The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie° ca'd a lord, *fellow*
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that,
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof° for a' that. *dolt*
For a' that, and a' that,
His ribband, star and a' that,
The man of independant mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon° his might, *above*
Guid faith he mauna fa' that![3]

For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' Sense, and pride o' Worth,
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree,° and a' that. *win the prize*
For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that,
That Man to Man the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

1795

3. Must not claim that.

1795

The Revolution Controversy and the "Spirit of the Age"

In a letter to Byron in 1816 Percy Shelley called the French Revolution "the master theme of the epoch in which we live." The closing sentences of his "Defence of Poetry" assert, similarly, that, because of the repercussions of the Revolution, English literature "has arisen as it were from a new birth." The "electric life that burns" within the great poets of the time, Shelley continues, expresses "less their spirit than the spirit of the age." Such judgments were widely shared: the literature of Romanticism, early and late, cannot be understood historically without acknowledgment of how these works' distinctive modes of imagining and feeling were shaped first by the promise, then by the tragedy, of the great events in France. In the generation preceding Shelley's several authors had expressed an enthusiasm for those political transformations that in its intensity resembled a religious awakening. Many tried to make sense of events in terms borrowed from the Bible, interpreting the Revolution as fulfilling the promise, guaranteed by an infallible text, that a short period of violence would ultimately usher in an era of universal peace in which the world will begin anew. (See "The French Revolution: Apocalyptic Expectations" in the supplemental ebook.) And even after what they considered the failure of the revolutionary promise—signaled by the executions of the king and queen, the massacres during the Reign of Terror under Robespierre, the wars of imperial conquest under Napoleon—many authors held fast, despite a pervasive disenchantment, to their dreams of radical transformation. Twenty years on, when Shelley wrote, it must have seemed, following the defeat of Napoleon's armies and restoration of the European monarchies, as though the clock had been turned back and the old political order had been re-established on even firmer foundations than before. Shelley and many other Romantic authors, however, continued in the belief that the hopes aroused by the Revolution remained relevant, even essential, for their moment.

That Revolution began with the storming of the Bastille and freeing of a handful of political prisoners by an angry mob of Parisians on July 14, 1789. A month later, the new National Assembly passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Six weeks after, in early October, citizens marched to the royal palace of Versailles and arrested King Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette, confining them to the Tuileries palace in Paris. These happenings were almost immediately reported in the London newspapers, quick to recognize a commercial opportunity. British liberals applauded the revolutionists' proclamation of natural rights and equality. The radicals were ecstatic, believing the moment was ripe for Britain to embrace political change as well. Conservatives, who referred to themselves "loyalists," thus casting others' reformist principles as treason, were first wary and then horrified. Most alarming to them, perhaps, was the emergent view that politics was the legitimate business of the common people and should not be monopolized by an aristocratic elite.

It did not escape the notice of British onlookers that during the revolutionists' festivities, printing presses were carried along in the parades—the French republic's way of honoring the technology that made it possible to spread new political ideas and to include the masses in their discussion. This section documents how, through the early 1790s, a frenzied pamphlet war over the meanings of the French Revolution kept the printing presses of England busy in their turn. Sales in London's print-making businesses were likewise boosted by the excitement, which provided visual artists, satirists especially, with unprecedented opportunities.

This English debate about the Revolution was initiated by Richard Price's sermon, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, which he delivered a month after the imprisonment of the French king and queen. When a year later Edmund Burke published a rebuttal to Price, his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, the controversy heated up. *Reflections* drew more than fifty further responses, from Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), and Thomas Paine, in his *Rights Of Man* (1791), most famously. The extracts we have chosen convey the wildly divergent tones those four writers brought to their debating: euphoric in Price; declamatory and sometimes blatantly sensationalist in Burke; forthrightly contemptuous in Wollstonecraft, who mocks her opponent's rhapsodic style; pointed and plain in Paine, who purposefully develops an accessible style meant to appeal to the newly literate. The loyalists soon found that, despite their belief that the common people were better suited intellectually to deference than to discussion, they too needed to mobilize popular support and address Paine's broad audience. The British government therefore launched a full-throttled propaganda campaign of its own—an attempt to communicate conservative ideas across the barriers of social class that itself represented a radical break with tradition. This section ends by sampling the pivotal contributions to that campaign that the brilliant artist James Gillray made in the dozens of political prints that he etched during the 1790s—works that seem to have begun as pictorial synopses of loyalist pamphlets, but whose shock tactics took them far beyond that assigned function. Gillray's exaggerated depictions of English radicals and members of the Parisian mob made revolutionary ideas look depraved and a tad ludicrous and convinced many that total anarchy was the inevitable consequence of any mass movement for political reform.

RICHARD PRICE

Richard Price (1723–1791) was a Unitarian minister in London and a writer on moral philosophy, population, and the national debt, among other topics. The full title of his sermon, which prompted Burke's *Reflections* and in turn the scores of responses to Burke, is *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, Delivered on Nov. 4, 1789, at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry, to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain*. The London Revolution Society had been founded a year earlier to mark the hundredth anniversary of the "bloodless" Glorious Revolution of 1688, which ended the short reign of King James II and produced the Declaration of Right, establishing a limited monarchy and guaranteeing the civil rights of privileged classes. The first two-thirds of the extracts given here commemorate that Revolution; in the final third, beginning "What an eventful period is this!" Price greets with religious fervor "two other Revolutions, both glorious," the American and the French. The *Discourse* went through six editions in its first year of publication.

From A Discourse on the Love of Our Country

We are met to thank God for that event in this country to which the name of THE REVOLUTION has been given; and which, for more than a century, it has been usual for the friends of freedom, and more especially Protestant Dissenters, under the title of the REVOLUTION SOCIETY, to celebrate with expressions of joy and exultation. * * * By a bloodless victory the [illegible] which despotism had been long preparing for us were broken; the rights of the people were asserted, a tyrant expelled, and a Sovereign of our own choice appointed in his room. Security was given to our property, and our consciences were emancipated. The bounds of free enquiry were enlarged; the volume in which are the words of eternal life, was laid more open to our examination; and that *aera* of light and liberty was introduced among us, by which we have been made an example to other kingdoms, and became the instructors of the world. Had it not been for this deliverance, the probability is, that, instead of being thus distinguished, we should now have been a base people, groaning under the infamy and misery of popery and slavery. Let us, therefore, offer thanksgivings to God, the author of all our blessings. * * *

It is well known that King James was not far from gaining his purpose; and that probably he would have succeeded, had he been less in a hurry. But he was a fool as well as a bigot. He wanted courage as well as prudence; and, therefore, fled, and left us to settle quietly for ourselves that constitution of government which is now our boast. We have particular reason, as Protestant Dissenters, to rejoice on this occasion. It was at this time we were rescued from persecution, and obtained the liberty of worshipping God in the manner we think most acceptable to him. It was then our meeting houses were opened, our worship was taken under the protection of the law, and the principles of toleration gained a triumph. We have, therefore, on this occasion, peculiar reasons for thanksgiving.—But let us remember that we ought not to satisfy ourselves with thanksgivings. Our gratitude, if genuine, will be accompanied with endeavours to give stability to the deliverance our country has obtained, and to extend and improve the happiness with which the Revolution has blest us.—Let us, in particular, take care not to forget the principles of the Revolution. This Society has, very properly, in its Reports, held out these principles, as an instruction to the public. I will only take notice of the three following:

First: The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.

Secondly: The right to resist power when abused. And,

Thirdly: The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.

* * *

I would farther direct you to remember, that though the Revolution was a great work, it was by no means a perfect work; and that all was not then gained which was necessary to put the kingdom in the secure and complete possession of the blessings of liberty.—In particular, you should recollect, that the toleration then obtained was imperfect. It included only those who could declare their faith in the doctrinal articles of the church of England. It has, indeed, been since extended, but not sufficiently; for there still exist penal laws on account of religious opinions, which (were they carried into execution) would shut up many of our places of worship, and silence and imprison some of our ablest and best men.—The TEST LAWS are also still in force; and deprive of eligibility to civil and military offices, all who cannot conform to the established worship. It is with great pleasure I find that the body of Protestant Dissenters, though defeated in two late attempts to deliver their country from this disgrace to it, have determined to persevere. Should they at last succeed, they will have the satisfaction, not only of removing