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VOLUME 1, 1771–1782

General Introduction

LIVING TO SOME PURPOSE: THE BIOGRAPHY AND IDEAS OF THOMAS PAINE

Gregory Claeys

[Charles Lee] used to say of Mr. Paine, the author of Common Sense*, in America, and since of* Rights of Man*, in England, (of whose writings he was a great admirer,) that "*he burst forth upon the world like Jove in thunder."

—EDWARD LANGWORTHY[1]

To this immortal man, to Paine 'twas given,
To metamorphose earth from hell to heaven.

—JOEL BARLOW[2]

The present age will hereafter merit to be called the Age of reason, and the present generation will appear to the future as the Adam of a new world.

—THOMAS PAINE[3]

1. Langworthy on Charles Lee, in *The Lee Papers*, 4 vols. (New-York Historical Society, 1872), 4:119–20.

2. Barlow, quoted in Thomas Clio Rickman, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (Thomas Clio Rickman, 1819), 134. Barlow also wrote that "the great American cause owed as much to the pen of Paine as to the sword of Washington," in Thomas Paine, *The Case of the Officers of Excise; with Remarks on the Qualifications of Officers; and on the Numerous Evils Arising to the Revenue, from the Insufficiency of the Present Salary* (J. S. Jordan, 1793), iii.

3. This ed., 2:568 (1792).

So long as the tongue of man can articulate the name of those heroes who benefited mankind, so long, in defiance of persecution, will the name of Thomas Paine resound throughout the world [as] a man of principle, who laboured for the promotion of the happiness of mankind [and] who kept himself aloof and independent of all faction.

—JOHN THELWALL[4]

Origins and Early Life

Thomas Paine was more intimately involved in the three eighteenth-century political upheavals that inaugurated the modern era than any other person.[5]

The first of these epochal events, the American colonists' break from Britain, was hugely stimulated by his stunningly influential tract *Common Sense* (1776),[6] which crystallized demands for independence and attacked monarchy in principle. This momentum was further sustained by his thirteen American *Crisis* pamphlets (1776–83),[7] which underscored the advantages of the break and boosted morale during the depths of wartime despair.

Secondly, if less successfully, Paine played a defining role in the first large-scale modern movement for democratic republicanism and against kingship in Britain during the 1790s. Here public debate and assembly were curtailed by severe government repression of freedom of speech and assembly, and the threat of revolution, most directly in Ireland, averted by military force. In England this movement bore its first fruit only with the Great Reform Act of 1832, then in the British working-class democratic movement known as Chartism, and subsequent legislation reaching into the twentieth century, which still, however, left vestiges of feudalism in place. In Ireland, despite insurrection in the 1790s, independence was delayed for most for more than another century.

Thirdly, Paine participated early on in the 1789 French Revolution, became a deputy in the National Convention at Paris in 1792, and was

4. John Thelwall, *The Tribune*, 3 vols. (Printed for the Author, 1795–96), 2:181.

5. I am very grateful to my coeditors for their comments on this introduction. Any errors of fact remain mine. References here to British archival manuscript sources are abbreviated as: TS (Treasury Solicitors Papers), HO (Home Office Papers), and PC (Privy Council Papers), all in the National Archives, Kew; and Add MSS (Additional Manuscripts, British Library).

6. This vol., 286–341. Paine thereafter often used the title as his pseudonym.

7. This vol., 399 ff. Their title echoed an earlier British *Crisis* series. See this ed., 6:205 ff.

a leading proponent of a republic to replace the monarchy from then on. Imprisoned during the so-called Terror (*la Terreur*) of 1793–94, he remained a decade in France and continued to defend universal suffrage against an increasingly conservative reaction.[8]

These events catapulted Paine onto the center of the world stage, making him, as Michael Foot (then leader of the British Labour Party), speaking before the United Nations in 1987 on the 250th anniversary of Paine's birth, put it, "the greatest Englishman of the eighteenth century," having "supplied the link between the three revolutionary movements of the epoch, in America, France and Britain."[9] Indeed he was "the best known international figure of his day," the first global political actor.[10] Hundreds of thousands championed him as a veritable savior who revealed, notably in his most influential work, *Rights of Man* (1791–92),[11] the meaning and force of a powerful, even all-consuming, new concept, which would become the foundation of modern political culture: "human rights." These rights, Paine insisted, belonged universally to all, as opposed to rights that had once been claimed or held by one or another people or group, conceded by past regimes, and later lost or stolen. To the wealthy elite, he was the most dangerous man of his times. The latter assessment was strengthened when, later in life, Paine's deist religious views and critique of divine revelation in *The Age of Reason* (1794–95),[12] and his falling out with George Washington in 1796, around whom a heroic cult already existed, made him deeply unpopular. Particularly antagonistic were the anti-Jeffersonian Federalists in the United States, who to Paine were essentially monarchists in disguise yet had successfully imposed their own

8. The term *Terreur* was largely introduced during the Thermidorean Reaction to describe policies prevalent in France in 1793–94, before the fall of Maximilien Robespierre, who was described as a dictator and the architect of the execution of some sixteen thousand to twenty-three thousand persons, the latter figure including battlefield executions. See this ed., 2:13–15; and for a recent reappraisal, Michel Biard and Marisa Linton, *Terror: The French Revolution and Its Demons* (Polity, 2021), 8–24. Paine shared in this demonization of Robespierre. "The Terror," of course, also referred to the atmosphere of denunciation and mutual suspicion that permeated this period, and many witnesses used this term to describe it. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, wrote in 1794 that "death and misery, in every shape of terrour, haunts this devoted country." *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd (Allen Lane, 2003), 249.

9. Michael Foot, "Thomas Paine and the Democratic Revolution," in *Thomas Paine: In Search of the Common Good*, ed. Joyce Chumbley and Leo Zonneveld (Spokesman Books, 2009), 27.

10. Walter Phelps Hall, *British Radicalism, 1791–1797* (Columbia University Press, 1912), 95.

11. This ed., 2:310–427 and 459–77.

12. This ed., 3:29–75 and 119–216.

views in the new constitution of 1787.[13] After returning from France in 1802 to what he hoped was still "home" in America, Paine found himself abused by the Federalist press in particular, though he still enjoyed the backing of the more liberal supporters of Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party.

Paine remained politically active until the end of his life. But the process had begun of writing him out of the revolutionary political narrative, of "unfathering" him, and marginalizing with him many other "radicals" to whom the ideal of the new republic meant preventing the propertied from tyrannizing the rest in any new order.[14] A cult came to be built around the "original intentions" of the Founding Fathers and the Federalist principles of the Constitution, as if these had been set in stone at the democratic behest of the original colonial population. A long tradition of writing hostile to more popular forms of democracy commenced in 1776 that continues to the present day. Paine would become "badly misrepresented," seen only as having struck the spark of *Common Sense* rather than presenting a serious radical program that is "not touted in school textbooks; nor . . . mentioned by the politicians of conservative persuasions who claim Paine as their own."[15] Because Paine had never held high public office, and too often had been persistently disruptive, his status in both popular and academic history books became, at best, what Jill Lepore describes as a "lesser founder."[16] This perception often accompanied the persistent myth that Paine was only a destroyer, not a builder; a critic, not a designer; an upstart, and certainly not a "clubbable" gentleman ("pubbable," though.). Such interpretation is laid to rest in this edition, which reveals a much richer, more nuanced, and more passionate and compassionate democratic republican than previous portraits have offered. Paine, we discover, was extraordinarily dedicated to the idea of politics as public

13. "Monarchy is veiled in the mantle of federalism," Paine apparently wrote in 1806 (this ed., 6:487). The theme was continued in the 1806 series of letters signed "Samuel Adams" in the *American Citizen* (this ed., 6:493–568). Later Paine called the 1787 Constitution "a monarchical government" (this ed., 6:546.)

14. The term "radical" has changed meanings many times, but here means someone who promotes specific governmental and social reform, especially in democracies or representative systems. It does not connote an "extremist," "deviant" or "abnormal" outlook. See this vol., 10n41.

15. Alfred F. Young, Ray Raphael, and Gary B. Nash, introduction to *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 6.

16. Jill Lepore, "A World of Paine," in *Revolutionary Founders: Rebels, Radicals, and Reformers in the Making of the Nation*, ed. Alfred F. Young, Ray Raphael, and Gary B. Nash (Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 89.

service. He achieved, over a long apprenticeship, an unparalleled grasp of how democracy could, indeed had to, empower active citizens, especially at the local level and through self-organization. And we encounter a man whose sympathy for the poor made him a pioneer of later modern welfare proposals.

The more negative appraisal of Paine rests in part on the fact that he was simply more "radical" than most of his peers, in the sense of demanding an equality of rights, and enfranchisement to secure them, which he would later define as the essence of "liberty." We tend today to assume that the U.S. Constitution introduced in 1789 represented the successful and inevitable conclusion of the colonists' rebellion, the Revolutionary War, and the constitutional debates that ensued and, as such, the only possible logical or realistic result of the revolution. This is far from true. In fact, the 1789 Constitution was one of the most conservative outcomes that the entire process might have generated. Already marginalized by Federalism in the late 1780s was the sense of an "alternative" American democratic tradition as epitomized in the initially much more popular constitution of Pennsylvania (1776–90), which Paine did much to help create. It insisted on much firmer popular controls over politicians and governments by universal male suffrage without a property qualification for both electors and aspirants to office, frequent elections and short terms of office, and a single representative assembly. To opponents of the Federalist constitution, the United States, by mimicking the unwritten British "constitution" with its emphasis on "checks and balances," had constructed a vastly more conservative and elitist political system than it might have, had it promoted more popular institutions. It had in effect succumbed to what the American historian Eric Nelson terms a "Royalist Revolution," in which a republic was effectively founded on the principles of kingship. While not explicitly monarchical, it had a strong executive, and while not aristocratic, it also gave more power to large landowners and less populated states, and more prolonged periods in office for political elites, than critics thought wise. Paine's more popular plans were the path not taken. And it became common to caricature their proponent as himself a failure, the better to dismiss his ideas as crude, misshapen, or "too radical" for the new nation. At the very least, this episode of American constitutional history made it clear that underpinning the formal mechanisms of political democracy there had to be a moral (and effectively republican) consensus to aim for the common good, a kind of unwritten social contract or tacit consent to play by the unwritten rules of civic virtue, which existed, as much as anywhere else, in the emotional substrata. Partisanship, corruption, or a

chasm in value systems among voters, of course, could easily and swiftly erode this consensus. And they did, repeatedly and sometimes with dire consequences.

Accordingly, by the late nineteenth century, complained his earliest major biographer, Moncure Daniel Conway, Paine was "either wronged or ignored" by most historians.[17] Censure began early and typically followed the lines of the first major historian of the American Revolution, Mercy Otis Warren, who wrote in 1805 that "[Paine's] celebrity might have been longer maintained, and his name have been handed down with applause, had he not afterwards have left the line of politics, and presumed to touch on theological subjects of which he was grossly ignorant, as well as totally indifferent to every religious observance as an individual, and in some instances his morals were censured."[18] Some of Paine's detractors scarcely disguise their contempt for the rude interruption by an "ill-" or "self-educated," uncouth interloper (for which read "artisan" or "working class") into a narrative best described as a gentlemen's disagreement about rights; witness Bernard Bailyn's sniffy academic dismissal of Paine as "an ignoramus both in ideas and in the practice of politics, next to Adams, Jefferson, Madison, or Wilson"—because he was not classically educated.[19] But his stalwart friend Jefferson, as we will see, certainly would not have agreed with this assessment. And some have seen Paine's chief influence as filtered through him; to Judith Shklar, "for American democratic thought[,] Paine's greatest single achievement was the profound impression that his writings made upon Thomas Jefferson."[20]

Yet Paine has his defenders too. Both effusive hagiographies and malignant denunciations abound, and he still arouses passion, adulation, contempt, aggression, wonder, even hatred. Amid all this, indisputably, Paine stands today as one of the world's most famous democratic theorists and perhaps its most influential republican—in the sense of being an inveterate opponent of hereditary monarchy, aristocracy, and tyranny in all their forms. A government for the good of the whole of all the people,

17. Moncure Daniel Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1892), 1:x.

18. Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (E. Larkin, 1805), 2:406. Warren's literary mentor and close friend was John Adams, though she fell out with him and came to support Jefferson.

19. Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence* (Knopf, 1992), 82, quoted in Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Thomas Jefferson: A Modern Prometheus* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 198.

20. Judith Shklar, *Redeeming American Political Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), 138.

and actually controlled by them, aiming to secure their rights against all predators: this was a novel idea worth defending. This, for Paine, was the more radical meaning of the American Revolution and its successor movements, often eroded, often forgotten, but a beacon nonetheless. This was what independence was for, not merely the reduction of taxation, freedom from British rule, or stronger local control as such. But this remaking of the ideal of democracy made great demands on the population. In the public space, civic virtue would have to triumph over self-, class, and local interests. In America, and elsewhere, such a price too often was to prove difficult to extract.

Thomas Paine was born in the small, declining market town of Thetford, Norfolk, on 29 January 1737.[21] His father was a stay maker (constructing corsets and sails) who was raised a Quaker, but expelled from the Religious Society of Friends when he married an Anglican attorney's daughter, Frances Cocke. Thomas was baptized in the Church of England.[22] Little is known of his youth or his early religious or political outlook. With divided religious loyalties, he soon became apprised of the difficult position of the Quakers and other Dissenters from the established church, who suffered many legal disabilities and personal and civic prejudices. He doubtless soon encountered the powers of the great landed magnates, among whom the Duke of Grafton dominated locally.[23] He may also have been aware of the reforming trend in poor law administration, which saw the erection of a number of "houses of industry" for employing the poor between 1764 and 1768.[24] Paine's "feeling . . . for the hard condition of others," which friends often noted as one of his central human qualities, was doubtless

21. The Gregorian calendar was adopted in Britain on 2 September 1752, moving the date eleven days forward. So Paine's birthday is sometimes given as 9 February. The family name was also spelled "Pain" and "Payne." As late as 1778, Paine was still signing letters to Benjamin Franklin as "Pain." *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 43 vols. (Yale University Press, 1959–2018), 24:293. The variant spellings continued for many years.

22. The most detailed and balanced biography of Paine is John Keane's *Tom Paine: A Political Life* (Bloomsbury, 1995). Other recent studies include Jack Fruchtman Jr., *Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom* (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1994); and W. A. Speck, *A Political Biography of Thomas Paine* (Pickering and Chatto, 2013). To understand how Paine has been read for most of the past eighty years, the starting points are Conway's 1892 biography, *The Life of Thomas Paine*; and Philip Foner's 1945 two-volume edition of Paine's writings, *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* (Citadel).

23. In Paine's youth this was Charles FitzRoy, 2nd Duke of Grafton (1683–1757).

24. Anne Digby, *Pauper Palaces* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 1.

indebted to his Quaker background, with its fervent devotion to peace and equality.[25] He thought the Quakers were "remarkable for their care of the Poor of their Society," and this would guide his own schemes of social reform.[26] Some of his closest friends later in life, like Colonel Joseph Kirkbride of Bordentown, New Jersey, had been raised as Quakers.[27] Yet he concluded that "the principles of Quakerism have a direct tendency to make a man the quiet and inoffensive subject of any, and every government *which is set over him*."[28] He also suggested that "if the taste of a Quaker could have been consulted at the creation, what a silent and drab-colored creation it would have been! Not a flower would have blossomed its gaieties, nor a bird been permitted to sing."[29] In 1778 he told the Quakers of Pennsylvania that "your religious principles are, really, such as are altogether inconsistent with the principles upon which alone civil government can be supported."[30] He came to rebel against Christianity, and later recalled being repelled by the idea that God had acted "like a passionate man, that killed his son, when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons."[31] This fittingly symbolized his later dissent in many areas. It is clear that Paine's peculiarly powerful sense of moral rectitude and social injustice, of the possibility of a far better world in this life, as well as his skepticism about established doctrines of all types, resulted at least partly from his early environment. His sense of the need for each person to encounter the divine directly and personally, as well as the earthly powers that be, certainly owes much to the Quaker ideal that every mind was its own church.[32] Where his frequent downright irreverence comes from is another matter. But his aversion to snobbishness, so markedly a quality of the English upper classes, doubtless began early.

The family was "distressed," and unable to provide young Thomas with an education.[33] He attended Thetford Grammar School from age seven to twelve, leaving with a tolerable grasp of mathematics and English but not

25. This ed., 2:639.
26. This ed., 3:326.
27. Paine called Kirkbride "my best friend" when he died: this ed., 4:972.
28. This vol., 283.
29. This ed., 3:58.
30. This ed., 6:324, tentatively identified by computer analysis.
31. This ed., 3:57–58.
32. This is associated with Quakerism by, for example, William Hamilton Reid, *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies of the Metropolis* (J. Hatchard, 1800), 69–70.
33. This ed., 2:532.

Latin, which the Quakers frowned on. He then entered the stay-making trade, remaining through the seven years of his apprenticeship until, in 1756, animated by what he later called the "false heroism" of his schoolmaster, Paine joined a privateer named the *Terrible*, captained by William Death. If he sought adventure, he certainly found danger, for privateers preyed on enemy ships and often suffered heavy losses.[34] Fighting in the English Channel in November, *Terrible* lost some 90 percent of its crew. But Paine was not aboard, having been rescued on the dock by his begging father. Instead he found work as a stay maker in Hanover Street, Long Acre, Covent Garden, London, then as now a feverishly active center of theaters and markets thronged day and night. But this employment too was short-lived, and within a month Paine had embarked on another privateer, the *King of Prussia*. Here he enjoyed some success. By November 1757, he was back in London with his prize money and flush with ambition. Now age twenty, he was described by contemporaries as "tall and slim, about five feet eight inches," with flashing dark eyes and thick dark brown hair pulled behind into a ponytail, and speaking with a soft Norfolk accent.[35]

Having discovered that "the natural bent of my mind was to science," Paine now plunged into the subject.[36] He acquired a pair of globes and began courses on astronomy and natural philosophy, as science was then called, taught by some of the capital's leading experts.[37] He soon met the Scottish astronomer James Ferguson, a friend, since 1757, of the American colonial agent and inventor Benjamin Franklin, who lived close by, off the Strand. Paine collaborated with Ferguson and the globe and spectacle maker Benjamin Martin on a project to construct a new type of clock. Their invention, completed in 1758, was later known as Ferguson's clock. Ferguson showed it to Franklin, who was also working on a new "three-wheel" clock, an account of which Ferguson published in 1773.[38] Paine

34. See Alice Barry, "Thomas Paine, Privateersman," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101 (1977), 451–61.

35. Keane, *Tom Paine*, 40. Received pronunciation was becoming ensconced in this period, and language was certainly a perceived marker of class, but there was a much wider variety of regional and local accents than today. A Norfolk accent might have marked Paine as a "country bumpkin" at some levels of London society. Norfolk has, however, long been associated with wit and humor.

36. This ed., 3:56.

37. He later wrote that "natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science, are a continual source of tranquil pleasure, and in spite of the gloomy dogmas of priests, and of superstition, the study of those things is the study of the true theology; it teaches man to know and to admire the Creator." This ed., 3:161.

38. *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 8:216–19.

made an appointment to meet Martin in late 1757 and, after a monthlong course on globe making, attended further lectures by both Ferguson and Martin, as did Franklin in 1757–59. So Paine and Franklin may well have met, at least casually, at this time—indeed, this now seems likely.[39] We will see below what might be implied if they did.

Though the arts and sciences of government were not on his curriculum, and Paine later said that he viewed politics as this time as being mere "Jockeyship," and that when he turned his "thoughts towards matters of government, I had to form a system for myself, that accorded with the moral and philosophic principles in which I had been educated."[40] His leading biographer, John Keane, maintains that these lectures "also introduced him to a new culture of political radicalism that rejected throne and altar."[41] For there were many to whom the tenets of Newtonianism

39. New research by Danielle Allen also supports this view; see *The Radical Duke: Charles Lennox, Thomas Paine, and Britain's Soft Revolution* (Liveright, [2026]).

40. This ed., 3:56.

41. Keane, *Tom Paine*, 43. J.C.D. Clark disingenuously claims that "[Paine's] attendance at the London lectures of Benjamin Martin and James Ferguson cannot have led him towards political radicalism," since the term "radicalism" was not coined until c. 1820, and that, "in its absence, the formation of Paine's political views, especially his negation of monarchy, becomes a problem"; see Clark, *Thomas Paine: Britain, America, and France in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution* (Clarendon, 2018), 32. This study's resolute hostility to its subject greatly undermines its value, as many of its judgments (like this one) are subverted and rendered suspicious by the relentless and dogmatic antagonism and the overtly antidemocratic bias that seemingly underpins it. Asserting that a thing does not exist before it has been named is of course disingenuous. The "ism," used to describe parliamentary reform movements, indeed, evidently did not appear in the 1790s and likely was not coined before 1810 and not in common circulation until after 1817. (Three early uses are in *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 30 December 1820; *Independent Whig*, 28 January 1821; and *Antijacobin Review* 59 [1821], 446). Uppercase "Radicalism" appears in a letter written by Sir Francis Burdett in November 1820 (M. W. Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett and His Times*, 2 vols. [Macmillan, 1931], 2:519). But the notion of "radical reform" of Parliament certainly was in use much earlier. In the twentieth century it was identified with a spectrum of critical beliefs generically termed "radicalism" that included opposition to monarchy in principle and is usually dated by historians to the "Wilkes and Liberty" movement beginning in 1763; see the six-volume history by Simon Maccoby entitled *English Radicalism* (George Allen and Unwin, 1955–61). The ideas themselves thus preceded the coining of the "ism" by at least sixty years. Eric Foner applies "radical" to Paine to mean "one who thinks forcefully and originally about the possibility of changing existing institutions and attempts to put those ideas into effect," in *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (Oxford University Press, 1976), xix. Among many others, H. T. Dickinson discusses "the ideological origins of radicalism" in terms of a progression from "Country to a radical platform," in *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 195–231. Generically, thus, "radicalism" as applied to the 1790s (and indeed back to the 1760s and even the seventeenth century) usually meant a parliamentary reform agenda that included a substantial extension of the suffrage as

and advocacy of the government of the world by rational laws, and the general premise of advancing knowledge of the natural world, heralded greater improvements in social and political life as well as theology. Paine had most likely already gained a sense of oppositional politics in Thetford. Now he began moving in circles where some men (and a few women) debated disestablishing the Church of England, bemoaned the deeply corrupt parliamentary system and the system of aristocratic patronage, and even challenged the existing constitution and need for an expensive and arrogant monarchy. Many of the artisans and shopkeepers who attended such lectures were non-Anglican Protestant Dissenters (also called Nonconformists) often averse to both the theology and politics of the establishment.[42] The study of science also clearly affected, or rather undermined, Paine's theology, moving him toward deism, or the belief in a God revealed through nature rather than by any sacred text:

> After I had made myself master of the use of the globes, and of the orrery, and conceived an idea of the infinity of space, and of the eternal divisibility of matter, and obtained, at least, a general knowledge of what was called natural philosophy, I began to compare, or . . . to confront, the internal evidence those things afford with the Christian system of faith.[43]

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well as other measures like annual parliamentary elections. Élie Halévy erred by a wide margin in assuming that "radical reform" entered currency in its political meaning only around 1797–98, in *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (Faber and Faber, 1949), 261. It was certainly coined as early as Thomas Christie's *Letters on the Revolution in France* (1791) and probably earlier; see *Political Writings of the 1790s*, ed. Gregory Claeys, 8 vols. (Pickering and Chatto, 1995), 1:171. On the Philosophical Radical side, the utilitarianism proponent Jeremy Bentham had supported parliamentary reform in 1790, then turned against Jacobinism before "converting" once again around 1809, possibly after meeting Scottish economist James Mill in 1808 or 1809. Bentham wrote his *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* in 1817, and in his *Radicalism Not Dangerous* (1819–20) used the term "Radicalism" as synonymous with "radical reform." He commented that, "in Pennsylvania, for these forty years, radicalism has been supreme: radicalism without monarchy or aristocracy: radicalism without controul, and not any the slightest shock has property there ever received"; see *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, 11 vols. (Simpkin, Marshall, 1843), 3:560.

42. On Dissent in this period, see Richard Burgess Barlow, *Citizenship and Conscience: A Study in the Theory and Practice of Religious Toleration in the Eighteenth Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962); Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the Revolution* (Clarendon Press, 1978); James E. Bradley, *Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Valerie Smith, *Rational Dissenters in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Boydell Press, 2021).

43. This ed., 3:58–59.

Religion had often been an obstacle to science, and now science was moving religion aside, or at least suggesting its modification and challenging some of its key premises. Later on, Paine's own ideas also seemed to encourage science, especially in America, where after the revolution, the painter Charles Willson Peale (Paine's friend and fellow deist) claimed, the new doctrine of equal rights "stimulated scientific research, especially in Philadelphia, where theological cobwebs did not hang so thick."[44]

In 1758, however, Paine's savings ran out. He went to Kent, working again as a stay maker in Dover and moving in 1759 to nearby Sandwich, where a newspaper advertisement from September 1759 describes him as established in the Fish Market. Here he reportedly preached either in his lodgings or at a local meetinghouse as an "independent, or a Methodist."[45] Just what he said is unknown. He supposedly had heard the greatest preacher of the day, the Methodist founder John Wesley, speak at Thetford. Paine might have gleaned from Methodism a strong sense of equality from the idea that all might be saved from sin and a feeling of solidarity with a rapidly growing movement for reform within Anglicanism.[46] Though generally loyal and not disruptive, the Methodists spoke directly to the common people and expressed a compassion for the poor many felt lacking in the established church. Wesley could sway large crowds with his mesmerizing eloquence, and Paine may have gained confidence and inspiration from encountering him. But his own first, evidently faltering, efforts did not foster an ambition for public speaking, which later on he always disliked. At some point, too, he seemingly parted ways with some of the more orthodox aspects of Methodist doctrine, such as the belief that Christ was the son of God. But many Quakers did not embrace this doctrine either. Paine later attacked Wesley's opposition

44. Charles Coleman Sellers, *Charles Willson Peale*, 2 vols. (American Philosophical Society, 1947), 2:3.

45. *The Journal of John Wesley*, 8 vols. (Charles H. Kelly, 1909–16), 8:31n. On trends in Methodism in the colonies at this time, see Dee E. Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760–1800* (Princeton University Press, 2000). Keane doubts that he was more likely an "Independent"; see *Tom Paine*, 46. William Cobbett calls him an "itinerant Methodist," in *The Life of Thomas Paine* (S. M'Dowall, 1796), 10.

46. A copy of vol. 1 (W. Straham, 1746) of Wesley's *Sermons on Several Occasions* (4 vols., 1746–50) that Paine owned at one time contains the inscription "Out of this volume Thomas Paine, author of the Age of Reason, used to read sermons to the Congregations at the Methodist Chapel in Dover when they were disappointed of a Preacher. At that time he belonged to the Methodist Society in that place" (Keane, *Tom Paine*, 544n29). The movement had about one hundred thousand adherents by the mid-1790s. Wesley had preached in Dover in 1756, 1759, 1760, and later. Paine may have heard him there in 1759.

to American independence, though he doubtless applauded his stance against slavery.[47]

While it is impossible to detail, on such slender evidence, just what this encounter with Methodism meant to Paine, it is worth hazarding the generalization that this underexamined episode was probably very important to him. There is no reason to suppose that he "became" a Methodist; more likely he found its idiom a suggestive vehicle for expressing the moral truths he had already adopted so fervently. He also found a way of mastering the most important text in the Christian world, the Bible, and of using it to reach the moral consensus notionally shared by his hearers. He had excellent powers of retention; several acquaintances later recalled that he had memorized the entire Bible as well as his own works. Such an intense engagement with the one book that was the bedrock of nearly everyone's worldview gave Paine a renewed sense of the doctrine of divinely ordained human equality and of the best choice of words to convey it. Paine evidently quickly concluded, however, that the words would have to be written, not spoken. For his shyness, it transpired, was a decided barrier to public speaking, though occasionally (as in his later debating experience at Lewes) he surmounted it. And so his challenge was to translate the spoken style into a written one. If he could not thunder like a prophet or a Mosaic lawgiver, he could write like (or better than) one, and stir in anger, resentment, and biting satire to boot. He found he could use words to engineer emotions, as in his appeal in *Common Sense* to the common "passions and feelings" of the colonists.[48] So he wrote during the Deane controversy in 1778 that, "as it is my design to make those that can scarcely read understand, I shall therefore avoid every literary ornament, and put it in language as plain as the alphabet."[49] As for politics, there has been a substantial debate as to whether Methodism was on the whole a counterrevolutionary force in this period. Bernard Semmel notes reports of Methodist

47. This ed., 6:254.

48. This vol., 314. This theme, and its Pennsylvania context, are explored in Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2008). In response to Bailyn's view that "the 'darling impudence,' the 'uncommon frenzy' which gave *Common Sense* its unique power, Paine brought with him from England in 1774; it had been nourished in another culture and was recognized at the time to be an alien quality in American writing" (Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* [Harvard University Press, 1967], 18), Eustace argues that "Paine's *Common Sense* grew directly out of the fertile soil of Pennsylvania's emotional culture and achieved the extraordinary popularity that it did precisely because it succeeded so well in marshaling the emotional language that was intrinsic to the articulation of Revolutionary political thought across America" (587).

49. This vol., 591.

preachers around 1805 being "perfectly orthodox in explaining the doctrines of *Thomas Paine*" concerning "*natural* and *equal right*."[50] In earlier decades, many Methodists were relatively conservative in outlook. In the 1790s there was also a group of about five thousand led by Alexander Kilham, sometimes called the Tom Paine Methodists because of its insistence on appointing leaders in the movement. But the influence here seems to have been more radicalism on Methodism than the reverse, as Kilham grew out of the same tradition of "free-born" Englishmen that inspired many Dissenters.[51] At the very least, we can surmise that different political conclusions could be drawn from Methodism and its doctrines, and that its importance to Paine lay more in a direct and simple elegance of style, and the sense of a community of equals striving for a purer morality, than in any substantial doctrine. But eventually he would have to discover, or to try to create, this community elsewhere; in 1806 he would condemn Methodism as "all creed and no morals."[52]

In September 1759, Paine married a local woman, Mary Lambert, who worked in the household of Sandwich's former mayor. But then he lost his employment, and in 1760, both his wife and child tragically died in childbirth. We can but conjecture how deep was his sense of grief and loss.[53] He had few known intimate relationships with women thereafter, though he fell briefly in love in 1798—to someone who was already married.[54] Conway called him "conservative in such matters," and he was always taciturn about his private life.[55] But there is no evidence, as some later critics alleged, that this marriage was in any sense a "failure." In early 1761, he returned to Thetford with a view to becoming an exciseman, or customs officer, the profession followed by his late wife's father. After the requisite procedures, including swearing an oath to the king, he commenced the task in late 1762, assessing brewers' casks in nearby Grantham, where he again associated with the local Methodists.[56] Promoted in 1764, he moved

50. Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (Heinemann, 1974), 125. See generally David Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750–1850* (Hutchinson, 1984).

51. David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (Yale University Press, 2005), 99–100; Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, 68 and, generally, 55–85. See my *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought* (Unwin Hyman, 1989), 171.

52. This ed., 4:1063.

53. He later wrote: "Tho' I appear a sort of wanderer, the married state has not a sincerer friend than I am. It is the harbour of human life, and is, with respect to the things of this world, what the next world is to this. — It is home, and that one word conveys more than any other word can express." This ed., 4:430.

54. This ed., 4:850.

55. Conway, *Life of Thomas Paine*, 2:404.

56. W. T. Sherwin, *Life of Thomas Paine* (R. Carlile, 1819), 8, has late 1763.

to Alford in Lincolnshire, an area where smuggling was widespread and the population was often resentful of what was seen as unfair taxation. Paine was dismissed in August 1765 after an accusation of "stamping," or passing goods without due inspection, though evidence points to a superior being the guilty party. He returned to stay making in a small town near Thetford. After applying for reinstatement as an excise officer on 3 July 1766, he spent time in London as an "usher," teaching English at a Baptist academy in Goodman's Fields, Aldgate, run by a well-known Dissenter.[57] Then he moved to another private school, in Kensington, earning a salary of twenty-five pounds a year, somewhat more than twice that of a common rural laborer's, while continuing to attend scientific lectures. Finally an excise position opened in February 1768 at Lewes, in Sussex, a fine seaside town with a long tradition of oppositional politics.[58] Here Paine earned some fifty pounds annually, though the cost of keeping a horse reduced this income by fourteen pounds.[59]

57. On such institutions, see Irene Parker, *Dissenting Academies in England* (Cambridge University Press, 1914), and on aspects of their intellectual orientation, my "Virtuous Commerce and Free Theology: Political Economy and the Dissenting Academies 1750–1800," *History of Political Thought* 20 (1999), 141–72.

58. Officially sponsored by a Mr. Cocksedge, the recorder at Thetford (Keane, *Tom Paine*, 59), Paine also owed the post in part to General Henry Conway, MP for Thetford (1761–84), whose approval was required. He was the stepfather-in-law of Charles Lennox, Duke of Richmond, who followed James Cartwright and became a prominent reformer and friend of Paine's from 1789 until around 1791–92. Thanks to Danielle Allen for these details.

59. Having some sense of eighteenth-century wages and cost of living is central to understanding Paine's outlook on life and his proposals for poor law reform and, eventually, the abolition of poverty. Average wages in Britain and their value vis-à-vis the standard of living in this period are difficult to estimate. Early in the century, some two-thirds of men were engaged in agriculture, but by the 1760s this had fallen to about 40 percent, with a similar proportion in manufacturing. In London around 1780, skilled craftspeople such as carpenters, masons, and plumbers earned from two shillings and four pence to three shillings per day, or perhaps seventy-five pounds per year. See Thomas Tooke, *A History of Prices*, 6 vols. (Longmans, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1838–57), 1:98. The earnings of agricultural laborers ranged from c. £12 to £15 per annum (p.a.), £12 being about £2,160 today. But by 1790, agricultural laborers in Kent might make £22 10s. (s. = shillings) p.a. See generally Gregory Clark, "Farm Wages and Living Standards during the Industrial Revolution: England, 1670–1869," *Economic History Review* 54 (2001), 477–505. Regionally, wages were generally higher in the north through this period. An early assessment is Elizabeth W. Gilboy, *Wages in Eighteenth Century England* (Harvard University Press, 1934), which offers a regional comparison and estimates that by the 1780s, single male average wages in the north had reached London levels and by 1790 were as high as 2s. a day (£30 p.a. in London, £20 in the west, and £26 5s. in the north). (Curiously, food prices were not that much higher than elsewhere.) Family incomes would have been higher, and in an average family size of six, the wife and two children could equal the man's income (219–21). Craftspeople's wages were substantially higher: a plumber

Lewes turned Paine into a proper civic figure.[60] It was likely here that he first appreciated how political participation can empower individuals and give them a sense of worth, well-being, identity, and belonging—the qualities he would come to associate with democracy. He joined the local debating society, the Headstrong Club, which still exists and at the time met weekly to discuss the pressing matters of the day at the White Hart public house, where, conveniently, the excise offices were located. Here Charles Lennox, the Duke of Richmond, soon to be his patron, was sometimes in attendance, and they likely met there. His shyness notwithstanding, Paine was often judged the most successful debater, and another member, William Lee, described him as "a shrewd and sensible fellow" with an unusual "depth of political knowledge."[61] These gatherings included the publisher of the local paper, the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, which supported the famed attacks on the government by the anonymous oppositional figure "Junius" between 1769 and 1772. Paine likely wrote several pieces for the paper and may well indeed, as we will see, have played a substantial part in the Junius affair.[62] He was, certainly, already somewhat rebellious. He is recorded as remarking on a bowls green, when a friend, Henry Verral, said that King Frederick of Prussia "was the best fellow in the world for a king; he had so much of the devil in him" that, "if it were necessary for a king to have so much of the devil in him, kings might very well be dispensed with."[63] Paine may also have met the leading

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could make £50 p.a. by 1790, spending somewhat less than one-fifth of this on food (47). The cost of living varied considerably. Up to about 75 percent of working-class wages was spent on food. During the second half of the century, the prices of both grain and meat were rising. On the concept of the standard of living, which is germane to any proposal to abolish poverty, such as Paine's in 1792–96, see Amartya Sen, *The Standard of Living* (Cambridge University Press, 1987). Though the standard of living is generally thought to have been rising through this period, many families were lucky to break even over the year. For a summary of the early stages of the debate on this subject, see A.J.P. Taylor, ed., *The Standard of Living in Britain in the Industrial Revolution* (Methuen, 1975). On the distribution of wealth, see this vol., 130n575.

60. The story is best told in Colin Brent, Deborah Gage, and Paul Myles, *Thomas Paine in Lewes, 1768–1774* (PM Trading, 2009).

61. Keane, *Tom Paine*, 69.

62. Keane, *Tom Paine*, 69–70, dismisses these attributions while noting that "among the oddest things about Tom Paine were his later persistent denials of having been an author during the first half of his life in England." The embarrassment of having been a lowly "Grub Street hack" (this vol., 29) and then becoming a world-historical figure, might explain some of this. So perhaps might his earlier political connections with certain Whigs, and patronage from them, as well as a desire to protect various underground authors he had worked with. So would the tacit admission of having engaged in potentially seditious activities. If he had something more pernicious to hide, it remains hidden.

63. Conway, *Life of Thomas Paine*, 1:232.

agitator John Wilkes, who did so much to bring the cause of popular rights and "liberty" to the fore in the early 1760s. Wilkes also identified these concepts with a sense of class consciousness, or at least the frustrated aspirations of the less well-off, styling himself in 1763 the defender of "the middling and inferior class of people, who stand most in need of protection."[64] Wilkes visited Lewes in 1770 and returned at least three more times in 1773–75, before introducing the first bill to reform parliament in 1776.[65]

We do not know when Paine first met a later collaborator, Major John Cartwright, whose *Take Your Choice!* (1776) marked a watershed in proposing a reform agenda based on universal male suffrage, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, secret ballot, and payment of members of Parliament (MPs), which, as John Belchem puts it, would "persist into the age of the Chartists and beyond."[66] This program, while not, like Paine's, antimonarchical, also created a form of identity for self-styled "radicals" that long succeeded in uniting reformers who might empirically be described as both "working class" and "middle class," until the categories began to disentangle after about 1815. "Liberty," which meant all things to all people early in this period, thus came to have much more precisely separate political and economic overtones after 1820 or so, as the new science of political economy began to suffuse public debate. To confuse matters, some in both camps would also style themselves "liberals" in the later period. (Paine generally used "liberal" and "liberality" as synonymous with "generous.")

Lewes's own history of Dissenting and radical politics stretched back more than a century. After the Restoration of 1660, anti-Catholic and anti-monarchist sentiments were never far from the surface. Paine clearly found its contrarian attitudes appealing. Through the Methodists (again), he rented lodgings from Samuel and Esther Ollive, whose daughter Elizabeth caught his eye. A tobacconist and grocer, Ollive was one of the two annually elected town constables, subject to the authority of a Council of Twelve, who dominated Lewes life. He soon brought Paine into the body, where he served some six years (1768–73), longer than anyone else at this time, gaining invaluable local administrative experience.[67] Ollive also

64. Georges Rudé, *Wilkes and Liberty* (Clarendon Press, 1962), 26.

65. Colin Brent, "Thomas Paine at Bull House in Lewes, 1768–1774," *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 147 (2009), 160–61.

66. John Belchem, *Popular Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Macmillan, 1996), 12.

67. Paine first appears as examining the town's accounts in 1769 and last performed the task in 1773. Verena Smith, ed., *The Town Book of Lewes, 1702–1837* (Sussex Record Society, 1973), 57, 62.

introduced Paine into the family business, which doubtless aroused the suspicion of his superiors in the excise office. Paine married Elizabeth in 1771 but separated from her in June 1774. For reasons that remain unclear, Paine "did not cohabit with her from the moment they left the altar till the day of their separation, a space of three years," according to his close friend Thomas Clio Rickman.[68] Rickman recalled, however, that Paine "always spoke tenderly and respectfully of his wife; and sent her several times pecuniary aid, without her knowing even whence it came."[69]

For much of this period, Britain's political opposition could be variously styled "Whig," "radical," or "republican," but the terms were flexible and sometimes overlapped. Most of the population generally regarded the constitutional monarchy that evolved from the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688–89 with pride, especially by contrast to the unbridled despotisms of many continental countries. But while the powers of the monarch had been pared back, both the Crown and the aristocracy still enjoyed great wealth and prestige through the eighteenth century. Affluence and luxury were indeed increasing, and the court and government had the means of dispensing both, by giving (in expectation of support) or selling "places" in the royal household, Parliament, or much of the civil and military administration. This led Paine (we believe) to complain in 1768 that "almost every man you meet is either a placeman, or expecting to be a placeman; and, in a little time, it would appear, we shall be wholly a nation of placemen and slaves."[70] Both the monarchy and House of Lords thus constantly tended to encroach on the rights and prerogatives of the popular branch of the constitution, the House of Commons. Many who applauded parliamentary reform nonetheless opposed altering the constitution in any fundamental way, and instead sought to eliminate corruption within the existing system. Some, however, invoked variations on the "Norman Yoke" idea that every Briton had been a self-governing or "freeborn Englishman" under an "Anglo-Saxon" constitution prior to William

68. Rickman, *Life of Thomas Paine*, 46. Sherwin denies this (*Life of Paine*, 17). A government employee named George Chalmers, writing under the pseudonym Francis Oldys, claimed that Paine once admitted he "married for prudential reasons and abstained for prudential reason," in *The Life of Thomas Pain*, 10th ed. (John Stockdale, 1793), 24. The former use included protecting Elizabeth's reputation. As to the latter, "prudence" was of course a byword for restraint from intercourse to avoid pregnancy; see Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (J. Johnson, 1798), 66, 171.

69. Rickman, *Life of Thomas Paine*, 45. And she in turn followed his career with interest and never spoke disrespectfully of him up to her death in 1808; Alfred Owen Aldridge, *Man of Reason: The Life of Thomas Paine* (Lippincott, 1959), 24–25.

70. This ed., 5:212.

the Conqueror's 1066 invasion.[71] Obadiah Hulme's *An Historical Essay on the English Constitution* (1771) was a leading source for this theme in Paine's times, recalling an elected king, voting by all taxpayers, and annual parliaments, with balance established between a council, courts, and the executive—in other words, a much more democratic constitution.[72] In the late eighteenth century, this view was often associated with the Bill of Rights that had followed the 1688 revolution, which pertains however only to the rights of the subjects of British monarchs. Such views did not necessarily challenge a society of ranks. Nor did they assert an ideal of universal human rights given by God rather than established historically as the rights of Englishmen, a step that was vital in the American colonial context, where many did not have English ancestry. But some writers, such as the Welsh Dissenter David Williams, in *Letters on Political Liberty* (1782), did insist that all the branches of government should be subjected to popular control when they exceeded their limits. Williams repeated the theme in his critique of the French political philosopher Montesquieu in *Lectures on Political Principles* (1789), which rejected the idea of a balanced constitution and any control of the legislature by the executive while retaining the idea of separation of powers.

Paine's politics at this time are often described as "republican," but the term is susceptible to many interpretations, from broadly supporting governments aiming at the public good (the "res publica") to active opposition to monarchy as such, which was much rarer.[73] Among the many repub-

71. See Christopher Hill's classic essay "The Norman Yoke," in John Saville, ed., *Democracy and the Labour Movement* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1954), 50–66. In this period, the concept was used by John Cartwright and Obadiah Hulme, among others. It remained common in the 1790s in the London Corresponding Society, discussed below (this vol., 141–42), e.g., in Thomas Hardy's journal, the *Patriot* (3 vols., 1792), 349–54.

72. [Obadiah Hulme], *An Historical Essay on the English Constitution* (Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 3–33. Authorship of this work remains somewhat uncertain.

73. The term "republican" circulated widely in the 1790s, but meant many things. For one delineation of the spectrum, see my and Christine Lattek's "Radicalism, Republicanism, and Revolutionism: From the Principles of '89 to Modern Terrorism," in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 200–254. The starting point for analyzing republicanism in this period is J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 1975); and Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1985). A sweeping study here is Paul A. Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992). For Paine in particular, see further A. O. Aldridge, "Thomas Paine and the Classics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 1 (1968), 370–80, which emphasizes the positive impact of classical writers and themes

licanisms, some were thus distinctly juxtaposed and incompatible. Much of the time, as with the concept of democracy in the 1770s and 1780s, the debate was thus not over a new term, but how to define it, and particularly what the scope of the franchise should be.[74] In this period, most resistance to royal interference in Parliament, and to the government, came from the Whig Party, usually regarded as more pro-commercial and favorable to the Dissenters' cause by contrast to the Tories, who were more oriented toward the landed oligarchy and the established church.[75] "Liberty" was usually the rallying cry for the opposition, which harked back to John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon's *The Independent Whig* (1720–21) and *Cato's Letters* (1720–23), then further back to John Locke, Algernon Sidney, and John Hampden in the seventeenth century, to Niccolò Machiavelli in the sixteenth, and then to some forms of classical republicanism, chiefly Roman. More radical eighteenth-century interpretations of this tradition sought to restore what was felt to be the lost supremacy of the popular house against the encroachments of the executive, whether the Crown, the House of Lords, or the government. More conservative thinkers assumed it was a more even balance between the three parts of the constitution that was aimed at. This disagreement would play out during the American Revolution and later, with Paine contending for minimal executive power, and James Madison and others urging a stronger executive and weaker popular control, with one author somewhat confusingly

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on Paine. There are also useful comments on the American development of the concept in Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (1982), 334–56; Steven J. Ross, "The Transformation of Republican Ideology," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990), 323–30; and Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 (1992), 11–38, which stresses Locke's impact on the American revolutionaries (13n4). Much of the literature on elite republicanism disregards its plebeian incarnations, though they have been vastly more influential, thus weakening the discipline's grasp of the overall spectrum of republican ideas. Beyond republicanism in the 1790s, analyzed throughout this introduction, see Frank Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain, 1760–2000* (Allen Lane, 2000); and David Nash and Antony Taylor, eds., *Republicanism in Victorian Society* (Sutton, 2000).

74. The term was in circulation in the 1790s.

75. On the background, see especially Dickinson, *Liberty and Property*; Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Cornell University Press, 1990); Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transmission, Development and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Harvard University Press, 1959); and Mark Philp, *Reforming Ideas in Britain: Politics and Language in the Shadow of the French Revolution, 1789–1815* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

describing Paine as "the leading champion of the parliamentary conception of the separation of powers" in 1776.[76]

"Liberty" was thus invoked principally against the abuse of executive power and corruption in the House of Commons by governing factions or parties, the nobility, and the monarch, generally through bribery. British government in the mid-eighteenth century was a sinkhole of venality, with constant plunder of the public purse. Such ubiquitous corruption, fueled by imperial expansion, prolonged warfare in Europe, and the growth of a standing army (augmented by foreign mercenaries), was regarded by critics as upsetting the unique balance of power among the three branches of the British constitution by enhancing the powers of the executive and the party in power in particular. Many government offices were for sale; in 1725 the lord chancellor, Thomas Parker, 1st Earl of Macclesfield, when prosecuted for selling offices in the Court of Chancery, simply claimed they were his private property. Posts subject to royal and ministerial patronage were well-paid sinecures given to "placemen," often in return for their votes in Parliament. (MPs were not remunerated until 1911.) Underlings, sometimes relatives and friends, were ill paid to do the real work. Commissions could be bought in the army and navy until 1871, in more prestigious regiments at a higher cost. "Pensions" were widely distributed to politicians, writers, and anyone else who would support the ministry of the day. Many of the mightiest pens and most stentorian orators of the time were swayed by such largesse, including Samuel Johnson and Paine's eventual nemesis, Edmund Burke. Ministers and landed magnates held powerful fiefdoms and milked any proceeds coming their way for all they were worth. Trade monopolies were also a source of great wealth to those who managed them. The East India Company, which was pillaging millions in South Asia, was one that was a major concern. Such corruption, of course, diminished the nation's revenues, and taxation was shifted as much as possible onto consumption and thus borne most heavily by the general population, who often struggled to survive with no social welfare net.[77] War was a key cause of the expansion of state expenditure in this period, which reached some £25.8 million in 1781. Of this, the English and Irish pension lists cost some £200,000 by 1780, while servicing the public

76. Meaning the supremacy of parliament, or "government by a single legislature that had the authority to appoint and recall all other governing officials." Mark A. Graber, "Separation of Powers," in *The Cambridge Companion to the United States Constitution*, ed. Karen Orren and John W. Compton (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 229–30.

77. But given the high infant mortality rate, once someone had survived to age twenty-five or so, it was not uncommon to live to fifty or sixty.

debt, which had nearly doubled during the American war, was about half the burden.[78]

From the 1760s onward, many parliamentary reformers began to widen their horizons. A narrowly English orientation began to jostle with more universal implications and suppositions, hinting at a revolutionary movement beyond the retrieval of "English" or "Saxon" rights to the assertion of human rights. By the early 1770s, some were moving toward the idea that the right to vote, at least for men, was a natural one, as was the right to stand for office. A few, like David Williams, who met Paine in the late 1780s and liked him, were willing to extend the principle to single and widowed women.[79] As the one essay deemed proto-feminist that historically was thought to have been Paine's has now been de-attributed, his views on this issue remain more obscure than previously assumed.[80] It does not seem, however, that he regarded revolution as affecting gender relationships very deeply, beyond limiting deference and affectation.

To other republicans, "revolution" chiefly invoked the execution of Charles I in 1649, which some celebrated and others mourned annually on 30 January.[81] But "republicanism" in this period, and the pursuit of "liberty" and "reform," did not as such mean a desire for democracy (which itself had many meanings), or for popular sovereignty, or for abolishing monarchy, much less all three together. In the eighteenth century, a plea for "liberty" usually meant resisting governmental corruption and tyrannical or despotic rule and advocating parliamentary reform.[82] Britain was not an absolutist monarchy after 1688 but an oligarchy, in which the Crown and the great landed magnates shared most social, political, and economic power among themselves, though they faced constant pressure from a rising commercial middle class. The king had to live on a fixed Civil

78. Philip Harling, *The Waning of "Old Corruption": The Politics of Economical Reform in Britain, 1779–1846* (Clarendon Press, 1986), 12, 17.

79. J. Dybikowski, *On Burning Ground: An Examination of the Ideas, Projects and Life of David Williams* (Voltaire Foundation, 1993), 161. Only in 1928 did all women achieve the right to vote in Britain.

80. "An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex," *Pennsylvania Magazine*, August 1775. See Frank Smith, "The Authorship of 'An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex,'" *American Literature* 2 (1930), 277–80. Foner reprinted this simply on the basis that it demonstrated Paine's interest (as editor of the magazine) in the subject (*Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, 2:34–38).

81. Prochaska, *The Republic of Britain*, 4.

82. See Lee Ward, *The Politics of Liberty in England and Revolutionary America* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 375–95. For an overview of these themes in this period, see Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2002), vol. 2.

List income, which was £900,000 in 1777, out of which the salaries of ministers, judges, and diplomats had to be paid. The Crown, in turn, was increasingly beholden to the government, since it held the purse-strings, and the king had to listen to if not necessarily accept ministerial advice much of the time.

Although some denied that Britain had a "constitution" at all, since its basic laws were not reduced to a single document, the limited democratic component of government lay in the House of Commons. Some three hundred thousand men could vote, but of these about six thousand people out of a population of perhaps seven million in 1770 elected a majority of the 558 MPs who sat in the Commons. Corruption in parliamentary elections was normal; the Duke of Norfolk, for instance, controlled eleven districts. Voting was in public; casting a ballot would not be secret until 1872. So the effects of patronage or bribery could be measured easily. Constituencies were very unequal, with some boroughs having twelve thousand voters and others seven. (The eleven voters in the most notorious "pocket borough," Old Sarum, all lived elsewhere and voted at the behest of the Pitt family.) After 1716, parliaments were elected only every seven years. Virtually all reformers accepted the tripartite British division of government of monarch, lords, and commons but lamented the interference of the first two in the latter. Britain may have had the "freest" constitution in Europe, but that did not stop George III, who became king in 1760, from meddling and, in the 1760s in particular, attempting to impose his Scottish favorite, the 3rd Earl of Bute, on Parliament, to demonstrate his independence of the Whigs.[83] (In this period, monarchs still had the power to remove ministers and governments. George III set his heart on destroying Wilkes in the late 1760s and early 1770s and also gaining the patronage of the East India Company.)[84] There were recurrent crises in Ireland, parliamentary instability, efforts to suppress the opposition (notably Wilkes), and agitation for parliamentary and economical reform. War and imperial expansion were nearly constant, and taxes were heavy. As we have seen, the idea of "radical reform" emerged in this period to denote a program of thorough parliamentary renovation, with a view to widening the franchise, making electoral districts more equal, shortening the duration of parliaments, and

83. Bute had been the king's chief adviser since 1756, when he was still Prince of Wales.

84. According to Burke, writing in 1772, the Crown aimed to "reduce the Company to a mere Trading Corporation. Next to the grand object of the destruction of Wilkes, the leading object in the Politicks of the Court, is to seize upon the East India Patronage of Offices." *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, 9 vols. (University of Chicago Press, 1958–70), 2:351.

reducing corruption. By the end of the period, "radicalism" would describe this program.

But many Whigs were not "radicals." At this time, Paine's politics were described as "Whig" by his friend Thomas Clio Rickman, who also hailed from Lewes.[85] Paine's early biographer Gilbert Vale, relying chiefly on W. T. Sherwin's 1819 biography, asserts that "Paine, while at Lewes, was a whig; and as such never thought of examining the first principles of government. A king, lords, and commons, were admitted as forming the best government by the admixture of the three sorts, royal, aristocratic, and democratic. As a whig, all he sought was the preservation of the supposed constitution."[86] When Paine lived in Lewes, the opposition consisted of two main groups, one following William Pitt the Elder, Earl of Chatham, and Charles Wentworth-Watson, Marquess of Rockingham, who began a program of economical reform in 1780; and a second, often more theoretically inclined, often Dissenters, who were for stronger reform measures and included a few extreme republicans who opposed kingship as such. All supported parliamentary reform, and also often lessening the restrictions on Dissenters and, by the early 1770s, defending the rights of the increasingly restive American colonists.[87]

Lewes's politics were particularly democratic by the standards of the time, and Paine's idea of self-organization and citizen-based activism were clearly formed and strengthened by his experience here. He also assisted in a local church body, the Vestry, which oversaw tasks like street-lighting and building repairs. Years later Paine wrote, in reference to his political outlook at Lewes, "Many of you will recollect that while I resided among you, there was not a man more firm and open in supporting the principles of liberty."[88]

He also wrote, however, that during his time in London (i.e., around 1772), he had held "those political notions, which I have since given to the world in my 'Rights of Man.'"[89] But this implies convictions very different from those of most Whigs in the 1760s or early 1770s. Paine long continued to self-identify as a Whig anyway. The label covered a multitude of possibilities. Not least, it purported to stand for the defense of "the people," who

85. Brent, Gage, and Myles, *Thomas Paine in Lewes*, 36.

86. Gilbert Vale, *The Life of Paine* (G. Vale, 1841), 26.

87. See generally Jerome R. Reich, *British Friends of the American Revolution* (M. E. Sharpe, 1998).

88. This ed., 2:642.

89. This ed., 4:613. The work itself has been entitled both *The Rights of Man* and *Rights of Man*; the latter is more common and is adopted here.

were not yet described as the working class(es), though some emphasized that they were more "productive" and "useful" than privileged elites.

According to many of his biographers, and some of his own quite insistent later statements, Paine was not active in publishing at this time, at least beyond writing an electioneering ballad in 1771 for a local Whig candidate named Thomas Rumbold for three guineas (£3 3s.) and a few poems.[90] Indeed, there is a pattern of emphatic denial by Paine of any literary activity in his early years, which has often bewildered and exasperated his biographers. In Part II of *Rights of Man* (1792), Paine describes his "first setting out in public life, nearly seventeen years ago," meaning about 1775.[91] It has been previously assumed that his main early (anonymous) publication was *The Case of the Officers of Excise*,[92] printed in 1772 but not published until 1793.[93] Thanks to the research of Professor Danielle Allen, however, we can now identify another major text from this period as Paine's. This is *The Juryman's Touchstone; or, A Full Refutation of Lord Mansfield's Lawless Opinion in Crown Libels, Addressed to All the Jurors of England* [Part I] (1771). Reprinted in this edition (vol. 5), it was evidently coauthored by James Burgh[94] and Benjamin Franklin, with some assistance by Richmond himself. An inscription in Paine's handwriting in the copy of the tract in the Duke of Richmond's library presents it as "by the author." As the tract appeared in the middle of the Junius controversy (1769–72), and Richmond was likely a key source of much of the material produced in the letters, it also cements Paine's association with this group.[95]

90. On his poetry, see Scott M. Cleary, *The Field of Imagination: Thomas Paine and Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (University of Virginia Press, 2019). Rumbold was an East India Company nabob attempting to buy a seat in Parliament; their collaboration appears to make Paine something less than "radical" at this time (Speck, *Political Biography of Thomas Paine*, 17).

91. In this ed., the titles of the two parts of *Rights of Man* are abbreviated as Part I and Part II. After the appearance of what was formally entitled "Part the Second," the first part was retitled as "Part the First," until both were amalgamated as *Rights of Man*. The same principle is applied in the notes and commentary on *The Age of Reason*, Parts I and II.

92. See this vol., 248–62.

93. Contemporaries reported that Paine also wrote another work, "a folio sheet," entitled *A Letter Concerning the Nottingham Officers*, which has since disappeared; see Francis Oldys [George Chalmers], *The Life of Thomas Pain*, 5th ed. (John Stockdale, 1792), 20.

94. James Burgh (1714–1775) was a radical Whig and author of the *Political Disqisitions*, amongst other works, as well as a Dissenting academy teacher.

95. We are very grateful to Professor Allen for alerting us to the existence of this text and generously assisting us in reprinting it here.

But Paine evidently did not regard any of his earlier writings as "public" (i.e., not anonymous or pseudonymous), including the "several excellent little pieces in prose and verse" that Rickman later recorded him producing in this period.[96] Paine also wrote that "it was the cause of America that made me an author."[97] This is usually assumed to refer to *Common Sense* and his meteoric rise to fame thereafter.[98] But he may have been describing his sympathies in the 1760s and/or early 1770s as well as meaning making a living as a writer. Paine wrote to the poet Oliver Goldsmith about *The Case of the Officers of Excise* in 1772, sending it, "such as it is." He continued "'Tis my first and only attempt, and even now I should not have undertaken it, had I not been particularly applied to by some of my superiors in office."[99] In 1777 he emphasized that "I never troubled others with my notions till very lately, nor ever published a syllable in England in my life."[100] But this can be interpreted as meaning under his own name and so clearly does not apply to *The Case of the Officers of Excise* or his early poetry.[101] Or he may have had other grounds for putting this stage of his career behind a curtain.

For reasons that remain doggedly obscure, Paine was peculiarly insistent on this point. After emigrating, he often repeated that America redefined him. He later recalled that in 1775, "I had no thoughts of independence or of arms. The world could not then have persuaded me that I should be either a soldier or an author. If I had any talents for either, they were buried in me, and might ever have continued so, had not the necessity of the times dragged and driven them into action."[102] In this narrative, *Common Sense* changed everything. The Massachusetts lawyer and lifelong enemy of Paine's (and later, in 1797–1801, Federalist president of the United States), John Adams, related that when they met in 1776, "He was extreamly earnest to convince me, that common Sense was his first born: declared again and again that he had never written a Line nor

96. Rickman, *Life of Thomas Paine*, 40.

97. This ed., 2:132.

98. E.g., by Richard Carlile, ed., *The Political and Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Paine*, 2 vols. (R. Carlile, 1819), 1:xi.

99. This ed., 4:18. He had known Goldsmith (who also knew Richmond) since *The Case of the Officers*, when Paine evidently sought his support for the cause; see John Ginger, *The Notable Man: The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith* (Hamish Hamilton, 1977), 263.

100. This vol., 425.

101. On the text, see Paul Myles, *The Case of the Officers of Excise* (Thomas Paine Society, 2018); and George Hindmarch, *Thomas Paine: The Case of the King of England and His Officers of Excise* (privately printed, 1998).

102. This vol., 514.

a Word that had been printed before Common Sense."[103] In 1783 Paine again insisted that "[in] England I never was the author of a syllable in print," though whatever this implied, he may have meant under his own name.[104] And again, in *The Age of Reason*, Paine wrote that *Common Sense* was "the first work I ever did publish,"[105] though in 1783 he had also mentioned "a few miscellaneous pieces in the Pennsylvania Magazine in the year '75."[106] So there are, to say the least, inconsistencies and mysteries to be reckoned with here, and we get the distinct impression that these protests masked a different story. Paine's denials about his previous career as a writer were possibly because he was a paid, hireling author, whereas his new identity centered on his selfless devotion to the public; constantly he would insert into arguments phrases such as "I am not cramped by self-interest in viewing a public measure."[107] Or he may have felt embarrassed by his past proximity to or patronage from Whig grandees, or nabobs, or even Whigs in general, when he was moving so rapidly away from them. Or he may have wanted to avoid undue scrutiny of his previous political associations, including a "political club" he helped form in 1767.[108] We may never know why he belabored this point.

But it does now seem that Paine did indeed lead a secret life for a considerable time in the mid-1760s and early 1770s. Disclaimers, denials, and prevarications notwithstanding, Paine evidently acted as a subordinate author or subcontractor on call to fill in holes or bulk out particular newspaper and journal submissions, writing on selected themes for various oppositional publications and taking commissions from others and adding to them. Later he took a more leading role with considerably more responsibility, producing a substantial number of articles, on a more or less regular basis, that contributed to oppositional political debates in the mid- and later 1760s, well before he emigrated to America.

From the outset, this activity involved considerable subterfuge. The subterranean world of political opposition was necessarily murky and impenetrable, for the penalties for treason or seditious libel were often very severe and ruinous, and retribution swift if not deadly. So, with dozens of others, Paine was truly an invisible man. Avoiding detection meant

103. John Adams, *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols. (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 3:334.

104. This ed., 4:257.

105. This ed., 3:57.

106. This ed., 4:257.

107. This ed., 2:121.

108. This ed., 5:7.

above all retaining anonymity and adopting disguises. Leaving any kind of paper trail was extremely risky. Contributors to particular pieces written for the opposition press were most likely entirely unknown to each other, except by constantly shifting pen names. This was true, as we will see below, in the Junius Letters and, until 1790, included collaboration between Paine and Edmund Burke.[109] One of Paine's other apparent associates was the Wilkesite, printer, anti-Catholic fanatic, and surgeon William Moore, who edited ninety-two issues of the English periodical the *Crisis*, from January 1775 to October 1776, to which both Paine and Moore apparently contributed. This jointly written *Crisis* was hugely influential in the colonies, selling better than any other tract prior to *Common Sense*.[110] In such publications, disguises were the norm. Moore used the names Roberts and Sharpe. Paine's friend Arthur Lee, the Virginia physician and later American spy, wrote under at least ten pseudonyms.[111] The ever-prolific Franklin adopted no fewer than forty-two different signatures, using at least twenty-seven only once.[112] And Paine sheltered behind at least sixteen.[113] All this anonymity and deflection has created a vast fog

109. Evidence suggests that Paine and Burke coauthored several pieces from 1768–69 to 4 October 1790. See this ed., 5:46, 64, 81, 168, 179, 244, 251, 297, 344, et seq. But this does not mean they necessarily met in person or were aware of the other's authorship during the early part of this period, which is very unlikely. Even the last contribution, in October 1790, may have been commissioned independently by the editor of the *Argus*.

110. Between April 1775 and April 1776, writing as "Casca," Paine contributed some nine articles and two epistles, some evidently with Moore as well as Edmund Burke. All are reprinted in *The Crisis: A British Defense of American Rights, 1775–1776*, ed. Neil L. York (Liberty Fund, 2016), which notes certain stylistic affinities with Paine's *Common Sense* but also differences (xii, 6, 388). Colin Bonwick, in *English Radicals and the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 1977), writes of this *Crisis* that its authors "certainly . . . did not represent the radicals" (82–83). T. H. Breen discusses the British *Crisis* in his *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (Hill and Wang, 2010), 262–74, and complains that it has been ignored in modern narratives about the American Revolution. The only tentative identification of any authorship of this series has been to the soldier, inventor, and traveler Philip Thickness(e). See Benjamin Goosequill and Peter Paragraph, *Curious Facts and Anecdotes Not Contained in the Biography of Philip Thickness* (J. Ridgeway, 1790), 20, 73, which supposes him to be the author of no. 30 only. No later biography explores the suggestion.

111. Louis W. Potts, *Arthur Lee: A Virtuous Revolutionary* (Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 139.

112. Benjamin Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin's Letters to the Press, 1758–1775*, ed. Verner W. Crane (University of North Carolina Press, 1950), xxix.

113. And his own name was used as a pseudonym too, notably by John Quincy Adams, under a poem, "Horace, Book II, Ode 4. To Xanthia Phoceus," published in *Port Folio* 2 (30 October 1802), 344. *Adams Family Correspondence*, 15 vols. (Belknap Press, 1961–2023), 15:227.

around hundreds of oppositional texts in this period, which we are only now beginning to penetrate.

Several additional pieces of softer but indicative evidence, however, also point to Paine being far more active as a writer before 1775 than has been usually presumed. Indeed for a time, at least intermittently, writing seems to have been his profession. A letter dated 11 June 1777 from Ambrose Serle, undersecretary to the secretary of state for the colonies, William Legge, the Earl of Dartmouth, describes one (American) *Crisis* issue as "written by a Mr. Paine, who was brought over hither, some Years ago, by Dr. Franklin, and has been chiefly employed by him, in one Pursuit or other, ever since. He was a Grub street Writer in London, when he fell into the Doctor's Way; and, by falling into his Principles, was enabled by him to emerge from Obscurity, and to meet with considerable Attentions in this Country."[114] The *Royal Gazette* (New York) of 4 September 1782 further tantalizingly described him as "once Dr. Smollett's, and since Dr. Franklin's Pamphleteer."[115] Paine's early biographer James Cheetham

114. *The Manuscripts of the Earl of Dartmouth*, 3 vols. (Eyre and Spottiswood, 1895), 2:439. Grub Street was a real place, near the site of the Barbican in London today, but achieved this fame through the satirical *Grub Street Journal* (1730–37). Its original name was derived from a ditch for refuse, hence "grubbing" became associated with "lowlife."

115. The first part of this allegation seems highly speculative if not unlikely, while the second is doubtless correct, which thus increases the credibility of the first. "Pamphleteer" implied greater activity and responsibility than any "Grub Street" appellation, and could also include poetry or monthly publications as well as Smollett's periodical, the *Universal History*, which appeared in this form. But perhaps we should not read too far into this description. Tobias Smollett (1722–1781) was a novelist who also edited the *Critical Review* (1756–63), the fifty-eight-volume *Universal History* (1756), and *The Present State of All Nations* (8 vols., 1768–69). One of his works that qualifies as a "pamphlet" was *The Reprisal: or, the Tars of Old England* (1757); Smollett also had naval experience. A modern biographer has stated that "every English writer, significant and insignificant, in London and elsewhere, knew of him" (G. S. Rousseau, *Tobias Smollett* [T. and T. Clark, 1982], 49). His general method was to work not with "wretched hirelings" and "obscure Hackney writers," whom he accused others of using, but with "gentleman" critics (James G. Basker, *Tobias Smollett: Critic and Journalist* [University of Delaware Press, 1988], 33–34, 36), a label that could hardly be applied to Paine in this period. (The journal was, however, elsewhere described as run by "garrets, journeyman authors, and understrappers"; Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of Tobias Smollett* [Faber and Gwyer, 1926], 132). Smollett knew Edmund Burke from the early 1760s. He was also friends with Oliver Goldsmith, who had spent time on Grub Street, writing occasionally for Smollett's *British Magazine*, founded in 1760, and for the *Critical Review*, beginning in 1757. Smollett described the *Critical Review* as run by "a Society of Gentlemen," namely four main editors. But the reality seems to have been that the underlings did much of the reviewing, and in 1761 at least fifty-six contributors were active. No accurate record exists of who did what, however, and many authors remain unidentified. (For a list of its more well-known contributors see Basker, *Tobias Smollett*, 151.) Smollett also knew John Wilkes fairly well, though they fell out politically,

relates: "What he had recourse to in the metropolis for a livelihood, neither Oldys nor the Impartial Sketch offers a conjecture, but a member of the revolutionary congress told me, that when Dr. Franklin first knew him, which was about the middle of the year 1774, he was a garret writer."[116] The lawyer and later diplomat John Jay, too, noted: "Thomas Paine . . . had been a hackney writer in London" before arriving in Philadelphia.[117] An enemy of Paine's said of him that "our hireling author having changed his soil, / True son of Grub Street, here renewed his toil."[118] "Grub Street" and "hackney writer" (today abbreviated to "hack") referred to people who were paid by the piece, or "penny-a-liners."[119] The use of these terms implies that *The Case of the Officers of Excise* cannot have been the only piece being referred to. It has also been alleged that "Paine began publishing his political pamphlets while living in Lewes Sussex just before moving

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and Smollett's newspaper the *Briton* was opposed by Wilkes's newspaper, the *North Briton* (1762–63). Another periodical, the *North Briton Extraordinary* was supposedly written by Smollett, though this attribution has been challenged. The *Critical Review* was decidedly "Scottish" in orientation. A monarchist, Smollett became a supporter of his fellow Scot Bute three days after the latter became prime minister, and Bute chose him to edit the *True Briton* in 1762. A satire called *The Battle of the Reviews* (1760) noted that "many hirelings," mostly Scots, worked for the journal (*The Letters of Tobias Smollett*, ed. Edward S. Noyes [Books for Libraries Press, 1969], 149). Four letters to Wilkes from 1759 to 1762 are extant. He may also have known Laughlin Macleane, a contender for "Junius." From the late 1740s, Smollett moved constantly in Grub Street circles, editing, translating, and writing fiction, and was founder and editor of three magazines that, like all such enterprises, required a "team of hack writers" (Jeremy Lewis, *Tobias Smollett* [Jonathan Cape, 2003], 89–95). He met other groups of specifically English acquaintances, usually at public houses. There is no evidence to indicate in what capacity he might have employed Paine, who apparently distanced himself politically from Smollett as editor of the *Briton* in 1762; see this ed., 5:43n12. We do, however, get some sense of how systems of literary production worked with Smollett. Once a week in the late 1750s, he went from his home in Chelsea to a coffeehouse named Forrest's at Charing Cross to meet, as George M. Kahrl puts it, "the drudges who were engaged in his hackwork ventures." One evening, two of them were invited to join the party at supper, and, as Smollett expected, they amused the company, "for they were curious characters" (Kahrl, *Tobias Smollett: Traveler-Novelist* [University of Chicago Press, 1945], 73). This indicates a considerable social gap between employer and stringer. Many of Smollett's vast projects involved a great deal of plundering from other sources to make up copy, for example, his *Compendium of Authentic . . . Voyages*, a task on which Paine could easily have worked. Writing notices of books, unless they consisted of using ponderously long extracts, was further up the Grub Street scale.

116. James Cheetham, *The Life of Thomas Paine* (A. Maxwell, 1817), 20.

117. John Jay, *Life of John Jay*, 2 vols. (J. and J. Harper, 1833), 1:97. Hesketh Pearson notes that Paine "for a few months existed as a hack writer" in the summer of 1774, in his *Tom Paine: Friend of Mankind* (Hamish Hamilton, 1937), 23.

118. Moses Coit Tyler, *The Literary History of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), 2:116.

119. "Hackneyed" was also used in this period to mean "debated."

(continued...)