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# The Prospectus War of the 1790s: Literary Advertising in an Age of Revolution

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## I

The French Revolution debate that dominated the British press for much of the 1790s is often referred to as a "pamphlet war" but the phrase gives little indication of the range of genres, formats and media through which the debate was conducted. The controversy extended beyond the bounds of the printed page to encompass many other forms of communication, from sermons and satirical cartoons to everyday objects such as crockery items, handkerchiefs and coins, all of which were used for propaganda purposes.[1] One type of printed ephemera[2] which played an important role in the controversy but which has not thus far been studied either by historians or literary scholars is the "prospectus," a marketing device widely used by the book trade to announce projected publications and to solicit advance orders or subscriptions. The subscription method accounted for only a small proportion – less than 5 per cent[3] – of the books published at this time but almost all periodicals relied on subscribers for some if not all of their sales, and the purpose of a prospectus was to attract them. The proliferation of new journals, magazines and newspapers that was part of the print phenomenon of the 1790s thus involved also the proliferation of prospectuses,[4] pamphlet-like documents which served not only to advertise new publications but also to encapsulate their political message in the most appealing way. It is the convergence of commercial and political functions – of the language of advertising and the language of political persuasion – that makes the prospectus of particular interest in this context. Although many prospectuses, like other types of ephemera, have disappeared, the corpus of surviving examples sheds light on the clash of political ideas, the publishing culture that sustained it and the relationship between literature, politics and advertising at this crucial historical moment.[5] It is this largely forgotten genre that forms the subject of this article, which will analyze a selection of journal and book prospectuses from across the political spectrum.

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[1] See the many kinds of text, artwork and ephemeral object catalogued in David Bindman, *The Shadow of the Guillotine: Britain and the French Revolution* (London: British Museum Publications, 1989). The diversity of written forms is illustrated by Alfred Cobban, ed. *The Debate on the French Revolution, 1789-1800*, 2nd ed. (London: A. and C. Black, 1960). See also David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 70-72. For French political ephemera, see Richard Taws, *The Politics of the Provisional: Art and Ephemera in Revolutionary France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2013).

[2] Defined here as any type of printed material whose intended function was transitory, the definition used by Maurice Rickards, *Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator and Historian* (New York: Routledge, 2000). For an historical overview, see Michael Twyman, "Printed Ephemera," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. 5: 1695-1830*, ed. Michael F. Suarez, S.J., and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009).

[3] James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2007), 316. For other statistical data, see William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004).

[4] On the proliferation of newspapers and periodicals, see Lucyle Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England 1792-1793* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1967); Jeremy Black, *The English Press, 1621-1861* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), chap. 8; Stuart Andrews, *The British Periodical Press and the French Revolution 1789-99* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); and Victoria E.M. Gardner, *The Business of News in England, 1760-1820* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[5] For the rise of literary advertising in this period, see John Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007); and Nicholas Mason, *Literary Advertising and the Shaping of British Romanticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2013).

The observation made by Marilyn Butler in her critical analysis of the Revolution controversy, that we lack commonly accepted rules for reading and interpreting its key texts,[6] applies more emphatically to a paratextual genre like the prospectus, which eludes traditional literary categories with respect even to basic features such as authorship and date. Typically running to three or four pages (though it could be much longer or as short as one page), a prospectus was a substantial printed advertisement, issued by a publisher or author, which would describe a projected book, journal or newspaper, explain the rationale for publishing it and how it differed from competitors, and state the conditions of sale, including how and where it could be obtained, and at what price. [7] A prospectus differed from other types of advertisement in being a free-standing brochure, printed and circulated separately rather than appearing in the classified columns of a newspaper or journal (though its wording could be reused for that purpose, usually in an abbreviated form, and prospectuses were also distributed as inserts in other publications, as advertising material is today). In the case of books, the conditions of sale would usually specify paper quality, typeface, number and type of illustrations (if used) and other technical details; sometimes specimen pages were included, or the prospectus itself would serve as a specimen by being printed on the same paper and in the same format and typeface as the proposed book.[8] Journal prospectuses, while not neglecting the material form, normally devoted more space to editorial policy, range of coverage, quality of information and, in the case of newspapers, speed of dissemination of news (the precise timing of publication was a crucial factor, as in *The Sun*'s insistence in its 1792 prospectus that "the Paper shall not be published *until after the hour of the arrival of the Foreign Mails*," to allow inclusion of the most up-to-date news).[9]

Though ephemeral in the sense that they became redundant when the publication they announced appeared, prospectuses had a lifespan that was longer than that of advertisements in, say, daily newspapers, which were tied by definition to the life-cycle of one day that is the root meaning of the word "ephemera" (from Greek *epi*, "on, for," *hemera*, "day"), even if in practice newspaper advertisements could be repeated over many issues. The time lapse between the issuing of a prospectus and the publication of the advertised book or journal could be weeks, months or even years, depending on the success of the appeal for subscribers and other variables. Where subscription funding proved insufficient, as happened not infrequently, the book or journal might never appear. In some cases, the prospectus went through multiple "editions" before the publication appeared, a textual instability that modern bibliographical conventions struggle to cope with (there is as yet no agreed system for referencing the textual "state" of a prospectus, and in many libraries prospectuses languish with other printed ephemera in uncatalogued folders or boxes, separated from the publications they announce and from other documents which might give meaning to them).

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[6] Marilyn Butler, ed. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), 2. Many scholars have since followed her lead in developing such techniques: see, e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, ed. Pamela Clemit (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010).

[7] John Feather, *English Book Prospectuses: An Illustrated History* (Newtown: Bird and Bull Press, 1984). This brief survey of the genre concentrates on earlier periods and excludes periodical prospectuses.

[8] See David Duff, "The Book to Come: Literary Advertising and the Poetics of the Prospectus," in *Forms, Formats and the Circulation of Knowledge: Innovations in the British and Irish Book Trade, 1688 -1832*, ed. Louisiane Ferlier and Bénédicte Miyamoto (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

[9] *A new daily paper… to be entitled the Sun*, 1 Aug. 1792, British Library, 937.g.3(58). Dates given here and below refer to the publication of the prospectus rather than of the work advertised. Page numbers are omitted.

Book historians, while acknowledging the role of prospectuses in subscription publishing, have failed to pinpoint the particular significance of the prospectus as the highest in a hierarchy of advertising genres: a master-advertisement that could itself be advertised, as in the many cross-references in newspaper advertisements to prospectuses that "could be obtained *gratis*" from booksellers or "news-carriers." The emergence of the word "prospectus," first recorded in this sense in 1765 (OED) and in standard use by the 1790s, reflects the increased visibility of the genre, which dates from the birth of subscription publishing in the seventeenth century but was previously known simply as "proposals to publish." The more concise and versatile term "prospectus" embraces both book and periodical proposals and suggests a broader remit than the recruitment of subscribers, though this remains its core function.

Other aspects of the everyday life of prospectuses have been similarly overlooked. One is their scale of use. As with other types of printed ephemera, the small numbers of copies that survive belie the ubiquity of the genre. The print-run of a prospectus could be many times that of the book or journal it advertised. Some copies would be posted to private individuals; others would be placed in bookshops, coffee-houses, lecture rooms and other public spaces. This meant that the commercial decision a prospectus solicited (whether or not to subscribe) would be taken, in many cases, in public, and witnessed by other people. Public visibility is part of the commercial logic of the subscription process, a tangible manifestation of which is the printed lists of subscribers' names often found in books published by subscription[10] and sometimes on prospectuses themselves (successive editions of which would add to the tally of subscribers to create a "crowd-funding" momentum). The fact that prospectuses were also distributed by itinerant news vendors or "news-carriers" (also known as "news-men" and "news-dealers") along with newspapers, pamphlets and other topical publications, gave them further public visibility. The announcement of a new publication or subscription offer became itself a newsworthy event, the performative language of the prospectus often deliberately highlighting this. In the case of political publications this factor took on special significance, connecting the prospectus with other forms of topical writing and other types of public announcement.

A second factor that needs to be taken into account is that prospectuses were not aimed solely at individual subscribers. They were aimed, too, at booksellers, who, in response to a prospectus, might take out multiple subscriptions for a book or journal in order to acquire copies for resale. Coffee-house and tavern owners, too, might place several orders for the same journal or newspaper: like the proprietors of circulating libraries and subscription libraries (who were more likely to take journals), they were buying not on behalf of themselves but of their clientele.[11] By the same token, many readers of prospectuses would have had no intention of taking out a personal subscription: for every subscriber there were several people who would only ever read borrowed or communal copies of the publication in question. For these, a prospectus served as an enticement to read rather than to buy.

Journal and newspaper prospectuses were often targeted, too, at potential contributors or "correspondents" (a word that could refer to one-off letter-writers, as on a modern newspaper

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[10] The one well-studied aspect of this topic: see, e.g., Frank J. G. Robinson et al., *Book Subscription Lists: A Revised Guide* (Newcastle upon Tyne: PHIBB, 1975); and Hugh Reid, *The Nature and Uses of Eighteenth-Century Book Subscription Lists* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010).

[11] See David Allan, *A Nation of Readers: The Lending Library in Georgian England* (London: British Library, 2008).

"letters page," or contributors making regular, paid submissions). Some prospectuses directly address this group, inviting would-be contributors to contact the editor and even setting out editorial guidelines, as in the prospectus to *The New London Review; or, Monthly Report of Authors and Books* (1799), which devotes a whole paragraph to "casual Contributions."[12] Potential advertisers were yet another target readership, for newspaper prospectuses especially, advertising being a crucial source of revenue for most newspapers, then as now. A typical example is the prospectus for *The Albion, and Evening Advertiser,* a daily evening newspaper launched in 1799, which closes by giving the name and address of the London printer "to whom Advertisements and Communications of every kind may be addressed."[13] The differing interests and needs of these various categories of reader help to account for the mixed discursive properties of prospectuses, which contrive to address the public at large (sometimes in sections explicitly entitled "To the Public") while also targeting specific professional groups, including the book trade itself.

A third factor to bear in mind concerns the authorship of prospectuses. Prospectuses are usually defined as a publisher's genre whose authorship is of little significance. In Gérard Genette's influential typology of paratextual forms, prospectuses lie outside the paratext proper (the liminal zone of verbal statements materially appended to a text that mediate it to the public and help to constitute it as a "book") and belong instead to the "epitext," a term he applies to ancillary texts that are physically separate from the book and serve a purely promotional function, their distinguishing feature being a "value-inflating hyperbole inseparable from the needs of trade."[14] Though an author may occasionally participate in this type of textual production, he does so "anonymously and in the capacity (a paradoxical one, if you like) of assistant to the publisher," expressing "less his own mind than what he thinks the publisher's discourse ought to be." (347) The hierarchical distinction Genette makes here between author and publisher, and the implication that prospectuses, as a commercial discourse, are an inherently impure or compromised form of textuality, make little sense, however, in cases where authors act as their own publishers, or where a prospectus includes an explicit authorial address to the public, as in several of the examples below. With journals, the person who writes the prospectus is often the editor, an under-theorized figure in modern theories of authorship, who serves as intermediary between author, publisher and reader. Genette's distinction between "paratext" and "epitext" is also problematic, in that it obscures the many instances where prospectuses are subsequently incorporated into the body of the work they announce: a practice common in this period both with books and periodicals, where, for example, a prospectus becomes a preface to set of bound volumes when a serial publication is transformed into a "book". The claims made by a prospectus can remain a key reference point throughout and beyond a journal's lifespan, both in the pages of the journal and in the broader public domain.

A full history of the prospectus as a paratextual genre and a type of printed ephemera remains to be written. The special interest of the 1790s lies in the way this well-established form – by then a standard part of the promotional machinery of the book trade – became caught up in the ideological struggles of the revolutionary decade and pressed into service as a propaganda instrument which was used on all sides of the Revolution controversy. The qualities which made the prospectus an effective marketing device – its techniques of persuasion and enticement, its ability to present grandiose plans in a condensed form, and its repertoire of different modes of public address, attuned to different readerships – made it also an effective vehicle for political exhortation and comment. The extensive distribution networks to which prospectuses had access, their high visibility in public places of reading and literary exchange, and their elevated status in the hierarchy of advertising genres also helped to give them significance disproportionate to their size. It is often difficult to isolate the impact of a prospectus from that of the book or journal it announces, and prospectuses were just one of the numerous pamphlet-like genres that circulated in the revolutionary decade. But close scrutiny of the language and form of prospectuses, and of what evidence survives of their reception history, suggests that this seemingly mundane genre played an important part in the French Revolution controversy, producing a distinctive kind of political prose whose function went far beyond that of commercial advertisement.

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[12] *Prospectus of the New London Review; or, Monthly Report of Authors and Books,* 1799, British Library, 823.c.1(11).

[13] *Prospectus of a daily evening newspaper, to be called the Albion, and Evening Advertiser,* 1799, British Library, 821.ee.19.

[14] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1987), trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 347.

## II

The use of the prospectus as an instrument of political communication is strikingly exemplified by the career of the radical journalist Sampson Perry, who on 27 October 1795 launched his fortnightly magazine *The Argus, or, General Observer of the Moral, Political, and Commercial World*. The unusual circumstances in which he did so, and the advertising methods he used, throw fascinating light on the radical publishing culture of which Perry was an important part, though his name is now known only to academic historians. A former military doctor specializing in bladder and kidney diseases, Perry first achieved prominence as a journalist as co-owner and editor of a daily newspaper also called *The Argus*, launched in 1789. When he later became sole proprietor, Perry took an increasingly radical stance and was repeatedly prosecuted for libels on the government, earning two terms of imprisonment. In September 1792, facing arrest again, Perry absconded to France and, like his friend and fellow radical Thomas Paine, was tried in absentia and outlawed. The London offices and presses of the *Argus* were taken over by the ultra-conservative, government-sponsored newspaper *The True Briton*, but Perry remained active as a journalist in revolutionary Paris and there is evidence that he sought publication of a French version of the *Argus*, though no copies have survived.[15] In August 1793, Perry, along with other British ex-patriates, was imprisoned under the Law of Suspects and spent 14 months in various Parisian jails. Released in November 1794, he returned secretly to England but was betrayed to the authorities, re-arrested, and imprisoned in Newgate, where he spent six years before eventually receiving a pardon with the change of ministry in 1801.

Far from abandoning his journalistic activities in prison, Perry teamed up with his former publisher Henry Symonds, who was also imprisoned in Newgate, and relaunched the *Argus* as a fortnightly magazine, priced one shilling. That he was able to edit a radical periodical while serving a penal sentence for seditious publication may strike modern readers as implausible, but recent research by Iain McCalman has shown that Newgate in the mid-1790s became, paradoxically, “an epicentre of British Jacobin cultural resistance,” the government’s anti-sedition legislation having produced a concentration in the same prison of many prominent radical writers, publishers and booksellers, who took the opportunity to embark on a series of publishing ventures.[16] The four-page prospectus Perry issued on 1 October 1795[17] alludes to his imprisonment, or "seclusion from the world " (as he ironically describes it), in a separate section entitled "Advertisement from the Author." Writing in the first person, Perry refers to the "persecution" he has suffered, and expresses "without reserve, my anxieties and my hopes for this new undertaking." Despite previous setbacks, "it is neither with shame nor reluctance, that I declare myself beginning the world again, though at this advanced period of my life, with no other stock in trade than pens, ink, and paper." Perry's candid, confessional tone gives a new note of authenticity to the conventional address to the public which is a feature of many prospectuses, aligning his authorial statement with other radical writings of the 1790s which employ self-disclosure for political ends.[18] Perry taps this fashionable autobiographical trend for both political and commercial reasons, signalling that personal testimony will be a major point of interest in the journal. The personal dimension is foregrounded visually by the use of a printed signature in a special italic font that resembles handwriting (figure 2), a font sometimes employed by newspapers as a sign of authenticity when citing handwritten newsletters. Its use as a similar sign of authenticity underlines the level of care taken with the design of the prospectus.

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[15] David V. Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790-1793* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1986), 244. See also Rachel Rogers, “Censorship and Creativity: The Case of Sampson Perry, Radical Editor in 1790s Paris and London,” *Revue Lisa / Lisa e-Journal* 11.1 (2013); and the entry on Perry (by Iain McCalman, 2005) in the online *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

While trading on Perry's name and controversial reputation, the prospectus also appeals to public fascination with the French Revolution, revealing that his revolutionary sympathies, unlike those of many British radicals, have been unaffected either by the Jacobin Terror or by the anti-radical campaign in England, notwithstanding his experience of imprisonment in both countries. The "Advertisement from the Author" concludes not with a message of regret or caution but instead with one of unrestrained optimism for the "new æra" which lies ahead. Here the notion of "prospectus" gains an explicitly political colouring as Perry, punning on the morphology of the word, calls attention to "the *prospect* of the new, the sublime destiny which awaits my fellow creatures," the same word, in another form, that he uses in the mission statement on the front page of the prospectus (figure 1):

> This Publication is calculated to instruct, enlighten, and prepare the Mind for comprehending and contemplating the Cause of those Changes, which have happened, and are about to happen, in the several Governments of Europe; with Reflections thereon, peculiarly applied to the *prospective* advantage of the People of England. (my emphases)

Balancing thought and action, retrospect and prospect, the general and the particular, Perry summarizes the message of the journal in a brilliantly succinct and provocative way. The confident, promissory language, enhanced by alliteration and parallelism but restrained by the careful phrasing and syntax ("with Reflections thereon, peculiarly applied to"), produces a compressed eloquence that shows prospectus-writing at its best. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Perry chose to reuse this paragraph in the abbreviated version of the prospectus that appeared in a number of newspaper advertisements (figure 3),[19] giving even wider circulation to what amounts to a personal political manifesto.

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[16] Iain McCalman, "Newgate in Revolution: Radical Enthusiasm and Romantic Counterculture," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22.1 (1998): 95-110. Another Newgate project for which a prospectus (from 1796) survives, though the work was never published, is William Hodgson's *The Female Citizen, or, A Historical, Political, and Philosophical Inquiry into the Rights of Women*, repr. in Michael. T. Davis et al., *Newgate in Revolution: An Anthology of Radical Prison Literature in the Age of Revolution* (London: Continuum, 2005), 139-43.

[17] *Prospectus to the Argus, or General Observer of the Moral, Political and Commercial World*, 1 Oct. 1795, British Library, E.2079(1), the copy reproduced in fig. 1. The prospectus was reissued with the announced launch date altered from 24 to 27 Oct. (British Library, P.P.3428, the copy used for fig. 2).

[18] See Pamela Clemit, "Self-Analysis as Social Critique: The Autobiographical Writings of Godwin and Rousseau," *Romanticism* 11.2 (2005): 161-80.

While foregrounding Perry's role as author and editor, the prospectus also refers to other contributors, citing the promises he has already received and inviting further submissions. Like other magazines, the *Argus* will include poetry but avoid the frivolous kinds normally associated with such publications, "magazine verse" already being a term of disparagement in some literary circles. In making this distinction, Perry uses the gendered terms frequently invoked by contemporary critics, justifying his policy on the grounds of historical necessity: "as these are not the piping days of Peace, no admittance can be given to *Love Sonnets* or *Elegies of the Deaths of Blackbirds* and *Linnets*," whereas "the emanations of a strong male poetic genius, will always be received with gratitude, and handed forward to posterity with pride by the Editor." A similarly chauvinistic tone is adopted in the policy on language, a topic foregrounded throughout the prospectus. Sampson declares that "purity" of expression will be "a matter of especial solicitude" in the journal: "affectation" will be banished, and there will be no "foreign idiom to disfigure – no pedantry to attenuate its force." The journal "is intended to be what the Author would prove himself – *English*." This allusion to the "purity of English" debate – a key issue in the politics of language in this period[20] – is intended to pre-empt the charge that Perry has been linguistically corrupted by his years in France, and thus to rebut the more serious charge frequently levelled against supporters of the French Revolution, of being unpatriotic. In this as in other respects, the prospectus is a carefully judged position statement, appealing to sympathetic readers while also using subliminal signals to reassure those wary of his stance.

How effective the prospectus was in recruiting subscribers is not known, though Perry was clearly not in a position to promote his publication in person the way that Coleridge was with his *Watchman* tour, the one well-documented case history of the distribution and reception of a political journal prospectus in the 1790s.[21] The new *Argus* ceased publication within eight months, one reason being that it was partly intended, as the prospectus explains, as a vehicle for publishing by instalments Perry's magnum opus *An Historical and Philosophical Sketch of the French Revolution*, a 48-page section of which was to be included with each issue. By allowing subscribers to spread the cost over 24 numbers, Perry hoped to bring his book within reach of readers who would not otherwise have been able to afford it. Once the serialization was complete, the *Sketch* was republished by Symonds in book form.[22] Perry intended to go on publishing the magazine part of the *Argus* on its own, but this did not happen; instead, the previously-published magazine material was collected in a second book entitled *The Argus; or, General Observer: A Political Miscellany* (1796). The preface to it explains this decision, citing as a reason "the passing of a bill which inflicts *transportation* as a penalty, for writing, printing, publishing, or uttering, any words or sentences to incite the people to hatred of the government."[23] This is a reference to the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act of December 1795, which had entered the statute books since the relaunch of the *Argus* and led many booksellers, as he delicately puts it, "to decline disposing of any work which animadverts upon government, however pertinently or warily." (iii) The effect of this draconian legislation, Perry implies, was to make publication of such magazines unviable. The full story of this whole publishing venture has yet to be told, but market conditions, and the shifting political situation which shaped them, undoubtedly played a part. Notwithstanding the eventual demise of the journal, the *Argus* prospectus stands out as a courageous piece of political writing which, under adverse circumstances and at a turning point in the Revolution debate, attempts to reclaim the radical initiative by reasserting the hope of political change and lending Perry's personal authority as an undisillusioned eye-witness to the French Revolution.

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[19] The online *British Newspaper Archive* contains at least five examples: the *Gloucester Journal*, the *Hereford Journal*, the *Manchester Mercury*, the *Norwich Chronicle*, and the *Oxford Journal*.

[20] See Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791–1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); and Andrew Elfenbein, *Romanticism and the Rise of English* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2008), chap. 1.

[21] Nicholas Roe, "Coleridge's Watchman Tour," *Coleridge Bulletin*, n.s. 21 (Spring 2003): 35-46; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Watchman*, ed. Lewis Patton (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), xxxii-xxxv.

[22] The book version carries the amended title *An Historical Sketch of the French Revolution, Commencing with its Predisposing Causes, and Carried on the Acceptation of the Constitution, in 1795*. For the significance of the term "sketch" in Perry's title, signalling both the immediacy of first-hand observation and unfinished nature of the political events described, see Rachel Rogers, "'Relinquish[ing] all former connections': British Radical Emigration to Early Republican Paris," in *Exiles, Émigrés and Expatriates in Romantic-Era Paris and London*, ed. David Duff and Marc Porée, special issue of *Litteraria Pragensia: Studies in Studies in Literature and Culture* (2019), vol. 29, no. 56 (July 2019).

## III

The role of the prospectus in radical print culture can be explored further through the publishing activities of the London Corresponding Society. In addition to its many other publications, the L.C.S. made at least two ventures into the area of periodical publishing, both of which generated prospectuses that survive. The idea of starting a weekly periodical was first mooted at a meeting of the L.C.S. Committee of Correspondence on 25 July 1794.[24] It was quickly approved and a hatter named Richard Hodgson wrote a draft prospectus for a weekly magazine to be entitled (provocatively) *The Politician*, priced at one penny an issue. His draft was deemed unsatisfactory and approaches were made to a series of well-known authors to produce an alternative prospectus. These included James Mackintosh, author of one of the most famous pamphlets of the Revolution controversy, *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791), and Joseph Towers, a leading Dissenter and political pamphleteer. That writers of this calibre and public prominence were approached underlines the importance accorded to prospectuses and confirms that prospectus-writing was regarded at the time as a form of serious literary authorship, not merely anonymous copy-writing. In the event, attempts to procure their services were unsuccessful and an amended version of Hodgson's original prospectus was used, the advertisement appearing on 13 December 1794, the day of publication of the first issue (figure 4). Despite these promotional efforts, the magazine failed to attract sufficient subscribers and was discontinued after just four issues, the poor state of L.C.S. finances making it impossible to sustain.

Notwithstanding the failure of the *Politician*, the idea of an L.C.S. journal was revived later in 1795, the Executive Committee having decided it "would be serviceable to the cause of reform" (Thrale, 349) and that, if properly run, it could help revive the financial fortunes of the L.C.S., which had deteriorated further due to expenses associated with the arrest and detention of several of its members. Though this optimistic plan met with some opposition (Francis Place, a former secretary of the L.C.S., later reflected that a "better contrivance to prevent the society paying its debts could hardly have been devised"[25]), a new, monthly periodical was established under the title *A Moral and Political Magazine*, priced at 4½*d.* for members, 6*d.* for non-members. A two-page prospectus was issued on 30 May 1796 (figure 5), announcing publication of the first issue on 1 July: copies of the prospectus were sent to all correspondents and included in letters to deputies. Initial sales were good, circulation rising to 4000 by the fourth issue, but thereafter the numbers went into decline and by January 1797 circulation had dropped to 1750, making the journal financially unsustainable. It ceased publication in June 1797. As well as being issued serially, the magazine was republished in book form (a standard arrangement to add to sales), the first volume appearing in 1796, the second, under a different publisher, in 1797.

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[23] Sampson Perry, *The Argus; or, General Observer: A Political Miscellany* (London: H.D. Symonds. 1796), iii.

[24] Michael T. Davis, ed. *London Corresponding Society, 1792-1799* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2002), 3:1. My information on L.C.S. periodicals is mostly taken from this edition, which includes facsimiles of the two prospectuses discussed here (*Politician* 3:3-4; *Moral and Political Magazine* 3:37-38). For additional information, see Mary Thrale, ed., *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983).

As in other cases, it is difficult to isolate the impact of the two prospectuses from that of the journals they advertise or from other L.C.S. publications. Several features, however, can be discerned which throw light on the Society's exploitation of the genre. The prospectus to *The Politician* is entitled not "Prospectus" but "Address," a term that carried a carried a special resonance for the L.C.S., connecting it with other publications such as the *Address from the London Corresponding Society to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, on the Subject of a Parliamentary Reform* (1792), its first major public statement, the *Address of the London Corresponding Society to the Other Societies of Great Britain, United for Obtaining a Reform in Parliament* (1792) and the Society's much-reprinted *Addresses and Resolutions* (1792), a collection of many such documents. Public address, with its distinctive linguistic registers, is, indeed, the dominant rhetorical mode of the L.C.S., an organisation whose raison d'être was the promotion of political reform through targeted speech acts, both spoken and written. The prospectus to the *Politician* reads much like other public announcements of the L.C.S., reaffirming the reformist aims of the organisation, denouncing the political and economic forces that stand against it ("the iron hand of Oppression" and "the present extravagant system of corruption") and citing other publications that have already made the case for reform. What is missing, however, is the sales patter which would normally be expected from a prospectus. Except for the assurance that the "labours" of organisations dedicated to "promoting political Knowledge" and "supporting the Rights of the People" "shall find in this work a faithful register," there is no information at all about the journal being advertised: a worrying omission since its business model required the recruitment of subscribers beyond the current membership of the L.C.S. (whose own willingness to subscribe is, again worryingly, taken for granted). In its lack of illustrative detail or verbal hype, the prospectus fails to mobilize the poetics of enticement that it is at the heart of successful advertising. If the resultant prose achieves a certain purity by its exclusion of these tricks of the trade and its reliance on a wholly *political* rhetoric, it is a purity that defeats the commercial purposes of a prospectus, and it is not surprising that the journal struggled from the start to recruit sufficient subscribers.

The prospectus to the *Moral and Political Magazine*, in this case actually entitled "Prospectus," is a more commercially astute document, which outlines in the first paragraph the scope of the journal (listing its regular features), the material form ("six half sheets of letter press") and the differential pricing policy allowing members of the L.C.S. ("and the country societies in union with us") to pay 1½*d.* less than "strangers." The procedural language of "addresses and resolutions" is still present, however, with the opening sentence declaring that the journal is the result of a committee decision, and the collective first-person plural being used throughout. Once again, the publication of a prospectus is used as an opportunity to restate the fundamental aims of the organisation, but there is a new note of urgency – and of defensiveness – which undoubtedly reflects the setbacks the L.C.S. had encountered and the sufferings incurred by some of its members as a result of repressive government action. To continue to campaign openly for parliamentary reform in the wake of the treason trials of 1794 and the "Gagging Acts" of 1795, was a brave undertaking,[26] and the prospectus is at pains to stiffen the resolve of those prepared to do so. In an intertextual manoeuvre typical of radical pamphlets of the 1790s, the prospectus cites (without naming) Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), reversing one of his famous sayings to make an opposite political point, about the "present fallen state" not of revolutionary France but of an England in the grip of populist reaction:

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[25] Cited in Thrale, 362.

> A celebrated man complained of the French Revolution, that it had slain the mind of the country. Whatever were the foundation of his complaint, the members of the London Corresponding Society encounter many hardships, and incur many risks, some of which it is too probable are yet undisplayed, to revive and exalt the mind of this country.

There is an unmistakable sense of desperation here. The idealism that marks the early addresses of the L.C.S. from 1792-3 is still discernible but it is no longer an unbridled optimism but instead a wary determination to keep political hope alive despite the public setbacks and the personal dangers (those already manifest and, ominously, those "yet undisplayed").

The final paragraph goes into further detail about the challenge of "restoring this commonwealth to the purity of its first principles" when the forces of reaction were exerting themselves so strongly and large sections of the population had been "influenced against their political opinions by men of wealth and power." The insidious power of ideology was a common theme in radical literature, blame often being laid on a corrupt, reactionary press (the focus of Coleridge's attack in his *Watchman* prospectus). The L.C.S. being a largely working-class organisation, the emphasis here falls instead on the plight of ordinary people – "the farmer and mechanic" – who, through misplaced deference to their "nominal" social superiors are manipulated to act against their own best interests. These are the people to whom the prospectus is addressed, in the hope that they will be persuaded to see through the blandishments and self-serving lies of the "profligate aristocracy," and instead take their political bearings from "men of plain good sense, and of honest and inflexible minds." A prospectus that begins, conventionally enough, as an appeal for subscribers ends as a plea to the common people of England to rescue their country from a state of subjection by penetrating the ideological fog that was enveloping it.

## IV

The tonal shift in radical political discourse suggested by a comparison between the 1794 and 1796 prospectuses of the L.C.S. can traced, too, in the sphere of loyalist publication, the genre revealing itself to be, here as elsewhere, both a barometer of the public mood and the occasion for a type of public address that frequently transcends its commercial function. Unsurprisingly, the premise of many counterrevolutionary prospectuses is that the British press was dominated by forces hostile to the government. Such was the view of *The British Critic*, a journal founded in 1793 (with substantial government subsidy) with the express aim of countering "what may be called *a monopoly of the press*," now the exclusive preserve of "sectaries, republicans, socinians, and infidels." These words appear in the *Proposal for a Reformation of Principles* published in London in January 1792 by an unnamed "Society of Gentlemen" who had come together to oppose the spread of radical ideas. This two-page document is the first iteration of what later became the prospectus for the *British Critic*, which is dated 22 April 1793. In between, a *Sequel to the Proposal for a Reformation of Principles* had appeared (in June 1792), giving further insight into the evolution of the journal and the motivations that lay behind it.[27]

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[26] For the impact of the trials and the "Gagging Acts" – the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act and the Seditious Meetings Act – on the L.C.S., see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 179-83. For other mechanisms of political surveillance and control, see John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and David Worrall, "Freedom of Speech", in *The Oxford Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. David Duff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 233-49.

The fact that the various stages of the project – the original idea for it, the choice of format and title, the selection of a publisher, the recruitment of contributors and the quest for subscribers – are shared with the public in a series of press announcements is part of a marketing strategy to stimulate interest incrementally, but it is also an ideological tactic designed to cultivate loyalty to a developing political programme. The first *Proposal* is an openly polemical document which conflates the language of commercial competition with that of political opposition. Quoting (and this case referencing) the account in Burke's *Reflections* of "that *literary cabal* in *France*, which, by poisoning the fountains of literature, of late effected the destruction of their church and government," the *Proposal* warns of a similar process underway in Britain, not only through the dissemination of "that mischievous and worthless piece of *Thomas Paine*," *Rights of Man*, now to be found "in pot-houses and petty assemblies in all parts of the Country," but also through more strictly literary publications such as the *Biographia Britannica* (co-edited by the Dissenters Andrew Kippis and Joseph Towers), the *Monthly Review* (a journal indiscriminate in its praise of "loose, dangerous, and fanatical writers") and even novels, written "to insinuate under that disguise the error of heresy and infidelity; as people, if they were to poison children, would mix arsenic with their sugar-plums."

At this stage, the group of Tory clerics who issued the *Proposal* probably had in mind a mission society along the lines of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (to which the *Proposal* refers), and a variety of publication schemes are mentioned, including the distribution of "little deep pamphlets … among the common people," an idea later taken up by Hannah More with her *Cheap Repository Tracts*. By the time of the *Sequel*, attention was focused on a "Periodical Review" for the "Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy," and the arch-Tory firm of F. and C. Rivington had been selected as the publisher. The title followed next, and the appointment of the philologist Robert Nares as editor, with the classical scholar William Beloe as his assistant. It was, presumably, Nares and Beloe who then drafted the prospectus, a four-page document which sets out the editorial policy of the journal by explicitly jettisoning any claim to impartiality and declaring the authors to be "firm friends to real Liberty, as established by the British Constitution, and to real Christianity, particularly as delivered in the Evangelical Doctrines of the Church of England." Instead of trying to persuade sceptics and dissenters, the editors promise to speak for the silent majority and

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[27] *No. I. A Proposal for a Reformation of Principles*, 1 Jan. 1792; No. II. *A Sequel to the Proposal for a Reformation of Principles*, 11 June 1792, British Library, RB.23.a.3539; *Prospectus to the British Critic, A New Review*, 12 Apr. 1793, British Library, 11902.c.26(82). The relationship between these three documents is explained by Derek Roper, *Reviewing before the* Edinburgh *1788-1802* (London: Methuen, 1978), 23-24.

"look for commendation only from such persons as agree with us, in what should be maintained as everlasting truths." With this uncompromising conservative agenda, the *British Critic* launched itself on the swelling tide of loyalist opinion, rapidly gaining a sale equivalent to that of the well-established *Critical Review* (3500 copies by 1797) and only slightly lower than that of its arch-rival and chief counter-model, the *Monthly Review* (5000 copies).[28] As recent studies have suggested,[29] the *British Critic*'s unabashed partisanship – its open breach with the convention of critical neutrality – was an important moment in the politicization of literary journalism, helping to inaugurate an age of polemical reviewing which lasted well into the nineteenth century – as did the *British Critic* itself. In this context, the 1793 prospectus, and the *Proposal* and *Sequel* which precede it, can be said to have set out of the terms of that new critical dispensation, and provided a model for later manifestoes of a similar kind.

One such manifesto is the prospectus to *The Revolutionary Magazine* (figure 6),[30] a weekly journal launched on 29 August 1795 by William Playfair, a well-known Scottish economist and entrepreneur who had spent six years in Paris and become an implacable enemy of the French Revolution. The other work he composed on his return to Britain in 1793, *A History of Jacobinism: Its Crimes, Cruelties and Perfidies*, published by subscription in 1796, is a minor classic of counterrevolutionary literature, a work that vies with Abbé Barruel's *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1797) and John Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy* (1797) for the ferocity of its denunciation of revolutionary ideas and the methods by which they were spread. The *Revolutionary Magazine* is a condensed version of Playfair's *History*, diversified by other anecdotes about the French Revolution and by political reports on other countries.[31] Published by Parsons of Paternoster Row, it was priced at 6*d.*, to include with each number "one Copper-plate Print, on some interesting Event of the Revolution." A premium edition on "superfine paper" was also available for 9*d.*,[32] while a standard half-year subscription was 10*s.* 6*d.* for 26 numbers, which worked out at under 5*d.* an issue.

The two-page prospectus that contains these details – almost certainly written by Playfair, since it bears every hallmark of his style – is notable for the exaggerated claims it makes both for the originality of the magazine and for the "unexampled" value for money it offers, the subscription terms making it "cheap enough for all classes of persons" while remaining "sufficiently elegant and interesting for the rich." Reaching for every available superlative (and using most of them at least twice), Playfair declares his magazine will be "a work more interesting, instructive, and entertaining any hitherto published, in any country or in any language, on a similar subject." Written by "a Society of Gentlemen," it will draw on a "very extensive" set of foreign correspondents "who have the means of receiving the most authentic information on every occasion;" and will include "many curious facts which have never been printed, and which, probably, never will be published in France; the French nation being ashamed of the atrocities committed during the reign of Robespierre and other tyrants." In its disclosure of new historical information and its unparalleled narrative skills, the magazine promises to be as revolutionary as the subject it treats, the double meaning of the title being part of the marketing strategy.

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[28] Timperley's figures, cited by Roper, 24.

[29] Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s: Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 3; Kevin Gilmartin, *Writing against Revolution: Literary Conservatism in Britain, 1790-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), 98.

[30] *Prospectus of the Revolutionary Magazine*, 1795, Bodleian Libraries, Univ. of Oxford, Vet.A5e.3735. This copy is bound into the journal (as numbered pages i-ii) and followed by both a "Plan of the Work" (iii-iv) and a "Preface" (v-viii), indicating Playfair's fondness for paratexts and organizational display.

[31] For commentary on these interconnected projects, see Jennifer Mori, "Languages of Loyalism: Patriotism, Nationhood and the State in the 1790s," *English Historical Review* 118: 475 (2003): 33-58.

[32] An option omitted from the advertising announcement (otherwise identical) entitled *On Saturday, the 29th of August, will be published. Number I. of the Revolutionary Magazine*, British Library, 1866.a.19(1).

This brazen confidence in the power of advertising and in the efficacy of hype is typical of Playfair, who in 1794 advised the government that the best way to combat the spread of radical ideas was not to imitate the tactics of organisations like the London Corresponding Society, who distributed subversive pamphlets free of charge, but rather to fund on a massive scale the advertising of pro-government pamphlets, at a cost to the Treasury of between £8000 and £12,000 a year.[33] Advertising was, for Playfair, inseparable from any other means of propagating ideas, a conviction that made his prospectuses genuine propaganda documents, in which no holds were barred either in the promotion of his own beliefs or the denigration of those of his opponents. Indeed, Playfair saw his interventions in the Revolution controversy not as a form of intellectual combat – this is not a "War of Opinion," he states bluntly in the prospectus to his *History* – but an attempt to wipe out the competition and eradicate dissent. "We are fighting for *Realities and not for Opinions,*" he declares, and it is "a view to remove every difference of opinion" that "has compelled the publication which I here announce." [34]

The same confidence in the self-evidence of truth is expressed in the epigraph from Pope's *Essay on Man* which adorns the title page of the prospectus to the *History* (figure 7):

> Vice is a Monster of such hideous mien
> That to be hated, needs but be seen

As befits the inventor of the statistical bar chart and pie chart, Playfair's whole ideological strategy rests on the idea of clarity of display, making the genre of the prospectus the natural medium for the expression of his outspoken political views. This comes through even more forcefully in the prospectus to the *History* than in that of the *Revolutionary Magazine* because here Playfair drops of the persona of the "Society of Gentleman" and speaks in the first person, invoking, like Perry, the authority of first-hand experience to substantiate his judgments on the French Revolution. The fact that, despite a massive advertising campaign, his *History* attracted fewer subscribers than he hoped for, and that the *Revolutionary Magazine* was a commercial failure notwithstanding the £250 government subsidy he received,[35] may indicate that he overestimated his skills as a copywriter, but his advertising efforts in 1795-6 mark another important stage in the prospectus war, showing how competitive pressures in the market for literature about the French Revolution, combined with an inflationary logic in counterrevolutionary discourse itself, had led to a major escalation of the commercial and political rhetoric of loyalism.

## V

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[33] Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the Press c. 1780-1850* (1949; rpt. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1973), 152-53.

[34] *The History of the French Revolution. Proposals for publishing by subscription, the History of Jacobinism; … by Mr. Wm. Playfair*, 19 Mar. 1795, Cambridge Univ. Library, 7560.c.80. This prospectus was distributed both separately and (as with this copy) as an insert in Playfair's *Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl Fitzwilliam* (London: Stockdale, 1795).

[35] Mori, 50 n.52. For the use of subsidy and other forms of economic control, see Ivon Asquith, "The Structure, Ownership and Control of the Press, 1780-1855," in *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day*, ed. George Boyce et al. (London: Constable, 1978).

Undoubtedly the most famous prospectus of the 1790s, and the one whose impact is easiest to demonstrate, is the prospectus to *The Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner*, the satirical journal launched on 20 November 1797 by George Canning, a junior minister in Pitt's government, and a group of friends including John Hookham Frere, George Ellis and William Gifford. The history of this short-lived periodical, which lasted only eight months but transformed the landscape of counterrevolutionary publishing, has often been told, as has that of its successor, *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor,* which ran from July 1798 till December 1821.[36] The importance of the prospectus to the first *Anti-Jacobin* – written by Canning – was noted by Marilyn Butler, who included an extract from it in her anthology of the Revolution controversy, remarking that it "has its own interest as part of the ideological debate, and its own literary merit." (215) The literary qualities are indeed conspicuous, not only in the sustained eloquence of the writing but also in its carefully calibrated wit: Canning's prose manages to be both deadly serious and playful at the same time, marshalling its denunciatory rhetoric with complete assurance and delighting in its own exaggerations while also maintaining the appearance of logical control. The Latin epigraph from Virgil's *Aeneid* (a preliminary signal of the cultural authority to which the journal lays claim and of the educated readership it seeks) sets the tone, displaying the relish for adversarial combat that will become the hallmark of the journal:

> Possit quid vivida virtus
> Experiare, licet: nec longe scilicet hostes
> Quærendi.[37]
>
> (You can put that lively courage of yours to the test: our enemies are not far to seek)

The belief expressed five years earlier by the founders of the *British Critic*, and by many others since, that the British press was under the control of dangerous radicals and that it was the responsibility of undeluded people to counteract this, is expanded here into an all-encompassing literary-political crusade of epic proportions. The title of the journal encapsulates its mission, which, as the prospectus explains in a much-quoted sentence, is to uncover, contradict and eradicate Jacobinism "in all its shapes, and in all its degrees, political and moral, public and private, whether as it openly threatens the subversion of States, or gradually saps the foundations of domestic happiness."

In expounding the aims of the journal, Canning's prospectus echoes the rhythms of Burke's counterrevolutionary oratory and makes conscious use of his defence of prejudice, custom and love of country. But the writing mobilizes, too, the resources of its chosen genre. It is the generic protocols of the prospectus that call forth Canning's dazzlingly lucid synopsis of the values for which the *Anti-Jacobin* stands, and his equally lucid – if utterly biased – assessment of the ideological arena into which the journal was entering. For all his rhetorical skills, spoken and written, Burke himself was incapable of this degree of concision, and his modes of publication and oral expression never required it. Canning's prospectus, by contrast, uses the spatial constraints and permissible hyperbole of an advertising brochure to present its message in the most succinct, seductive and memorable form. More successfully than any of the prospectuses we have so far seen, the *Anti-Jacobin* concentrates its rhetorical energies on achieving what communication theorists call “transportation,” a state of mind in which readers are so immersed in the narrative being presented as to realign their attitudes and beliefs to the ones stated or implied.[38] The “narrative” in this case is an argument about the threat posed by revolutionary politics and the urgent necessity of opposing it. More subliminally (and this is where the verbal performance of the prospectus is so important), it is also about the intellectual pleasure to be had from engaging in that collective act of opposition – by subscribing to the journal.

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[36] See, e.g., Andrews, chaps. 6 and 8; and Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins, 1798-1800: The Early Contributors to the Anti-Jacobin Review* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

[37] *Prospectus of the Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner,* Nov. 1797, John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, Bodleian Libraries, Univ. of Oxford, Prospectuses of Journals 3 (14); Virgil, *Aeneid,* XI, 386-88.

In any prospectus, the parting gesture – the final act of solicitation – is crucial, because it here that the reader makes the mental decision of whether or not to subscribe. With a political journal, the stakes are particularly high because what is being sought is an ideological commitment as well as a financial one: to subscribe is to enlist. In the *Anti-Jacobin* prospectus, this clinching moment is handled, like everything else, with supreme confidence and gusto. The arguments and exhortations of the previous paragraphs are brought to a resounding climax with a single, paratactic, 300-word sentence which summons the allegiance of every right-thinking person in the land: “of every man, who loves his COUNTRY in the old way;” “of ALL who think the PRESS has been long enough employed principally as an agent of destruction;” “of ALL who look with respect to public honour, and with attachment to the decencies of private life;” “of ALL who think the blessings which we enjoy valuable, and who think them in danger; and who, while they detest and despise the principles and the professors of that NEW FAITH by which the foundations of all those blessings are threatened to be undermined, lament the lukewarmness with which its propagation has hitherto been resisted, and are anxious, while there is yet time, to make every effort in the cause of their COUNTRY.” In a year which witnessed an escalating fear of invasion, following the abortive landing of a French fleet at Fishguard in Wales and the naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, Canning’s peroration was calculated to have an electrifying effect, not just in terms of recruiting subscribers to the journal but of galvanizing support for the counterrevolutionary crusade.

The physical form of the prospectus reinforced the sense of its importance (figure 8). Most prospectuses are printed in octavo; the *Anti-Jacobin*’s is an impressive quarto, four pages long and closely printed in double columns, making this a substantially longer document than the others we have considered. When publication of the journal ceased, the 36 issues were republished as a book which went into multiple editions; in addition, there was a one-volume selection, *The Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin* (1799), and a separate edition of the poetry (1799), also much reprinted. The *Beauties* replaces the original prospectus with a new ‘Advertisement’ (or preface), but in the collected edition the prospectus is reprinted in its entirety, becoming an integral part of the book (in Genette’s terms, the epitext becomes paratext, and the ephemeral is made permanent). A full study of the circulation of the prospectus has yet to be made, but the large number of copies that survive suggest the scale of its distribution. Of particular interest is the annotated copy in the Bodleian which was sent to Lord Auckland, a Tory statesman and diplomat who in 1798 became Joint Postmaster General in Pitt’s government.[39] The prospectus was posted to him at his home near Bromley in Kent, presumably in late 1797 (the Bodleian copy carries an address and wax seal, and has been folded and sent). An unidentified hand – the signature is not visible because the paper has been cut – has added, at the bottom of the last page (figure 9):

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[38] M. C. Green and T. C. Brock, “The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79.5 (2000): 701-21.

[39] For Lord Auckland’s interest in counterrevolutionary literature, of which he was a noted collector, see Mori, 50-51.

> The first Number is intirely out of print – [I] have not a copy in the house or your Lordsh[ip] shd certainly have had it.

Whether written by a bookseller or a friend, this simple note is telling evidence of the high demand for the *Anti-Jacobin* (confirmed by other sources: the initial print run of 2500 copies sold out very quickly) and of the effectiveness of the prospectus in stimulating this demand: the "certainly" of the note picks up on the language of necessity in which the prospectus couches its appeal.

Further evidence of the impact of the prospectus can be found in proposals for other journals in the wake of the *Anti-Jacobin*. A projected Sunday newspaper entitled *The Volunteer* (announced for 12 May 1799) appears to develop directly from the idea of enlistment around which the prospectus to the *Anti-Jacobin* is built, making explicit the analogy between subscription and military recruitment at a time when voluntary recruitment to loyalist militia was at an all-time high.[40] The "Volunteer" of the title refers not just to the newspaper but also to the subscriber, as the text of the prospectus makes clear.[41] (Figure 10). Though conceived primarily as a newspaper rather than a review, the advertised scope and aims of the *Volunteer* are strikingly similar to those of the *Anti-Jacobin*, not least the determination to "unmask the pretensions of the public enemy" by interspersing its news coverage with the "history of the rise of Jacobinism in England." In claiming it will do this in such a way as not only "to confound the schemes, but even astonish the minds of the Jacobins themselves," the prospectus pinpoints exactly the rhetorical mode of the *Anti-Jacobin*, a reminder too that the modern theory of "transportation" is in part reformulation of the Longinian – and Burkean – theory of the sublime (which is about the power of writing to bypass reason by "astonishing the mind"). The final rallying call – the promise to "rouse the national resentment against a ferocious enemy; and excite the people of Great Britain to rally around its religion, laws, literature, and morality" – is a straightforward reprise of the closing paragraph of the *Anti-Jacobin* prospectus, if one lacking its hyperbolic force. The reference to the proprietors and editors as "A Society of Gentlemen" meanwhile points back to the *British Critic* and *Revolutionary Magazin*e, this phrase now clearly acting as a code-word for conservative publishing enterprizes.

Similar fare is promised by the prospectus to *The Heart of Oak, and Union Advertiser*, a thrice-weekly evening newspaper announced for 31 August 1801, to be printed at what was now calling itself "the Anti-Jacobin Press, Peterborough Court, Fleet-Street."[42] Echoing, once again, Burke's defence of prejudice and his warnings about "the prevailing spirit of innovation," the prospectus aligns itself squarely with the *Anti-Jacobin* in claiming that "we are Anti-Gallicans in the most comprehensive signification of the term" (comprehensiveness was a leitmotif of the *Anti-Jacobin* prospectus, a totalizing claim that became a standard part of counterrevolutionary rhetoric). The iconography of the title needs no explanation but receives one nonetheless ("Heart of Oak: truly British; firm, inflexible, invincible"), a redundancy of which the prospectus betrays a lurking awareness in its opening admission that "the Press may be literally said to groan beneath the weight of Periodical Publications." The same can be said for *The Old Englishman; or, Anti-Jacobin Examiner*, another spin-off, from another "Society of Gentlemen," to be published, once again, from "the Anti-Jacobin Office" on Fleet Street, evidently now the headquarters of counterrevolutionary printing.[43] The prospectus, published in November 1798, claims that this twice-weekly newspaper was planned *before* the launch of the *Anti-Jacobin*, but its advertised political agenda is nonetheless identical, and it justifies itself on the grounds that, since the closure of its namesake, "the Conductors of the Jacobin Prints" (i.e. Opposition newspapers and journals) "have resumed, in a stronger Tone of Insolence and Triumph, their former Occupations; and the same Necessity for Detection and Exposure which existed in 1797 still continues to exist at the Close of 1798." The inquisitorial mission of the *Anti-Jacobin* – the desire to stamp out every trace of radicalism by exposing the "lies", "misrepresentations" and "mistakes" of other publications – had become by 1798 a national obsession.

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[40] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994), 289.

[41] *Prospectus of a new weekly paper entitled the Volunteer*, 1799, British Library, 11902.c.26(119).

[42] *Prospectus of the Heart of Oak, and Union Advertiser*, 31 Aug. 1801, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian, Prospectuses of Journals, 27 (21).

The fact that the prospectus to the *Old Englishman* was published in the pages of the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* makes the impression of redundancy even more striking, and it comes as no surprise to learn that neither the *Old Englishman* nor the *Volunteer* was apparently ever published (no copies survive of the *Heart of Oak* either). Whether this was a result of a preemptive strike by their competitors or a gentlemen's arrangement at the Anti-Jacobin Press is not clear. Another possibility is that, by the late 1790s, prospectus-writing had become an ideological end in itself, the announcement of one new anti-Jacobin journal after another creating precisely that sense of a growing loyalist consensus which the whole propaganda campaign was attempting to achieve. Whatever the case, it was quickly apparent that the true successor to the *Anti-Jacobin* as the flagship of counterrevolutionary journalism was to be the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*. Following so quickly in the footsteps of the *Anti-Jacobin*, and with such obvious points of connection, there was perhaps no need for the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* to mount an extensive advertising campaign. But a prospectus was nonetheless circulated in large numbers both before and after the launch, appearing both as a separate brochure and as an insert in other publications, including the *Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons* (1799) – an interesting example of a commercial prospectus circulating within an official parliamentary publication. The two-page prospectus, written by the editor John Gifford, lacks the verbal energy of its predecessor, offering instead a rather plodding description of the journal's aims and methods. There is, however, a flash of the same incisive wit when it announces, in a sequence of puns, the plan to adopt the metacritical procedure of the *Anti-Jacobin* by undertaking "to review the *Monthly*, to criticise the *Critical*, and to analyse the *Analytical*, Reviews," a promise carried out in the "Reviewers Reviewed" section which appeared in each issue. [44]

The intertextual quality of the French Revolution debate, of which metacommentary of this kind is one facet, has often been noted.[45] Prospectuses, as we have seen, have their own forms of intertextuality, connecting with one another, and with other texts, as well as with the publications they announce. This is just one way in which prospectuses intersect with the "pamphlet wars" of these years, mirroring the techniques of other kinds of polemical writing while also exploiting the distinctive resources of their own genre. In this paper, I have tried to pinpoint some of those resources, and show how the prospectus, as a mode of writing, a form of public announcement and a type of printed advertisement with its own patterns of circulation, became a powerful instrument of political communication for radicals and reactionaries alike. For all its ephemerality, the genre played an influential role in the Revolution controversy and was a conspicuous presence in the print culture of this period, producing some of its most resonant political prose.[46]

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[43] "A New Newspaper Twice a Week. Prospectus of the Old Englishman; or, Anti-Jacobin Examiner," *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* 1.5 (Nov. 1798): 601-2.

[44] *Prospectus of the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor*, 1799, Univ. of Edinburgh Special Collections, D.S.h.12.17/7.

[45] See, e.g., Butler, 2; Gilmartin, 121-24; Steven Blakemore, *Intertextual War: Edmund Burke and the French Revolution in the Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, and James Mackintosh* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1997).

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