canonization) or expressed in everyday life (a town in Vermont named for him; even a series of

[161] Daniel T. Rodgers, for instance, calls Crèvecoeur a "failed travel writer" and claims that he was "virtually unread in the United States before the twentieth century." See Rodgers, "Exceptionalism" in *Imagined Histories*, 27.

YouTube videos featuring dramatic readings of the most well-known passages of Crèvecoeur's third letter, "What is an American?").

My argument is that Crèvecoeur is appropriated in Britain and America as a site where anxieties concerning national identity and good citizenry are expressed and confronted.[162] During his life and extending into his afterlife, Crèvecoeur became a site of ideological contestation. Reactions to his public personas and literary works indicate his utility as a space where tensions intersected, and where meaning could be made and continuously remade. Britain and America needed Crèvecoeur during the Revolutionary period, and he was used for restorative purposes, whether in terms of maintaining, modifying, or resisting values imagined as integral to both nations. He was also appropriated in France, where he became a confidante to Louis XVI and was publicly celebrated as an emblem French and American hybridity. He was encouraged by the Parisian elite to capitalize on the popularity of his 1782 *Letters*, and in two subsequent and heavily revised 1784 and 1787 French editions, Crèvecoeur did exactly that by refashioning himself as an ideological opponent to Britain. That the French editions were largely forgotten following his death tells a story of its own, one that emphasizes the lasting resonance of the 1782 *Letters* to British and American audiences.

Crèvecoeur's emergence during the Revolutionary period reflects his ongoing utility as well as the prolific, restorative appeal of his 1782 *Letters*. It is therefore no coincidence that Crèvecoeur's rich afterlife aligns with traumatic periods of unrest, as demonstrated, for instance, by his appropriation in mid-twentieth-century American exceptionalist projects. Another

[162] Benedict Anderson argues that nations must be "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." My use of the phrase "imaginative communities" is indebted to Anderson's conception of how nationhood is formed and put into practice. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso Books, 2006), 7.

explanation for Crèvecoeur's ongoing utility is that his 1782 *Letters*—far more than the successive 1784 and 1787 French editions—has generated widespread disagreements concerning the author's ideological underpinnings and how these inform the rhetorical ambitions of the work.

The second part of my argument about Crèvecoeur's restorative utility is that because of the rhetorical ambivalence of his 1782 *Letters*, he becomes the target of willful (mis)readings that position him as a corrective, factionalist reference point. Both the initial reception to *Letters* and Crèvecoeur's afterlife are shaped by the needs of British and American audiences who perceived in the work the values that either aligned with their own or served as convenient opposition. Unpacking Crèvecoeur's service to the needs of transatlantic communities during the American Revolution and then afterwards, as his afterlife continues to evolve, necessitates analysis of the author's own politics, his troubled relationship with factionalists during his lifetime, and how the literary reception to his 1782 *Letters* influenced his afterlife.

My methodology considers key components of Crèvecoeur's background including his French aristocratic upbringing and his New York-based arrests on suspicion of espionage, first as a Loyalist and then as a Patriot. I will show that the arrests are a microcosm of subsequent disagreements about how to "read" Crèvecoeur, not only in terms of his intentions, his core values and political identity, but also in correlation to the body of literature he produced and its transatlantic impact during and following the American Revolution. I will then provide representative examples of transatlantic reviews inspired by his 1782 *Letters* to demonstrate its restorative influence on the wartime anxieties of factionalist readers. And finally, I will examine Crèvecoeur's afterlife through the aforementioned lenses, each of which provide critical evidence for his lasting utility as a site of patriotic reaffirmation.

❖ Situating Crèvecoeur Critically: The "American Farmer" as a Transatlantic Site

Crèvecoeur's contemporaries, including those who knew him and/or read his work, along with biographers and literary scholars who have labored to situate him within early American literature and culture, disagree even about the ideological commitments that compelled him into action.[163] The majority of scholarship concerning Crèvecoeur's life and literature—in particular, his 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer*, his first published work and the primary basis of his claim to a place in the transatlantic literary canon—follows a similar line of inquiry, one that relies upon an interpretation of his ideological commitments as a framework for critiquing his literature. Grantland Rice, for instance, argues that Crèvecoeur's literature reveals the author's core beliefs through its oppositional stance; that it stages his skill "at adapting (often simultaneously) to opposing religious, philosophical, political, and national groupings."[164]

Other scholars have treated *Letters* and the two French editions he subsequently produced not as art but as an authentic report of the American experience from which Crèvecoeur's very own theory of America can be gleaned. Even among scholars who have prioritized *Letters* as art, the work is imagined in semi-autobiographical terms and as a reflection of Crèvecoeur's own perspective of America. In this regard, Farmer James (the narrator of *Letters*) functions as a

[163] For representative biographies of Crèvecoeur, see Robert de Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de Crèvecoeur: Sa vie et ses ouvrages* (Paris: D. Jouaust, 1883); Julia Post Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: AMS Press, 1916); and Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Viking, 1987).

Mitchell suggests that Crèvecoeur was a Loyalist. She cites correspondence from Major-General Pattison to New York military Governor Sir William Clinton, in which *Letters* is described as favoring "the side of Government and [throwing] Odium on the Proceedings of the Opposite Party." See Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 54. Robert de Crèvecoeur, his French biographer, maintains instead that he was "Américain dans l'âme." See R. Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de Crèvecoeur : Sa vie et ses ouvrages* (Paris: D. Jouaust, 1883), 54-55. Allen and Asselineau, Crèvecoeur's most recent biographers, contend that he was indeed a Loyalist during his time as a farmer in America, but they also point to his divided allegiances, first to France, where he was his father's heir apparent and a man of property, and to America, where he could not reconcile his affection for America as an idea with the reality as he knew it. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 211-213.

[164] Grantland S. Rice, "Crèvecoeur and the Politics of Authorship in Republican America." *Early American Literature* 28.2 (1993): 108.

stand-in for Crèvecoeur himself, and it is argued that his disillusionment with the failures of the American experiment mirrors that of the author. Letter IX, in which James describes Charlestown and the slave trade, is cited as the narrative turning point signaling James's awakening from naïve idealism to sober reflection.[165] Another common critical perspective is that Crèvecoeur puts James on trial for his naïve idealism, in which case *Letters* is perceived as satire and social critique, and James's punishment plays out in his disorientation and grief at the conclusion of *Letters*.[166]

While critical approaches that view *Letters* as a reflection of Crèvecoeur's ideological commitments have facilitated productive and wide-ranging discussions regarding the author's rhetorical intentions, his extraliterary concerns, and his role as a valuable commentator on the American experiment, it is the pursuit of a uniform, overarching interpretation of Crèvecoeur's literature that risks obscuring the rich ambiguity of his language and the conflicted, dialogical ruminations expressed therein. One needs only to refer to Crèvecoeur's self-described transformation during his second imprisonment and the "new man" that emerges to get a sense of his desire to remain ideologically open and resistant to the kinds of factionalist zealotry that contributed to his own suffering.[167] A relatively recent thread in Crèvecoeur scholarship that casts him as a spy is thus incongruent with who he aspired to be—a man whose guiding principle is not to proselytize or deceive but rather to remain unprejudiced and earnest. The appeal of positioning him as a spy no doubt originates from Crèvecoeur's propensity to relocate as well as

[165] For instance, see Thomas Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), 74-92.

[166] See Dennis D. Moore, "Introduction," *Letters from an American Farmer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), ix-xxxi.

[167] This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter, but I am referring to the following statement by Crèvecoeur: "I became a new man: ashamed not to be able to laugh with others or share their gaiety, I avoided the company of my closest friends . . . I could converse with myself and give rise through this conversation to ideas that simple meditation didn't produce." See Bernard Chevignard, "St. John de Crèvecoeur a New York en 1779-1780, *Annales de Normandie* 33 (1983): 170.

his own troubled legal history, and it is one that seeks a link between the author's life and a "language of spying" contained within *Letters*.[168] Speculative investigation and creative analysis have resulted in claims that he was a spy for the Loyalists, the Patriots, and also the French, respectively.[169] Crèvecoeur's main biographers, all of whom explore the relationship between his real-life and literary masquerades, are likewise at serious odds concerning his loyalties.[170]

My intention is not to solve the puzzle of Crèvecoeur's politics—the most likely answer, however unsatisfying, is that his ideological commitments wavered, especially during the trauma and instability of the Revolutionary period; and that if *Letters* is to be examined as a reflection of the author's politics, it reflects that wavering also. Philip Gould offers the invaluable reminder that the relations between political identity and social and familial affiliations do not neatly correlate, a fact that sometimes confounds the distinctions between Loyalists and Patriots altogether.[171] Similarly, Linda Colley suggests that "identities are not like hats . . . human beings can and do put on several at a time."[172] There were varying degrees of political fervor including, for instance, Whiggish Loyalists who nonetheless were unable to accept independence.[173] Further, to express political neutrality did not mean that one was indifferent; rather, it likely reflected the opposite—a great uncertainty and the unease of being pulled in two opposing directions by historical forces well beyond one's control. I am interested in the critical discourse

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[168] Bryce Traister, "Criminal Correspondence: Loyalism, Espionage and Crèvecoeur," *Early American Literature* 37.3 (2002): 470.

[169] For a discussion of Crèvecoeur's possible role as a Loyalist spy, see Traister, "Criminal Correspondence": 469-496. James P. Myers explores the possibility that Crèvecoeur was a spy in service to the French. See Myers, "Crèvecoeur: Concealing and Revealing the Secret Self," *Early American Literature* 49.2 (2014): 357-401.

[170] See footnote 163.

[171] Philip Gould, *Writing the Rebellion: Loyalists and the Literature of Politics in British America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 8.

[172] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 6.

[173] Gould identifies Pennsylvania Loyalist Joseph Galloway as an example. Galloway, who proposed the plan for an American Parliament to share sovereignty with Britain in colonial affairs, also praised his countrymen for defending their liberties. Gould, *Writing the Rebellion*, 8-9.

concerning the nebulous relationship between Crèvecoeur's politics and literature only so far as it reflects how and by whom he is used as a site where anxieties regarding national identity and good citizenry are expressed and confronted.

As with my analysis in the previous chapter of Major John André and the afterlife he inspired, my strategy for interpreting Crèvecoeur's cultural significance in Britain and America—and in this case, also France—is to examine Crèvecoeur as a site where core beliefs concerning national and personal identity are negotiated and tested. It is through his appropriation that one can uncover the specific anxieties and needs of those drawn to him in the first place. In life, and during his afterlife, Crèvecoeur is used for restorative purposes. Like André, Crèvecoeur also emerged as a public figure during the American Revolution, the timing of which would influence his afterlife utility during subsequent historical moments that exposed uncertainties regarding national identity and good citizenry. His afterlife, as such, reflects an ongoing process of negotiation, modification, and resistance.

❖ French Origins and Crèvecoeur's Post-American Cultural Capital

Crèvecoeur's literary reception and afterlife (posthumous literary scholarship, biographies, and literary canonizations) are shaped by biographical periods in which the author has been accused of swapping identities and allegiances when it benefitted him most. Indeed, some Crèvecoeur scholars have even accused him of calculated duplicity.[174] Analysis of Crèvecoeur as a restorative site, particularly as one where anxieties concerning national identity and good citizenry are expressed and confronted, benefits from taking a step backwards to uncover patterns that invite speculation regarding his duplicity. To do so reveals two defining steps taken by Crèvecoeur, each signaling a desire for reinvention and renewal. The first step

[174] See footnote 169.

occurred when Crèvecoeur decided not to return to his native France after his service in Canada, but instead to explore America and become a naturalized British citizen. This process of reinvention included anglicizing his name, marrying a Protestant, and raising his children in the Protestant church. He was, as such, a French-British citizen whose identity shifted towards that of an "American" following more than two decades of assimilation. The second step occurred after this assimilation, when he returned to France. The manner by which he reintegrated into French society is one of the reasons that analyses of both Crèvecoeur and his semi-autobiographical *Letters* have elicited so much disagreement.

The early childhood of Michel-Guillaume Saint-Jean de Crèvecoeur was spent in idyllic surroundings at Pierrepont.[175] At the age of twelve or so, he was sent to the Collège Royal de Bourbon, a renowned Jesuit school in Normandy. There he was educated in "grammar" (this included Latin and French languages, eloquence, style, belles-lettres, as well as catechism and ethics), mathematics, cartography, and surveying. In what would prove useful to him later as he composed *Letters*, he was also trained in *rhétorique*, in which his wits were tested at length for argumentation and recall. His family occasionally traveled to Paris, where they developed relationships with persons of influence like the d'Houdetots and the Liancourts—those of Norman nobility with high rank in the French army.[176] Following his formal education, Crèvecoeur spent two years in England at Salisbury, where he lived with distant relations, practiced his English, and perhaps developed an underlying Anglophilia. He would later reflect,

[175] His father owned several properties in the Caen region, and it is understood by biographers that he was set to inherit at least one of them. Tax records also point to Guillaume-Augustin de Crèvecoeur's ownership of a small farm in the parish of Mathieu. He owned about 65 U.S. acres of houses and lands in the parish Robehomme (to the northeast of Caen), which produced an annual income of £725. The land he owned at Quesnel brought an annual income of £481, and in 1778 he purchased more land at Pierrepont for £3600 in all. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 233.

[176] The d'Houdetots were on friendly terms with Crèvecoeur's family because they owned property near Pierrepont. The Liancourts were even more influential, for the dukes de Liancourt belonged to the peerage. Ibid., 2-3.

for instance, that he missed "the verdant lawns of England"; he also admired the sterling quality of English products: "England surpasses all the world for the perfection of mechanism and the peculiar excellence with which all its tools and implements are finished. We are but children and [the English] are our parents."[177]

In 1756, presumably with his father's blessing, Crèvecoeur embarked for America and arrived in Canada at the outset of the French and Indian War.[178] He promptly enlisted in the French Colonial Army, for whom he fought against the British and worked as a cartographer and surveyor. In September 1759, he was wounded during the siege of Quebec and was hospitalized there after the French capitulation. The reasons for Crèvecoeur's resignation from the army are unclear, and they may point to a forced resignation.[179] On 16 December 1759, he arrived in New York by way of a British ship that was headed for London with other French officers who wished to return home. Crèvecoeur never offered any immediate explanation for his decision to start a new life in the British colonies. In 1790, however, he did blame France for limiting the Canadians' ability to self-rule. In *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America*, he contended that "France overlooked [Canada] until it was too late, [that] the very struggle they made during the [French and Indian War] shows what they could have done had they been established on a broader foundation."[180]

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[177] Crèvecoeur, *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America: More "Letters from an American Farmer*." Edited by Henri L. Bourdin, Ralph H. Gabriel, and Stanley T. Williams (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), 52-3.

[178] Upon enlistment, Crèvecoeur's sponsors were given as Baron Breteuil and Marquis d'Houdetot, both old friends of the family. There is no direct link to his father's approval of his enlistment, but it is nonetheless likely because he was known to have encouraged his son to pursue a military career. Ibid., 19.

[179] Crèvecoeur never wrote about his resignation. Scholars have located, however, a letter dated 23 October 1759 and composed by a Commissioner Bernier, who wrote Louis Antoine de Bougainville (later, he became known as an explorer) that "certain French officers" would be sent home by way of New York on a British ship, and among them was Crèvecoeur, who "[wished] only to seek his future elsewhere". It is further mentioned in the letter that "every regiment which expels an officer ordinarily gives him passage". There is uncertainty over the French verb "expulse" and whether it means that Crèvecoeur was forced to resign. As quoted in Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 22.

[180] Crèvecoeur, *Sketches*, 172.

Crèvecoeur's literary reception and afterlife utility would be shaped by his reinvention in America. Records suggest that he may have lived and worked in Pennsylvania, but this period remains elusive to his biographers.[181] Documentation of his whereabouts did not resurface until 23 December 1765, when he became a naturalized British citizen in New York City under the name of Hector St. John. If such a moment denotes Crèvecoeur's reinvention by way of a new national identity and an anglicized name, he subsequently sought the identity of an American farmer on 12 December 1769 when he purchased 250 acres of land for £350 in Orange County, New York. The property he called Pine Hill, which he describes with reverence in *Letters*:

> The instant I enter on my own land, the bright idea of property, of exclusive right, of independence exalt my mind. Precious soil, I say to myself, by what singular custom of law is it that thou wast made to constitute the riches of the freeholder? What should we American farmers be without the distinct possession of that soil? . . . No wonder we should thus cherish its possession, no wonder that so many Europeans, who have never been able to say that such portion of land was theirs, cross the Atlantic to realize that happiness! (17).

Pine Hill afforded Crèvecoeur agency, and he demonstrates America's capacity, unlike that of Europe, for supplying an avenue in which renewal and reinvention were possible. The passage is expressed in the voice of an idealist whose faith in America's potential is upheld by the peaceful utility of working the farm. As such, Crèvecoeur embarked upon the duties of a modest, self-sufficient farmer, and he began working on the semi-autobiographical *Letters* when time permitted. He married a Protestant with Loyalist ties named Mehetable Tippet and became a father to three children.[182] They were given a Protestant baptism, and their legacy was not a Norman estate but instead Pine Hill.

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[181] Biographers speculate that he would have been able to support himself as a surveyor and cartographer based on his previous education. He may have also made a living as a fur trader. See Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 11-12.

[182] The Tippet family had owned land in Westchester County, New York, for over a century. They were Loyalists and fled to Nova Scotia during the Revolution, leaving their property to be confiscated. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 33.

Prior to 1776, there exists almost no reference by Crèvecoeur in his writings to the developing conflict between England and the colonies. He appeared to feel secure on his farm, and yet as he describes vividly in *Letters*, Pine Hill and the region of Orange County that contained it soon became a war zone: "From the mountains we have but too much reason to expect our dreadful enemy . . . our fate cannot be far distant" (150). His property was a day's march from New York City—the hub of British power in North America from 1776 until the end of the war—and it was far enough inland to be vulnerable to the raids of Loyalist partisans and their Seneca and Mohawk allies. A large camp for prisoners of war was situated only a few miles from Pine Hill, and north and west of Orange County, Loyalist guerrillas under John Butler and Indian war parties led by Joseph Brant terrorized the frontier.[183] Local factionalism had become increasingly dangerous, and the once thriving social utopia of nascent America was now on the brink of self-destructive collapse. Crèvecoeur's determination to remain politically neutral meant that the war as he experienced it promised not one enemy but *two*, for he was caught between Loyalists and Patriots and was trusted by neither. The Revolution shattered Crèvecoeur's idealism regarding the American project just as it had shattered the foundational structure of a society he once described as an "asylum" (30). By 1778, there was little choice but to flee.

Crèvecoeur's literary reception and afterlife utility would also be shaped by his reinvention in France. It was during Crèvecoeur's reassimilation in France that he engaged in a social transaction with his native country, one that instantly benefitted him, if not necessarily his

[183] John Butler led a militia unit known as Butler's Rangers on the northern frontier in New York during the Revolutionary War. Along with Joseph Brant (a Mohawk military and political leader), he was accused of participating in the Wyoming Valley Massacre of July 1778 and the Cherry Valley Massacre of November 1778. These resulted in mass deaths of patriot soldiers as well as civilians in the regions of the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania and Cherry Valley, New York. See Francis W. Halsey, *The Old New York Frontier: Its Wars with Indians and Tories, Its Missionary Schools, Pioneers and Land Titles, 1614-1800* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901).

children.[184] No longer was he an *American* farmer—he was instead a *Frenchman* who experienced the life of an American farmer. The distinction mattered to those who embraced him as one of their own. In exchange, Crèvecoeur acquired cultural capital unlike anything he had previously known. Not only was he now at a safe distance from the Revolution, but he was exalted as a celebrity by a French society eager to reclaim him. From 1781 to 1783, he lived in Paris and was feted by the intellectual aristocracy, for he was in great demand as a witness to the American experience. The esteemed company he kept included his *protectrice* Madame d'Houdetot, as well as the Duke de La Rochefoucauld and the Duke de Liancourt, among many others.[185] He had become a celebrity due to the success of his *Letters*, and he used his connections to acquire an appointment as French consul to New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Crèvecoeur traveled to New York City only two months after the signing of the 1783 Treaty of Paris. In the passage of only four years, it was as if Crèvecoeur had returned an entirely different man.

So complete was Crèvecoeur's transformation that he commissioned an artist named Valière to make a miniature of him.[186] This was in 1786, two years following the publication of the first French edition of Crèvecoeur's *Letters*, and one year prior to the second French edition, which was the lengthiest yet and included a third volume of unpublished materials. Miniatures, as projects of performance and self-fashioning, are designed to be seen. Framed in the miniature is Crèvecoeur's distinguished profile. He was fifty-one years old. He wore a powdered peruke

[184] In France at this time a Protestant could not inherit property. Crèvecoeur was still legally a Catholic, but his children would be regarded as illegitimate. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 56.

[185] Madame d'Houdetot was known to socialize with the Princess de Beauvau and artists and intellectuals like Jean le Rond d'Alembert, Guy-Jean-Baptiste, Jean-François de Saint-Lambert, Friedrich-Melchior Grimm, and Jean-François de la Harpe. See Thomas Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 30.

[186] Valière, "St. John de Crèvecoeur, 1786" in *St. John de Crèvecoeur: The Life of an American Farmer*, by Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, (New York: Viking, New York, 1983), iv.

with large curls over the ears, and in an illusion of transparency befitting aesthetic ideals of the late eighteenth-century, his skin appeared translucent.[187] Hair is drawn back on the nape of his neck and a lace jabot hangs from the front of his shirt. Most prominent among his features is his nose, which contrasts with a small mouth and chin to form a disproportionate but not unhandsome appearance. His natural hair was red, and absent from the miniature are freckles covering his face, arms, and hands.[188] His was a look of dignity and sobriety, and he was unmistakably a gentleman. Adorned in the fashion of a French nobleman, Crèvecoeur now looked the part and had, in effect, reclaimed his French identity.

❖ Patriot (Mis)Readings of Crèvecoeur at Pine Hill

The origins of Crèvecoeur's utility as a site of ideological contestation exist in New York state where he was arrested twice on suspicions of espionage, first as a Loyalist and then as a Patriot. Such is the importance of his arrests that they function as a microcosm of subsequent disagreements about how to "read" Crèvecoeur, whether in terms of understanding his politics, why the literary reception of *Letters* is so prolific, or how his rich afterlife evolves as it does. That he was arrested for two opposing factions speaks not only to the extent to which Crèvecoeur was misunderstood as a French-British hybrid who had been living as an "American" farmer; his arrests speak also to his remarkable utility as an object upon which the public could project their anxieties about national identity and good citizenry. The arrests reflect the isolation of the

[187] The miniature appears modeled in style and effect after English miniatures of the period, in which translucent skin was imagined to register every human emotion. Epitomized in England by Richard Cosway, English miniature portraits emphasized restrained colors and elegant forms. Artists and patrons alike valued them because they were luminous and delicate. See Catherine E. Kelley, *The Republic of Taste: Art, Politics, and Everyday Life in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 105-107.

[188] His freckles are described in a letter written by his father, Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur. See Julia Post Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 314.

wartime neutral and the immediate dangers of neutrality during the Revolution. Farmer James stresses both in Crèvecoeur's twelfth letter, "Distresses of a Frontier Man":

> I find that any kind of opposition to its now-prevailing sentiments immediately begets hatred . . . If I attach myself to the mother country, which is 3,000 miles from me, I become what it called an enemy to my region; if I follow the rest of my countrymen, I become opposed to our ancient masters: both extremes appear equally dangerous to a person of so little weight and consequence as I am, whose energy and example are of no avail" (152).

Farmer James speaks to the neutral subject's precarious relationship to factionalists who were unwilling to tolerate political uncertainty. It is an experience that Crèvecoeur knew firsthand.

Crèvecoeur's first arrest was a culmination of years of harassment by local Patriots. His stated neutrality during a period of rampant factionalism was received with great skepticism, and the question of how to "read" his ideological values would likewise carry over into Crèvecoeur's afterlife, primarily as a result of his semi-autobiographical 1782 *Letters*, which conveys the author's sense of uncertainty and divided allegiances. By September 1777, as the war was encroaching upon both Orange and Ulster counties, Patriots in the region responded to the news of British advancement along the Hudson by pressuring all able-bodied men to enlist, even at the expense of abandoning their farms and families.[189] Crèvecoeur was forty-three at the time and may have been a little past fighting age, but he was no doubt urged to serve in some fashion.[190]

[189] In some communities, local militia captains drafted men by drawing names from a hat, but rigged drafts were more common. These targeted suspected Loyalists or the destitute and desperate. See John A. Ruddiman, *Becoming Men of Consequence: Youth and Military Service in the Revolutionary War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014), 47. Such an aggressive strategy was enabled by Congress, which pushed individual states with a quota of Continental soldiers to raise. Congress urged the states to meet their quotas "by drafts from their militia, or in any way that shall be effectual." Entry for 28 February 1778, in Ford et al., *Journals of the Continental Congress* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904-37) 10: 202-3.

[190] Available records do not always distinguish between those who were drafted and those who actually served, but most eligible men under forty contributed to the war effort in some fashion. Fighting was often left to younger men, but records exist of some exceptions of men older than fifty who also fought. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 50. See also Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 147-149.

His refusal to serve due to his stated neutrality encouraged suspicions of his duplicity.[191] He was hardly alone in this regard. As many as twenty to thirty percent of the American people were opposed to the Revolution, but neutrality proved increasingly unrealistic as there was no clear resolution to the war in sight. [192]

Crèvecoeur's claim to neutrality was received with hostility and viewed as a sign of unspoken Loyalism or even as a cover for espionage; such a misreading of his political values would inform both the literary reception to his 1782 *Letters* and, by extension, also the course of his afterlife. Henry Wisner, a powder-maker and neighbor to Crèvecoeur, contacted Governor George Clinton in a letter regarding his "alarm" of rumors that Crèvecoeur was soon set to depart for British-occupied New York City.[193] Wisner's fear was that Crèvecoeur would report to British authorities valuable Patriot information regarding a massive iron chain forged at Sterling (just over the New Jersey line), which was to be stretched across the Hudson in front of West Point to prevent British ships from sailing beyond that point.[194] Clinton wrote to General McDougal at Fishkill on the subject.[195] In McDougal's reply to the governor, it is evident that Crèvecoeur's culpability as a spy was taken seriously: "If you permit [St. John] to go [to British-occupied New York]; I wish he may go by Land; and on the west Side, and under Such guards as

[191] Crèvecoeur's options were limited, but it was possible for him to declare his loyalty without fighting. Although drafts favored the rich, Crèvecoeur could have hired a substitute or payed a substantial fine. See Goss, *The Minutemen and Their World*, 147.

[192] This figure is incredibly difficult to determine with accuracy, and it varies by region and social milieu. See Paul H. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. ser. (1986): 259-277. See also Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 176.

[193] It is unclear how Wisner learned of Crèvecoeur's desire to depart, or if at this point Crèvecoeur was committed in doing so. It is nonetheless clear that Crèvecoeur applied for admission to New York early in 1778. See Mitchell, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 47.

[194] Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 57.

[195] Fishkill, New York is a town in Dutchess County and adjacent to Orange County.

your own prudence shall suggest."[196] The letter offers key insights into strategies adopted at times of suspected espionage. Such strategies include covert surveillance, the restriction of enemy movement, and the disruption of lines of communication, the latter of which is indicated in the postscript to the same letter: "[Crèvecoeur] ought not to be allowed to return during the Contest by New York, or any Post in the Hands of the Enemy, nor immediately from New York."[197] While there are no known Continental records of Crèvecoeur's travels to New York, McDougal's instructions indicate that he was likely under close watch.

The peculiarity of Crèvecoeur's arrest as a suspected Loyalist spy is that no record exists of it, and this at a time when such records were rigorously kept.[198] The most likely explanation is that he was never charged. The main source of evidence instead comes from Crèvecoeur himself. In a letter dated 17 February 1779 to Colonel Roger Morris, he describes the intense scrutiny and harassment he received in Orange County as "4 Years of Contumely Receiv'd, of Fines Imposed [and] Emprisonments."[199] The arrest—and here Crèvecoeur alludes to multiple ones—is reminiscent of Thomas Anburey's description of similar events in Fishkill, a town in Duchess County, which is adjacent to Orange County where Crèvecoeur lived. In December 1778, Anburey witnessed first-hand the imprisonment of citizens who were seized on their plantations for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the United States.[200] At Fishkill, citizens were

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[196] *Public Papers of George Clinton*, *First Governor of New York*, Vol. III: (Published by the State of New York, 1775-1795—1801-1804): 151.

[197] Ibid., 227.

[198] James P. Myers, "Crèvecoeur: Concealing and Revealing the Secret Self," *Early American Literature* 49.2 (2014): 365.

[199] Morris was responsible for inspecting the claims of New York City refugees. The letter was written from New York, 17 February 1779. Now in the Royal Institution, at London, Vol. 10, No. 114. Also, noteworthy here is that Crèvecoeur paid fines along with serving jail time. Typically, those who refused to serve were punished in one form or another, not both, and not on a repeated basis. If it is true that Crèvecoeur was repeatedly jailed and fined, one can surmise that he became a target of considerable animosity.

[200] Thomas Anburey, *Travels in the United States* (London: William Lane, 1789), 262-64. Anburey himself is a controversial figure. *Travels* was popular in Britain upon publication in London in 1789; it was translated in French and German and reprinted in North America three times in the twentieth century. But it was not until 1943

plundered by Continental soldiers who "[took] away horses and other property;" even their officers approved "under the Idea of the Inhabitants being Tories [who were thus] proper Objects of punishment."[201] The soldiers' bullying of neutrals and suspected Loyalists was commonplace, as indicated by similar reports in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Rhode Island.[202]

Crèvecoeur's utility, both during his life and also his afterlife, would be shaped by his commentary on his harassment by Patriots. Semi-autobiographical details of Crèvecoeur's persecution are included in his "Distresses of a Frontier Man," the last chapter of his 1782 *Letters*, and likewise in the final six chapters of *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America*. In "Distresses of a Frontier Man," so traumatized is James that he fantasizes of retreating from the destructive chaos of the Revolution to live among a Native tribe with no political ties to the war (157-73). While the character of James must not be confused with Crèvecoeur himself, it matters that the author's 1782 *Letters* concludes with James's desire to remain politically neutral, and this despite his persecution. It matters because factionalist readers would project their needs upon the text and use it as a site for maintenance, modification, or resistance.

❖ Loyalist (Mis)Readings in British-Occupied New York City

Crèvecoeur's second arrest in New York state, this time on suspicion of Patriot espionage, serves as yet further evidence of the extent to which he was "misread" by factionalists who projected upon him their anxieties regarding national identity and good citizenry. Such misreadings carry over into the reception of *Letters* and into Crèvecoeur's afterlife, thereby

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that Whitfield Bell, a scholar who compared *Travels* to dozens of other travel literatures, that plagiarism was definitively discovered. See Ennis Duling, "Thomas Anburey at the Battle of Hubbardton: How a Fraudulent Source Misled Historians," *Vermont History* 78.1 (Winter/Spring): 1-14.

[201] General Orders, 9 June 1777, in William Heth's "Orderly Book of William Heth of the Third Virginia Regiment, May 15-July 1, 1777," *Collections of the Virginia Historical Society*, n.s., II (1892), 317-76.

[202] See Ruddiman, *Becoming Men of Consequence*, 91-101. There are likewise stories in the newspaper press of American sympathizers being beaten or even tarred and feathered by neighbors. See, for instance, the *Leeds Intelligencer*, 16 December 1777.

illustrating his ongoing utility as a restorative site where patriotic affirmations could be expressed and negotiated. In the middle of February 1779, Crèvecoeur arrived at British-occupied New York City a destitute refugee. He was accompanied by his six-year-old son Ally, having left behind his wife and two younger children with friends at Chester, a village in Orange County. Whether it was his intention to seek passage back to France where he stood to inherit his father's estate, or to bide time until he could form an escape plan for his family during the war, the reasons for Crèvecoeur's flight remain unclear.[203] Their immediate destination had become the political and military center of British operations during the war, but it was also a city destabilized by overarching political uncertainty and one unable to cope with its oversized demands. New York City was overrun with British troops, impoverished Loyalist refugees, as well as Patriot prisoners who were held at King's College, and later, due to a lack of available space, on squalid ships at Wallabout Bay.[204] The city was under torrid conditions, and Crèvecoeur, like so many others, faced a desperate trial to find food, safe housing, and employment.[205]

[203] The estate in Pierrepont had been in the family in unbroken line since the Normand Conquest, and evidently in his old age, Crèvecoeur's father expected him to inherit the estate. For more on Crèvecoeur's lineage, see Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 1-18. See also Benjamin Hoffman, *Posthumous America: Literary Reinventions of America at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2018), 16-18.

[204] Wallabout Bay is located along the northwest shore of Brooklyn, between the present Williamsburg and Manhattan bridges.

[205] The scarcity of housing had become an increasing problem since British troops took the city in 1776. This reached a disastrous point following the Great Fire of 20 September 1776, in which one-fourth (or upwards of one thousand) of its houses west of Broadway were destroyed. British officers confiscated the best remaining houses for themselves, even from Loyalist owners, though they were assured compensation. Houses owned by rebels were seized outright. Compounding the miseries of the city, an epidemic of fever broke out in July 1779. It persisted through a severe winter and did not cease until November of the following year. The fever was perhaps typhoid or a tropical disease. It was described as "ague" and "intermittent." For more on the housing scarcity, see Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 59. For a vivid description of how the Great Fire spread, see Edward G. Lengel, *General George Washington: A Military Life* (New York: Random House, 2005), 157. For more on the 1779 fever, see Oscar Theodore Barck, *New York During the War for Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), 94.

As bleak as the first months in New York City were, Crèvecoeur managed to find shelter with two refugees who had rented a small building once used as a stable and grain loft. The only employment he could find was that of assisting British soldiers at Corlear's Hook, in which he knocked old ships to pieces. He was paid not in money but in wood, which was all he could contribute to the collective fund. In early summer of 1779, Crèvecoeur's fortunes appeared to be improving. He was hired by Antoine Van Dam, master of the port, to replace an old, discolored map of the New York harbor; following this, he worked as a surveyor of local property at Trinity Church. Crèvecoeur believed of the latter employment that it "would be long and useful."[206] But it is through this work that his proximity to the hostile factionalism of the city would become dangerous and likewise painfully reminiscent of traumas he experienced years before at Pine Hill.

On the second day of his work as a surveyor, Crèvecoeur purchased white handkerchiefs and fastened them to staffs. His intent was to establish old property lines, but drunken British sailors took them for French flags. They tore the staffs from the earth, hurled the flags, cursed at Crèvecoeur and threatened to beat him.[207] As a French-born, naturalized British citizen, and as a political neutral who was compelled by the war to flee to Loyalist territory, it is difficult to imagine Crèvecoeur feeling secure within such a heightened, factionalist environment. It is unclear in his personal letters how the incident was resolved or even if he completed the task for which he was hired, but the harassment signaled a collective mood of toxic intolerance that had pervaded the city. The incident not only serves as an example of how wartime anxieties are expressed—in this case, through xenophobic abuse of a perceived outsider—but it also

[206] Bernard Chevignard, "Documents pour l'Histoire de la Normandie: St. John de Crèvecoeur à New York en 1779-1780," *Annales de Normandie* 33 (1983): 172.

[207] Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 61.

foreshadows a major turning point in Crèvecoeur's life in New York, in which he was arrested on 8 July 1779 as a suspected Patriot spy and taken to a prison called The Fields.[208] Sir Henry Clinton, who was in command of British forces in New York, received an anonymous letter that accused Crèvecoeur of corresponding with General Washington earlier in the summer. Its author claimed that Crèvecoeur had maps of the harbor, which he intended to share with the Patriot army. Crèvecoeur's culpability appeared plausible even if it was untrue—he did indeed correspond with Washington, but it was to seek permission to travel to New York City; he also had a map of the harbor, but it was one he was hired by Van Dam to make.[209]

Published in the expanded 1787 French-language edition of *Letters* is Crèvecoeur's account of his three-month imprisonment. Crèvecoeur was clearly relying on his own experiences to appeal to French audiences that self-identified as natural enemies to Britain. He was held not in the worst of local military prisons but nonetheless in one run by Provost William Cunningham, "a man of ill repute" who was well-known for his cruelty toward Patriot prisoners.[210] Crèvecoeur describes being locked inside a dark, rat-infested and foul basement. The screaming of prisoners being flogged in the courtyard echoed from above, and sometimes he could hear the creaking of the beam from which men were hanged.[211] Crèvecoeur's experience was harrowing, but he describes his imprisonment also as a metaphysical awakening of sorts: "I suddenly became a Manichean …What unholy questions I dared to ask the great Creator when I saw society as a group of lions tearing to shreds the weakest but most numerous of its

[208] The prison, which was built in 1759, was located where city hall now stands in Manhattan, between Broadway and Park Row.

[209] Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 61.

[210] Wilbur C. Abbott, *New York in the American Revolution* (New York: Scribners, 1929), 29.

[211] Crèvecoeur requested to be transferred to an upstairs room where men of his own class were held. The request was eventually granted, but conditions remained comparable otherwise. For more on his experiences at the prison, see Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Cuchet, 1787), 425-462.

members."[212] The trauma he experienced during captivity was amplified by concern over his young son Ally, who was unaware of his father's whereabouts and who, for all that Crèvecoeur knew, was terrified and left to care for himself.[213] Crèvecoeur was released on 17 September 1779 after three months of imprisonment under false claims. He was released thanks to William Seton, a Tory magistrate and Crèvecoeur's oldest friend in the city, who secured his freedom by putting up a bail of a thousand pounds and offering assurance that he would not communicate with the enemy.[214]

Crèvecoeur was never formally charged despite the length of his captivity, and he emerged from prison deeply altered. His health had deteriorated, but his experiences—as traumatic as they surely were—nonetheless helped to facilitate a personal and artistic evolution, one that would inform his writing in *Letters*. In an written for French audiences, he outlines this period of his life and goes on to describe his alteration:

> I became a new man: ashamed not to be able to laugh with others or share their gaiety, I avoided the company of my closest friends. In my solitude, I had discovered pleasures that I had never experienced before. I could meditate at length on the same subject without being disturbed. I could converse with myself and give rise through this conversation to ideas that simple meditation didn't produce. I could, finally, in the moments of calm remember those ideas and write them down.[215]

Crèvecoeur describes a shift from meditation to introspective conversation, and such a dialogical approach affords him access to multiple perspectives, which he could then tease out and

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[212] Ibid., 392-93.

[213] Crèvecoeur was especially distraught after he received word of his son's illness since details of his condition were withheld. Ally, who remained ill for some time, was taken in by Henry Perry, a friend of Crèvecoeur's who lived in the city, but Crèvecoeur remained unaware until Perry sent a Negro slave to the prison to inform him. For more, see Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 64.

[214] Crèvecoeur, *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain*, Vol. 1, 454.

[215] See "Esquisse de ma vie depuis ma sortie de prison à New York le 17 septembre 1779 jusques à mon retour dans la même ville comme consul de France le 17 novembre 1783" ["Outline of my life from my release from prison in New York on 17 September 1779, until my return to the same city as the French Consul on 17 November 1783.] It is introduced by Chevignard in "St. John de Crèvecoeur a New York en 1779-1780," *Annales de Normandie* 33 (1983): 170.

investigate in his writings. It is difficult to imagine how Crèvecoeur could emerge from prison with a superior power of concentration and analysis, but he intimates that his experiences made him better equipped to examine the moral consequences of the ordeals he had undergone during his captivity, and more broadly, during the American Revolution itself.

Much like the circumstances leading to his arrests, the reception of his 1782 *Letters* is haunted by factionalism, and Crèvecoeur becomes a site where political idealizations and anxieties are repeatedly tested; his utility would function in similar fashion during his afterlife, for he would be used by different social groups as a site for maintenance, modification, or resistance. His afterlife utility is shaped in part by the circumstances involving the publication of his 1782 *Letters*. It was published in London by Thomas Davies and Lockyer Davis. Theirs was an important publishing firm that had been serving as booksellers to the Royal Society and had also printed Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), a colossal intellectual feat that met a demand for a standard language, but that also showcased to the rest of Europe the nation's industry and genius.[216] That Crèvecoeur, an unknown author at the time, published with them indicates the perceived quality of his 1782 *Letters*, just as it also reflects a burning interest the text held for British audiences, particularly in its representation of the American project and what it was like to experience British-America before and during the Revolutionary War.[217]

Crèvecoeur's arrival in the public space of Britain inspired factionalism in terms of broadsides but also tributes, a pattern that would extend into his afterlife. *Letters* was widely

[216] To do this kind of work, France and Italy had academies, immense committees of learned men, who were financed by public money and private patronage. England had a few booksellers and Samuel Johnson. For more on Johnson's production of *A Dictionary* and its political functions, see John Wain, *Samuel Johnson: A Biography* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 129-31.

[217] He was paid thirty guineas, a sum that was likely satisfactory. See Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 68-71.

reviewed, and as the reviews accelerated, so did the reactions of reading audiences who, as communities in need, searched for new ways to project but also validate their own feelings about the war. The reception of *Letters* plays a major role in Crèvecoeur's afterlife because it contains efforts to reimagine the work in simple, palatable terms that satisfy the needs of factionalist readers. Such reimagining is managed in part by willful misreadings; but as later editions indicate, Crèvecoeur's rhetorical ambitions played a key role as well. So drastic was the alteration of the original *Letters* for French audiences that the 1784 edition is more an adaptation of the original rather than a translation.[218] In form as well as content, the London edition of *Letters* is vastly unlike the subsequent, lengthier French editions. Their differences are key to understanding why and for whose benefit Crèvecoeur is used as a restorative site during and following the war. Also revealed in their differences is Crèvecoeur's self-conscious effort to shape his legacy by appealing to specific reading audiences, thereby alienating others in the process.

- Crèvecoeur's Transatlantic Reception: Willful (Mis)Readings of *Letters* and the Problem of Authenticity

If Crèvecoeur felt better equipped to depict the ambivalence of the wartime neutral following his second imprisonment, or if he was more self-assured in grappling with the moral consequences of a failed British America, it is evident that contemporary readers of *Letters* were disinterested in the author's portrayal of Farmer James' fractured allegiances to both Britain and America. *Letters* instead generated a body of reception characterized by willful (mis)readings

[218] The 1784 two-volume edition of *Les Lettres* is nearly twice the length of the English edition. The original dedication to Abbe Raynal is replaced by a letter to Marquis de Lafayette, one that is anti-Loyalist in content and tone. Farmer James is absent from the narrative. He is replaced by a host of correspondents and the persona of St. John, who is identified as the compiler of the materials from which *Les Lettres* is constructed. The 1787 edition of *Les Lettres* is even longer than the previous. The additional third volume extends Crèvecoeur's refashioned identity as a Patriot and democratic idealist.

that served the specific needs of factionalist audiences. Polarized reactions to the 1782 London publication of *Letters*, most notably in Britain and America, reflect efforts by readers to reconsider the boundaries of their patriotism and to perform their commitment to patriotic citizenry.

The first known response to an early draft of *Letters* can be traced to New York City in July 1779. Crèvecoeur had arrived there five months prior, when two British officers discovered in a trunk the manuscript along with other writings. Scholars have determined that Crèvecoeur had been working on some version of *Letters* while still a farmer at Pine Hill, which suggests that he secured the materials during his travels to New York City and finally to London, where he sold the manuscript to Davies and Davis on 20 May 1781.[219] Crèvecoeur had managed to smuggle it out of Orange County while under the watch of Patriot officials; its discovery by two British officers in New York City resulted in a report sent to Governor Sir Henry Clinton. This early draft of *Letters* is described as "a sort of irregular Journal of America" and as that which tended to "favor the side of Government and to throw odium on the Proceedings of the Opposite Party [i.e., the American Patriots]."[220] It is impossible to determine precisely what the British officers encountered in the manuscripts, but their description offers insight into how some version of the 1782 London edition of *Letters* would be viewed by at least a minor segment of Loyalist readers—not as an attack on Britain but as one on the Patriots of America instead, and as a defense of Britain's presence in the colonies. Further, its description as a "Journal" aligns

[219] It was not until 1 September 1780 that Crèvecoeur escaped New York City and arrived in Europe with Ally. They were passengers on a ship that was part of a convoy of eighty vessels headed for England, only they wrecked off the coast of Ireland due to bad weather. Nearly a year later in London, Crèvecoeur sold Letters on 20 May 1781, meaning that he managed to secure the manuscript as far back as February 1779, when he left Pine Hill. For more on his smuggling of the manuscript, see Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 68-9.

[220] Letter dated 8 July 1779, quoted by Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 54, n. 21.

with impressions by readers that it was not fiction but instead a "true report" of the American experience.[221]

The timing of the 1782 London publication of *Letters* is itself remarkable, for it fell between General Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown in October 1781 and the signing of the Treaty of Paris in September 1783. This was a period of immense transition, realignment, and gradual recovery for Britain. If patriotism, as Linda Colley posits, is "ultimately a means of demanding a much broader access to citizenship," then the British Empire's impending loss of the American colonies promised that the boundaries of British citizenry would need to be redrawn.[222] Such a loss was viewed as a far-reaching threat, not merely to patriotic sensibilities but to how British subjects would come to view themselves in relation to their government and, more broadly, as members belonging to an empire whose identity as an impenetrable global force was undergoing a dramatic alteration.[223]

The popularity of *Letters* in Britain occurred despite—or perhaps because of—the dominant sentiment that it was a Patriot text. An argument can be made for both. The London publishers of Davies and Davis capitalized on a period in which America as a subject was one of great interest to British readers and to western Europeans in general. Also, apart from Marquis Francois-Jean de Chastellux's *Voyage dans l'Amérique septentrionale (Travels in Northern America)*, which was published in 1780 following the author's travels to America as a major general in Rochambeau's army, no accounts of the new United States had been published.

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[221] Disguised as a document and travelogue, *Letters* was thought by many readers to be a "true report." It is thus aligned with such representative examples as Thomas Hariot's *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588) and John Smith's *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624). Thomas Jefferson's well-known *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) was published not soon after Crèvecoeur's *Letters*.

[222] Linda Colley, *Britons*, 5.

[223] For a succinct analysis of the cultural impact within Britain regarding the loss of the American colonies, see Colley, *Britons*, 134-147.

Letters would appeal to readers who desired "authentic" information about America.[224] Its printing was so profitable that a Dublin edition published by John Exshaw appeared alongside the London edition in 1782, and this despite a weak economy; James Magee promptly published a Belfast edition the following year.[225]

Aside from the reaction of the British soldiers who discovered in New York City an early manuscript of *Letters*, only a small segment of British readers identified the 1782 *Letters* as a Loyalist text—the vast majority of Royalists instead perceived it as a Patriot text. Its popularity reflects a divergence in Britain between readers' curiosity about America and the fears of a sharp decline in British hegemony, one accelerated by the possible exodus of British migrants to America, and this at a time when Britain was confronting the looming realities of losing the colonies in a costly and increasingly unpopular war. Contemporary readers could not have known of Crèvecoeur's stated neutrality in America, and the literary distance between the author and Farmer James remains a subject of contention for scholars today.[226] But to embrace *Letters*

[224] Julia Post Mitchell notes, for instance, the resemblance between *Letters* and John Dickenson's widely popular *Letters of a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (1767). See Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 1-2.

[225] It is unclear if the Dublin and Belfast publishers purchased copyrights from Davies and Davis, or if Crèvecoeur received any payment as a result. It is likely that he did not. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 70.

[226] Dennis D. Moore argues that Farmer James, particularly for his naivete, is an object of satire. Moore considers James as satirical creation consistent with works that Crèvecoeur was believed to have read, most notably, Voltaire's 1733 *Letters concerning the English Nation*. See Dennis D. Moore, "Satire, Inoculation, and Crèvecoeur's Letters Concerning the English Nation: New Evidence from the Archives," *Early American Literature* 46.1: 159-166. Moore continues this argument regarding James as a satirical object in his "Introduction" to *Letters*. See D.D. Moore, "Introduction," *Letters from an American Farmer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), ix-xxxi. Other scholars view *Letters* as a veiled political argument that includes Crèvecoeur's theory of America. For a range of examples, start with Crèvecoeur's biographers: R. Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de Crèvecoeur : Sa vie et ses ouvrages* (Paris: D. Jouaust, 1883); Julia Post Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: AMS Press, 1966); and Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: Viking, 1987). More recent examples of scholars who interpret *Letters* as a political argument include Bryce Traister, "Criminal Correspondence: Loyalism, Espionage and Crèvecoeur," *Early American Literature* 37.3 (2002): 469-496; Yael Ben-zvi, "Mazes of Empire: Space and Humanity in Crèvecoeur's *Letters*," *Early American Literature* 42.1 (2007): 73-105; Jeff Osborne, "American Antipathy and the Cruelties of Citizenship in Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an America Farmer*," *Early American Literature* 42.3 (2007): 529-553; Steven Blakemore, "Crèvecoeur and the Subversion of the American Revolution" in *Literature, Intertextuality, and the American Revolution: From* Common *Sense to* "Rip Van Winkle" (Lanham, MD:

as Loyalist literature demands willful (mis)readings that overlook, for instance, Letters III ("What is an American?") and XII ("Distresses of a Frontier Man"). Letter III includes Crèvecoeur's indictment of European (including British) traditions of power and rule, which he contrasts with America's utopic potential; in Letter XII, Crèvecoeur details the atrocities committed by factionalists on the frontier. Such willful interpretations of *Letters* by imaginative communities not only play a role in shaping Crèvecoeur's afterlife, but they in turn reflect the author's pliability as a site where factionalist readers could project their own needs.

In a 1782 review featured in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, its anonymous author praises Crèvecoeur for the breadth of his sentimental talents, a notion that would resurface in his afterlife reimaginings. Specifically referenced is Letter IX ("Description of Charles-Town") and the grim incident of the "Negro slave" imprisoned in an outdoor cage, which "must sensibly affect every mind not absolutely callous to the impression of humanity."[227] The inhumanity of American slaveholders is stressed, and America, because it permits such inhumanity, is deemed both institutionally and morally "callous." Targeted here is the incongruity between the ideals of a better, freer America and its social realities. Following the review is a lengthy excerpt of James's encounter with the body of the enslaved prisoner. The scene includes description of the man's cage as one "suspended to the limbs of the tree, all the branches of which appeared covered with large birds of prey;" the man has been mutilated by the birds, his eyes picked out and his body "covered in a multitude of wounds" (129).

Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), 69-106; and James P. Myers, "Crèvecoeur: Concealing and Revealing the Secret Self," *Early American Literature* 49.2 (2014): 357-401.

[227] "Letters from an American Farmer," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 52 (September, October 1782), 439. An excerpt of Letter IX was included in several other London-based periodicals, only without a review attached. Often it is the title of the review that indicates the publisher's attitude toward slavery: "Melancholy State of the Slaves in the American Colonies, including an extract of *Letters from an American Farmer*," *Public Advertiser* (15 November 1782).

The scene is preceded by Crèvecoeur's indictment of the unrestricted use of power by the Charleston elite, a group comprised mostly of lawyers, planters, and merchants. As "the chosen race," they indulge their riches without fear of punishment by the law and at the expense of slaves who are brutalized (121). There is little else to suggest the factionalism of the reviewer, but its condemnation of slavery aligns with emergent abolitionist values held by segments of both Royalists and Loyalists alike. Slavery was not abolished in Britain until 1833, but the 1782 review was published during a period in which the British public had grown increasingly intolerant of slavery. Ten years prior, for instance, Lord Mansfield ruled in the Somerset case that slavery was unsupported by law in England and no authority could be exercised on slaves entering English or Scottish soil.[228] The reviewer's inclusion of an excerpt set in Charleston further supports an abolitionist perspective. Charleston was a major hub in the slave market, and almost half of all enslaved Africans who came to America first arrived in the port of Charleston—and by the time of review, thousands of Black Loyalists had escaped from plantations and fled to British lines, especially following the British occupation of Charleston in 1780.[229]

Crèvecoeur's indictment of slavery crosses political lines, but it nonetheless would appeal to like-minded Royalist readers of Britain. More likely, it reflects an egalitarian worldview consistent with the author's distrust of traditional systems of power, particularly those identified in the "What is an American?" section of *Letters* but extending also to his identification of the corrupt Charleston elite. Some scholars have argued, however, that Crèvecoeur's critique of

[228] For an analysis of the Somerset case, see Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 120-126.

[229] Ibid., 192.

political extremism is reason enough to label the work an anti-Patriot text.[230] Such an assertion is highly problematic, but *Letters* contains moments that could indeed satisfy the kinds of willful (mis)readings practiced by imaginative communities in search of rallying, factionalist evidence. Letter XII ("Distresses of a Frontier Man") includes descriptions of the "unfortunate revolution" as it approaches Pine Hill, destroying the idyllic frontier along its path (152). James senses a "dreadful enemy" obscured by the dense wilderness (150). In an episode characteristic of the gothic supernatural, James and his family are haunted by ominous sounds at night, and by day their nerves are too shattered to focus on anything else:

> We never go to our fields but we are seized with an involuntary fear, which lessons our strength and weakens our labour. No other subject of conversation intervenes between the different accounts, which spread through the country, of successive acts of devastation, and these, told in chimney corners, swell themselves in our affrighted imaginations into the most terrific ideas! We never sit down either to dinner or supper but the least noise immediately spreads general alarm and prevents us from enjoying our meals. The very appetite proceeding from labour and peace of mind is gone; we eat just enough to keep us alive. Our sleep is disturbed by the most frightful of dreams . . . At other times the howling of our dogs seems to announce the arrival our enemy; we leap out of bed and run to arms (150-51).

One can imagine how the nightmarish account of the encroaching Revolution would serve an anti-Patriot reading of *Letters*—in the absence of a Patriot rebellion, there would be no nightmare in the first place. While Patriots are not identified by name, the enemy described haunts as if it was immaterial, thus allowing it to exist both everywhere and nowhere at once.

If interpreted in Royalist terms, Letter XII functions as didactic literature in which disobedience to the crown is expressed as anarchy. For James, the Revolution signals contemptuous disregard for the past and for his British heritage: "Shall I arm myself against that country where I first drew my breath? . . . Must I be called a parricide, a traitor, a villain?" (153).

[230] For a representative example, see Traister, "Criminal Correspondence," *Early American Literature* 37.3 (2002): 469-496.

For James, the Revolution also represents an end to self-regulation: "Farewell education, principles, love of our country, farewell; all are become useless to the generality of us" (154). Such a sentence neatly addresses James's values and how they were formed—specifically, it is through the right kind of education that nationhood as a unifying political and moral force can be learned. Crèvecoeur offers little regarding his narrator's own education, only that the American-born James admires Mr. F.B.'s European education and considers it to far exceed his own. James is limited to relying upon Mr. F.B. and a library of books inherited from his grandfather (who brought them from England) as sources of knowledge beyond his own experiences. The books are mostly historical in nature, and according to James himself, they are insufficient in providing well-rounded training. As such, the "education" to which James is referring is vague at best, but Royalists in need of an ally in Crèvecoeur—and who could likewise profit from the author's immense popularity—could opportunistically use this ambiguity to claim the concluding chapter of *Letters* as an endorsement of their values.

In a 1782 review of *Letters* published by *The European Magazine and London Review*, evidence of James's allegiance to Britain (and by extension Crèvecoeur's) is once again imagined within the context of education. The anonymous author concludes that *Letters* was written by "a man of cultivated and even refined mind."[231] The inference likely alludes to a European education, but it is in the author's perceived incongruity that *Letters* was produced not by a single person, but instead by two—one who observed America and one who wrote the book—that offers compelling evidence of a Royalist interpretation. The review illustrates the creative leaps taken by those in need of Crèvecoeur as an intellectual and political ally, thus informing the author's prolific reception. For *Letters* to have been produced separately, first by

[231] Anonymous, "Review of *Letters from an American Farmer*," *The European Magazine and London Review*, I (April 1782), 272.

an observer and then by an author, implies necessary distance both in terms of geography and writing ability. There would be no need for a separate observer unless the author could not be physically present to witness the American experience; and further, the observer would not depend upon the assistance of an author unless he was incapable of producing the work himself. Following such logic, the New York-based observer would need to rely upon the intellectual prowess of a European-educated author who is located elsewhere, whether in another region of the continent or abroad. Also, the reviewer's assertion that *Letters* is "instructive" and "useful" suggests a didactic reading, thus reinforcing the perspective that Crèvecoeur's rhetorical intentions are consistent and unambiguous.[232] Sympathy for the American farmer who has lost everything to the "ravages and ruin of civil war" likewise alludes to the tragedy of an avoidable conflict.[233]

Royalists who pursued Crèvecoeur as a political ally would latch onto James's expressed reverence for patrilineal and imperial descent. Even in Letter III ("What is an American?"), which is most commonly cited as an indictment of European hegemony, James refers to "the silken bands of mild government" as well as "the original genius and strong desire of the people ratified and confirmed by the crown" (29-31). Willful (mis)readings by Royalists would require dismissing the broader context of James's privileging of an idyllic, protean America over European traditions of confinement and service to an "invisible power" (29). It is likely that Royalists also saw an opportunity to appropriate Crèvecoeur's ambivalent depiction of British colonial policy. In Letter III, as James considers a key difference between earlier and later British administrations, he praises the former for its "wisdom" and "decency" and he criticizes the latter for "[t]he greatest political error the crown ever committed in America . . . to cut off

[232] Ibid., 272.
[233] Ibid., 272.

men from a country which wanted nothing but men" (30-31). Rather than condemn the crown as tyrannical, James suggests that it committed a grievous error in management, one that could be corrected by permitting the American—this "new man"—to flourish under British law, albeit at a distance in the colonies (32).

Published in the Royalist-aligned *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* is another 1782 London-based review of *Letters*. The anonymous author responds specifically to Letter III, asserting of the colonists that "the love of their country could not be a very predominant passion: but the people are attached to America by the powerful ties of interests."[234] The intended meaning of "country" could simply refer to landscape, in which case the comment expresses a dismissal of Crèvecoeur's descriptions of idyllic America. Such would support a Royalist strategy of devaluing America to potential migrants during the war. More likely, however, is that "country" has political meaning, in which case the author is suggesting that patriotism has been displaced by colonial self-interest. The inference is that a reverence for empire has been lost in the colonies and that this "new man" lacks the qualities of good citizenry that have thus far sustained Britain. The reviewer also notes the "pathetic account of the misery of the negroe slaves" in Letter IX, which further distances British citizenry from the colonists, and in this case, from the inhumanity of American slaveholders, as well.[235] The 1782 review serves the needs of Royalists by stressing Britain's superior culture of citizenry, and it further demonstrates Crèvecoeur's utility as a restorative site where factionalists could project their needs.

As late as 1774, Loyalist literature aimed to establish rhetorical control by operating from the assumption that the inhabitants of the colonies were all British Americans. Early

[234] Anonymous, "Review *of Letters from an American Farmer*," *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* 53 (1782), 264.

[235] Ibid., 265.

pamphleteering, for instance, adopted a tone of familiarity, and it targeted reasonable readers who could be reminded both of the benefits of residing in the British Empire and their shared values as British subjects. This measured rhetoric, which consists of well-timed moments of shared exasperation and moral persuasion, is exemplified by titles such as Thomas Bradbury Chandler's *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans* (1774) and Joseph Galloway's *Arguments on Both Sides in the Dispute Between Great-Britain and her Colonies* (1774).[236] But this strategy of rhetorical appeal by Loyalists soon collapsed under the increasing weight of oppositional efforts to intimidate and censor. For instance, Loyalist fears of dispossession materialized when Patriots began confiscating Loyalist property, which accelerated following the declaration of American independence. Loyalist authors bitterly lamented the illegal dispossession of their homes, valuables, and their livelihoods.[237] As such, decorum was abandoned, and a rhetoric of dissent became necessary to express the anger and disbelief felt by so many Loyalists. Satire and burlesque were the forms most commonly adopted in Loyalist polemics such as *The Association; by Bob Jingle, Poet Laureate to the Congress* (1774), *The Poor Man's Advice to his Poor Neighbors* (1774), and *The Battle of Brooklyn* (1776).

A common theme in satirical Loyalist literature is the absurdity of Patriots who assert their supremacy, whether political, intellectual, or martial. Not long after independence was declared, the Loyalist poet Jonathan Odell targeted Benjamin Franklin as one of the chief adversaries of the Revolution. Originally titled "Inscription" as it circulated in manuscript form among educated Loyalists and Quakers in Philadelphia, the poem was reprinted in 1777 in

[236] Thomas Bradbury Chandler, *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans* (London: Richardson and Urquhart, 1774). Joseph Galloway's *Arguments* was printed but not published. It was included, however, in Galloway's widely read *A Candid Examination of the Dispute Between Great Britain and her Colonies* (New York, 1775).

[237] For the Loyalist Claims Commission, see Wallace Brown, *The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965).

London's *The Gentleman's Magazine* under the deliberately ridiculous title "Inscription for a Curious Chamber-Stove, in the Form of an Urn, So Contrived as to make the Flame Descend, Instead of Rise, from the Fire: Invented by Doctor Franklin."[238] Written as a mock eulogy, Odell satirizes Franklin's Promethean desire to rise above his station: "Like a Newton sublimely he soar'd / To a Summit before unattained; / New Regions of Science explor'd, / And the Palm of Philosophy gain'd.[239] In a move that subordinates an esteemed colonial figure to that of an esteemed Englishman, Franklin is presented as a flawed version of England's Newton; he likewise becomes a generic stand-in for any self-important Patriot who suffers from the delusion of supremacy.

A similar strategy of delegitimizing Patriots can be located in Major John André's *The Cow Chace* (1780), a satirical ballad that was first serialized anonymously in James Rivington's Loyalist newspaper, the *Royal Gazette*.[240] It commemorates General Anthony Wayne's failed assault on Loyalists at a blockhouse located on the Hudson River. The ineptitude of the Patriot military is amplified by André's ironic elevation of the episode through the ancient ballad of "Chevy Chace." The revival of ancient balladry promoted British literary and cultural nationalism by encouraging audiences to imagine romantic histories as part of a mutual national destiny.[241] André's clever reworking of the ballad stresses the contrast between the noble past

[238] For more on the complex publication history of the poem, see Winthrop Sargent, ed., *The Loyalist Verses of Joseph Stanbury and Jonathan Odell; Relating to the American Revolution* (Albany: J. Munsell, 1860), 112-113. The poem also appeared in Benjamin Towne's *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, where it is ascribed to Odell, as well as in other Loyalist works by Jonathan Boucher and William Smith. It was likewise published in the Loyalist newspaper *Rivington's New-York Gazette*.

[239] J Winthrop Sargent, ed., *The Loyalist Verses of Joseph Stanbury and Jonathan Odell; Relating to the American Revolution*, 5.

[240] The poem was first published in three installments in Rivington's *Royal Gazette* in September-October 1780. It was then published as a monograph along with other comic poems, including Jonathan Odell's *The American Times as the Cow Chace, in Three Cantos* (New York: Rivington, 1780). It was also published along with William Dunlap's play, *Andre, a Tragedy, in Five Acts* (New York: T&J Sword, 1798).

[241] In Britain, the revival of ancient balladry became fairly common, particularly following Thomas Percy's popular *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Later collections include Joseph Ritson's *A Select Collection of*

and the ignoble present. For instance, included in the original "Chevy Chace" is a gruesome image of warfare: "For Witherington needs must I wayle, / As one in the doleful dumpes; / For when his legs were smitten of, / He fought upon his stumpes."[242] In André's version, it is not courage that is stressed but rather cowardice. Here, he is unambiguously targeting the cowardice of well-known Patriots:

> In Valour's phrenzy, Hamilton
> Rode like a soldier big,
> And Secretary Harrison
> With pen stuck in his wig.
>
> But lest their Chieftain Washington
> Should mourn them in the mumps,
> The fate of Withrington to shun,
> They fought behind the stumps.[243]

The movement of Loyalist literature that used satirical forms to attack Patriot claims to supremacy continued beyond the 1782 London publication of *Letters*, and readers who actively sought in Crèvecoeur a political and intellectual ally were accustomed to reading Loyalist literature through satirical lenses. To imagine *Letters* as being consistent with the themes of other satirical Loyalist texts helps to clarify how such willful (mis)readings occurred in the first place.

Taken as satire produced for the satisfaction of educated British readers as well as Loyalists, *Letters* is imagined to be narrated by a gullible bumpkin. Instead of praising James's characteristic modesty—for instance, he admits to having "a very limited power of mind"—the satirical-minded reader would find it both obvious and laughable (100). So ignorant is James that

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English Songs (1783), *Select Scottish Ballads* (1783), Thomas Evans's *Old Ballads, Historical and Narrative, with Some of Modern Date* (1784), and Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1803). For a critical evaluation of ballad publishers and audiences, see Dianne Dugaw, "The Popular Marketing of 'Old Ballads': The Ballad Revival and Eighteenth-Century Antiquarianism Reconsidered, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 21 (1987): 71-90; for more on Scottish ballad culture, see Janet Sorensen, "Alternate Antiquarianisms of Scotland and the North, *Modern Language Quarterly* 70 (2009): 415-41. For the history of the Chevy Chase ballad, see Claude M. Simpson, *The British Broadside Ballad and Its Music* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1966), 96-101.

[242] Thomas Percy, ed., *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), 183.

[243] John André, *The Cow-Chace* (Rivington, 1780), 3.

Mr. F.B. necessarily "conducted [him], on the map, from one European country to another" (4). Such a detail is included in the first paragraph of Letter I, thereby positioning James as a satirical object almost instantly. Also, for all that James lacks in formal education—he owns only "a few musty books"—he is also painfully naïve in matters of sensibility (4). The structure of the 1782 *Letters* centralizes James's naivete in its first three selections, and by its conclusion in Letter XII, his story ends as a reworking of the *bildungsroman*—what knowledge regarding the self-destructiveness of humanity that James may have acquired fails to shield him from tragedy and instead amplifies his persistent inadequacies.

As a satirical critique of the sentimental hero and the popularized "man of feeling," James's heightened sensibility is hardly an asset; instead, it clouds his judgment and facilitates his failings as a patriarch.[244] For instance, at the apocalyptic climax in James's narrative, as the war encroaches upon Pine Hill, he indulgently rues his loss of happiness ("Happy—why would I mention that sweet, enchanting word?") and retreats into the dangerous fantasy of fleeing society altogether to live among local Natives (149). Paralyzed by his own "wild [and] trifling reflections," James is not a man of action, and what he grasps he grasps too late (163). Implied at the conclusion of *Letters* is the tragedy to come—the slaughter of James and his family by Natives—and it will stand as another lesson learned too late. James explains, "I intend my children neither for the law nor the church, but for the cultivation of the land" (171). A satirical reading locates James as a misguided idealist, and the narrative trajectory of *Letters* (as it

[244] As G.J. Barker-Benfield notes, "The expression of sensibility came to be of major importance—even a 'dogma' in religion, secular philosophy, and aesthetics among the emergent middle class in Britain and America." See G.J. Barker-Benfield, "The Origins of Anglo-American Sensibility," in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, edited by Lawrence J. Friedman and Mark D. McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 72.

concerns both James and the external action of the war itself) exposes the tragic hubris of abandoning European models of governance.

Crèvecoeur's literary reception is shaped by Royalists and Loyalists alike whose political and social needs were gratified by way of opportunistic reading strategies. But those critical of the 1782 London edition of *Letters*, or who were more direct in their attacks of Crèvecoeur, frequently shared a common grievance, itself reflective of a rhetorical strategy aimed to undermine the author's credibility and to deflect the appeal of *Letters* to prospective immigrants to the colonies, particularly those based in Ireland and England.[245] The grievance was that Crèvecoeur lacked authenticity as a purveyor of the American experience. His literary achievements were similarly attacked, with anonymous reviewers describing *Letters* as "dross," "absurd and romantic," and even "insidious."[246]

The debate concerning Crèvecoeur's authenticity was by no means limited to Royalist responses in Britain or Loyalists in America, and in fact it spread to western Europe as early as 1783.[247] But it was the staunch supporters of the crown in Britain who responded most passionately to the subject. Such is telling of their needs and anxieties from at least mid-1782, as the colonies were to be lost. The most impassioned critics of the 1782 *Letters*—and these include Samuel Ayscough and over a dozen anonymous authors published in British periodicals by

[245] *The Hibernian Magazine*, based in Dublin, reprinted extracts from *Letters* prior to the release of the Irish edition—this was a period of severe economic depression in Ireland, when many Irish were planning to migrate to America. *Letters* appealed to potential migrants who were eager to learn more about fertile land, more affordable land, as well as other opportunities for self-advancement. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 71.

[246] The first quotation: Anonymous, "London," Göttingische *Gelehrte Anzeigen: Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, II (7 December 1782), 1201-4. The latter two quotations: Anonymous, "Remarks on the *Letters from an American Farmer*," *Gentleman's Magazine*, 53 (December 1783), 1036.

[247] In 1783, much of the European-based debates concerning his authenticity were published in France. Examples include Anonymous, "Lettres from an American Farmer, &c. ou Lettres d'un Fermier Américain," *Courier de l'Europe*, 13 (14 March 1783), 167-68 ; also, Lacretelle, Pierre-Louis, "Lettre au Rédacteur du Mercure," *Mercure de France* (4 January 1783), 4-6.

December 1783[248]—are likely responding foremost to the Letters I and III since both portray pre-Revolutionary America as idyllic and far better and freer than Britain.[249] If *Letters* is read not as satire but instead as an American farmer's true account of his experiences both before and during the war, then the tone of the work becomes strikingly different. Farmer James remains a simple farmer from the Pennsylvania countryside, but what he lacks in education, he makes up with attentiveness, simplicity, and earnest reflection. He describes with affection how Mr. F.B. "instructed" him on their "famed mother country," and with characteristic industry, he absorbs lessons on British politics, agriculture, arts, manufactures, and trade.[250] James is no fool, and crucially, for Crèvecoeur's exposition of America be deemed credible, he needs his readers to both trust and admire his protagonist. James's simplicity is depicted as a virtue that allows him insight into the flaws of British customs; his perspective as an American—this "new man"—facilitates a reversal in which British customs are judged not as the inevitable hegemonic standard, but rather as cultural blemishes that Americans can reject if they so choose.

Crèvecoeur establishes a thematic pattern in the first letter, in which Farmer James correlates systems of credit with idleness, a lack of self-reliance, economic captivity through debt, and the gaping economic and class disparities of Britain and western Europe at large. He describes the English, for instance, as "strange people [who] can live upon what they call bank notes, without working."[251] As a prototype of the "American farmer," James models self-

[248] Ayscough was an English clergyman and would later receive attention for indexing *The Gentleman's Magazine*, which he did in 1789.

[249] Representative examples of polemics inspired by the 1782 *Letters* include Samuel Ayscough's *Remarks on the 'Letters from an American Farmer'; or the Errors of Mr. J. Hector St. John; Pointing out the Pernicious Tendency of the Letters to Great Britain* (London: John Fielding, 1783). Consider the following, as well: Anonymous, "Review of *Letters from an American Farmer*," *The European Magazine and London Review*, I (April 1783), 272-78; Anonymous, "Review of *Letters from an American Farmer*," *The Scots Magazine*, XLIV (May 1783), 263-64; and Anonymous, "Remarks on the *Letters from an American Farmer*," *Gentleman's Magazine*, LIII (December 1783), 1036.

[250] Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Other Essays*, 3.

[251] Ibid., 12-13.

sufficiency through industrious usage of the land, thus embodying oppositional values that, in this case, are aligned with agrarianism, anti-capitalism, and Quakerism.[252] But it is the third letter ("What is an American?") that most succinctly signals the author's juxtaposition of both regions—through its repressive economics, politics, social traditions, and intolerant religious institutions, Europe confines, rejects, and restricts; in contrast, America liberates, welcomes, and offers boundless opportunities for advancement, in particular, for those marginalized and in pursuit of a future previously imagined as impossible back home. Crèvecoeur's contrasting of both nations is furthered by his description of Europe's physical terrain as congested and overpriced, whereas the American landscape is vast, fertile, and affordable for anyone willing to work with industry and self-discipline.

Although *Letters* was the target of Royalist broadsides insisting on its inauthenticity prior to Samuel Ayscough's *Remarks on the 'Letters from an American Farmer'* (1783), Ayscough's lengthy pamphlet came to encapsulate the vitriol and paranoia triggered by Crèvecoeur's perceived endorsement of a protean America in favor of Europe and especially Britain. This is a key moment in the reception to *Letters*, and the work was appropriated once again as a site of factionalist interpretation. Ayscough addresses what would become two major threads in Crèvecoeur-related scholarship: that of reading *Letters* autobiographically, and that of reading it as a treasonous, Patriot manifesto. It is from both perspectives that Crèvecoeur's authenticity is attacked, and these reflect more immediate concerns regarding the appeal of *Letters* as a recruitment tool to prospective British immigrants. Ayscough argues, for instance, that

[252] The Quaker communities of America were admired by many intellectuals as models of orderly societies upon which they based the principles of simplicity and benevolence: "From Voltaire forward, the French *philosophes* had used the gentle Quakers as important weapons in the assault upon religious formalism and intolerance, political violence and injustice, and social artificiality and complexity." See Philbrick, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 49.

Crèvecoeur's deception could "produce a total dismemberment [of] the British Empire."[253] Similarly, he insists that *Letters* is "artfully disguised, and hostile to the happiness of [Britain]."[254] Such deception is an issue of national importance because the work and its popularity could disrupt Britain's recovery from the war, further destabilizing a nation already in crisis due to "the weight of accumulated taxes [and] the natural consequence of war."[255]

Ayscough's fear of mass migration is economically driven: Britain could lose its "most useful inhabitants," its soldiers, whose return would boost the national economy through agriculture and manufacturing.[256] Worse still, such a loss would benefit America as an economic competitor.[257] Ayscough's preamble then offers a patriotic rallying call, one that stresses what is at stake if British migration to America were to increase:

> The time being come when the independence of America is in some measure acknowledged by this country, we already see allurements thrown out to encourage the inhabitants of all nations to come and settle with them, and by that means to recover their country from the desolation it has sustained by the war, by draining various nations of the most useful inhabitants, without waiting for the flow increase of natural population…This politic conduct in them ought as much as possible to be counteracted, in order to prevent emigration, which may in the event prove more fatal to this country than the war itself. As false lights are already held out to impose on the credulous, it is the *duty* of every good citizen to draw aside the veil under which truth is eclipsed.[258]

The prevention of mass migration is equated with good citizenry, and the usage of "duty," itself a politically charged concept, is assigned even loftier meaning as an indicator of moral clarity, in

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[253] Ayscough, *Remarks on the 'Letters from an American Farmer,'* 2.

[254] Ibid., 3.

[255] Ibid., 1.

[256] Ibid., 2.

[257] There is no specific mention by Ayscough of the whaling industry in America, but it is likely that he had it in mind when addressing his economic fears. For instance, he describes the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard as "barren," and this amounts to an implicit dismissal of the region described by Crèvecoeur. In *Letters*, Crèvecoeur writes extensively on American whaling as a bourgeoning American industry (see letters on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, or letters five through eight). Crèvecoeur is quite clear in his belief that Americans had demonstrated superiority to their European counterparts in this area of economic activity. See Thomas Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 50-51.

[258] Ayscough, *Remarks on the 'Letters from an American Farmer,'* 2-3. The emphasis is mine.

which British subjects must commit to a conscientious removal of "the veil under which truth is eclipsed."

Ayscough's primary method of delegitimizing Crèvecoeur and his *Letters* is by insisting that contrary to what the title affirms, the author is "not American born, as he pretends."[259] Rather, he "is a Frenchman, born in Normandy; [his] residence was chiefly at New York, and there [he was] looked upon by the Loyalists as no friend to Englishmen."[260] Ayscough's gleeful exposure of Crèvecoeur is only partly accurate, of course. Had the public known of Crèvecoeur's abuse by Patriots and his New York arrest on suspicion of Loyalist espionage, the impact of Ayscough's polemic would not have been quite so severe. But the public remained unaware and the reception to *Letters* was in turn shaped by Ayscough's attack. Evident in Ayscough's polemic is his contention that *Letters* was not semi-autobiographical fiction but instead a true-life document—or rather, a malicious attempt to disguise itself as such. He contends that Crèvecoeur aimed to exploit the curiosities of British readers who had been previously infected by the "poison" of other forgeries about America, specifically those that present it as a pastoral utopia.[261] This he calls a "new species of forgery," one unlike the domestic ones of recent memory concerning William Lauder and Thomas Chatterton.[262] The forgeries of Lauder and Chatterton were foolish efforts to pass as serious intellectuals, but Ayscough alleges that Crèvecoeur's ambitions were both treasonous and potentially damaging to the recovery of post-war Britain.

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[259] Ibid., 7.

[260] Ibid., 8.

[261] Ibid., 4. He cites only an alleged French forgery by Abbé Robins, but there appears no evidence to support his claims. See Abbé Robins, *New Travels through North America* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1783).

[262] Ibid., 3. Lauder made false claims about the authenticity of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, while Chatterton was known for attempting to pass off his work as that of an imaginary medieval poet called Thomas Rowley.

Crèvecoeur's identity as a farmer is also disregarded as a duplicitous disguise, as one adopted out of necessity to facilitate his literary masquerade. The "simple farmer" is instead quite clever, for he adopts "the frothy metaphors of [a] rhetorician, and the distinguishing verbiage of [a] petty philosopher of France."[263] Inherent in this language is Ayscough's deep resentment of French intellectualism and of the French more broadly, and his indictment is given added impetus by Crèvecoeur's French origins, which he presents as a shocking revelation. Linda Colley's summary of the antagonism between Britain and France in the eighteenth-century is useful in light of this defining moment in Crèvecoeur's reception: "[Britons] defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent, and *unfree*."[264] Ayscough's perspective is that as an unfree Frenchman, Crèvecoeur lacks the authority to write about American liberty. British resentment of the French was no doubt amplified by France's alliance with the Americans in 1778, which for the British signified an ultimate betrayal by "the most substantial sector of its first empire, and the part with which the bulk of its population felt the closest emotional ties."[265] Crèvecoeur's *Letters* was imagined as yet another assault on British values and another betrayal by the American colonists who abandoned their motherland, and worse still, with the assistance of Britain's foremost enemy. Ayscough taps into British anti-Gallicism, projecting this substantial cultural resentment onto Crèvecoeur, and he likewise strikes a chord with fellow countrymen who were anxious about Britain's future, both in terms of its economy and social life.

So influential was Ayscough's attack on Crèvecoeur that the author himself was compelled to respond. This he did in a letter dated 14 April 1783, which he then sent to the

[263] Ibid., 10.
[264] Colley, *Britons*, 6. The emphasis is mine.
[265] Ibid., 4.

Courier de l'Europe, Gazette Anglo-Française, published in London. In an effort to stifle the opportunistic reading practices of factionalist readers such as Ayscough—and further, to reclaim control of his relationship with the reading public—Crèvecoeur insisted that it was his right to identify as an American because nearly one-fourth of those who had fought for American independence were not born abroad.[266] As such, his French origins in no way disqualified him or detracted from his portrayal of American life. Not even Crèvecoeur's rebuttal, however, could halt the momentum brought on by Ayscough's pamphlet. *The Gentleman's Magazine* now sided with Ayscough, as did *The Monthly Review*, and both had originally published enthusiastic responses to *Letters*.[267] In the former, many of the stories in *Letters* are described as "absurd and romantic," and Crèvecoeur's motive of persuading British migrants to "the promised land" of America is deemed "insidious."[268] In the latter, the reviewer says that Crèvecoeur intended to "diffuse a spirit of migrating to America," and that Ayscough's remarks are "pointed."[269] Among reviews that do not cite Ayscough's pamphlet directly, its inflammatory spirit nonetheless remains. In *The Scots Magazine*, and anonymous author argued that *Letters* is "unsuitable to the general character of an American, or indeed of any other farmer."[270] The integrity of Crèvecoeur's authenticity is again called into question, suggesting that *Letters* is nothing short of

[266] Crèvecoeur did not fight in the Revolutionary war, and it is possible that he wished to mislead the public in this regard. See *Courier de l'Europe, Gazette Anglo-Française*, 13 (9 May 1793) : 296, in Howard C. Rice, *Le cultivateur américain* (Paris: Champion, 1932), 66.

[267] Enthusiastic reviews were written by Anonymous, "Art. I. Letters from an American Farmer," *The Monthly Review; or Literary Journal*, 66-67 (June, August, October), 401, 140-46, 273-77. See also Anonymous, "Letters from an American Farmer," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 52 (September, October 1782), 439-41, 533-35. Negative reviews were later written by Anonymous, "Review of *Remarks on the Letters from an American Farmer*," *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal*, 68 (June 1783), 536-37. See also Anonymous, "Remarks on the Letters from an American Farmer," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 53 (December 1783), 1036.

[268] Anonymous, "Letters from an American Farmer," *The Gentleman's Magazine* (December 1783), 1036.

[269] Anonymous, "Review of *Remarks on the Letters from an American Farmer*," *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal*, 68 (June 1783), 536-37.

[270] Anonymous, "Review of *Letters from an American Farmer*," *The Scots Magazine* 64 (May 1782), 263-264.

a fabrication intended to harm Britain and to monopolize on the craze of British readers' interests in America.

- Crèvecoeur's Reception in France: Reinventing the "American Farmer" amidst France's Ongoing Rivalry with Britain

Letters continued to sell in Britain following Ayscough's *Remarks*, but it is telling that in 1783—the year in which Britain formally relinquished the colonies—that the only periodical to publicly side with Crèvecoeur was the *Courier de l'Europe*, a Franco-British periodical published out of London and Boulogne-sur-Mer. In this case, the anonymous author dismisses accusations of inauthenticity, stating that "one should not expect a farmer to write like [Edward] Gibbon."[271] The review is noteworthy because it is among the first of many French-based reviews to come to Crèvecoeur's defense, not merely in his public debate with Ayscough, but also in broader conversations regarding his authenticity and literary merits. In consideration of Crèvecoeur's literary reputation as constructed by the French, it is useful to recall that Crèvecoeur fled New York and was living in Paris by 1781, where he was soon reclaimed by aristocratic French society. By 1784, Crèvecoeur had become a confidant of Louis XVI, had authored official accounts of America, advised Marshal de Castries on American geography, and accepted the French consulship to New York.[272] Viewed by the French as an agricultural expert, he was also encouraged to publish a seventy-two-page treatise on the culture of potatoes.[273] His reclamation of French identity and his realignment with French aristocracy and its intellectual

[271] Anonymous, "Lettres from an American Farmer, &c. ou Lettres d'un Fermier Américain," *Courier de l'Europe*, 13 (14 March 1783). Edward Gibbon was a British historian and Parliament member who wrote *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1778).

[272] Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 115-120. See also, Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 30-31.

[273] "Traité de la culture des pommes de terre et des différents usages qu'en font les habitants des Etats-Unis de l'Amérique." See Robert de Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de* Crèvecoeur, 294-295.

elite was reflected in the French reviews of *Letters*. The reviews were published by imaginative communities within France that wished to reclaim Crèvecoeur.

Published in the 4 January 1783 edition of the influential *Mercure de France* is Pierre-Louis Lacretelle's glowing review of *Letters*.[274] For Lacretelle, Crèvecoeur's authenticity is never questioned; he is instead praised for his "naïve paintings, varied details, [and] original manner," and this despite the view that "he lacks the advantages of the trained writer."[275] According to Thomas Philbrick, Lacretelle was one of Crèvecoeur's acquaintances in Paris and was evidently eager to publish an account of the author.[276] Such news calls into question precisely how Crèvecoeur was presented to Parisian society upon his reintegration, which biographers suspect occurred in March 1782, when Madame d'Houdetot invited him to reside in her Parisian mansion and acquainted him with her fashionable circle. Years later, Crèvecoeur wrote of Madame d'Houdetot: "How that lady welcomed me! How promptly she understood me, reassured me! How skillfully by her perseverance and her little unobtrusive compliments she made me over into a new man!"[277]

Crèvecoeur had spent twenty-seven years in North America, and for ten of them he labored as a farmer at Pine Hill. His French was now awkward, and his return to France after such a long absence was something of a shock, especially as he assimilated into cosmopolitan Paris. Crèvecoeur's biographers tend to agree that he was presented by Madame d'Houdetot as something of a specimen, this "new man," the American farmer. Gay Wilson Allen and Roger

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[274] Lacretelle was a French journalist, lawyer, and politician who shared a prize for an award-winning essay he wrote with Robespierre in 1784. The essay addressed the question of whether the relatives of a condemned criminal should share his disgrace. See Joseph I. Shulim, "The Youthful Robespierre and His Ambivalence Towards the Ancien Régime," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 5.3 (Spring 1972): 398-420. For Lacretelle's review, see "Lettre au Rédacteur du Mercure," *Mercure de France* (4 January 1783), 4-6.

[275] Lacretelle, "Lettre au Rédacteur du Mercure," 4.

[276] See Philbrick, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 30-31

[277] From the manuscript "Souvenirs sur Mm. la Comtesse d'Houdetot (1813), quoted in French by Robert de Crèvecoeur, *Saint John de* Crèvecoeur, 71.

Asselineau go so far as to claim of his new company that "they all wanted their share of the American savage Madame d'Houdetot had so luckily captured."[278] Such a description conjures the image of imperialists gawking at a newly-acquired animal, wild but rare, an exciting addition to an already extensive collection of exotic curiosities.

Crèvecoeur was hardly savage, however—and his privileged upbringing in Normandy, which included periodic visits to Paris, promised that he was not entirely unfamiliar with Parisian customs. Further, it is difficult to imagine Crèvecoeur, who on repeated occasions refused to declare his loyalty amidst persistent factionalist harassment, to perform the subordinate role of an exotic specimen. If Crèvecoeur was presented to Parisian society as a curiosity, it was not as a savage but rather as a philosopher-artist whose lack of formal training demonstrated the capacity for wisdom, even genius. But this, too, suggests imaginative appropriation by Madame d'Houdetot—the d'Houdetot family socialized with the Crèvecoeurs, and there is little reason to believe that she was unaware of Crèvecoeur's upbringing, including his training at the Collège Royal de Bourbon. In Lacretelle's 1783 review of *Letters*, he stresses the public image of Crèvecoeur as a simple farmer whose talents, while untrained, "shine with all the beauties produced only by natural poets, orators, and philosophers."[279] Unless he was informed of Crèvecoeur's previous life of education and access, Lacretelle was responding only to the persona he encountered.

The persona of the simple farmer was one that Madame d'Houdetot encouraged Crèvecoeur to cultivate. Recalling Crèvecoeur's description of Madame d'Houdetot—"How skillfully . . . she *made me* over into a new man"—the idea that she played a key role in

[278] Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 87.
[279] Lacretelle, "Lettre au Rédacteur du Mercure," 4.

Crèvecoeur's reinvention is persuasive.[280] It is useful to consider also that within a few days of Crèvecoeur's arrival in France, she wrote her friend Benjamin Franklin, then in France on a wartime diplomatic mission, introducing him as "a young American . . . a Frenchman by birth, but for a long time has been established in your country, under the protection of your laws, to which he is faithful."[281] Appropriated as an emblem of French-American hybridity, this new Crèvecoeur possesses the marketable knowledge of an American, but crucially to d'Houdetot and her influential social circle, he is also French-born and educated. Lacretelle's concluding wish that Crèvecoeur translate *Letters* into French, and on the basis that it "would best achieve the poetry and elegance of the original," is revealing.[282] Not only does it signal the appeal of Crèvecoeur and the desire of the French to reclaim him as both emblem and ally, but it further suggests the cultural capital that he would enjoy in France following the publication of the two subsequent French editions of *Letters*.

The reception of Crèvecoeur's *Letters* varies according to the needs of imaginative communities, and the 1784 publication of the two-volume French *Les Lettres d'un cultivateur Américain* further illustrates the utility of Crèvecoeur as a site of patriotic reaffirmation. As in Britain, everything American was wildly popular in France, and despite the degree to which it varied from the 1782 *Letters*, the new edition was a sensation in France. *Les Lettres* was really an adaptation rather than a translation, and its differences reveal Crèvecoeur's self-conscious effort to shape his legacy by appealing to an entirely different set of readers. It was nearly twice the length of the English edition and notably different in content and tone. Additional "anecdotes"—as Crèvecoeur called them—included those on Virginia, Canada, Jamaica and the

[280] The emphasis is mine.

[281] From a letter of 10 August 1781, translated from French by Ludwig Lewisohn, ed., *Letters From an American Farmer* (New York: Fox, Duffield, 1904), 331-332.

[282] Lacretelle, "Lettre au Rédacteur du Mercure," 5.

Bermudas, and Martha's Vineyard. Also included is a letter to Marquis de Lafayette, one that replaced the 1782 London edition's dedication to Abbe Raynal.[283]

The differences mark a calculated shift in ideology as well as the author's reclaiming of his French identity. In the London edition, Crèvecoeur's dedication to Raynal signaled an alignment with his views on "universal benevolence," which encompassed Raynal's abolitionism and his belief that America was an "asylum of freedom, the cradle of future nations and the refuge of distressed Europeans."[284] The dedication alludes to the potential of America while distancing itself from factionalist rhetoric. Crèvecoeur's letter to Marquis de Lafayette, however, is unambiguously anti-Loyalist. He describes the abuse he suffered at the hands of the British in New York City, and he also condemns English imperialism as a source of misery for colonies as far as Bengal. He terms Loyalists "monarchists" and Patriots "Republicans, and he goes so far as to avoid "God" (Dieu), which to the *philosophes* represented papist superstition, in favor of "l'Être Suprême" (the Supreme Being) or "le Tout-Puissant" (the Almighty).[285]

Les Lettres caters to Crèvecoeur's Parisian friends and patrons, the *philosophes* who urged him to publish a French edition. He made use of the original materials, but in the transformation from *Letters* to *Les Lettres*, the original contents were radically revised in both form and substance. The result is something of a hodgepodge, a messy collection of sketches, anecdotes, and descriptions of persons and places. The work is confusing, and this is due to

[283] Marquis de Lafayette was a French aristocrat and military officer who fought in the Revolutionary War, commanding American troops in several battles, including the Siege of Yorktown. After returning to France, he was a key figure in the French Revolution of 1789 and the July Revolution of 1830.

[284] Guillaume Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique de établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*. See book 15, chapter 15. There were seventeen editions of Raynal's work between 1772 and 1780. Raynal's 1770 *Histoire de deux Indes* was an inspiration to Crèvecoeur, particularly for its ideas concerning civic humanism. For Raynal, America was, unlike Europe, founded on the humanist promise of self-sufficiency, but there were already signs of the colonies' slip into commercial free enterprise. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 88-89.

[285] Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 96.

Crèvecoeur's abandonment of a narrative strategy that was integral to the original conceit of the 1782 edition. Farmer James is now absent and gone is the perspective unity that shaped his American experience. He is replaced by a host of correspondents and the persona of St. John, who is identified as the compiler of the sketches, autobiographical narratives, newspaper clippings, and consular reports from which *Les Lettres* is constructed. This persona oscillates between fictional construct and that of the author himself, and by the end of the first volume, the identity of this persona becomes muddled, particularly as he expresses his relief at finally reaching France, "my homeland, which I had not seen for twenty-seven years."[286]

Les Lettres struck a chord with the French reading public of 1784. Crèvecoeur's condemnation of British tyranny and his clear support of the moral righteousness of Patriots rallied French readers who were accustomed to viewing Britain as an economic competitor and as both an ideological and martial adversary. In *Les Lettres*, the tone of the first half of Letter XII is staunchly anti-British, whereas in the original *Letters*, the tone is ambivalent. In the original, James is crippled by the thanklessness of choosing a side: "If I attach myself to the mother country . . . I become what is called an enemy in my own region; if I follow the rest of my countrymen, I become opposed to our ancient masters" (152). Another appeal to French readers is Crèvecoeur's additional account of his New York City imprisonment, in which he vividly describes the atmosphere of betrayal and suspicion throughout the city. Crèvecoeur's imprisonment becomes an apt metaphor for his characterization of Britain's abuse of power, since he is held on false allegations and is denied access to the liberties of home, employment, and family. Compounding his portrayal of British oppression, Crèvecoeur includes narratives of his fellow prisoners, one case history after another.

[286] Crèvecoeur, *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain* (Paris: Cuchet, 1784), Vol. 1, 461.

In what Thomas Philbrick calls a "process of radical simplification," the ambiguities and contradictions present in *Letters* are all but absent in *Les Lettres*.[287] Most obvious is Crèvecoeur's abandonment of political neutrality in favor of Patriot politics, which is presented as a clear choice between good and evil. "The Man of Sorrow," an unpublished sketch from the English manuscript, is transformed into the "Histoire de Joseph Wilson." Crèvecoeur stresses the cruelty of the British raids as justification for Patriot abuse of Wilson, a suspected Loyalist. Rather than interrogate human nature and the moral ambiguities of warfare, he instead assigns blame to Britain, a far more palatable object of derision for French readers. Crèvecoeur's depiction of the natural world is hyperbolic and similarly void of nuance and variety. Absent are the stinging wasps or aggressive wrens depicted in *Letters*. The 1784 edition includes a seven-page hymn to nature, in which St. John regrets he cannot play the lyre, for he "longs to sing of our American Naiads, our rural divinities, the verdure of our mountains, the fertility of our valleys, the majesty of our rivers."[288] James's depiction of the American landscape is idyllic, but St. John's is pure fantasy—it is a strikingly generic effort to conform with the eighteenth-century literary image of pastoral seclusion and innocence.

Les Lettres was followed in 1787 by another edition, now comprised of three volumes. The third volume extends Crèvecoeur's refashioned identity as a Patriot and democratic idealist. It begins with Crèvecoeur's sudden departure from New York in 1780, and it offers a feeling description of his thoughts upon returning as French consul in 1783. Describing Americans as "long term victims of calamities produced by fanaticism, tyranny, and feudal oppression," Crèvecoeur relies once more on the rhetorical strategies of the previous French edition.[289] He

[287] Thomas Philbrick, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 138.

[288] Crèvecoeur, *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain* (Paris: Cuchet, 1784), Vol. 1, 80.

[289] See Everett Emerson, "Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur and the Promise of America," *Forms and Functions of History in American Literature*, Ed. Winfried Fluck (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1981), 48.

also caters directly to France's enthusiasm for the celebrities of the American Revolution. Included is the account of Washington's triumphant entrance with his army into New York City in 1783, which Crèvecoeur witnessed first-hand. He provides an excess of materials on Washington, along with letters that concern Franklin and Lafayette—all adulatory in tone but ultimately insignificant. In the English manuscripts, Natives are depicted with ambivalence, as either helpful companions or merciless killers, but by the third edition they are noble and melancholy. Crèvecoeur goes to great length to personalize the Natives and to create the appearance of authenticity, even passing off speeches as direct quotations of Lackawané as he refuses the proposal of his tribal council to adopt the agricultural practices of the whites. Evident in the French editions is Crèvecoeur's calculated strategy of appealing to French readers eager to affirm their superiority to the British, and who were fascinated by American revolutionary celebrities and the clichés of American pastoralism and Native primitivism.

The French reviews of *Les Lettres* signal Crèvecoeur's utility as a restorative site in service to France's ongoing hostile relationship with Britain. Lacretelle, who in his 1783 review of the *Letters* helped to popularize Crèvecoeur's persona as an author of both simplicity and genius, responded to *Les Lettres* (1784) with similar praise. He labels Crèvecoeur "the poet of America, as well as its Historian," who offers a "sensitive" view of a nation that contains multitudes, including the American farmer, the struggles of the European immigrant, the heroism of the Revolution, and the character of the Negro and the Native.[290] Lacretelle's review was reprinted in the 1784 French edition, as he had developed a friendship with Crèvecoeur and had access to the text well before publication.[291] That Lacretelle assigns Crèvecoeur the role of poet

[290] Pierre-Louis Lacretelle, "Lettre au Rédacteur du Mercure," *Mercure de France* (24 January 1784), 148-149.

[291] See Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 110.

is consistent with his 1783 review, but to label him also a historian conveys that *Les Lettres* is not merely a document of American experience, but one that should be trusted as fact. This enriches Crèvecoeur's legacy and suggests that he is above reproach. Given Crèvecoeur's aggressive indictment of British tyranny in the colonies, Lacretelle's characterization of the author's expertise inherently satisfies French readers in search of further evidence of Britain's moral, political, and martial failures.

Jacques P. Brissot de Warville likewise contributes to Crèvecoeur's legacy by advocating that the author spoke for *all* Americans, itself a claim that blatantly ignores the social and political complexities of the region:

> Everything in these letters can be praised; love of humanity seems to have dictated them. Who is not transported by the simple pleasures of the Americans? To appreciate their happiness, one must be as simple and virtuous as they are. Upright, decent souls will read and reread it for amusement and instruction. Strong souls will discover a country where the wish of their heart is realized.[292]

Brissot's description is highly sentimental and hyperbolic, and he idealizes Crèvecoeur as a model of virtuous simplicity. There is no expressed concern about the work's lack of narrative unity, but rather a focus on its spiritual impact, provided it finds the right audience. *Les Lettres* can be appreciated only by "upright, decent souls"—a clear jab at Britain as the adversary to American liberty, and a congratulatory gesture to French readers who derive pleasure from the work.

Crèvecoeur is identified as a "good citizen" in an anonymous 1785 review published in *L'Année Littéraire*.[293] Such a phrase has double meaning considering the author's literary identification as an American alongside his appropriation by France. The success of *Les Lettres*

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[292] Jacques P. Brissot de Warville, "Letters from an American Farmer, *ou Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain*," *Journal du Licée de Londres: ou Tableau de L'Etat Présent des Sciences et des Arts en Angleterre* (July 1784), 286-287.

[293] Anonymous, "Lettre V. *Lettres d'un Cultivateur Americain*, *L'Annee Litteraire*, (1785), 73.

is a positive reflection of French intellectual culture that endorsed Crèvecoeur's virtues as an artist and philosopher. Evident also is the reviewer's desire to canonize *Les Letters*, in which Crèvecoeur's most touching passages are compared to those of the *Odyssey*, Homer's epic. Another critic describes *Les Lettres* as "one of the great histories of North America," which echoes the sentiment of its rightful place in the literary canon and as a defining marker in intellectual history.[294] Upon the release of the 1787 *Les Lettres*, a reviewer takes into consideration the French reception history of the two previous editions and describes the newest one as that which "has justified our eulogies."[295] The canonization of any work is both subjective and political, but it is difficult to imagine either French edition as being mentioned in the same breath as the *Odyssey*.

The additional third volume of *Les Lettres* is voluminous and yet it adds little of literary merit to previous editions. As Thomas Philbrick puts it, "Anything and everything was grist for [Crèvecoeur's] mill so long as it related to America and was in consonance with the preconceptions that the *Lettres* was designed to support."[296] New additions included expository essays and narratives of individual experience, some even comparable to the best of the British edition, but the bulk of the third volume consists of anecdotes that Crèvecoeur collected from newspapers and reprints of public documents and addresses. The 1787 *Les Lettres*, like its 1784 predecessor, is at times tedious and incoherent, and the rallying calls for its canonization are a reminder of Crèvecoeur's utility as a stabilizing site of national identity and good citizenry. His literary reception is informed by French critics eager to exalt and claim him as their own.

[294] Anonymous, "Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain," *Journal de Paris* (10 February 1785), 171.
[295] Anonymous, "Lettres d'un Cultivateur Américain, *Mercure de France* (7 July 1787), 46.
[296] Philbrick, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 140.

❖ Crèvecoeur's Afterlife: Imaginative Expansion, Canonicity, and a Resurgence in America

On 12 November 1813, Crèvecoeur died in Sarcelles, a commune in the northern suburb of Paris. His unsigned obituary was published in the *Journal de l'Empire*, the most read conservative newspaper of the first Bourbon Restoration and the July Monarchy. By the time of his death, Crèvecoeur had fallen out of the public's eye for some twenty years. Such was the impact of the French Revolution that even America had become remote in space and time. It is therefore unlikely that the new generation had read *Letters* either in French or English, and yet the published tribute to Crèvecoeur reaffirms the vital role he played as a site of patriotic affirmation: "No one probably has combined to a higher degree an exquisite sensibility, a vigorous mind, an ardent imagination . . . [and] the love of good and the perseverance to ensure its triumph."[297] The obituarist contends that Crèvecoeur represents the finest qualities of citizenry, but that his appeal ought to extend further, beyond factionalism and even nation: "Such men honor both their country and mankind; their memory should live forever in all hearts."[298] Crèvecoeur is classified as a servant to the public, and indeed he was one. It is a role he welcomed and helped to create.

No obituaries were published in either England or America following Crèvecoeur's death. In Britain, sales and critical attention to the 1782 *Letters* abruptly declined following the negative press that Ayscough's broadside precipitated, and perhaps British readers still inclined to defend Crèvecoeur felt betrayed by his realignment with the French and were further alienated by the subsequent French editions of *Letters*. Mary Lamb's response in 1805 to William Hazlitt's suggestion that she read *Letters* encapsulates the book's reputation in Britain the decade before Crèvecoeur's death: "Tell Hazlitt not to forget to send the *American Farmer*; I daresay it is not

[297] Anonymous, *Journal de l'Empire* (21 November 1813), 225.
[298] Ibid., 225.

so good as he fancies, but a book's a book."[299] Hazlitt was an anomaly in nineteenth-century appraisals of *Letters*, and twenty-five years after he urged Lamb to read it, he praised the work again in the *Edinburgh Review* under the pretense of reviewing William Ellery Channing's *Sermons and Tracts* (1828). His review developed into a survey of American writing, and he identified three writers who occupied "a higher and graver place in the yet scanty annals of American Literature"—Franklin, Edwards, and "the author (whoever he was) of the *American Farmer's Letters*."[300] Less than fifty years following Crèvecoeur's celebrity in Britain, Hazlitt did not even know the identity of the author to *Letters*, and yet he considers it "very near . . . a definition of genius."[301] *Letters* was prized for its lack of pretense and affectation, for its "power to sympathize with nature, without thinking of ourselves or others."[302] Integrated in the review also is the first critical alignment by a Briton of *Letters* as canonical American literature. Based on what little Hazlitt knew about Crèvecoeur, he evidently imagined him if not as American-born, at least as an American citizen.

Hazlitt's support for *Letters* did not receive public support by another British scholar of American literature until 1919, when D.H. Lawrence included it among his examples of seminal American literature. Lawrence's praise was tempered, however, by more than a trace of lingering national resentment toward Crèvecoeur, in which he determines the author's persona as a subversive idealist a masquerade, at least as it concerns the conclusion of *Letters*:

> But it is all a swindle. Crèvecoeur was off to France in high-heeled shoes and embroidered waistcoat, to pose as a literary man, and to prosper in the literary world. We, however, must perforce follow him into the backwoods, where the simple natural life shall be perfected, near the tented village of the Red Man . . . He was determined to have

[299] Charles Lamb, *The Complete Works and Letters*, edited by Saxe Commins (New York: The Modern Library, 1935), 748. Mary Lamb collaborated with her brother Charles on an English children's book, *Tales from Shakespeare (*1807). William Hazlitt was an English critic and essayist who befriended the Lambs, among others.

[300] William Hazlitt, "Review of W.E. Channing, *Sermons and Tracts*," *Edinburgh Review*, 50 (1829), 130

[301] Ibid., 131.

[302] Ibid., 130.

> life according to his own prescription. Therefore, he wisely kept away from too close contact with Nature and took refuge in commerce and the material world. But yet he was determined to know the savage way of life, to his own *mind's* satisfaction.[303]

Far more was known about Crèvecoeur thanks to Julia Post Mitchell's 1916 full-scale biography, which had an obvious impact on Lawrence's position regarding Crèvecoeur's abandonment of a life among the Natives.[304] Lawrence treats Farmer James' determination to remain in America as literary invention and as an intellectual exercise to get to "know the savage way of life." He resents Crèvecoeur for posing as a "literary man," but he also relates to his unwillingness to remain in such close proximity to Natives. Lawrence's attitude about Natives is racist, of course—even France is preferable to a "savage way of life."

Lawrence responds to *Letters* as a series of philosophical ruminations on pre-Revolutionary America. For instance, he describes *Letters* as "a series of delightful egoistic accounts of [Crèvecoeur's] own ideal existence as an American citizen."[305] In a puzzling moment, he also misrepresents Crèvecoeur's literary reputation in Britain by claiming that "Hazlitt, Godwin, Shelley, Coleridge, the English Romanticists were [all] thrilled by the *Letters*."[306] It is possible that Lawrence's misrepresentation was not intentional but rather a product of either assumption or myth, for there is no evidence to suggest of the authors listed that any but Hazlitt wrote about Crèvecoeur directly.[307] Romanticists may be drawn to the emphasis

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[303] Lawrence initially published his thoughts on Crèvecoeur in *The English Review*. See D.H. Lawrence, "Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur," *The English Review* (January 1919). He expanded his analysis of *Letters* in book form, which I am citing here. See D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1923), 44.

[304] Julia Post Mitchell, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur* (New York: AMS Press, 1916).

[305] Lawrence, "Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur," *The English Review* (January 1919), 24.

[306] Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, 33.

[307] Crèvecoeur, like many other French émigrés, had fled the French Revolution to the Hamburg area. While staying in Altona (near Hamburg) in the summer of 1795, Mary Wollstonecraft, who had been residing in Paris but who also decided finally to flee, wrote to her friend Gilbert Imlay that she and Crèvecoeur often dined together. Perhaps their acquaintance at this time helps to explain the speculative link between *Letters* and at least Godwin, Wollstonecraft's future spouse, and Shelley, her future son-in-law. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. John de Crèvecoeur*, 189.

Crèvecoeur places on the subjective experience, just as they may find pleasure in his earliest descriptions of a British America in its state of natural beauty and with its "silken bands of mild government" (29)—but this hardly accounts for Lawrence's assertion of an endorsement by literary giants.

Lawrence also contends that while "Franklin is the real practical prototype of the American, Crèvecoeur is the emotional."[308] He was partly reacting to Crèvecoeur's shrewd usage of the epistolary, a form that creates a sense of immediacy as well as intimacy. But Lawrence is also calling attention to Crèvecoeur's depiction of nature, which he characterizes in terms of both pastoral beauty and the "innocent simplicity of one of Nature's Communities." For Lawrence, Pine Hill is Edenic, and he celebrates Farmer James for cultivating "the virgin soil" and coming to the aid of his neighbor, "whom he no doubt loved as himself," to build a barn.[309] That he credits Crèvecoeur as the "emotional" prototype of the American signals the rhetorical power of such idyllic scenes. It is not Crèvecoeur's portrait of postlapsarian America that resonates with Lawrence but rather those provided in the earliest letters, and this would prefigure a trend in Crèvecoeur's twentieth-century afterlife in America, particularly in regard to his utility as a stabilizing reference point during wartime morale projects.

At the height of his European popularity in the 1780s, Crèvecoeur's impact in America during the same period was almost non-existent. Contemporary reviews of the 1782 *Letters* in American periodicals are incredibly scarce, and Crèvecoeur's ascendance as a site of patriotic affirmation in America—unlike in England and France—took not months or years but rather several decades. Upon the 1782 publication of *Letters*, there is little evidence to suggest it reached the American colonies with any regularity. It was read by George Washington, who

[308] Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, 33.
[309] Ibid., 34-35.

found it pleasurable but feared in its portrait of America that it "embellished with rather too flattering circumstances."[310] Washington likely became aware of *Letters* because Crèvecoeur had become well-known during his consulship in New York and had developed friendships with others of political influence, men such as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Ethan Allen. By 1793, however, local interest in Crèvecoeur had so declined that Matthew Carey's first American edition to *Letters*, published the same year, was a financial failure.[311] In fact, the first notable American literary response to the 1782 *Letters* did not surface until 1818, or five years following Crèvecoeur's death. John Bristed, who wrote the response, accused Crèvecoeur of "exceedingly exaggerating" the condition of pre-Revolutionary America—a sentiment that echoed Washington's concern. Bristed addresses *Letters* in the context of its similarities to Gilbert Imlay's *The Emigrants* (1793), arguing that both misrepresent America as utopic refuge from Europe.[312]

There are at least two major reasons for the inattention *Letters* received in America prior to Bristed's 1818 review. The first reason is practical, for it concerns the challenges of accessing books in late eighteenth-century America, which consequently affected *Letters* in terms of its lack of sales and reviews. The challenges of access were many: books were usually imported; they were exorbitantly expensive, especially outside of the city; America's cities were sparsely populated; and everywhere the roads were bad.[313] The initial failure of *Letters* to impact American readers also occurred because even by 1782, it no longer accurately reflected

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[310] Quoted by W.P. Trent, Prefatory Note to *Letters from an American Farmer*, edited by Ludwig Lewisohn (New York: Fox, Duffield, 1904), viii.

[311] Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1793). See Philbrick, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 162.

[312] John Bristed, *The Resources of the United States* (New York: James Eastburn, 1818), 4-5.

[313] For more on each of these factors, see Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the World: The Rise of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 15-37.

American experience, if it ever did. America as idyllic myth may have captivated the English and French, but for the colonists who were experiencing its daily realities, Crèvecoeur's portrayal of pre-Revolutionary America was outdated, a nostalgic fantasy of egalitarianism and liberty that applied certainly not to the poor or to women, blacks, or any reformers who supported their cause. Cathy N. Davidson shows that in the 1790s, a bleak portrait of America emerged through a literature defined by "disenchantment," and she cites the rise of the American Gothic novel during this period as a more accurate reflection of the national mood.[314] Crèvecoeur's "What is an American?" chapter, reviewed with such frequency in England and France, was simply not palatable to post-Revolution American sensibilities.

Posthumous reviews of *Letters* in America signal an evolution, however gradual, in Crèvecoeur afterlife, and they set the tone for his emergence as a site of patriotic reaffirmation by the mid-twentieth-century, and then afterwards, as his American literary canonization becomes commonplace. Nineteenth-century American publications about *Letters* remained extremely scarce. Its first inclusion in any comprehensive anthology or history of American literature occurs in 1855 in the *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*.[315] *Letters* is characterized as

[314] Ibid., 215. See also Davidson's chapter on the early Gothic American novel, 212-253.

[315] Evert A. Duyckinck and George L. Duyckinck, "Hector St. John Crèvecoeur," *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*, Vol. I (New York: Charles Scribner, 1855), 183. The reference to St. Pierre is likely that of Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a French author and botanist known for *Paul et Virginie* (1788), a novel that records the fate of a child of nature corrupted by the artificial sentimentality of the French upper classes. The reference to Chateaubriand is certainly to François-René, vicomte de Chateaubriand, who authored *Voyage en Amérique* (1826), in which he describes his travels to New York and Massachusetts.

The authors of the volume offer little to explain Crèvecoeur's relationship to St. Pierre and Chateaubriand save for the obvious French connection and that they all write of American domestic life with "fanciful enthusiasm." Claude Lorraine was a seventeenth-century French painter known for his Baroque landscapes. A mirror called "Claude glass" was named for him, and it is alluded to in this review of *Letters*. Claude glasses have the effect of abstracting the subject reflected in them from its surroundings, reducing and simplifying the color and tonal range of scenes and scenery to give them a painterly quality. Poet Thomas Gray's *Journal of his Tour in the Lake District*, published in 1775, popularized the use of the Claude mirror – it is sometimes referred to as a "Gray glass" around this time. See Alexandra Harris, *Weatherland: Writers & Artists Under English Skies* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015).

"all sentiment and susceptibility in the French school of St. Pierre and Chateaubriand, looking at homely life in the Claude Lorraine glass of fanciful enthusiasm."[316] Crèvecoeur may write "in the French school," but his inclusion is based upon the subject matter of early American experience. It is not until 1897 that another published reference to *Letters* surfaces in America, when Moses Coit Tyler describes it in *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783* as a "prose pastoral" and as that which is comprised of "two distinct notes—one of great peace, another of great pain."[317] Tyler, to his credit, acknowledges the narrative trajectory of *Letters* as it encompasses both America's utopic potential and the horrors that accompanied its failure.

A fascinating development in Crèvecoeur's afterlife in America concerns the publication of Emily Pierpont Delesdernier's *Fannie St. John: A Romantic Incident* (1874).[318] Delesdernier's minor work is a fictional reimagining of Crèvecoeur's separation from his children, Fannie and Louis (known otherwise as Ally), and of their rescue by Gustavus Fellowes, whom the author proudly identifies as her grandfather.[319] The account was loosely based on fact. Prior to his return to New York as French consul, Crèvecoeur was unable to contact his wife and two children, from whom he had been separated for close to four years. Through an acquaintance at Pierrepont, Crèvecoeur sent letters to Gustavus Fellowes, who lived in Boston and promised to help. It was not until Crèvecoeur's arrival at New York on 19 November 1783 that he learned from William Seton of his wife's death, that his house had burned to the ground in an Indian

[316] Moses Coit Tyler, "Two Apostles of Quietness and Good Will: John Woolman and St. John Crèvecoeur," *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1763-1783*, Vol. II (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 347-58.

[318] Emily Pierpont Delesdernier, *Fannie St. John: A Romantic Incident* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1874).

[319] I have been unable to locate proof of their relationship, but the author's familiarity with certain details of Fellowes' role in aiding Crèvecoeur's makes her claim plausible.

raid, and that someone had taken his children, only the whereabouts were unknown.[320] It took a week for Crèvecoeur to learn that Fellowes not only received his letters but that he resolved immediately to rescue the children and take them to Boston.

Given that *Fannie St. John* mythologizes Fellowes' tenacity and courage as he endured terrible weather and great distances to reach the region of Pine Hill from Boston, its title may seem unusual—but it is likely that Delesdernier either identified with Fannie or that she projected upon Fannie a desire to be rescued by her grandfather. In the preface, for instance, Delesdernier states, "In writing this book, my main purpose has been to make known the rare goodness of heart of my grandfather, Captain Gustavus Fellowes."[321] *Fannie St. John* doubles as an exercise in hero-worship and as a sentimental project. In its narrative trajectory, the work mimics to some degree the scope of Crèvecoeur's America, from its idyllic protean state to its wartime devastation—Delesdernier even describes Pine Hill as a "colonial Arcadia."[322] The hero of her story, however, is Fellowes, for he braves frozen conditions, delivers Crèvecoeur's children into the arms of their father, and distracts Fannie during an unnerving river crossing over clear ice with stories about the region.[323]

Even in such limited cases, what quickly becomes apparent in an afterlife study of Crèvecoeur is the challenge of classifying *Letters*, and similarly, the challenge of determining the precise nature of Crèvecoeur's contribution to American literature. Perhaps the first serious attempt at either task is taken by Ludwig Lewisohn in his 1904 edition of *Letters*, which stands as the first reissue of any of Crèvecoeur's major works in over a century. In his introduction,

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[320] The manner of his wife's death is unclear, and Crèvecoeur offered no hints in his writings. See Allen and Asselineau, *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur*, 108.

[321] Ibid., v.

[322] Ibid., 12. There is no direct evidence that Delesdernier read *Letters*, but the similarities in *Fannie St. John* would suggest she did.

[323] Ibid., 25-28.

Lewisohn argues in favor of treating Crèvecoeur not as an autobiographer, a nature writer, a political philosopher, or a foreign observer, but rather as an artist—and that *Letters* "should be regarded primarily as a piece of literature."[324] He goes on to praise *Letters* for "its tone and atmosphere, its singularly engaging style, and [for] the fact that it forms part of a great literary movement," which he identifies as that belonging to the "masterpieces" of Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782), St. Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788), Chateaubriand's *Les Natchez* (1827), and Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774).[325] He argues that the common characteristic among all of the texts, *Letters* included, is a "spiritual rebellion," a rebellion against governing institutions, and the pursuit of "an absolute ideal."[326] Lewisohn acknowledges Crèvecoeur's alterity as a Frenchman who immigrated to America, but stresses that it is his propensity to "rebel" against oppressive institutions, coupled with the fact of the American setting in *Letters* and the "singular purity" of his English prose, that qualify *Letters* as American literature.[327]

Lewisohn is therefore at least partly responsible for conflating *Letters* with generic ideas about American identity, whether in terms of its virtuous rebelliousness or the "singular purity" of American idioms. Following Lewisohn's edition, efforts to treat *Letters* as a rallying symbol of "American" identity quickly accelerated. In a 1915 review of Crèvecoeur's work, Percy H. Boynton claimed that *Letters* shows a "typically American" optimism that "precludes awareness of the problems implicit in the nation."[328] Stanley T. Williams described Crèvecoeur in 1926 as "an eighteenth-century Thoreau" whose *Letters* embodied "American spirit."[329] In the

[324] Ludwig, Lewisohn, "Introduction," *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Fox, Duffield and Co., 1904), xv-xvi.

[325] Ibid., xvi.

[326] Ibid., xvi-xvii.

[327] Ibid., xxiv.

[328] Percy H. Boynton, "A Colonial Farmer's Letters," *The New Republic*, III (19 June 1915), 168-170.

[329] Stanley T. Williams, "American Spirit in *Letters*," *Pageant of America*, Vol. XI (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), 61, 97.

Dictionary of American Biography, Williams also characterized eighteenth-century American literature in terms of the "simple strong writing" offered by Crèvecoeur.[330] Chester E. Eisinger goes so far as to credit Crèvecoeur's dramatization of obtaining freehold property as an act that "changed the immigrant into an American."[331]

Letters received important treatments by American scholars such as Vernon Parrington in the 1920s and Marcus Bewley in the 1950s, but it was in the 1960s that Crèvecoeur's finally reached exalted status in the American literary canon.[332] A turning point in Crèvecoeur's afterlife occurred with the publication of a New American Library edition of *Letters* in 1963. Albert Stone argued in his introduction that *Letters* inaugurates American literature "as the voice of our national consciousness."[333] He goes on to clarify that by "literature" he means the manner by which *Letters* presents "arrangements of affective images embodied in the traditional forms of poetry, fiction, and drama, and expressing a spirit of place."[334] With Penguin's republication of Stone's edition in the 1981, mass availability now coincided with arguments for the work's cultural impact to make it a common presence in survey courses of American literature going forward.

Crèvecoeur's afterlife in the twenty-first century is further shaped by the online presence of dramatic readings featuring the most well-known passages from the "What is an American?" portion of *Letters*. The readings are performances in their own right, and there are dozens

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[330] Stanley T. Williams, "Crèvecoeur," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 542.

[331] Chester E. Eisinger, "Land and Loyalty: Literary Expressions of Agrarian Nationalism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *AL*, XXI (May 1949), 160.

[332] See Vernon Parrington, "The Frontier: Land of Promise," in *Main Currents in American Thought: The Colonial Mind* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), 143-150. See also Marcus Bewley, "Symbolism and Subject Matter," *The Eccentric Design* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 102-106.

[333] Albert Stone, "Introduction," in Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. Albert Stone (New York: Penguin, 1981), 7.

[334] Ibid., 7.

available on *YouTube*, a platform that allows access to anyone with the knowledge to record, edit, and upload videos. The majority of the videos are designed for educational effect and are usually posted anonymously and without explanation.[335] Information such as rhetorical purpose and desired audience can only be inferred, but these are in all probability intended to appeal to novice students of the early American period. Because the videos are most often comprised of verbatim readings from Crèvecoeur's iconic third letter, they offer nothing with which scholars of Crèvecoeur are not already familiar. But there is at least one video that offers something more, and it demonstrates how afterlife documents adapt, appropriate, and re-present the original text.

The video features a two-minute clip of a woman (Lucy Roberts) as she recites from center stage excerpts from the "What is an American?" letter.[336] She is backed by two men, both seated, while one plays an acoustic guitar and the other a violin. All three are in formal dress, black. The music is slow, sentimental, and played in a melody intended to resonate and uplift. Methodically, she begins to read aloud the following portion of *Letters*:

> What, then, is the American, this new man? He is either an European or the descendent of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandmother was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present fours sons now have four wives of different nations. He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds (31).

As she continues, the scattering of applause can be heard, particularly at moments in which the language punctuates, as if in rhythm with the music. Little can be gleaned from the information provided about the video, only that it was published on 10 November 2015 and is described as an event for the "GPHS Orchestra of New York." The desired rhetorical impact of either the live

[335] Those who post to *YouTube* are allowed screennames and, as such, their identities remain anonymous.

[336] Sara Cole, "*Letters from an American Farmer* recited by Lucy Roberts of the GPHS Orchestra." YouTube video, 2:26. Posted 10 November 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4tNDN7edrA

performance or the video itself is unclear, but the power of Crèvecoeur's passage remains perfectly clear. It is a rousing passage, one that inspires with its evocation of American hybridity and the optimism of a future unburdened by "ancient prejudices and manners."

Crèvecoeur has emerged into an American icon. He was made an honorary citizen of both New Haven and Hartford and voted into the American Philosophical Society—a remarkable turnaround for a man once arrested on suspicion of Loyalist espionage. Such is his afterlife that Ethan Allen affixed his name to the American landscape at St. Johnsbury, Vermont.[337] That the 1782 *Letters* contains evidence of Crèvecoeur's desire to remain neutral during the war mattered little. His descriptions of protean America have satisfied a lasting need of the culture. *Letters* arrived during a period of traumatic change, when new identities were necessarily forming and as Americans had to reconcile past loyalties with emergent aspirations. Unlike in England and France, the impact of *Letters* took decades, arguably even a century or more. But there is little to suggest that its memory will now fade. Crèvecoeur led many lives, and perhaps the one he cherished most is best represented in a 1778 watercolor sketch of his own design. The watercolor features a grand, two-story building with five front windows. Steps lead from the ground level to a second-story piazza. The front door on the ground floor is lit, fueled by whale oil. Behind the home is acreage, vast in scope, cultivated neatly and with pride. The scene is idyllic. It is Pine Hill.

[337] Grantland S. Rice, "Crèvecoeur and the Politics of Authorship in Republican America," 107.

Chapter Three: Repurposing Perdita: Mary Robinson's Self-Fashioning Projects and Her Extraordinary Afterlife

As an actress-mistress, a fashion trendsetter, an editor, and an esteemed author whose literary career included letters, poetry, novels, drama, a comic opera, political tracts, and an autobiography, Mary Robinson embodied the extreme boundaries of womanhood in the public arena of Britain during the late eighteenth century. Her ascension as a celebrity was as sudden as it was notorious, for it was precipitated by an affair in 1780 with the Prince of Wales that lasted not even a full year. Reflecting in her *Memoirs* (1801) on this period, Robinson describes her fame as a "national absurdity."[338] It was absurd, indeed, that she would become trapped inside a London shop by a horde of onlookers that surrounded her carriage, all of whom were eager to catch a glimpse of what she was wearing or buying.[339] It was also absurd that an actress who was lambasted by the press as a profligate social climber and mistress could possibly inspire fashion trends (among them, the "*Perdita* Hood," the "*Robinson* hat for Ranelagh," the "*Perdita* handkerchief," and the "*Robinson* gown"), or that newspapers and periodicals would report on what she was wearing around London, whether at fashionable events or during her jaunts around the city.[340]

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[338] Robinson's *Memoirs* was published posthumously in 1801 and was revised, reprinted, and translated several times over the next few years: *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson, Written by Herself, with some posthumous pieces in verse*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Robinson, 4 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1801); New York and Philadelphia, 1802; translated into French, 1802; vol. III included essay series "The Sylphid," novel-fragment *Jasper*, and the poem, "The Savage of Aveyron"; vol. IV included the two-book poem "The Progress of Liberty," tributary poems and poetic correspondence, letters from "Peter Pindar" (John Wolcot) and Sir Joshua Reynolds. *Memoirs* was reprinted without "posthumous pieces," 1803, 1827. For the quotation, see Mary Robinson, *Perdita: The Memoirs of Mary Robinson,* ed. M.J. Levy (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1994), 152. As late as 1994 via the edition cited here, Robinson's autobiography was republished under the title *Perdita*. Going forward, I will refer to it as *Memoirs*, both for sake of clarity and to remain true to the original title, which did not contain the "Perdita" label.

[339] Robinson claims in her *Memoirs*, "Many hours have I waited till the crowd dispersed, which surrounded my carriage, in expectation of my quitting the shop." Ibid.

[340] Robinson's impact on fashion was reported by a wide range of newspapers and periodicals. The *Lady's Magazine* was perhaps the most devoted, having reported on what she wore for the bulk of the 1780s. For

But in many ways, Robinson's celebrity was not absurd in the least, and her dismissal of her wild popularity as a "national absurdity" should be viewed with skepticism. Following her emergence into public fascination as the *paramour* to the Prince of Wales, Robinson actively encouraged her celebrity and worked tirelessly to shape her public persona(s)—and as a self-fashioning project of its own, the production of her *Memoirs* at the end of her life is but one indicator of this fact. Similarly, Robinson would go on to utilize several carriages, each designed to generate attention and to cast herself in different social roles.[341] The carriage that was surrounded by onlookers during her day of shopping would have been easily spotted by the London public, and Robinson would have been pleased by the attention. The Prince paid for the carriage, and it was not only ornate but contained a cipher created by John Keyse Sherwin, a well-known engraver and painter. The cipher featured a basket of five rosebuds located at the top of a rose wreath, and the initials *MR* were positioned at its center. It was no coincidence that from a distance and when in motion, the design was reminiscent of a royal coronet.[342] Aside from the fact that she was still *married*, Robinson was hardly an eligible match for the Prince—but at least she looked the part.[343]

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coverage of the 1782-1783 season, for instance, see the *Lady's Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* 14 (1783): 187, 268, 331, 650-51.

[341] For more on Robinson's use of carriages as a method of self-fashioning, see Judith Pascoe, "The Spectacular Flâneuse: Mary Robinson and the City of London" *The Wordsworth Circle 23.3* (Summer 1992).

[342] For a detailed description of the carriage, see Paula Byrne, *Perdita: The Literary, Theatrical, Scandalous Life of Mary Robinson* (New York: Random House, 2004), 121.

[343] Known originally as Mary Darby, Robinson was born in Bristol, the daughter of Hester Vanacott, a descendent of an affluent Welsh family, and Nicholas Darby, an adventurous merchant-seaman who claimed kinship with Benjamin Franklin. At the age of just fifteen, Robinson married in 1773 to Thomas Robinson, a solicitor's clerk. Robinson's biographers have noted that it was a deeply unhappy marriage, one plagued by financial instability and also rife with infidelities on both sides. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 27-30; see also Sarah Gristwood, *Perdita: Royal Mistress, Writer, Romantic* (London: Bantam Press, 2005), 47-52.

Regarding her father's claims of kindship to Franklin, there is likely no truth in it. According to the preface to *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Robinson, including many pieces before never published, ed. Mary E. Robinson* (1806), Mary's paternal grandfather married Franklin's sister, Hester Franklin. But among his many sisters, there was no Hester, in which case it would appear her father's claim was either mistaken or intended to exaggerate his ties in America.

In addition to the scandalous appeal of a young royal's (the Prince was only seventeen years of age, nearly six years younger than Robinson) courtship of a beautiful, married actress, the timing of Robinson's 1780 affair with the Prince also helps to explain her rapid ascension into notorious celebrity. Like that of Major John André and J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, Robinson's public utility becomes apparent in the years during and following the American Revolution. This, of course, was a traumatic period for Britain, and Robinson was scrutinized by the British press at a time when the nation's loss of the American colonies threatened to upend foundational beliefs about its status as a colonial and commercial power.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the anxieties resulting from Britain's failures to control the American colonists, compounded years later by both the Regency Crisis of 1789 and concern from within Britain about the French Revolution, were projected onto Robinson, whose celebrity served as a catalyst for the hegemony to reaffirm its control elsewhere—in this case, upon a British female subject accused of violating gendered standards of propriety and good citizenry. But Robinson was not to be easily subdued. She resisted her role as the emblematic "fallen woman," and she did so by refashioning herself in a variety of social roles. Not only was she a priestess of taste who blurred distinctions between ladies of virtue and those considered "impure," but she also resurfaced in the 1790s as a remarkably prolific and skillful author whose endorsement of reform politics led to further castigation by hegemonic forces that were deeply fearful of Britain becoming infected by the same revolutionary spirit that had recently overwhelmed France.[344]

[344] Linda Colley argues that the ruling elite of Britain recognized—certainly by the 1790s—that it was on the brink of crisis. This was not merely a crisis of self-confidence but of day-to-day security, one brought on by the French Revolution of 1789, but also by an increasing cynicism from within Britain as it concerned the legitimacy of the power elite. As one key example, Colley directs the reader to William Pitt the Younger's admission that war with France (Britain was engaged in conflict with France from 1793 to 1815) represented a struggle to defend rank, and above all, property. See Colley, *Britons*, 152-8.

My argument in this chapter is two-fold. First, I argue that Robinson, both in life and during a rich afterlife, is appropriated as a site where anxieties regarding female propriety and good citizenry are expressed and confronted. That the persona(s) and works (literary and extraliterary) of Robinson continue to resonate with British and American audiences reflects the ongoing utility of her afterlife, particularly during periods of national unrest. And second, I argue that Robinson's self-fashioning projects, most notably in her *Memoirs* and in her broader literary output of the 1790s, function as forms of resistance. Robinson's self-fashioning projects signal her will to assert her own agency within the limited confines of British hegemony, and they likewise play a key role in shaping her transatlantic afterlife into the twenty-first century.

Unpacking Robinson's service to the needs of transatlantic communities during the American Revolution and then afterwards, as her afterlife continues to evolve, necessitates recognition that from December 1779 until her death in 1800, Robinson was haunted by "Perdita," a persona precipitated by her stage performance in Richard Sheridan's revival of David Garrick's *Florizel and Perdita* (1756), which itself was an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (1611).[345] Prior to her performance as Perdita, Robinson had enjoyed popular and critical success since her stage debut on 10 December 1776 as the tragic heroine of Garrick's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.[346] She was professionally aligned with Sheridan,

[345] Garrick's 1756 adaptation of *The Winter's Tale* omitted the first three acts of Shakespeare's original and began the action with a penitent Leontes washed up on the coast of Bohemia in company with his courtiers. Hermione is the most important female part in the original, but Garrick's adaptation focuses more on the young lovers, Prince Florizel and the shepherdess who is really a princess. In honor of Garrick who had died earlier in the year, Richard Sheridan revived *Florizel and Perdita* on 20 November 1779. The revival was a success, although the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* objected to the costumes, which were not as Shakespeare described in the original work: "Mrs. Robinson appears in a common jacket, and wears the usual red ribbons of an ordinary milk-maid." See *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 24 November 1779. For its part, the audience seemed not to mind Robinson's ribbons or her figure-hugging jacket, and the second showing attracted high-ranking members of London society, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, among many others. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 96.

[346] The author of "Theatrical Intelligence" in the *Morning Post* wrote of Robinson: "Her person is genteel, her voice harmonious, admitting of various modulations; and her features, when properly animated are striking." See *Morning Post*, 11 December 1776. A rival paper, the *General Advertiser* (where Garrick had good contacts),

playwright and theater manager of Drury Lane, as well as "King" David—David Garrick—whose reputation as an actor and producer was unparalleled in England, and who was convinced by Sheridan to abandon retirement in order to tutor a then nineteen-year-old Robinson. She proved to be a prolific talent and was cast in a wide range of roles over the next four seasons, including light romantic ones, ingénues, and virtuous wives.[347]

Robinson's relationship with the British public was permanently altered on Friday, 3 December 1779. Drury Lane hosted a royal command performance of *Florizel and Perdita*, and this at a time when it was regarded as the Opposition's theater, in part because Sheridan himself had become more closely affiliated with the radical Whig faction of Charles James Fox. As such, the attendance of King George and Queen Charlotte, as well as their son George, who was soon to become the Prince of Wales, was a special occasion. The young Prince sat in a box located

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went much further in its praise: "There has not been a lady on this, or any other stage for some seasons, who promises to make so capital an actress." See *General Advertiser*, 11 December 1776. The *Morning Chronicle* wished for more "polish in her manner of speaking," but noted that she had a "genteel figure, with a handsome face, and a fine masking eye." See *Morning Chronicle*, 11 December 1776.

[347] Robinson would play Juliet several more times over the following months of the 1776-77 season. She would also star as the exotic Statira in Nathanael Lee's tragedy *The Rival Queens* (1677); Amanda in Sheridan's adaptation of Sir John Vanbrugh's Restoration comedy *The Relapse* (1696), which was retitled *A Trip to Scarborough*; while eight months pregnant, she also chose the role of the pregnant Fanny in *The Clandestine Marriage* (1766), a wildly popular comedy co-authored by Garrick and George Colman the Elder. However, due to entering the final stage of her pregnancy, she did not accept Sheridan's offer of a role in his new play, *The School for Scandal* (1777), which premiered on 8 May and was an immediate sensation. The following season of 1777-78 is perhaps most noteworthy for two roles: she would play Miss Nancy Lovel in a comedy called *The Suicide* (1778) by George Colman, and she performed in a musical farce of her own writing called *The Lucky Escape* (1778).

Robinson added several new roles to her repertoire during the 1778-79 season: Palmira in *Mahomet* (1741), an English version of a tragedy by Voltaire; Lady Plume in *The Camp* (1778), a musical entertainment by Sheridan with assistance from Garrick and John Burgoyne; Miss Richly in *The Discovery* (1763), a comedy by Sheridan's mother, Frances; Cordelia in Shakespeare's great tragedy of *King Lear* (1606); Jacintha in Benjamin Hoadly's comedy called *The Suspicious Husband* (1747); and Fidelia in Isaac Bickerstaffe's reworking of William Wycherley's comedy *The Plain Dealer* (1676), a breeches role that proved tremendously popular, at least in part because it afforded male audiences their only public glimpse of the shape of a woman's leg.

During the 1779-80 season, which would mark her final full season on stage, she performed the roles of Ophelia and reprised her role as Fidelia in *The Plain Dealer*. She also added to her repertoire the roles of Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Nancy in *The Camp*, Rosalind in *As You Like It* (1623), Oriana in George Farquhar's *The Inconstant* (1702), Widow Brady in Garrick's *The Irish Widow* (1772), and Eliza Camply in *The Miniature Picture* (1780) by Lady Elizabeth Craven. Of course, she also played the lead role in Garrick's *Florizel and Perdita* (1756).

directly opposite the King's but equally close to the stage, and an audience already captivated by the presence of royalty certainly would have noticed the Prince's fervid attention as he admired Robinson during her performance.[348] That he continued to attend her stage performances regularly through the spring of 1780 only contributed further to the accelerating gossip concerning a possible scandal.[349] The title characters would become synonymous with their love affair—not only is Florizel a prince in the story, but Perdita is a name meaning "the lost one." Robinson's characterization as Perdita, "the lost one," would be tailored and refined by sections of the British press, for she would swiftly become an emblem of female impropriety and bad citizenry. Her appropriation in this respect would haunt Robinson until her death in 1800, and it would pervade her transatlantic afterlife, as well.

As this chapter will demonstrate, Robinson began to employ self-fashioning methods as resistance to her appropriation by the British public, and she did so as early as 1780 when she worked towards repurposing the Perdita persona, first testing public desire as an innovator and icon of fashion. Her self-fashioning and resistance strategies continued in 1782 with Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Mrs. Robinson*,[350] a portrait she likely paid for herself, and one that positioned her not as the Prince's mistress but as a self-assured member of the elite.[351] By the 1790s, Robinson would remake herself into a prolific and respected literary figure, and she would continue to use the traces of her past as Perdita to network and to attract a wider audience of readers. She would also offer the occasional nod to Perdita in her written works. This chapter is designed to show

[348] As a result of George II's poor eyesight, the royal boxes were not in the center of the auditorium but placed near the stage at his command. See Davenport, *The Prince's Mistress*, 64.

[349] The *Morning Post* reported, for instance, that the pair was spotted at an oratorio, and it contended that Robinson worked diligently to get the Prince's attention. See *Morning Post*, 12 February 1780.

[350] Joshua Reynolds, "Mrs. Robinson," in *Perdita*, by Gristwood (2005), color plate 16. The original 1782 portrait is located in London at the Waddeson Museum.

[351] Reynolds' pocketbook records eleven appointments with Robinson for the portrait, beginning on 25 January 1782. See James Northcote, ed., *The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, vol. 1 (London: H. Colburn, 1818), 102.

that Robinson's transatlantic afterlife is informed both by the persona of Perdita and by her strategies of resistance. As such, my methodology consists of three major steps, and these explore the correlation between Robinson's appropriation by the public, her responsive efforts to recast herself in a wide range of social roles, and her transatlantic afterlife.

The first step includes an exploration of the ways in which Robinson's public persona is appropriated in Britain, beginning in 1780 amidst the American Revolution, and extending until the time of her death in 1800. One can locate resurgences in Robinson's utility, particularly as her public persona is appropriated in service to the restorative needs of Britain during periods of national unrest. I will provide a wide range of textual examples—those such as Tête-à-tête columns, caricatures, and satirical pamphlets—to show that Robinson's lambasting by the British press was a political act, an attempt to restore morale and to deflect from Britain's failures in America and at home by reaffirming its power to subjugate and punish "fallen" women. Similarly, I will demonstrate the acceleration of such attacks alongside subsequent periods of national unrest, most notably during the Regency Crisis of 1789 and in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

The second step entails detailed analysis of Robinson's responsive efforts to resist her appropriation and thus the campaign against her. I will address her influence on fashion trends, which worked to resist her cultural designation as a mistress and impostor among the British elite. I will show that she used portraits as a method of further revising her public image and as a means of recasting herself in respectable social roles. I will also examine how her literary efforts during the 1790s (with specific emphasis on her most political poetry and prose, as well as her *Memoirs*) reflect further efforts on her part to shape her own legacy. Robinson's literary career illustrates her talent for testing the desires of the public, and yet it also marks an evolution in her

politics that would inspire further polemical attacks by her critics. Alongside my analysis of Robinson's literature through the aforementioned critical lenses, I will also explore Robinson's literary reception. This pairing is necessary, for it reflects the restorative, stabilizing impact of her utility as a site, in which her literary works could be dismissed or even derided on the basis of either her politics or her enduring affiliation with Perdita.

Each step provides necessary context for examining Robinson's lasting utility as it applies to her transatlantic afterlife, and accordingly, I will provide representative examples of that afterlife, whether expressed in terms that are textual (anthologization, abridgement, and creative continuation), performative (theater), or visual (caricatures and illustrations). There are lessons to be learned from how Robinson continues to be appropriated and reimagined, namely that as late as the twentieth century, the public continued to reduce her to the notorious figure of Perdita when, in fact, she was so much *more*. There were exceptions, of course, but these were infrequent and most often short-lived, such as the temporary boom of readers based in New York City who were interested in Robinson in the years immediately following her death. It was not until the latter decades of the twentieth century that serious scholarly efforts were made to reconfigure Robinson's literary contributions.

Organizationally, the remainder of the chapter consists of three major sections, although the final second contains its own subsections. The first concerns critical threads within Robinson-related scholarship as well as clarification regarding my own critical alignments. The second concerns Robinson's appropriations by the British public during the 1780s. Robinson's transatlantic afterlife is acutely informed by her proximity to the persona of Perdita, and so persistent is her appropriation during this tumultuous decade that I have dedicated to it an entire section for the purpose of exploring the wealth of materials that reflect her restorative utility. The

final section is intended to represent a conversation of sorts—that is, I put Robinson's resistance strategies in conversation with representative examples of her transatlantic afterlife. In doing so, the objective is to measure the ways in which her resistance strategies have—or have not—managed to shape her transatlantic afterlife. This section will consist of a total of *five* subsections, and it contextualizes Robinson's resistance strategies as they influence her afterlife. Accordingly, I provide analysis of the following as they correlate to Robinson's rich afterlife: her obituaries; her lasting influence upon fashion and portraiture; the influence of her novelistic *Memoirs*; and, of course, the influence of her literary output, which inspires textual, performative, and visual appropriations and reimaginings.

❖ Situating Robinson Critically: Her Celebrity and Transatlantic Utility

Scholarship on Mary Robinson's life and work generally adheres to four critical threads, although each overlap in specific and revealing ways. The first thread concerns Robinson as an autobiographical subject who adopts self-fashioning strategies in an effort to control her public image. Scholars have demonstrated how Robinson's self-fashioning facilitates her alignment with a range of respectable social roles. [352] Her *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson*, published posthumously in 1801, has generated the most critical attention, along with her strategic use of

[352] For representative studies of Robinson's strategies of self-fashioning, see the following: Linda H. Peterson, "Becoming an Author: Mary Robinson's *Memoirs* and the Origins of the Woman Artist's Autobiography" in *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers, 1776-1837*, eds. Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 36-50; Eleanor Ty, "Engendering a Female Subject: Mary Robinson's (Re)Presentations of the Self," *English Studies in Canada* 21.4 (1995): 407-31; Angela Rosenthal, "She's Got the Look! Eighteenth-Century Female Portrait Painters and the Psychology of a Potentially 'Dangerous Employment," *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, ed. Joanna Woodall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 147-67; Anne K. Mellor, "Making an Exhibition of Her Self: Mary 'Perdita' Robinson and Nineteenth-Century Scripts of Female Sexuality," *Nineteenth-CenturContexts* 22 (2000): 271-304; Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity: 18th-Century British Actresses and Strategies for Image Making* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2011); Anca Munteanu, "Confessional Texts Versus Visual Representation: The Portraits of Mary Darby Robinson," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9.2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 124-152; and Michael Gamer and Terry F. Robinson, "Mary Robinson and the Dramatic Art of the Comeback," *Studies in Romanticism* 48 (Summer 2009): 219-256.

portraits painted by some of England's most respected artists, Thomas Gainsborough and Sir Joshua Reynolds among them.[353] The second critical thread concerns Robinson's role as an eighteenth-century celebrity in Britain. This applies not only to her stage celebrity, but also to her influence as a fashion trendsetter, and especially to her notorious celebrity as Perdita. Much recent scholarly work has been done to establish Robinson as a significant celebrity presence in Britain during the 1780s and 1790s.[354] Especially notable is Laura Engel's contention that Robinson adopted "Gothic strategies" as a tactic for negotiating her varied self-representations and for fashioning her celebrity.[355] In this respect, Engel's analysis overlaps with the first critical thread in several key ways.

The third critical thread revealed within Robinson-related scholarship concerns the political outspokenness that informs her writings. Scholars have productively situated her literary output in the 1790s within the framework of female literary responses to the French Revolution and, more broadly, within Jacobin literature itself."[356] Such work has helped to contextualize

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[353] *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson, Written by Herself, with some posthumous pieces in verse*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Robinson, 4 vols. (London: R. Phillips, 1801); New York and Philadelphia, 1802; translated into French, 1802; vol. III included essay series "The Sylphid," novel-fragment *Jasper*, and the poem, "The Savage of Aveyron"; vol. IV included the two-book poem "The Progress of Liberty," tributary poems and poetic correspondence, letters from "Peter Pindar" (John Wolcot) and Sir Joshua Reynolds. *Memoirs* was reprinted without "posthumous pieces," 1803, 1827. For the quotation, see Judith Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 2.

[354] See Judith Pascoe's discussion of Robinson in *Romantic Theatricality* (1997); see also Clair Brock, *The Feminization of Fame, 1750-1830* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Elizabeth Fay, "Framing Romantic Dress: Mary Robinson, Princess Caroline and the Sex/Text" in Historicizing Romantic Sexualities, ed. Richard C. Sha (Romantic Circles Praxis Series, January 2006), http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/sexuality/fay/fay.html.; Tom Mole, "Mary Robinson's Conflicted Celebrity" in Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750-1850, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 186-205; and Julia H. Fawcett, "The Memoirs of Perdita and the Language of Loss: Mary Robinson's Alternative to Overexpression" in *Spectacular Disappearances: Celebrity and Privacy, 1691-1801* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 173-205.

[355] Engel, "Mary Robinson's Gothic Celebrity" in *Fashioning Celebrity*, 59-97.

[356] See Gary Kelly, "Women Writers and the French Revolution Debate: Novelizing the Revolution/Revolutionizing the Novel," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 6.4 (1994): 369-88; Stuart Curran, "Mary Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* in Context" in *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers 1776-1837*, eds. Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 17-35; Sharon M. Setzer, "Romancing the Reign of Terror: Sexual Politics in Mary Robinson's *The Natural Daughter*," *Criticism* 39 (1997): 531-55; Paula Byrne, "A Simple Story: From Inchbald to Austen," *Romanticism* 5.2 (1999): 161-71; Laura Runge,

Robinson's contemporary literary reception, as her literature (her poetry and novels, in particular) was frequently received with either contempt or acclaim. The final thread concerns Robinson's literary contributions within the contexts of British Romanticism and the Gothic novel. Robinson's poetry has been examined both in terms of her place alongside other women writers of the Romantic period, and in regard to the qualities that set her apart from her contemporaries. Scholars have demonstrated that Robinson's poetry serves as a kind of "cultural barometer" of aesthetics, in which she uses popular tastes to literary advantage.[357] Robinson's place in the Gothic novel tradition has largely been explored in terms of how she uses Gothic conventions to dramatize the need for reform, most explicitly as it applies to a woman's lack of agency in the face of patriarchal power.[358]

My interests in Robinson's life and work intersect with all four critical threads, but I am most indebted to the first two, as both consider the self-fashioning strategies adopted by Robinson, and they do so within specific historical and cultural contexts. My contribution to Robinson-related scholarship includes consideration of her afterlife that is broad in scope but

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"Mary Robinson's *Memoirs* and the Anti-Adultery Campaign of the Late Eighteenth Century," *Modern Philology* 101.4 (2004): 563-585; Iain Hampsher-Monk, ed., *The Impact of the French Revolution: Texts from Britain in the 1790s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Amy Garnai, *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[357] I am specifically referencing Judith Pascoe's "Introduction" in *Mary Robinson: Selected Poems*, ed. Judith Pascoe (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview University Press, 2000), 20. For other key scholarship concerning Robinson's role within British Romanticism, see Stuart Curran, "The I Altered" in *Romanticism and Feminism*, eds. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea Von Mücke (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 266-89; Jan Fergus and Janie Farrar Thaddeus, "Women Publishers and Money, 1700-1820," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 17 (1987): 191-207; Jacqueline M. Labbe, "Selling One's Sorrows: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, and the Marketing of Poetry," *Wordsworth Circle* 25 (1994): 68-71; and Paula Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

[358] For representative examples, see Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Energies of the Mind: Novels of the 1790s," in *Desire and Truth: Functions of Plot in Eighteenth-Century Novels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 175-202; Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995); Michael Gamer, "Gothic Fictions and Romantic Writing in Britain" in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrod E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 85-104; Katherine Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Stephanie Russo, "'Where Virtue Struggles Midst a Maze of Snares': Mary Robinson's Vancenza and the Gothic Novel," *Women's Writing* 20.4 (2014): 586-601.

explicit in its analysis of the meanings generated within the cultures of Britain and America. Similarly, I make a case for the correlation between Robinson's personas during her life and those that continue into her afterlife. That the persona of Perdita extends into her afterlife reflects the needs of transatlantic communities who appropriate and revise the Perdita persona. Robinson's afterlife in America likewise reveals her utility within a young nation, one still burdened by former allegiances to Britain but also keen to construct its own identity.

- Robinson's Restorative Appropriation in Britain amidst a Series of National Crises

Robinson's casting by the British public as Perdita, a "fallen woman" and an emblem of both female impropriety and bad citizenry, overlapped with a series of national crises in Britain during the 1780s. The continual appropriation of her public persona(s) over this extended period signals the lasting and restorative utility of Robinson as a site of ideological expression and contestation; and further, such appropriation prefigures how her public persona(s) would be used over the span of her transatlantic afterlife.

The 1780s in Britain marked a period of tremendous transition and realignment, and the nation found in Robinson a target upon which it could project its fears and frustrations, and indeed, its anger. At stake was Britain's self-belief and, in particular, its self-constructed identity as an imperial and economic force. The loss of the American colonies, compounded by the chaos and division within its own government, exposed its self-perpetuating status as an impenetrable global power for what it really was—a myth, one forged to create the illusion of a collective that had been united by shared values and calibrated for the self-actualizing challenges of warfare and empire.[359]

[359] My ideas here are inspired by Benedict Anderson's argument regarding a nation as "an imagined political community." See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

Robinson's emergence as the "lost" Perdita could not have come at a better time for a British hegemony in desperate need of demonstrating (both to itself and to its citizens) its capacity to demonstrate control—in this case, upon a British female subject accused of violating gendered standards of propriety and good citizenry. After all, it was Britain's inability to maintain control—first, of its colonial subordinates in America; and second, of France, its old Catholic enemy, which had allied itself with the American rebels in 1778—that had so exposed its unstable status as the world's foremost imperial power. Save for a few German states who had lent it manpower, Britain by 1780 had no European allies in the war against American independence. The Americans, in contrast, had allied themselves with France; Spain followed in 1779, and then Holland in 1780. Britain was outmatched in the American colonies and surrounded by enemies in Europe. Worse still for Britain, the colonists in America were by and large Protestant and predominately British in origin, and yet common ethnicity and religion failed to keep them attached to the mother country.

Britain was also losing control of its subjects at home, and the rise in celebrity of Robinson-as-Perdita would provide more than a timely distraction. Her celebrity would also provide an opportunity for the hegemony, most notably through sections of the press, to reaffirm its control elsewhere. The Gordon Riots, which lasted from 2 June to 9 June 1780, were not merely an outcry against the Papists Act of 1778—in a more immediate sense, they signaled the conflation of anti-Catholic sentiment with the public's escalating anxiety about Britain's potential failure in the American colonies.[360] A series of other disasters followed the Gordon

[360] With uncontrollable violence, the Gordon Riots destroyed half of London in the span of days. Catholic chapels were burned and prisons such as Newgate were opened, resulting in the deaths of many. For a detailed account of the riots, the events preceding them, and their aftermaths, see *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in the Late Eighteenth-Century*, eds. Ian Haywood and John Seed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). For a contemporary representation, see James Gillray's etching "A March to the Bank" (1787). The etching captures the chaos of the riots, in this case, on Threadneedle Street as it borders the Bank of England,

Riots: General Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown in October 1781; Lord North's resignation in March 1782 and his subsequent triggering of a constitutional crisis; the formation and then dissolution of the Fox-North Coalition; and of course, the Treaty of Paris in September 1783, which formally ended Britain's claim to America.

The Regency Crisis of 1789 further illustrates Robinson's utility to a British public that projected upon her its anxieties regarding leadership among the British elite. By November 1788, George III appeared to go mad, and panic regarding his condition had reached the higher echelons of government.[361] Charles James Fox expressed privately the urgent need for a change in leadership,[362] but of upmost concern to Fox and his fellow Tories was that the King's heir apparent was the Prince of Wales, whose gambling, womanizing, and secret marriage (and to a Roman Catholic no less) could hardly be dismissed as youthful indiscretions, since he had now reached the age of twenty-six.[363] The profound concerns about the Prince's suitability for the role resulted in heated debates within the House of Commons regarding the law of automatic

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which was also looted. See Richard Godfrey, ed., *James Gillray: The Art of Caricature* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 72.

The Papists Act of 1778 was intended to reduce lawful discrimination against British Catholics, one enacted by the Popery Act 1698, which had made it illegal, among other things, for Roman Catholics to inherit or purchase land.

[361] George III was reported to have abandoned his carriage while in Windsor, approached a tree, gripped its branches as if shaking its hand, and carried a long conversation with it under the pretense that he had been speaking with the King of Prussia. See Rebecca Fraser, *The Story of Britain, From the Romans to the Present: A Narrative History* (New York: Norton & Company, 2003), 472. There were also rumors of him foaming at the mouth, rambling deliriously of building new palaces and founding new orders of chivalry. See Colley, *Britons*, 199. It now appears that what was believed to be mental illness was instead a metabolic disorder called porphyria.

[362] On 15 December 1788, Fox wrote to Elizabeth Armistead, "At any rate the Prince must be Regent and of consequence the ministry must be changed . . . The King himself (notwithstanding the reports you may possibly hear) is certainly worse and perfectly mad. Armistead was a courtesan who married Fox secretly in 1795. For the quote, see *Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox*, II (Philadelphia: Blanchard, 1853), 299-300.

[363] The Prince secretly married Maria Fitzherbert in defiance of George III's 1772 Royal Marriages Act. The marriage was deemed invalid.

regency.[364] A Regency Bill was passed in February 1789, but the King recovered within days of the Prince's ascension.

Appropriated by the British public as an actress-mistress, Robinson became a target of invectives over the entire decade of the 1780s. The British public could not dismiss the nation's failures in America, nor could it address with any immediacy the dysfunction of its own government—but it could project its frustrations upon Robinson, whose persona as Perdita remained fixed in public memory. Precipitated by her affair with the Prince in 1780, Robinson was accused by the press of harming the nation, for it was the Prince's proximity to an actress-mistress that called attention to overarching fears about British leadership, and more broadly, about the stability of British identity.

Evidence of Robinson's love affair with the Prince was still scarce during the first few months of 1780, and yet one can trace accelerating efforts by the British press to characterize her as a scheming mistress whose prize target is the young Prince. The restorative effect of Robinson's treatment is two-fold: it works to affirm a virtuous image of the heir Regent amidst a period of national instability; and further, any wrongdoing is projected onto Robinson, whose profession as a stage actress makes her immodest characterization by the press all the more palatable.[365] In April 1780, the *Morning Post* took note of Robinson's public appearance with Lord Malden, a politician and friend to the Prince, at a recent masquerade: "After a few *pouting* parings round the room, [Robinson] retired with her *pliant* spouse on one side, and the *Malden*

[364] Pitt, the Prime Minister, tabled proposals for a restricted Regency, which would have given the Prince limited powers. A Regency Bill was finally passed in 1789, and the Whigs were pleased that the Prince was so close to becoming Regent. The King's recovery thwarted this, however.

[365] It was not uncommon for actresses to be viewed as only different in degree, not different in kind, from prostitutes. Because they were on public display, they broke conduct-book rules about feminine modesty.

hero on the other."[366] Unambiguously cast as a prostitute whose performative skills as an actress inform her new trade, Robinson is depicted with two men in tow: the first, her husband, who acts as her pimp; and the second, Malden, who appears unaffected by the scrutiny that such a transaction would invite. The report also anticipates the possibility that Robinson's affair with the Prince is genuine. By casting her as a prostitute who has already ensnared Malden—and likewise, by casting her husband Thomas as a partner in this illicit commerce—the report works to absolve the young Prince as a victim of a larger plot, one enacted by a team of predatorial schemers.

Despite the damaging portrayal by the *Morning Post*, Robinson's public persona as an actress-mistress was still being negotiated by the British public. Throughout her stage career, Robinson was noted for her considerable beauty and charm, and also for the intelligence with which she performed a variety of roles.[367] Her appeal was evident, and this informed her ambivalent treatment by certain sections of the press. One such example is *Town and Country Magazine*, which featured Robinson and Malden in a "Tête-à-Tête" column on 1 June 1780. The magazine's "Histories of the Tête-à-Tête annexed" was enormously popular.[368] Ephemeral

[366] According to Robinson, Malden played a key role in assisting the Prince in his courtship of Robinson less than a year earlier. She describes at length in her *Memoirs* the courtship strategies of the Prince, as well as Lord Malden's role in them. See *Memoirs*, 101-4. For the quotation, see the *Morning Post*, 5 April 1780.

[367] Reactions to Robinson following her stage debut on 10 December 1776 as Juliet are just one indication of her appeal. The author of "Theatrical Intelligence" in the *Morning Post* wrote of Robinson, "Her person is genteel, her voice harmonious, admitting of various modulations; and her features, when properly animated, are striking. See *Morning Post*, 11 December 1779. A rival paper, the *General Advertiser* (where Garrick had good contacts), went much further in its praise: "There has not been a lady on this, or any other stage, for some seasons, who promises to make so capital an actress." See *General Advertiser*, 11 December 1779.

[368] The column was immortalized by Sheridan in the opening scene of *The School for Scandal* (1777). Specifically, the scene concerns the moment when Snake observes of Mrs. Clackit, "I have more than once traded her causing a *tête-à-tête* in the *Town and Country Magazine*." See Richard Sheridan, *The School for Scandal and Other Plays*, ed. Michael Cordner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 210. The play was originally produced at Drury Lane in May 1777 and published in Dublin, 1780.

gossip provided material, but the Tête-à-Tête also reflected the passing political and social currents of the *haut ton*.[369]

Robinson's depiction in the Tête-à-Tête works restoratively in that she is once again cast as a prostitute. Such treatment locates her as an object in need of moral correction, and thus as an example through which hegemonic forces can reaffirm control amidst a period of great instability. Robinson's characterization, however, is not entirely straight forward, and one can detect a reluctance to castigate her entirely—an impulse that also surfaces in afterlife reimaginings of Robinson's persona. The usual template of the Tête-à-Tête, which features rakish biographical sketches and playful games of sexual foreplay, is instead revised to reflect the public's divided feelings about Robinson.[370] In the account of Robinson's origins, she makes for a sympathetic figure whose ruin is put in motion by the indiscretions of an imprudent father.[371] She is praised for her "almost irresistible" charm and for her skills as an actress, and even offered is a defense of her honor in the face of impropriety, in which she rejects Malden's offer of one hundred pounds "for the pleasure of passing a few hours with her." It is not until he writes her a polite billet and encloses a *carte blanche*, followed by the gift of diamond earrings, that she finally "surrenders at discretion."[372] Malden is appropriated as a generic stand-in for the rake, but Robinson's characterization as a reluctant prostitute—or at the very least, as one who

[369] For an overview of the *Town and Country Magazine*'s use of the Tête-à-Tête as a genre of satirical biography, see Eleanor Drake Mitchell, "The Tête-à-Tête's in *Town and Country Magazine*," *Interpretations* 9.1 (1977): 12-21. *Town and Country Magazine* presented it not as a lampoon (despite the fact that it often was) but as that which was produced with the classical purpose of "lashing the Vices and Follies of the Age." See *Town and Country Magazine*, 1770, ii.

[370] In form, the Tête-à-Tête traditionally included a pair of oval portraits of a man and woman, followed by their "history" of sexual liaisons. Adorned with engravings of a fetching Robinson and a youthful Malden, theirs promised to be yet another scandalous affair, particularly with the subtitle "Memoirs of the Doating Lover and the Dramatic Enchantress."

[371] "The daughter of an imminent tradesman, who, from a variety of unforeseen accidents and disappointments, was obliged to become bankrupt." See *Town and Country Magazine*, June 1780, 235.

[372] Ibid., 236.

knows what she is really worth—suggests a curiosity about the beautiful and charismatic actress, even if it is one ultimately undermined by the more pressing cultural need to castigate her.

Preceded by accelerating gossip, Robinson's covert meetings with the Prince, and a formal financial offer that would convince her to retire from the stage, the news of her affair with the Prince broke on 18 July 1780, thereby prefiguring her transatlantic afterlife and permanently aligning her in the public's memory with the persona of Perdita, actress-mistress and emblem of both female impropriety and bad citizenry.[373] In an anonymous letter published by the *Morning Post*, the author suggests, "And so the Theatrical *Perdita* of Drury-Lane is labouring night and day to insinuate to the world, than an *amour* has taken . . . between her and a certain illustrious character."[374] The pun of "labouring" signals Robinson's sexual labor, and it is labor lacking any extended value, for the author predicts that the Prince will soon tire of Perdita's "vain boasting."[375] Even as the Prince is implicated in the affair, Robinson remains the central object of derision.

Between September and December 1780, one can trace in Robinson's treatment by the British press an evolution in her restorative utility alongside rhetoric that becomes increasingly personalized and vitriolic. On several occasions, Robinson was spotted at masquerades with Malden, which in turn facilitated premature gossip that her affair with the Prince had come to an end. To make matters more confusing for the British public, she was also practically living as royalty. Her carriage, which featured a cipher reminiscent of a royal coronet, signaled a violation

[373] Covert meetings were held in the months between February and July 1780, and Robinson would retire from the stage on 31 May 1780. She was inspired to do so by the Prince's signed financial offer, which included £20,000 upon the Prince's coming of age. It is a sum with the modern equivalent of approximately £1 million. The Prince also promised that he would look after Robinson following her retirement from the stage, and the new residence she took that year was proof of his sincerity. It was located in the fashionable west end on Cork Street, and he furnished it lavishly. Robinson was also given funds to purchase luxury items such as paintings and books. She even traveled around London in an elaborate carriage fashioned as if she were a royal. For more on the carriage, see footnote 341.

[374] *Morning Post*, 18 July 1780.

[375] Ibid.

of class boundaries; also, any feelings that Robinson had climbed far above her station were further exacerbated by a grand ball that the Prince threw for her.[376] Responses in the press reflected the public's increasing intolerance of Robinson's lavish lifestyle and royal posturing. Also expressed was the fear that the honorable, high-ranking woman could be mistaken for the far less reputable actress.[377] For instance, in September 1780, the *Morning Post* published a letter in which the author accused Robinson of a simultaneous affair with Malden, and also suggested that she had no business "[mixing] with women of character and distinction."[378] Such criticism clearly echoed the sentiment that Robinson was an impostor on borrowed time, and that the British elite possessed inherent qualities she could never emulate. Some still came to Robinson's defense by citing a lack of evidence regarding the double affair,[379] but this well-meaning support failed to silence subsequent accusations of Robinson being a "ripe mine of diseases" or "an orange woman [that] should keep out of side-boxes.[380]

A case for Robinson's appropriation and restorative utility during the latter months of 1780 can be made by her representation in a one-shilling pamphlet called *A Satire of the Present Times* (1780), which was not only one of the first full-scale printed assaults on her character, but also one of the earliest indicators of the specific restorative needs that Robinson's affiliation with

[376] The Prince did at least respect conventions of aristocratic precedence by opening the dance with the Duchess of Devonshire. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 113.

[377] Such anxieties were not nothing new, aided in part by well-to-do women who sold their clothes second-hand to actresses, who were then able to dress fashionably onstage and off. Further, it was not uncommon for actresses to align themselves with aristocratic women to deflect from allegations of impropriety. See Felicity Nussbaum, "Actresses and the Economics of Celebrity, 1700-1800," in *Theatre and Celebrity in Britain, 1660-2000*, eds. Mary Luckhurst and Jane Moody (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 159. Robinson was no exception to such strategies of alignment, and she enjoyed the patronage of the Duchess of Devonshire, among others. See Davenport, *The Prince's Mistress*, 34-5.

[378] The author adopted the name "Dramaticus." *Morning Post*, 27 September 1780.

[379] "No ill conduct has ever been proved against this Lady, neither has she ever been *censured* beyond the *ill-nature* of a newspaper paragraph." See *Morning Post*, 30 September 1780.

[380] *Morning Post*, 9 October 1780; *Morning Post*, 11 November 1780.

Perdita would serve.[381] The verse functions rhetorically to cast Robinson as an emblem of female impropriety, whose "narrow soul / Was curs'd with pride not reason could controul."[382] Expressed also is an inherent suspicion of the dangers posed by the stage, only the stage is not merely a danger for the actress—rather, it is a danger to the spectators who gaze upon the actress: "The bait soon took; her ev'ry wish prevail'd; / And charms succeeded where her merit fail'd."[383] The command Perdita enjoys of her "pimping spouse" is posited as unnatural and thus partly to blame for her ruin, and one gets a sense of the underlying patriarchal dictate that a virtuous woman requires the governance of an assertive man.[384] Indicted also are her suitors who "boasted wealth" and "preach'd up" their passion," and who enabled Perdita "to tread the path which leads to public fame."[385] Curiously absent, however, is the Prince himself, and the only mention of him is in passing, as Perdita "struts" in the guise of a "would-be mistress of a p----e."[386] The qualifier of "would-be" functions to dismiss the rumors of the Prince's involvement, and given the evidence reflecting the contrary, such dismissal points towards a revisal of history even as it is still being made. However, the qualifier of "would-be" decidedly does *not* dismiss Perdita's status as a conniving social climber and actress-mistress.

Robinson's restorative utility and her appropriation as a site of ideological expression would become further pronounced as a result of caricatures that unambiguously depict her as an impostor—specifically, as a prostitute playing the role of a royal. Such appropriation likewise prefigures how her public persona(s) would be used over the span of her transatlantic afterlife.

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[381] Anonymous, *A Satire on Present Times* (London: J. Stockdale, 1780).
[382] Ibid., lines 75-78.
[383] Ibid., lines 89-90.
[384] Ibid., line 92.
[385] Ibid., lines 81-2, 86.
[386] Ibid., line 98.

The first of several caricatures lampooning the affair was published in November 1780.[387] "Florizel and Perdita" offers a perspective of the Prince unlike that of *A Satire of the Present Times*, thereby demonstrating a negotiation by the public in regard to the Prince's culpability. The caricature alludes to the Prince's moral failures even as it also assigns the primary blame to Robinson and her husband. This would become a frequent go-to strategy in subsequent characterizations of the affair, in which the Prince's behavior is ultimately forgiven on behalf of his youthful (and male) indiscretion, while Robinson, in particular, is cast as an enemy to the nation.

"Florizel and Perdita" presents Robinson as the main focal point, as she is flanked by the Prince on one side and her husband on the other. Her dress is low-cut, and she wears a Welsh hat over a long wig. The Welsh hat, as an accessory to the Welsh national costume, signals a key component in the rhetorical intentions of the caricature, and it is one pronounced by her occupied place in the foreground and center of the image—that Robinson has deceitfully seized her role as a national emblem. But of course, it is a role for which she is most unsuited. This is clarified in part by the representation of her husband, who is adorned with horns that signal his role as a cuckold, and who also holds a paper inscribed with the phrase "Sir Peter Pimp." With hollow, black eyes and an almost formless face, Thomas Robinson makes for a menacing figure; his horns are animal-like, rendering him almost monstrous, which thus reiterates his unnatural role as pimp to his wife. In stark contrast to Thomas, the Prince's big eyes and cherubic face exaggerate his youthful innocence. His coronet, which is falling from his head, is decorated with two ostrich feathers and a leek, the emblem of Wales—stressed here is Robinson's seizure of power at the expense of the young Prince, whose authority has been compromised.

[387] Anonymous, "Florizel and Perdita," in *Perdita*, by Byrne (2004), 98. The 1780 caricature currently resides at the British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.

The anxieties of a nation in need of stable leadership are perhaps most keenly conveyed by the action taking place between Robinson and the Prince. Robinson is in the process of handing him a copy of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734). The Prince, with both hands raised, notices not the book but Robinson instead. The scene conjures Pope's famous conclusion to Epistle I, "Whatever is, is right."[388] Understood in this context, the reference signals the public's concern about the Prince's role as future king, while it also suggests that God remains in control. Set below the engraving is a song set to the tune of "O Polly is a sad Slut!", with Polly an allusion to Robinson's family name. The full lyrics of the song are provided, and they detail the many roles played by Robinson—among them the Tragic Queen and the Peasant; but she plays none as well as the Whore.

The end of Robinson's affair with the Prince was brought on by the heir Regent's selection of a new mistress.[389] Robinson's restorative utility to Britain, however, continued to flourish, and references to her as the notorious Perdita persisted through the 1780s, perhaps most notably in the form of three works: *Letters from Perdita to a Certain Israelite* (1781), a slim volume containing copies of correspondence between Robinson and John King, a former suitor; "The Thunderer" (1782), James Gillray's scathing caricature of the Prince of Wales and Banastre Tarleton squaring off in front of a brothel; and *The Death and Dissection, Funeral Procession and Will, of Regency* (1789), a satirical pamphlet that celebrated the end of the Regency Crisis but also contained an attack on Perdita herself. As sites of ideological expression, each text reflects the needs of Britain amidst periods of heightened instability—and accordingly,

[388] Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man* in *Poetry and Prose of Alexander Pope*, ed. Aubrey Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), 130, line 294.

[389] By the end of 1780, the Prince began an affair with Elizabeth Armistead, a beautiful courtesan who had been linked previously with the Duke of Ancaster, the Duke of Dorset, the Earl of Derby (Viscount Bolingbroke), and the Duke of Devonshire's brother, Lord George Cavendish. She would go on to marry Charles James Fox in 1795.

Robinson's persistent treatment as a corrective model for female impropriety and bad citizenry would inform her transatlantic afterlife.

In 1781, or the year following her scandalous affair with the Prince, Robinson would continue to be subjected to creative appropriations of her Perdita persona. Such efforts reflect the needs of a nation wracked with uncertainty, but in the case of *Letters from Perdita to a Certain Israelite*, also revealed are the voyeuristic pleasures (and the distractions they provide) of reading private correspondence between a notorious celebrity and a wealthy suitor. The publication of the letters would also establish a viable market for creative appropriations of Robinson's public persona(s). Appearing in the *Morning Herald*, for instance, was an advertisement: "On Saturday next will be published in Quarto, Price 2 Shillings, *Genuine Letters* from *Perdita* to a *Jew*; with the Jew's answer. This pamphlet will through [sic] new light on the Art of Love, and furnish useful hints to Lovers of every Denomination."[390] The emphasis on King's Jewish heritage is also a marketing strategy, for it likely evokes the public's memory of the so-called "Jew Bill," which called into question who should—and who should not—have access to British citizenship.[391] King was an ambitious money broker who offered Robinson and her husband a series of loans in 1773, and if he took issue with his typecasting as the "Jew" King, this did not prevent him from publishing the full correspondence.[392]

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[390] *Morning Herald*, 21 March 1781.

[391] The "Jew Bill" was introduced in 1753 by George Montagu Dunk to the House of Lords. The Jewish Naturalization Bill proposed that those of the Jewish religion who had been born outside of England could be naturalized by Parliament without receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The bill passed but was then met with tremendous furor in the form of pamphlets and prints, sermons, petitions, and newspaper responses. It was quickly repealed. See Dana Rabin, "The Jew Bill of 1753: Masculinity, Virility, and the Nation," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39.2 (Winter 2006): 157-71.

[392] According to Robinson's biographers, King suspected he could profit from his former correspondence with Robinson. He went to her house and tried to sell them back to her for £400. She refused, and King in turn increased the price to £2000. The blackmail failed and King accordingly had them published. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 138-9. See also Gristwood, *Perdita*, 150-1.

Known otherwise as *Letters from Perdita to a Certain Israelite*, the advertisement in the *Morning Herald* promises a licentious exchange, one claiming to benefit the public with instructions of love. It was also at least partly authentic, save for moments in which King may have taken creative license to sensationalize the prose for publication.[393] It consisted of copies of letters that Robinson and King exchanged between 21 September and 20 November 1773. Perhaps the greatest selling point of the correspondence is that it offered the public access to Robinson prior to her stage career and also several years before she was known as Perdita. Imaginative readers could adopt the role of detective and search for clues that would hint at the persona she would be assigned years later.

Letters from Perdita reflects Robinson's restorative appropriation as a corrective model, and it works to extend her reputation as a scheming whore. Robinson was already romantically linked to Malden and, more convincingly, to the Prince—but the addition of John King to a list of possible lovers was particularly damning, for it suggested that adultery and prostitution were not beyond her moral boundaries at the age of sixteen. The letters are presented chronologically, and they trace the evolution of a blooming friendship to a courtship that is purely transactional in nature. Robinson's reputation as Perdita informed how the public would read *Letters*, and what may have initially been polite flattery in her first letter on 21 September 1773 instead comes off as characteristically manipulative and sexually suggestive: "Your Company, from the first Moment of our Acquaintance, has been so agreeable, that I scarcely know how to spare you."[394] King responds flirtatiously, and by Robinson's third letter, she prefaces a plea for funds in highly suggestive and transactional terms: "You express so much Friendship, that the hardest Task . . .

[393] Paula Byrne determines that it contains details "so specific that it is impossible to suppose that the volume was mere fabrication. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 32.

[394] Anonymous, *Letters from Perdita to a Certain Israelite* (London, 1781), 17. While *Letters* was initially printed anonymously, it was later attributed to John King.

is how to return Thanks . . . I long to be in Town."[395] Robinson was away in Bristol with her husband Thomas, and her expressed desire to be "in Town" where King resided would not have been misunderstood.

In addition to Robinson's continual appropriation as a scheming whore, her transatlantic afterlife would be impacted by the final two letters that were published from her correspondence with King. The letters would prove particularly damaging to her reputation, and in fact she was so upset by their publication that she made strenuous efforts to recover them immediately thereafter.[396] Following a letter from King in which he encloses fifty pounds, Robinson responds, "I am charmed by your Letters to a Sin"; and then later she inquires, "Is it a Crime to say I *love* you?"[397] The correspondence went on like this, but on 1 November, King had finally grown tired of being teased following yet another request for funds: "You little Prodigal, you have spent £200 in Six Weeks: I will not answer your Drafts."[398] It is the manner by which Robinson concludes her final letter that would prove so humiliating, and would inspire even further ammunition against her: "I do not wish an Acquaintance with any Man who professes so much Love, but who gives so little Proof of it."[399] King was furious and responded with a long, recriminatory letter to end their correspondence. Having never recovered either his original loan or his subsequent advances, together with a sense of having been thoroughly manipulated by Robinson's insinuations, King's decision to publish *Letters from Perdita* in 1781 smacks of publicly staged revenge, one motivated also by his desire to recoup what he could from sales. Of

[395] Ibid., 19.

[396] The pamphlet was published on a Saturday, and on the following Monday, she and Lord Malden attempted to retrieve the original letters. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 138-9.

[397] *Letters*, 35-36

[398] Ibid., 38-39.

[399] Ibid., 40.

course, his method of revenge would captivate a British public eager for an object upon which it could project its own anxieties amidst national unrest.

Robinson's restorative appropriation by the British press continued largely as a result of subsequent affairs that she had with two high-profile, influential men, both of whom had an impact on how British subjects self-identified as committed, patriotic citizens. Her affair with Colonel Banastre Tarleton, a popular British hero of the American Revolution, was followed by another with Charles James Fox, "the man of the people," a swashbuckling Whig statesman who helped revive the party during North's administration, and who rose to prominence via the Fox-North Coalition of 1783.[400] Fox would be satirized alongside Robinson in several caricatures between the years of 1782 and 1783.[401] However, it is James Gillray's "The Thunderer" (1782), which addresses Robinson's affair with Tarleton, that functions as a more potent example of Robinson's utility as an emblem of female impropriety who, by way of her affairs, was accused of harming the nation.[402] Robinson's proximity to Tarleton, like that of the Prince of Wales, effectively cast shame upon another key figure in Britain, and this at a time when the nation sorely needed stable models of leadership. Tarleton's prowess in the American Revolution had been followed closely by newspapers, and he was among the few British officers who returned from the war with his reputation enhanced.[403] He was intelligent, athletic, educated at Oxford,

[400] As the name suggests, this was a coalition of the groups supporting Charles James Fox and Lord North. Fox and North both opposed the government of Lord Shelburne and combined their forces in the House of Commons to throw out the Shelburne ministry and to form a government of their own. The coalition was formed in April 1783 but lasted only to 17 December 1783, when George III dismissed it.

[401] Fox's role as yet another lover taken by Robinson following her affair with the Prince led to the perception among caricaturists that they were engaged in a sexual threesome. Gillray's "Paridise [sic] Regain'd," published in February 1783, is one example.

[402] "The Thunderer" first appeared in the window of a print shop on 20 August 1782 on St. James Street, only a few streets from Robinson's home, where Tarleton was also lodging.

[403] During the American Revolution, Tarleton developed a savage reputation and he earned the nicknames "Bloody Tarleton" and "Butcher Tarleton." He became the figure most despised by the American patriots, who would rally to the cry "Tarleton's Quarter" and use his reputation as justification for committing atrocities of their own. Upon news of his return from America to London on 18 January 1782, Tarleton would be called upon by the

and he was imagined by the British public as a romantic figure. One of his contemporaries described him as "a perfect model of manly strength and vigour."[404]

In terms of the vitriol conveyed by the caricature, "The Thunderer" represents yet another evolution in Robinson's appropriation by the public as a site of ideological expression, for she is dehumanized entirely and reduced to the passive image of a crude sexual prop.[405] Gillray's work, in this regard, perhaps reflects a shift in the national mood, in which a weary public finally tired of the attention Robinson received in the press.[406] In its salacious and biting tone, "The Thunderer" offers a revealing contrast to the 1780 caricature of "Florizel and Perdita." In both cases, Robinson is depicted in the company of two lovers. The Prince is present once more, but Robinson's husband ("Sir Peter Pimp") is absent, now replaced by the imposing figure of Tarleton. Whereas Robinson occupies a central position in "Florizel and Perdita," she is instead placed in the background. For Gillray, the visual priority is the expressed tension between the Prince and Tarleton, who occupy foreground and center, and who are side-by-side, engaged in a standoff. The action takes place in front of a brothel called The Whirligig, and both men are positioned to suggest their roles as competitors, sexual or otherwise. The figure of Robinson is

King, the Prince of Wales, and his uncle, the Duke of Cumberland, to dine with them at Cumberland House. For more on his welcome, see Robert D. Bass, *The Great Dragoon: The Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson* (Columbia, SC: Sandlapper Publishing, 1973), 7-8.

[404] James Parton, *The Life of General Andrew Jackson* (1861), as quoted by Robert D. Bass, *the Green Dragoon*, 3.

[405] James Gillray, "The Thunderer," *National Portrait Gallery*, April 19, 2019. https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw63182/The-thunderer-King-George-IV-Sir-Banastre-Tarleton-Bt. "The Thunderer" (1782) currently resides at the National Gallery, London.

[406] Consider the following passage published in the *Morning Herald*, 31 July 1782: "In what a degree a low scandal is a certain morning paper now held! Whole columns of it filled with Mrs. Robinson's *green carriage*. It is of little consequence to the public whether an *impure*, as they are fashionably denominated, drives four ponies or two coach-horses; whether she paints her neck or her cheeks . . . whether she is accompanied by a peer or a pimp; a commoner or a bully . . . it sickens a modest woman, and creates the belief that *girls of the town* are the whole entertainers of the polite circles in the metropolis."

placed in the uppermost right corner, which suggests that she remains only an afterthought to the men.

As with previous appropriations of Robinson as Perdita, she is identified by Gillray as the whore, only here her sexual power is rendered both inert and sterile. In Gillray's treatment, she is quite literally an object: positioned above the sign of the brothel, she appears to be an extension of the sign itself, as if she were made of wood rather than flesh. Breasts exposed, legs apart and impaled on a pole, she is transformed into a crude sexual prop, ridiculed as a spectacle whore. Even the post upon which she is fastened is given eyes to look up her skirt. As such, the assigned permanence of her sexual availability explains why neither the Prince nor Tarleton bother to look in her direction, just as it also reveals Gillray's other satirical motives. The men are not competing to win Robinson, but rather the standoff itself is Gillray's staging of a rivalry for superior virility. The Prince and Tarleton are men who serve themselves, not the public.

Gillray uses Robinson's ubiquitous, scandalous persona as Perdita to stage the spectacular failure of Britain's political and martial leaders to preserve the empire and unify the nation. The old-fashioned, elite ideal of masculine gentility, which is based upon propriety, elegance of manners, and social ease, is a key reference point for Gillray. But neither man is worthy of these ideals: the Prince is rendered too weak and stupid, Tarleton too cocksure. The Thunderer of the title is Tarleton, and his depiction is a parody of Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Tarleton completed months earlier, with both posture and dress replicated.[407] Tarleton is dressed in military regalia, his feet wide apart, his crotch greatly exaggerated. Outstretched in his hand is

[407] Tarleton sat for Reynolds on 28 January 1782. The portrait, simply titled "Colonel Tarleton," features the former soldier dressed in a dashing uniform of the Green Horse Troop: green coat with white piping, tan trousers, cavalryman's boots, and an embroidered white neckcloth. Joshua Reynolds, "Colonel Tarleton," in *The Green Dragoon: The Lives of Banastre Tarleton and Mary Robinson*, by Robert D. Bass (Orangeburg, SC: Sandlapper Publishing, 1973), color plate 1. The 1782 portrait currently resides at the National Gallery, London.

an imposing sword, and on his face is a contemptuous sneer. The Prince is placed to the side of Tarleton but also slightly behind him, as evidence of his inferiority. He has been emasculated by Tarleton, and the evidence is ample: first, there is the Prince's timid stance, for the heels of his feet are touching; then, his drooping riding whip; and finally, his crotch, which is considerably inferior to his rival's. Characterized as a dolt, the Prince's head has been replaced with a featherhead. Just as "The Thunderer" marks a stark evolution in Robinson's appropriation from active (the scheming prostitute) to passive (the inert sexual prop) agent, the caricature also reflects the public's increasing disillusionment with weak-willed men who have been romantically linked to her. Exposed by their personal failures is the collapse of the Prince and Tarleton as stable models of national pride and idealized masculinity.

While invectives aligning Robinson with Perdita continued throughout the remainder of the 1780s,[408] her appropriation for restorative purposes is once again utilized amidst the Regency Crisis of 1789. Creative reimaginings of Perdita prefigure Robinson's transatlantic afterlife, and they demonstrate how malleable—how easily re-shaped and made anew—that persona would become. By the end of the decade, Robinson was on the brink of refashioning herself as an author, but appropriations of her persona as Perdita nevertheless persisted in the public's imagination. With the publication of a satirical pamphlet called *The Death and Dissection, Funeral Procession and Will, of Mrs. Regency* (1789), Robinson would be reimagined not

[408] Robinson was the farcical subject of numerous engravings and prints. Notable examples include T. Colley's *Perdito and Perdita—or—the Man & Woman of the People* (1782); *The Beaux Stratagem* (1783), *Scrub and Archer* (1783), and *Florizel and Perdita* (1783), all published anonymously; Gillray's *Paridise Regain'd* (1783); and J. Boyne's *The Adventures of Prince Pretty Man* (1784). See Engel*, Fashioning Celebrity*, 59-97. She was also the subject of scurrilous gossip in the form of *Memoirs of Perdita* (1784), which was published anonymously and provided graphic details of her alleged sexual adventures with a pompous dandy and an unnamed drunk who imported vintage wines. See: Anonymous, *Memoirs of Perdita* (London: G. Lister, 1784).

merely as Perdita, but as "Mrs. Regency," a stand-in for the dashing of Whig aspirations and the end of the Regency Crisis.[409]

The Death and Dissection, Funeral Procession and Will, of Mrs. Regency is not an afterlife text, but it does farcically stage Robinson's imaginary death. Included among her mourners are the "Cyprian Corps," processing "two and two, dressed in weeds . . . and supporting poor Perdita Robinson, in the last stage of an *incontinent* consumption."[410] Robinson had not been romantically linked to the Prince in nearly a decade, but in the public mind she remained a player in the Prince's drama, which in this case entailed his failed ascension. The anonymous author not only imagines her premature death, but the emphasis on *incontinent* reflects an ongoing desire by the public to revel in the base humiliation of Perdita. Anyone familiar with Robinson's history as Perdita would instantly recognize the allusions to her scandalous reputation as a mistress: "With a melancholy voice," Perdita sings the old song of "When I was a young one, what girl was like me, / So wanton, so airy—so brisk as a bee."[411] Similarly, she is depicted as having offered to the Prince "every thing in her power to bestow,"[412] and perhaps such is the reason for her untimely demise, in which "the Lady . . . shewed symptoms of approaching dissolution."[413] The latter quotation alludes to rumors regarding Robinson's infirm health, those which began in October 1783 but periodically resurfaced for the remainder of the decade, culminating in the false report of her death.[414]

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[409] Anonymous, *The Death and Dissection, Funeral Procession and Will, of Mrs. Regency* (London: J. Walter, 1789).

[410] Ibid., 27.

[411] Ibid., 27.

[412] Ibid., 1-2.

[413] Ibid., 3.

[414] Following a severe attack of acute rheumatic fever in 1783, papers began to report her illness with varying degrees of accuracy and compassion. A newspaper report in October claimed that she had "lost the use of one side of her frail and lovely tenement." See *Morning Herald*, 22 October 1783. However, another paper noted, "The Perdita, who has been ill, mends but very slowly. She is said, from her shattered condition to be unfit for any further service. She is, however, in dock, and the colonel is emptying her cargo, and stopping her *leaks*." Banastre

❖ The Impact of Robinson's Resistance Strategies on Her Afterlife: Obituaries

Mary Robinson would become the subject of three obituaries in London's leading paper, the politically conservative *Morning Post*. The first obituary, which was published on 14 July 1786, would prove to be a serious (and yet revealing) gaffe, for Robinson had not died. She was visiting Aachen, a spa town in Germany, where she was recovering from a violent rheumatism that had plagued her for years.[415] The second obituary, which was published on 29 December 1800, was accurate. Robinson's death had occurred two days prior, and the obituary served as a second opportunity for the *Morning Post* to reflect on her legacy. A third obituary, a much lengthier one, was published by the same paper on Monday, 31 December 1800. That the *Morning Post* felt it necessary to revise and publish yet another obituary two days later suggests that its readers desired *more*—more content detailing Robinson's accomplishments, lengthier descriptions of the qualities that made her so appealing, and another opportunity to mourn her passing.

The remainder of this chapter will examine the correlation between Robinson's strategic efforts to resist her appropriation and that of her treatment by the public during her life and especially during her transatlantic afterlife. The dramatic shift in Robinson's public image between the years of 1786 and 1800, as indicated by her representation in the three obituaries of the *Morning Post*, indicates that her resistance strategies were profoundly impactful. Robinson embarked upon a series of self-fashioning projects as strategies of resistance, and these ranged from her use of portraits to cast herself in respectable social roles to her gradual emergence as an ambitious, prolific, and respected literary figure.

Tarleton is certainly the colonel referenced. See *Rambler's Magazine*, November 1783, 362. As for false reports of her death, this would be printed by the *Morning Post* on 14 July 1786.

[415] At its most severe, Robinson's degenerative disease made walking or even standing an impossibility. Such health problems were mostly caused by acute rheumatic fever. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 213-14.

Closer inspection of the obituaries by the *Morning Post* are necessary, for they cumulatively reflect the evolution of Robinson's persona beyond her appropriation as the "lost" Perdita. Because the 1786 obituary represents a false start of sorts, it cannot not qualify as the first example of Robinson's afterlife. It instead occupies a liminal space, and it is valuable for this reason. Had Robinson died as originally reported, her story would have ended with Perdita, and Robinson would have been remembered most of all as a social climber who terminated a promising but short-lived stage career for promised riches and notorious fame. Embedded in the obituaries of 1800, however, is the story of Robinson's resistance—it is one that reflects not only the breadth of her literary talents, but also her remarkable will to assert her own agency within the limited confines of British hegemony. Her transatlantic afterlife would take on characteristics of both sets of obituaries, and in this regard, it stages an ongoing negotiation among audiences who have discovered the lasting utility of her public personas and her works, both literary and extraliterary.

The 14 July 1786 obituary by the *Morning Post* functions as a false start in the history of Robinson's transatlantic afterlife, and yet it succinctly reveals her restorative utility as a corrective model and as an object upon which the nation's citizens could project its anxieties and desires. It was on 14 July 1786 that the paper released news of Robinson's untimely death in Paris, where she had fled from England two years prior due to a combination of bankruptcy, ill repute, and declining health. She was not yet thirty years of age. Striking in its ambivalence, the obituary reflects the range of feelings Robinson managed to elicit in the British imagination, and this nearly six years following her scandalous affair with the Prince of Wales. A pattern emerges in Robinson's treatment in which the obituarist is careful not to overpraise her. Her skills as an actress are labelled "above mediocrity"; and similarly, in what is hardly an endorsement of either

her printed poetry or her unpublished farce produced at Drury Lane, the obituarist concedes only that she "was possessed of literary abilities."[416] Even as Robinson is applauded for her kindness to the late Sophia Baddeley, for whom she had facilitated financial assistance during a period of illness and pecuniary embarrassment, her observed proximity to a fellow actress and known mistress amplifies her own reputation as a profligate social climber.[417]

While the obituary includes a summary of Robinson's accomplishments, it doubles as a tale of moralism in which she is cast as a fallen woman whose virtues were no match for the *haut ton*, a social circle that encouraged her dissipation and accelerated her exile and ruin. Robinson's foremost tragedy, the reader is warned, is that of unfulfilled potential: "This Lady, had she walked in the paths of virtue and peace, would have been an ornament to her sex." Her appeal was natural and immediate, and the "amiable qualities" she possessed "[made] time glide easily on." But the obituarist also stresses the limits to which her seduction by the *haut ton* warrants sympathy—it was Robinson's vanity, her "strong propensity to dissipation," and a "spirit of levity" that contributed to her own undoing. This was consistent with Robinson's

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[416] *Morning Post*, 14 July 1786. The farce is unnamed in the obituary, but its full title is *The Songs, Chorusses, etc. in The Lucky Escape, a Comic Opera* (London: printed for the Author, 1778). As for her literary output as of 1786, Robinson would complete her first volume of poetry in 1775, which she managed while still residing in the Fleet, a debtor's prison that housed about three hundred prisoners and her families. She would remain there for fifteen months, along with her husband Thomas and their infant daughter Maria Elizabeth, to whom she gave birth a few weeks shy of her seventeenth birthday. For more on this period in Fleet prison, see Robinson, *Memoirs*, 42. See also Byrne, *Perdita*, 79.

Her 1775 collection is *Poems*, and it was printed as an octavo volume of 134 pages, with a frontispiece engraved by Angelo Albanesi, a fellow prisoner. It contained thirty-two ballads, odes, elegies, and epistles. See Mary Robinson, *Poems by Mrs. Mary Robinson* (London: C. Parker, 1775). In her *Memoirs*, Robinson would dismiss her first literary effort as "trifles." See *Memoirs*, 79. The mediocre response from the *Monthly Review* echoes Robinson's sentiment: "Though Mrs. Robinson is by no means an Aiken or More, she sometimes expresses herself decently on her subject." *Monthly Review*, September 1775. Hannah More was perhaps the most admired "bluestocking" poet of her age. Anna Aikin (later Barbauld) was an obvious influence on Robinson's poetry. "The Linnet's Petition," for instance, was an imitation of Aikin's "The Mouse's Petition."

[417] In October 1780, Robinson visited Baddeley's home and came bearing ten guineas from the Duke of Cumberland, the youngest son of King George III and an avid theatergoer. See Paula Byrne, *Perdita: The Literary, Theatrical, Scandalous Life of Mary Robinson* (New York: Random House, 2004), 122. See also Hester Davenport, *The Prince's Mistress: A Life of Mary Robinson* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 78-9.

characterization two years prior when the *Morning Post* alleged that she had designed a circular dressing area, one contrived so she could sit in the middle and admire all angles of herself at once.[418]

For the obituarist, the most evident stain on Robinson's character was her role as fashionable mistress to the Prince of Wales, which established a precedent for other indiscretions, "amours" with high-profile men such as Lord Malden, Charles James Fox, and Colonel Banastre Tarleton.[419] Robinson is aligned with prostitutes and compared to a spent commodity, one whose exile in France was the outcome of "admirers of the *ton* [who had] worn her out of fashion." With her value so diminished, her role as tragic exemplar of the fallen woman is fully realized—abandoned by her lovers, she sinks into obscurity and dies "in a state of despondency." The obituary concludes with a verse couplet: "Let coxcombs flatter, and let fools adore, / Here learn the lesson to be vain no more!" As a parting reminder of the dangers of female vanity, the couplet punctuates the moralism of the obituary, just as it also alludes in mock-tribute to Robinson's relatively slight career as a poet.

Robinson's biographers have all noted, of course, that she had not died in Paris.[420] The *Morning Post* obituary was a major blunder, one that perhaps reflected wishful thinking on the part of her most unsparing critics. However, its characterization of Robinson as a fallen woman was congruent with the gossip and invectives that had plagued her since 1780, when her affair with the Prince became known. The *Morning Post* had blamed her for employing coquettish "pursuits and designs," and she was accused of "vain boasting" following her successful

[418] The claim was that Robinson was expecting "a patent for the sale of [the invention]." *Morning Post*, 10 June 1784.

[419] *Morning Post*, 14 July 1786.

[420] See Byrne, *Perdita* (2004); Davenport, *The Prince's Mistress* (2004); and Gristwood, *Perdita* (2005).

conquest of the young Prince.[421] The paper's campaign against Robinson was given added impetus in August 1782 by rumors of an affair with Charles James Fox, a leading figure of the Whig party who supported the American Patriots, had opposed the Royal Marriage Bill, and was viewed as a political rival to the rising Tory Star William Pitt the Younger.[422] As a politically conservative paper, the *Morning Post* was also vehemently anti-Fox—and Robinson, who had also campaigned for Fox, was treated as complicit with his perceived shortcomings.[423] A gambler and heavy drinker, Fox was well known for his profligacy and indulgent time-wasting.

Congruent with the moralism of Robinson's obituary, the *Morning Post* also contributed to long-standing rumors that her finances were in a dire state. On 18 July 1781, the paper printed an account, almost certainly true, of her imminent arrest for debt: "[Robinson's] carriage was stopped in the streets last Wednesday and the pretty bauble touched on an *execution*; but we are happy to hear that it was soon restored, through the *pecuniary* interest of a noble friend."[424] The double-meaning of "interest" reiterates Robinson's perceived role as a scheming mistress who has traded one form of debt (financial) for another (sexual). The deterioration of Robinson's health is likewise depicted as a repercussion of her profligacy. A similar argument would

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[421] *Morning Post*, 18 July 1780.

[422] Speculation of an affair first appeared in the *Morning Herald*, 16 August 1782. Regarding the Royal Marriage Bill: known otherwise as the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, it prescribed the condition under which members of the British Royal family could contract a valid marriage to protect against marriages that could diminish the status of the royal house. It was proposed by George III in response to the marriage of his brother Prince Henry, the Duke of Cumberland and Strathearn, who married the commoner Anne Horton. A member of the royal family who violated the Act therefore did not forego his or her place in the line of succession, but any resulting offspring of the union were made illegitimate by the voiding of the marriage. See Vernon Bogdanor, *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[423] Robinson made several public appearances to support Fox as he campaigned for the position of prime minister of Great Britain, which he would lose in 1784 to Pitt. Her carriage sported the motto "Fox and Freedom"; and in a published account of the campaign, it was asked, "How many voters may Perdita's fair face gain over to the cause?" See J. Hartley, *History of the Westminster Election, containing every material occurrence, from its commencement on the first of April, to the final close* (London: J. Debrett, 1784), 231. During this period, she also contributed to Fox's campaign with poems, squibs, and songs praising Fox. The poems, published in the *Morning Herald*, were anonymous. See Byre, *Perdita*, 224-6.

[424] The friend was likely Lord Malden, whose finances had recently benefitted from his grandmother's death. Ibid., 148.

resurface in her imagined death amidst the Regency Crisis in *The Death and Dissection, Funeral Procession and Will, of Mrs. Regency* (1789), but it is one preceded by several other occasions. For instance, on 13 July 1784, the *Morning Post* claimed, "The Cyprian divinity of Berkeley-square is said to be *on her last legs*." A snide pun, the phrase "*on her last legs*" alluded to both her medical and financial woes. The phrase also inspired a caricature used as the frontispiece to the August 1784 issue of the *Rambler's Magazine*, one that featured Robinson as a streetwalker in a ragged low-cut dress, her legs brittle and emaciated, while begging the Prince for money.[425]

In August 1784, Robinson was taunted again by the *Morning Post* for the misfortunes leading to her exile in France. Evident is the editor's enjoyment in conveying the details:

> A life of wanton dissipation has reduced [Robinson] to penury and distress; poverty, with all its horrors, surrounds her; her constitution and her limbs are gone; death stares her in the face, and no comfort is left but the recollection of such actions as contradicted the general tenor of her conduct. To view [her] *now*, would be a lesson indeed![426]

Consistent in tone and content, the moralism of the passage neatly prefigures Robinson's 1786 obituary. Its "lesson," which works to reaffirm the patriarchal and political values of the paper's readers, conflates poverty and illness with female sexual liberty and the pursuit of pleasure beyond one's station. The passage reflects a cultural desire to celebrate Robinson's suffering as an outcome of moral justice. But it is the concluding sentence that explicitly locates her crime of vanity. "To view [her] *now*" signals Robinson's most severe punishment, that she has been *seen* by the public while in such a pitiful state.

Three weeks following the 14 July 1786 obituary, Robinson's response was printed in the *Morning Post*. Her strategy was to take the moral high ground by deflating with humor the allegations about her sexual history and financial ruin: "With astonishment I read . . . a long

[425] The caricature is entitled "Perdita upon her last legs." *Rambler's Magazine*, August 1784, 281.
[426] *Morning Post*, 16 August 1784.

account of my *death*, and a variety of circumstances respecting my *life*, equally void of the smallest foundation."[427] She corrected the erroneous assumption that her French exile was permanent ("I propose passing my winter in London"), and she stressed that her absence from England had made her increasingly vulnerable to gossip. To the editor she pleaded, "I am fully convinced, that your knowledge of the world, and liberal sentiments, will induce you to render justice to a person, whose absence requires an advocate." It was unlikely that Robinson anticipated any "justice" in return because she had been slandered by the *Morning Post* for years. But by asking the editor for protection—protection she was then denied, since her letter elicited neither an apology nor a retraction—she could expose the pettiness of her critics while also encouraging sympathy and support from the reading public. This was a deft performance, for Robinson deflected a potentially humiliating attack by the press.

Fourteen years later, Robinson died on Friday, 26 December 1800, at her cottage on Englefield Green.[428] Her death at the age of forty-three was a result of a long-standing degenerative disease concluding in heart failure, what her physicians described as "a dropsy in the chest."[429] The *Morning Post* printed an obituary the following Monday, and this was the paper's second opportunity to reflect on Robinson's life and to characterize it for the public. The 29 December 1800 obituary stands as the first instance of Robinson's rich afterlife, and the tonal differences between it and the 1786 obituary that preceded it are remarkable. As but one indication of how much Robinson's reputation had altered, the *Morning Press* had hired her as the paper's poetry editor in late 1799.[430]

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[427] *Morning Post*, 4 August 1786.

[428] Englefield Green is on the edge of Windsor Great Park, which is located to the south of Windsor, on the border of Berkshire and Surrey in England.

[429] Robinson's physicians also located six large gallstones in her gall bladder. See Robinson, *Memoirs*, 152.

[430] She took over from Robert Southey as poetry editor. It was now her role not only to be the chief contributor but also to select and edit submissions from other poets. See Byrne, *Perdita*, 354.

The 1786 obituary signaled Robinson's unstable relationship with a British public that reduced her to an actress-mistress and social climber, while the 1800 obituary recast her as one of the preeminent authors of her age, whose passing would be mourned by "the literary world."[431] Absent is not only the moralism of Robinson's portrait as a fallen woman, but also any reference either to her financial strife or her high-profile, scandalous "amours." If the obituarist felt compelled to measure his praise of Robinson in 1786, this was no longer the case in 1800. She instead becomes the subject of adoration: "[Robinson's] many friends . . . deeply lament[ed] that a woman of so much genius, of such elegant taste, of so rich an imagination in poetry, should be cut off at a period when the mental faculties are in their prime." So esteemed is her literary career that the public would be "still further indebted to her pen, if she had been blessed with life and health."

A much lengthier obituary was printed by the *Morning Post* on 31 December 1800. It was the paper's second attempt at Robinson's obituary that week. As with the 29 December obituary, it works as a correction of the 1786 original. In this case, however, the obituarist alludes to Perdita—but never by name, and only by way of incidents that would signal her past. Details used as lacerating evidence against Robinson in the 1786 obituary are either reframed or omitted entirely. In this case, it is not Robinson who seduced the Prince of Wales, but rather it was *he* who "induced [her] to quit the stage"—and no wonder the future king desired her, for "[Robinson's] beauty was universally spoken of as a phenomenon."[432] No longer cast as the plotting, worn-out mistress, Robinson is instead celebrated for a literary career that produced

[431] *Morning Post*, 29 December 1800.
[432] *Morning Post*, 31 December 1800.

"genuine, various, glowing, and vivid" verse. Of her poem "Sight" (1793), the obituarist suggests that it "would do honour to the pen of almost any English Poet of the present century."[433]

The second half of the 31 December obituary reads as a defense of Robinson's divisive politics.[434] Robinson is cast as a "martyr" and is portrayed in highly sympathetic terms—as a "cripple" whose later years were "darkened by the embarrassment of her circumstances . . . [which were] created by her generous and inconsiderate involving herself for the convenience of others." The argument presented is that Robinson's financial problems resulted not from her own profligacy, but from her charity. This refers to the idealism of her political beliefs, in which egalitarianism leads to a better, freer society. The conclusion to her obituary further signals her martyrdom while also condemning her oppressors: "[Robinson] was prematurely driven out of the world by the persecution of a set of trivial claims . . . [which might have been] liquidated by the sum of one thousand pounds."

When paired with the false 1786 obituary, the 1800 *Morning Post* obituaries reflect the considerable impact of Robinson's resistance strategies, most notably her emergence as a respected literary figure of the 1790s. As the 31 December obituary indicates, Robinson was unable to completely erase the public's memory of her alignment with Perdita—to do so was an impossible feat. And similarly, although the 29 December obituary refrains from referencing Perdita, so indelible is the persona that any such omissions would be glaring to contemporary readers. The conditions of Robinson's celebrity as Perdita to the Prince's Florizel were simply too remarkable to forget. Further, evidence demonstrating the restorative utility of Perdita, which

[433]The poem was originally included in Robinson's *Sight, The Cavern of Woe, and Solitude* (London: Evans and Becket, 1793) and later in *Poems*, vol. II (London: printed by T. Spilsbury and sold by J. Evans, 1793).

[434] Numerous scholars have situated Robinson's literary output within the framework of the political landscape of Britain during the 1790s, thereby situating her contribution within female literary responses to the French Revolution and, more broadly, within Jacobin literature itself. See footnote 356.

emerged in 1780 and persisted until the end of Robinson's life, is yet another reason why the public would not forget. Amidst moments of heightened national anxiety, Robinson-as-Perdita provided a temporary escape, whether she was appropriated as a corrective model or used as an object of derisory pleasure, in which her notorious public image provided shock-value thrills and entertainment. The public would not forget because Robinson herself remained fascinating, and because the men with whom she was romantically linked were fascinating in their own right.

Robinson was astutely aware that she could never entirely escape the looming shadow of Perdita—and so she used it. She repurposed the most appealing parts of the Perdita persona and re-presented them as a form of resistance and as means of reclaiming her agency. Beginning in 1780 at the height of Robinson's celebrity as Perdita, she began to reconfigure the persona. She did so gradually, first testing the public as an innovator and icon of fashion. As of 1782, she commissioned a series of portraits, each designed to cast her in different social roles. During the 1790s, she remade herself into a prolific and respected literary figure, and she would continue to use the traces of her past as Perdita to network and to attract a wider audience of readers. She would also allude to Perdita in her written works. Robinson's strategies of resistance and the personas she cultivated belong in conversation with her afterlife, for they cast light upon the specific needs and desires of transatlantic communities that revived and revised her public personas and works.

- The Impact of Robinson's Resistance Strategies on Her Afterlife: Staging Identities in Fashion and Portraits

Robinson's use of fashion was much more than a creative outlet, for it allowed her to counter the aggressive press campaign against her, one that alleged that she was not only a scheming whore but also an impostor among the British elite. Cast by the British press in 1780

and 1781 as an opportunistic seductress of the young Prince, Lord Malden, and John King, Robinson's reputation had never been lower—that is, until caricatures lampooned her as a purchasable commodity whose sale was facilitated by Thomas, her "pimping spouse."[435] She was brutalized by the press—and yet by the spring of 1781, it was entirely possible that members of the elite were wearing Robinson's very own fashion designs. The *Lady's Magazine* cited as the season's newest trend "The Perdita," described as a "chip hat with a bow, and pink ribbons puff'd round the crown."[436] Robinson relished the idea of being consulted as "the very oracle of fashion," and she worked diligently to cultivate that persona by designing costumes of her own.[437]

Robinson's use of fashion to influence public opinion was a lesson learned from her experiences on stage, for it was there that she discovered the rhetorical power of costuming.[438] She was particularly astute to the buzz that her notorious celebrity generated in the press, and she would reveal her designs at opportune moments, thus altering her relationship with the British public and thereby revising her public image. For instance, as the 1782-1783 season progressed, Robinson was spotted at multiple masquerades. Newspapers and periodicals reported on her costumes as if they were an extension of her identity: the "*Perdita* Hood," the "*Robinson* hat for

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[435] Anonymous, *A Satire on Present Times* (London: J. Stockdale, 1780), 92.

[436] *Lady's Magazine* (June 1781), 287.

[437] "Present State of the Manners, Society, etc. etc. of the Metropolis of England," *Monthly Magazine*, (August 1800), 37. This was published anonymously, but Robinson claimed authorship in a letter to R. K. Porter. See Pforzheimer Misc. MS 2290.

[438] Consider Robinson's detailed descriptions of her stage costumes in her *Memoirs*, most notably that of her debut role as Juliet, as well as the exotic Statira in Nathaniel Lee's *Alexander the Great*. See *Memoirs*, 88-9. Several scholars have explored Robinson's detailed descriptions of her clothes. Laura Engel argues that Robinson constructs a Gothic celebrity that disrupts traditional female roles; see *Fashioning Celebrity*, 65-80. Diego Saglia contends that Robinson's descriptions align with positive forms of luxury and consumption; see "Commerce, Luxury, and Identity in Mary Robinson's *Memoirs*," *SEL* 49 (Summer 2009): 717-36. Chris Cullens considers them alongside Robinson's metaphors for cross-dressing and masquerade in her novel *Walsingham*; *or, The Pupil of Nature*. See "Mrs. Robinson and the Masquerade of Womanliness," in *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea Von Mücke (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 266-89.

Ranelagh," the "*Perdita* handkerchief," and the "*Robinson* gown" were all noted.[439] Her most voguish look was the 1782 "*Perdita* chemise," a hoop-free muslin tube cinched at the waist and styled after Marie Antoinette's version of the gown, the Chèmise à la Reine.[440] The press played its role in generating excitement.[441] However, both in terms of its design and its affiliation with Antoinette, the Perdita chemise also proved disruptive because it prompted questions about propriety. It was loose and clung to the figure—but perhaps, the larger disruption was the idea that a woman from the trading classes could dress in the style of the Queen of France.[442] This was a masterstroke on the part of Robinson, who had been accused of impropriety as well as class posturing, for the dress functioned to blur the line between the elite and the subordinate classes, just as it created confusion regarding the distinctions made between "chaste" women and those such as Robinson, who were considered "impure." Not only did Robinson play a role in altering such distinctions, but she encouraged others to do the same. Five years after Robinson introduced the dress, the *Lady's Magazine* noted that "all the Sex now, from 15 to 50 and upwards . . . appear in their white muslin frocks and broad sashes."[443]

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[439] For coverage of the 1782-1783 season, see the *Lady's Magazine, or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* 14 (1783): 187, 268, 331, 650-51. See also footnote 3.

[440] Following the Prince of Wales's waning attention, Robinson would cross the English Channel in mid-October of 1781, with letters of introduction to various respectable French families and to Sir John Lambert, an English banker who lived in Paris. There she would be courted by the wealthiest man in Europe, the Duke de Chartres (whom she would refuse). She would also briefly befriend Marie Antoinette, and that encounter would prove lasting in Robinson's memory. Not only did she copy many of the Queen's fashions and bring them to England, but she also wrote poems in the voice of Antoinette, those such as "A Fragment, Supposed to be Written Near the Temple, at Paris, on the Night before the Murder of Louis XVI" and "Marie Antoinette's Lamentation, in Her Prison of the Temple." Both poems would be published by *The Oracle*, the former on 2 February 1793, and the latter on 8 March 1793. For examples of scholarship regarding Robinson's friendship with Antoinette and its impact on her politics, see Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Amy Garnai, *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s: Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 82, 87-9.

[441] See, for instance, the *Morning Herald* on the dates of 15 October and 20 November 1782.

[442] See the *Morning Herald*, 21 November 1782, for an example of similar concerns expressed about the dress.

[443] *Lady's Magazine*, July 1787, 331.

The Perdita chemise, which was later promoted in Britain in a different form by the Duchess of Devonshire, paved the way for the neoclassical gowns of the 1790s and 1800s.[444] That it was revised by the Duchess, and that it continued to be revised following Robinson's death, represents another moment in her afterlife. Waistlines would continue to rise, and dresses became more transparent and figure-hugging.[445] One of Jane Austen's letters, written in 1801, notes that a Mrs. Powlett "was at once expensively and nakedly dressed; --we have had the satisfaction of estimating her Lace and her Muslin."[446] The Perdita chemise and its mutations called attention to the female body, and in doing so, Robinson played a role in liberating women from restrictive dress for at least two generations—that is, until the Victorian age, when waistlines dropped and skirts were hooped once again.

Just as Robinson used fashion to resist her appropriation by the British press as a scheming whore and an impostor among the elite, she also sat for portraits by well-known eighteenth-century painters to cast herself in respectable social roles. Her use of portraits would impact the public in its ongoing negotiation of Robinson's personas; the roles with which she aligned herself would also carry over into her transatlantic afterlife. Between the years of 1781 and 1783, Robinson sat for several portraits, but Thomas Gainsborough's *Mary Robinson* (1782) is the only one that certainly she did not pay for, since it was commissioned and paid for by the Prince.[447] Robinson likely had no say in how she would be represented, and it stands as the only portrait of her that directly alludes to her identity as either an actress or the Prince's mistress.

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[444] The Duchess of Devonshire's chemise was different to Robinson's in only slight ways, perhaps most notably in the region of the neckline. See Aileen Ribiero, *The Art of Dress: Fashion in England and France, 1780-1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 71.

[445] Ibid.

[446] *Jane Austen's Letters*, ed., Deidre Le Faye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 70.

[447] The painting was commissioned by the Prince in 1781 and completed the following year. Thomas Gainsborough, "Mary Robinson," in *Perdita*, by Gristwood (2005), color plate 1. The original 1782 portrait is located at the National Art Museum in London, Wallace Collection.

Following her relationship with the Prince, Robinson would commission, sit for, and most likely pay for three other portraits, each of which worked to reconfigure her relationship to Perdita.

In March 1782, it was announced that the forthcoming annual Royal Academy exhibition would include Gainsborough's *Mary Robinson* (1782) alongside Reynolds' *Mrs. Robinson* (1782).[448] The portraits make an unusual pair. Taken together, so unalike are the rhetorical objectives of each work that Robinson appears to be a different person altogether. Most of all, it is the difference in agency assigned to Robinson that sets each one apart. Placed at some distance from the spectator's eye, Robinson is cast as a passive agent by Gainsborough. The effect is first conveyed by her expression and pose. Seated, she glances outward, but her eyes are directed at nothing in particular; in her hand, she clasps the Prince's miniature, which signals his absence and her resulting melancholy. Alongside Robinson is her only companion, a white Pomeranian.

Gainsborough's brushstrokes further suggest her passive agency. Almost impressionistic in style, they create an ethereal effect in which Robinson, whose dress as a shepherdess is made of the softest shades of white and pink, appears capable of both blending in with and being swept away by the lush landscape of her pastoral surroundings. Finally, it is the context of the public's viewing of the portrait that signals her assigned role as passive agent. By the time of the Royal Academy exhibition in 1782, the public would have known that the Prince had moved on from Robinson. Robinson, of course, had moved on, as well. But Gainsborough's representation is a revision of the past, one that exaggerates the Prince's emotional hold on Robinson, who has been

[448] *Public Advertiser*, 23 March 1782. There are conflicting reports of the title assigned to Reynolds' portrait. Scholars most often refer to the work as *Mrs. Robinson* (1782), and yet in the descriptive history of the portrait's provenance via the Waddesdon Museum, it was evidently presented at the Royal Academy in 1782 as *Portrait of a Lady*. If this is true, there is little reason to believe the audience present for the exhibition would not instantly recognize Robinson as the portrait's subject, particularly because it was paired with Gainsborough's portrait of her as well as two miniatures by Richard Cosway. It also remains unclear who settled on *Portrait of a Lady* as a title, whether it was Reynolds himself, or Reynolds at the behest of Robinson, or someone affiliated with the Royal Academy. [The source of location at waddesdon.org.uk has crashed; I am currently investigating the problem.]

cast as the lost Perdita. That she still carries with her the Prince's miniature both signals her devotion and informs the portrait's melancholy tone.

Reynolds' *Mrs. Robinson* (1782) offers an entirely different representation of his Robinson, for here she is cast as a self-assured member of the elite. [449] The casting signals a resistance strategy, one in response to Robinson's treatment by the press as a scheming whore and impostor among the elite. Robinson likely paid for the portrait herself, in which case she would have had some say in the artistic decisions being made.[450] She wears a plumed hat and dark bodice, and her erect posture recalls Rubens' *Chapeau de Paille* (1622), which Reynolds had admired on a recent trip in Antwerp.[451] Robinson's expression is direct, perhaps boldly so, for she returns the spectator's gaze with confident authority. Her eyebrows are also slightly arched, which gives her the appearance of haughtiness—perhaps to signal an affectation not uncommon among the most privileged. This is not the Perdita of Gainsborough's portrait; this version of Robinson would not dwell on love lost, and she would wait for no one. Her agency is further stressed by Reynolds' use of sharp, bold colors, the most dominant being black and burgundy, those which contrast with the pale white of her skin.

Robinson returned to Reynolds once more for *Portrait of Mary Robinson* (1783), a strikingly dramatic portrayal that serves as another example of the strategies of self-fashioning she adopted to revise her scandalous reputation as Perdita.[452] In this case, Robinson adopts the

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[449] Joshua Reynolds, "Mrs. Robinson," in *Perdita*, by Byrne (2004), color plate 1. The 1782 original resides in Waddesdon at the Waddesdon Manor, Rothschild Collection.

[450] Robyn Asleson has argued, "The publicity afforded by portraiture was simply too important to be overlooked, and a skilled performer such as Robinson would undoubtedly have participated in determining (or at the very least approving) the salient aspects of her pictorial representation." See Asleson, "Introduction, in *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture, 1776-1812*, ed. Asleson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 8.

[451] Gill Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre, 1768-1820* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 67.

[452] Joshua Reynolds, "Portrait of Mary Robinson," in *Perdita*, by Gristwood (2005), color plate 21. The 1783 original resides at the National Art Museum in London, Wallace Collection.

guise of a romantic heroine. She wears a white muslin gown with a pink sash, and a black necklace emphasizes the whiteness of her skin. The spectator is afforded only the view of her profile, for her body is dramatically turned in the direction of the ashen sea far below.[453] The romantic features of the painting, the setting in particular, suggest that her persona is natural and unstaged. Of course, the portrait can also be read in opposite terms, as the staging of an authentic self, a self-fashioning performance. The effect in either regard is to evoke a feeling of melancholic sympathy for Robinson. The rhetorical power of the portrait is partly indebted to its ambiguity: the spectator cannot know what she is thinking, but can infer only that she is lost in thought.

Portrait of Mary Robinson captures the Gothic mood and melancholy spirit that Robinson would later convey in much of her literature. In fact, she selected it as the frontispiece to her *Poems* (1791) and her *Lyrical Tales* (1800), which suggests that she wished to associate the image with her authorial persona. Seven years later, as Maria Elizabeth worked to complete *Memoirs* on behalf of her deceased mother, she describes Robinson during her 1788 residence in Brighton. In its details, the description matches the 1783 portrait:

> During hours of tedious watching over the health of her suffering child, Mrs. Robinson beguiled her anxiety by contemplating the ocean, whose successive waves, breaking upon the shore . . . afforded a melancholy pleasure, which could scarcely be relinquished without regret. Whole nights were passed by Mrs. Robinson at her window, in deep meditation, contrasting with her present situation the scenes of her former life.[454]

The effect is once again a dramatic character rendered authentic. Or to put it another way, it is a performance disguised as natural. Maria Elizabeth's description of her mother is an early

[453] Laura Engel notes that Robinson's body turning away suggests "a turning away from previous representations that emphasized her fashionable body towards an image that suggests the value of her interior self—her intellect and emotional sensibilities;" see Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity*, 79.

[454] *Memoirs*, 132.

example of Robinson's afterlife, and it is one that works to reimagine her in a Gothic setting and as a romantic heroine.

The Gainsborough and Reynolds portraits that feature Robinson between the years of 1781 and 1783 enrich Robinson's afterlife. They circulated in ownership among some of Europe's most wealthy and esteemed families, and this reflects not only the quality of the works, but also the credibility that Robinson earned during her lifetime as well as her lasting appeal as a subject. Little has been recorded regarding the provenance of Gainsborough's *Mary Robinson* (1782). What is known is that the Prince of Wales, who commissioned the portrait in 1781, presented it on 13 April 1818 to Francis Ingram Seymour-Conway, 2nd Marquess of Hertford.[455] The portrait now resides in the Wallace Collection of London's National Museum, but in 2014 it was included in an exhibit called "Museum Dogs" in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. In this case, the focus is placed upon Robinson's white Pomeranian companion rather than Robinson herself, so as to present Gainsborough's painting within the contexts of the Enlightenment and developing views regarding the roles of animals in the natural order.[456] The exhibit serves as one of many surprising moments in Robinson's afterlife, and it illustrates the range of ways that Robinson would be used—in this case, not as Perdita, mistress to the Prince, but as a representation of late eighteenth-century pastoral life, with her dog as company. Later in 2014, English fashion designer Vivienne Westwood would refer to the same painting and focus

[455] Seymour-Conway, 2nd Marquess of Hartford, served under Lord North between 1774 and 1782. He held seats in the Irish House of Commons from 1761 to 1776 and in the British House of Commons from 1766 to 1794.

[456] "Museum Dogs," National Gallery of Art, accessed 13 August 2019, https://www.nga.gov/collection/artist-info.1329.html

not on Robinson or her legacy, but rather on the aesthetic appeal of the work: "My God, the fashion and the beauty."[457]

The provenance of Reynolds' *Mrs. Robinson* (1782) makes yet another case for Robinson's enduring appeal, one that carries over into her afterlife. The Seymour-Conways would purchase two more pieces featuring Robinson, and it was the 3rd Marquess of Hertford who acquired *Mrs. Robinson* in 1796 for the sum of fifty guineas.[458] The portrait would be subsequently owned by several others esteemed families until 1957, when it was bequeathed to Waddesdon Manor.[459] Its exhibition history, and in particular, the title descriptions assigned to the work, reflect a network of interpretations, many of which extend into Robinson's afterlife. At the 1782 Royal Academy exhibition, it was described as *Portrait of a Lady*, thereby signaling a reconfiguration of Robinson as a stand-in for women among the British elite, and this despite the obvious obstacle that her contemporaries would be attuned to Robinson's affiliation with Perdita.[460] For its part, the *Public Advertiser* offered snide commentary on the exhibit: "The *Perdita* has been particularly successful in the commerce of this Year."[461] The paper rejects Robinson's recasting, and it calls attention to the illicit "commerce" with which Perdita was affiliated. *The Morning Herald* was more receptive despite its reference to Robinson as Perdita:

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[457] "Vivienne Westwood: 'My God, the beauty of Gainsborough!" *The Guardian*, accessed 13 September 2019, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-features/11082080/Vivienne-Westwood-My-God-the-beauty-of-Gainsborough.html

[458] [The source of location at waddesdon.org.uk has crashed; I am currently investigating the problem.]

Francis Ingram Seymour-Conway, 3rd Marquess of Hertford, was an avid art collector, a British Tory, and a member of Parliament from 1797 to 1822.

[459] Charles Wertheimer purchased Reynolds' *Mrs. Robinson* (1782) in the early 19th century, and it was sold to Baroness Mathilde de Rothschild in the mid-19th century. In both cases, the exact dates are unknown. It would remain in the Rothschild family until 1957, although its permanent home at Waddesdon Manor remains affiliated with the Rothschilds, as the Manor was built for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the 1870s. Ibid.

[460] Regarding its description at the Royal Academy in 1782, see footnote 448.

[461] *Public Advertiser*, 19 April 1782.

"The exhibition . . . will at least captivate the admirers of *beauty* and *elegance*, for the most distinguished pencils will exhibit the lovely *Perdita*!"[462]

While the attempt to recast Robinson as a member of the British elite was not wholly successful in 1782, there is evidence within Robinson's afterlife that audiences grew more receptive indeed. At the Worcestershire Exhibition in 1882, the same portrait was called *Mrs. Robinson in Hat and Feather*, a title that aligns her with a rich tradition of esteemed portrait subjects described in the same manner.[463] At Grafton Galleries of London in 1894, *Mrs. Robinson*, to which it was referred, was included in an exhibit called "Fair Women." In both cases, Robinson is treated as analogous to the British elite, thereby signaling the long-term impact of her resistance strategies and her efforts to reconfigure her relationship to Perdita.

Reynolds' *Portrait of Mary Robinson* (1783) was sold by the artist to the Prince of Wales in 1799.[464] Edmund Phipps, an author and attorney, acquired it in 1823; it was then sold on 25 June 1859 to Richard Seymour-Conway, thereby marking the third purchase of a Robinson portrait by the family.[465] The portrait was included in an 2015 exhibition called "Joshua Reynolds: Experiments in Paint."[466] The exhibition was a culmination of a four-year research project, in which a variety of his portraits belonging to the Wallace Collection were investigated using techniques such as X-ray and infrared imaging.[467] The goal was to uncover Reynolds'

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[462] *Morning Herald*, 23 March 1782.

[463] Marie Antoinette, for instance, would be portrayed in numerous portraits while wearing a hat and feather. See, for instance, Louise Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun's *Marie Antoinette en chemise* (1783), which also features the Queen in a chemise that would inspire Robinson's voguish dress.

[464] In *Public Characters of 1800-1801* (Dublin: J. Moore, 1801), an annual publication that consisted of biographical sketches of notable public figures, the Prince of Wales is said to have purchased the 1783 Reynolds piece. See *Public Characters*, 270.

[465] "Mrs. Mary Robinson," *The Wallace Collection*, accessed 13 September 2019, https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org

[466] Rachel Knowles, "Joshua Reynolds: Experiments in Paint," *Regency History*, accessed 24 September 2019, https://www.regencyhistory.net/2015/03/joshua-reynolds-experiments-in-paint.html

[467] They were investigated by experts at the Wallace with advice from the National Gallery and the Yale Center for British Art. Ibid.

methods of painting, and his *Portrait of Mary Robinson* was one of the centerpieces of the exhibit. The research led to the discovery that the portrait of Robinson was not his first attempt on the canvas, and that underneath it was another earlier painting, upside down—thus, Reynolds must have faltered and then flipped the canvas. One cannot know what led to his dissatisfaction, or perhaps it was Robinson who was displeased with her initial representation. The discovery of Reynolds' revision demonstrates the richness of Robinson's afterlife, for in this case, *Portrait of Mary Robinson* reflects not only Reynolds' methods, but it leads to new questions about the role Robinson may have had in the design of the portrait itself.

❖ The Impact of Robinson's Resistance Strategies on Her Afterlife: Her *Memoirs*

Robinson's *Memoirs* (1801) also functions as a strategy of resistance. In fact, it represents a culmination of the lessons Robinson learned during two decades of self-fashioning, from 1780 until 1800. She uses *Memoirs* as a self-fashioning project, one that works to resist her appropriation as the "lost" Perdita. Robinson was aware that resistance remained necessary: as recent as two years prior to her death, Robinson was included by the *Telegraph* in a list of forty-two people who "pay to have themselves puffed in the Newspapers."[468] Similarly, Jane Porter, author and close friend to Robinson, decided against publishing a memoir because she was warned that "all the world would cut [her]" if their friendship became public knowledge.[469] *Memoirs* is thus Robinson's defense of her own reputation, a self-conscious response to the traces of a scandalous past that still haunted her. It functions as further evidence of Robinson's literary talents and her skills at self-promotion, and certainly one should avoid taking at face value its status as an authentic representation of Robinson's life. *Memoirs* should be considered

[468] *Telegraph*, 11 February 1797.

[469] Mb. 15, fols. 2-3, referring to her memoir, "Character of the Late Mrs. Robinson, who is usually stiled the British Sappho, extracted from a letter to a lady." Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC: letter; poems in a commonplace book; also references in Jane Porter's manuscript diary.

not as a representation of the "real," but instead as a legacy-(re)shaping production, one carefully staged for entertainment, instruction, and self-exculpation.

Robinson uses *Memoirs* to refashion herself in terms that readers of her literature would recognize, and in a manner that also evokes Reynolds' *Portrait of Mary Robinson* (1783)—that is, as a sentimental heroine in the Gothic mode. The work plays out in novelistic terms, and as the distressed heroine, Robinson is the victim of duplicitous men who represent potential moral dangers, and whose indiscretions and weaknesses expose her to various traps of confinement and captivity.[470] The work aims to "correct" Robinson's history, and it also provides context necessary for evaluating Robinson's lasting transatlantic utility, for it contains strategies of self-representation that influence how her public persona(s) would be further appropriated and reimagined during her rich afterlife.

Memoirs represents a careful balancing act, for Robinson simultaneously (and shrewdly) alludes to the persona of Perdita, while she also works to distance herself from it, thereby stressing the most central argument posed by the work: that she alone is responsible for her transformation from actress-celebrity and *amour* to the Prince of Wales, to that of a respectable literary figure. Robinson was keenly aware that any allusions to Perdita would thrill her readers, and these become most pronounced in descriptions of her stage experiences and, of course, in what she offers regarding her courtship by the Prince. Consistent with generic patterns and tropes common to the subgenre of the celebrity autobiography, Robinson provides details of her

[470] Both themes are introduced via Robinson's representation of Nicholas Darby, her father, whose duplicity and abandonment of the family results in a kind of financial captivity. Further, upon learning that Robinson wishes to embark upon a stage career, the now absent Nicholas stresses in a letter to his wife: "Take care that no dishonour falls upon my daughter. If she is not safe at my return I will annihilate you." See *Memoirs*, 34. Robinson goes on to cast Thomas, her future husband, in much the same way. His mismanagement of their finances resulted in a fifteen-month stay in the Fleet, which she describes at length. Ibid., 79-81.

discovery, her most iconic roles, and the buzz her performances generated in the press.[471] As a nod to her former persona as a fashion icon, she also offers a high degree of attention to her stage costumes.[472]

Robinson's portrayal in *Memoirs* of her courtship with the Prince reflects the manner by which she capitalizes on the Perdita persona. She dramatizes, for instance, one of the most enduring myths of the Florizel and Perdita affair, that of how the pair first met on Friday, 3 December 1779, the evening of her royal command performance:

> I was overwhelmed with confusion. The Prince's particular attention was observed by everyone, and I was again rallied at the end of the play. On the last curtsy, the royal family condescendingly returned a bow to the performers; but just as the curtain was falling, my eyes met those of the Prince of Wales; and, with a look that I *never shall forget*, he gently inclined his head a second time; I felt the compliment and blushed my gratitude.[473]

Robinson's use of italics to emphasize the Prince's brief but meaningful glance was great entertainment, and it catered to fantasies of rapid social ascension, living amongst royalty, and romantic love. But a key part of her Cinderella story was not true: they had met at least once before. The Prince revealed in a private letter that he had seen Robinson in society previously and had fancied her then, as well.[474] That a different story emerged serves as yet another example in this project of myth intruding upon reality. Robinson's role in perpetuating this myth speaks to her anticipation of what the public desired, and further, it reflects precisely how she used Perdita to her advantage.

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[471] For instance, Robinson describes David Garrick's reaction upon hearing her sing for the first time: "Mr. Garrick's encomiums were of the most gratifying kind." Ibid., 35.

[472] Of her costume in Nathaniel Lee's *The Rival Queens*, she writes: "My dress was white and blue, made after the Persian costume, and though it was then singular on stage, I wore neither hoop nor powder." Ibid., 89.

[473] Ibid., 102.

[474] In a letter to Mary Hamilton (who preceded Robinson as the most recent object of the Prince's affections), the Prince explained, "This passion has laid dormant in my bosom for some time, but last night has kindled it again to such a degree . . . that Heaven knows when it will be extinguished." *Letter 74* of Anson Papers: correspondence of Prince of Wales and Mary Hamilton regarding Mrs. Robinson, in the possession of Rear Admiral Sir Peter and Lady Elizabeth Anson. As quoted in Byrne, *Perdita*, 100.

Robinson would continue to resist the worst qualities assigned to Perdita—namely, that she was a scheming whore whose involvement with the Prince cast further doubt upon the character of Britain's leaders. *Memoirs*, in this respect, functions as a form of self-exculpation, in which Robinson stresses her extreme propriety in resisting the Prince's advances. She withstands "many months of confidential correspondence," and in the process offers the Prince a litany of reasons for her refusal: he is too young; he does not yet know his own heart; her consent would ruin her career and end her marriage, thus putting her "entirely [at] his mercy;" the public would abuse them both; he would grow bored of her; and most significantly, it was imperative they "do nothing that might incur the displeasure of his Royal Highness's family."[475] It is her final objection that resonates most, for it counters accusations that Robinson faced—particularly during the 1780s—that her affair with the Prince was harming the nation's morale. The casting of herself as a model of good citizenry is an act of resistance, a means of revising the public's narrative about Robinson-as-Perdita.

The final way in which Robinson uses *Memoirs* as a method of resistance is by the story she tells regarding her evolution from Robinson-the-actress to Robinson-the-author. *Memoirs* is self-consciously literary in style, intended to appeal to readers of Gothic novels and sentimental fiction. That it reads in many ways like a novel supports Robinson's self-alignment as a literary figure. The setting of Robinson's birthplace is Gothic, novelistic in its descriptive details. She claims, for instance, that she was born in a room that had been part of a monastery belonging to the order of Saint Augustine, where "casement windows shed a dim mid-day gloom."[476] The role to which she assigns herself as a child is part sentimental heroine and literary prodigy, for she

[475] *Memoirs*, 104.
[476] Robinson, *Memoirs*, 18.

suffered from "a too acute sensibility," and her "natural genius" meant that she could recite lengthy elegiac poems before the age of seven.[477]

The Gothic and sentimental elements of *Memoirs* serve as evidence of Robinson's literary talents and successful authorship, and they extend into Robinson's descriptions of her fifteen months stay in the Fleet, a debtor's prison that housed Robinson and her husband, along with their infant daughter Maria Elizabeth, to whom she gave birth a few weeks shy of her seventeenth birthday. That Robinson is the heroine of her own life story is unsurprising, but it is the manner by which she overcomes this period of captivity and confinement that affirms her status as the heroine of *Memoirs*. Robinson describes the completion of *Poems* (1775) while still residing in the Fleet, and thus she provides to her readers a lesson in persistence while also staging her gradual transformation into that of a literary figure.[478]

Robinson was unable to elaborate any further on her literary accomplishments because she died prior to the completion of *Memoirs*.[479] It was instead completed posthumously by her daughter Maria Elizabeth.[480] Regarding the Prince's persistent advances, Maria Elizabeth would go on to offer only that "[Robinson] determined . . . to brave the world, and, for a support against its censures, to rely on the protection and friendship of [the Prince]."[481] *Memoirs* was published in four volumes by a London publisher in 1801, and the last two volumes extend the self-

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[477] Specifically, she claims to have memorized Alexander Pope's 82-line *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* and William Mason's 108-line *Elegy III: On the Death of a Lady*. Ibid., 21-22.

[478] A year following their release from *debtor's* prison, Robinson published "Captivity" (1777). "Captivity" was her longest poem to date, a plea on behalf of the wives and children of imprisoned debtors. It was included in *Captivity, a Poem; And Celadon and Lydia, a Tale* (London: T. Becket, 1777).

[479] Robinson set aside *Memoirs* to complete two novels, *The False Friend* (1798) and *The Natural Daughter* (1799), as well as *A Letter to the Women of England* (1799), a polemical feminist treatise. She was also preparing her "favourite offspring," a collection of poetry called *Lyrical Tales* (1800). For the quotation, see Letter to Jane Porter, 27 August 1800, Pforzheimer Misc. MS 2295.

[480] Maria Elizabeth's contribution is marked as "Continuation by a Friend." She provides approximately the final one-third of the material, and her contribution begins in the midst of the Prince of Wales' romantic advances towards Robinson.

[481] *Memoirs*, 109.

fashioning of the first two, in which Robinson distances herself from Perdita and recasts herself as an author. Volumes three and four consist of poetry, prose articles, and the opening chapters of an unfinished novel, *Jasper*.[482] The excerpts of *Jasper* suggest another Gothic-inspired novel that begins at midnight at the front of a castle, the wind howling from a storm and the nearby sea. A brief critical assessment of Robinson's poetry is also included, and her Della Cruscan poems are described in terms of their "purity, simplicity, and pathos."[483] *Ainsi va le Monde* is praised for its endorsement of liberty, and "Sight" is used as an example of her "excellence in the composition of blank verse."[484]

Memoirs is also useful as an afterlife example in its own right. It occupies a liminal space given that Maria Elizabeth completed the work. In this respect, *Memoirs* is a self-fashioning project that does not entirely belong to Robinson, and the section completed by Maria Elizabeth is in effect a reimagining of her mother, and thus it belongs to Robinson's afterlife. It generated such interest following Robinson's death that in 1802 it was translated into French, while in America two editions were published in New York and Philadelphia respectively. A portion of its transatlantic popularity can be explained by a marketplace of consumers who desired "authentic" narratives from celebrities.[485] Robinson, in addition to other actress-celebrities such as Sarah Siddons and Mary Wells, produced autobiographical narratives in response to an "unprecedented conspicuousness in the public eye."[486] By the end of the century, the desire for

[482] The final two volumes are not usually reprinted in later editions and are absent, for instance, in the most recent 1994 edition.

[483] The literary criticism, if one can call it that, went uncited. This leads one to believe that Maria Elizabeth wrote it. Robinson, *The Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson II* (London: C. Mercier, 1803), 177.

[484] Ibid., 181.

[485] For more on the origins and the lasting impact of eighteenth-century celebrity culture, I would start with Laura Engel, *Fashioning Celebrity* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2011).

[486] In "Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth," Siddons composed notes on how to perform the part sometime after 1815, and these were published in Thomas Campbell's *Life of Mrs. Siddons* (London, 1834). Her performance of Lady Macbeth was adored by audiences and was the subject of portraits and engravings prior to printing of her "Remarks." Campbell's Life of Mrs. Siddons also includes excerpts from Siddon's "memoranda,"

the consumer to gain vicarious access to the celebrity was nothing new, and like celebrity portraits, for instance, the celebrity autobiography catered to this demand.[487] That autobiographies were also written by the celebrity made them all the more appealing, for they created the illusion of shared intimacy. *Public Characters of 1800-1801*, an annual publication that consisted of biographical sketches of notable public figures, was written prior to Robinson's death but not published until afterwards. That year's edition would feature only two female subjects: Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith.[488] Robinson's biography covered the not inconsiderable length of eight pages; however, in a subsequent reprinting of the volume in 1807, the original essay was replaced by a twenty-page condensation of her *Memoirs*.[489]

❖ The Impact of Robinson's Resistance Strategies on Her Afterlife: Her Literary Career

Robinson's most impactful strategy of resisting her appropriation as Perdita was achieved by way of a remarkable literary career, the majority of which she managed during the 1790s, a period that of course preceded her *Memoirs*. Her career began modestly with *Poems* (1775) and *Captivity* (1777), as well as an operetta *The Songs, Chorusses, etc. in The Lucky Escape, a Comic Opera* (1778).[490] It was not until 24 October 1788 that she made her "debut" in *The World*, which had quickly grown into one of London's most profitable newspapers. Robinson's

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which constituted remarks on her own life. The full text of the "memoranda" was lost, only to resurface in the 1940s. It was published as *The Reminiscences of Sarah Kemble Siddons, 1773-1785*, ed. William Van Lennep (Cambridge: Widener Library, 1942). For Mary Wells' autobiography, see Mary Wells, *The Memoirs of Mrs. Sumbel, Late Wells.* 3 vols. (London: C. Chapple, 1811). For the quote, see Robyn Asleson, "Introduction," in *Notorious Muse*: *The Actress in British Art and Culture, 1776-1812* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 1.

[487] Joseph Roach describes such exchanges between the consumer and the celebrity, whose imagined persona is "consumed" by way of accessory objects, which facilitates a form of vicarious intimacy. See Roach, *It*, 5. For more on the market for celebrity portraits, such as those displayed in Royal Academy exhibitions, see Gill Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre, 1768-1820* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 19.

[488] *Public Characters of 1800-1801* (Dublin: J. Moore, 1801). Paula Byrne speculates that the author of the biography was William Godwin, who had made contributions to previous volumes. See *Perdita*, 367.

[489] *Public Characters of 1800-1801* (London: Richard Phillips, 1807).

[490] Robinson's operetta was performed at Drury Lane in conjunction with *Macbeth* on 30 April 1778.

transatlantic afterlife, particularly in terms of how her literature is both categorized and canonized, is informed by one of the core strategies she adopts in the process of refashioning herself as an author. By aligning herself with fashionable literary circles and the genres in which they worked and published, Robinson acquired instant popularity (albeit not instant credibility) as an author.

Ample evidence suggests that Robinson's debut in *The World* was carefully planned for maximum impact, a notion consistent with her previous resistance efforts. She initially fashioned herself in the style of the Della Cruscans, a small group of expatriate poets whose effusive and sentimental lyrics had become something of a fad, if only for a period in the late 1780s.[491] Maria Elizabeth would later express regret for the role Robinson played in the Della Cruscan vogue, presumably on her mother's behalf.[492] But Robinson was likely drawn to the opportunities it presented, that of poetic disguise and a means of experimenting with different literary voices; its popularity would have appealed to her too. Robinson's "Lines, Dedicated to the Memory of a much-lamented Young Gentleman," printed on 24 October 1788, closely resembled the popular and ongoing poetic exchanges between Robert Merry, who used the pseudonym "Della Crusca," and Hannah Cowley, who replied under the name "Anna Matilda." Each week their poetic exchanges appeared in *The World*, and in tone they evolved from mildly flirtatious to

[491] The Della Cruscans were mocked by critics for their ornamental excess, but readers admired their inventiveness. For more on *The World* and its relationship, in particular, to the Della Cruscans, see Tanya M. Caldwell, "'A Lasting Wreath of Various Hue': Hannah Cowley, the Della Cruscan Affair, and the Medium of the Periodical Poem," in *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1690s-1820s*, eds. Jennie Batchelor and Manushag N. Powell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 113-128.

[492] "Dazzled by the false metaphors and rhapsodical extravagance of some contemporary writers, [Robinson] suffered her judgment to be misled and her taste to perverted: an error of which she became afterwards sensible." *Memoirs*, 136.

suggestively erotic. Devoted readers speculated on their identities, and over a year passed before they would meet.[493]

But in a sudden, dramatic turn of events, a *third* poetic lover surfaced, thereby creating a love triangle that fundamentally altered how the reading public would imagine the Della Cruscan exchanges. This new lover, of course, was Robinson, and while her poem does not name either Della Crusca or Anna Matilda, it was recognizably composed with the same highly romantic and effusive poetic style. The manner of its opening lines portrays the lost but devoted lover, one that would fit perfectly into the Della Cruscan universe: "Thou art no more my bosom's Friend; / Here must the sweet delusion end, / That charm'd my senses many a year, / Thro' smiling summers, winters drear."[494]

Robinson likely had an ally at *The World*, since it appears that she used her connection to insert herself into the highly popular Della Cruscan exchanges. Following her debut poem in *The World*, she signed her name as "Laura," which referenced the love object of Petrarch. The poem concluded with its speaker weeping over the tomb of an "ill-fated Youth." As "Della Crusca," Robert Merry had produced a new poem entitled "To Anna Matilda." It was to be printed on 24 October, the same day as the appearance of "Laura," only it was instead printed four days later. Its delay, apparently, was due to a lack of space. Because Merry's poem followed Robinson's, the public read one passage in particular as a *response* to "Laura": "For Anna! O I live, I live for thee alone! / And when to Laura's Tomb I came."[495] The likeness of Robinson's poem to Merry's functions as the most striking piece of evidence that she had an ally at the paper, and

[493] Hannah Cowley was married. She also had several children and "was showing her age." Byrne, *Perdita*, 247.

[494] Robinson as Laura, "Lines, Dedicated to the Memory of a much-lamented Young Gentleman" in *The World*, 24 October 1788.

[495] Richard Merry, "To Anna Matilda," *The World*, 28 October 1788.

that she had capitalized on advance knowledge of Merry's poem. Robinson generated such buzz that *The World* encouraged this new literary love triangle. The paper published another work from "Laura" on 1 November 1788, three days after Merry's "To Anna Matilda." For her part, Cowley (as "Anna Matilda") was furious. She was pacified only when "Laura" responded with a conciliatory poem that praised her.[496]

Robinson's talent for adopting literary disguises would inform her literary reception, just as it would her afterlife. The anonymity Robinson enjoyed via "Laura" allowed her to get feedback untarnished by the public's memory of her as Perdita.[497] She managed to capitalize simultaneously on the popularity of the Della Cruscans and to encourage public debate regarding the identity of "Laura." Robinson's theatrical past had served her well, for she was adept at calling attention to herself in a manner that kept the public in suspense. After receiving praise for her poetry over the span of a few months, Robinson revealed the identity of "Laura" by sending her next poem to *The World* under her own name. She also claimed authorship of all the lines signed "Laura." John Bell, the publisher, evidently did not believe her, and according to Maria Elizabeth in *Memoirs*, Bell insisted that "he was well acquainted with the author of the productions."[498] While Robinson immediately confronted Bell and convinced him otherwise, his skepticism that Perdita could possibly become a successful poet foreshadowed the skepticism the public would also share.

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[496] This sequence of *poems* was reprinted in *The British Album*, 2 vols. (1790), II, 137-62.

[497] "Laura" continued to publish in *The World*, and her lyrics were reprinted in provincial newspapers, in magazines, and in anthologies such as *The Poetry of the World* (1788) and *The British Album* (1790). The mystery of her identity was stirred by the Morning Post: "Of all the Della Crusca school . . . the public is acquainted with all the writers except Laura . . . the elegant Laura continues to the charm the town under a fictitious signature." *Morning Post*, 15 April 1789.

[498] This is Maria Elizabeth's claim only, for I have recovered no evidence elsewhere to confirm it. Whether or not Robinson relayed the story to Maria Elizabeth is also unclear. One wonders if the story was pure invention on the part of Maria Elizabeth, and if so, what here intentions were in doing so. See *Memoirs*, 137.

The first volume of Robinson's *Poems* (1791) was supported by six-hundred subscribers, a fact that indicates the remarkable strides she had made in terms of achieving legitimacy as an author.[499] Most impressive was not the number itself but rather the names among them, which would be printed for the public to see. As a rhetorical device, the list aligned Robinson with the most elite of late Georgian high society, among them the Prince of Wales.[500] Reception to *Poems* suggests that despite the incredible patronage that Robinson now enjoyed as an author, and despite her masterful negotiation of print media to both publish and publicize, the British public would continue to associate her with Perdita. For the reader to encounter the Prince of Wales at the top of the subscription list, for instance, evokes the entirety of their scandalous history and their aftermaths—not only "Florizel and Perdita," but the national disasters with which the pair were conflated, those such the King's "madness" and the Regency Crisis of 1789.[501]

Critical responses to *Poems* (1791) would set a precedent for how Robinson would be received in the 1790s. They also signaled a pattern that would continue in her afterlife, in which her literature—no matter how varied in form, content, tone, or even quality—would be haunted by the traces of her scandalous past. In some cases, Robinson's affiliation with Perdita would go unmentioned, but this did not always translate to positive reviews.[502] The conflation of Robinson

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[499] *Poems by Mrs. Robinson*, vol. I (London: J. Bell, 1791). The second volume would be published in 1793 (London: T. Spilsbury) and reprinted as *Poems: A New Edition* in 1795.

[500] Beneath the Prince's name was Frederick, the Duke of Orléans. The rest of the subscribers were listed alphabetically, with aristocrats preceding gentry under each letter (Dukes and Duchesses, then Earls and Countesses, Lords and Ladies, Baronets, Esquires, and the untitled). The list included the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, the Earl of Cholmondeley, Charles James Fox, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Sheridan, and newspaper editor Henry Bate. It extended to Tarleton's army circles, the theater (via the actress Dora Jordan), the literary world (Samuel Pratt and John Taylor), to clergymen, to Parliament (mostly Whigs), and to students and academics affiliated with Cambridge University.

[501] Names within the list have a similar associative impact, that of lovers and suitors, whether genuine or rumored (the Duke of Orléans, Fox, Tarleton, Sheridan, among others), who each became targets of press gossip, or worse, a Gillray caricature, a published romantic correspondence, or a satirical pamphlet.

[502] Likely influenced by Robinson's working relationship with *The Oracle*, the paper offered a glowing review of *Poems*. See *The Oracle*, 3 May 1791. The *Analytical Review* praised its "rich and beautiful imagery" and "sweetly harmonious verse"; *Analytical Review*, 10 (1791), 279. The *Critical Review* reacted negatively, and it

with the Perdita persona became a catch-all for any perceived deficiencies in her poetry. The *Gentleman's Magazine*, for example, suggested that Robinson's beauty and charisma allowed her undeserved access to wider readership: had she been less blessed with "beauty and captivating manners," "her poetical taste might have been confined in its influence."[503] The *Critical Review* was less concerned with Robinson's opportunistic networking, and it focused instead on her deployment of cheap thrills in the Della Cruscan mode: "Rejecting the accustomed phraseology, [Robinson] seem[s] fond of introducing uncommon terms and ideas, to provoke attention and excite admiration."[504] The reference to Robinson's stage career may be indirect, but the latter part of the comment ("to provoke attention and excite admiration") recalls her past as a stage actress, and by extension, also her affiliation with the notorious persona of Perdita. A similar slight is echoed by the *English Review*, in which Robinson's lyrics are compared to performative affectations: "The rage of passion, the moanings of love, the scream of despair, all must be *pretty*."[505]

Robinson-as-Perdita would resurface most vehemently in reviews that objected to the author's evolving politics. One such example is *The General Magazine*'s review of *Ainsi va le Monde*.[506] *Ainsi va le Monde*, which was Robinson's first published response to the French Revolution, is something of an anomaly in *Poems*: its length is ambitious at nearly 350 lines, and it is expressly political. The poem inscribes the Revolutionary events in France and their ramifications in Britain as a major concern to the nation. In doing so, it poses a correlation between cultural production and the revolutionary moment, advocating for each. The reviewer in

condemned Della Cruscanism as a gimmick that aimed to "provoke attention and to excite admiration." See *Critical Review*, 2 (1791), 109.

[503] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 61 (1791), 560.

[504] "Review of *Poems* (1791), by Mary Robinson," *Critical Review* (July 1791), 309.

[505] *English Review* 19 (1792), 42-3.

[506] "Ainsi va le Monde" translates to "thus goes the world."

The General Magazine acknowledges none of this and instead undermines Robinson's vision: "These verses, which the world owes to the pen of the celebrated Perdita, though the flash of a moment, are not a flash without fire."[507] To reference the author as Perdita rather than Robinson is itself a petty slight, and one that would prove customary in many of her contemporary reviews; the comment itself also suggests, however ambiguously, that the "flash" (whether this alludes to her poetic skills, the ideas therein, or both, remains unclear) exists not without "fire." Fire is a destructive force; it spreads quickly, and it suffocates and burns. It is not fertile but instead destroys that which is fertile. Viewed accordingly, the reviewer is arguing that despite Robinson's "refined sensibility," "richness of fancy," and "correctness of taste," her poem lacks the generative qualities that warrant serious consideration.

Serious consideration of *Ainsi va le Monde* reveals its generative qualities—in this case, fire serves as an apt metaphor for the work's tone and vision, but in the sense that fire wipes out decay and helps to revive the soil for the emergence of new life. Robinson argues that revolution can rid society of its rotten core, thus resulting in regeneration. Closer inspection of the poem likewise signals the direction that much of Robinson's literary endeavors would take, as it reflects her alignment with revolutionary politics and a Jacobin system of values. As with many of her British contemporaries, Robinson valorized independence, equality, and the hope for a better, more just world.[508] While the poem includes several Della Cruscan tropes,[509] Robinson's

[507] *The General Magazine*, 4 (1790), 548.

[508] British contemporaries who share in Robinson's politics include Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Charlotte Smith, among others. For more on Robinson's politics and her alignment with a Jacobin system of values, see Amy Garnai's *Revolutionary Imaginings in the 1790s* (2009). See also Sharon M. Setzer, "Romancing the Reign of Terror: Sex and Politics in Mary Robinson's *The Natural Daughter*," *Criticism* 39 (1997): 531-535.

[509] The opening lines of the poem include, for instance, an invocation of the dedicatee, and the "Muse" to which she refers is Robert Merry, whose poem *The Laurel of Liberty* (1790) inspired Robinson to respond (lines 1-2). Robinson employs a second Della Cruscan trope by stressing the blighted state of contemporary British poetry (lines 31-4, for instance).

foremost priority is to provide a defense of the French Revolution, which she does by linking "Celestial Freedom" to images of regeneration and vitality, that of "new creation," a "palpitating vein," a "fertile brain" (158-64). To do so links liberation ("Celestial Freedom") or, in this case, political revolution, to creative fertility. As such, Robinson uses the second half of the work to argue that the ideals and subversive spirit that have animated the French Revolution are precisely what Britain needs to awaken itself from its current state of artistic and spiritual torpor.

The dismissive review of *Ainsi va le Monde* featured in *The General Magazine* reveals a pattern of criticism that would follow Robinson throughout the 1790s, and further, into her afterlife. The pattern constitutes more than just Robinson's inability to escape the shadow of Perdita; it is one that reveals the extent to which her political values would preoccupy her critics. Her politics would often prove to be the governing factor in evaluations of her work. William Gifford, the editor of the influential right-wing *Quarterly Review*, attacked Robinson in satirical poems called *The Baviad* (1794) and *The Maeviad* (1795), even making a cruel jibe about her infirm health.[510] Despite Robinson's remarkable and prolific output in the 1790s, her work—and this applied to her vast body of poetry, her novels, and certainly to her nonfiction reformist literature—was subjected to polemical outbursts inspired by her reform politics. Robinson was included, for instance, among the "transgressive" women writers cited by the critics of the Anti-Jacobin circle. Thomas J. Mathias grouped her literature with that of Smith and Inchbald, and he cast them as a menace to the public.[511] Mathias struck a chord with like-minded readers—his polemical poem *The Pursuits of Literature* (1794), which included extended notes and

[510] For instance, "See Robinson forget her state, and move / On crutches tow'rds the grave." *The Baviad*, quoted from a combined representation of Gifford's *The Baviad and the Maeviad*, 8th edition (London: Becket and Porter, 1811), 9-10.

[511] Mathias contended, "They are too frequently *whining* or *frisking in novels*, till our girls' heads turn wild with impossible adventures, and are . . . tainted with democracy, and sometimes with infidelity and loose principles." See *The Pursuits of Literature*, 4th edn., (London: T. Becket, 1797), 14.

commentary surveying the British literary landscape, went through multiple editions well into the nineteenth century, thereby impacting Robinson's afterlife. Similarly, Richard Polwhele included Robinson in his famous polemic against women writers, suggesting that her works embody "the doctrines of Philosophism [and thus] merit the severest censure."[512]

Robinson's development as a poet was aided in part by her adoption of numerous literary disguises, and these allowed her to practice her skills in a range of poetic genres while also testing the public's reactions. This was a strategy she maintained until the end of her life. She had her Shakespearean "Portia," and she wrote as the amorous "Julia" and "Lesbia." The flirtatious "Oberon" appeared in her "Fairy Rhymes."[513] She used "Tabitha Bramble" exclusively for the *Morning Post* during the final year of her life, after she became the newspaper's poetry editor in December 1799. Several of these she included in her final poetry volume of *Lyrical Tales* (1800).[514] But it was as "Sappho," her tragic lover persona, that would prove most impactful in terms of shaping Robinson's reputation as a poet, thereby also informing her afterlife. Robinson had been known as the "English Sappho" since at least 1791, and with *Sappho and Phaon* (1796), a collection of forty-four linked sonnets, she would embark upon a highly ambitious sonnet cycle in the Petrarchan mode.[515] Robinson demonstrates her credentials as a classical poet with the sonnet sequence, just as she also addresses the development of the

[512] Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1798) 17.

[513] "Fairy Rhymes" consisted of a series of poems that were possibly inspired by Henry Fuseli's erotic representations of the fairies in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Robinson poetically enacts the amours of Titania and Oberon. See Judith Pascoe's "Introduction" in Mary Robinson, *Selected Poems*, ed. Judith Pascoe (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview University Press, 2000), 49-50.

[514] Tabitha Bramble is a pious spinster and satirical object that is featured in Tobias Smollet's 1771 novel *Humphry Clinker*. For more on the "Tabitha Bramble" poems, see Daniel Robinson, "Mary Robinson and the Trouble with Tabitha Bramble" *Wordsworth Circle* 41.3 (Summer 2010): 142-6.

[515] The full title is *Sappho and Phaon, a series of legitimate Sonnets, with Thoughts on Poetical Subjects, & Anecdotes of the Grecian Poetess* (London: S. Gosnell, 1796). The epithet of "English (or British) Sappho" derives from a review of *Poems* (1791). It was a compliment to Robinson's technical proficiency and her strong sensibility—not a comment on her sexuality. *Monthly Review*, 6 (1791), 448-50.

sonnet form at different historical moments, in Sappho's own time and in her own.[516] With the preface of *Sappho and Phaon*, Robinson declares her intentions of providing a commentary on the wider literary and political landscape; she defends, for instance, the "legitimate" sonnet form of Petrarch and criticizes "the non-descript ephemera from the heated brains of self-important poetasters" that filled the newspapers. She also pays tribute to her "illustrious country-women; who, unpatronized by the courts, and unprotected by the powerful, persevere in the paths of literature." [517]

The Sappho that Robinson imagines is a mature woman whose (heterosexual) love for the younger Phaon becomes an all-consuming passion. Since Petrarch, the vast majority of sonnet sequences were written from the perspective of the male, but Robinson rejects this tradition and instead tells the story of Sappho's unrequited passion from its origins to its demise. The effect is to personalize Sappho's tragedy for the reader, and likewise to assign agency to her perspective as the gazer rather than the gazed upon: "Why, when I gaze on Phaon's beauteous eyes, / Why does each thought in wild disorder stray?"[518] As the sequence reaches its climax, Robinson offers imagery of stormy seas and crashing waves, a "dizzy precipice" over which Sappho peers as she prepares for oblivion.[519] It was almost certainly deliberate on Robinson's part that the imagery evokes Reynolds' second painting of her, *Portrait of Mary Robinson* (1783), particularly because the portrait had by 1796 become Robinson's most iconic image.[520] With the

[516] She cites Addison and Pope, for instance.

[517] See the Preface to *Sappho and Phaon*. My quotations are from the 1813 Minerva Press edition of *Sappho and Phaon*.

[518] Ibid., Sonnet IV, lines 1-2.

[519] Ibid., Sonnet XLIII, line 1.

[520] The image was frequently engraved and used as the frontispiece to Robinson's works, and it was also around this time that Robinson was painted by John Hoppner in a similar white "Grecian" robe and classical headdress, with the sea behind her. The portrait is called *Portrait of a Lady*, a title that echoes the description used in the 1782 Royal Academy presentation of *Mrs. Robinson* (1782). It currently resides at the National Gallery of Victoria – Melbourne.

pairing, Robinson repurposes the public's memory of the portrait and the feelings it evoked, and she does so within the context of Sappho's suicide, thereby signaling an evolution in her strategies of resistance at the climactic moment in the narrative of her sonnet sequence. Robinson demonstrates that she has moved beyond her self-fashioning as a sentimental heroine in the Gothic tradition, and with *Sappho and Phaon*, she establishes her credentials as an ambitious and most talented poet.

That *Sappho and Phaon* was generously reviewed illustrates Robinson's success in terms of altering her reputation as a poet, which would in turn impact her afterlife. But many of the reviews contained references, some veiled and some not, to her scandalous past. The *Analytical Review* offered its enthusiastic support, "We have frequently had occasion to commend the taste and talents of this fair writer; and we think we have seen her progressively improve [with the collection] in both."[521] The *English Review* considered the collection a "lively example of the human mind enlightened by the most exquisite talents." However, the same reviewer alludes to Robinson's history as a stage actress and, in particular, to the performative qualities that elevated her to notorious fame as Perdita: "There is [an] . . . *affectation*, in the models on which our British Sappho studies to form her style and manner: but in these, as in her other poems, she gives proof of a genius capable of producing greater excellence, had it been better directed."[522] Astute readers would note the autobiographical elements of *Sappho and Phaon*, and in the "Account of Sappho" that prefaces the sonnets, Robinson presents a poetess much like herself.[523] Details of Sappho's marriage, motherhood, and fame were standard features in eighteenth-

[521] *Analytical Review*, 24.6 (December 1796), 605. *Critical Review*, 19 (1797),

[522] The emphasis on "affectation" is mine. *English Review*, December 1796, 583-4.

[523] She describes a woman of genius who "derived but little consequence from birth or connections" (21), who married and gave birth to a daughter (22), and whose poetry continued to shape "future ages" (26). Again, the quotations are from the 1813 Minerva Press edition of *Sappho and Phaon*.

century biographies, but in a moment of pure invention, Robinson also conjectures about Sappho's fame, which "excited the envy of some writers who endeavoured to throw over her private character a shade."[524] Robinson's employment of self-fashioning methods reveals not a denial of Perdita, but rather a repurposing of the persona to her calculated advantage. She used *Sappho and Phaon* to draw implicit parallels between Sappho's life and her own, which makes the work all the more compelling for her readers.[525]

Sappho and Phaon helped to revive the sonnet form that had fallen out of favor in the eighteenth century, thus impacting Robinson's afterlife. Her sonnet cycle would at least be partly responsible for inspiring a resurgence in Sappho-related literature during the nineteenth century, and one can trace an acceleration of such literature produced in the decade following her death.[526] The debate regarding Sappho's sexuality began to thrive by mid-century, particularly because Sappho was co-opted as a lesbian by Charles Baudelaire in France, and later by Algernon Charles Swinburne in England.[527] By the end of the nineteenth century, lesbian authors such as Michael Field (a pseudonym for Katharine Harris Bradley) and Amy Levo incorporated reimaginings of Sappho in their works.[528]

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[524] Ibid., line 22.

[525] Scholars have likewise suggested that the sonnets can be read autobiographically, as a veiled account of Robinson's agonies over her loss of the Prince of Wales, or, alternatively, over her later loss of Banastre Tarleton. Stuart Curran suggests that Sappho and Phaon was written as "a sonnet sequence *à clef* upon being deserted by Banastre Tarleton," but Linda H. Peterson contends that Robinson had her greater loss of the Prince of Wales in mind. See Stuart Curran, "Mary Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* in Context," in *Re-Visioning Romanticism: British Women Writers 1776-1837*, eds. Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 17-35. See also Linda H. Peterson, "Becoming an Author: Mary Robinson's *Memoirs*," in the same volume, 36-50.

[526] Linda H. Peterson offers a useful reading of John Nott's *Sappho: After a Greek Romance* (1803), positing Robinson's sonnet cycle as an influence on Nott's work. See "Becoming an Author: Mary Robinson's *Memoirs*," in *Re-Visioning Romanticism*, 42-44.

[527] Margaret Reynolds, *The Sappho Companion* (London: Vintage, 2001), 231-2.

[528] Ibid., 261.

As notable as Robinson is for her poetry, she also refashioned herself as a literary figure by experimenting with a variety of prose genres, thus demonstrating the remarkable range of her literary talents. Her experimentation during the 1790s would often function as a means by which she could express her political values, and as with her poetry, critical reactions to her prose would be informed by the ideological alignments of the reviewer (or more likely, by the ideological alignments of the periodical for which the reviewer wrote). Representative examples correlate to reviews of three of Robinson's novels: *Vancenza; or, the Dangers of Credulity* (1792), *Angelina, a Novel* (1794), and *Walsingham; or, the Pupil of Nature, a Domestic Story* (1797).

Vancenza, a Gothic romance in the style of Ann Radcliffe, was Robinson's first novel as well as a literary sensation.[529] Its reviews were generally positive,[530] although the *Critical Review* concluded that it was not worthy of publication at all: "Mrs. Robinson's eager, partial, and injudicious friends, have misled and injured her; nor are we wholly free from the inconveniences which they have occasioned."[531] Such a complaint is consistent with previous reviews of Robinson's poetry, in which her perceived literary deficiencies are equated with her social influence and the flattering company she was presumed to keep. *Angelina* was Robinson's first radical novel, one that engaged in serious interrogations regarding the iniquities of female

[529] *Vancenza; or, the Dangers of Credulity* (London: J. Bell, 1792). There were five editions printed by 1794; a Dublin edition was also printed in a single volume; and it was translated into French and German in 1793.

[530] The *European Magazine* described *Vancenza* as "An ancient Spanish record of domestic woe [that was] extremely interesting and pathetic." See *European Magazine*, 20 (1792), 298. The *English Review* suggested that it was an "elegant and affecting little tale," but considered it below the standard of Robinson's poetry. See *English Review*, 20 (1792), 111.

[531] *Critical Review*, 4 (1792), 268. It also slammed Robinson's ornate language, perhaps being reminded of the Della Cruscans' aesthetics: "If you intended the language to be prose, it is too poetical; if it to be poetry, it is very faulty." The reviewer also attacks Robinson's supporters: "Mrs. Robinson's eager, partial, and injudicious friends, have misled and injured her; nor are we wholly free from the inconveniences which they have occasioned."

education, marriage as a form of legal prostitution, slavery, and aristocratic hypocrisy.[532] The *Critical Review* labeled it "the nonsensical jargon of mock sentiment and overstrained hyperbole."[533] The intended meaning of "jargon" remains unexplained, but in light of the newspaper's historical alignment with conservative politics, the term certainly signals a dismissal of Robinson's political and social arguments.

Walsingham was Robinson's most controversial and radical novel to date.[534] It begins as an epistolary novel, but after a few letters are exchanged, it then shifts to the title character's autobiographical narrative, one that "unfolds the mystery of [his misfortunes]."[535] The novel pursues questions about a woman's right to inherit property, one that is dramatized by a plot that includes crossdressing and the heroine impersonation of a man.[536] But it is *Walsingham*'s sustained attack on aristocratic corruption that would most outrage its anti-Jacobin critics. The *Anti-Jacobin* review complained, for instance, that "[Robinson's] judgment is frequently distorted by very false notions of politics."[537] So representative is the reviewer's dismissal of the values of both Robinson and her allies that it is beneficial to include a lengthy excerpt:

> Like Charlotte Smith, she has conceived a very high opinion of the wisdom of the French philosophers; and, like many other female writers, as well as superficial male writers, she considers the authority of those whom she admires as equivalent to her argument . . . her peers or peeresses are all either weak or wicked . . . The miseries and vices of the low are uniformly deduced from the oppressions and the vices of the high . . . this representation is hurtful, because it tends to encourage the dislike for nobility . . . It is possible, and indeed, very probable, that those persons of rank with whom Mrs. Robinson has been in the habit of associating, may be as bad as she represents, but it is very unfair and false

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[532] *Angelina*, *a Novel*, 3 vols. (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1796); a Dublin edition was also published in 2 vols.; it translated into French (undated) and German (1799-1800).

[533] *Critical Review*, 16 (1796), 397.

[534] *Walsingham; or, the Pupil of Nature, a Domestic Story*, 4 vols. (London: Longman, 1797); a Dublin edition was published in 2 vols. (1798); it was translated into French twice (1798-99) and German (1799).

[535] I am citing from Julie A. Shaffer's edition of *Walsingham* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003), 47.

[536] See Shaffer's "Introduction" in *Walsingham; or, the Pupil of Nature* (2003), 7-34.

[537] *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 1 (1798), 160.

> assertion that all the nobility are profligate . . . *Her* experience, we think, must have taught her that, at least, equal profligacy obtains among *commoners* and *plebeians*.[538]

The reviewer's lengthy dismissal aligns radical politics with effeminacy. The Francophobia is obvious, and so is the jab aimed at Robinson for her past as Perdita. This thinly veiled reference further reiterates Perdita's cultural appropriation as an emblem of female impropriety and bad citizenry.

❖ Additional Afterlife Expressions: Robinson's Lasting Transatlantic Impact

Following her death and the *Morning Post* obituaries of 29 December and 31 December 1800, Robinson's importance to the British literary community would be expressed both privately and within small groups. William Godwin, a loyal ally to Robinson in her later years, did so privately by observing her death in his diary.[539] Samuel Taylor Coleridge expressed his grief regarding her passing in a letter to his benefactor Thomas Poole, thus demonstrating Robinson's impact on a community of friends and literary peers[540] Included in Coleridge's letter is a four-line tributary verse, in which he contends that Robinson will remain fertile in the memories of her admirers: "O'er her pil'd grave the gale of evening sighs / And flowers will grow upon its grassy Slope![541] John Wolcot, a satirist known otherwise as Peter Pindar, mourned Robinson's passing publicly, and he did so in the form of a pastoral elegy:

> Remembrance shall dwell on thy smile,
> Shall dwell on thy lute and thy song,
> Which often my hours to beguile
> Have echo'd the valleys among . . .[542]

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[538] Ibid., 160-4.

[539] Godwin's Journal vol. X, 26 December 1800, Abinger Deposit, Dep.e.205, Bodleian Library.

[540] Thomas Poole was a political essayist, philanthropist, and a figure within certain intellectual circles that included Coleridge and Robert Southey. In 1793, he began a local reading club in Somerset that discussed the teachings of Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, and Mary Wollstonecraft, among others. See Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 159.

[541] Coleridge to Thomas Poole, 1 February 1801, *Coleridge Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge II*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 669.

[542] See Caroline Franklin's introduction to Robinson's *The Poetical Works* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1996), lvi.

An elegy is a form of shared grief, and his celebrates more than Robinson's charms. With her "lute" and "song," Wolcot aligns her with ancient muses whose lyrics resonate despite the passing of generations.

Despite the remarkable strides made by Robinson to repurpose Perdita and thereby amend her relationship with the public, not all of her allies were comfortable with mourning her death publicly. Jane Porter, who would become an esteemed historical novelist and dramatist, recorded in her diary the social pressures to keep Robinson at a distance. She describes her thoughts upon learning of Robinson's death while at a dinner party in the home of Mrs. (later "Lady") Champion de Crespigny, a writer and society dame:

> Obliged as I was to conceal the shock, which this intelligence gave to me, I bore up very composedly, till after the company had dined. Then finding, that in spite of Mrs. Crespigny's penetration, (for to her enquiries, I had denied my knowledge of Mrs. Robinson,) I must be overcome, I pleaded a nervous head-ache, and made an excuse for the tears which poured down my cheeks. Oh! How did it cut my heart, that I was thus forced to hide a regret which I thought laudable![543]

Porter's performance at Crespigny's dinner party reflects the pressure she felt to conceal her sincere affections for Robinson. In the same letter to Thomas Poole, in which Coleridge offers a tributary verse about Robinson, he also writes, "That a woman had but been married to a noble Being, what a noble Being she would herself have been."[544] His comment casts blame on Thomas Robinson for his lack of protection, and it further indicates that the persona of Perdita still loomed.

Maria Elizabeth Robinson was twenty-six when her mother died. The Prince of Wales confirmed that he would continue paying an annuity, but at the reduced level of £200.[545] Maria

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[543] Jane Porter's Manuscript Diary, 1801, Folger Shakespeare Library, M6 15.f.2.

[544] Coleridge to Thomas Poole, 1 February 1801, *Coleridge Letters II*, 669.

[545] In 1780, the Prince had promised Robinson a sum of £20,000 upon coming of age. Such is why Robinson retired from the stage. But she did not receive anything close to that amount. In 1783, with Charles

Elizabeth was saddled with debt by 1801, and she pleaded to Colonel John McMahon, the Prince's Treasurer, for an advance of £125 on the annuity. It was then that she learned that her father had exerted his rights over the estate and had claimed the money.[546] In principle, this would have surely outraged Mary Robinson herself, for she had objected to British laws that privileged the patriarch out of custom or design.[547] Maria Elizabeth's financial troubles made the 1801 publication of *Memoirs* all the more necessary.

Memoirs aroused interest in Britain but was only reviewed at length by the *Monthly Review*, which noted its resemblance to a novel.[548] The looming shadow of Perdita appeared yet again: "Mrs. R. played the part of a *pretty*, but not a *prudent* wife."[549] It is a snide statement, loaded with meaning. For one, the reviewer has cast Robinson as the pretty but morally suspect Perdita. Asserted elsewhere is the problem of "truth" in autobiography, the absence of Thomas Robinson's side of the story, and the blame that the author deserves for putting herself in dangerous situations.[550] That the veracity of *Memoirs* is called into question reflects the reviewer's undoubted bias. Thomas Robinson was well known for his infidelities and dissipation, and he was derided by the British press—his perspective was hardly trustworthy. Further, to suggest that Robinson was to be blamed for her profligacy ignores her limited options both as a female who needed an income and as the wife of Thomas Robinson, a man of suspect character.

James Fox as an intermediary, a settlement was agreed that the Prince would pay Robinson an annuity of £500. It was also agreed that following Robinson's death, Maria Elizabeth would receive an annuity of £250. She would receive only £200 per year, however.

[546] Davenport, *The Prince's Mistress*, 224.

[547] See, for instance, Robinson's *A Letter to the Women of England* (1799) and *The Natural Daughter* (1799).

[548] *Monthly Review*, 36 (December 1801), 344. During the same period, the *Poetical Register* reviewed only the fourth volume of Memoirs, which contained primarily complimentary verses. Its response was muted, offering only that "most" were "pretty," and that Robinson likely regretted adopting the manner of the Della Cruscan school. See *Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry* (1801), 433.

[549] Ibid., 346.

[550] Ibid., 344-360.

But the reviewer is also not incorrect in calling attention to the performative components of *Memoirs*. It is indeed a work of invention and opportunistic self-fashioning. Such a response to *Memoirs*, as the *Monthly Review* indicates, suggests that even if the work revived memories of Robinson's literary feats, it also revived memories of Perdita. At an auction in the late 1820s, *Memoirs* in its original manuscript would be sold for a mere £3, perhaps an indication of how far Robinson's star would fall.[551]

Posthumous reviews of Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* (1800) contain the characteristic trope of alluding to Perdita in the process of reviewing her literary endeavors. *The Monthly Visitor* references her recent death and labels her a "celebrated author" of "tenderness and simplicity."[552] But it also notes her scandalous reputation: "We shall, at present, say nothing of her history, but shall continue our attention to the *Lyrical Ballads* before us." Evident here is the ongoing obstacle of distinguishing Robinson's persona from her work. Of course, in the process of saying "nothing" about Robinson's history, the reviewer says alludes to it. The review concludes in a similar manner: "Poetical pieces of merit, from whatever quarter they may come, are sure of finding a place in our Miscellany." A similar response in printed by the *British Critic*, in which *Lyrical Tales* stages Robinson's "great facility," but her talents are obscured by the details of her past: "We have had frequent occasion to commend, though incidentally just reason to censure, various publications of her pen."[553]

Robinson's afterlife and her legacy as an author would erode in nineteenth-century Britain, save for her part in reigniting interests in Sappho and the Petrarchan sonnet. Like so many contemporary female poets, Robinson's work was eclipsed by the dominance of male

[551] William T. Whitley, *Thomas Gainsborough* (London: John Murray, 1915), 183.
[552] *The Monthly Visitor*, 12 (April 1801), 416.
[553] *British Critic*, 18 (August 1801), 193.

Romanticists, those such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Byron, (Percy) Shelley, and Blake. But not even her female contemporaries were weighed down by the same cultural baggage, and Robinson's dismissal in the minds of readers and critics alike is at least partly indebted to her affiliation with Perdita. When Maria Elizabeth Robinson saw to the publication of her complete poetical works in 1806, the public paid little attention.[554] Of the few occasions in which *The Poetical Works* was reviewed, responses contrasted in glaring ways. Published in 1806, or twenty-six years after the Prince of Wales first spotted Robinson as Perdita, the *Annual Review* devoted the majority of its three-page column to mocking Maria Elizabeth's characterization of her mother, which she provides in the volume's preface.[555] Specifically, the reviewer interrogates an argument made in the preface, one presented more thoroughly in *Memoirs*, that Robinson was the victim of duplicitous men. After citing a series of "pathetic lamentations" included in the preface, the reviewer offers a declarative dismissal: "Let not juvenile ignorance be deceived by sentimental misrepresentations and unprincipled concealments." There is little mention of the poetry within the volume itself, only a mischaracterization of Robinson as "one of the chief disciples" of the Della Cruscans, which it labels a "sect of harmonious drivellers." The poetry of Robinson, of course, matured far beyond that of the Della Cruscan vogue.

In 1807, the *Poetical Register* printed a brief review of *The Poetical Works*.[556] It reflects once more the challenge for the reviewer in delineating between Robinson's literary merits and that of her reputation as Perdita. Her poetry is praised, but her character is not. The accusation is subtle at first: "Robinson had a brilliant imagination, and a considerable command of language,

[554] *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Robinson, including many pieces never before published*, ed. Mary E. Robinson, 3 vols. (London: Phillips, 1806); reprinted as *Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Robinson* (London: Jones, 1824).

[555] *Annual Review*, 5 (1806), 516-19.

[556] *Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry*, 6 (1807), 540.

but she was deficient in taste. A great number of her compositions are rendered disgusting by affectation and meretricious ornament." The allusion is to the Della Cruscan aesthetic, and the slight appears not to be personal. However, the adjectives "disgusting" and "meretricious" do not quite fit. In meaning, they usually function as descriptors of morality, not poetics. The concluding sentence of the review takes this judgment of a moral nature one step further, even as it remains disguised by the framework of literary criticism: "Her later poems are written in a much purer style." As the reviewer in the *Annual Review* demonstrated, the public could not forget Perdita, and "purer" would surely signal Robinson's past as Perdita. Understood in this manner, Robinson's poetry may have improved with the abandonment of Della Cruscan tropes, but it is her refashioning as an ambitious and prolific literary figure that also signals growth. In this case, growth is conveyed in moral terms.

The Poetical Works was also reviewed by the *British Critic* in 1807, only here Robinson's characterization as an "unfortunate lady" is emphasized.[557] The reviewer expresses "sincere regret for [Robinson's] misfortunes," and "Madrigal," a poem described as "elegant," is included in full. Fitting with its title, "Madrigal" is song-like, simple but eloquent in its evocation of love personified as a "little blooming boy" who eventually loses his way after becoming separated from his mother.[558] The boy wanders and weeps for ages, and the poem concludes with a brief but "blissful" return before he was "hurled" away once more. Rhetorically, the effect of pairing Robinson, the "unfortunate lady," with the boy of "Madrigal" is to cast her as a tragic and sympathetic figure. The reviewer concludes with praise that would promptly be ignored until the latter decades of the twentieth century, when Robinson's contributions to the literary became

[557] *British Critic*, 30 (July 1807), 78-9.
[558] Robinson, "Madrigal" in *The Poetical Works*, 259-60.

a subject of committed scholarship: "[*The Poetical Works*] will be an acceptable addition to all collections of the best modern English poetry."[559]

Robinson's appropriation as Perdita would resurface in Britain during yet another national crisis—the Regency crisis of 1808. The Prince was satirized by means of "historical" novels that enacted the "Florizel and Perdita" affair, but in medieval settings. The anonymous *The Royal Legend* (1808) contained recognizable characters like "Colonel Carleton" (Tarleton), "Waldon" (Lord Malden), and "Lupo" (Fox), and its treatment of Robinson appeared to be based on a close familiarity with her *Memoirs*:

> The youthful Perdita, which was the name of the female, gave early proofs of a sensibility of disposition very uncommon at her tender years: the gloomy ruins of the cloisters were her constant haunt during the day; and in their solitudes her mind received those intellectual rays which beamed so brightly in her more advanced years.[560]

The Private History of the Court of England (1808), another faux-historical satire and one presented as a "secret history," reimagines the Prince of Wales encountering Perdita on stage while cross-dressed as Hamlet.[561] Public interest in the Prince kept interest in Perdita alive. In 1814, Pierce Egan published *The Mistress of Royalty; or, the Loves of Florizel and Perdita*.[562] It was a gleeful volume of imaginary letters between Florizel and Perdita, one that described her in no uncertain terms: "That the elegant, enlightened, interesting, beautiful Perdita was unchaste!"[563]

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[559] For representative examples of scholarship concerning Robinson's literature, including *Poetical Works*, see the following: Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Alison Conway, "Nationalism, Revolution, and the Female Body," *Women's Studies* 24.5 (1995): 395-409; and Chris Cullens, Mrs. Robinson and the Masquerade of Womanliness," in *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Veronica Kelly and Dorothea Von Mücke (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 266-89.

[560] *The Royal Legend, A Tale* (1808), 34.

[561] Sarah Green, *The Private History of the Court of England* (London: Tipper, 1808). It was anonymously published but Green has since been credited.

[562] Pierce Egan, *The Mistress of Royalty; or, the Loves of Florizel and Perdita, portrayed in the Amatory Epistles, between an Illustrious Personage, and a Distinguished Female* (1814).

[563] Ibid., 143.

The public would continue to conflate Robinson with the Perdita persona, but an occasional reference to her political values would surface. William Gifford, who attacks Robinson in *The Baeviad* (1791) and *The Maeviad* (1797), derides her political values in explanatory notes available only in an 1811 publication that included both works: "This wretched woman, indeed, in the wane of her beauty fell into merited poverty, exchanged poetry for politics, and wrote abusive trash against the government at the rate of two guineas a week."[564] William Hazlitt responded by describing Gifford's attacks on Robinson as "unmanly."[565] Hazlitt loathed Gifford and would briefly come to Robinson's defense in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825). It is likely due to Robinson's political values in the 1790s that she is referenced in Percy Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), in which the narrator's sister is called Perdita. Shelley, of course, married Mary Godwin, daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, both of whom were political allies of Robinson.

Robinson would become the subject of reimaginings in the most unexpected places, thereby signaling her ongoing utility to a British public that remained fascinated by her works and public personas. Charlotte Dacre—daughter to John King, who slandered Robinson years earlier in *Letters to Perdita from a Certain Israelite*—would claim in a poem called "To the Shade of Mary Robinson" to have a heart that beat to Robinson's own.[566] Robinson is imagined in sentimental terms, as a "seraph" who from heaven watches over the poem's speaker. Mary Pilkington wrote in her 1811 *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters*: "It is impossible to peruse the memoirs of [Robinson] without experiencing a mixture of pleasure and pain."[567]

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[564] William Gifford, *The Baviad and The Maeviad*, 8th edition (London: Becket and Porter, 1811), 55-6. The comment is included in the explanatory footnotes written by Gifford in correlation to *The Maeviad*.

[565] William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Henry Colburn, 1825), 272.

[566] Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya*, ed. Adriana Craciun (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview University Press, 1997), 269.

[567] Mary Pilkington, *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters* (London: Albion Press, 1804), 293.

Pilkington's text was an anthology of sorts, one advertised as "the most extensive collection of illustrious examples of feminine excellence ever published." Robinson's amours are defended as "the natural sensibility of her heart," and both her stage and literary careers are celebrated.[568] Robert Huish, who sought to capitalize in 1830 on the death of the former Prince Regent, rushed out a serialized *Memoirs of George IV*. Huish referred to Robinson as "one whose beauty, whose talents, and whose misfortunes, cannot fail to interest every susceptible mind in her favour."[569] But his defense of George IV was based upon the dubious assertion that Robinson was guilty of too fond an attachment: "She lived but for him, and in him only was she happy."[570] Robinson's reputed lack of sexual restraint would be used against her in order to make George IV appear more sympathetic.

Robinson received almost no critical attention in America. News of her death went unreported in American-based newspapers, and she was only periodically referenced in the nineteenth century. In the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, she is briefly mentioned, but only in connection to a book review of *Lights of the Old English Stage* (1878), a compendium by the Handy-Volume series that offered an overview of eighteenth-century British stage figures, those such as the Cibbers, David Garrick, Charles Macklin, Sarah Siddons, and John Kemble. The review refers to Robinson only once, as "Mary Robinson ('Perdita')", thereby signaling the conflation of Robinson with the Perdita persona.[571] *Lights of the Old English Stage* (1878) provides a chapter on Robinson, one entitled "The Story of Perdita." The title demonstrates how Robinson would be mythologized—not as a literary figure, but as Perdita. But her characterization here is sympathetic, a tragedy of unfulfilled potential. It functions, in fact, much

[568] Ibid., 294-5.
[569] Robert Huish, *Memoirs of George IV* (London: William Clowes, 1830), 56.
[570] Ibid., 71,
[571] *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, 14 September 1878, 7.

like the *Morning Post*'s false obituary of Robinson in 1786, in which she is cast as a victim of "unfortunate surroundings" whose promising stage career is thwarted by and uncaring husband and the negative influences of the *haut ton*.[572]

Robinson's afterlife in America contains at least one single spectacular period. It overlaps with the last year of her life in 1800 and extends to 1805. This period has been recovered thanks to the Digital Historic Collections at the New York Society Library, which provides records of books, readers, and borrowing history between 1789 and 1805.[573] Transcriptions of circulation records reveal a boom in New York City-based readers' interests in the works of Robinson, beginning in January of 1800. There are no records available prior to this date, presumably because New York Society Library had not yet acquired any of Robinson's works. Four prose titles were owned by the library—*Angelina* (1796), *Walsingham* (1797), *The False Friend* (1799), and *The Natural Daughter* (1799). For sake of clarity, I will examine these not in order of their publication date but rather in accordance to the years in which they were most popular at the library.

In 1800, the four volumes of *The False Friend* were borrowed a total of 130 times.[574] To put its popularity in perspective, *The Writings of Thomas Paine* (1792) was borrowed twice that same year; *The Life of Doctor Benjamin Franklin* (1798) was borrowed just twice in 1801. Members could take home the same book more than once, although records indicate that such did not happen often. Perhaps its disproportionate popularity is partly explained by a review of the domestic novel in the *Morning Post*: "The sable habit in which Mrs. Robinson has disguised

[572] *Lights of the Old English Stage* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878), 205.

[573] The New York Society Library is the oldest cultural institution in New York City. It was founded in 1754 as a subscription library.

[574] "The False Friend," *City Readers*, Accessed January 31, 2018.

The False Friend does not conceal the glaring traits of the character she means to delineate."[575] It was assumed that the character of Treville was written to mirror Colonel Banastre Tarleton. That Tarleton was despised by many Americans, coupled with the fact that Treville perishes on a journey to Lisbon, could signal a certain wish fulfillment on the part of the library's members.

In 1801, *The Natural Daughter* was borrowed 84 times.[576] In Britain, the novel was universally lambasted by anti-Jacobins for its similarities to Wollstonecraft's politics. The *British Critic*, for instance, wrote that "the heroine [is] a decidedly flippant female, apparently of the Wollstonecraft school.[577] *European Magazine* suggested that Robinson stick to poetry instead.[578] The story is set in 1792 when the French Revolution was "the great topic of conversation."[579] Unlike the courtship stories of so many contemporary novels, the heroine, Martha Morley, is abandoned by her husband; in order to survive, she pursues a career as an actress, poet, and novelist. While the parallels to Robinson's own life are obvious, perhaps borrowers of a still newly independent America admired the heroine's spirited independence, for she rebels against her oppressive husband, and this despite the abject poverty she faced.

Walsingham, a novel that offers a sustained attack on aristocratic corruption, was borrowed 52 times in 1802.[580] *Angelina*, borrowed 65 times in 1804, dramatized aristocratic hypocrisy and interrogated marriage as a form of legal bondage.[581] For perspective once more, Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1794), which would become the biggest bestseller of American history prior to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* half a century later, was

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[575] *Morning Post*, 22 February 1799.
[576] "The Natural Daughter," *City Readers*, Accessed January 31, 2018.
[577] *British Critic*, 16 (1800), 327.
[578] *European Magazine*, 37 (1800), 138.
[579] Robinson, *The Natural Daughter*, ed. Sharon M. Setzer (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview University Press, 2003), 180.
[580] "Walsingham," *City Readers*, Accessed January 31, 2018.
[581] "Angelina," *City Readers*, Accessed January 31, 2018.

borrowed nine times in 1804.[582] Between 1800 and 1805, Robinson's fiction remained incredibly popular among the New York City-based reading public, although it is a shame that only men were allowed to become members. As such, there is no way to determine how many were borrowing on behalf of their wives.

Several of Robinson's literary works would be revived by way of modern editions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries,[583] and especially her poetry would be included in anthologies of British literature, as well as those that positioned her place in the canon of literary Romanticism.[584] As a further demonstration of Robinson's lasting influence, the astory of "Perdita and Florizel" would be retold in the twentieth century, most often in the form of faux-historical romantic reimaginings. The texts cumulatively reflect the lasting appeal of their scandalous romance, and they also signal a range of reimaginings of Robinson as Perdita, many of which Robinson tailored during her lifetime. Stanley B. Makower's *Perdita: A Romance in Biography* (1908) presents Perdita as the pastoral heroine of Gainsborough's 1781 portrait. Their covert meetings are described as taking place "at that hour of milkmaids, when every hedgerow

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[582] "Charlotte Temple," *City Readers*, Accessed June 2, 2019.

[583] This is not a comprehensive list, but it does indicate the extent to which her work has been revisited and revived: *A Letter to the Women of England and The Natural Daughter*, ed. Sharon Setzer (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003); *Lyrical Tales*, facsimile with introduction by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); *Memoirs*, ed. M.J. Levy, as *Perdita: The Memoirs of Mary Robinson* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1994); *Poems, 1791*, facsimile with introduction by Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); *Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Robinson*, facsimile with introduction by Caroline Franklin (London: Routledge, 1998); *Sappho and Phaon*, ed. Judith Pascoe (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1994); *Selected Poems*, ed. Judith Pascoe (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000); *Walsingham; or, the Pupil of Nature*, ed. Julie Shaffer (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1992).

[584] Consider the following: *Broadview Anthology of Literature of the Revolutionary Period, 1770-1832*, eds., D.L. MacDonald and Anne McWhir (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2010); *Broadview Anthology of British Literature, Concise Edition, Vol. B*: *The Age of Romanticism*, ed., Joseph Black (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2012); *Broadview Anthology of British Literature, Vol. A.,* 3rd editions, ed. Joseph Black (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2017); *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740-1830*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); *Romanticism, an Anthology*, 4th edition, ed. Duncan Wu (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2014).

offers its milky couch for lovers."[585] In E. Barrington's *The Exquisite Perdita* (1925), the young Perdita Robinson is married to a cruel, negligent man, but her fate is drastically altered as she meets Mr. Sheridan, who encourages her to become an actress.[586] The central dilemma of the novel concerns her ability to avoid the trappings of the Royal court to find romantic love. Jean Plaidy's *Perdita's Prince* (1969) is described by its publisher as "the haunting story of a sweeping love that threatened to divide politics and become a national scandal."[587] In this case, Robinson is reworked as Mary Hamilton, a "pure woman" who commands the Prince's "pure love."[588] Most notable perhaps is Plaidy's rendering of George III as a domestic disciplinarian who would rather manage the home than manage Britain. Fox and his "double-chin" make an appearance, and the Prince's first letter to Mary is addressed to "Incognito," which evokes the genre of amatory fiction.[589]

Mary Robinson's grave is in a churchyard at Old Windsor. When she was buried, there was no cortège, nor any outbursts of either praise or ridicule. No one shouted "Perdita!" or cited elegiac verse. Only two friends were in attendance—William Godwin and John Wolcot. While women at this time did not typically attend funerals, the low number remains striking. Robinson fascinated the public, but her funeral was a quiet, nearly solitary affair. Robinson chose the burial spot herself, and on one side of her tomb is an epitaph she composed. One stanza, in particular, is reminiscent of the Gothic heroine of her *Memoirs*:

> No wealth had she, nor power to sway;
> Yet rich in worth, and learning's store:
> She wept her summer hours away,

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[585] Stanley B. Makower, *Perdita: A Romance in Biography* (New York: Appleton, 1908), 130.

[586] E. Barrington is the pseudonym of Elizabeth Louisa Moresby. See Barrington, *The Exquisite Perdita* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1925).

[587] Jean Plaidy, *Perdita's Prince* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1969).

[588] Ibid., 40.

[589] Ibid., 35; 41.

She heard the wintry storm no more.[590]

On the other side of the tomb is a sonnet by Robinson's friend Samuel Jackson Pratt. Its parting image is of Robinson as "an early victim of misfortune," an accurate statement given her poor choice of a husband. There is also a detail engraved just below Robinson's name and the years of her life: "Perdita." Knowing that Robinson refashioned herself for upwards of twenty years to repurpose the persona of Perdita, it seems impossible that it was she who asked for it. That Maria Elizabeth allowed the engraving also seems unlikely. But the grave was restored in 1952 by Robinson's great-great-niece. Perhaps it was she who added "Perdita" and unknowingly cast upon her the persona of Perdita once again.

[590] This is included in *Walsingham* as "Penelope's Epitaph." See *Walsingham*, ed. Shaffer, 153-4.

Conclusion

In 2014, a television series called *Turn: Washington's Spies* premiered on the *AMC* network.[591] Over the span of four seasons, *Turn* dramatizes events between 1776 and 1781 as they occurred primarily in New York State during the American Revolution. The series staged the origins of the Culper Ring, a spy ring formed by Major Benjamin Tallmadge under General Washington's orders in the summer of 1778, as the British occupied New York City.[592] *Turn* also staged the execution of Major John André in the finale of its third season, "Trial and Execution."[593] Shortly before André's hanging, he converses in a scene with Ben (Benjamin Tallmadge), who was a college classmate of hanged Patriot spy Nathan Hale.[594] Ben tells André, "Hale did it for his country. You did yours for your king. And I want you to know, I see honor in both." André's responds following a rueful sigh: "I did it for a woman. That is the loss I regret, more so than my own life."

The woman to which André is referring is the beautiful Peggy Shippen, wife to the traitorous Benedict Arnold. Posited by the series is a love triangle, and much like Anna Seward's *Monody on Major André* (1780), André is reimagined as a sentimental hero and a tirelessly devoted man of feeling. Peggy's loyalty is to André and not to her husband—and later, just as André's body is about to fall, the camera spans to Peggy, who is shown tearfully clutching a lock of André's hair. Their romantic relationship is pure fiction, of course, but this particular

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[591] *Turn: Washington's Spies*, season 1, episode 1, "Pilot," directed by Rupert Wyatt, written Craig Silverstein, featuring Jamie Bell, Seth Numrich, and Daniel Henshall, aired 6 April 2014, in broadcast syndication, Anchor Bay, 2014, Blu-Ray. The series is *loosely* inspired by Alexander Rose's *Washington's Spies: The Story of America's First Spy Ring* (New York: Bantam, 2006).

[592] The "Culper" name was suggested by Washington, who devised it from Culpepper County, Virginia. See Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 75.

[593] *Turn: Washington's Spies*, season 3, episode 10, "Trial and Execution," directed by Andrew McCarthy, written Craig Silverstein, featuring Jamie Bell, Seth Numrich, and Daniel Henshall, aired 27 June 2016, in broadcast syndication, Anchor Bay, 2016, Blu-Ray. André is performed by J.J. Field. Ben, as he is referred to in the series, is Benjamin Tallmadge. He is performed by Seth Numrich. Ksenia Solo portrays Shippen.

[594] Tallmadge and Hale were classmates at Yale in 1773.

reimagining of André further enriches his extraordinary afterlife. Seward used her *Monody* to personalize André's sacrifice to Britain, and she did so by inventing a story of love unfulfilled between André and Honora Sneyd. That André is assigned once more a fictional lover in *Turn* demonstrates the lasting appeal of personalizing his sacrifice in romantic terms. *Turn* perpetuates this mythic characterization of André rather than correct it. Let us not forget, after all, that André botched a key military mission for Britain, and he did so in the most careless of ways—by storing Arnold's letters in his stockings rather than memorize the instructions.

Seward may have had expressly political motivations for casting André as she did in *Monody*, but she also knew it made for good entertainment. The writers of *Turn* knew this, too. Only in the case of *Turn*, André's romantic pairing with Shippen, wife to Benedict Arnold, complicates the legacy of Arnold perhaps more than even that of André. Arnold's crime of disloyalty for personal gain is portrayed in terms far more severe than André's, who may have been a "common spy," but whose loyalty to Britain never wavered. The adaptation of Arnold's wife as André's love interest allows for the viewers of *Turn* to be rewarded twice: first, by the unambiguous pleasure of Arnold losing his wife to a better man; and second, by the bittersweet pleasure that occurs as a result of love lost to tragic sacrifice.

The study of afterlives facilitates discovery. The process of tracing an afterlife subject leads to the most surprising revelations—for instance, that within the mythology of André's afterlife, a peach tree at his burial site in Tappan, New York, was allegedly replanted in the King's garden; or that the most optimistic sections of Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) are backed by an orchestra and read aloud annually to an outdoor audience in New York; or that Charlotte Dacre—daughter to John King, who slandered Mary Robinson in *Letters to Perdita from a Certain Israelite*—would exalt Robinson as a "seraph" in a poem called

"To the Shade of Mary Robinson." Did Dacre idolize Robinson, or was the poem an act of rebellion against her father? Just as the study of afterlives facilitates discovery, it also leads to new questions. Indeed, this is part of the fun.

The project has traced the rise to public prominence of three late eighteenth-century figures who each have struck a chord in the cultures of Britain and America, beginning amidst the tumultuous period of the American Revolution and extending into the twenty-first century. As their remarkable afterlives indicate, the personas and works (literary and extraliterary) of Major John André, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, and Mary Robinson continue to fascinate, inspire, and divide transatlantic communities.

With this project, I have linked André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson in part because they all emerged as restorative public figures at approximately the same historical moment, as Britain's defeat in the American Revolution looked increasingly likely. Such a defeat represented a permanent disruption, and it resulted in a permanent alteration. Maps would need to be redrawn; identities would need to be recalibrated; at stake was not merely how the British imagined themselves, but rather how a weakened Britain would be imagined by its colonial subordinates. The 7 April 1778 address by the Earl of Chatham in the House of Lords neatly encapsulated the stubborn resolve felt by those most loyal to the ideals of Britain as a global empire, and his collapse embodied the fragility of the nation.

Of course, I have also linked André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson because their afterlives reflect a continual desire by transatlantic communities to revisit their personas and works (literary and extraliterary). In certain cases, their lasting utility can be explained by their restorative impact. For instance, a twenty-first century American audience is still capable of being inspired by a British spy's courage at the scaffold, for it speaks to enduring ideals

regarding citizenship and loyalty. In other cases, their lasting utility can be explained by public memory and the proximity of their personas and works to periods of national unrest. Mary Robinson, for instance, had not been romantically involved with the Prince of Wales for nearly thirty years, and yet her utility to the British public became pronounced once again during the Regency Crisis of 1808. Britain was facing a potential crisis of leadership, and Robinson-as-Perdita served as a powerful reminder—one that the Prince's political opponents, in particular, could use—of the Prince's inadequacies as a leader.

The personas and works of André, Crèvecoeur, and Robinson have also remained useful to transatlantic communities because they evoke a range of feelings—to put it simply—that are *relatable*. Crèvecoeur's vision of protean America still inspires today, just as one can still relate to his depiction of an America ravaged by war and man's compulsion to self-destruction. As afterlife subjects, they each are made anew, and continuously so. Their afterlives are intertextual and expansive, and they contain not shadow-lives but rather a range of creative transformations. Afterlife expressions are diverse; they are not confined to any single boundary or platform, whether textual, performative, or visual; and they allow us to re-orient our understanding away from the proprietary, original author.

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