



E. P. Thompson, Britain, and the
French Revolution
by David Eastwood

Re-reading much of Edward Thompson's work, I have been struck afresh by how deeply English his cast of mind was. It was not so much that his scholarly work focused almost exclusively on English subjects, but rather that his reading of English history so often verged on a celebration of English exceptionalism. The finest summary of Thompson's reading of long-run developments in English historical formation remains his 1965 essay 'The Peculiarities of the English', that wonderfully controlled polemic where Thompson married intellectual virtuosity and theoretical plasticity to so telling an effect.¹ If this 1965 essay hinted at the great arch of Thompson's historical vision, the rest of his oeuvre offered stonework of a very distinctively English kind.² Now it is true that some Thompsonian concepts have travelled, the idea of 'moral economy' most notably, but even his most generally influential theoretical formulations were rooted in the English popular experience and in English archival sources. Whether or not Thompson died in the faith of a 'Mugletonian Marxist' I am not competent to judge, but only the most English of Radicals could have defined himself as such *in New York in 1968*.³

All of this is crucially relevant both to Thompson's reading of the French Revolution and to the way in which he sought to situate the French Revolution in English history. Throughout his work Thompson constantly and emphatically played down the significance of 1789 for English history.

Too often, since every account must start somewhere, we see only the things which are new. We start at 1789, and English Jacobinism appears as a by-product of the French Revolution. . . . Certainly the French Revolution precipitated a new agitation, and certainly this agitation took

root among working people, shaped by new experiences, in the growing manufacturing districts. But the question remains – what were the elements precipitated so swiftly by these events? ⁴

In contrast to those who accorded the French Revolution a normative role in the formation of English popular radicalism (G. S. Veitch, P. A. Brown, and Albert Goodwin most notably), in opposition to those who sought to locate English radicalism in a pan-Atlantic revolutionary culture (R. R. Palmer, Jacques Godechot, and, more problematically, George Rudé), and in refutation of those who regarded English radicalism as a mutant from the authentic and international radical movement (Perry Anderson, Tom Nairn, and latterly the new French left), Thompson offered an unflinchingly *English* account of English radicalism.⁵ Its constant theme, however implicitly articulated, was English exceptionalism; its tone that of reverence for the English radical tradition.

The French Revolution had two functions in Thompson's account: firstly it constituted the context for the extraordinary democratization of English radicalism in the 1790s⁶; and secondly the French Revolution and the Revolutionary Wars triggered a twenty-five year counter-revolution by the British state, a counter-revolution which delayed the reform of parliament and reshaped the forms of mass radicalism. Post-war radicalism and Chartism were its unplanned progeny. But if the French Revolution was doing a good deal of work in Thompson's account, it generally did so as a silent, brooding presence rather than as a normative force. Here there is no *British* debate on the French Revolution. In so far as a reading of the Revolution is seen as instrumental in the construction of English radicalism, that reading is straightforwardly Paineite. Moreover it is no coincidence that, for Thompson, the central intellectual figures of English radicalism in the 1790s are not Paine, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft, but Thelwall, Spence, and Blake.⁷

In *The Making of the English Working Class* in particular, Thompson was inclined to present the French Revolution not as a *process* but as an *event*. The 'Fall of the Bastille' was offered both as symbol and essence of the Revolution.

Too often events in England in the 1790s are seen only as a reflected glow from the storming of the Bastille. But the elements precipitated by the French example – the Dissenting and libertarian traditions – reach far back into English history. . . . It was not an agitation about France, although French events both inspired and bedeviled it. . . . Constitutionalism was the flood-gate which the French example broke down. But the year was 1792, not 1789, and the waters which flowed through were those of Tom Paine.⁸

This disposition to regard the French Revolution as event rather than as process was doubly impoverishing. Firstly, it implicitly committed Thompson to

a very thin reading of the Revolution itself. I will return to this later. Secondly, it blurred the changing contours of the English debate on the Revolution. Initial English reaction to the French Revolution was inclined to construe the French Revolution as an event, in the manner of the English Revolution of 1688, and to evaluate it accordingly. In so far as the French Revolution differed from the Glorious Revolution, it did so in terms of the magnitude of the event. The French Revolution was more radical in its redistribution of rights and power, bolder in its transformation of subjects into citizens, more searching in its reconfiguration of the relationship between state and church. The interventions of Richard Price, James Mackintosh, Joseph Priestly and Mary Wollstonecraft are best understood as attempts to understand and justify the event of the French Revolution.⁹ This was, as Alfred Cobban insisted, a genuine debate on the fundamentals of British politics, 'the last real discussion of the fundamentals of politics in this country', and it was a debate which fused interpreting the French Revolution with contesting the nature and legitimacy of the English polity.¹⁰

Now it may be objected that the English response to the French Revolution was not part of Thompson's concern in *The Making of the English Working Class*. Thompson's problematic here was the formation of popular political consciousness and the development of popular political activism in England. But in fact the two processes were of a piece. Thompson attributed the explosion of popular radicalism in 1792 to the extraordinary success of Paine's *Rights of Man*. Paine's work both ignited mass radicalism and became 'a foundation-text of the English working class movement'.¹¹ Yet Paine's radicalism is not to be explained simply in terms of the English radical tradition, rather it gave sharper definition to an emergent Atlantic radical tradition. Moreover, it owed its inspiration to the English debate on the French Revolution. In short, *Rights of Man* both refracted the French Revolutionary experience for an English popular readership and translated the debate on the French Revolution into the vernacular of popular radicalism.¹² In so far as English popular radicalism in the 1790s turned on a Paineite moment, that Paineite moment was a moment in the struggle to define the meaning of the French Revolution for English political evolution. Thompson was, of course, right to insist that English radicalism drew heavily, even predominantly, on English radical idioms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the distinctive language of English popular radicalism was neither pure nor insular. From the London Corresponding Society to the Chartist Conventions English radicalism retained a structural syncretism. The promised land might have been English, green, and pleasant, but, thanks to Paine, some French trees of liberty gave it shade and colour.

In a celebrated review of *The Making of the English Working Class*, Geoffrey Best gently chided Thompson for his treatment of popular loyalism, remaining 'a while longer on the fence . . . while I turn over a number of small questions in my mind and hope that the rising tide of serious

social history will sooner or later provide answers to them. How strong then was that flag-saluting, foreigner-hating, peer-respecting side of the plebeian mind? . . . Mr Thompson, fair as he ever tries to be, notices it but, impelled by distaste or incomprehension, at the end discounts it'.¹³ Thompson never denied this oversight, welcomed the prospect of work on plebian loyalism, and implicitly recognised the deeply fissured nature of English working class political consciousness. What Thompson never fully appreciated was the extent to which taking popular patriotism seriously might necessitate a modification both of his model of English popular political culture and the importance of the French Revolution for the English political tradition. Over the past fifteen years or so much scholarly attention has been devoted to the conservative and popular response to the French Revolution.¹⁴ I want to focus on two central themes which have emerged from this work: the transformation of the language of patriotism and the impact of the Revolutionary Wars on the nature and capacity of the English state. Both themes configure the French Revolution not as event but as process; both assume that the evolving, frequently dichotomous, and always capacious nature of the Revolution was a constant challenge to the English state and to English political culture; both, in other words, invite us to adopt a more dynamic model of the relationship between Britain and the French Revolution than that generally implied by Thompson.

Let us begin with popular patriotism. The language of patriotism in the eighteenth century was predominantly a language of radicalism, quite distinct in its political resonance from loyalism. From Bolingbroke through to Richard Price reformers invoked patriotism as a political language which legitimised reformism.¹⁵ The rhetorical substance of eighteenth-century patriotic discourse was anti-corruption, broader representation of opinion, hostility to oligarchy, and an expansion of individual and political rights. After the French Revolution, and particularly after the outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars, a different symbolic language of patriotism was forged which celebrated the crown, the church, an ordered and propertied polity, and a new pantheon of national heroes, Nelson and Wellington most notably. By the close of the Napoleonic Wars, the political meaning of patriotism had changed profoundly. Traditional, and popular, English reflexes – anti-gallicanism, xenophobia, anti-Catholicism – had found a place, and a more politically sophisticated form, in a patriotic discourse which turned these insular, negative, popular intuitions into a celebration of the English polity itself. The catalyst for this transformation was the need to forge a popular and authentically English political language to challenge the hegemonic claims of the political language of Revolutionary France, with its universalizing imperatives.¹⁶ The language of popular patriotism, like the language of radicalism, was improvised on that most resonant of rhetorical formulations, 'the rights of Englishmen'.

The emergence of a popular, non-radical patriotic language both facilitated and embedded itself in new forms of conservative political action.

The Loyalist Associations of 1792–3, the Volunteer Corps which flourished after 1793, and the Local Militias of the Napoleonic era enabled the state to mobilize mass action in support of the anti-French, anti-radical struggle, and in defence of a conservative polity.¹⁷ For Thompson the period after 1792 was a period of sustained *counter*-revolution in England. If that was so, and there is a good deal to be said in defence of this idea, then it was a counter-revolution which had high political and popular theatres.

This leads us directly to the role of the French Revolution in transforming the nature and capacity of the English state. Viewed from the perspective of state formation, the French Revolution was a profound, indeed systemically democratizing event. The *levée en masse* and Terror, coupled with a new ideology of citizenship, enabled the French state to mobilize resources for war on a quite unprecedented scale. The Revolutionary Wars confronted the English, aristocratic polity with the challenge of matching the French state's ability to mobilize national resources for war without embracing, or even acknowledging the efficacy of, the revolutionary means it had employed in order to achieve this organization of the nation for victory. Thus the mass participation in the British war effort, the massive privations associated with Britain's insistence on systematic economic warfare, and the increasing reliance on mass volunteering was justified in terms of an essentially English participatory patriotism.¹⁸ The process was not without its ambiguities. Activism in defence of the English polity, whether through the Reeves Associations, the Cheap Repository, or through active volunteering, constituted a form of self-enfranchisement. Under pressure from Revolutionary France, the English state was forced to abandon the idea of popular political quietism. If there was a counter-revolution after 1792 it was a process which redefined the relationship between patrician politics and plebeian political action, and it was a process which made the forging of popular politics and popular political identities altogether more hesitant, complex, and contradictory.

So far I have skirted around Thompson's concept of an English counter-revolution. We should now confront it more directly. The fullest statement of this Thompsonian counter-revolution comes towards the end of *The Making of the English Working Class*.

The example of the French Revolution initiated three simultaneous processes: panic-struck counter-revolutionary response on the part of the landed and commercial aristocracy; a withdrawal on the part of the bourgeoisie and an accommodation (on favourable terms) with the *status quo*; and a rapid radicalization of the popular reform movement until the Jacobin cadres who were tough enough to survive through the Wars were in the main little masters, artisans, stockingers and coppers, and other working men. The twenty-five years after 1795 may be seen as the years of the long counter-revolution, and in consequence the

Radical movement remained largely working class in character, with an advanced democratic populism as its theory.¹⁹

Thompson's chronology of this counter-revolution is not altogether consistent. Elsewhere he speaks of 'the political *counter*-revolution from 1792–1832'.²⁰ Here timing matters enormously. If we date a counter-revolution to 1795 then it is explicitly a response to the presence and puissance of popular radicalism in Britain, and it was announced in the repressive Treason and Seditious Practices Acts of 1795. But Thompson's earlier date is equally plausible, implying a counter-revolution heralded tentatively in the Royal Proclamation of 21 May 1792, consolidated in the Reeves Associations and the encouragement of Volunteering, and acquiring a misplaced but revealing confidence in the State Trials of 1794. A counter-revolution beginning in 1792 would be grounded in ministerial fear that the synergy between popular radicalism and the actions of the French Revolutionary state might prove devastating for the English polity.

Thompson's counter-revolution was located within a specifically English process of state formation. He always conceptualized the Hanoverian state in terms of 'Old Corruption'. In 'The Peculiarities of the English' he offered a characterization of the eighteenth-century state, first as aristocratic 'brigandage', then as the 'parasitism' of a governing elite, and finally in the Cobbettesque language of 'Old Corruption'. Thompson's reading of Hanoverian politics, analytically, is straightforwardly Namierite, even if the descriptive language is tonally different: 'all this does not quite make up an aristocracy, conceived as a ruling class. It was . . . [sic] nothing but itself. A unique formation. Old Corruption. It could scarcely have seen the eighteenth century out if the French Revolution had not occurred, providentially, to save it'.²¹ Thus the French Revolution '*consolidated* Old Corruption by uniting landowners and manufacturers in a common panic'.²² I can't say I find this very persuasive, at least in the form in which Thompson developed the argument. 'Old Corruption' was a splendidly resonant radical rhetoric, but as a description of the way in which the late Hanoverian state functioned it is at best imprecise and at worst misleading.²³ It caricatures sophisticated political processes, parodies flexible political institutions, and, above all, understates the English state's ability to reform itself. The ability of the English state to increase its capacity – in fiscal, political, and economic spheres – in the late eighteenth-century was at least as important as its repressive capacity in explaining why the English state survived and whilst an increasingly-sclerotic French state collapsed before the Revolution.²⁴

Thompson's counter-factual is illuminating. 'The Priestley Riots in Birmingham in 1791 showed to what extremes this class antagonism might have grown'.²⁵ Thus the substantive effect of Thompson's counter-revolution was not merely to delay the ending of Old Corruption but to change the trajectory of England's historical development. The implication

that the Priestley Riots represented the prologue to some sort of decisive class contest is hardly born out by John Money's work on the political culture of the West Midlands, nor does Thompson himself seem to incline to this rather stark formulation of fundamental class alignments in his later essay 'Patricians and Plebs'.²⁶ That aside, Thompson's account of the English counter-revolution embraces not just Tory repression but also Whig cynicism. By 1831 the long counter-revolution had given way to another potential revolutionary moment, and a revolutionary moment in which a mass reform movement was not to be constrained by the crudely coercive strategies of counter revolution. Here again Thompson's counter-factual is revealing, not least for its French resonances. 'In 1832 a revolutionary outbreak was averted only at the eleventh hour. . . . If it had not been, then it is reasonable to suppose that revolution would have precipitated a very rapid process of radicalization, passing through and beyond a Jacobin experience; and whatever form a counter-revolution and eventual stabilization might have taken it is unlikely that many eighteenth-century institutions could have survived – the House of Lords, the Established Church, the monarchy, and the judicial and military elite, would, probably have been swept away, at least temporarily'.²⁷ Thus, for Thompson, this long English counter-revolution culminated in what might be termed 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Lord Grey'.²⁸

There was a final, profound, and suggestive twist in Thompson's characterization of the French Revolution. In chapters two, three, and four of *The Making of the English Working Class* Thompson traced the deep roots of English radicalism. In *Witness Against the Beast* he revisited these themes in a way that accorded still greater weight to the radical legacy of the seventeenth century and which carefully mapped the contours linking English Dissent to English radicalism. This is far removed from the universalizing language of French Revolutionary radicalism. But when it is associated with Thompson's insistence on seeing the eighteenth-century English landed class as a ruling capitalist class²⁹, this line of argument can be redeployed *against* what Thompson took to be a vulgar version of English exceptionalism. Thompson was profoundly uneasy with the notion of the French Revolution of 1789s constituting the normative model of the revolutionary process.

The French Revolution was fundamental in the history of the West, and in its rapid passage through a gamut of experiences it afforded incomparable insights and prefigurements of subsequent conflicts. But because it was a gigantic experience it was not necessarily a typical one. . . . It [a bourgeois/capitalist revolution] happened one way in France, in another way in England. I am not disputing the importance of the difference – and of the different traditions which ensued – but the notion of typicality.³⁰

As Thompson developed this theme he came close to developing an argument for the exceptionalism of the French Revolution. In the French Revolution

revolutionary processes took self-consciously revolutionary forms, and in so doing compressed, intensified, and reproblemated the process of transformation. The glittering, traumatic result had beguiled Marxists and others.

. . . if earlier Marxists had been less obsessed with the French, and more preoccupied with the English, Revolution, the model [of Revolution] itself might have been different. Instead of one climatic moment, *the* Revolution, we might have had a more cumulative, epochal model, with more than one critical transition.³¹

Thompson's insistence on the pluralism, complexity, and distinctiveness of historical processes is as welcome (though perhaps less necessary) in the 1990s as it was in the 1960s. His model of the French Revolution, however, is one which stands awkwardly alongside more recent scholarship. His tendency to treat the French Revolution as an event rather than a process would find little support in more recent scholarship. Indeed it is this notion of the French Revolution as *process* that much recent work has explored.³² Certainly the French Revolution itself had no one climatic moment, not even in Year II, and not even the post-Soboul Marxists would suggest it did.³³ Moreover, the Revolutionary tradition in France (a tradition we might now believe ended in 1871 rather than 1968) has had more than one 'critical transition' and has influenced British history more than once (again in 1830 for example). In the light of recent scholarship, Thompson's tendency to characterize the French Revolution as form of Revolutionary exceptionalism, now looks distinctly perilous.

This would doubtless have concerned Thompson but I am unclear as to how far it might have caused him to modify his stance. As with Professor Best's flag waving, foreigner hating plebeian culture, Thompson would possibly have recognised realities and then set them aside as incidental to his principal concern. The true genius of Edward Thompson lay in his reconstruction of the vernacular of English radicalism. If he was sometimes deaf to ways in which French idioms intruded themselves into that vernacular, he enabled us to relish the sonorities of the English radical tradition and to perceive the dignity of popular political interventions. He was the most English of English historians.

NOTES

1 Reprinted in E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), pp. 245–301

2 Thompson's hostility to French intellectual fashions endured to the end. Compare his mordant self-criticism quoted by Paul Slack and Joanna Innes in 'E. P. Thompson', *Past and Present*, 142 (1994), p. 5, with E. P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory or An Orrery of Errors' in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, pp. 1–210.

- 3 E. P. Thompson, *Witness Against the Beast. William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge, 1993), p. xxi.
- 4 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin edn., 1968), p. 27.
- 5 G. S. Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (new edn., London, 1965), pp. 108–207; P. A. Brown, *The French Revolution in English History* (new edn., London, 1965); Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty. The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979); R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution* (2 vols., Princeton, 1958/64); Jacques Godechot, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, 1770–1799* (English edn., London, 1971); George Rudé, *Revolutionary Europe 1783–1815* (London, 1964), pp. 179–200; P. Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *N[ew] L[eft] R[evue]*, 23 (1964); Tom Nairn, 'The British Political Elite', *NLR* 23 (1963); *idem*, 'The English Working Class', *NLR* 24 (1963).
- 6 *Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 27, 888.
- 7 *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 172, *Witness Against the Beast*, and E. P. Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', *Past and Present*, 142 (1994), pp. 94–140.
- 8 *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 111 cf. p. 114.
- 9 Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (London, 1789); James Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae Defence of the French Revolution and its English Admirers, against the Accusations of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (London, 1791); Joseph Priestley, *Letters to the Right Hon Edmund Burke, Occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Birmingham, 1791); Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London, 1792).
- 10 Alfred Cobban, *The Debate on the French Revolution 1789–1800* (2nd edn., London, 1960), p. 31.
- 11 *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 99.
- 12 Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language 1791–1819* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 35–67; Mark Philp, *Paine* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 54–93; Ian Dyck (ed.), *Citizen of the World. Essays on Thomas Paine* (London, 1987).
- 13 Geoffrey Best, 'The Making of the English Working Class', *Historical Journal*, viii (1965), pp. 271–81, here at p. 278. For Thompson's response see *Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 916–17.
- 14 Here the work of H. T. Dickinson has been crucially important, notably *Liberty and Property Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1977), pp. 270–318; 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789–1815', in Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution 1789–1815* (London, 1989), pp. 103–26; 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in Eckhart Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture. Germany and England in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 503–34. Other contributions include Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty, and the British Nation 1760–1820', *Past and Present*, 102 (1984), pp. 94–129, *idem*, *Britons, Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven and London, 1992); Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792–3', *Historical Journal*, 4 (1961), pp. 56–77; Robert Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, Ky., 1983); E. C. Black, *The Association: British Extraparliamentary Political Organization 1769–1793* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 233–74; and David Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State in the 1790s', in M. Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 146–68. For an incisive critique of some of this work see John Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of Anti-Jacobinism', in Philp (ed.), *French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp. 38–49.
- 15 Hugh Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism', *History Workshop Jnl.*, 12 (1981), pp. 8–33; John Dinwiddy, 'England' in Dinwiddy and Otto Dann (eds.), *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1988), pp. 53–70.
- 16 David Eastwood, 'Robert Southey and the Meanings of Patriotism', *Jnl. of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 265–287; Colley, *Britons*, pp. 97, 284–7.
- 17 Austin Gee, 'Volunteering in Britain 1793–1815', (unpublished University of Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1989); J. E. Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793–1815: Some Contexts', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), pp. 867–91; S. C. Smith, 'Loyalty and Opposition in the Napoleonic Wars: The Impact of the Local Militia, 1807–1815', (unpublished University of Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1984); Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism 1792–93', *English Historical Review*, forthcoming.
- 18 Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State in the 1790s'.
- 19 *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 888.
- 20 *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 216.

21 'Peculiarities of the English', pp. 258–9 For a helpful summary of Namier see Linda Colley, *Namier* (London, 1989), esp. pp. 46–71. When Thompson was working on both *The Making* and 'Peculiarities of the English' the eighteenth century was, in a very distinctive sense, Namier's century; see John Kenyon, *The History Men* (London, 1983), pp. 251–69.

22 *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 195

23 Compare, for example, Paul Langford's richly penetrating *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman 1689–1798* (Oxford, 1991). Interestingly Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer who, in 1985, offered an expansively Thompsonian reading of the eighteenth century as 'Old Corruption', have recently modified their account, *The Great Arch. English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (new edn., Oxford, 1991), pp. 87–113, cf. pp. 210–12.

24 Amidst a large literature see on the English state see John Brewer, *Sinews of Power War, Money, and the English State 1688–1783* (London, 1989); and on the French state see J. F. Bosher, *The French Revolution* (London, 1989), pp. 60–132; David D. Bien, 'Officers, Corps, and a System of State Credit: The Uses of Privilege under the Ancien Régime', in Keith Michael Baker (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture. The Political Culture of the Old Regime* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 89–114

25 'The Peculiarities of the English', p. 262

26 E. P. Thompson, 'The Patricians and the Plebs', in *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), 16–96, esp. p. 91; John Money, *Experience and Identity, Birmingham and the West Midlands 1760–1800* (Manchester, 1977)

27 'Peculiarities of the English', p. 256.

28 During this long counter revolution, Thompson believed that the ideology of the English middle class shifted profoundly, 'Godwin giving way to Bentham, Bentham giving way to Malthus, M'Culloch, and Dr Ure, and these giving rise to Baines, Macaulay and Edwin Chadwick', *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 888. The ideological narrative here implied is, to say the least of it, distinctive.

29 See 'Peculiarities of the English', p. 262; E. P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters* (Penguin edn., 1977), 190–269; *Customs in Common*, pp. 16–96, 185–258, 352–403.

30 'Peculiarities of the English', p. 257.

31 'Peculiarities of the English', p. 268

32 Notably Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley, 1984); Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Eng. edn., Cambridge, 1981).

33 Geoffrey Ellis, 'The "Marxist Interpretation" of the French Revolution', *English Historical Review*, 93 (1978), pp. 353–76.

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