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Between Scylla and Charybdis? Irish Republicans between the British Empire and the early French Republic, 1792–4 --Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract:	<p>In 1792, foreigners flocked to France to partake in the new republican regime, redefining nationality along the lines of popular sovereignty. A number of American, British, and Irish foreigners formed a club in Paris, the Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man (Société des Amis des Droits de l'Homme; SADH), among whom Irish republicans were a key component. Eager to “revolutionize” Britain and Ireland, they contributed to the rise in tensions and, ultimately, to the outbreak of war between France and Britain. This article argues that these Irish, because of their colonial experience, were a key factor in the redefinition and opposition between British imperial and French republican concepts of nation and citizenship. Their defense of a cosmopolitan citizenship ideal was violently rejected in Britain, and was severely tested by the “Terror” in France.</p>
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Between Scylla and Charybdis?

Irish Republicans between the British Empire and the early French Republic, 1792–4

Introduction: The Republican Project

A picturesque anecdote tells that, on January 23, 1793, on the packet boat returning from the continent where he had been studying, the young Daniel O’Connell, future “Liberator” of Ireland, met the Irish brothers Henry and John Sheares. The latter of the two brothers boasted that they had paid two national guards to wear their uniforms and assist at the execution of Louis XVI. Images of scenes of people dancing the carmagnole around the scaffold and imbibing their handkerchief with the royal blood inevitably come to mind. While the veracity of this anecdote is dubious at best, there is an element of truth to it: the participation of foreigners in the trial and execution of the king as France was defining itself, in this undertaking, as a republic.¹ Asked as to why they had desired to participate in this “horrible spectacle,” John Sheares answered: “Love of the cause, sir.”²

The cause was precisely the French Republic that Henry and John Sheares, along with many other Irish, English, Scottish, and American patriots, had decided to support by founding the Société des Amis des Droits de l’Homme (SADH), which was the outcome of a

¹ For similar anecdotes placing other members of the SADH – John Oswald and Dr. Maxwell – at the scene, see Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières*, 245-6. The British spy Captain George Monro, however, informed his government that the Sheareses had left Paris before the execution of the king, on the 16th and that they were to go back to England or Ireland through Ostend: Monro to [Grenville], 21 Jan. 1793, National Archives, Kew [thereafter NA], Foreign Office [thereafter FO] 27/41 f. 113. On the execution of Louis XVI as a mean for France to truly become a republic, see Biard *et al*, “Apprivoiser la république.”

² O’Connell, *Life and Speeches of Daniel O’Connell*, 9-10.

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dinner held at White's Hotel on November 19, 1792. This political club was also a way for them to participate in the making of the new French republican regime.³ With the founding in 1792 of the first true democratic republic,⁴ the French revolutionaries were inventing the modern concept of the nation as the sovereign people made up of "citizens" – all of those who shared in the decision-making process. As all adult men were for the first time included in the body politic, the French Revolution defined the "nation" first and foremost as a political concept. Indeed, in the 1791 and 1793 constitutions, residency in France, involvement in French society, and a declaration of allegiance to the new political principles opened the way to become a French citizen, and thence to have French nationality. In other words, since it was defined politically, citizenship granted nationality, not the other way around, and one could be a foreigner *and* a French citizen.⁵

Yet, precisely because popular sovereignty was at stake, this universalist conception of citizenship, which belies the idea of nation-states as exclusive and homogeneous, forced the nation to be delimited; boundaries had to be set up for citizenship, whether it was age, gender, race, or origins. The foreign patriots played a key role in the process of determining these boundaries. Informed by their ambiguous political identity and by their alienated status within the British Empire, the Irish republicans, alongside their allies within the SADH, invested their hopes for an egalitarian and inclusive French citizenship and nation in the promising French Republic, a plea heeded by the French authorities, both under the Girondin and Montagnard conventions.

³ Ferradou, "Histoire d'un 'festin patriotique' à l'hôtel White".

⁴ Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas*.

⁵ Bacsko, "'Ici on s'honore du titre de citoyen', " 9; Bart, "Citoyenneté et naturalité," 34-37. For a similar development in the United States, see Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen-Sailors*.

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However, the issues of nation and empire were entangled as republican France in 1792 inherited from the Ancien Régime a colonial empire while it tried to build a sovereign nation. When considering state-building, the recent “global” and “imperial turns” in historical and political theory literature have challenged the dichotomy as well as the narrative that considered empires as belonging to a pre-modern world and nation-states as the crucible of modernity, the latter replacing the former during the Age of Revolutions (circa 1760–1820) and more specifically during the French Revolution.⁶ On the one hand, as Krishan Kumar asserts, “many nations-states are empires in miniature” and “some empires are nation-states writ-large.” These political projects have been represented in the literature as two models available to elites for state-building, and this is what happened in Britain with the English core *ethnie* building an inner empire that became Great Britain.⁷ On the other hand, scholars have long identified “imperialist republicans” from Rome to the United States (about which Raymond Aron coined the term “imperial republic”⁸) through to Machiavelli and most certainly republican France, which, in its dealings with its colonies, largely remained an “imperial republic.”⁹

However, another republican tradition existed, one that held imperialism as abhorrent and incompatible with the republican virtue. These “anti-imperial republicans” were heirs to classical republicanism when they denounced territorial or commercial expansions as leading to the corruption through which an external empire soon transformed the state into an internal

⁶ The literature is vast. For a useful review: Malešević, “Empires and Nation-States.”

⁷ Kumar, “Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States,” 120, 124, 128; Kumar, “Empire and English Nationalism.” See P. J. Marshall, “Introduction,” 4-8 for the evolution of the meaning of “empire” during the eighteenth century from the sovereignty of the Crown to the hierarchical collection of territories.

⁸ Aron, *La République impériale*.

⁹ Gainot, *L’Empire colonial français*, 135-54; Gainot, *La Révolution des esclaves*, 163-204.

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empire, synonymous with tyranny and absolute monarchy.¹⁰ In the same vein, these advanced republicans drew from a radical anti-slavery tradition whose origins lay in the English Revolution of the seventeenth century.¹¹ Heirs to this advanced republicanism, the Irish within the SADH, by their very existence, acted as a link between these issues as they themselves originated from a country that had been colonized.¹² In participating in the debates about French citizenship in the early republic (1792–4), and in navigating the dangerous vagaries of the “Terror,” the Irish republicans in Paris advocated a truly republican model, which was in opposition to that of the British Empire.

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This article, by focusing on these Irishmen’s involvement in the French Republic, aims at contributing to the discussion concerning the influence of the “global,” or the outside, on one of the key features of the French Revolution.¹³ It argues that the respective French and British political (re)definitions of citizenship were fueled by a dialectical process between republican France and the British imperial monarchy. French citizenship – and through it the French nation – were defined as a counter-model to the British Empire. Concurrently, on the other side of the Channel these developments informed the government in its policy for reconfiguring the British Isles, specifically the relationship between Britain and Ireland, which redefined the meaning of citizenship there. Thus, quite ironically, nationality, as a political concept, was redefined during the 1790s through a transnational process. This article examines how Ireland and Irishmen played a central role in these parallel developments in France and Britain. Building on recent research, this focus on a transnational conception of

¹⁰ Kennedy, “Empires and Republics in the History of Political Thought.”

¹¹ Donoghue, *Fire Under the Ashes*.

¹² On the debate about Ireland as an example of the Ancien Régime or a colony, a useful overview is Ian McBride, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland. The Isle of Slaves*.

¹³ Bell, “Questioning the Global Turn”.

1 French citizenship and nation questions the prevalent narrative of the French Revolution from
2 1789 to 1792–3 as a downward spiral from a peaceful and cosmopolitan government to a war-
3 mongering and chauvinistic – if not outright xenophobic and nationalist – government, which
4 especially targeted foreigners.¹⁴ In so doing, this article builds on and goes beyond Michael
5 Rapport’s demonstration that the persecution of foreigners during the “Terror” was grounded
6 in political issues and not ethnic or xenophobic ones.¹⁵

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18 **“He was cosmopolitan and therefore French”:¹⁶ “Nomad Citizenship” in the French**
19 **Republic, August 1792–February 1793**
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22 From the establishment of the French Republic to the declaration of war against England,
23 many Britons and Irishmen came to France to support the new regime. In France, they played
24 a role in the definition of what the republic would be.
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32 *A “Congress of the Entire World” in Paris*
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36 On August 24, 1792, as elections for the future National Convention were underway, deputy
37 Marie-Joseph Chénier declared that he wanted to gather a “congress of the entire world”
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41 ¹⁴ On the challenges to the use of the word “Terror,” see Martin, *La Terreur*; Jourdan, “Les discours de la
42 terreur.”
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45 ¹⁵ Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France*, esp. 227, 327-33. See also Simonin, *Le*
46 *Déshonneur dans la République*, 263-9, who argues that the exclusion of foreigners from the national
47 community and the harsh measures against suspects must be analyzed in the particular historical context –
48 France was then, under siege, shielding itself from enemies both from the outside and from the inside and
49 attempting to prevent military power from taking over civil power. It was also the thesis defended by Mathiez,
50 *La Révolution et les étrangers*, 1-4, 181, 189-90. Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen* reached similar conclusions in
51 her elaborate analysis of the revolutionary discourse regarding the foreigners.
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59 ¹⁶ François Chabot on Joseph Priestley, quoted by Rapport, “‘Deux nations malheureusement rivales’.”
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comprised of all the “apostles of liberty.”¹⁷ As a token of “universal brotherhood,” on August 26, 1792, the Legislative Assembly granted French citizenship to eighteen prominent British, American, Italian, German, Swiss, and Dutch publicists or politicians. The Legislative Assembly considered that

men, who, through their writings and courage, have served the cause of liberty and furthered the emancipation of peoples, cannot be regarded as foreigners by a nation whose enlightenment and whose courage have made free.¹⁸

This decree tied together the different sources upon which the French Republic was founded: enlightened cosmopolitanism as expressed in the public, educated sphere; the claim that France was defending universal human rights; and the legitimacy of the defensive war it was fighting against Prussian and Austrian invaders. As Suzanne Desan writes: “These three forces accentuated the centrality of foreigners and foreign issues to the Revolution. Republicanism – born at war and based on universalism – could not be simply a national product.”¹⁹

¹⁷ *Archives parlementaires* (hereafter *AP*), vol. 48, 688-9.

¹⁸ Decree of 26 Aug. 1792, *AP*, vol. 49, 10: the recipients were Joseph Priestley, Thomas Paine, Jeremy Bentham, William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, James Mackintosh, David Williams, Giuseppe Gorani, Anacharsis Cloots, Cornelius de Pauw, Joachim Heinrich Campe, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, George Washington, John Hamilton, James Madison, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Thadeus Kosciusko, and Friedrich von Schiller. On September 25, 1792, the list was extended to Thomas Cooper, John Horne Tooke, John Oswald, Thomas Christie, and Joseph Warner (all translations are the author’s).

¹⁹ Desan, “Foreigners, Cosmopolitanism, and French Revolutionary Universalism,” 100. See below for how the SADH members associated these issues with anti-slavery in a truly universalist take.

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Amongst these illustrious defenders of liberty was Thomas Paine. The founding father of the American Republic – author of *Rights of Man* (1791 and 1792) and prosecuted in England for seditious writings – came to France in September 1792, where he was elected as representative to the National Convention. While he was considered a threat to the political stability of the English monarchy, this “apostle of liberty” was thus deemed worthy of not only French citizenship but also, endorsed by the people, of representing them in the newly formed National Convention and, as such, to draft a new constitution for France.²⁰

Paine was the figurehead of the circle of foreign patriots who had come from the English-speaking world to bask in the atmosphere of cosmopolitan hope in Paris, where they formed a political society, which met at White’s Hotel, near the Palais-Royal, officially announcing its existence as the Société des Amis des Droits de l’Homme.²¹ Some of the prominent members were English radical entrepreneur John Hurford Stone, Scottish ex-soldier, publicist, and vegetarian John Oswald, and renowned “feminist” authors Helen Maria Williams and Mary Wollstonecraft. Many were associated with the Society for Constitutional Information (SCI) and with the abolitionist movement. In France, they involved themselves in the debates on the future constitution, prompted to do so by deputy Bertrand Barère, who, on October 19, 1792, had invited “all the friends of liberty and equality to present [to the National Convention], in any language, . . . the means they thought proper to confer a good constitution to the French Republic.” SADH member, American poet, and diplomat Joel

²⁰ Jourdan, “La République française: perceptions d’ailleurs. Two other foreigners were likewise distinguished: Anacharsis Cloots and Joseph Priestley. The latter declined.

²¹ *Moniteur*, 7 Jan. 1793.

1 Barlow responded on November 7, 1792, pleading for a “nomad citizenship” that would make
2 French citizens “citizens of the world.”²²
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5 On Wednesday November 28, 1792, the SADH organized a dinner at White’s Hotel.
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7 Presided by John Hurford Stone, this “patriotic feast”²³ gathered about one hundred guests
8 from the entire Atlantic revolutionary galaxy, who celebrated the recent French military
9 victories at Valmy and Jemmapes. In a series of rousing toasts, the list of which was
10 published in several French, English, and Irish newspapers, they linked religious toleration,
11 radical democracy (including women), and the abolition of slavery.²⁴ They also resolved to
12 convey an address of congratulations to the National Convention. On the next Saturday
13 (November 24), a committee of fifteen headed by Irish journalist D. E. MacDonnel penned
14 the address,²⁵ which was signed by fifty of the “English, Scottish and Irish residents and
15 domiciled in Paris.” On November 28, a delegation of 20, headed by SADH secretary and
16 Irish lawyer Robert Bray O’Reilly, presented it at the bar of the National Convention. This
17 address reaffirmed the signatories’ attachment to liberty and equality as exemplified by
18 France and urged the “victorious troops to not lay down their arms until there will be no more
19 tyrants or slaves.”²⁶ On the same occasion, a second address was presented by the SCI by
20 John Frost and Joel Barlow.
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47 ²² Wahnich, *L’Impossible citoyen*, 72-3; *AP*, vol. 52, 577; *AP*, vol. 53, 292. Barlow in his *Lettre à la Convention*
48 *nationale...* (ibid., 286-97) lamented the fact that in the 1791 Constitution a French national would lose his
49 nationality if he became naturalized in another country.
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52 ²³ John Oswald to the editor, *Patriote François*, 26 Nov. 1792.
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54 ²⁴ E.g. *Patriote François*, 21 Nov. 1792; *Morning Chronicle*, 26 Nov. 1792; *Northern Star*, 6 Dec. 1792.
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56 ²⁵ Captain George Monro’s report, 6 Dec. 1792, NA, Treasury Solicitor’s Papers (hereafter TS) 11/959, Part 2.
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58 ²⁶ Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (hereafter AN), C 241.
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1 Both addresses were enthusiastically applauded, receiving the “honours of the
2 session.” The president of the National Convention, Henri Grégoire, responded by addressing
3 the deputation of the SADH as “co-citizens of the world” engaged in a common struggle of
4 liberty against tyranny.²⁷ Deputy Léonard Bourdon invited the honoured guests to sit while
5 the deputies resumed the trial of the former king Louis XVI. Honouring foreigners, especially
6 British and Irish, by allowing them to participate – even if only as mere spectators – in the
7 trial of a king indicated that the royalist and republican models were seen as opposed, as
8 Grégoire had declared on September 21 that kings were monsters to the physical order.²⁸
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10 *Irish Patriots and French Citizens*

11 Among these cosmopolitan republicans were several Irishmen. Besides O’Reilly and
12 MacDonnel, about fifteen Irish signed the SADH address to the National Convention (about
13 one-third of all the signatories). Among them were Edward FitzGerald and the brothers – and
14 both lawyers – Henry and John Sheares, all three future planners of the Irish Rising of 1798,
15 both who died during the event. Other less well-known members were either soldiers in the
16 service of France or students from the Irish College in Paris.²⁹
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18 Edward FitzGerald had previously experienced a political epiphany when he fought in
19 the American War of Independence in the ranks of the British army. From this imperialist and
20 colonial experience, he went back to Ireland and England as a committed abolitionist and a
21 Paineite democrat.³⁰ Following Paine to Paris in September, FitzGerald basked in the
22 atmosphere of fraternity and embraced the egalitarianism of republican citizenship. He
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24 ²⁷ AP, 53, 635-8.

25 ²⁸ AP, 52, 74. For the role of the trial of the king in redefining a republic as the “antonym” of a monarchy, see
26 Glénard, “La République des origines.”

27 ²⁹ Ferradou, “Un festin patriotique.”

28 ³⁰ Whelan, “FitzGerald, Edward”; Tillyard, *Citizen Lord*; Moore, *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*.

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ostensibly preferred walking, eschewing the use of carriages, and sported a republican
cropped haircut, *à la romaine*, clearly playing the part of the French citizen. He even publicly
renounced, along with Sir Robert Smith (former member of parliament for Colchester), his
aristocratic title, which he had already done prior to the dinner, calling himself the “citoyen
Edouard Fitzgerald,” an attitude that was celebrated by a toast at White’s.

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Henry and John Sheares were Dublin lawyers. They came to France to visit Henry’s
children who were in the custody of a friend after the death of their mother.³¹ In the aftermath
of the presentation of the address, both of them assumed French civic responsibilities, as
Henry testified:

We have just been honoured with the title of French citizens this morning.
We came off of guard which we mounted at the Convention. On Sunday,
we mount guard on the King & Queen, & are to escort him for tryal (sic)
to the Convention.³²

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This amazing letter reveals two crucial developments in the early French Republic. The first is
that, besides those on August 26 and September 25, other foreigners were granted French
citizenship,³³ and the second is that even before being recognized as such, these Irish patriots
were participating in the trial of the former king, which entailed what the new republic would
be. Republicanism not only was therefore a national project but also embodied a universal
aspiration, attracting foreign patriots and making them French citizens.

31 C. J. Woods, “Sheares, Henry”.

32 Henry Sheares to Citizen Henry Fleming, 1 Dec. 1792, Trinity College Dublin, Ms. 4833

33 Another case is Joel Barlow, who received French citizenship in February 1793 following the prompting of
Paine and Grégoire: Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières*, 187-9.

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Another telling instance of this Irish-French citizenship, indeed at the microcosmic scale, lies in the episode of the “Republic in the College.” Irish Catholics were forced to come to the continent for their education because the “penal laws” deprived them of this possibility in Ireland. Alienated from and colonized within the British Empire, it would then come as no surprise to find that several of the Catholic students who were in Paris embraced rather than condemned the French Revolution, contrary to what their religious hierarchy did. The politicization of the Irish students, led by William Duckett, who had arrived in Paris in 1786, and Nicholas Madgett, a former priest and professor at the universities of Bordeaux and Toulouse, resulted in their attempt to reconcile Catholicism and republicanism. They denounced their superiors as refractory and counter-revolutionary priests, ousting and replacing them after having organized an election on October 29, 1792 with the support of the Parisian Commune. They formed for a brief, fleeting but highly significant moment a “Republic in the College.” Though it only lasted for three weeks, this episode paved the way for their continued involvement in the French government.³⁴

It thus appears that the SADH members were endeavoring to promote a “global” or “nomad” citizenship, one that they felt could be implemented in the French Republic. They wanted to avoid the increasingly English identity of eighteenth-century Britain, from which they were excluded: Paine because of his outlawry; Henry Redhead Yorke – another associate of the SADH and close friend of the Sheareses – because of his mixed origins as the illegitimate son of a wealthy plantation manager in Antigua and Barbuda and a slave; Barlow because of being American; and Williams because of her gender. As the British Empire reconfigured itself, especially after the Seven Years’ War and the American wars, English identity increasingly formed the core of the British Isles.³⁵ This produced a growing sense of

³⁴ Ferradou, “La République au collège.”

³⁵ Colley, *Britons*, 101-93

1 marginalization for these alienated radicals, who embraced the cause of cosmopolitan
2 republicanism in order to assert their own sense of identity and, as citizens of the world, to
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4 create a political space, or a “periphery public sphere,” that would combine a global identity
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6 and local belonging into which they could belong.³⁶
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10 In this perspective, these radicals’ embrace of the French Republic meant that they
11 celebrated its egalitarianism, thereby pitting it against the hierarchical British Empire with the
12 English monarchy at its center. These advanced republicans were also adamant in their
13 condemnation against slavery, and the toasts at their dinner linked the French Republic, with
14 its egalitarian promise, to the abolitionist movement. Indeed, Yorke, when he first came to
15 England, tried to fit in the metropolitan society and assert his own whiteness and Englishness
16 by writing a pro-slavery pamphlet – which he recanted when he came to France, seeing the
17 opening of possible integration – but for which he was denounced by others within his
18 circle.³⁷
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33 The Irish brought their own sense of alienation and their own aspiration for a nomad
34 citizenship, highlighting the particular colonial experiences and interface role of the Irish
35 between the British Empire and republican France. The Irish students tried to find a way to be
36 included, as Catholics, within the French Republic. FitzGerald, the Sheareses, MacDonnel,
37 and O’Reilly, despite being members of the Irish Protestant “Ascendancy,” were all “colonial
38 outsiders.”³⁸ They had all basked in the atmosphere of classical republicanism and of the
39 Protestant “colonial nationalism” that prevailed in eighteenth-century Ireland, which posited
40 an equal status for Ireland as sister kingdom to England, which would benefit equally from
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53 ³⁶ Goodrich, “The Early Career of Henry Redhead Yorke,” 624, 634-5.
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55 ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 622.
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57 ³⁸ Dunne, *Theobald Wolfe Tone, colonial outsider*. On the colonial identity and colonial nationalism of the Irish
58 Protestant, see Bartlett, “A People made Rather for Copies than Originals.”
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1 the commercial advantages of the British Empire, a claim that English politicians
2 contemptuously dismissed. They were all imbued with the feelings of the glory and pride of
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4 the Volunteer “citizens-soldiers” who had sprung up during the American War of
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6 Independence, whose political role was pivotal in securing legislative independence for
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8 Ireland in 1782. All of this could have fit within a British imperialist, Anglo-Irish
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10 constitutionalist and Protestant framework.³⁹ However, the mingling of these members of the
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12 Irish Protestant elite with British radicals and with Irish Catholics in revolutionary France
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14 insured that it would not be because this entailed the question of popular sovereignty and of
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16 parliamentary reform.
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22 In Ireland, this question was explosive as it was linked with the Catholic question and,
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24 ultimately, with the prospect of Irish independence, which in turn was linked with the
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26 question of slavery. Many Irish patriots, drawing on a complex mix of traditions – republican,
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28 antinomian, classical, humanist, and Enlightened – associated the political and civilian
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30 “slavery” (as experienced under a tyranny) with racial slavery. Their identification with the
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32 first led them to fight against the second.⁴⁰ One notable example is Edward FitzGerald, whose
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34 friendship with his long-time companion, Tony Small, a former slave who saved his life at the
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36 Battle of Eutaw Springs in 1781 and whom he freed, constitutes “the best documented Irish
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38 example of imaginative sympathy between a white and a black man. For FitzGerald, Small
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40 represented the talisman of universal brotherhood, of the possibility of human companionship
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42 across the barriers of colour, class and nationality.”⁴¹ Years later, in June 1789, FitzGerald
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51 ³⁹ Small, *Political Thought in Ireland*.

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53 ⁴⁰ On how these republican traditions were key factors in the Age of Revolutions, fueling the opposition to the
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55 British Empire and the American Revolution as well as the Irish patriotic movement, see Di Lorenzo and
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57 Donoghue, “Abolition and Republicanism.”
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59 ⁴¹ Whelan, “FitzGerald, Edward.”
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1 was adopted by the Seneca Tribe of the Iroquois Confederacy under the patronage of chiefs
2 Joseph Brant and David Hill.⁴²
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5 Imbued with all these hopes of an inclusive republican citizenship, the SADH
6 members, and the Irish in particular, tried to influence the debate on the nature of the French
7 Republic, infusing it with their egalitarian, cosmopolitan, and anti-imperial ideals.
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17 **“Republicanism does not easily penetrate Irish minds”: The Irish during the “Terror,”**
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19 **from Cosmopolitanism to Internationalism?**
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22 However, the advent of war on February 1, 1793 against the British Empire tested the limits
23 of the ideal of French “nomad citizenship” as an atmosphere of suspicion against the British
24 soon pervaded France.
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30 *British and Irishmen faced with the “Terror”*
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34 Between the spring of 1793 and the spring of 1794, the National Convention enacted a series
35 of measures targeting foreigners in France. On March 21, 1793, the Committees of
36 Surveillance were created to watch over foreigners. As the military and political situation
37 worsened during the summer, the French government identified the troubles within the
38 country and the setbacks abroad with the so-called *complot de l'étranger*, as exemplified by
39 the notorious (and most probably forged) “Letter from Lille.” The National Convention voted
40 on several decrees (August 1, September 6, and October 9, 1793) against foreigners, ordering
41 the mass arrest of “all the subjects of the king of Great Britain who are now in the territory of
42 the Republic.” In his *Rapport sur la Loi contre les Anglais* of 25 Vendémiaire Year II
43 (October 16, 1793), Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just justified this measure in reference to
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59 ⁴² More, *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*, vol. I, 147-8; Gibbon, “The Return of the native.”
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the Irish General Charles Edward Jennings Saul De Kilmaine; though, he tellingly referred to him as English:

There are factions within the Republic. ... Who can testify for an Englishman, after Kilmaine, showered with favours among us? Who can testify for an English when so many French are themselves conspiring against their homeland?⁴³

On 5 Nivôse Year II (December 25, 1793), the National Convention passed a decree excluding foreigners “from the right to represent the French people,” targeting specifically Anarchasis Cloots and Thomas Paine, who were arrested on the following day.⁴⁴ On 11 Pluviôse Year II (January 11, 1794), Robespierre rallied against the English at the Jacobins: since they did not rise up against their government, they were guilty of being complicit in the war it waged on France, especially considering that their political system allowed them to express their opinions.⁴⁵ In consequence, the infamous decree of 7 Prairial Year II (May 26, 1794) forbade French soldiers “to make any English or Hanoverian prisoner.” Barère, as *rapporteur*, justified the decree because Englishmen were guilty of the crime of *lèse-humanité* (crime against humanity) by warring against a nation fighting for its natural rights, rendering them strangers to all mankind.⁴⁶

However, the idea that without the cosmopolitan Girondins the French Revolution took up xenophobic nationalism must be challenged: the Montagnard Constitution, adopted on June 24, 1793, still defined citizenship as independent from national identity. Again, one

⁴³ Archives diplomatiques, La Courneuve (hereafter AD) Correspondance politique Angleterre (hereafter CPA) 588 fol. 47-52 (47v, 51v).

⁴⁴ Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen*, 127; AN F⁷ 4774 61 fol. 27-38 : Paine's prison file.

⁴⁵ Aulard, *La Société des Jacobins*, vol. 5, 633-4.

⁴⁶ Wahnich, Béliassa, “Les crimes des Anglais”; Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen*, 243-312.

1 was French because he was a citizen, not the other way around.⁴⁷ Even after the summer of
2 1793, political loyalty still mattered more than nationality, though political orthodoxy
3 restricted such loyalty, and dissent was not tolerated, which explains Paine's arrest: "It was
4 not his nationality which mattered but the fact that his conformity to the current political
5 orthodoxy was suspect" because of his connections with the Girondins and his opposition to
6 the execution of Louis XVI.⁴⁸ Finally, the accusation of *lèse-humanité* against the English
7 should be associated with the vote by the National Convention on 16 Pluviôse an II (February
8 4, 1794), which abolished slavery and granted French citizenship to the inhabitants of Saint-
9 Domingue: slavery was also deemed a crime of *lèse-humanité*.⁴⁹

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This does not preclude the existence of old prejudices combined with nascent
xenophobia.⁵⁰ One *député-représentant en mission* commented on Kilmaine, justifying why
he was unfit to become the new general-in-chief of the French armies in the spring of 1793:
"Republicanism does not easily penetrate Irish minds" (*le républicanisme n'entre pas
facilement dans les esprits irlandais*).⁵¹ The execution on 24 Germinal Year II (April 13,
1794) of Irish-born General Arthur Dillon, hero of the American War of Independence and

⁴⁷ Art. 4: "any man born and domiciled in France, aged 21 accomplished; - every foreigner aged 21
accomplished, who, domiciled in France for one year – Lives there from his work – Or acquire a property – Or
marries a French woman – Or adopts a child – Or nourishes an old man; - Any foreigner at last, who shall be
judged by the Legislative body as deserving of mankind – Is admitted to the exercise of the Rights of French
citizen."

⁴⁸ Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, 144-50, 190-1.

⁴⁹ Serna, "Que s'est-il dit à la Convention les 15, 16 et 17 pluviôse an II?"

⁵⁰ On ancient prejudices toward the Irish in 18th-century France, see Noël, "Images de l'Irlande"; Le Biez, "Irish
News in the French Press"; Davies, "L'Irlande des Lumières"; Gargett and Sheridan (eds), *Ireland and the
French Enlightenment, 1700-1800*.

⁵¹ Quoted by Hayes, *Ireland and Irishmen in the French Revolution*, 139.

1 the Battle of Valmy, along with nineteen others, among whom were common criminals, as
2 well as Lucille Desmoulins, Camille Desmoulins's wife, has certainly been interpreted in this
3 way.⁵² However, Dillon's example helps to understand what a foreigner was under the
4 "Terror": Dillon was guilty of being associated with those who opposed the National
5 Convention, that is to say the Feuillants because of his attachment to monarchy and probably
6 also because of his pro-slavery stance, and the Dantonists because of his friendship with
7 Desmoulins.⁵³

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18 As such, he was a *factieux* (a member of a faction) whose existence threatened the
19 unity of the French Republic and hence a stranger to the revolution. As a general, he
20 represented too dire a threat in the very dangerous context of a state of siege, as the National
21 Convention was wary of a military coup.⁵⁴ In other words, as Saint-Just articulated, the
22 *étrangers* were all those – émigrés, Chouans or Vendéens, criminals, and spies – who plotted
23 and waged war against the French Republic, regardless of their actual nationality.⁵⁵ But a
24 linguistic ambiguity persisted: *l'étranger* could either designate the foreigner, who was not a
25 national but could be a friend of the French Revolution, or the stranger, in the political sense
26 the enemy of the French Republic. While the distinction can be expressed in English, it is not
27 the case in French. Hence the questions: Was one a *factieux* because he was a foreigner or
28 was it the other way around? Were all foreigners suspicious and persecuted as *factieux*? Had
29 French nationalism become xenophobic?

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“*This liberty for which I have made every sacrifice*”

52 Ibid., 171.

53 Ibid., 119; Alger, *Englishmen in the French Revolution*, 171-6.

54 Mazeau, “La ‘Terreur’ ”; Simonin, *Le déshonneur dans la République*, 263-9.

55 Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen*, 130.

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The fate of the radical British and Irish exiles associated with the SADH give some insight into this conundrum. They continued to express their support for the French Republic in a second address to the National Convention on September 23, 1793 in order to cast off the cloud of suspicion that had befallen them because of their association with the Girondins.⁵⁶ Thanks to this and to their networks of support, they endured the waves of arrest and *all* were able to obtain their freedom.⁵⁷ Here the role of Nicholas Madgett is relevant. From his position as the head of the *bureau des traductions*, which was established in 1792–3 within the Ministry of the Navy before it was moved to the Committee of Public Safety,⁵⁸ Madgett was able to shield many SADH from persecution and to obtain the liberation of the Reverend William Jackson, a fellow Irishman and signatory of the SADH address of November 1792 who had been arrested on October 13, 1793, by mobilizing an impressive range of contacts within the Ministry of the Navy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Committee of General Safety and the Committee of Public Safety. His argument was that Jackson was conducting “useful work for the Republic.” Indeed, he was a member of the English Revolutionary Committee set up by Madgett to watch over British spies in France and would later become a French agent sent to England and Ireland to assess the possibility of popular support for a French invasion.⁵⁹

This contrasts with the fate of other Irishmen who had not been associated with or had opposed the SADH. On September 8, 1793, twelve Irish students signed a petition and sent it to the National Convention asking for protection from the decree of September 6 against

⁵⁶ *AP*, vol. 75, 49-50; AD CPA 588 fol. 3-4.

⁵⁷ Rogers, “Vectors of Revolution,” 197-213.

⁵⁸ Kleinman, “Translation, the French language and the United Irishmen,” 75-84.

⁵⁹ AN F⁷ 4748 1 doss. 1; Madgett to Lebrun, 13 and 22 Mar. 1793, AD CPA 587 fol. 20-21, 45-46; [Madgett], “Projet d’organisation du comité révolutionnaire Anglais,” Service historique de la Défense, Vincennes, Marine BB3 36 fol. 115-117 ; Elliott, *Partners in Revolution*, 63-7.

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British subjects.⁶⁰ They expressed their concerns that some *malveillants* (ill-intentioned) among their fellow countrymen had denounced them. Indeed, a bitter conflict existed between the Irish in Paris to take control of the Irish College. These students had opposed the ones involved in the “Republic in the College” and had been denounced as such by the latter’s ally, deputy Léonard Bourdon, at the National Convention on September 6.⁶¹ Many of these students were later arrested and would have been deported to Ireland, but the war prevented it. They were released in April 1795 and treated as refugees.⁶² These contrasting cases confirm that Irishmen – and British subjects – in France were not persecuted because of their origins but because of their political allegiance.

Madgett also helped another fellow Irishman, Thomas MacDermott. Born in 1752 near Roscommon, MacDermott was a quintessential example of the Catholic “underground gentry” and had family connections with the Society of United Irishmen and the secret society of the Defenders.⁶³ In 1782–4 he became a colonel of a regiment of Volunteers, one of the few selected Catholics invited to join their ranks. Coming to France in 1790, he attended the dinner at White’s Hotel, signing the SADH address to the National Convention. Following the law against foreigners of September 6, 1793, he was arrested on 26 Frimaire Year II (December 17, 1793), and incarcerated in the Port Libre prison, from where he wrote to Madgett. His letter, written in very bad, phonetic French, was certainly dictated to a guard.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ *AP*, vol. 73, 526. Original text of the petition is in AN C 271 fol. 29.

⁶¹ Gallois, *Réimpression de l’Ancien Moniteur*, vol. 17, 617-8; Sydenham, *Léonard Bourdon*, 200-1. Wahnich, *L’Impossible citoyen*, 47-53 analyzed these two addresses but, failing to identify their respective authors, she did not perceive that their opposition in tone stemmed from their rivalries.

⁶² Swords, *The Green Cockade*, 96-106.

⁶³ Whelan, “An underground gentry?”; McDowell, *Proceedings of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen*, 7; Tone, *Writings*, vol. 1, 153-4; Gibbons, “Republicanism and radical memory.”

⁶⁴ [MacDermott] to “citoyen Majatte [Madgett],” n. d. [c. Feb.-Mar. 1794], AN F⁷ 4774 28.

1 He also wrote another statement in English approximately at the same time.⁶⁵ In these two
2 documents MacDermott calls himself “Citoyen,” reaching out to Madgett as a fellow
3 “citizen,” but also as a fellow compatriot and Irishman and, as such, “able to judge if I write
4 truthfully or not.” He then lists his credentials as a “patriot”: his deeds for the establishment of
5 liberty in Ireland, his election by his “co-citizens” as colonel of the Volunteers, and his
6 attendance at the conventions of 1782, 1783, and 1784, whose purpose was to draft a new
7 constitution based “upon the rights of man.” He ends his letter to Madgett with a very
8 interesting plea:
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Despite being born in a foreign country I hope that the above facts find
enough [grace?] to procure me this liberty for which I have, during all my
life, made every sacrifice.⁶⁶

Adopting the republican language as a survival strategy, MacDermott nonetheless
confirms that patriotism is international. He was a foreigner, but his struggle against the
English colonial domination of Ireland proved his republicanism, entailing him to enjoy
liberty – to benefit from the rights of man and citizen – in republican France.

Revealingly, on 16 Floréal Year II (May 5, 1794) the revolutionary committee of the
section of the Temple, where he was residing before his arrest, endorsed a document in which
they praised his exemplary conduct. His personal papers were seized and examined on 27
Prairial Year II (June 15, 1794), and three French citizens – all of Irish origins – testified on
his behalf in front of a notary on 17 Fructidor Year II (September 3, 1794)⁶⁷. In the meantime,
a change occurred, which can only be perceived by a crossing out of a word on an official

⁶⁵ Declaration of Thomas MacDermott, n. d. [after March 1794], AN T 1376.

⁶⁶ [MacDermott] to “citoyen Majatte [Madgett],” n. d. [c. Feb.-Mar. 1794], AN F⁷ 4774 28.

⁶⁷ “Attestation devant Guilbert, notaire Franciade, par Jacques ö Melaglin, Guillaume Walsh, Patrice O’Brien,”
17 fructidor an 2 [3 Sept. 1794], *ibid.*

1 document: on 21 Thermidor Year II (August 8, 1794), the Committee of Surveillance of the
2 section of the Temple restated that MacDermott was imprisoned because of the law against
3 foreigners and then added “he is ~~English~~ Irish” (and his exemplary conduct was again
4 mentioned)⁶⁸. In consequence, on 22 Vendémiaire Year III (October 13, 1794), he was
5 freed.⁶⁹ One year later, he even wrote to the committee in order to demand the return of his
6 personal papers and possessions.⁷⁰

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15 This crossing out of a single but crucial word indicates that, faced with general
16 suspicion and persecution, Thomas MacDermott, thanks to his network of local Irish contacts,
17 was able to convince the French authorities that he was a patriot and, as such, of his
18 revolutionary credentials. To do so, he asserted his Irishness and his commitment to Irish
19 independence, thereby proving his compatibility with (French) republican principles.
20 Patriotism was not anymore associated with cosmopolitanism but rather with internationalism
21 between citizens who fought to establish nationhood, that is to say independence and liberty
22 in their respective country.⁷¹ In this context, it is the nation that, as the expression of popular
23 sovereignty of emancipated peoples, rendered internationalism possible between fellow free
24 nations, what was then called *réciprocité*, contrary to the empire, which entailed domination
25 that was incompatible with liberty. Republicanism in France and Ireland sowed the seeds for
26 internationalism between these two nations with their common opposition to empire, perhaps

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50 ⁶⁸ Comité de surveillance, section du Temple, 21 thermidor an 2 [8 Aug. 1794], *ibid.*

51 ⁶⁹ Libération de Macdermotte par ordre du Comité de Sûreté générale, 22 vendémiaire [an III; 13 Oct. 1794],
52 *ibid.*Cf. MacDermot, *The MacDermot of Moylurg*, 328, who writes that he had died in prison in 1793 as a
53 “political prisoner.”

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57 ⁷⁰ Thomas MacDermott to the citoyens composant le comité du sixième arrondissement, AN F⁷ 4774 28.

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59 ⁷¹ Serna, “Every Revolution is a War of Independence.”

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2 even more than to royalty.⁷² This is similar to the new diplomatic principle during the
3 “Terror” that France should only have relations with fellow republics.⁷³
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5 Since this process started during the “Terror,” it supports the idea that the legislation
6 against foreigners cannot only be explained by a retreat from cosmopolitanism.⁷⁴ Saint-Just’s
7 report on October 16 was thus misread by Marianne Elliott as laying “to rest the myth of
8 international brotherhood.”⁷⁵ Quite the opposite, Saint-Just responded in a scathing tone
9 against those who either proposed to cancel or to extend the law against the English to all
10 foreigners in the name of cosmopolitanism and to avoid the “nationalization” of the war
11 against England. He explained that these measures should only target those who are actually
12 suspect because of their ties – either political or economic – to the British government and are
13 intent on destroying the French Republic. Extending the law would dilute its meaning and
14 convince the people of its illegitimacy.⁷⁶ In this light, the examples of those involved in the
15 SADH show that those who could prove their patriotism – that is to say, both their loyalty to
16 republican principles and their enmity to the British government – could escape the rigors of
17 the “Terror,” which was probably easier for the Irish who managed to distinguish themselves
18 from the British.
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43 ⁷² Wahnich, *L'impossible citoyen*, 354-6; cf. Serna, “Le Directoire, miroir de quelle République?” for a
44 conflicting interpretation. Gillen, “Constructing Democratic Thought in Ireland in the Age of Revolution” also
45 uses the concept of “revolutionary internationalism.” Thibaud, “Pour une histoire polycentrique des
46 républicanismes atlantiques.”
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51 ⁷³ Palmer, *Twelve who Ruled*, 59.
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53 ⁷⁴ Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, 206-207.
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55 ⁷⁵ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution*, 62-3.
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57 ⁷⁶ Saint-Just, *Rapport fait à la Convention nationale... sur la Loi contre les Anglais*, 25 [vendémiaire] an II [16
58 Oct. 1793], AD CPA 588 fol. 47-52.
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Ireland and the Nationalization of the British Empire

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3 Historians have well-documented how the French Revolution prompted an ideological
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5 opposition in Britain. Based on the belief that British embodied true liberty and not mere
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7 anarchy, constitutionalism became the language of loyalty. “Jacobin” and “democrat” became
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9 synonymous with bloodthirsty regicides. The government’s clamp down on “radicals” forced
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11 them to go underground or to couch their demands in constitutional language. Popular
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13 loyalism and conservatism were stronger than radicalism.⁷⁷ In Ireland, to the contrary, popular
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15 disaffection grew unabated.⁷⁸ The treatment in Britain of the SADH members, especially in
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17 relation with Ireland, is a vantage point from which to examine how the building of a counter-
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19 model was achieved.
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Reconfigurations of the Empire

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28 The activities of the SADH had far-reaching consequences in Britain. The day after the dinner
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30 at White’s Hotel, the National Convention, presided by Grégoire, voted its (in)famous decree
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32 of November 19, promising fraternity and help to all oppressed people who would rise up to
33
34 assert their liberty. This decree encouraged the covert activities of Paine, FitzGerald, and
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36 Oswald to urge the French government to support an uprising and/or an invasion in England
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38 and/or Ireland.⁷⁹ The dinner and the decree were unmistakably seen together, provoking
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40 consternation and alarm in the British government.⁸⁰ Faced with the prospect of war abroad
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42 and of rebellion at home, William Pitt’s government secured ties between Britain and Ireland.
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49 After Edmund Burke had dramatized the threat of insurrection in England in a speech on
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51 ⁷⁷ Dickinson, *British Radicalism*, 25-42; Evans, *Debating the Revolution*; Dupuy, “Vue d’Angleterre.”

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53 ⁷⁸ Smyth, *Men of No Property*; Smyth, “The 1798 rebellion in its eighteenth-century contexts,” 12-13; Dickson,
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55 “Paine and Ireland”; Morley, “The Continuity of Disaffection.”

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57 ⁷⁹ Erdman, *Commerce des Lumières*, 244-66; Ferradou, ‘Un festin patriotique’.

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59 ⁸⁰ See Edmund Burke’s speech of 5 March 1793 in the Commons: *Parliamentary History*, vol. 30, 550-551.
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December 28, 1792,⁸¹ Pitt's cabinet took several security measures, among which were increasing the number of troops in London, the Gunpowder and Arms Act (forbidding the import of weapons), the Alien Act (to watch over correspondence and travelers, especially French), and the Seditious Assembly Act (which made the holding of conventions illegal) between December 1792 and February 1793.⁸² The result was rejection, by the Edinburgh Convention, whose delegates were eager to prove their constitutionalism, of the Society of United Irishmen's address, presented by the Scottish reformer Thomas Muir, in December 1792. This insured that there would be no pan-British Isles movement and that the British Parliament would be an imperial one. The radical movement in Britain thereby identified itself with British patriotism, only competing with loyalists as to the meaning behind this patriotism.⁸³ Pitt's government also showed conciliation towards the Irish Catholics with the Catholic Relief Act in April 1793, granting them the right to vote in parliamentary elections as well as the right to bear arms (all attributes of citizenship) in order to secure their loyalty and recruitment in his war effort, providing Irish Catholic troops for the British army and seamen for the navy as well as creating an Irish Militia to defend Ireland from a French invasion.⁸⁴

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In so doing, the British government redefined the boundaries of citizenship in Ireland, which now encompassed the Catholics (though the right to be elected was withheld). Irish citizenship was not anymore exclusively Protestant despite the outcry of the proponents of the

⁸¹ Ibid., 189. For Burke's pivotal role in raising alarm at this time: Bourke, *Empire & Revolution*, 809-19, 852-919.

⁸² Emsley, "The London "Insurrection" of December 1792"; Emsley, "An Aspect of Pitt's 'Terror'"; Emsley "Repression, 'Terror' and the Rule of Law."

⁸³ Pentland, "Patriotism, Universalism and the Scottish Conventions."

⁸⁴ Bartlett, "Ireland during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars."

1 “Protestant Ascendancy.”⁸⁵ This inclusive policy, long promoted by Irish-born, British
2 imperialist Edmund Burke,⁸⁶ was a masterful response by the British government, which
3 managed to strengthen the ties between the different components of the “British” Isles. This
4 nuances the interpretation of Linda Colley that the making of the British nation against rival
5 France was synonymous with Protestant national identity.⁸⁷
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12 *British citizenship versus French Citizenship: The Fabrication of an Irish anti-Briton*
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16 The perceived threat of French Jacobinism for Britain had a central Irish component. Indeed,
17 the expression “French disease” was first coined by Thomas Hussey, Irish chaplain to the
18 embassy of Spain in London, disciple and friend of Edmund Burke, in a letter to Burke’s son
19 Richard in 1790, blaming French ideas for the new hostility of Irish Catholics toward their
20 clergy.⁸⁸ This threat grew with the establishment of the French Republic and the collusion of
21 Irish, English, and Scottish republicans. In response, government propaganda refuted the idea
22 of an international republican model of citizenship, instead proposing a new definition of
23 what British citizenship entailed. In November 1792, Thomas Paine was found guilty in
24 absentia of seditious libel, and effigies of him were burnt throughout England to much
25 popular support.⁸⁹ FitzGerald was cashiered from the British army on December 24,
26 indicating that his renouncing of his title and his endorsement of French citizenship was
27 incompatible with British loyalty.⁹⁰
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48 ⁸⁵ Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation*, 146-72.

49 ⁸⁶ McDowell, “Burke and Ireland”; Pitts, “Burke and the Ends of Empire”; Bourke, *Empire & Revolution*, 209-
50 22, 238-43, 406-19, 783-800.

51 ⁸⁷ Colley, *Britons*, 6-7, 11-54.

52 ⁸⁸ Keogh, *French Disease*, 27.

53 ⁸⁹ O’Gorman, “The Paine Burnings.”

54 ⁹⁰ Cobbet, *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 30, 88-90.
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Henry Redhead Yorke illustrates how the imperial redefinition of the “True Briton” citizen occurred in opposition to the French model and Irish element as he went himself from advanced republicanism to ultra-loyalism. Returning to England from Paris in early 1793, Yorke became an itinerant preacher of revolutionary democracy, attracting crowds of thousands at political rallies throughout England, calling for parliamentary reform, the abolition of slavery, and the release of the Scottish reformers. Considering him and the Sheares brothers to be “violent Men and great Republicans,”⁹¹ the government arrested Yorke in June 1794 during the wave of arrests against radicals across England.⁹² Yorke was charged with treason and seditious conspiracy. Tried in July 1795, Yorke was convicted and sentenced to prison, contrary to other radicals like Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, or John Thelwall, who were acquitted. Yorke’s conviction came from his ambiguous defense: from an apologist of the ancient English Constitution, he then presented himself as a romantic martyr of liberty before finally reaffirming the natural rights of men in a very and universalist Paineite challenge of the establishment. So instead of sticking to an apologetic tone, Yorke used his trial as a public forum in order to legitimize his radicalism. This strategy failed: not only was he sentenced to two years in prison but it blurred his radical posturing and prevented him from appearing as a radical hero and martyr.⁹³

After his release in 1797, Yorke recanted his revolutionary past, married his prison warden’s daughter, and converted to ultra-loyalism. In this endeavor, he cast himself as a paragon of British patriotism and English loyalism, rewriting – as other British did – his

⁹¹ Monro to [Grenville], 17 Dec. 1792, NA FO 27/40 (Part 2) fol. 202-203; Monro to [Grenville], 31 Dec. 1792, *ibid.*, fol. 276-277.

⁹² Durey, “William Wickham,” 730.

⁹³ Yuval, “Between Heroism and Acquittal.”

1 revolutionary and republican experience in Paris,⁹⁴ notably insisting on his opposition against
2 Irish republicans. In his *Letters from France in 1802*, he pretends to have opposed Oswald's
3 plan to revolutionize Ireland in 1792–3. He also derisively scorned his former associates in
4 the SADH, especially the Sheareses, who he claimed had “maniac Irish propositions.” Yorke
5 especially mocks “Citizen O’Reilly” for presenting himself as “an Irishman, and a French
6 citizen, but not a subject of the king of England” who used “every opportunity to affront the
7 English,” and “an active member of the club of Irish traitors in Paris.”⁹⁵ Interestingly, Yorke
8 always links “maniac” revolutionary republicanism with sexual deviance (John Sheares is in
9 unrequited love with Théroigne de Méricourt, Oswald has two wives, O’Reilly “keeps his
10 girl,” Stone lives with Helen Maria William, etc.) and with Catholicism, which he sees as
11 leading to tyranny and atheism.⁹⁶ Yorke thus paints the anti-portrait of the respectable
12 Englishman: respectful of the Constitution, defender of the English “empire” in Britain, and
13 Protestant and married. In so doing, he engages fully in the “moral turn” about citizenship
14 observed in Britain in the 1790s, which forced radicals to reconsider their advocacy of the
15 French Revolution.⁹⁷ In a letter to William Wickham, dated August 3, 1798, after the
16 execution of the Sheares brothers as traitors on July 14, 1798 in Dublin, Yorke comments on
17 their fate: “May it serve to guard the monarchy, and enlighten the deluded!”⁹⁸

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47 ⁹⁴ Rogers, “The Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man.”

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54 ⁹⁵ Yorke probably took a hint from the same depiction of SADH president John Hurford Stone in the trial of his
55 brother, William Stone, in 1795: Wharam, *The Treason Trials*, 85-90; NA, TS 11/555 doss. 1793: trial of
56 William Stone.

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65 ⁹⁶ Yorke, *Letters from France in 1802*, vol. 1, 142-2, 162-3; vol. 2, 320-9, 383.

⁹⁷ Rogers, “The Definition of a Virtuous Man.”

⁹⁸ Vane, *Memoirs and Correspondance of Viscount Castlereagh*, vol. 1, 257-9.

Tentative Conclusions

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3 By focusing on the involvement of the republican Irishmen in Paris in the dialectical
4 redefinition of metropolitan citizenship in the metropolises of the French and British empires,
5 and thus in the formation of the metropolitan nations themselves as they were redefined
6 during the French wars, this article attempted to understand what were the motivations of the
7 SADH members who vested their hopes in the fledgling French Republic. In so doing, these
8 cosmopolitan and anti-slavery republicans contributed in 1792–4 to the definition of the
9 burgeoning French republican nation-state. Based on citizenship, it was defined politically
10 and not on any ethnic or “national identity.” This had several implications.
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23 First, it prompted these Irishmen, whose identities excluded them from the core of the
24 English monarchy and British Empire, to invest their aspirations in the republican project in
25 conjunction with other English-speaking patriots. Second, it meant that, even when faced with
26 war and the “Terror,” Irish republicans were able to navigate the vagaries of the narrowing
27 political orthodoxy by proving their patriotism, notably as striving for the independence of
28 Ireland. This, in turn, laid the groundwork for a new revolutionary internationalism against a
29 common enemy, imperial England, which was nourished by geopolitical pragmatism in the
30 context of war as well as born out of a burgeoning sense of international brotherhood.⁹⁹ Third,
31 by advocating the abolition of slavery, these Irish republicans shared a common language of
32 freedom against slavery with the French authorities. To what extent their pleas were heeded is
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51 The argument proposed here is that this common language was a key factor in defining
52 the republican nation as a counter-model against the British Empire. This language continued
53 even after the “Terror”: despite restrictions on accessing French citizenship, the 1795
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59 ⁹⁹ Ferradou, “L’Irlande et la France à l’époque de la République atlantique.”
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Constitution established isonomy between the metropole and the overseas territories (furthered by the *départementalisation* of the colonies in 1798)¹⁰⁰ and the Directory welcomed the pleas of Irish republicans for help against England with Theobald Wolfe Tone in 1796. It is no coincidence that with Napoléon Bonaparte, imperialism was defined in 1797 with the concept of the “Grande Nation,”¹⁰¹ nationality became based on ethnicity, citizenship lost its political definition with the Napoleonic Code,¹⁰² and slavery was reinstated in 1802–3¹⁰³ – all of this culminating with the establishment of the empire in 1804. In this regard, with the imperialist, racial, and authoritarian turn of 1799–1804, the French Republic ended, even though the name was retained in the imperial constitution, and the nation of the nineteenth century became “nationalist.”¹⁰⁴

Faced with the doctrine of national popular sovereignty and with internationalism, the English reaction was the Burke-inspired policy of Pitt’s government to integrate Irish Catholics into the British monarchy in order to secure Ireland’s link with Britain and thus to strengthen the empire. To this end, however, the government had to make sure that Irish Catholics would be loyal. The propaganda and repression against Irish republicans and the “French disease” served precisely to further this goal. In fabricating the French/Irish republican as an anti-British citizen, Britain confirmed that it was an empire first at home. When Ireland erupted in “rebellion” in 1798, the new British nation, as an opposite of the republic, was ready to integrate the post-Rising Ireland by diluting it in a Protestant nation

¹⁰⁰ Gainot, *L’Empire colonial français*, 135-54; Gainot, *La Révolution des esclaves*, 163-204.

¹⁰¹ Serna, “The Sister Republics,” 40.

¹⁰² Bart, “Citoyenneté et naturalité.”

¹⁰³ Gainot, *L’Empire colonial français*, 134, 165-6; Chappey, “A la recherche du premier écrivain noir.”

¹⁰⁴ Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, 26; Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 112-14, 199-219.

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with the Act of Union.¹⁰⁵ The continuous display of conformity to the model would entail a gradual integration into the imperial hierarchy, enabling the Irish to participate in the benefits of the empire. In this configuration, Catholic emancipation could be contemplated, something that Daniel O’Connell understood very well, as the anecdote of retelling of his rejection of regicide republicanism shows.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, in the nineteenth century, Ireland’s attachment to the empire was greater than to the union even if the latter permitted Ireland to be a part of the core of the world-system,¹⁰⁷ thereby distinguishing more clearly the European metropolitan centre from the rest of the British Empire. In this way, the Irish Catholics in the United Kingdom, much like their counterparts in the United States, became “white.”¹⁰⁸

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¹⁰⁵ Bartlett, “This famous island set in a Virginian Sea.”

¹⁰⁶ Colantonio, “L’impossible rencontre.”

¹⁰⁷ Colantonio, “L’Irlande, les Irlandais et l’Empire britannique”; Darwin, *The Empire Project*.

¹⁰⁸ Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*; Peatling, “The Whiteness of Ireland under and after the Union.”

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