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Introduction

- ¹ This paper seeks to shed further light on the international membership and context of the establishment of the English-speaking, pro-revolutionary political club registered with the Paris municipal authorities in January 1793 under the name of “Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man¹.” The society, whose members gathered at a hotel in the passage des Petits Pères, not far from the Palais Royal, run by an English landlord, Christopher White, drew together sympathisers with the Revolution from across the nations of Britain and Ireland, as well as from France and the United States of America². Writings on the Paris society have rarely adequately accounted for the role of Irish members within the club or acknowledged their joint agendas, pursued in exile, in conjunction with English, Scottish, Welsh and American counterparts. The ill-adapted term “British Club” has been employed to refer to the expatriate community in Paris, negating, by its restrictive remit, the wider significance of the society’s activities and the international character of its membership and outlook³. Indeed, as Mathieu Ferradou has shown, Irish members, rather than being marginal actors on the fringes of the club, were central to its organisation⁴. His work investigates the contribution of the international society to forging an early sense of republicanism among Irish visitors to Paris, some of whom would later go on to play active roles in the Irish Rebellion of 1798. Such international cooperation, during a period of exile, had a bearing on the political and

ideological positions taken by members of the society during the period of the early republic.

- 2 Much scholarship has been devoted to charting the experience of the British in Paris during the French Revolution. Historians John Goldworth Alger, Lionel D. Woodward and David Erdman have focused on the British community in Paris after 1789, while other scholars, such as Sophie Wahnich and Michael Rapport, have explored the treatment of and perception of foreigners under the revolutionary administration, including in their work a particular focus on English or British visitors⁵. There has been significant exploration of the place of the Irish in France during the revolutionary period. Liam Swords has shed light on the status of the Irish colleges in the capital during the Revolution, while Marianne Elliott's work focused on the preparations for the Irish rebellion of 1798 and the role of the French revolutionary administration in assisting the attempted overthrow of British rule in Ireland⁶. There have also been some studies of the American contingent in Paris during the revolutionary years, most notably by Philipp Ziesche and Yvan Bizardel⁷. Richard Buel's biography of Joel Barlow and Wil Verhoeven's work on Gilbert Imlay have also added new perspectives on the American experience in revolutionary Paris through the individual trajectories of these two key figures of the international revolutionary scene.⁸ While these studies admit the centrality of the principles of universalism and cosmopolitanism underpinning the worldviews of international visitors to France and foreign involvement in the Revolution, few seek to place the precise nature of this international cooperation on the ground in the French capital, or the impact of the lived experience of exile on foreign residents, at the centre.
- 3 This article will first outline the context in which the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man was founded. By focusing on the society's address to the French National Convention in November 1792 along with other depositions presented by British reforming societies, it will be shown that not only was the society's membership made up of a wider range of individuals than the term "British Club" suggests, but that the perspectives adopted in communications with the revolutionary administration were shaped by a collective experience of exile. Emphasis will be placed on the joint agendas pursued by British and Irish residents of Paris and the common position adopted towards the republican direction of the Revolution. Indeed, at the turn of 1793, while it became increasingly unwise for British radicals at home to couch their calls for reform in terms which revered the French example, British residents in Paris continued to express their views on constitutional reform in the universal rights-based language of the Paineite tradition, seen as associated with the French Revolution. The Society's engagement with the Convention, and its members' readiness to offer their opinions on constitutional change to the committee charged with finding a republican settlement, must be put in the context of the domestic reform movement's support for constitutional conventions in England, Scotland Ireland. While this common adherence by both domestic and exiled radicals to the importance of 'associations of the people' outside parliament will be acknowledged, it will be argued that the reluctance of those resident in Paris to adopt a position broadly supportive of the British constitutional heritage set them apart from their counterparts in the Edinburgh and British Conventions of 1792 and 1793. While a concern about the repressive treatment of the Irish, English and Scottish radical movements was voiced at the Edinburgh gatherings, the opportunity for collective action with Irish radicals was lost once the Convention had rejected the United Irishmen's address delivered by Thomas Muir in December 1792. This article will argue that this

opportunity was seized upon in Paris, when British constitutional arrangements were more firmly rejected by British and Irish radicals alike.

- 4 The situation for English-speaking residents of Paris changed with the entry into war in February 1793. While the position of British and Irish radicals became increasingly difficult with the heightened suspicion of foreign visitors from nations at war with France, this article will confirm Michael Rapport's contention that it was firm proof of political affinity with the regime that guided the response of the revolutionary authorities to both British and Irish radicals in 1793 over and above nationality. The French administration tended to adopt a similar position towards Irish and British residents, and equally Irish residents did not insist on their separate identity in correspondence with the authorities. If the agendas of British and Irish radicals did not diverge in the months after the outbreak of war, one important factor may have been the continued sympathy of British residents for the republican departure in the Revolution, even during the months of 1793, a stance which dovetailed with Irish concerns. Although it has been widely claimed that British residents affiliated to the Girondin delegates in the Convention and were repelled by the death of the king, a study of the accounts and conduct of British radicals still in Paris would suggest that many were sympathetic – and more than just superficially so – to the aims of the Mountain. Although retrospective accounts written by British visitors to Paris after 1802 tend to write out this continued enthusiasm for French revolutionary politics during the course of 1793, an enquiry into behaviour and opinions voiced at the time would imply that there was a significant degree of support for the radical changes underway in France. This may warn us against concluding too readily that a separate Irish republican strand of activism was developing in Paris as early as 1792, but would lead us to contend that even during the years of the Terror, there was considerable scope for British and Irish political conjunctions⁹.

A foreign community in exile under the early republic

- 5 On 18th November 1792, at a dinner organised at White's Hotel for the English-speaking residents of Paris, a committee was designated to frame an address of support to the new National Convention of France. British spy, Captain George Monro, in a letter sent to the Home Office shortly after his arrival in the French capital, singled out the protagonists in this nascent political formation as Sir Robert Smith, John Hurford Stone and Irish activists Lord Edward Fitzgerald and John and Henry Sheares¹⁰. The declaration was signed six days later, on 24th November, by fifty men, the most prominent members of a society which would be registered in January 1793 with the Paris municipal authorities as the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man. Signatories included former or current students of the Irish colleges, Jeremie Curtayne, Bernard MacSheehy, Edward Ferris and William Duckett, American resident Stephen Sayre and a large number of Scottish and English sympathisers including Robert Merry, John Oswald, William Choppin and Robert Rayment. Members of the group were drawn from across the English-speaking nations of Britain, Ireland and America, and the association may also have attracted some French followers¹¹. On 28th November, the address from the "English, Scots and Irish, residents of Paris" was presented to the representatives of the Convention. At the time of the deposition, English and Irish members held leading roles in the society. John Hurford Stone, deemed a "violent conspirator" by George Monro, was acting as president, and Robert O'Reilly occupied the post of secretary. Although Monro dismissed him as "of little

consequence either one way or the other”, O’Reilly was said to have presented the club’s address to the bar of the Convention and his position as secretary indicates his centrality within the club was perhaps greater than Monro admits¹². From the outset therefore, the society drew together foreign exiles from across the nations of Britain and Ireland, and Irish members appear to have been amongst the most influential in the early stages.

- 6 The declaration was presented along with a similar address from the Society of Constitutional Information¹³. The SCI was a London-based reform society which had begun to cast off its reputation as a gentlemanly Whig reform group by mid to late 1792, welcoming a more plebeian membership and electing to endorse Part Two of Thomas Paine’s controversial *Rights of Man* in February of the same year. Paine’s latest pamphlet had been widely condemned by the Pitt ministry as a seditious libel and Paine was indicted on those charges in December 1792, a month after the addresses were presented. By that time, Paine had already left Britain and taken up his seat as a deputy in the National Convention. He was nominated to the constitutional committee charged with drafting a republican constitution on 11th October 1792. The SCI delegation was headed up by Joel Barlow, an American citizen and veteran of the War of Independence and John Frost, a lawyer, and co-founder of the London Corresponding Society. Frost was also a member of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man and put his name to the November address. The connections between the SCI and the Paris society were close, as at least thirteen members of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man were or had previously been on the books of the SCI in London, often, like Robert Merry or Sampson Perry, managing to keep attending meetings on both sides of the Channel in the latter months of 1792¹⁴.
- 7 The address was one of the first official acts of a society which was established in mid-November 1792 and which was formally registered with the Paris municipal authorities in January 1793. This was not a particularly auspicious moment to create a pro-revolutionary club from a British point of view. The execution of Louis XVI the very same month had consolidated the case of loyalist commentators and activists that the French were departing from civilised norms in the pursuit of a more far-reaching settlement than had been established at the end of Britain’s revolutionary century. This followed on from the events which had already dissuaded the bulk of British opinion of the merits of the Revolution, in particular the so-called ‘Second Revolution’ of 10th August 1792, the massacres in the prisons of Paris the following month and the decision to try the king. It became increasingly difficult, and could lead to prosecution, to make calls for political or constitutional reform in Britain with reference to the French example. The Royal Proclamation of May 1792 led to a raft of prosecutions against booksellers, printers and authors connected with Paine or the reform movement, and loyalist groups, such as the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property from Republicans and Levellers or the Society of Loyal Britons attracted a popular following, taking part in actions aimed at disrupting and undermining the radical reform agenda. The establishment of the Paris-based pro-revolutionary society in late 1792 therefore, and its formal registration in January 1793 by English-speaking residents of the French capital, provides evidence of the continued pursuit of radical ideas by British reformers, in conjunction with counterparts from America and Ireland, in the arena of revolution where the experience of exile influenced both outlooks and fortunes.
- 8 The London and Paris society addresses were presented to the Convention in the same month as the successful campaign waged by the republican armies at Jémappes and only

ten days after the Convention had issued a ‘propaganda decree’, or diplomatic declaration of fraternity to those peoples considered to be struggling under oppressive monarchical government¹⁵. In the address, the signatories congratulate the republic on its recent military victories and hold up the principles of the French Revolution as an example for the rest of Europe. The constitutional settlement of Britain, long seen as a model of moderate monarchical government in Europe, and even presumed initially to have inspired the events of 1789, is not referred to. Nevertheless, the authors claim to have “always applauded the sacred principles” on which the French representatives have pledged to found their government, a statement which hints at a general admiration for the French interpretation of liberty, while not denying that such liberties may exist in theory, or may have existed in practice, in Britain¹⁶. The future enfranchisement of the people of Europe is looked forward to and the union between the French republic and “the English, Scottish and Irish nations” is celebrated. Not only does this statement of unity coincide with the congratulatory message sent by the SCI but it also echoes the toast made at the Revolution Society dinner of 16th November 1792, two days before the first meeting of the Paris society, to call for “equal rights for the Irish people” as well as “unity between the people of Britain, Ireland, France and America¹⁷”. The Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man’s address outlines an ideal vision of liberty in the spirit of the universalism of the early revolution, and emphatically sidelines the more prosaic confrontations taking place on British soil between the advocates of reform and the Pitt government, backed by popular loyalist associations and propaganda efforts, which reached a peak in December 1792 and January 1793¹⁸. The changed perspective provided by exile could bind foreigners together in the service of an ideal form of liberty unconstrained by the weight of the British constitutional heritage.

- 9 On the manuscript copy of the November address however, held at the National Archives in Paris, there is an indication of the difficulty encountered by the members of the society in aggregating the priorities of the wider English-speaking community. Ways of describing national groups alter as the address progresses. The “English and Scots” residents of the title becomes “British” in the address itself. Furthermore, a reference to the Irish residents is slotted in with a small upward-pointing arrow in what appears to be a belated correction. Judging by the handwriting, it would seem that the addition was made by the original drafter of the address, rather than added *a posteriori* by members of the Convention. Without reading too much into what is a small amendment, considering that the term “Irlandois” is included in the formal title of the address, this alteration hints at the broader question of how different radical groups, from the nations of Britain and Ireland, negotiated their particular agendas within the movement, and more broadly the tension between a universal interpretation of citizenship and an emerging definition of national identity based on loyalty to the Revolution. The rectification may be proof of the marginal place that Irish radicals occupied, or were seen to occupy, within the expatriate British community at this stage of the society’s development, although given the number of Irish signatories to the address, this seems unlikely. Perhaps it is suggestive of the temporary but significant wedding of English, Scottish and Irish interests that exile, combined with a shared heritage and the republican direction of the Revolution, had engendered. There would have been an awareness within the British expatriate community of the distinct history and cause of their Irish counterparts, and the correction may have been a belated acknowledgement of that position.

- 10 In January, *Le Moniteur Universel*, the French government's official news outlet, announced the registration of the club and simultaneously recognised that the society's members were drawn from a wide cross-section of the English-speaking communities resident in Paris, refining an earlier announcement made in late 1792. In November, the paper had contended that "English residents of Paris" had gathered "to celebrate the victories of the French republican armies and the triumph of liberty". The newspaper went on to triumphantly inform its readership that "foreigners from different European countries were invited to this celebration and shared the joy which moved the Assembly. Thus are strengthened each day the bonds of universal fraternity which the French have extended to all peoples and on which they stake their lives¹⁹". If we look past the blatant propaganda and insistence on the breadth of support for the Revolution among the peoples of Europe, what stands out is the broad-brush characterisation of the society's members as "English". On Monday 7th January 1793 however, the paper announced that "foreigners, for the most part English, Scots and Irish, resident in Paris, have addressed themselves to the city council, and declared that, in accordance with the law, they will meet every Sunday and Thursday, under the name of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man, at White's English hotel, 7 passage des Petits Pères²⁰." This change in terminology most likely reflects less a change in the composition of the club, than a recognition by the administration's official mouthpiece of the different national groupings within the foreign contingent and their combined yet distinct priorities.

Joint ventures by British and Irish radicals

- 11 Interconnected agendas between British and Irish nationals are also evident in the individual ventures of those exiled in the French capital as well as in the collective political enterprises of foreign residents. Cross-national collaborations were common in journalism, political activism and entrepreneurship, perhaps facilitated by the common experience of residence abroad, shared language or recognition of ideological affinities which may have been accentuated by exile. Nicholas Madgett, later a key asset for the Directory in its dealings with the United Irishmen, worked closely with British writer and poet, Robert Merry, translating his tract advising the constitutional committee on the form of the new constitution into French in late 1792:

While in the city, and under the invitation given by the French legislature to all foreigners, to favour them with their sentiments on the erecting a free constitution; he wrote a short treatise in English on the nature of free government. It was translated into French by Mr. Madget [*sic*], and presented in the same manner as the *Laurel of Liberty* to the National Convention: "honourable mention" being made of it on their journals.²¹

- 12 Madgett would later attest to Merry's loyalty to the republic in March 1793 when asked to provide the revolutionary administration with a list of trustworthy foreign residents who could safely remain in the capital.
- 13 Cultural activities and socialising also cut across national lines. While Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Thomas Paine took up residence together at White's Hotel, the hub of the society's activities, where members would have discussed politics over a weekly meal and newspaper reading, Fitzgerald, who had regularly attended SCI meetings on the Strand in London in late 1792, and Stone, the acting president, visited the opera together. Fitzgerald, in a letter to his mother from White's hotel wrote, "I lodge with my friend

Paine, - we breakfast, dine, and sup together. The more I see of his interior, the more I like and respect him. I cannot express how kind he is to me; there is a simplicity of manner, a goodness of heart, and a strength of mind in him, that I never knew a man before possess. I pass my time very pleasantly, read, walk, and go quietly to the play²².” Paine’s call for government to be based on reason rather than historical precedent and his dismissal of the British constitutional heritage as a series of acts which excluded the people from a role in politics may have found resonance with Irish radicals struggling against the British authorities.²³

- 14 Shortly after this letter was written, Fitzgerald found common cause with former British MP Sir Robert Smith and both renounced their titles at the dinner at White’s in solidarity with the abolition of titles enacted by the National Convention. Monro reported, “After a dinner a variety of toasts were given, and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and Sir Rob’t Smith propos’d laying down their titles, and are now actually call’d by this sett Citoyen Fitzgerald, and Citoyen Smith²⁴.” Their actions were inspired by the decision taken by the National Convention at its inception to replace the title “monsieur” with that of “citizen²⁵”. Robert Merry praised the conduct of members of the *noblesse* who “cordially acquiesced in the new order of things, and by a glorious effort of enlightened benevolence, cheerfully [sic] sacrificed the empty gewgaws of aristocracy to merit the most substantial and only noble distinctions of a *patriot* and a *philanthropist*²⁶.” No titles had any merit other than those which emphasised a person’s membership of the universal community of humanity. While these shared initiatives, ventures and modes of sociability do not necessarily reveal any common political cause in themselves, what does appear to emerge from this portrait is that such cooperation – with political intent and a broadly pro-revolutionary agenda at its heart – wedded British and Irish radicals together in what was, at least for the time being, a relatively concordant enterprise. What’s more, if we draw upon the recent research of Simon McDonald, we see how the English-language newspaper published in Paris in 1792, the *Paris Mercury*, drew together society member Thomas Marshall and Irish editor, Robert Taylor in another joint publication initiative, aiming, in McDonald’s words to provide “speedy reportage from Paris”, but also epitomising the “claim that Paris had superseded London both as a place of news interest and as a centre of uninhibited journalistic production²⁷”. Cross-national initiatives therefore found their place easily in the early republic.

Conventions of the people in Britain and Ireland after 1791

- 15 The members of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man lent their assent in the November address to the idea that a convention of the people should be held across the Channel, to allow their fellow countrymen to share their opinions about the state of the government. The declaration contended that the signatories were not alone in their ideas on liberty and that the same reasoning would be found “among the large majority of our fellow countrymen if public opinion was canvassed as it should be in a National Convention²⁸.” The assertion that an ideological union between the nations of Britain, Ireland and France would have received the overwhelming support of the British people is debateable given the evidence Linda Colley has provided to support her claim that loyalism was by far the majority position within Britain at this time, and considering the popular attendance at Paine burnings across the country in late 1792²⁹. Yet, the call for a

convention, outside the remit of parliament, to gather the opinion of the nation and set out the principles by which a government should be held to account, was a common claim within the British reform movement. It can therefore be understood as, rather than a pragmatic attempt by foreign residents to secure their safety and position within their country of exile, as part of a consistent platform within the English, Scottish and Irish reform movements. The call for a convention was coherent with the steps taken by the Scottish Friends of the People at the turn of 1792 to set up a convention in Edinburgh as well as the emergence of the Irish convention movement in 1791-1792.

- 16 In December 1792, 170 delegates of the reform movement in Scotland met in Edinburgh under the banner of a convention, and in the following April a second convention was held in Edinburgh, after which two principal figures within the Scottish radical movement, Thomas Muir and Thomas Fyshe Palmer, were tried and sentenced for sedition.³⁰ A further convention was held in October and November 1793, this time under the title of the “British Convention of the Delegates of the People gathered together to obtain universal suffrage and annual parliaments” and with a significant delegation from the London Corresponding Society. The “British Convention” which declared its name on 19th November 1793, a year to the day after the French Convention had promulgated the Edict of Fraternity, drew together plebeian radicals from societies active across Scotland and England. Their terms of discussion and structure of the convention, as the British government noted with alarm, were modeled on the Convention of France even declaring “Year One of the British Convention”, in a patent echo of developments across the Channel. The aping of French tone, forms and style prompted a draconian clampdown by Pitt’s government which ordered the arrest of the leading members of the convention in December. Further arrests were made in April and May of 1794 and those indicted were tried, though not convicted, of treason in October and November 1794. As T. M. Parsinnen has argued, the authorities saw in the convention the makings of an “anti-parliament”, a revolutionary body intending to “introduce a system of policy in this country founded on the example of that instituted in France.”³¹ He highlights how “the term itself had revolutionary overtones. A convention brought to mind the extraordinary convention parliaments of 1660 and 1688, the Continental Congress of the American Revolution, the Convention of Irish Volunteers, and more ominously still, the Convention presently sitting in Paris. To most Englishmen, ‘convention’ meant popular revolution, the September massacres, war, and a republic of regicides³².”
- 17 Parsinnen has shown how the extra-parliamentary ‘association’ movement gained momentum in the 1780s during the American War of Independence when impetus for a convention in Ireland was provided by the American colonists whose example prompted the “denial of Westminster’s authority over Irish matters³³.” Part of the support for a convention – a national association of the people with authority over the legislative branch – also stemmed from the ancestry of British constitutionalism that radicals such as Obadiah Hulme and James Burgh revived in their writings in the late eighteenth century. Ancient Anglo-Saxon practices of local assembly, in the form of the *witenagemot*, were recalled and infused with democratic meaning, reinforcing the age-old view that the advent of despotism coincided with the Norman conquest. Joseph Gerrald, a key figure in the British Convention of late 1793, set out his arguments for a convention in the pamphlet *A Convention the Only Means of Saving us from Ruin* (1793) and emphasised the historical precedents for such a gathering.³⁴ As James Epstein has noted, Gerrald did not venerate the settlement of 1688, but turned to England’s revolutionary heritage and

patriot martyrs such as Algernon Sidney in his search for examples of ancient rights in custom and to justify the principle of resistance to unlawful rule. Gerrald deemed that the Glorious Revolution had “reconfirmed the right to alter the line of succession and change the constitution, but failed to recover the people’s ancient right to vote³⁵”. Yet, as Epstein highlights, Gerrald did not call upon Paine as a revolutionary figurehead, and mixed both natural rights thinking with constitutionalist thinking in an example of the “fragmented” discourse of reform that Mark Philp and Epstein have shown to be at the core of reformist language in Britain³⁶.

- 18 Despite the government’s anxiety that the Scottish and British Conventions were shaping themselves up as ‘anti-parliaments’ and therefore potentially subversive forums, Gordon Pentland has suggested that the radicals who met in Edinburgh from 1792-1794 drew upon a very British heritage of reform, which was appealing to Scottish reformers, employing a mostly ‘constitutional idiom’ rather than the discourse of abstract theory to call for political change. Pentland argues that despite the pervasive fear within ministerial ranks that the conventions were intended to be a revolutionary substitute for parliament, the majority of members were at pains to prove the constitutionality of the convention. This, he suggests, partly explains why the delegates rejected the United Irishmen’s address read out by Thomas Muir to the first Convention in December 1792, which held up Scotland as an “embodied nation” in its own right. One delegate, Forsyth, insisted that the address “borders on an attack on the British constitution³⁷”. Unlike the Scots, who could legitimately point to the Claim of Right as grounding their own history within a broadly British constitutional heritage, most Irish reformers could find no space within the discourse of British constitutionalism and there was little visible cooperation between the Irish reform movement on the one hand, and English and Scottish radicals on the other.
- 19 In Britain, although common cause was not found between British and Irish reform movements within the bounds of the Conventions, the treatment of the different nations at the hands of the ruling authorities was perceived as being equally repressive. In February 1793, a convention had been held at Dungannon in Ireland in favour of universal manhood suffrage and full Catholic emancipation. The Irish Parliament reacted by introducing legislation which made conventions illegal³⁸. This decision was cited at the Scottish Convention in Edinburgh in April and May 1793 as proof that the Pitt government could take similar action against British reformers. The experience of repression being meted out against reformers of all nationalities could forge common grievance amongst the different radical communities. Political philosopher William Godwin even saw the case of England as being worse than that of Ireland. In his letter to Joseph Gerrald before the latter was due to stand trial in March 1794 for his involvement in the Edinburgh Convention, he acknowledged that in Ireland a “tyrannical law” had been passed to take away the “inalienable privilege” of men meeting together to consult, but that in England “they do worse” since a law forbidding meetings (later to be known as the Two Acts or “Gagging Acts” of 1795) was under consideration in parliament and the jury in Gerrald’s case was asked to “act as if the law were already in existence”, a “breach of equity and reason” in Godwin’s eyes³⁹. In the London Corresponding Society’s “Address to the People of Great Britain and Ireland” of early 1794, the disbanding of the British Convention is deplored and parallels are drawn between the treatment of the Irish and Scottish reform movements and that of the English at the hands of William Pitt’s government:

Consider, it is one and the same corrupt and corrupting influence which at this time domineers in Ireland, Scotland, and England. Can you believe that those who send virtuous Irishmen and Scotchmen fettered with felons to Botany-Bay, do not meditate and will not attempt to seize the first moment to send us after them? Or if we had not just cause to apprehend the same inhuman treatment... should we not disdain to enjoy any liberty or privilege whatever, in which our honest Irish and Scotch brethren did not equally and as fully participate with us? Their cause then and ours is the same. And it is both our duty and our interest to stand or fall together. The Irish Parliament and the Scotch judges, actuated by the same English influence, have brought us directly to the point⁴⁰.

- 20 If British reformers acknowledged that the English, Scottish and Irish reform movements were subject to similar treatment at the hands of the British government, there was a lack of close collaboration between English and Scottish reformers on the one hand, and Irish radicals on the other. While as Pentland, Epstein and others have shown, the participants in the Scottish and British Conventions of 1792-1793 put forward their calls for reform in the language of natural rights but also the British constitutional heritage, Irish reformers, many of whom were inspired by the American colonists' stance, could find no place within the British constitutional tradition for their own aims.⁴¹ Exile in France however provided the space and ideological context for British and Irish radicals to engage in a closer cross-national enterprise. British radicals in Paris often couched their calls for reform in language free of British constitutional idiom and this may have allowed for a greater degree of cooperation with Irish radicals.

British contributions to the constitution debate in France, 1792-1793

- 21 After leaving Britain for France, Thomas Paine reinvigorated his calls for a convention, infusing his arguments with more theoretical justifications and eschewing the 'ancient constitutionalist' justifications that appear to have been dominant at the later Scottish and British Conventions. Writing from exile in September 1792, he stated:

I consider the reform of Parliament, by an application to Parliament, as proposed by the Society, to be a worn-out, hackneyed subject, about which the nation is tired, and the parties are deceiving each other. It is not a subject which is cognizable before Parliament, because no government has the right to alter itself, either in whole or in part. The right, and the exercise of that right, appertains to the nation only, and the proper means is by a national convention, elected for the purpose, by all the people⁴².

- 22 Paine had already denounced the British constitutional settlement of 1688 as a "bill of wrongs, and of insult" in *Rights of Man* and was less forthcoming than Gerrald in celebrating Britain's heritage of liberty and resistance to tyranny as a basis for reform. The Paineite version of 1688 was particularly convincing for reformers who, like Paine himself, went into exile in France or America in the early 1790s and who had more scope for open criticism of the British political establishment than those who remained on British shores. The Glorious Revolution was characterised by such figures as alternately a Whig conspiracy, which gave no tangible benefits to the people, as the replacement of one tyrant by another, and as a spurious revolution, if compared with those of America or France. Paine's compatriots in Paris seconded his arguments. Sampson Perry, incarcerated in Newgate jail after a period of residence in Paris, drew upon his knowledge

of the French context to make the case for the need for a constitutive body, external to Parliament, to enact the necessary changes to government:

The parliaments all cried out against this new institution; and that of Brittany sent up a deputation to protest against it as *illegal*, upon the principle that the nation was dissatisfied with the government; that it insisted upon a *reform*, but that the government had no right to reform itself; that it was unnatural to expect it would be done effectually, as it was presumptuous to attempt it at all⁴³.

- 23 The job of a National Convention, as it was understood by British observers in Paris in late 1792, was to settle on a new constitution. Paine had become a member of the constitutional committee of the Convention in October, and it was this role, over and above his role as a representative of the French nation which he considered as most important.⁴⁴ It was the matter of constitution-making which animated debate within the British and American community more widely and which inspired a raft of depositions to the Convention in the latter months of 1792 and early 1793. Those among the British residents of Paris who articulated their views for the consideration of the committee were virulent in their calls for more direct forms of democracy. They held up the British model as an example of mock representation, corruption and decline, and France as a beacon of liberty. The French experiment, for Robert Merry, was a necessary step to liberating all the enslaved peoples of the continent, not least the subjugated people of Britain⁴⁵. For John Oswald, the principal focus of David Erdman's study of the *British in Paris*, the new French constitution should usher in true popular sovereignty, not the "sham government of the people" as practised in Britain⁴⁶. British members of the Paris society therefore tended to take a radical position on governmental reform, sometimes even professing admiration for, in a French context at least, republican forms of organisation. Commentators advocated direct democracy, popular sovereignty and an active role for the people in law-making in a post-monarchical republic without reference to the British constitutional heritage and mixed constitution. They couched their calls for a constitution in Paineite terms, emphasising man's natural rights, as opposed to the freedoms exercised in a halcyon Anglo-Saxon era.
- 24 The constitutional texts published at the turn of 1792 and 1793 show that some, though not all British reformers, had a significant interest in the merits of more popular participation in government, semi-direct or direct democracy, and held the representative system in mistrust, if not contempt; ideas that went counter to what has become the commonly-held interpretation of Girondinism. Robert Merry put forward the merits of classical republican virtue over commercial republicanism and John Oswald believed that the people should have a boisterous role in politics. Oswald's view contrasts therefore with what William Doyle sees as a core element of the Girondin stance: the belief that the opportunity to create an enlightened republic would be squandered "if the ignorant were allowed to override with their prejudices the benevolent convictions of educated men⁴⁷." Oswald was scathing of elite legislators or enlightened chaperons of the people. He agreed with the Cordeliers position, as Patrice Gueniffey defines it, that "representatives had confiscated the right of the people to express the general will." As Gueniffey has put it, "[The Cordeliers] did not mean giving *citizens* the right to *verify* the conformity of laws with their rights, but returning to the *people* the power to *make* the law, in order to establish, thanks to the immediate exercise of sovereignty, the absolute reign of the general will⁴⁸." Robert Merry's pamphlet is much more reticent on the vocal presence of the people, but he was deeply sceptical about representation.

- 25 British residents of Paris have generally been portrayed as sympathetic to the republic only as long as the king remained alive, and once his death had been pronounced and achieved, most, it is suggested, reverted to a critical position. This tends to oversimplify the genuine extent of support for the radical changes underway in France within the British community in exile. Those who remained in Paris after November 1792 tended to be amongst the more committed to the cause of political reform, not necessarily going as far as to advance to case for a republican overhaul of the British constitution, but certainly refusing to rein in their own enthusiasm for the republican turn in France, even after the execution of Louis XVI. Republicanism did find sympathy among British members of the club, and may have wedded with developing concerns among Irish members of the society. Such views, which tended to celebrate the republican advances in France rather than extol the British constitutional heritage of Magna Carta, the Glorious Revolution and the Bill of Rights – instruments of oppression from a radical Irish perspective – could perhaps give us some idea as to why convergences were possible between British and Irish members of the Paris society.

The wartime experience of British and Irish residents after February 1793

- 26 The outbreak of war between Britain and France had a significant impact on the position of British and Irish residents in Paris, even if, as Michael Rapport argues, the rhetoric of exclusion did not always match the behaviour of the authorities towards foreigners considered as of little threat to the Revolution. If certain prominent foreigners such as William Wilberforce, Joseph Priestley and Thomas Paine could be granted French citizenship for their services to humanity in August 1792, and if foreign peoples struggling for their liberty could be embraced in a declaration of solidarity in November 1792, the outbreak of war altered the way foreigners were talked about and treated by the French authorities. In March 1793, foreign residents were required to obtain proof of their *civisme* from their local section in order to leave Paris, and local section committees held foreigners in greater suspicion. Landlords were required to identify foreign tenants occupying their premises and residents from abroad increasingly had to provide proof of their civic utility and loyalty to the regime. By August 1793, subjects of nations at war with France could be targeted for imprisonment, and on 9th October 1793 all British national were arrested and their property confiscated. On 25th December 1793 Thomas Paine and Anacharsis Cloots were expelled from the Convention and Paine narrowly escaped execution for his suspected Girondin sympathies after having voted for the exile rather than the execution of the king. Under the laws of 26-27 Germinal Year II (15th and 16th April 1794), foreign participation in political societies was outlawed and foreigners had to leave Paris and all frontier towns and ports.
- 27 According to Sophie Wahnich, early revolutionary discourse posited the conflict as a fight against the government of William Pitt, not the British people themselves. Yet, while the early enemy was Pitt, in his role as the head of a counter-revolutionary offensive, keeping the people in unwilling servitude, by late 1793 and with the continued prosecution of the war, the British people, who had failed to rise up against their oppressors during the conflict, were seen as complicit in the liberticide of their governors. There was no longer a distinction made between a ministry, responsible for manipulating the nation and holding it in servitude, and the people, whose reason and capacity to act was suppressed

by the force of oppression and propaganda.⁴⁹ The people were guilty and therefore punishable by death because, in the eyes of the revolutionaries they were free individuals who were consenting in the crimes of their government. They represented a sovereign people who refused to reclaim their ancient liberties and freely backed Pitt's war offensive. In other words, the blame shifted from "the carelessness of a duped people, to the fault of a guilty people⁵⁰." Michael Rapport argues that even during the most acute period of revolutionary terror, from late 1793 to July 1794, the response of the French authorities to foreigners was shaped by pragmatism. If foreigners were arrested or prosecuted, it was often because of their perceived affinity with a political faction under scrutiny for its revolutionary credentials or lack of civic commitment rather than because of their nationality per se. As Rapport puts it, "patriotism became increasingly exclusive, not on lines of nationality, but along those of political allegiance⁵¹." Rapport cites the example of foreigners John Hurford Stone and Helen Maria Williams who, despite being arrested in the blanket incarceration of British nationals in October 1793, were treated relatively leniently and were released quickly from jail.

- 28 In March 1793, it was Irish resident Nicholas Madgett who drew up the list of loyal citizens to be guaranteed protection by the revolutionary committees. His list included a range of English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish visitors and what sets the names on Madgett's list apart is not nationality, but rather a clear and tenacious commitment to revolutionary goals. Those named had written pro-revolutionary tracts during their stays in Paris or furthered publishing projects in the French capital at a time when opinion in Britain was turning against the Revolution. Featuring on the list were many of the members of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man who appear to have continued to support the Revolution even after the trial and execution of the king. The civic commitment of these individuals would later be on display once more in the prison testimonies given to prove the injustice of their arrest. Robert Rayment, Sir Robert Smith and Sampson Perry were listed by Madgett, as were Thomas Paine's lodging partners William Johnson and William Choppin. John Frost was also cited, even though it appears his enthusiasm had begun to wane after the outcome of the king's trial, as was James Gamble an associate of Rayment, who had taken part in a relief operation after the siege of the Tuileries in August 1792⁵². Although this list of loyal British residents may have been drawn up more as a protective gesture, a way of insulating expatriates from accusations of treachery, we may tentatively use it as a guide to those expatriates whose enthusiasm for the Revolution was not tempered by the events of August and September 1792, nor perhaps by the execution of the king. This analysis is reinforced by the behaviour of many of those cited by Madgett during the months of 1793 which indicates that the Revolution continued to provide material and moral inspiration for some British expatriates on the radical wing of the exiled reform movement.
- 29 In September of 1793 an increasingly strained set of foreign residents sent a further address to the National Convention. The address suggests that there had been no lessening of British and Irish bonds in the period since war broke out, and the petition from the "*Anglois, Irlandois, & Écossais, résidans à Paris*" is a reiteration of a common demand for protection of those citizens, whatever their nationality, who had consistently demonstrated their loyalty to the Revolution. The text suggests that Irish residents were not immune from the terms of the decree against the English, despite the particular nature of Ireland's history under British rule:

We come before the National Convention in the name of our English, Irish and Scottish brothers resident in Paris and its outskirts, who, like ourselves, hold the principles of liberty dear, and who suffer under the severity of the decrees that your justice and wisdom have, we know, only passed in order to strike a mortal blow at the enemies of the Republic. Foreseeing that we will be the innocent victims of troubles ahead, we come, with confidence, to demand your protection, and the rights of justice and hospitality⁵³.

30 The fact that English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish residents were treated in similar fashion by the revolutionary authorities during the months of 1793 is borne out in appeals by individuals caught up in the crisis, this despite written assertions of distinct nationality. Robert O'Reilly petitioned the *Comité de Sureté Générale* for a passport out of France to attend a trial in London in June 1793. O'Reilly signed off his letter as an "Irlandois". The committee replied in somewhat ambiguous fashion, allowing "citizen O'Reilly, an Irishman" safe passage to "England his homeland⁵⁴". Appeals for passports out of the country from March onwards, while mentioning nationality, did not appear lend weight to Irishness but stressed the pleader's relationship with the Revolution. Appeals were made on the basis of unfailing commitment to principles rather than national belonging. Two medical students, John O'Brien and Jim Maghery, were denied passports by their local section office because of their status as "Englishmen". Rather than invoking their identity as Irish residents, and asserting their non-Englishness in their plea for reconsideration of their case to the *Comité de Sûreté Générale* they deemed themselves to be "English subjects against whom there is no cause for complaint⁵⁵". Such evidence backs up Michael Rapport's case that it was political allegiance which was seen as more important in appeals to the revolutionary authorities than nationality.

31 This may have changed by 1794 onwards when many of the British residents of Paris returned home. Mary-Ann Constantine has noted in her work on the Welsh in Paris, that "to be English, Scottish or Irish meant something" in the French capital, considering the legacy of the Catholic colleges, well-established in the city, while Welshness was much more difficult to determine⁵⁶. Yet by 1795, Welsh nationals in France were beginning to assert a non-English identity in an attempt to avoid the brunt of the clampdown on visitors connected to Britain. Welsh visitor to Paris, James Tilly Matthews not specifically linked to the club and his opinions often discredited because of his developing schizophrenia, wrote from prison to the *Comité de Salut Public* His views were translated by Nicholas Madgett:

I am Welch; tho English by being a Subject of Great Britain; from the time of Caesar to this Moment, we have preserved our Liberty and Laws, and History cannot furnish an Hundred instances in this period of a man having forsaken the Cause for w. you are now fighting. I say if obstinacy of Principle is of any weight, the Welch have the Preference over all mankind.⁵⁷

32 As Constantine notes, that "the idea of a Welsh past mattered a great deal to Matthews". She goes on, "The narrative of that past is presented as one of resistance to external military power, and of the preservation of cultural integrity – 'our Liberty and Laws'. The Welsh nation itself is 'principled', even obstinately so, and its values (including, of course, opposition to England) are the values of the new France."⁵⁸ As the French administration placed more emphasis on nationality as a criterion for trustworthiness, British expatriates may have begun to accentuate their own particular national histories. Harry T. Dickinson points quite rightly to the very different history of conquest and subjugation that the Irish struggled under, and which the British could not draw on as grievance⁵⁹. In 1793 however it appeared as important to reiterate a certain affinity with the principles

espoused in the Revolution rather than invoke a specific national heritage. This would appear to be evidence for the existence of a solid joint agenda, uniting British and Irish reformers. While such common cause can be found in the domestic reform movements, the experience of exile appears to have heightened this sense of cross-border affinity⁶⁰.

British ultra-radicalism in France: attitudes to the Terror

- 33 Despite suggestions that only John Oswald among the British residents in Paris had any affinity with the more hard-line grouping of the Mountain, that most British visitors were aligned with the “moderate” Girondin grouping and that by January 1793, most British residents had recoiled from their support, in outrage at the death of the king, it is worth studying the behaviour of some of the British residents who experienced life in France during the course of 1793 and 1794, and who wrote about it afterwards, to gauge whether this assertion of British moderation is justified⁶¹.
- 34 A number of members of the British colony did have more radical views which gave them some leeway in the terrorist regime⁶². Robert Merry professed his loyalty to the Mountain to Jacques-Louis David and was not unsettled by the prospect of more popular involvement in government. Sampson Perry was held in high esteem by leading members of the revolutionary government even as late as April 1793, and his 1796 *Historical Sketch* of the Revolution is probably one of the most partisan, pro-revolutionary histories that appeared in Britain in the latter half of the decade. Perry, with the aid of Sir Robert Smith, agreed to take on a diplomatic mission on behalf of Hérault de Séchelles⁶³. A member of the *Comité de Salut Public*, Hérault would go on to be executed with Danton in April 1794⁶⁴. Perry, imprisoned with Robert Smith, believed that his “intimacy” with Hérault would bring about a summons before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Perry’s close association with, and agreement to undertake a mission on behalf of, one of the members of the *Comité de Salut Public* only confirms that British radicals had very eclectic associations in Paris. Although they admired the intellectual brilliance of the Girondins, and Perry was no exception, they were not uniform in affiliating politically with a group that saw value in enlightened leadership.
- 35 Perry is one ultra-radical figure who, during his time in exile in Paris, appears to have cultivated an unwavering sympathy for the transformative effects of the Revolution. In his two-volume *An Historical Sketch of the French Revolution*, written after his return from France in 1796, Perry justified some of the actions of the years 1793 and 1794. Although Perry did not deny the excesses that took place, he still considered the events of France as setting an example to other nations and having the potential to create a new source of happiness through the establishment of freedom. It is worth quoting at length from the preface to volume two, which charts the events that he had witnessed in part:

The Author is aware of the unpopularity he may lie under at present, for not condemning the Revolution altogether, as other writers who have gone before him have done: he is, nevertheless, not afraid to appeal to impartial posterity, as to whose opinion of it is best founded. It is true, that in following up the progress of this Revolution, (as new in its nature, as wonderful in its effect) the eye will necessarily sometimes be arrested by scenes of horror and of pity, the painful instances of human ferocity arising out of the former debasement of the People; but if this event from first to last be seen only with a philosophic eye, and those humiliating evidences of the joint imperfection of man and of government be

overlooked, what a delightful prospect will present itself to the view! For though the sun of freedom at its rising in France should have been obscured by passing clouds, and sometimes veiled with almost impenetrable darkness, yet is it expected henceforward to shine with meridian lustre, and to extend its beaming influence to the happy guidance of every politically bewildered country in the world.⁶⁵

- 36 Although the “horrors” and “impenetrable darkness” of the gloomier phases of the Revolution are not omitted, he recommends that they be “overlooked” and that the events be seen with a broad, “philosophic eye.” Such a perspective would, he believed, help to convince those in doubt of the ultimate benefits of the Revolution. In the main body of the account, the flaws and machinations of the privileged class are set in sharp contrast to the justice and boldness of the people. While the violence of the Terror and the September massacres are not justified, they are explained on rational grounds, and if the King, his ministers, the Girondin members and Robespierre are heavily criticised, leading members of the Mountain, the members of the first Constituent Assembly and Jean-Paul Marat are given more sympathetic treatment. This retrospective account of the revolution’s more radical turn might help to support the case that British residents, sometimes arrested under the Terror, did not always renege on their support for the Revolution, even during the months of 1793 and 1794.
- 37 Other cases suggest that British visitors also had some sympathy with the direction of the Revolution from early 1793 onwards. Both Robert Smith and Robert Rayment had generated enough confidence in the Parisian sections of their place of residence to prompt impassioned pleas by citizens and section leaders on their behalf once in prison. While American resident Joel Barlow would later go on to state his repugnance for the violence of the Terror, he wrote to Jefferson in March 1793 bemoaning critical accounts of the Revolution by those who had not seen the events first-hand. He voiced his concern “lest some of the late transactions in France should be so far misrepresented to the Patriots in America as to lead them to draw conclusions unfavourable to the cause of liberty in this hemisphere⁶⁶.” Some expatriates therefore cannot be easily classified as Girondins, and even those who are more clearly linked to a particular group, such as Paine or Williams, sometimes showed inconsistencies. Paine for example, perhaps sensing the risk he had put himself at by withdrawing from the Convention after the purge of 31st May 1793, offered his services to the *Comité de Salut Public*. He was heavily dependent on the Girondin members for translation services, and indebted to them for publicising his earlier writings, but did not consider himself linked to them ideologically.
- 38 As Mark Philp has argued, “the historical evidence shows that most late eighteenth century writers drew freely on a wide range of intellectual traditions and mobilised rhetoric from a variety of political languages⁶⁷.” This observation is clearly relevant to the political thought of the British radical movement in early 1790s Paris. There was a high degree of liberty in what members of the society chose to express and how they conveyed both their thoughts on French regeneration and their hopes for subsequent change in Britain. What’s more, the constraints imposed on British residents of Paris were neither as powerful nor as restrictive as on democratic reformers in Britain. Although new limits came to be imposed on foreign residents in the French capital after the outbreak of war with Britain and different counter-revolutionary upsurges in the Vendée, Marseille or Toulon, for a short time, those present in Paris could express their ideas relatively openly. This freedom did not completely disappear during the Terror, though it was severely proscribed. Before the trial of the king, and even in the months that followed, there was still some scope for speaking according to conscience. John Hurford Stone,

writing to his brother during the Terror, contended that “I am not affected by it myself: on the contrary, having the full enjoyment of liberty as an artist, and also the confidence of my not being hostile to the cause of liberty, I am more than free. I am respected, tho’ I keep aloof from all political acquaintance⁶⁸.” Freedom was therefore dependent on expatriates’ agreement not to enter into factional battles.

- 39 Radicals who took up residence in France did actively support and entertain some of the theories and ideas which emerged during the Revolution, some even expressing their unfailing affinity as late as 1796. They were less closely attached to the notion of the purity of the ancient pre-Norman constitution and found justification for their ideas in natural rights theory but also in the views expressed by democratic reformers in France. Their criticism of the British system of representation and constitutionalism often went further and was expressed more openly compared to their compatriots in Britain. Mark Philp has noted that in Britain:

Late eighteenth century political debate contested in detail the interpretation of the constitution, and the customs and practices of the English state. But it did so while accepting those institutions as embodying the sovereignty of the state, which they had no wish to impugn. The result was a broadly shared, tacit agreement on the basic institutional structure of the British state, which grew out of the Restoration and subsequently the Revolution Settlement and was increasingly stable by the middle of the century⁶⁹.

- 40 Philp’s argument is that the theoretical language of republicanism was marginalised during the course of the late eighteenth century, while a commitment to the fundamental legitimacy of the institutions of the British state emerged. This may be true for those radicals who had to conform to the more restrictive context of political debate in Britain in the later 1790s. Yet British radicals in exile were able to engage with models of political thought and language that were no longer mobilised in their home country, a position which set them apart from domestic reformers and which allowed for new collaborations in France.

Retrospective re-reading of the Revolution

- 41 Some radicals, on their return to Britain in 1794 and 1795, after the relaxation of the measures adopted under the Terror and the opening up of the Channel crossing to foreigners, maintained their admiration for French affairs, flirting with imprisonment when they did, under the terms of existing libel laws or the new Gagging Acts of 1795. Sampson Perry, for instance, published his pro-revolutionary reading of events in France from 1789-1795 from within Newgate prison in 1796. Others however, rewrote their involvement in the Revolution and in doing so wrote out much of their earlier enthusiasm, differentiating in a much clearer way between the interests and priorities of British and Irish members of the society. David Williams, the Welsh Dissenting minister who had advised the constitutional committee in late 1792 and early 1793, and Henry ‘Redhead’ Yorke, British reformer and member of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man, are two noteworthy examples of revolutionary enthusiasts who rewrote their experience on their return to Britain⁷⁰. From 1796, Williams began to work with founder of the Association for the Protection of Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers, John Reeves, who would lend his name to the popular association movement, and Yorke, writing during the Peace of Amiens in 1802, drew a clear distinction between British and Irish members, the latter’s involvement in the rebellion of 1798 being traced

back to their earlier activities in Paris in 1792. Yorke remembered his former fellow Paris society member Robert O'Reilly as "one of the rankest conspirators against our country" who "as citizen O'Reilly, in the year 1792, he succeeded in expelling two Englishmen from White's in the rue des Petits Pères, because they opposed the manic Irish propositions of Citizen Lord Edward Fitzgerald and the two unhappy Sheares, all of whom met a tragic fate in Ireland⁷¹." Yorke here saw in the Irish members in 1792 insurrectionary tendencies which made them stand apart from British expatriates from the outset. Yorke's account is deeply coloured by the events in Ireland four years before publication. Yorke's description of O'Reilly is characterised by disillusioned revisionism and a desire to distance himself from the radical reformers who had set up residence in the French capital. He suggests that O'Reilly had "set up in Paris as a persecuted Irish patriot", and was part of a distinct "Irish club" in the capital, therefore emphasising his association with a specifically Irish movement from the earliest months of the society⁷².

- 42 Yorke was an integral member of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man and Captain George Munro, in a report to the Foreign Office of late December 1792, suggested that Yorke had been a close acquaintance of the Sheares brothers and shared their republican commitments:

The party of Conspirators have now formed themselves into a Society, the principles of which I have the honor of inclosing, they have however as yet met with but few subscribers, many of them that signed the late address heartily refuse it. [...] In Robert Smith, Miss [...] Raymond, Sayer, Joyce and two Mr Sheares with a Mr York are the leading [members]. The two Sheares are Irish gentlemen and brothers, and Mr York brought an address from Derby to the National Convention. Those three are violent men and great Republicans, but men neither of weight or ability to do much mischief.

- 43 A fortnight later, Munro wrote again, once more referring to Yorke's violent tendencies and ardent republican principles: "Mr York is a very violent man as I had the honor of saying before, he brought an address from Derby if possible he merits to be punished he is constantly with Frost⁷³." Yorke, as leading member of the Sheffield Constitutional Society, was also one of the more enthusiastic supporters of a further convention of the people that had been planned by the radical societies of Britain in March 1794.
- 44 What can be gleaned from these conflicting viewpoints on the period of late 1792 through to 1793 – namely Yorke's vision of an already diverging radical movement in exile in which the Irish were the avowed enemies of the British crown and the British were moderate reformers, and Munro's account of the convergence between the republican sentiments of British radicals in Paris and their Irish counterparts – is that views changed as the Revolution wore on, and for those British members of the club, returning home after their brief experience in revolutionary France, there was a temptation, at least for some, to renege on previous commitments and draw a much starker gulf between acquaintances who were later implicated in attempts to overthrow British rule in Ireland. This cannot eradicate a certain degree of concordance in the early years. Such retrospective rewriting and re-interpretation can sometimes over-emphasise the schisms and dissensions within the club and the early emergence of a specifically Irish republican agenda.

Conclusion

45 If any conclusions can be drawn therefore from a survey of the international Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man, it might be that, first and foremost, if an Irish republican agenda was developing in the context of the political experiments in the Atlantic world, it included, at this early stage British activists, who found common cause with Irish reformers as well as other “international patriots” in revolutionary Paris. The associational culture which emerged at White’s Hotel was one which allowed radicals from different national backgrounds to engage in the exchange of ideas as well as to develop a coherent, if short-lived, political movement in exile. Yet, it would appear that nationality was not as cohesive a factor as might be expected, and that in the years 1792 to 1793 at least, loyalty to the Revolution, a potent sense of international citizenship, and commitment to universal goals took precedence over the advancement of specifically national agendas. This does not mean that the roots of a later Irish republican movement should not be identified in the experience of membership of the society and life under the Revolution, but this needs to include an acknowledgement that the period was one of flux, both in terms of how nationality was perceived and performed but also in terms of how it was seen by the authorities. If it was the Irish residents who built upon the formative experience in Paris in the momentum towards a republican uprising from 1795, this experience had an international dimension and cut across national boundaries in 1792 and 1793.

NOTES

1. The echoes with the official name of the Cordeliers Club, the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man and the Citizen may hint at the political affinities of the English-speaking society and warn against seeing the English-speaking residents of Paris as affiliated as a group to the Girondins.
2. Alger explains more about the geographical surroundings and location of the hotel and its subsequent transformation in “The British Colony in Paris, 1792-93,” *The English Historical Review*, 13, 52 (1898), p. 672-694.
3. Scholars such as John Goldworth Alger, writing at the end of the nineteenth century, or even David V. Erdman, who published his work on the British in Paris under the title of *Commerce des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris 1790-1793*, Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1986, failed to grasp the scope of Irish involvement in the activities of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man. Alger addressed the society’s activities in his article “The British Colony in Paris, 1792-1793”. The neglect of a specifically Irish perspective might be in part due to the particular context in which he was writing, before the renaissance of the Irish republican movement in the years immediately before the outbreak of war in 1914. I myself clumsily employed the term “British Club” in my doctoral thesis which focused on the British community in early republican Paris. See Rachel Rogers. “Vectors of Revolution: The British Radical Community in Early Republican Paris, 1792-1794”, unpublished PhD thesis, Université Toulouse II.

4. The focus in this paper is not on the Irish members of the club themselves, since Mathieu Ferradou is thoroughly documenting the place of these figures in the society, demonstrated in his recent article “Histoire d’un “festin patriotique” à l’hôtel White: les irlandais patriotes à Paris, 1789-1795” which appeared in the *Annales Historiques de la Révolution Française* in December 2015. My thanks go to Mathieu for his work with Pierre Serna in organising the conference at which this paper was initially presented, and for his thoughtful comments during the debates, which widened my own understanding of the extent of Irish involvement in the club at this phase of the Revolution.

5. The main works by Alger dealing with the British expatriate community are *Paris in 1789-94: Farewell Letters of Victims of the Guillotine*, London, Allen, 1902; *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives, 1801-1815*, New York, AMS Press, 1970; *Englishmen in the French Revolution*, London, S. Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1889; *Glimpses of the French Revolution: Myths, Ideals, and Realities*, London, Sampson Low, Marston and Co., 1894; and “The British Colony in Paris, 1792-93.” Another significant contribution is David V. Erdman’s, *Commerce Des Lumières*. Although Erdman contests earlier views expressed by Captain Monro and John Goldworth Alger that the society had virtually dissolved by the beginning of 1793, his own work only extends the society’s existence to John Oswald’s death in the Vendée in September 1793 and does not provide any substantial insights into the experience of members of the club during the Terror in the period leading up to Thermidor. If we rely too heavily on Erdman’s account, there is also a danger of exaggerating Oswald’s role and influence within the society. Other studies of the British in Paris include Lionel D. Woodward, *Une Anglaise amie de la Révolution française: Hélène-Maria Williams et ses amis*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 1930. See also Sophie Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen: l'étranger dans le discours de la Révolution française*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1997) and Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: The Treatment of Foreigners 1789-1799*, Oxford, Clarendon, 2000.

6. See Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1982 and Liam Swords, *The Green Cockade: The Irish in the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, Dublin, Glendale, 1989.

7. See Philipp Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots: Americans in Paris in the Age of Revolution*, Charlottesville and London, University of Virginia Press, 2010 and Yvon Bizardel, *Les Américains à Paris sous Louis XVI et pendant la Révolution: notices biographiques*, Paris, Y. Bizardel, 1978.

8. See Richard Buel, *Joel Barlow American Citizen in a Revolutionary World*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011 and Wil Verhoeven, *Gilbert Imlay: Citizen of the World*, London, Pickering and Chatto, 2008.

9. This paper is based on the wider research I carried out in the pursuit of my PhD thesis entitled *Vectors of Revolution: The British Radical Community in Early Republican Paris, 1792-1794* (Université Toulouse II, 2012). My focus was on the associational culture centred on White’s Hotel and I also explored the contributions of members of the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man to the debates on the drafting of a republican constitution at the turn of 1793, and the manner in which they tried to capture the Revolution in writing for a British audience, contributing to the flow of cross-Channel information. My own work did not examine at length the Irish contributions to the society’s agenda, despite a very lengthy footnote the introduction explaining how the existing terminology – the “British Club” in particular – used to refer to the expatriate community in Paris was wholly inadequate. While recognising the place of the Irish in the society that was formed in Paris in late 1792, my final study did not pay sufficient attention to the broader international perspective of foreign political activism in France during the early years of the Revolution.

10. The National Archives (TNA) Treasury Solicitor’s Papers (TS) 11/959. Monro admits that he only arrived in Paris on 20th November, two days after the event took place.

11. For the full list of signatories, see the manuscript copy held in the Archives Nationales, C11 278-40. David Erdman also includes a typed transcript of the address in *Commerce des Lumières*.
12. TNA TS 11/959.
13. A letter read at the SCI gathering of 7th December 1792 confirmed the deposition of the address at the bar of the Convention.
14. See TNA TS 11/962/3508 for the record of SCI meetings in London from Friday 9th December 1791 to Friday 9th May 1794. Sampson Perry attended another SCI gathering at the Crown and Anchor Tavern on 28th September 1792. He was not present throughout the entire month of October, but resumed attendance on three successive occasions in November, just before his departure to Paris. Perry was actually in France in October 1792, attempting to secure an agreement for the publication of his newspaper in Paris.
15. Sophie Wahnich highlights how both the need to ensure British neutrality and the legacy of the British influence on actors in the 1789-1790 Constituent Assembly meant that there was a persistent attempt to differentiate between a guilty government and a liberty-loving people. See Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen*, in particular p. 281-310.
16. Many reformers assented to the view that there had been a form of ideal liberty in England before the Norman conquest of 1066, when Englishmen exercised some sort of democratic role in local assemblies.
17. Quoted in *Le Moniteur Universel*, volume 14. The Revolution Society had a much more Whig-oriented reform agenda in late 1792 than the SCI or the London Corresponding Society.
18. In November 1792, the Reeves Association was established, militating against the democratic reform movement. In December, the king called out the militia to guard the Tower of London and Paine was indicted and found guilty in absentia for seditious libel. Burnings of Paine's effigy and his pamphlet *Rights of Man* took place around the country in December 1792 and January 1793 to great popular approval. For more on the loyalist reaction to Paine, see Frank O'Gorman "The Paine Burnings of 1792 and 1793," *Past and Present* 193 (November 2006), p. 111-156. For a discussion of the genuine fear of revolution pervading the ruling elite at the turn of 1793, see Clive Emsley, "The London 'Insurrection' of December 1792: Fact, Fiction or Fantasy?" *The Journal of British Studies*, 17:2 (Spring 1978), p. 66-86.
19. *Le Moniteur Universel*, vol. 14, Monday 26th November 1792. "De Paris – Les Anglais demeurant à Paris se sont assemblés, il y a quelques jours, à l'hôtel de Withes, passage des Petits-Pères, pour célébrer les victoires des armées de la république française et le triomphe de la liberté. Des étrangers de différentes contrées de l'Europe ont été invités à cette fête, et ont pris part à la joie qui transportaient l'assemblée. Ainsi s'étendent chaque jour les liens de la fraternité universelle à laquelle les Français ont invité tous les peuples, et qu'ils veulent établir au prix de leur sang."
20. *Le Moniteur Universel*, vol. 14, Monday 7th January 1793, "France, Commune de Paris, du 5 janvier : Des étrangers, pour la plupart Anglais, Ecossais et Irlandais, résidant à Paris, se sont présentés au secrétariat de la municipalité, et ont déclaré, suivant la loi, qu'ils se réuniront tous les dimanches et jeudis, sous le nom de Société des Amis des Droits de l'Homme, à l'hôtel anglais de White, no. 7, passage des Petits-Pères."
21. "Biographical notice of Mr. Robert Merry," *The Monthly Magazine*, vol. 7 (April 1799), p. 255-256. The "Mr. Madget" mentioned in the notice is Nicholas Madgett, a member of the Paris society and translator for the revolutionary government during the Terror. Madgett suggested drawing up a list of loyal and trustworthy British citizens in Paris in March 1793, a list on which Merry's name figured.
22. Thomas Moore, *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1835, p. 73-74.

23. This would support the contention of Jim Smyth that the United Irishmen were strongly influenced by Paineite ideas. See Jim Smyth, "Introduction: The 1798 Rebellion in its Eighteenth-Century Contexts" in Jim Smyth (ed.), *Revolution, Counter-revolution and Union: Ireland in the 1790s*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 1-20. See also David Dickson, "Paine and Ireland" in David Dickson, Dáire Keogh, Kevin Whelan (eds.), *The United Irishmen. Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion*, Dublin, Lilliput Press, 1993, p. 135-150.
24. George Monro, 6th December 1792, TNA TS 11/959.
25. Sampson Perry noted the change in his second volume to *An Historical Sketch*. He wrote, "It ought not to be omitted in mention, that this convention, still more strongly imbued with the principle of equality than either of its predecessors, resolved the same day to disuse the title of *monsieur*, and take the plain one of *citizen*." (*An Historical Sketch of the French Revolution; Commencing with its Predisposing Causes, and Carried on to the Acceptation of the Constitution, in 1795*, vol. II, London, Symonds, 1796, p. 265.
26. Robert [?], *A Circumstantial History of the Transactions at Paris on the Tenth of August Plainly Shewing the Perfidy of Louis XVI, and the General Unanimity of the People, in Defence of their Rights*, London, Symonds, 1792, p. vii-viii.
27. Simon MacDonald, "English-language Newspapers in Revolutionary France", *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 36 No. 1 (2013).
28. « Nous ne sommes pas les seuls animés de ces sentimens, nous ne doutons pas qu'ils ne se manifestent également, chez la grande majorité de nos compatriotes, si l'opinion publique était consultée comme elle devrait l'être dans une Convention Nationale » (AN, C 241/ 11 278-40. My translation).
29. See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 1992; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. Colley argues that although dissenting voices did exist in the loyalist-dominated climate of wartime Britain, "we should not let them drown out the other, apparently more conventional voices of those far greater numbers of Britons who, for many different reasons, supported the successive war efforts" (p. 5).
30. For further details on Muir's trial and the case of the Scottish Jacobins, see James Epstein's article, "'Our Real Constitution': Trial Defence and Radical Memory in the Age of Revolution" in James Vernon (ed.), *Re-reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996. See in particular pages 32-33 for an account of Muir's case.
31. T. M. Parsinnen, "Association, Convention and Anti-parliament in British Radical Politics, 1771-1848" *English Historical Review*, 1973, 88, p. 504-533.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 512.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 508.
34. Gerrald held that "the Saxons convened every year all the freemen of the kingdom who composed an assembly called the Mycelgemot, Folk-mote, or Convention." Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 511.
35. See Epstein, "Our Real Constitution", p. 43.
36. James Epstein notes how "democratic writers and speakers freely mixed historical and natural concepts of rights, moving with little sense of incompatibility between the twin poles of natural reason and the constitutional past." Epstein, "Our Real Constitution", p. 31. See also Mark Philp, "The Fragmented Ideology of Reform," in Mark Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. Thomas Paine, like Gerrald, had also criticised the settlement of 1688, but in Paine's case it was for failing to provide for the *natural* (not ancient) right of popular sovereignty and universal suffrage.
37. Gordon Pentland, "Universalism and the Scottish Conventions, 1792-1794," *History* 89:3 (295), 2004, p. 340-360 (p. 347).
38. For further details on the suppression of the Irish Convention, see Parsinnen, "Association, Convention and Anti-parliament".

39. *The Trial of Joseph Gerrald, before the High Court of Justiciary, at Edinburgh, on the 13th and 14th of March 1794, for Sedition; with an Original Memoir and Notes* (Glasgow, Muir, Gowan & Co., 1835), p. 116.
40. Thale (ed.), *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society*, p. 106-107.
41. This was particularly the case for “radical reformers” such as Edward Fitzgerald. However, some Irish reformers, such as William Drennan, did fit more clearly into a Whig tradition, employing a “constitutional” idiom.
42. Paine, “Letter Addressed to the Addressers”, in Philip S. Foner (ed.), *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, (New York: Citadel Press, 1945), 2, p. 477.
43. Perry, *An Historical Sketch*, I, p. 20.
44. He went to France to engage in a political experiment which he had meditated on since he began his career as a revolutionary. As he explained in his letter to the French people from the Luxembourg prison at the height of the Terror, “parties and factions, various and numerous as they have been, I have always avoided. My heart was devoted to all France, and the object to which I applied myself was the Constitution.” AN F7 4774 61, Thomas Paine file.
45. Robert Merry, *Réflexions politiques sur la nouvelle constitution qui se prépare en France adressées à la république*, Paris, J. Reyner, 1792.
46. John Oswald, *The Government of the People, or a Sketch of a Constitution for the Universal Commonwealth*, Paris, The English Press, 1792, p. 8-9.
47. William Doyle, “Thomas Paine and the Girondins,” *Officers, Nobles and Revolutionaries: Essays on Eighteenth-Century France*, London, Hambledon Press, 1995, p. 216.
48. Patrice Gueniffey, “Cordeliers and Girondins: The Prehistory of the Republic?” in Biancamaria Fontana (ed.), *The Invention of the Modern Republic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 86-106 (p. 106). See also Rachel Hammersley, *French Revolutionaries and English Republicans: The Cordeliers Club 1790-1794*, Rochester, Boydell, 2005 and “Harringtonian Republicanism, Democracy and the French Revolution”, *La Révolution française* [En ligne], 5 | 2013. URL : <http://lrf.revues.org/1047>.
49. Loyalty to the reigning government and constitutional settlement was encouraged through different means. Petitions against Thomas Paine were drawn up, and burnings of Paine’s effigy and his book *Rights of Man* were carried out across the country. Caricature artists such as James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson also played their part in fostering anti-democratic sentiment amongst the people. See Pascal Dupuy’s contribution to this special issue.
50. Sophie Wahnich, *L’impossible citoyen*, p. 293 : “L’irresponsabilité d’un peuple trompé à la responsabilité d’un peuple coupable” (My translation). See also Sophie Wahnich and Marc Bélissa, “Les crimes des Anglais : trahir le droit”, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, n° 300, 1995, p. 233-248.
51. Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, p. 334.
52. Rayment was one of the principal figures behind a plan to provide relief for the widows and orphans of those who died at the Tuileries on 10th August 1792. See AN F7 4774 88.
53. Archives diplomatiques, La Courneuve (AD), Corr. Pol. Ang. (CPA), vol. 588, item 1, cited and translated in Mary-Ann Constantine, “The Welsh in Revolutionary Paris” in Mary-Ann Constantine and Dafydd Johnson (eds.), *Footsteps of Liberty and Revolt: Essays on Wales and the French Revolution*, University of Wales Press, 2013, p. 70.
54. AN, F7 4412.
55. AN, F7 4412.
56. Mary-Ann Constantine, “The Welsh in Revolutionary Paris”, p. 69-91.
57. 19th May 1795, AD, CPA, vol. 588, f° 158, quoted in Mary-Ann Constantine, “The Welsh in Revolutionary Paris,” p. 82.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 82-83.

59. See Harry T. Dickinson, "L'Irlande à l'Époque de la Révolution française", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 342, 2005, p. 159-183.
60. Mathieu Ferradou tempered this assertion in the discussions at the IHRF, suggesting that there is archival evidence to attest to the fact that Irish residents of Paris, particularly under the Terror, began to assert a more distinctive Irish identity in their appeals to the revolutionary administration.
61. If we go by David Erdman's study of John Oswald and his associates in the French capital, the society had all but disbanded by February of the same year, under the pressure of sustained surveillance of foreigners after war broke out between Britain and France and when foreigners, particularly those of countries with which the republic was at war, had to officially register with local *comités de surveillance*. It would appear however, from an investigation of the police records and *Comité de Salut Public* and *Comité de Sureté Générale* deposits, that the ties cultivated both within the club but also by its members who engaged in entrepreneurial and journalistic ventures outside the remit of the society, were drawn upon during the more testing months after February 1793 and this culture, gathering Irish, English, Scottish and Welsh sympathisers but also wider more eclectic associates, from different countries, was nourished and perpetuated during the early republic.
62. Michael Rapport, though accepting that the majority of British radicals in Paris had "publicly supported the Girondins," argues that a radical minority, in which he includes John Oswald, were "true Jacobins": Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, op. cit. p. 180-81. Albert Mathiez also identified Scottish radicals John Oswald and Thomas Christie as being dedicated to the Mountain, despite the vast majority of foreigners being allied to the Girondins or under the influence of counter-revolutionary elites. See Mathiez, *La Révolution et les étrangers: cosmopolitisme et défense nationale*, Paris, Renaissance du livre, 1918, p. 46-47. F. M. Todd acknowledged that Helen Maria Williams had "connexions with the Girondin party," but suggested that her lover, John Hurford Stone, was a Jacobin. See F. M. Todd, "Wordsworth, Helen Maria Williams and France," *Modern Language Review* 43.4 (1948), p. 458. Furthermore, Deborah Kennedy has argued that while the majority of British residents of Paris were disillusioned by the Revolution's course by the end of 1793, some, such as Sampson Perry, did not withdraw their support from the Jacobin leadership. See Deborah Kennedy, "Responding to the French Revolution: Williams' *Julia* and Burney's *The Wanderer*," in Laura Dabundo (ed.), *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*, Lanham, University Press of America, 2000, p. 3-17.
63. For Perry's account of how he secured an extension on his liberty, see his *An Historical Sketch*, I, p. 15.
64. Perry, *An Historical Sketch*, I, p. 12-13.
65. Sampson Perry, *An Historical Sketch*, II, p. iii-iv.
66. Joel Barlow to Thomas Jefferson, 8th March 1793, quoted in Philip Ziesche, *Cosmopolitan Patriots*, op. cit., p. 80.
67. Mark Philp, "English Republicanism in the 1790s," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 6:3 (1998), p. 235-262 (p. 249).
68. T. B. Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanours from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783, with Notes and Other Illustrations...and Continued from the Year 1793 to the Present Time*, vol. 25, London, 1818, p. 1226.
69. Mark Philp, "English Republicanism in the 1790s", p. 239.
70. David Williams and Peter France, *Incidents in My Own Life Which Have Been Thought of Some Importance*, Brighton, University of Sussex Library, 1980.
71. Henry Redhead Yorke, *France in 1802, Described in a Series of Contemporary Letters* (1804), ed. J. A. C. Sykes, with an introduction by Richard Davey, London, Heineman, 1906, p. 228.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
73. TNA FO 27 40 Part 2.

ABSTRACTS

This article focuses on the English-speaking community in revolutionary Paris after the establishment of the National Convention in September 1792. More specifically, it highlights the close ties forged between British and Irish radicals within the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man at what was a critical juncture for foreign residents in the French capital. It suggests that British radicals in Paris adhered to a broadly Paineite tradition, eschewing the revered British constitutional heritage in their contributions to the debate on a republican constitution at the turn of 1793. Such views both set exiled Britons apart from compatriots at home who were active in the convention movement of 1792 and 1793 and drew them into a closer union with radical Irish reformers in Paris. This paper also refutes the widely-held contention that British residents of Paris formed part of the Girondin grouping. Instead it is argued that some British nationals had more than superficial sympathy with the aims of the Mountain, and this more radical strain of British activism may have provided impetus for British and Irish political conjunctions in the arena of revolution.

Cet article s'intéresse à la communauté anglophone qui existait dans le Paris révolutionnaire sous la Convention nationale, à partir de septembre 1792. Plus précisément, il souligne les liens étroits qui furent forgés entre les radicaux britanniques et irlandais au sein de la Société des Amis des Droits de l'Homme dans le contexte de ce qui représentait un tournant pour les étrangers résidant dans la capitale française. Il suggère que les radicaux britanniques à Paris se définissaient comme disciples de Thomas Paine, rejetant l'héritage constitutionnel britannique dans leurs contributions au débat sur la constitution républicaine au tournant de l'année 1793. De telles positions plaçaient ces Britanniques exilés dans une position singulière vis-à-vis de leurs compatriotes qui étaient actifs dans le mouvement pour une convention en Grande-Bretagne en 1792 et 1793, et les conduisit à une union plus étroite avec les Irlandais réformateurs radicaux à Paris. Cet article réfute également l'idée largement répandue que les résidents britanniques de Paris étaient partie intégrante de la mouvance girondine. En réalité, il est démontré ici que certains de ces Britanniques partageaient de nombreuses vues politiques avec la Montagne, et que cette tendance plus radicale de l'activisme britannique a pu donner une impulsion déterminante pour un rapprochement entre Britanniques et Irlandais vers l'arène révolutionnaire.

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Mots-clés: Société des Amis des Droits de l'Homme, cosmopolitisme, Ière République, radicalisme britannique et irlandais, constitutions

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