Aristocrats into Modernity: French Émigrés and the Refashioning of Noble Identities

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

In the wake of the French Revolution, several thousand noble men and women sought refuge outside France. The emigration was a unique space in which ci-devants – as the revolutionaries called ex-nobles – could experiment with different practices and conceptions of nobility. The collapse of the traditional social structure under which they had been accustomed to exist and the extraordinary circumstances of exile allowed, and often compelled, several noble émigrés to adapt, or at least attempt to adapt, to the new world ushered by the Revolution. In order to find a new place and a new legitimacy, noble émigrés relied on a variety of practices and discourses. Some turned to landownership and argued that land was the foundation of the order’s moral superiority and socio-economic power. Others turned to commerce to rebuild their fortunes and re-establish their families on a favourable footing in post-revolutionary France. Noble émigrés also modified their social reproduction strategies to meet the revolutionary challenges and facilitate the survival of the noble family’s corporate distinctiveness. In spite of its dispersal all over the Western world, the émigré diaspora formed an imagined community tied together by cultural productions as well as by a common set of valued emotions and comportments meant to affirm their nobility, their national identity, and their resistance to the Revolution. The counter-revolution was not limited to taking up arms against the French
Republic and émigrés waged war against revolutionaries in the Francophone pan-European public sphere. They articulated discourses that contested the revolutionary representation of the émigré as a decadent, treasonous aristocrat. This cultural battle continued after their return to France under the Napoleonic Regime and Restoration when they penned several memoirs. The revolutionary upheavals led to the development of a heightened historical consciousness. As a result, émigrés left numerous testimonies that helped them impose their specific interpretation of the Revolution – one that emphasized its destructive nature – and helped them fashion their individual and collective identities.
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### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>AAE</td>
<td>Archives des affaires étrangères, France</td>
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<td>AN</td>
<td>Archives nationales de France</td>
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<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
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<td>BNF</td>
<td>Bibliothèque nationale de France</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
<td>Library and Archives Canada</td>
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<td>TNA</td>
<td>National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom</td>
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Introduction

Dans les histoires de la Révolution on a oublié de placer le tableau de la France extérieure auprès du tableau de la France intérieure, de peindre cette grande colonie d’exilés, variant son industrie et ses peines de la diversité des climats et de la différence des mœurs des peuples. En dehors de la France, tout s’opérait par individu, métamorphoses d’états, afflictions obscures, sacrifices sans bruit, sans récompense ; et dans cette variété d’individus de tout rang, de tout âge, de tout sexe, une idée fixe conservée ; la vieille France voyageuse avec ses préjugés et ses fidèles, comme autrefois l’Église de Dieu errante sur la terre avec ses vertus et ses martyrs.1

In this passage of his Mémoires d’outre-tombe drafted around 1822, Chateaubriand remarked upon the French émigrés’ absence from the historical record. To some extent, the memoirist’s complaint about the émigrés’ historiographical invisibility still holds true.2 Since émigrés were ultimately on the wrong side of history – the popular conception labels them as relics of an old order overthrown by the Revolution – one of the first modern refugee crises has gone largely unnoticed.3 The Age of Revolutions, Maya Jasanoff rightly notes, was also an “age of refugees.”4 During the late eighteenth century, American loyalists and French émigrés, among others, went into exile because of their ideological convictions. Revolutionary refugees’ stories shed light on how modern republican nation-building – despite its universalist claims – was intimately tied to exclusionary politics.5 Those who did not subscribe to the new polity’s ideals were ejected from the body politic and, eventually, from the collective memory.

Nineteenth-century critics of the emigration often repeated “les émigrés n’ont rien appris, rien oublie,” a saying attributed to Talleyrand and/or Napoléon.6 This saying condemned émigrés’ conduct, their refusal to learn or adapt. It also made their foreseen fall into oblivion seemingly natural and inevitable: they belonged to a bygone era and had failed to move forward with the times. This dissertation challenges this popular representation of the emigration and shows that,

except for a privileged few who spent their exile in the Bourbons’ circles – Louis XVIII’s entourage rarely exceeded 200 nobles –, adaptation was not only possible but, often, necessary.\footnote{Philip Mansel, “From Exile to the Throne: The Europeanization of Louis XVIII,” Monarchy and Exile: The Politics of Legitimacy from Marie de Médicis to Wilhelm II, ed. Philip Mansel and Torsten Riotte (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 186.}

This dissertation argues that exile was a unique opportunity that allowed – and often compelled – noble men and women to experiment with different practices and definitions of what it meant to be noble in the post-1789 world. The emigration was a sort of laboratory in which, confronted by revolutionary and foreign “others,” nobles could experiment with and conciliate traditional markers of nobility – namely, race, corporatism, service, and honnêteté – and modern “bourgeois” values – namely, individualism, utility, civic mindedness, family love, and domesticity.\footnote{These values are now considered bourgeois but Sarah Maza found no evidence of a coherent articulation of a distinct bourgeois identity in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary France. These values developed during the Enlightenment and were expected to be universal and to transcend social distinctions. The association with the bourgeoisie was done retrospectively by liberals between the 1820s and the 1840s. Sarah Maza, The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 39, 59-68, 74-75, 100-101, 195} Émigrés could experiment with different conceptions of nobility since, by definition, the experience of exile is one of rupture. Emigration, Chateaubriand rightly noted, undermined noble corporatism. The dislocation that characterized exile led to a rather sudden emancipation of the self.\footnote{Fernand Baldensperger, Le mouvement des idées dans l’émigration française (Paris : Plon, 1924), vol. 1, 12.} For many nobles, emigration was an individualized experience: family, court, and noble sociable institutions were either absent or had a more limited influence than they had had in pre-revolutionary France. After the dispersal of the Coblenz society – the Bourbon Princes’ court in exile until 1792 – the social controls under which the nobility had been accustomed to exist evaporated. The almost complete disappearance of traditional noble careers, the diminished role of lineage, parents’ struggles to properly socialize their offspring, and isolation often gave noble individuals, particularly those belonging to the younger generations, more autonomy than they would have had in the rigid pre-1789 society. The Revolution, by eliminating the corporate order that had anchored collective identities, also freed nobles from their feudal identity and made self-fashioning possible.\footnote{Karine Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés dans les pays germaniques pendant la Révolution Française” (PhD diss., Université de Paris I, 2001), 184-189. Doina Pasca Harsanyi, “A Resilient Elite. Survival and Decadance,” Scandinavian Journal of History 30, 3/4 (2005), 289. Dror Wahrman, The Making of the Modern Self: Identity and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England (New Haven, CT : Yale University Press, 2004), 313.} It deprived the nobility of its perceived immutability and strongly impressed the idea that the future was uncertain and unpredictable upon the group. The experience of exile also gave nobles the critical distance necessary to
critically reflect upon their own condition and society. The émigré nobility, Karl Mannheim argues, gained self-awareness: “When imposed by fate, detachment from one’s own accustomed mode of existence… provides greater sociological and historical clear-sightedness and penetration.” Finally, the experience and challenges of emigration played a crucial role in the French nobility’s transition to modernity.

To find a place in the new world ushered by the Revolution, the ci-devants – as the revolutionaries called ex-nobles – drew on the different conceptions of nobility that had emerged during the previous century. The development of the modern state and of commercial society, as well as the weakening of the holistic semi-divine social order had led to critical discussions about the second order’s origins, nature, and role. The two sides of the debate argued that the nobility embodied the nation’s honour, or that the nobility’s degeneracy threatened the nation’s morality and honour, some critics accusing the nobility of being a self-interested group that worked against the public good. Nobles themselves had largely contributed to this debate and to efforts to redefine their collective identity. This refashioning of noble identities intensified during the revolutionary decade when competing conceptions of nobility, patriotism, and virtue collided.

Noble émigrés’ efforts to adapt to the changes brought about by the Revolution and by exile can be sorted into two interrelated categories: first, practices meant to facilitate lineages’ successful social reproduction and, second, discourses and rhetorical strategies meant to provide the nobility with a new ideological legitimacy after the collapse of its legal foundation. Chateaubriand’s epigraph sheds light on many aspects of the noble émigrés’ transformed class, gender, and national identities and hints at several avenues of investigation. This dissertation examines how noble émigrés transitioned from the corporate society of orders to a class-based society. It studies how they defined and justified their superiority and how they sought to preserve their corporate identity during and after their exile notably with the development of an aristocratic class ethos that placed great emphasis on cultural criteria as markers of elite status. It examines how aristocratic gender norms changed as a result of exile and of the growing influence of affectionate family ideals. It addresses the question of French national character and shows that émigrés defined their Frenchness in opposition to revolutionary and foreign “others.” This


dissertation also pays particular attention to the émigrés’ voluminous literary output – be it correspondence, novels, or memoirs – since these texts played a pivotal role in their self- and collective fashioning efforts.

Émigrés did not adopt a unified strategy in their efforts to adapt to the new circumstances. Their experiments mirrored the diversity that had characterized the Enlightenment debates about the nobility’s nature and purpose. Some turned to land, others to commerce. Some sought places for their progeny in traditional institutions, others gave them a more practical education. Some continued to conclude marriages of convenience, others opted to give sentiment a greater place. Many stressed their cultural superiority. In sum, some strategies were essentially traditional and sought to preserve distinctive aspects of nobility and endow them with renewed relevance whereas others were modern. Some were a mixture of both, inspired by an idealized, but updated, past. Adaptation and resilience became a part of their identity. They defined themselves, in part, through their efforts to face the challenges that the Revolution and exile engendered.

By examining émigrés’ experiences and discourses, this dissertation provides insights into the group’s resilience and its ability to perpetuate its social, economic, cultural, and political influence well into the nineteenth century. Indeed, by redefining noble identities – by selecting which aspects of their traditional class, gender, and national identity were indispensable and which needed to be modernized – these men and women provided a new legitimacy for their continued importance and relevance in post-1789 French society.

Noble Emigration: Chronology, Numbers, and Myths

From its very beginning, the Revolution had detractors. Several thousand French men and women left France during the 1790s. The first wave emigrated in the summer of 1789, after the fall of the Bastille and the Great Fear, more left after the October Days. The movement continued in 1790 and 1791: reforms and incidences of popular violence led to more departures. For many observers, Louis XVI’s failed flight and his arrest in Varennes in June 1791 seemed to condone emigration: the attempted escape was construed as evidence of the King’s rejection of the revolutionary project and as proof that he was a prisoner of the Revolution. In the next few

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months, French military officers deserted and joined Louis’s brothers in Coblenz where they orchestrated the counter-revolution. Departures increased with the escalation of violence in 1792, with the beginning of the war, the fall of the monarchy, and the September Massacres, and in 1793, with the Terror. Two-thirds of the émigrés left in 1792 or after.\(^{15}\) Staunch royalists were likely to have departed early, while more moderate nobles often only left after the violent episodes of the summer of 1792. This chronology has led contemporaries – and historians – to establish a distinction between émigrés – “who acted on principle” when the immediate danger was limited – and refugees – who were displaced by revolutionary violence.\(^{16}\) The timing of émigrés’ departures became a source of tension in their divided ranks, some blaming royalists for having stayed too long. However, there was no absolute correlation between political opinions and the date of emigration: several royalists only left in 1792 since they judged that their continued presence in France could better serve the monarchy’s interests.

1792 was a turning point for the emigration. Up until then, exile had been mostly self-imposed and considered temporary. With the fall of the monarchy, the émigrés’ exile became forced and protracted. The failure of the counter-revolution in the fall and, more significantly, the revolutionary armies’ superiority aggravated émigré noblemen’s identity crisis. “Those who fight” had lost. They were uprooted and had little hope of a quick return. Laws against émigrés were also enacted in 1792. Their properties were sequestered, designated biens nationaux, and auctioned off. They were banished in perpetuity and subjected to the death penalty if caught on French soil. Laws adopted in the spring of 1793 finalized émigrés’ civil death.\(^{17}\)

There is still no reliable data on the number of émigrés.\(^{18}\) The most common estimates place the number of émigrés between 150 000 and 200 000. This would put the proportion of

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16 Doyle, “Introduction,” xvi.
17 Carpenter, Refugees, 186.
18 John Dunne, “The French Nobility and the Revolution: Towards a Virtual Solution to Two Age-Old Problems,” French History 17, 1 (2003), 96-107. Most of the émigré lists are riddled with mistakes including: inclusion of non-émigrés, multiple inscriptions of the same émigré, and omissions. Departmental lists included men and women who resided outside the department but who had not emigrated. Despite these flaws, Donald Greer estimates that about 130 000 men and women left France during the Revolution. This number is likely too low considering that he showed little interest in emigration after 1794. René de Castries estimates that the number of émigrés could be as high as 250 000 to 300 000. As Patrice Higonnet points out, Castries’s estimate, probably based on the Directory’s 1795-assertion that its had 250 000 émigrés registered on its lists, are most likely too high. For his part, Higonnet suggests a total of 150 000 to 200 000 émigrés. For an example of an émigré list see Micheline Vallée ed., Les émigrés de 1793 (Secqueville-en-Bessin : Publications Micheline Vallée, c.1991). Donald Greer, The incidence of the emigration during the French Revolution (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1951), 8. René de
émigrés close to 0.5 percent of the total French population. All things considered, this proportion is quite small. Yet, émigrés had an importance that far exceeded their statistical existence. The figure of the émigré loomed large in the revolutionary imaginary.

To many contemporaries, the emigration was a noble phenomenon: in their minds, the émigré was an unpatriotic, untrustworthy aristocrat plotting with foreign powers to overthrow the Revolution and restore the Ancien Régime’s worst abuses. This popular belief is evidenced by contemporary caricatures showcasing ridiculous, disorganized, and physically deformed émigrés consorting with foreign powers.19 The fact that a critical mass of noble men and women chose or felt compelled to leave France was highly problematic to many revolutionaries who believed in the nation une et indivisible; the ci-devants became suspect because they were strangers to the nation and their exile revealed that they did not wish to be part of a regenerated polity.20

Greer’s study dispels a few persistent myths about the emigration. He debunks the assumption it was synonymous with nobility. The majority of identifiable émigrés came from the third estate – approximately 51 to 55 percent – followed by the clergy – approximately 25 to 27 percent. The defunct second order accounted only for 17 or 18 percent of the total emigration. 22 000 to 25 000 nobles emigrated.21 The proportion of nobles who emigrated cannot be calculated precisely since estimations on the order’s numbers on the eve of the Revolution vary from 110 000 to 400 000.22 A very impressionistic estimate thus suggests that less than a quarter, and probably closer to one-eighth, of nobles may have emigrated. Nonetheless, even if the overwhelming majority of ci-devants weathered the Revolution in France, a large proportion of them had relatives or acquaintances who left and the majority of France’s great families emigrated.23 Greer’s study also shows that there was a correlation between warfare and roturier emigration. Most émigrés from the third estate came from the peripheral departments that were

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21 Greer’s conclusions are based on the identifiable social origins of 93% of the men and women included in émigré lists. Higonnet, Class, Ideology, and the Rights of Nobles, 284. Greer, The incidence of the emigration, 112.
23 Claude-Isabelle Brelot finds that between one-fourth and one-fifth of the Franche-Comté nobility emigrated. She also found that the vast majority of noble families were related to an émigré. Claude-Isabelle Brelot, La noblesse en Franche-Comté de 1789 à 1808 (Paris : Annales littéraires de l’université de Besançon, 1972), 99-100. Doyle, Aristocracy and its Enemies, 256. Daniel Roche, Les circulations dans l’Europe moderne, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle (Paris : Pluriel, 2010), 346.
FIGURE 0.1 GRAND CONSEIL DES ÉMIGRANTS
the most affected by war. When excluding these departments, the majority of émigrés, about 63 percent, came from the privileged orders. Furthermore, roturier emigration was often circumscribed to the 1792-1795 period, period during which France was most affected by warfare. In sum, from 1789 to 1792 and 1795 to 1815, the majority of émigrés likely came from the former privileged orders. Furthermore, a large number of roturiers who did not leave because of the war did so because of their ties to noble émigrés.

The revolutionaries’ assumptions about the emigration were not entirely wrong. The second order had a disproportionately large and influential presence in émigré ranks. Some of the Revolution’s most active and important opponents – the conspirators – came from the nobility. Noble exiles also sought to monopolize the “émigré” epithet. According to those assembled in Coblenz, an émigré was a righteous French nobleman who joined the Princes and who was ready to fight to restore the Ancien Régime. Nobles’ social prominence also inflated their emigration’s significance. The fact that some of the Ancien Régime’s pillars were deserting the nation had important psychological repercussions. Émigrés’ claims to speak for all of the nobility heightened revolutionary suspicion of the aristocrates who had remained in France.

Emigration was predominantly the affair of men. Greer calculated that 85 percent of the nobles on the émigré lists were men. These were also mostly young men. The ratio of male to female noble émigré increases even more if we include the roughly 2300 men of the high clergy who left France in the wake of the Revolution, many of whom were banished in 1792 for their failure to swear allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Noblemen were more likely to emigrate because of the imperatives of honour. Émigrés shamed noblemen who remained in France and sent them quenouilles (distaffs), symbols of their emasculation. La Tour du Pin explained how, in the fall of 1791, “[l]’émigration se transformait en un point d’honneur.”

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26 Greer, *The incidence of the emigration*, 71
Chateaubriand, who joined the émigré armies in July 1792, wrote that although he disapproved of the emigration, he believed that he was honour-bound to share its “imprudence.”

The military counter-revolution appealed to wide segments of the second estate. It provided noblemen – affluent, middling, and poor – with an opportunity to assert their distinctiveness. The rise of commercial society in which wealth often defined worth, the commodification of status, and the growing gap between the noblesse de cour and the poor nobility meant that martial honour became the most important unifier of aristocratic masculinity; it was the nobility’s “last refuge.” Martial honour was “a commodity available exclusively to the noblesse” and the métier des armes displayed noblemen’s natural leadership abilities. The counter-revolution allowed noblemen to fulfil their natural destiny as protectors of the monarchy. It was also an opportunity for the noble warrior class to redeem itself after the Austrian Succession and Seven Years’ wars’ defeats. In sum, the counter-revolution provided the warrior class – broadly conceived since many robe nobles joined its ranks – with an opportunity to reaffirm its virility and its vocation after having been criticized for its effeteness.

Noble émigré women – émigrées – were a small but significant minority – Greer counted 2506 – many of whom left with their families. Women’s civil dependence raises the question of their agency with regards to exile. It is plausible that a significant number left because the male heads of their families decided so. However, revolutionaries contended that their subordination did not absolve them from the crime of emigration; they claimed that their responsibilities towards the nation could trump their legal subservience to their husbands. Furthermore, noblewomen’s honour was not linked to emigration the way men’s was. By staying in France, they could send funds to their émigré husbands, manage their families’ property, and, often,
shield some of their patrimony from confiscation. They were also somewhat less likely – although by no means entirely unlikely – to be the target of revolutionary violence. The emigration of a male relative was troublesome for family members who remained in France. They were repeatedly visited by republican authorities and subjected to “patriotic contributions.”

Émigré ranks were deeply divided. As Antoine de Rivarol put it, “Lorsque deux émigrés se rencontrent, avant de se parler ils s’épurent.” The divisions often replicated those that had already existed among the different political factions – purs, monarchiens, and constitutionnels – during the Revolution’s early stages. Constitutionnels, like Germaine de Staël and her circle, avoided those they considered the “émigrés:” that is the ultra-royalists. Travelling in the German States in 1800, Adèle de Boigne was equally disgusted by the émigrés’ political extremes. She disapproved of the “relâchement des idées royalistes” she witnessed in Hamburg and Altona as much as of the “extravagance” of the staunch royalists whom she encountered in Munich. Boigne was a partisan of the “juste milieu.” La Tour du Pin was highly critical of émigrés’ behaviour, regardless of their political convictions. She preferred to avoid them, writing, “La société des émigrés, leurs caquets, leurs petites intrigues, leurs médisances m’en avaient rendu le séjour odieux.” Religion – that is, the importance of religion for the preservation of the social order – was the only thing upon which émigrés reached a consensus.

Émigrés were emigrants, not immigrants: few sought to assimilate into their host societies or permanently establish themselves in foreign countries. Most considered themselves Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, temporarily cast out of France, often waiting for the first

39 In Paris, for example, 546 noble men and 220 noble women were arrested between August 1792 and July 1794 and 20% (226 out of 1158) of the recorded noble victims of the Terror were women. Doyle, Aristocracy and its Enemies, 289. Donald Greer, The Incidence of the Terror during the French Revolution: A Statistical Interpretation (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1966), 95-96.
opportunity to return.\textsuperscript{45} The 1801 Concordat and the 1802 Napoleonic amnesty facilitated the return of most émigrés in the early 1800s. Only a handful of the Bourbon’s staunchest supporters were excluded from the amnesty.\textsuperscript{46} Whether under the Directory, Consulate, Empire, or Restoration, about 90 percent of émigrés eventually found their way back to France.\textsuperscript{47}

The Nobility, the Ancien Régime, and the Revolution

In Ancien Régime France, the definition of nobility was, as Elie Haddad puts it, a “contested space.” There was no universal acceptance of the idea of nobility as an essence and the recognition of noble quality depended on representation, distinct ways of life, and laws. The early modern monarchy put forward a legal definition of nobility and asserted that it came from the king and not from imprescriptible lineage and virtue, as nobles traditionally claimed. The tensions between, first, the argument that nobility came from race and virtue – the source of noblemen’s authority and devotion to the king’s service – and, second, the argument that nobility was a quality bestowed by the king were never resolved. On the eve of the Revolution, the Colbertian compromise – monarchical control over the composition of the second order and the promotion of the principle of noble race – no longer reflected the order’s sociological reality.\textsuperscript{48}

One of the French Revolution’s most significant achievements was the abolition of the society of orders and establishment of (male) civil equality. Several revolutionary measures targeted the nobility. The abolition of privileges and of the remnants of the feudal system (féodalité) on the Night of 4 August 1789 sapped the second order’s legal foundations. The National Assembly abolished venal – and ennobling – offices, thereby eliminating the savonettes à vilains, which had been the most important channel of social mobility during the eighteenth century. This dramatically curbed nobility’s openness and renewal ability; in fact, it became a


\textsuperscript{46} See for example the “Liste des femmes non éliminables” that contains only 38 names. AN, F\textsuperscript{7} 5790. On the amnesty see Emmanuel de Waresquiel, “Joseph Fouché et la question de l’amnistie des émigrés (1799-1802),” \textit{Annales Historiques de la Révolution française} 372, 2 (2013), 105-120.

\textsuperscript{47} Jasanoff, “Revolutionary Exiles,” 42.

Judicial reforms, including the abolition of the parlements, further eroded the ex-order’s influence. In 1790, hereditary nobility itself was eliminated: titles, liveries and heraldry were banned. Other reforms undermined the nobility’s distinctiveness. Changes to family laws weakened its social reproduction strategies. Equal inheritance and divorce threatened the preservation of noble patrimony. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the suppression of monastic orders, and other measures that curbed the Church’s role in French society seriously challenged noble strategies since these had long relied on the clergy as a source of suitable positions for children not destined for marriage. The opening of civil and military careers to talent and nobles’ subsequent exclusion from public offices undermined the nobility’s service ethos. New political institutions challenged the group’s position as the ruling class. Changes in manners, tastes, and fashion weakened its traditional role as tastemakers and cultural leaders. All of these changes resulted in an undeniable déclassement; the nobility as a social category had been utterly erased, all that remained was nobles’ own sense of identity and distinctiveness.

Some ci-devants argued that revolutionary attempts to abolish the nobility were futile. They maintained that nobility consisted of imprescriptible moral qualities. Many agreed with the comte d’Antraigues who – although he had been critical of the noblesse de cour, maintained that in principle a noble social category was useful – argued:

Les ennemis de la noblesse s’imaginèrent, qu’en effaçant par un Décret, les armoiries de Nobles, en leur enlevant leurs titres, en les dépouillant même du nom de leurs Pères, ils détruirient en effet la Noblesse : certes, quand elle ne consiste plus que dans ces signes extérieurs qui les décorent, c’est qu’elle a déjà cessé d’exister dans tous les coeurs… Les vrais titres d’un Ordre de Noblesse… reposent dans le cœur des individus qui la composent. C’est la tradition des Lois de l’honneur… qui est le Titre primordial de la Noblesse. C’est le souvenir de ce qu’elle fut et de ce qu’elle doit toujours être, qui assure sa perpétuité ; c’est le dépôt des actions de ses Ancêtres, qui forme ses vrais trésors.

Laws and decrees could not eradicate the biological qualities the noble race enjoyed, its prestigious genealogy, and other intangible components of its status, such as politeness and

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honour.\textsuperscript{52} And, indeed, the revolutionaries were not entirely successful in their efforts to abolish what they called the Ancien Régime. Napoléon resurrected the nobility as a social category and the nobility’s mystique and landed economic power proved remarkably resilient. Regardless, the status of the nobility had irrevocably changed. The society of orders was definitely gone. The imperial and restoration nobility was a “fait social;” it was the nobility of 1790, not that of 1789. Its existence and distinction were based on patrimony and culture; it no longer enjoyed a legal justification. It did not recover its privileges or its seigneurial rights, nor did it not recover any of its public authority.\textsuperscript{53} The restoration nobility was similar to the imperial one in that regard: it was a \textit{noblesse de service}. Louis XVIII continued Napoléon’s policy of harnessing noble service and prestige to support the state’s.\textsuperscript{54} In this context, it was necessary for the nobility to develop new discourses and practices meant to ensure its survival and give it a new \textit{raison d’être}. The monarchy’s abolition, albeit temporary, and the experience of exile pushed émigrés to generate a definition of nobility that did not depend on the king for recognition. This definition relied on distinctive habits and beliefs, including the nobility’s biological quality, service tradition, and excellence with an emphasis on polite manners and cultural superiority.

\textbf{French Émigrés: “Les invisibles de la Révolution”\textsuperscript{55}}

The history of the French Revolution is inseparable from that of the counter-revolution. As Jean-Clément Martin argues, “Révolution et Contre-Révolution n’ont pas d’existence l’une sans l’autre, et celle-ci hors des cadres de pensée imposés par celle-là.”\textsuperscript{56} The counter-revolution was a real political alternative and it played a fundamental role in the creation of the French nation: it brought about the mass politicization of French society.\textsuperscript{57} However, opposition movements do not sit comfortably with a republican tradition that promotes the revolutionary heritage.\textsuperscript{58} The fact that some men and women spurned the revolutionary project is an uncomfortable truth for the French collective imaginary. Consequently, scholarly interest in the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[55] Casta, “Les invisibles de la Révolution,” 93.
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emigration was, for a long time, limited.\textsuperscript{59} As Simon Burrows notes, “[i]t has… been too easy for Anglo-Saxon scholars to relegate the émigrés to an historical wasteland without challenging the popular images of the émigrés as the swaggering aristocrats of Coblenz.”\textsuperscript{60}

Burrows and Kirsty Carpenter’s ground-breaking scholarly monographs on émigrés in Britain challenge this popular representation. They show that the émigrés – even nobles – were by no means a monolithic group of ultra-royalists. To the contrary, diversity and factionalism dominated émigré politics.\textsuperscript{61} Burrows’s study of émigré journalism argues that the exile press must be examined in conjunction with the counter-revolution’s efforts since propaganda was an essential component of the fight against the French Republic.\textsuperscript{62} Carpenter’s study also examines the cultural transfers engendered by this unique episode in Franco-British history.\textsuperscript{63} These studies show that the emigration was more than just a political phenomenon; it had important social and cultural components. They explore many aspects that were central to the émigrés’ changing identities – politics, culture, education, and general survival strategies – but, because of their geographic scope, they cannot keep track of an émigré community that was largely peripatetic.

For liberal noble émigrés, Doina Pasca Harsanyi argues, exile was an opportunity to “reexamine their identity as well as their beliefs while trying to find a place in the new world ushered in by the Revolution that rejected them, but with which they still identified.” They reflected upon how they had erred and why they had failed to retain the leadership of the Revolution. Harsanyi contends that these noblemen, who believed they disposed of the required merit and abilities, saw themselves as the natural leaders of France’s regenerated society. In sum, they contributed to an “updated sense of noblesse oblige,” one in which an enlightened nobility was expected to protect freedom against the masses’ democratic excesses.\textsuperscript{64}

French scholars’ approach to the history of emigration has focused mainly on its literary output. Fernand Baldensperger, studying émigré literature, concludes that the dislocation that characterize the experience of exile and, most importantly, the decline of aristocratic sociability led, first, to a dramatic shift of sensibilities from classicism to Romanticism and, second, to the

\textsuperscript{62} Burrows, \textit{French Exile Journalism}, 95, 226.
\textsuperscript{64} Harsanyi, \textit{Lessons from America}, 21, 144.
emergence of modern conservatism. Karine Rance’s study of émigré memoirs argues that, despite a diversity of experiences, noble émigrés were a group with a distinct identity. A set of common behaviours – the refusal to integrate into host societies and the attachment to nobility as a dominant characteristic of selfhood – provided cohesion to the émigré diaspora. Memoirs, a genre upon which nobles had long relied to fashion particular visions of their lives, played an important role in the nobility’s efforts to ensure its perpetuation and to maintain its identity since the Revolution had thrown the group’s perceived immutability into question.

Stéphanie Genand, in her study of émigré novels, shows how authors used the pathos at the heart of the sentimental novel to challenge the pejorative definition of the émigré and turn this controversial figure into a victim. Novelists insisted on their stories’ vraisemblance and shed light on the émigrés’ suffering in order to appeal to the readers’ sensibility. Istvan Cseppentö argues that émigrée novelists established a distinction between the bad, arrogant émigré who resisted change and the good one who adapted and endured the trials of exile with dignity. These analyses of émigré literary productions demonstrate how émigré writers engaged in self-fashioning and countered the revolutionaries’ one-dimensional representation of the émigré.

**French Nobility: From Crisis to Resilience**

Since the 1970s, revisionist historians have discredited the “crisis of the nobility” thesis. This thesis was predicated on a political, economic, and ideological decline of the nobility during the early modern period as a result of the rise of the modern state, the early developments of capitalism, and the fall of agricultural revenues. Instead, revisionist scholarship has shifted the focus to the nobility’s adaptability. On one hand, scholars studying the eighteenth-century – including Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, David D. Bien, and Jay M. Smith – argue that the nobility was more open to modern ideas – merit, ability, and individualism, for example – than the crisis

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thesis gave them credit for. Smith shows that merit – often linked with birth and lineage – as a basis of noble distinctiveness had well-established seventeenth-century roots. Under Louis XIV, the “public modality of service” changed. Education, talent, and discipline were added to the traditional noble service ethos that emphasized generosity and self-sacrifice. Useful occupations, especially those useful to the state became one of the benchmarks against which the monarchy measured merit. Thus, revisionist historians argue that the nobility was not a monolithic reactionary group and that at least some segments of the second order were progressive. The second order also successfully coopted some of the third estate’s most dynamic elements.

Cultural historians have shown that, since the seventeenth century, the nobility’s ethos put more emphasis on cultural criteria as a source of distinction. Doing so, the group was able to assert some control over the transition from a hereditary to a more open elite. Cultural institutions – including the salon – played a vital role in the cooptation and assimilation of newcomers distinguished by their wealth or merit into the elite. The use of culture as a marker of status, Elizabeth Goldsmith argues, helped the nobility perpetuate its social ascendancy. It also provided it with a legitimacy that did not depend on a legal definition or on the monarchy.

Considering that calls for the complete elimination of the nobility as a social category were rare until the very eve of the Revolution – most contributors to the debate called for a reform or a reimagining of the category – William Doyle argues that its abolition in 1790 was one of the Revolution’s most radical acts. Yet, revolutionaries failed to completely eliminate the idea of the nobility as a distinctive social group. Napoléon revived its existence and noble writers, including émigrés, used their pens to propagate ideas of noble exceptionalism.

On the other side of the revolutionary divide, Arno Mayer challenges the liberal triumphalist historiography of the bourgeoisie. He argues that “the ‘premodern’ elements were

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not the decaying remnants of an all but vanished past but the very essence of Europe’s incumbent civil and political societies.” The old governing classes were able to adapt to nineteenth-century socio-economic challenges and maintain their dominance over political and civil society, mostly by exalting their service ethos and by coopting promising newcomers and by maintaining their symbolic clout.°6 Indeed, D. M. G. Sutherland and Chaussinand-Nogaret find that, despite the Revolution, there was no significant renewal of the French elites in the early nineteenth century.°7

Nineteenth-century historians also find that culture – the noble mystique – played a fundamental role in the nobility’s ability to maintain its distinctiveness and social prominence. David Higgs describes the nineteenth-century nobility as a sort of “ethnic group” in the sense of “a self-perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by the others with whom they are in contact.”°7°8 In her study of the Franche-Comté nobility, Claude-Isabelle Brelot argues that the nobility’s economic adaptation and modernization did not lead to an assimilation of bourgeois values or a decline of the group’s particular ethos. On the contrary, the nobility actively cultivated its distinctive symbolic capital. Its cultural specificity – its emphasis on history, noble lifestyle, exclusive sociability, patrimony, and châteaux – was instrumental in the order’s effort to maintain its prestige and influence.°7°

Suzanne Fiette is one of the few historians to have followed the nobility from the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth-century. The families she studies adapted, had an enduring presence in positions of authority, and mostly maintained their wealth. They operated a synthesis between traditional noble values and contemporary realities without losing their distinctiveness. To paternalism, charity, merit, virtue, and service, they added financial prudence and industriousness. Yet, it was the nobility’s symbolic capital that was at the heart of its identity. However, the study’s examination of the emigration is mostly anecdotal and does not offer new insights on how the experience of exile contributed to noble adaptation.°8

This dissertation bridges the revolutionary divide that has marked the scholarship on the nobility. By focusing on a specific group, the émigrés, who left a significant body of sources – memoirs, novels, letters, pamphlets, among others – dealing with self-fashioning and who faced particularly disruptive circumstances, it sheds light on the concrete strategies noble men and women adopted in the post-1789 world. Émigrés’ experiences were unique. Unlike nobles who stayed in France, they did not need to downplay their noble status to avoid revolutionary violence. At the same time, the confiscation of their patrimony made their future more uncertain. In this context, experimentation with definitions of nobility was both possible and necessary.

The Imperatives of Honour: Aristocratic Masculinity and Femininity

Mita Choudhury shows that studies of the eighteenth-century nobility have largely overlooked gender as an analytical tool. This oversight, she claims, is all the more surprising considering how central gender was in critiques of the nobility’s role as the ruling class. Critics argued that it was unnatural for powerful aristocratic women and effeminate aristocratic men to rule over more virile citizens. In the wake of the Revolution, gender intersected with questions of class and patriotism and the republican nation-building project was predicated on the exclusion of the aristocrat – “an outsider, effete and ineffective, who had betrayed the nation” – from the regenerated polity. Gender is thus a crucial tool in the examination of the nobility’s crisis of authority and its rehabilitation from the Ancien Régime to the Restoration.

French noblemen’s gender identity was complex and evolving. It comprised three main parts: first, the paterfamilias, second, the servant of the state, and, third, the honnête homme. Above all else, noblemen’s masculinity depended on their honour. Honour, Robert Nye argues, “was never secure, required constant reaffirmation, and was always open to challenge.” Masculinity itself was never secure and was fundamentally unstable. Masculinity, therefore, relied on performativity. In the case of French noblemen, assertions of manliness intersected

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with questions of class and ethnicity. Their masculinity was defined in contrast to femininity and to commoner and foreign masculinity.\textsuperscript{85}

In order to ensure his line’s successful social reproduction – procreative, educative, and matrimonial strategies aimed at transmitting the full extent of the family’s power to the next generation –, the noble paterfamilias – the head of a household and, in some cases, head of the noble lineage – had to exercise authority over his wife, children, and other dependents such as servants and pages.\textsuperscript{86} His honour was tied to his ability to control his dependents.\textsuperscript{87} His authority derived in great part from his position as landowner. Landowning often provided noblemen with most of the resources necessary to support a distinguished lineage and a patronage network. Landowning also enabled noblemen to live nobly. Noble honour depended on the avoidance of vile, self-interested métiers, the practice of which would lead to dérogeance.\textsuperscript{88} Even if the reality of dérogeance had been abolished along with the nobility during the Revolution, noblemen remained, for the most part, attached to its imperatives since these safeguarded their honour. The resources they drew from their estates allowed them to maintain an idle lifestyle or to dedicate themselves to the service of the state. More importantly, land was “something to rule” and mastery over the landscape was a clear manifestation of the nobility’s power.\textsuperscript{89} Nonetheless, the link between landowning and noble masculinity in eighteenth-century France has received limited attention but British historiography on the subject suggests a few avenues of inquiry.

Henry French and Mark Rothery, in their study of the gentry from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, challenge the assumption that “landed power [was]… an inherent aspect of manliness, in ways that were straightforward, unproblematic, and unchanging.” They theorize that British genteel masculinity was multilayered. The first layer they identify consisted of a nuanced understanding of “hegemonic masculinity,” that is the “hegemonic patriarchal distribution of power and authority in society.”\textsuperscript{90} They contend that from the seventeenth to the

\textsuperscript{85} Reeser, \textit{Masculinities in Theory}, 38-40.
\textsuperscript{86} Pierre Bourdieu, Les stratégies matrimoniales dans le système de reproduction, ” \textit{Annales ESC} 24, 4-5 (1972), 1125.
\textsuperscript{87} Nye, \textit{Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor}, 16, 18.
\textsuperscript{90} Hegemonic masculinity refers to the “configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees … the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.” R. W. Connell, \textit{Masculinities} (Cambridge : Polity Press, 1995), 77.
nineteenth century, gentlemen’s exercise of authority over their dependents as well as the values considered necessary to wield authority – virtue, self-control, autonomy, and honour – changed very little. They conclude that this model acted like a habitus: it structured and limited an individual’s behaviour and its quasi-permanent status made the existing distribution of power seem self-evident.91 Landownership, because of the public authority and social responsibilities it conferred, required certain attributes. Manly virtues and skills were necessary for good governance but also to make social leadership and authority seemingly natural and legitimate. Except for the revolutionary interlude, this “hegemonic patriarchal distribution of power” can be applied to French society. The second layer of genteel masculinity – the conjectural layer – that French and Rothery identify was more flexible. This layer consisted of masculine stereotypes – in contrast to the hegemonic archetype – that changed more rapidly such as the eighteenth-century polite gentleman or the nineteenth-century man of feeling, this layer combined with the hegemonic model gave the landed gentleman his complete gender identity.92 This layered analysis of landed genteel masculinity helps distinguish between a more stable, almost timeless, and pan-European core of elite masculinity tied to men’s roles as patriarchs and landowners and a more flexible conjectural layer based on the dominant values of a given period and region. This model adds to the existing French studies that have mostly focussed on the conjectural level and shows that there was a more stable component of elite masculinity. Furthermore, this framework helps analyze the evolution of elite masculinities over the revolutionary period. Whereas nineteenth-century “bourgeois” masculine ideals adopted the hegemonic model with few changes, more significant clashes about manly ideals occurred over the second layer.93

Noblemen’s service ethos formed the second component of their gendered identity. The emphasis on service as the nobility’s raison d’être had been relatively stable throughout the early modern period. The second order had its origins in military service. In the society of orders, the nobility was initially defined as “those who fight.” As the modern monarchical state emerged, the definition of noble service expanded to include other forms of service to the dynasty, namely civil and judicial service. Noble apologists argued that the second estate’s predisposition to honour and self-sacrifice made them ideally suited to serve as the country’s ruling class. There

92 French and Rothery, Man’s Estate, 12.
93 Nye, Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor, 8-9.
may have been debates about the best way for the nobility to serve the dynasty or the state but nobles generally agreed that they disposed of the required traditions, education, and virtues to justify their prominence.\footnote{Smith, \textit{Nobility Reimagined}, 11.} It was through service, Montesquieu theorized, that the nobility could hope to achieve distinction. The nobility’s desire for glory and honour, he argued, constituted the French monarchy’s driving force.\footnote{Montesquieu, \textit{De l’esprit des lois} (Paris : Garnier-Flammarion, 1979), book 3, chap. 6-7, book 4, chap. 2, vol. 1, 148-150, 155-158.} By the end of the Ancien Régime, the service ethos was still an important aspect of \textit{noblesse oblige}. Furthermore, in the wake of the Revolution, noblemen placed greater emphasis on service to refute accusations of parasitism and effeminacy. \textit{Noblesse oblige} – a dictum not coincidentally formulated by an émigré – became one of the cornerstones of male émigrés’ definition and justification of nobility.\footnote{Gaston de Lévis, \textit{Maximes et réflexions sur différents sujets de morale et de politique} (Paris: P. Didot l’aîné, 1810), 24. Émile Littré, “Noblesse,” \textit{Dictionnaire de la langue française} (1872-77) in \textit{Dictionnaires d’Autrefois}, The ARTFL Project, CNRS and the University of Chicago, accessed August 24, 2015, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=noblesse}  

Even if sword nobles had lost their monopoly over nobility, martial prowess and glory remained important aspects of noble masculinity. Louis XIV, while considerably increasing the ranks of the robe nobility, actively promoted a model of aristocratic masculinity that prized physical fitness, prowess, courage, and stoicism.\footnote{Nye, \textit{Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor}, 19, 24-25. Sean M. Quinlan, “Men without Women? Ideal Masculinity and Male Sociability in the French Revolution, 1789-99,” \textit{French Masculinities}, ed. Forth and Taithe, 33.} These attributes were essential to Louis’s self-fashioning as a warrior-king and to representations of France as a virile, martial nation. The links between manhood and nationhood were relatively straightforward. Virility, martial prowess, and physical fitness were core features of modern nation-building in France.\footnote{Nye, \textit{Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor}, 19, 24-25.} The vigorous warrior remained an important residual part of French elite masculinity but, by the end of the eighteenth century, its vigour and roughness had been hewn by new notions of polite behaviour.  

The model of the \textit{honnête homme} developed alongside a court and salon culture that favoured the art of pleasing and emotional restraint. Among the court nobility, Georgia J. Cowart argues, \textit{galanterie} and the pursuit of pleasure even supplanted valour as the foremost masculine aristocratic ideal. The accomplished nobleman was expected to master polite codes of comportment that emphasized self-control, grace, gaiety, \textit{esprit}, and \textit{bon goût}.\footnote{Georgia J. Cowart, \textit{The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle} (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2008), 12-14. Norbert Elias, \textit{The Civilizing Process} (Oxford : B. Blackwell, 1978-1982), 2 vols.} The ideal of the
honnête homme was particularly important for the performance of aristocratic masculinity since it was considered a distinctive class and national characteristic.  

On the eve of the Revolution, the state of French manhood was a source of concern. Military defeats cast doubt upon the nation’s manly vigour. Critics argued that court society, with its flowery and voluptuous manners, and commercial society, with its ease and luxury, had feminized aristocrats. A number of social changes towards the end of the Ancien Régime affected elite masculinity. The “trivialization of honor and honnêteté” and its spread to commoners was a source of anxiety for nobles. The emergence of new criteria to judge merit and the growing importance of public spirit destabilized the honnête homme model. More importantly, the cult of sensibility promoted natural behaviour as opposed to the courtier’s contrived manners. Reformers attempted to shift the honnêteté ideal from the “art of pleasing” to the “art of feeling” to showcase elite men’s capacity for sympathy and, by extension, their humanity.

The French Revolution engendered multiple and conflicting models of masculinity. Revolutionaries rejected most of the conjectural layer of elite masculinity; they rejected the honnête homme for his lack of public spiritedness, his lack of transparency, and his effeteness. Although revolutionary authorities promoted renewed virility and martial prowess, they rejected noble martial honour and the pursuit of glory since these were incompatible with equality. Even noble masculinity’s hegemonic layer was briefly challenged as republicans recast the patriarch as a despot and stripped him of much of the means to enforce his will. Instead, revolutionaries promoted the ideal of the loving father and of the egalitarian brotherhood. The


100 Vila, “Elite Masculinities,” 15.


Revolution marginalized noble masculine ideals.\textsuperscript{105} Moreover, exile, since it deprived noblemen of the means to fulfil their patriarchal functions, was an emasculating experience.

The fashioning of regenerated noble manly ideals was an important part of exile. Émigré noblemen experienced a double-alienation from the nation, first, because of their class and its supposed feminization, and, second, because of their exile. Their reintegration into the national fold and their ability to reclaim their social leadership depended on the rehabilitation of noble masculinity. Thus, émigré noblemen adapted their gender norms. They did not completely reject pre-existing conceptions of noble manhood. Manners and emotional restraint – which regained favour after the Terror – remained core aspects of elite manliness but they took care to avoid accusations of effeminacy. Their resilience and ability to face the hardships of exile helped them assert their virility. Noblemen also promoted their service ethos to display their civic mindedness. In imperial and restoration society, service became the main source of distinction.\textsuperscript{106} Finally, émigrés did not, and could not, renounce honour as the fundamental aspect of noble manhood. Fortuitously, martial glory was a dominant aspect of imperial manly ideals and noblemen’s rehabilitation was facilitated by the spread thenoble code of honour among the bourgeois classes.\textsuperscript{107}

Eighteenth-century noble femininity – since, unlike masculinity, it was considered a natural state that women should preserve rather than an acquired state – was assumed to be more straightforward.\textsuperscript{108} One of the main components of noble femininity was biological. Women’s reproductive functions played a crucial role in noble lineages’ perpetuation. As the eighteenth century progressed, noblewomen’s virtue became more dependent on their sexual continence.\textsuperscript{109}

Noblewomen also had public responsibilities. For them, there was no clear distinction between public and private. Their social functions placed them at the intersection of both spaces. They played an essential part for the fulfilment of the noble family’s hospitable and charitable duties. They helped maintain the family’s patronage networks and safeguarded its status through

\textsuperscript{106} Maza, The Myth of the Bourgeoisie, 127-130.
They managed households and sometimes estates. As hostesses and guardians of codes of *honnêteté*, they also helped create a noble class ethos based on cultural refinement and facilitated the assimilation of upwardly mobile persons into the elite.

*Mondanité* and *honnêteté* affirmed noblewomen’s belonging to the elite. The *honnête femme*’s principal attributes consisted of naturalness, modesty, and proper measure (*juste milieu*). Feminine ideals of *honnêteté* were more closely linked to feminine Christian virtues, namely humility, chastity, and piety. As a result, noblewomen were expected to play a more passive role than their male counterparts in sociable gatherings. By the end of the eighteenth century, emphasis on women’s greater naturalness had two main consequences for polite society. First, it suggested that women were endowed with greater natural sensibility than men. Second, it suggested that they, being more prone to natural sentiments, were likely to be more virtuous than men. Critics, however, claimed that the *honnête femme* was contrived and, thus, unnatural. Noblewomen also came under attack for their supposed degenerative influence on manliness, for their unnatural influence in political affairs, and for their lack of virtue.

The ideal of feminine domesticity contrasted sharply with noblewomen’s semi-public lifestyle. Revolutionaries put forward a republican motherhood model which held that women had an important role to play for the moral regeneration of the nation from their position within the domestic sphere. Their love and sensibility – the source of their virtue – could help them shape men into good citizens. These standards, because they were based on a conception of women’s “natural” role, had universal implications. Noble émigrées had an ambivalent relationship with the cult of domesticity. Many welcomed the more affectionate family lives it

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112 Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” 143-148.
114 Linton “Virtue Rewarded?,” 51.
promoted. It valued their roles as wives and mothers and the emphasis on their greater naturalness and morality empowered them to criticize their societies’ failings. Yet, émigrées did not reject *honnêteté* and, more often than not, they did not abandon their *mondanité*.¹¹⁷

**Émigré Imagined Communities**

The noble émigré diaspora was an “imagined community.”¹¹⁸ Through their emotional, intellectual, and cultural practices, émigrés created an imagined community and developed a “defensive nationalism.”¹¹⁹ They defined their national, gender, and class identity in contrast to the revolutionaries and to the foreign cultures they encountered during their exile. Their “national habitus” – a concept that accounts for the role of emotions in the creation of national identities – was based on the preservation of national and class specific emotional and cultural practices.¹²⁰

Scholarship on the history of emotions shows that communities develop emotional norms.¹²¹ Emotional communities – groups “in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value or devalue the same or related emotions” – are not limited to communities with close ties; like imagined communities, they can be “textual communities” in which individuals, not personally acquainted with one another, connect through media.¹²² Multiple emotional communities can coexist, within a given society, although a particular community – usually the elite’s – can dominate.¹²³ In sum, the nation or of the nobility – as a social category – can be distinct communities that use emotional norms as means of distinction.

¹¹⁸ Benedict Anderson ascribes four main components to an imagined community: it is imagined since it is too wide to be based upon personal connections (and it relies on print culture to unite its dispersed members), it is limited since it does not comprise all of humanity, it is sovereign or shares a desire to be sovereign, and it is a community based upon horizontal camaraderie or fraternity. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 6-7.
In order to meet the emotional norms of a given community, individuals engage in emotional management to elicit, heighten, or suppress feelings. Historians have stressed how emotions and their expressions are deeply embedded in their context, that they are socially constructed, and dependent on the cognitive tools available in a given culture and language to articulate and express feelings. Nevertheless, individuals dispose of some degree of emotional agency and their emotions are only partially subjected to voluntary and social moulding. To better grasp the complexity of emotions and of their expression, William M. Reddy coined the term “emotive.” This concept “describe[s] the process by which emotions are managed and shaped, not only by society and its expectations but also by individuals themselves as they seek to express the inexpressible, namely how they ‘feel.’” The concept also accounts for how the expression of an emotion impacts the way an individual feels.

Emotional experiences and displays are connected to the process of national identification and nations have commonly generated national emotional stereotypes – the assumption that particular emotional dispositions are part of a national essence. Moreover, emotions have significant political ramifications; the emotional management that communities require from individuals are part of power structures. Indeed, “emotional expression is a fundamental form of social communication critical to the exertion and to the contestation of power.”

Building on the existing contributions to the history of emotions, this dissertation shows that emigration altered the affected nobles’ emotional regime and led to the emergence of a distinct émigré emotional community. Emigration elicited specific emotional responses and the experience of exile cannot be separated from the unstable emotions that uprootedness produces. Furthermore, émigrés’ emotives had class and political implications. Their emotional regime was lived and constructed in opposition to the revolutionary and “bourgeois” one. They relied on national emotional stereotypes to assert their Frenchness and, contrary to

what Jürgen Habermas postulates, emotions played a fundamental role in the public sphere and in the formation of public opinion both in the *France intérieure* and *extérieure*.\(^{130}\) Reason and emotion are a false dichotomy: émigrés systematically used emotives and emotional management in addition to reason in their fight against the Revolution and in the affirmation of their identities. Even in exile, the noble representation ideal relied extensively on emotional management and restraint. In that sense, émigrés’ experience corroborates Norbert Elias’s argument that, by the end of the eighteenth century, self-control was tied to noble honour.\(^{131}\) In the Revolution’s aftermath, assumed noble self-control was a significant socio-political advantage. Indeed, the lower classes’ perceived inability to rein in their passions led to their political disenfranchisement.

**Sources and Chapter Outline**

This dissertation mostly focuses on the 1791-1802 period, period during which most of the noble emigration was concentrated. It occasionally includes émigrés’ experiences between 1789 and 1815. Chapter 6 follows the émigrés into the nineteenth century and examines how they reflected on their exile *a posteriori*. In order to access a peripatetic group’s experiences, it adopts a transnational approach. It principally focuses on their experiences in the English-speaking world, but, when the sources allow it, it sometimes follows them across Europe, all the way to Russia, and even in South America. This dissertation also focuses on a select group of émigrés that responded – and recorded their responses – in significant ways to the identity crisis triggered by the Revolution and aggravated by exile. Émigrés who left extensive written accounts of the experience of exile – whether in novels, memoirs, or other publications – are more visible since they provide insights into how the new discourses on nobility were articulated and disseminated. The handful of émigrés who spent most of their exile in the Bourbons’ entourage and those who remained with the Condé army throughout the decade rarely feature in the analysis: their traditional noble way of life was less threatened than those who fell outside the social structures

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of the court and army. Moreover, less conservative émigrés appear with greater frequency in the
analysis since they were part of the group that was more likely to adapt to the new circumstances.

Émigrés left a wide variety of sources: diaries, letters, political writings, periodicals,
books, and memoirs. This dissertation draws on all of these types of sources to varying extent.
Immediate sources have been privileged whenever possible since they generally provide a more
direct access to the quotidian experience of exile. It uses archival documents mostly from the
French Archives Nationales and the Archives des Affaires Étrangères and from the British
collections housed in the British Library and the National Archives. However, the nature of
emigration, with its frequent movements, and the nobility’s particular attachment to family
history which, to this day, has left large collections of archives in private hands, has limited the
availability of contemporary documents and letters. As a result, parts of the argument rely heavily
on published correspondence, memoirs, and other personal accounts.132

Published sources almost inevitably favour noteworthy émigrés and cases of successful
adaptation. Families who failed to adapt and who either went extinct or who experienced
downward social mobility are less likely to be represented in these sources. Nonetheless, the
sources’ predisposition supports the idea that in order to understand how the experience of exile
helped nobles’ transition into the post-revolutionary world, it is crucial to focus on adaptation.

Using Alfred Fierro’s critical bibliography, twelve male memoirs were chosen for their
representativeness – Des Cars, Walsh, and Moré, for example – or for their uniqueness –
Chateaubriand, Talleyrand, and Montlosier, for example.133 The number of memoirs written by
noble émigrées being smaller, all have been consulted. However, they are of uneven value and
more interesting – La Tour du Pin, Boigne, and Genlis, for example – or representative –
Ménerville, Des Cars, and Gontaut, for example – memoirs feature more prominently in the
analysis. Memoirs that focus almost exclusively on the military counter-revolution have been
generally excluded since they were written by the least adaptable émigrés.

Memoirs have significant historical value but they necessitate a number of precautions.
As Damien Zanone notes, “Comme objet d’étude les Mémoires de la période pré-positiviste ont
la qualité de ne pouvoir être pensés qu’à l’intersection de démarches qui ont pris l’habitude de
s’exclure.” Indeed, memoirs were both historical and literary endeavours. This hybridity has led

132 For a full discussion of émigré memoirs and their significance as a historical sources, see chapter 6.
133 Alfred Fierro, Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur la Révolution écrits ou traduits en français (Paris : Service
des travaux historiques de la Ville de Paris, 1988).
many historians to discount them as sources. However, their hybridity and subjectivity are particularly interesting for the study of noble identities. They offer a unique window into the development of noble men and women’s modern selfhood and into the persistence of corporate identities. Indeed, these sources reveal that the noble self was inextricably connected to and only exceptionally divorced from its corporate identity.

Memoirs were not autobiographies. The author’s life served as a thread for the narration of historical events: their object was unvaryingly the history of their time; their goal was to make individual and collective sense of revolutionary and emigration experiences. Still, they propose subjective self- and world-views. They are acts of self-creation that enabled their authors to fashion their individual and corporate identity in complement, contrast, or opposition to the official civil identity that the modern state conferred upon them. They are also part of a sort of collective autobiography. As such, they help historians understand how memory, particularly the memory of exile, shaped nobles’ identities. They rarely deviate from the genre’s well-established conventions. Even if they relate personal experiences of historical events, they are scripted texts: memoirists reproduce strikingly similar values, ideas, themes, and narrative techniques in their works. As a result, more often than not, this study focuses less on the facts that memoirs relate than on the scripts that they articulate. These allow the historian access to the means by which nobles forged their individual and caste identities.

Maya Jasanoff has highlighted the importance of personal accounts for the study of modern refugees. She argues that the narratives they generate have intrinsic historical value. As she puts it, “the refugees’… discourse… captures aspects of human experience that are often left out of traditional political, economic, or diplomatic histories of this era, yet that are vital for understanding how revolutions affect their participants… and how refugees cope with displacement.” As chapter 6 shows, memoirs were the émigrés’ attempts at bridging the revolutionary gap and restoring some continuity and normalcy to their existences from the

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138 Jasanoff, Liberty’s Exiles, 17.
Ancien Régime to the nineteenth century. Moreover, in order to understand how émigrés narrativized their experiences and how memoirists’ narratives differed from immediate experiences, I have, whenever possible, cross-referenced retrospective sources with more immediate ones. In order to access émigrés’ representations of themselves and of the general emigration, I have also periodically analyzed émigré novels. These offer an interesting window into the socio-political implications of émigrés’ self-representations.

This dissertation proposes a historical sociology of the nobility. It examines how a distinct social group traversed a period of dramatic political, social, economic, and cultural change. To do so it examines its socio-economic strategies, its social reproduction strategies, its cultural policies and its discourses. Chapters 1 to 4 focus mainly on émigré practices. Chapters 5 and 6 also examine practices but pay greater attention the articulation of émigré discourses.

The first two chapters focus on émigrés’ socio-economic life. The first studies how groups of male émigrés experimented with utopian settlements in North America. It examines the Scioto project in Ohio, the Asylum colony in Pennsylvania, and the Windham Settlement in Upper Canada. In their minds, landownership promised wealth, status, and redemption. The role of paternalist and beneficent landlord provided noblemen with a purpose as well as with a moral justification for their superiority. These initiatives were at once both reactionary, focused on an idealized “feudal” past, and modern, drawing on enlightened ideals of beneficence and utility. The second chapter examines the émigré noblesse commerçante. The emigration provided a unique window of opportunity for noblemen who could experiment with trade and speculation without derogating. It studies the cases of Gaston de Lévis, Anne-Pierre de Montesquiou, Étienne Bernard de Sassenay and Albert-François de Moré de Pontgibaud. Loyalty to the Bourbon cause, a strong desire to avoid humiliating dependence, and the ability to support less fortunate émigrés ennobled – at least temporarily – commercial activities.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the émigrés’ social reproduction strategies and private emotional life. They reveal, on the one hand, that in the context of emigration the tensions between individual wishes and corporate duties were greater than before. The contemporary rise of individualism and the collapse of most of the institutions through which patriarchs had heretofore enforced their wills challenged traditional social reproduction strategies. Exile facilitated the formation of more affectionate bonds within noble families. Love acquired heightened moral significance. These chapters also examine the reproductive strategies of noble
émigrés in Britain and show that, although émigrés delayed marriage and procreation in the early years of the emigration, a shift occurred around 1797 and many waited no longer.

Chapter 3 focuses on the first steps in the nobility’s pattern of social reproduction: procreation and education. This chapter shows how the relationships between noble parents and children changed in exile. It argues that the inculcation of proper noble values were of paramount importance for an uprooted nobility attempting to preserve its corporate existence. Émigré youths’ education pursued two objectives: it sought to endow them with the skills necessary to fulfil their roles as France’s ruling class in the event of a restoration and with the skills necessary to survive in exile if that restoration did not happen. The next chapter studies the third step in social reproduction: establishment. It focuses on marriage and domestic life. It shows that, overall, endogamy remained the norm but that émigrés had greater flexibility in the conclusion of matrimonial unions. Unions of convenience were common but émigrés also concluded marriages of inclination and often claimed to have found greater fulfilment with the latter.

Chapter 5 turns to the émigrés’ imagined community. It argues that culture and emotions played a crucial part in the definition and affirmation of their class and national identities. These were part of the symbolic capital that the revolutionaries were powerless to eliminate. Émigrés developed an exiled public sphere in which they organized cultural and intellectual attacks against the Revolution. The counter-revolution’s most significant battles were not won on the battlefield but rather in the cultural sphere. The final chapter follows the émigrés in the longue durée. It shows how noble émigrés used memoirs to fashion their individual and corporate identities and to reintegrate their exilic experience into nineteenth-century French collective memory. They, ultimately, sought to shape the interpretation of the contested revolutionary past as well as dictate the representation of the nobility as a social caste.

In the end, exile was an exercise in fortitude, adaptation, and self-fashioning. As Fanny Burney, spouse of a French exile, wrote in her 1814 émigré novel The Wanderer:

In your present lonely, unprotected, unexampled situation, many and severe may be your trials; let not any of them shake your constancy… But chiefly bear in mind, what has been the principle of your education, and what I wish to be that of your conduct and character through life: That where occasion calls for… exertion, mental strength must combat bodily weakness; and intellectual vigour must supply the inherent deficiencies of personal courage; and that those, only, are fitted for the vicissitudes of human fortune, who, whether female or male, learn to suffice to themselves. Be this the motto of your story.139

139 Fanny Burney, The Wanderer or, Female Difficulties (Pandora : London, 1988), 204.
Chapter 1

Noble Émigrés in Arcadia: North American Landed Settlement Projects

In the rapidly changing post-1789 world, landownership outside of France appealed to many uprooted noble émigrés. It promised wealth, status, power, and stability and it was a sphere of activity with which they were already familiar. They possessed the necessary skill set to be landowners, or at least they believed they did. Landownership also presented the nobility with an opportunity to demonstrate that it was still a relevant and deserving ruling class: the paternalist landowner had a beneficial role to play in this predominantly agrarian world. It was a persuasive source of justification for the nobility’s social and political power. It enabled noblemen to reassert their influence and provided a solution to their dynastic concerns: new estates would ensure their lineage’s perpetuation. Noble émigrés who chose to acquire land in foreign countries embraced what was on one level a remarkably unaltered masculine model. Questions of familial patrimony, dynastic tradition, honour, autonomy, and authority continued to be cornerstones of their class and gender identities. They attempted to reestablish the “hegemonic” layer of their genteel masculinity: the one concerned with landownership and patriarchal power.¹

In order to highlight the continuity and changes to French noble masculinity and its relationship with landownership, this chapter examines three North American landed experiments devised by émigré noblemen. It studies the marquis de Lezay-Marnésia’s Physiocratic project in Ohio. The marquis believed that the nobility could find a new purpose, utility, and vindication as enlightened leaders of agrarian communities. His project aimed to update masculine models to reflect the contemporary developments of sensibilité and of enlightened leadership. Then, it turns to the Asylum settlement: the vicomte de Noailles’s capitalist speculation and aspiring haven of aristocratic civility. The vicomte created a refuge where émigrés could preserve the distinctive manners of the French nobility who, in turn, would help restore him his fortune. Next, it analyzes the comte de Puisaye’s Upper Canada colony. The comte’s project rejected the developments of commercial society and sought to re-establish a hierarchical landed order. This last experiment turned to a conservative, reactionary even, notion of noble masculinity and sought to partially rehabilitate the seigneur and suzerain. This chapter argues that the disappearance of traditional noble social structures such as the court and the seigneurial regime as well as the confiscation of

émigrés’ estates prompted a number of exiles to turn to the land in order to re-establish their social distinctiveness and to find their place in the new world ushered by the Revolution. These experiments reveal that émigrés considered landownership as one of the essential and most stable foundations of nobility. Even if they shared the conviction that land could help salvage the nobility, these men’s motivations and projects stemmed from different philosophical currents and their conceptions of noblemen’s place in society varied. Lezay-Marnésia’s experiment was suffused with enlightened ideas and, although based on a traditional stratified conception of the socio-economic order, it was in essence progressive. At the other end of the spectrum, the comte de Puisaye’s project was anti-liberal, resolutely turned to a golden-age “feudal past.” In order to understand the significance of these émigrés’ landed reflexes, this chapter begins with an overview of the nobility’s complex relationship with land during the Ancien Régime.

**Nobility and Land in Pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary France**

*The Long Eighteenth Century: A Retreat from Land?*

The nobility was one of the most important landowning groups in pre-modern France. Depending on the region, the second order owned between one-fifth and one-third of the land. Nobles owned most of the seigneuries which gave them significant local power: they collected dues and dispensed justice. Except for the poorest members of the order, nobles rarely cultivated their lands themselves. They preferred to lease them. The revenues they collected from the rents and other dues enabled them to live nobly. By the end of the Ancien Régime, the figure of the landowner was only one of the components of aristocratic masculinity. It provided the status and resources necessary to pursue the occupations of courtier, soldier, or servant of the state.

The nobility’s relationship with land was varied and complex. A number of concurrent changes from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries contributed to the declining socio-economic and cultural importance of land for the order. The growth of the state under the Bourbon monarchs changed the nobility’s lordship positions. The monarchical state sought to limit the seigneurs’ autonomy. To achieve their centralizing goals, the kings undermined the seigneurs’ political and legal authority. Moreover, with the emergence of court society, a

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significant part of the most affluent and influential nobles relocated to Versailles or Paris. Urbanization also affected the nobility’s middling segments who often elected to reside in provincial hubs where monarchical institutions such as the parlements and the estates were located. The higher echelons of the nobility’s relocation and the growing centralization of the Bourbon state weakened the nobility’s ability to maintain their clientage networks and often contributed to the downward social mobility of the order’s lowest echelons who were deprived of the essential patronage of their more affluent peers. The direct influence of the nobility in the countryside waned during the last century and a half or so of the Ancien Régime.

Moreover, from about 1660 to 1750, agricultural prices declined. Historians have argued that eighteenth-century landowners were able to maintain or even increase the revenues they drew from their estates by launching a seigneurial offensive. The essence of this offensive was that landowners showed renewed vigour in their efforts to collect dues and enforce seigneurial rights that had lapsed. In order to do so, they hired specialized lawyers (feudistes) who revised their terriers – the legal documents that outlined their rights. Robert M. Schwartz has criticized the use of the concept of feudal reaction to describe the movement since it emphasizes its backward-looking orientation. Instead, the seigneurial offensive can be seen as an attempt to modernize – that is, to rationalize and systematize – feudal law and erect it into a coherent and intelligible system. The renewal of the terriers had been a common practice for many centuries. What changed in the eighteenth century was that peasants were much more likely to initiate legal proceedings to challenge the legal, historical, and moral basis of their seigneurs’ rights.

New cultural attitudes developing hand-in-hand with court society and the modern state made country life a symbol of failure for the nobility. Service in the royal armies or administration often took noblemen away from their estates. Retreat to the countryside became a

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5 Le Roy Ladurie, Les paysans de Languedoc, 583.
symbol of disgrace and was incompatible with noble honour.\textsuperscript{8} With the development of court society, noble distinctiveness increasingly relied on the mastery and display of sophisticated ideals of \textit{honnêteté} and urbanity in a courtly or urban setting.\textsuperscript{9} Furthermore, the importance of French châteaux as centers of political power declined. The countryside became associated with rusticity and vulgarity. A nobleman’s influence depended more heavily on his connections at court and in Paris than on his cultivation of provincial interests.\textsuperscript{10} By the eighteenth century, landowning was no longer a requirement for noble status in France.\textsuperscript{11}

All these developments had an impact on the nobility’s relationship with land. A large part of the high and middling nobility became absentee landlords who relied on stewards to oversee the collection of seigneurial dues and the management of their estates. Arthur Young, travelling through France in the 1780s, was shocked by the nobility’s widespread absenteeism. In his account, he explained that “the country [is] deserted [of gentlemen], or if a gentleman in it, you find him in some wretched hole, to save that money which is lavished with profusion in the luxuries of a capital.”\textsuperscript{12} The Saulx-Tavanes house’s practices substantiates Young’s claim. The duc de Saulx-Tavanes relied on professionals – stewards, assessors, lawyers – to maximize resources extraction from his estates in order to support his courtly lifestyle. He elevated his estate into a duchy, at great cost, but did not visit it. He did not invest more than was absolutely necessary for the maintenance of his properties and sold parts of his scattered properties to reduce his debts and preserve his most prestigious estate: his duchy.\textsuperscript{13} The emergence of a class of professional estate managers enabled the nobility to place the direction of their most prized patrimony in the hands of competent administrators who could oversee, and sometimes improve, the collection of what often accounted for a substantial share of their income.

Nevertheless, nobles’ interest for and influence in the countryside did not completely vanish. Their proximity to the king also perpetuated their importance as intermediaries between

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Samuel Clark, \textit{State and Status: The Rise of the Sate and Aristocratic Power in Western Europe} (Montreal : McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 213.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Arthur Young, \textit{Travels in France during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789} (New York : Anchor Books, 1969), 96.
\end{itemize}
the central power and the provinces. The second order also consolidated its role as arbiter of taste during this period. Large-scale improvement projects such as the updating of châteaux and parks according to new neoclassical tastes demonstrate that the nobility still valued their country seats. This type of architectural improvement, however, reveals a desire for displays of wealth, taste, and status, rather than a sustained interest in land development and investment. Landscaping projects and the creation of formal gardens – displays of the nobility’s control over land and territory – worked as expression of the order’s political power. Therefore, although the monetary value of land might have fluctuated during the long eighteenth century, its symbolic value remained high. Ownership of a seigneurie conferred prestige and authority and, although it was not a prerequisite for noble status, it was common practice for commoner families completing their transition to nobility to acquire a landed estate, preferably a seigneurie, to consolidate their assimilation into the second order.

For noblemen land was not simply a commodity but rather “something to rule.” Seigneurs owned land but they also owned public authority: they performed a sovereign function as dispensers of justice over the men and women who resided on their estate. Nobles’ honour, status, and power were closely connected to their position as owners of seigneuries. These reaffirmed noblemen’s independence, their elevated social station, and their distinguished ancestry. They offered a sense of permanence, of rootedness, for noble lineages. Accordingly, noble families’ social reproduction strategies focused on preserving the integrity of their estates. The French nobility followed a patrilineal model of social reproduction: nobility was transmittable through the male line and inheritance patterns, although not strictly adhering to the principle of male primogeniture, generally favoured the first-born male child. The landowning nobleman was a paterfamilias. He was responsible for preserving the family honour, maintaining

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17 Dewald, The European Nobility, 65.
or improving the family’s consequence, and preparing the next generation to take over. The
patriarch’s paternalism, his benevolence towards his dependents and social inferiors, his ability to
control and protect them enabled him to assert his masculinity.19

A number of mid-eighteenth-century changes rekindled the nobility’s interest in land. First, the resounding failure of John Law’s financial experiments with the Banque générale and the Compagnie du Mississippi between 1715 and 1720, in which many nobles, encouraged by the Regency, had invested, cautioned the nobility against financial speculation. Land remained a safe investment. Second, agricultural prices started to rise again around 1750. Combined with the seigneurial offensive, many noble landowners were able to increase their agricultural revenues. Third, agronomists – Physiocrats as well as some philosophes and royal ministers – promoted the patriotic and moral importance of landownership. The Physiocrats criticized landowners’ evasion of their moral and economic duties. They argued that France’s financial and moral welfare depended on land. Physiocracy conferred new prestige and accrued responsibilities to the landowner; it also gave the nobility, as a landowning class, a modern sense of purpose and utility.20 Agriculture, because the Physiocrats considered it as the main productive sphere, enabled landowners to reconcile wealth and virtue.21 Fourth, at a time when professions increasingly defined men’s worth and identity, many middling-rank noblemen embraced lordships as a noble occupation that provided a justification for their wealth and status.22 Finally, pre-Romantic thinkers, Rousseau first among them, praised the benefits of the country. Contrasts between town and country underlined how the first corrupted while the latter fostered virtue. Life in the countryside, a life lived in accordance to human nature, brought happiness while town life caused unrest and misery. These theorists also emphasized how wholesome country life was

compared to the polluted urban environment. This revalorisation of nature as well as mounting criticisms of the court helped make country life more palatable to nobles. Arthur Young noted Rousseau’s influence and some nobles’ newfound appreciation of the country: “The present fashion in France, of passing some time in the country, is new… its introduction was effected the easier, being assisted by the magic of Rousseau’s writings.”

On the eve of the Revolution, the seigneurial and feudal systems came under scrutiny. The fact that the seigneurial system was all that remained of the feudal system (féodalité) did not matter to contemporaries. Féodalité loomed large in the late eighteenth-century imaginary. As an idea, it came to embody all the ills and abuses of the Ancien Régime. Enlightenment thinkers, Physiocrats, and monarchical reformers held that it imposed undue burdens on the lower classes and that it impeded progress, centralization, and modernization. As an idea, it opposed aristocracy to equality, oppression to liberty, privilege to unity, outmoded tradition to reason. By 1789, critics of the seigneurial regime claimed that the reciprocal relationship originally at the core of the system – dues for protection and amenities – had been replaced by a relationship that only benefited the seigneur who offered very little in return. Noble apologists had sought to offer a more positive interpretation of féodalité. Henri de Boulainvilliers and Montesquieu had theorized that it was a socio-political structure in which the nobility had an essential role to play as an intermediary between the monarchy and the French population. The nobility limited the monarchy’s abuses and protected the population. Boulainvilliers had further argued that the second order had a leading role to play in France’s moral and political regeneration.

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24 Young, Voyages, 65.
The French Revolution and Émigrés Estates

Many nobles who emigrated during the Revolution saw their properties confiscated and auctioned off as *biens nationaux*. Not only were they in reduced circumstances in exile, the confiscation of their French properties raised the prospect of permanent (relative) poverty and of the loss of authority; their return would by no means guarantee that their properties would be reinstated to them. For a group that defined itself, in great part, as a propertied class and that derived some of its power from land, to be unpropertied resulted in a *déclassement* and a loss of legitimacy. Consequently, a number of émigrés, who were attached to estates and who believed that they were an essential component of their lineage’s social reproduction, acquired new ones elsewhere. The émigrés’ strategies differed widely. Some sought to reconstitute estates by buying or being granted large plots of lands, mostly in the New World or in Eastern Europe. Others, due to their limited resources or ambitions, satisfied themselves with a few acres that they could call their own. The latter often cultivated their plot of land themselves, or with the help of a few servants, thus combining the leisurely activity of gardening with broader utility. In the end, however, émigrés’ decision to acquire or cultivate land was a limited experimentation. It represented a limited adaptation to their post-revolutionary circumstances: those who turned to land generally sought to replicate a way of life with which they were already familiar and none questioned their righteousness as a propertied, ruling class.

In acquiring land, émigrés pursued four objectives. First, they sought to put an end to the peripatetic nature of their exile. Second, they hoped to improve their financial situation by reducing the costs associated with the short-term leases that had been preferred in the early days of emigration. Added to this was the possibility of earning some revenue from their property by embracing an occupation that had not led to *dérogeance*. Third, land was generally perceived as a safe investment, particularly for émigré noblemen seeking to ensure their and their children’s independence. Fourth, owning a plot of land, albeit in a foreign state, enabled them to restore part

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of their status by providing grounds for the recognition of their social prominence in an agrarian society. Landownership reasserted what the nobility thought was its natural place in society and it provided it with an opportunity to demonstrate that it was useful, that it was still a deserving ruling class. Europe offered limited opportunities for those who hoped to acquire large estates. Thus, several turned to North America’s vast expanses.

**North American Utopias**

The American continent – more specifically the recently independent United States – occupied a prominent place in the eighteenth-century French imaginary. Writings by Raynal, Rousseau, St. John de Crèvecoeur, among others, fed a conception of an ideal society based on religious tolerance, moderate government, and simple living to their readers. According to these representations, it was a virgin land free from the corruption of civilized life and, later, free from revolutionary excesses, a land that they could mould according to their desires. Several émigrés fell prey to this mirage. They became convinced, despite available evidence to the contrary, that the New World provided them with an opportunity to lead a prosperous life in a fertile and tranquil land. There, they could conduct social experiments designed to lead to mankind’s regeneration: free from the vices of European societies and free to cultivate primitive virtues. They believed that it was an idyllic haven. The first impressions Aristide-Aubert du Petit-Thouars recorded upon his arrival in the United States in 1793 reveal how deeply anchored this conception of the New World as Arcadia was: “[N]ous entrions dans une rivière douce et tranquille qui coule majestueusement entre deux rivages enrichis de verdure. Mille bâtiments de formes aussi variées que légères voguent sur son sein ; de temps en temps l’épaisseur du bois s’éclaircit et laisse voir d’élégantes chaumières. La récolte est rangée à côté en meulons jaunâtres...” He added, “Je n’ai pu découvrir aucun ruisseau de lait, aucune fontaine de vin ; malgré cela, je suis certain que lorsque les poètes ont échauffé leur imagination dans les peintures...

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de l’âge d’or, ils ont parlé par anticipation de cette Nouvelle-Angleterre.”34 Unscrupulous American land promoters did not attempt to disabuse prospective French buyers and continued to perpetuate this vision of a land of plenty.35

Over the course of the revolutionary decade, groups of French noblemen devised plans for utopian émigrés settlements in North America. As early as 1790, Claude-François-Adrien, marquis de Lezay-Marnésia developed a project for an establishment in the Scioto Valley in Ohio. In 1793, hoping to provide a refuge from the Terror and from that Haitian Revolution to their countrymen, Louis-Marie, vicomte de Noailles and Antoine-Omer Talon founded the Asylum colony in Pennsylvania. In 1798, Joseph-Geneviève, comte de Puisaye successfully lobbied the British government and obtained land grants for a group of émigré officers in Upper Canada.

These settlement projects shared a number of significant similarities. They marked the nobility’s desire for a return to the land. These sword nobles – Puisaye, Noailles, and Lezay-Marnésia belonged to the sword nobility – devised plans by which the group’s survival in the post-revolutionary world could be secured by a return to its landed roots. The colonization projects also occurred during a time when both the British and American governments were anxious to develop unsettled land and when land speculation was booming in the United States.36 Furthermore, these émigrés adhered to the idealized conception of the New World outlined above. They generally had no realistic understanding of the challenges posed by wilderness. Gouverneur Morris – an American financier, land speculator, and diplomat living in Paris – observed: “Purchasers here are for the most part ignorant of geography. So far from thinking the forests a disadvantage, they are captivated with the idea of having their chateaux surrounded by magnificent trees. They naturally expect superb highways over the pathless deserts, and see with the mind’s eye numerous barges in every stream.”37 His observations shed light on another of these projects’ characteristics: they were ambitious. The model they had in mind was that of an

affluent gentleman farmer, not that of a pioneer. Chateaubriand eventually poked fun at these émigrés’ extravagant ambitions, writing in his memoirs that some émigrés “partaient pour l’Ohio, où ils se faisaient précéder de plans de châteaux à bâtir chez les Sauvages.”

These émigrés’ projects sought to create regenerated communities that would combine virtues of French civilization, such as civility and gaiety, with virtues of the New World, such as simplicity. Unlike the revolutionaries who were dismantling the “feudal system,” these émigrés maintained that an agrarian patriarchal and hierarchical community, partially modelled on the French seigneurial system, was an important basis for social order. The extent to which the noble émigré colonists drew on the components of the seigneurial regime for their new establishments varied. Among the components that they preserved were the nobility’s rentier mentality, the importance of a hierarchical social order, some aspects of the nobility’s public authority and its intermediary role between the state and the population, and the lord’s paternalist duties. Puisaye’s project was the truest to the French seigneurial regime and it preserved most of the regime socio-economic components. It was more conservative. Lezay-Marnésia’s project was more modern, it proposed a renovated agrarian social framework: it was heavily based on the scientific frameworks developed by the Physiocrats and it sought to provide a rational base for a moral community. Noailles’s project was the most loosely theorized and it mostly held on to the rentier mentality that supported the elite’s urbanity and sociable practices.

Lezay-Marnésia, Noailles, and Puisaye believed that they possessed natural leadership qualities. Benevolent noblemen, with their education, their experience as France’s ruling class, and their ethos of civic responsibility were endowed with the necessary skills and qualities to become exemplary leaders of regenerated communities. They believed that this leadership role was noblemen’s true and ideal vocation, and that it was also their responsibility. According to their conception, the exemplary nobleman was a beneficent landowner and community leader.

Ultimately, these New World establishments’ successes were mediocre at best. The émigrés’ utopian visions of North America were impossible to reconcile with the harsh realities of life on the frontier. The wide availability of land undermined their ability to establish landed

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38 Spaeth, “America in the French Imagination,” 255.
estates similar to European ones, since these had relied on the scarcity of land. They also entertained out-dated notions of social organization and failed to attract the ordinary colonists upon which their enterprises’ success depended. Finally, in the case of the Asylum and Puisaye settlements, the émigrés’ commitment to North American ventures was often half-hearted. The émigrés’ sights generally remained fixed on France. Only Lezay-Marnésia initially appeared determined to settle permanently in America. The Scioto experience – the first and most elaborate iteration of an idealized agrarian society – demonstrates how unrealistic these noblemen’s expectations could be.

The Scioto: The Marquis de Lezay-Marnésia’s “demeures patriarchales et fraterelles”

The Scioto settlement project of the Société des Vingt-Quatre is the purest expression of the aristocratic ideal of an agrarian community. It shows how the elite male members of the Twenty-Four were prone to devise grandiose plans. These privileged men had the resources, the confidence, and they believed they had the know-how necessary for the conception and realization of ambitious settlement projects. This project also demonstrates how these émigrés resolutely turned to land as a means of restoring their status: their roles as developers and builders of a virtuous New World community would constitute their glorious achievement. They would find their natural place as beneficent leaders of an agrarian community. It was their way of finding a new raison d’être for a noble order in crisis. This conception of the nobleman’s role combined elements of the traditional landowner model – protection and paternalism – and more modern elements of civic masculinity – civic responsibility, enlightened guidance, and sensibility.

As early as 1790, agents of the Scioto Land Company in Paris, selling large tracts of lands in Ohio, identified discontented aristocrats as potential investors in their speculation schemes. The second edition of the Compagnie du Scioto’s prospectus, published in 1790, propagated an idyllic image of the New World. Moreover, it enticed prospective buyers by promising both profits and status. It appealed to disgruntled landowners by stating that “un grand nombre de personnes qui ont perdu leur état par les révolutions présentes, seront charmées de trouver une ressource honnête & un espoir de se procurer un état avantageux.” The publicity campaign of the Scioto Company hit the mark. In late December 1789, Gouverneur Morris was assailed by

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40 Other aristocrats who attempted to establish New World estates faced the same challenge. Weaver, The Great Land Rush, 213.
41 Bonnel, Éthique et esthétique, 1.
42 Scioto Land Company, Prospectus pour l’établissement sur les rivières d’Ohio et de Scioto en Amérique (n.p, n.d.)
“very troublesome” French visitors with queries about the Scioto.\textsuperscript{43} By February 1790, notarial records reveal a shift in the social origins of the buyers with nobles starting to acquire large tracts of land, usually more than 1000 acres for each of the thirty-seven aristocratic buyer.\textsuperscript{44} The marquis Claude-François-Adrien de Lezay-Marnésia was enthralled and he recruited members of the Ancien Régime elite to invest with him. Members of Lezay-Marnésia’s Société des Vingt-Quatre, including Jean-Jacques Duval d’Eprémesnil, purchased vast properties from the Scioto.\textsuperscript{45} They projected to erect a column in their new settlement to commemorate their Rousseauian endeavour: “De vrais Français… / sont venus à ces lieux, / Que nul homme n’avoit habités, / Demander une patrie nouvelle. / Ils sont venus avec des cœurs bons & sensibles, / Dans l’intention / De pratiquer les douces vertus, / Et pour y jouer / De la paix de la liberté véritable / Et des charmes de la fraternité, / Y vivre dans la simplicité primitive, / Et y recueillir, / En se livrant à un travail actif & modéré, / Tous les dons de l’agriculture.”\textsuperscript{46}

Lezay-Marnésia belonged to that group of discontented aristocrats whom the American promoters had identified as prospective buyers. In February 1790, he outlined his reasons for leaving France in a letter to his wife: “Je sentirai toujours que la France est inhabitable pour moi ; car vous savez très bien qu’il n’y a point d’efforts capables de me faire demeurer à St Julien [his estate] avec les chefs donnés à la Milice et la Municipalité qu’on se propose d’y former. Je ne me soucie pas de l’influence ; mais n’ayant jamais voulu être oppresseur je ne veux pas davantage être opprimé. Il vaut mieux n’être pas que de vivre avili.”\textsuperscript{47} He would not defer to municipal authorities of common origins. His conceptions of liberty and fraternity were incompatible with the revolutionary definitions of the same concepts. He set out for the “promised land” with his son Albert in May 1790.

\textsuperscript{46} Claude-François-Adrien, marquis de Lezay-Marnésia, \textit{Lettres écrites des rives de l’Ohio} (Paris : Prault, an IX), 71.
\textsuperscript{47} Emphasis in original. Reproduced in Bourget-Besnier, \textit{Une famille française}, 31.
FIGURE 1.1: MAP OF THE TERRES DU SCIOTO

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48 Scioto Land Company, Prospectus
Lezay-Marnésia was representative of the Enlightenment movement of return to the land. In his writings – particularly in his 1785 *Le bonheur dans les campagnes* – he extolled the virtues of rural life. Influenced by the Physiocrats and Mirabeau, he subscribed to a third way: a modernized nobility’s legitimacy and purpose should stem from their roles as landowners, not as warriors, as the chevalier d’Arc argued, nor as *commerçants*, as the abbé Coyer suggested. His renovated conception of seigneurialism emphasized the landowner’s duties and moral obligations: sensibility, benevolence, and paternal protection.\(^49\) Noble landowners would be legitimate because they would be useful; after all, their skills and abilities were essential for the community’s welfare: “les lumières & la vertu des chefs sont continuellement nécessaires pour les [country inhabitants] défendre contre les oppressions, les secourir dans les calamités, y amener l’industrie, y encourager le travail, y entretenir l’abondance, & y former des établissements non-seulement utiles pour les lieux où ils seront placés ; mais qui, par leurs correspondances & leurs rapports, seront utiles pour le royaume entier.”\(^50\)

Lezay-Marnésia also engaged with the contemporary luxury debate. Luxury, in contemporary social commentators’ texts, came to embody all the ills that accompanied the rise of commercial society: confusion of ranks, emasculation of the French nation, egoism, moral decadence and the collapse of traditional forms of authority. These commentators painted an idealized picture of the rural world and contended that it was exempt from the widespread corruption engendered by luxury.\(^51\) Lezay-Marnésia’s contribution criticized the nobility’s unrestrained consumption which led to cupidity. Cupidity was incompatible with the noble principle of *largesse*. Worse, it led landowners to manage their estates with the sole view of extracting as much capital as possible. He also argued that this situation was aggravated by the fact that the nobility spent the resources they extracted from the countryside in cities. He argued that the king should curb aristocratic expenditures. This, he believed, would improve the nobility’s relationship to land: “Souvent visitées [the estates] par eux, ils en augmenteroient la valeur, y répandroient la prospérité. Ils y formeroient des établissements utiles, y porteroient des secours nécessaires, détruiroient les abus destructeurs, puniroient les administrateurs négligents ou infidèles, effraieroient les exacteurs barbares, & augmenteroient leurs richesses en augmentant


leurs bienfaits.” Peasants would thus benefit from the paternal protection of their seigneurs and harmonious, tender even, social relationships in the rural community would ensue.\(^\text{52}\)

Lezay-Marnésia’s conception of the social order, and of the nobility’s role in it, had been influenced by enlightened ideas of sensibility, merit, and utility. By basing the noble order’s legitimacy on its *bienfaisance*, he acknowledged that the order’s justification should be based on its positive contribution to society and not on a legal definition. Still, he remained convinced that nobles, because of strong familial traditions, were predisposed to beneficence. The societal model he proposed was steeped in a belief of a return to a golden age where the nobility has served as leaders and protectors of their communities and as intermediaries between the king and their vassals. His ideas were rooted in an agrarian and patriarchal noble ideology.\(^\text{53}\)

Lezay-Marnésia’s moral and philosophical ideas influenced the management of his lands. In 1769, when he was only thirty-four, he resigned from his military commission and retired to his estate.\(^\text{54}\) There, he strove to become the epitome of the beneficent landowner. He financed the construction of charitable institutions for the care of the sick and the education of poor girls. He also provided work for local inhabitants and hired them to help with the upgrading of his properties. Still, local inhabitants contested the collection of some seigneurial dues and he took legal action to obtain confirmation of his rights. His financial needs and his attachment to his privileges could not overlook this challenge.\(^\text{55}\) The Revolution cut his improvement efforts short. Convinced of the soundness of his ideas about the leadership roles noble landowners ought to take for the benefit of society, he decided that there was no better place than the American frontier to materialize his dreams of a regenerated paternalist utopia.

Lezay-Marnésia set out for America expecting that he would find the prosperous and idyllic utopia that had been described over and over again in Enlightenment literature. Although he expected to acquire a considerable fortune, that was not his principal motivation. Rather, he claimed that sensibility, virtue, and domestic happiness were his true goals: “je borne mes vœux particuliers à vivre sur une terre abondante, libre et pacifique avec ce que j’ai de plus cher, à finir mes jours dans l’union de famille et dans l’intimité des cœurs... nous retrouverons tous, du moins

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\(^{54}\) Bonnel, *Éthique et esthétique*, 7.

His enthusiasm for his new settlement was unbridled. Despite claiming that he aspired to nothing more than simple family life for himself, his vision was ambitious. He clearly had no intention of getting his aristocratic hands dirty. The Twenty-Four would be a New World landed aristocracy. They would be the leaders of their patriarchal community and leave the manual toil to the artisans and peasants they would recruit.

Lezay-Marnésia wrote to Duval d’Eprémesnil, who was still in France, and asked him to recruit “wise,” “skilful,” and “hardworking” artisans and peasants. He thought it imperative to find these hands in Europe, since he judged the United States almost completely deficient in that respect. No doubt aware of the difficulty of recruiting female candidates for pioneer life, he asked Duval d’Eprémesnil’s wife to recruit twenty-four female foundlings to be employed in the textile trade. He no doubt assumed that these girls would eventually marry into the community.

The settlement’s economy would primarily be agrarian but they would not neglect useful manufactures. In this respect too, Lezay-Marnésia judged America lacking. The manufactures they would set up would enable them to process some of the resources they produced and provide for some of their needs. They would also to derive additional profits from their activities. However, in an effort to preserve the community’s virtue, they would steer clear of the luxury trades. In Lezay-Marnésia’s unchecked imagination the virtuous agrarian community would also set up all the necessary institutions of a civilized society: church, court of justice, schools, university, learned society, hospital and charitable institutions for the sick – there would be no need of charitable institutions for paupers in their prosperous community.

The Twenty-Four firmly intended to establish a Catholic colony. Lezay-Marnésia’s son Albert noted that his father required recruits to provide billets de confession in order to be accepted. No doubt they believed that the clergy would be an important ally in their efforts to maintain proper social order.

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57 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 7 August 1790. AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 4.
58 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 7 August 1790. AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 4. Lezay-Marnésia, Lettres écrites des rives de l’Ohio, 73.
59 Albert de Lezay-Marnésia, Mes souvenirs, 10.
priests and six sisters of charity would be needed. They would perform all the required religious
services but also take care of the community’s schools and charitable institutions. These positions
of influence would allow them to instil proper ideas about social order and virtuous industry
amongst the community. He pressed Duval d’Eprémesnil to intervene with the papal authorities
in the hopes of being allowed to constitute their settlement in a new bishopric.61

Lezay-Marnésia also intended to establish a university and a learned society. The learned
society he envisioned was probably modelled on French provincial academies – he had belonged
to three such learned societies before the Revolution.62 Their learned society’s mandate would
include the study of letters, natural history and, most importantly, agriculture. It would also
publicize the progress of the French settlement and help promote it through the publication of a
bilingual periodical.63 The production and diffusion of knowledge was a central part of the
enterprise from the start. The Twenty-Four’s utopian vision, or at least Lezay-Marnésia’s, was a
few steps removed from the simplistic, primitive life; “letters, sciences, arts,” which he
considered to be French virtues, would greatly improve America’s state of nature.64

Convinced of his and his associates’ innate superiority, Lezay-Marnésia complained
about the “mediocrity” of the commoners who were travelling with him to the Scioto valley. He
believed that members of “la dernière classe du peuple” were unenlightened and “peu capable de
raisonnement.” He conceded, however, that his fellow travellers of common origins appeared to
be an honest sort of people with a desire for order and explained that they seemed to have quite
naturally placed their trust in him, trust which he intended to use to organize their group.65
Although they would leave the toiling to others, Lezay-Marnésia, Duval d’Eprémesnil, and their
fellow shareholders expected to play the central role in the development and governance of the
colony. The Twenty-Four’s glory would not come from military feats but rather from their efforts
for the public good and from their roles as creators of a regenerated, virtuous agrarian community.
In August 1790, Lezay-Marnésia, only just arrived in the United States, urged Duval
d’Eprémesnil to abandon his work in the National Assembly and come join him as soon as

61 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 26 May 1790. Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 7 August 1790.
AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 3, 4.
62 Lezay-Marnésia belonged to the Nancy, Lyons, and Besançon academies. Bonnel, Éthique et esthétique, 89-91. On
the role of provincial academies in the spread of the Enlightenment see: Daniel Roche, Le siècle des lumières en
63 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 7 August 1790. AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 4.
64 Lezay-Marnésia, Lettres écrites des rives de l’Ohio, 67.
65 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 26 May 1790. AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 3. Lezay-Marnésia, Lettres écrites des
rives de l’Ohio, 68.
possible: “au nom de dieu,… au nom de votre gloire, au nom du bien immense qui doit en
résulter, donnez tous vos soins, livrez vous tout entier à l’éxécution de cet important projet…
C’est de vous, de vos lumieres, de votre zèle que va dépendre, en tres grande partie, le sort de
français nombreux… Votre influence s’étendra sur l’Amerique entiere. Cet éclat éternel vaut
mieux que la lueur ephemere qu’on peut obtenir dans un pays entierement désorganisé.”

It is apparent that the Twenty-Four never intended to establish an egalitarian and
democratic utopia; their vision was in fact essentially hierarchical. They intended to put in a place
a patriarchal utopia. The colony’s governance would be in the hands of the landed families’
patriarchs who would oversee its administration in the same way that good fathers govern their
families: with kindness, generosity, and sensibility. Authority and legitimacy would be based on
the governing classes’ paternalism. Lezay-Marnésia’s letters are filled with references to their
“demeures patriarchales et fraternelles”. Although he envisioned that the social relationships
between the proprietary class and its subordinates would be harmonious due to the former’s
paternal protection, he considered the idea of equality ludicrous:

[O]n ne croira pas qu’il puisse entrer dans la tête d’hommes qui se sont réunis par
convenance, par goût, par conformité de principes & par choix, d’associer à leur
administration, de lier à leurs intérêts des hommes qu’au moins l’extrême différence
d’éducation empêche d’être les égaux. A ces hommes, salariés par eux, ils devront des
soins, de la protection, le prix abondant de leur travail, de la douceur, de l’indulgence &
de la bonté. Rien au-delà. Il seroit absurde que les fermiers & les artisans eussent les
mêmes droits que les propriétaires, ne pouvant pas contribuer comme eux ni en argent, ni
en lumières, & n’ayant pas les mêmes intérêts.

His renovated seigneurial system kept the landowners’ public authority intact but it did
emphasize their paternalist duties to a greater extent. There is no evidence that he intended to
transplant the seigneurial dues and obligations which the Physiocrats considered an obstacle to
economic modernization and which the general population considered odious. Rather, he
reframed the relationship between the landowner and the peasant who tilled his land as quasi-
modern labour relations: the employers owned the means of production and the product and, in
exchange for their labour, employees received a salary and paternalist protection.

66 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 7 August 1790. AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 4.
67 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 26 May 1790. AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 3. Similar language can be found in the
letters he wrote May 12 and August 7. See fo. 2 and 4. Lezay-Marnésia, Lettres écrites des rives de l’Ohio, 14.
Bonnel, Éthique et esthétique, 341.
68 Emphasis added. Lezay-Marnésia, Lettres écrites des rives de l’Ohio, 74.
The members of the Society of Twenty-Four placed high value on their exclusivism. Admission to the Society was done through cooptation. Members, almost all of them men, had to share in the belief that liberal noblemen disposed of natural leadership qualities which they would put to good use in their new settlement. The Society’s statutes stipulated that decisions were to be reached through deliberations between the members thus formalizing their intentions to establish a sort of landed aristocratic oligarchy. Furthermore, Lezay-Marnésia’s plan stipulated that the commoners and elites would be physically separated, that is, settled in two separate towns. He intended to establish all of the community’s institutions in the aristocratic town, thus physically removing the lower classes from the sites of power. The Twenty-Four had no intention of sharing the governance of the settlement with the lower orders. They believed that their lumières, that is their education, knowledge, social station, and gender – in sum, their merit – put them in the best possible position to lead the new society. Lezay-Marnésia’s vision of a regenerated, relevant nobleman looked both at an idealized past and at more modern ideas. He posited that noblemen’s continued relevance in the modern world rested on their sensibility, merit, utility, and benevolence, all Enlightenment values.

The project drew many criticisms. Although the vast majority of the thousand or so emigrants who left for the Scioto were from the lower orders, revolutionary critics focused on the Ancien Régime elites’ desertion. They were concerned that the transplantation of the aristocracy in these unspoilt lands would lead to the transfer of the seigneurial system’s most archaic aspects and contaminate the New World’s state of nature. The figure of the benevolent paternalist landowner came under heavy criticism. This form of masculine authority was rapidly falling out of favour in revolutionary France where the image of the tyrannical father supplanted that of the good father and was eventually replaced by the ideal of the egalitarian band of brothers.

Ultimately, the Scioto scheme failed. For one thing, the promised land was not “empty” and its indigenous inhabitants were, as Lezay-Marnésia noted, “nullement disposés à l’abandonner.” Besides, the Scioto Land Company had not secured actual property rights but

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69 New members had to be recommended by an existing member and be accepted by majority. Madame de Laval seems to have been the only woman directly involved in the affairs of the Society. Moreau-Zanelli, Gallipolis, 184-186, 189, 195. Desan, “Transatlantic Spaces of Revolution”, 481-2.
71 Desan, “Transatlantic Spaces of Revolution”, 487.
73 In fact, in the summer of 1791, the American troops led by General St Clair suffered an important defeat at the hands of the Western Confederacy of American Indians. Lezay-Marnésia, Lettres écrites des rives de l'Ohio, 12.
only pre-emptive rights: the right to acquire the land in the future. Furthermore, aristocrats generally made poor colonists. Lezay-Marnésia’s grand scheme with its university, learned society, and bishopric sheds light on his concern about his aristocratic settlement’s prestige, to the point that he was entirely oblivious to the practical realities of life in the wilderness of the American frontier. Albert noted how poorly equipped for the role of pioneer his father had actually been: “mon père… était loin d’avoir l’organisation administrative qu’il fallait pour mener à bien une aussi grande entreprise: plein d’enthousiasme pour son idée, il agit en enthousiaste, livrant aux rêves de son imagination l’accomplissement de la grande œuvre de sa colonie, la plus difficile peut-être des entreprises humaines, celle qui demande le plus les conseils de la prudence, de la réflexion et de l’expérience.”

It is also doubtful that the Twenty-Four would ever have been able to recruit enough workmen to sustain their ambitious plans. Lezay-Marnésia brought fifty-seven colonists from Europe and the three associates who accompanied him brought a total of forty-nine. The group expected temporary reinforcements – twenty-two lumberjacks and approximately thirty-three soldiers – but in the end only about one hundred people were expected to remain. Not that the Scioto lands had no interest for commoners, on the contrary hundreds purchased acres, but the hierarchical and paternalist society that the Twenty-Four envisioned had limited appeal in a post-1789 world. Indeed, their conception of social relations was out-dated and could not be transposed to a republican and anti-aristocratic context, be it the United States or revolutionary France. Commoners purchasing land in the Ohio valley wished to settle independently, not under the tutelage of paternalist aristocratic landowners, no matter how well intentioned.

Lezay-Marnésia made it as far as Marietta but never to the lands he had acquired. Unwilling to abandon his American dream just yet, he then purchased 4000 acres near Pittsburgh. He continued to perfect his patriarchal agrarian utopian settlement plans and wrote a long letter to Bernardin de Saint-Pierre to try to convince him to get involved in the project. His hopes were once more frustrated. In May 1792, after having been bitterly disappointed by his American experience, he returned to Europe. As his son Albert wrote in January 1792: “Désormais il faut

77 It is unclear whether he actually sent this letter to the intended recipient. He did however publish it a few years later. Lezay-Marnésia, *Lettres écrites sur les rives de l’Ohio*, 10-113. On this particular iteration of his utopian project see: Bonnel, “Sur les rives de l’Ohio,” 43-59.
renoncer à tout établissement en Amérique : chaque jour qui nous y éclaire, chaque homme que
nous y voyons nous fait sentir combien ce séjour serait insupportable à des Français honnêtes et
sensibles, accoutumés à une vie douce. Le spectacle d’hommes avides, qui n’ont de passion que
pour l’argent, qui ne font de sacrifices que pour en acquérir davantage est trop dégoûtant pour ne
pas nous regrouper à jamais.”

American cupidity spoilt the virgin lands. By then, Lezay-Marnésia had lost a considerable part of his personal fortune. As for Duval d’Eprémesnil, he never made the crossing. Despite the resounding failure of this first émigré settlement scheme, the vast, “sparsely settled” spaces of the New World, continued to have some appeal for several noble émigrés in the following years. The “empty” lands seemed like the ideal location to resettle the French exiles and help them find a new place in the post-revolutionary world.

Asylum, Last Refuge of French Civilization

In 1793, at the height of the Terror, Louis-Marie, vicomte de Noailles and Antoine-Omer Talon formed a partnership to create a refuge for French and Saint-Domingue émigrés in Pennsylvania. They aptly named this settlement Asylum. This settlement had different goals from those of the Scioto: it aimed to be a fully developed bucolic haven but one which did not reject the refinements of civilization. In fact, Asylum would allow émigrés to salvage distinctive aspects of French civility and manners that the Revolution and the unrefined American mores threatened. For Noailles, it would also be an opportunity to rebuild his fortune by profiting from the land speculation bubble.

Noailles was a controversial figure among émigré circles. A liberal noble, he had greeted the early stages of the Revolution with enthusiasm. He was one of the instigators of the abolition of privileges on the night of August 4. He claimed to have done his outmost to serve his country: “As long as it was possible to serve the cause of liberty, I never deserted it, but when it became criminal, I left my country, quitted the part of the world where crimes were committed, and fled to England [in 1792], where I pity the errors of the French people, and cannot forget their

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79 Lezay-Marnésia to Duval d’Eprémesnil, 4 June 1792. AN, 158 AP 12, fo. 8.
cruelty.”82 As a result of his political opinions, his asylum options were limited: he, like other constitutionnels, was criticized by more conservative émigrés and deemed undesirable by foreign authorities. Following his exile, he first solicited employment in the British army but, when his requests failed, he decided to leave Britain for America. Noailles, Lafayette’s brother-in-law, was a veteran of the American Revolutionary War. He had many friends among the American elite and he also had a good command of English.83 In 1793, he travelled to Philadelphia where he found several other liberal French émigrés.

Noailles’s financial situation was precarious and, once in Philadelphia, he sought employment as a land agent for William Bingham. Direct accounts of his work are rare: he never mentioned it in his letters to his family and his émigré friends in Philadelphia also seem to have avoided discussing his business activities during their sociable encounters. They had a tacit understanding that working for wages in his case was “a matter of necessity.” Still, he applied himself to his work. A Philadelphian contemporary reported: “It was necessary for him to live, and he set himself bravely to the task… It was amusing to see the spirit with which he embraced his new avocation, so foreign from the pursuits of his former life… Everyday at the coffee-house, or exchange… he drove his bargains as earnestly as any regular bred son of a counting house.”84

Noailles used his connections to promote his émigré settlement project in the Pennsylvanian Susquehanna valley. In a letter from 1793, he explained that he had acquired 500,000 acres of land: “I have not purchased such an immense quantity of uncultivated land to make a speculation upon it and resell with advantage. My intention has been to prepare an exile to those of my countrymen who, disgusted of the horrid scene which took place in France, will forever abandon the theatre which has produced it.” The settlement would help preserve French mores. He continued, “Our manners will be soft, our conversation animated, our labor active, we will be the French people [from before the Revolution] and not the present nation.” He stated that about forty French and fifty German families were settled there in “easy circumstances.”85 Noailles may well have embellished this account of the settlement’s beginnings and the project

was not as successful as he and Talon had hoped. In 1794, they partnered with the American financiers Robert Morris and John Nicholson and formed the Asylum Land Company.\footnote{Harsanyi states that Noailles persuaded Morris and Nicholson to invest in his project while Furstenberg argues that it was the latter who convinced the Frenchman to lend his name and credit to their speculation. Harsanyi, Lessons from America, 102. Furstenberg, When the United States Spoke French, 230, 243.}

Noailles’s motivations were two-fold: his project derived from humanitarian impulses, but it also had more pragmatic, pecuniary motives. In a letter to William Windham addressed from Morris’s house, he detailed the financial advantages of land speculation: “The settlement of a few families doubles directly the capital sum and two years after the first cultivation one receive four times what he has expended.”\footnote{[Noailles] to William Windham, 1 June 1793. William Windham, The Windham papers : the life and correspondence of William Windham, 1750-1810 (London : Jenkins, 1913), vol. 1, 135.} Even if it relied upon the noble reflex that land could ensure the group’s survival, his project had decidedly modern, capitalist motivations.

Noailles’s émigré friends concurred: land was a profitable and safe investment. Talleyrand argued that investment in uncultivated land promised few risks and significant profits, even if the land was not developed after the acquisition. Concerned with the effects of revolutions on property and wealth, he further averred that land was the only form of property whose value was safe from political disturbances.\footnote{Hans Huth and Wilma J. Pugh ed. transl., Talleyrand as a Financial Promoter, 1794-1796. Unpublished Letters and Memoirs (Washington : United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 148, 151-152.} In May 1794, he wrote to Germaine de Staël and asked her if some of her acquaintances would wish to buy American lands. He believed he could improve his personal fortune by acting as an intermediary for European investors: “Elles [Staël’s acquaintances] et moi y gagnerions beaucoup.”\footnote{Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord to Germaine de Staël, 12 May 1794 in “Lettres de M. de Talleyrand à Madame de Staël,” Revue d’histoire diplomatique 4 (1890), 211.} François-Alexandre-Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld, duc de Liancourt was convinced that land investments could safeguard his family’s future. He reported on the “prodigious” increase of land’s worth, claiming that the value had doubled over the last three or four years. He advised patriarchs (“pères de famille”) to acquired new lands to be cleared and settled since it was one of the most advantageous investment opportunities.\footnote{François-Alexandre-Frédéric, duc de Liancourt, Voyage dans les Etats-Unis d’Amérique fait en 1795, 1796 et 1797 (Paris : Dupont, Buissson, Charles Pougens, 1799), vol. 1, 117.} In March 1796, he wrote to his wife, who was still in France, and asked her to send him capital – 5000 to 6000 francs – to invest: “[J]’en placerai une partie dans des terres bien choisies d’Amérique, qui doubleraient, décupleraient peut-être de valeur dans l’espace de huit à dix années. Cette idée-là est une idée capitale. C’est celle qui est pour les
événements futurs le fondement peut-être de l’aisance de notre famille.” Liancourt, as a noble patriarch, believed that it was his “most sacred duty” to provide for his son, even if their political convictions differed widely. Land investment was, as far as these men were concerned, a honourable way to improve one’s fortune. The pursuit of wealth was an important motivator for land investors or buyers, so was the fact that estate management was still associated with traditional markers of status, independence, and even refinement.

In their dealings, Noailles and his fellow associates behaved like modern capitalists. In 1794, the Asylum Land Company issued 5000 shares each priced at $500. A share included 200 acres of land and an annual return of six percent. The company then used the capital at its disposal to hasten the development of the settlement’s infrastructure. Liancourt reported, “de grandes dépenses … ont été faites,” though he added that some were done without proper planning. He marvelled at the colony’s fast development as a result of this capital influx. Talleyrand reported that Talon had settled at Asylum “with women, horses, a French cook, and everything that could persuade purchasers that they are not arriving at a wild place.” Noailles and his associates sought to establish a local bank to attract capital and facilitate settlers’ access to credit. The Company also actively worked to attract new colonists. They advertised their lands in newspapers and had agents in Europe and in American port cities.

Charles-Albert, comte de Moré – another veteran of the American Revolutionary War who sought refuge in the United States – was critical of the company’s tactics: “cette société de commerce rural avait des agents placés en vigies qui attendaient comme à l’affût les passagers venant d’Europe. Le factionnaire factotum de ces messieurs tendait, aux naufragés qui avaient l’air d’avoir sauvé quelques bagages, une main protectrice, et leur offrait avec l’empressement de la compassion, les moyens de réparer leurs pertes, en achetant, sur une terre hospitalière, une seconde patrie.” He continued that the Company sold the land it had acquired for fifteen sous per acre to the refugees for six francs. He doubted the Company’s humanitarian intentions and clearly stated that it was a profiteering

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92 Weaver, *The Great Land Rush*, 212.
94 Liancourt, *Voyage*, vol. 1, 153-154.
95 Huth and Pugh, *Talleyrand*, 29.
enterprise, one that took advantage of unfortunate French and Saint-Domingue refugees.\textsuperscript{97} Although his evaluation of Noailles’s motivations was too cynical – perhaps influenced by his antipathy for the liberal noble –, and although Noailles did believe that his project could help refugees find a new place in the post-revolutionary world, there is no doubt that the prospect of improving his personal fortune was a significant incentive.

The Asylum Company attracted quite a few settlers. When Liancourt visited in May 1795, the settlement had been in existence for about fifteen months. He judged that remarkable progress had been made for such a recent establishment. The town counted about thirty log houses, taverns, and two stores. Sixteen notable families lived in the colony. Liancourt added that some French and a few American artisans and workers had settled there but added that they were for the most part mediocre at best, and, more often than not, drunkards. A number of slaves also accompanied the Saint-Domingue refugees.\textsuperscript{98} By this account, the settlement was thriving.

Noailles rejected Lezay-Marnésia’s Rousseauian fantasy. His aim was to preserve distinctive markers of civilization in a rural context. He did not express any particular desire to return to primitive virtues nor did he reject hallmarks of civilization such as commerce and material refinements. Asylum would be no ordinary pioneer village either: the goal was to establish a fully functional rural haven. The settlement would sidestep the first modest stages of pioneer development and become a full-fledged civilized bucolic utopia.\textsuperscript{99} In addition to cultivating land, the notable settlers would be able to cultivate the ideals of honnêteté. At Asylum, honnêtes hommes and femmes would be able to preserve their distinctive French elite mores.\textsuperscript{100}

Contemporary accounts and archaeological evidence reveal how the settlement’s prominent residents recreated forms of distinction on the frontier. They maintained their French habits and limited their interactions with their unsophisticated neighbours. Liancourt believed that this behaviour could severely impede the colony’s development. He criticized the French inhabitants’ prejudices, some of whom “se targu[aient] de ne vouloir point apprendre la langue du pays; dans beaucoup d’autres, à celui de ne voir aucun Américain.” Émigrés called Americans “barely civilized” and “boorish.” The colonists’ conduct had not changed a year later. Isaac Weld, an Irish traveller, remarked upon the antipathy between the French settlers and their neighbours:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{97} Charles-Albert, comte de Moré de Pontgibaud, \textit{Mémoires du comte de Moré} (Paris : Alphonse Picard et fils, 1898), 152-154.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Spaeth, “American in the French Imagination,” 255, 257.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Harsanyi, \textit{Lessons from America}, 102-103.
\end{itemize}
FIGURE 1.2: A PLAN OF THE TOWN OF ASYLUM IN LUZERNE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

“[The French] live entirely to themselves; they hate the Americans, and the Americans in the neighbourhood hate, and accuse them of being an idle dissipated set. The manners of the two people are so very different that it is impossible they should ever agree.” \(^{102}\) There was an incommensurable gap between the French settlers’ mores and that of the typical pioneers.

The French notable residents endeavoured to live a life of idleness, or at least to appear to do so, and embraced genteel pursuits as much as possible. According to Weld, “[t]he French settled here seem… to have no great inclination or ability to cultivate the earth, and the greater part of them have let their lands at a small yearly rate to Americans, and amuse themselves with driving deer, fishing, and fowling.” \(^{103}\) Rentier mentality was a deeply engrained habit of these privileged émigrés who often favoured the recreational use of land over attempts to maximise profit and resource extraction. They behaved just like people of their social station would have been expected to in Ancien Régime France or in Saint-Domingue: although créole planters often had more developed commercial and economic activities than typical French landowners, the two groups left the cultivation of the land to others and lived off the rent and the sale of agricultural products. \(^{104}\) These sources of income enabled them to maintain elite sociable practices which displayed their status. They retained their French “gaiety” and had “courteous, polite and affable” manners. They picnicked, went horseback riding, played music, danced, played cards, chess and backgammon. They also maintained their French diet and eating habits. They had late breakfast and dinner at four o’clock and engaged in commensality. They consumed tea, coffee, bread, butter, meat, wine, and brandy. \(^{105}\) These practices may have seemed odd to non-French observers but they were part of elite French men and women’s attempts to maintain their gender, caste, and national identities and to assert their distinctiveness. \(^{106}\) The Asylum settlers’ nationality and aristocratic ways contributed to their isolation. The non-French colonists of the area frowned upon what they deemed trifling aristocratic practices. The growing anti-French sentiment of the late 1790s also negatively influenced American opinion of the Asylum settlers. \(^{107}\)

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\(^{102}\) Liancourt, *Voyage*, vol.1, 162. Isaac Weld Jr., *Travels through the states of North America and the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada during the years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (London : Johh Stockdale, 1800), 535. Peter Regnier, quoted in Spaeth, “America in the French Imagination.” 263.

\(^{103}\) Weld, *Travels*, 535.

\(^{104}\) Dewald, *Aristocratic Experience*, 164.


\(^{106}\) On elite cultural and emotional practices see chapter 5.

\(^{107}\) The relations between the United States and France severely deteriorated under John Adams’ Federalist administration starting in 1797. Diplomatic relations plummeted a year later with the XYZ Affair when an American
These émigrés’ behaviour was consistent with that of the pre-revolutionary nobility who, as noble values of largesse dictated, should be indifferent to vulgar pecuniary matters. The affluent nobility who had more urban lives by the eighteenth century would have engaged in similar leisurely activities when visiting their country estates. Émigrés attempted to recreate a vie de château in the Pennsylvania. Their decision to hunt was a noble way to provision the settlement. It also served as a powerful reminder of the hunters’ martial skills, of their virility, and of their elite status: hunting had been a noble privilege in Ancien Régime France. Other sociability practices enabled participants to display their mastery of the codes of honnêteté. The cultivation of such social refinements was an important indicator of these émigré men and women’s elite French identities. Their proclivity for a revisited vie de château and their rentier mentality demonstrate that they had not shed their noble and seigneurial reflexes.

Archaeology provides further evidence of the settlers’ search for distinction. The town’s 413 plots were laid out in neoclassical style. The houses were larger and more elegantly furnished than typical frontier log houses. The normal dimensions of frontier log houses rarely exceeded eighteen by twenty feet. Asylum houses measured between thirty by sixty feet and forty by sixty feet. Some houses had two stories and other luxurious amenities such as cellars and outbuildings. The houses’ architecture was inspired by the Georgian style and the buildings had more elaborate ornamentation than typical log cabins. Colonists also paid attention to their houses’ furnishing. Some rooms had papered walls and elegant furniture that pointed to the occupants’ leisurely lifestyle and elite status. The settlement also boasted a log manor – the Grande Maison – which measured eighty-four by sixty feet, had three stories, eight fireplaces, delegation, sent to France to negotiate when the two countries were on the verge of war, were asked for bribes. The American diplomats were offended and left France without engaging in any discussions. The XYZ Affair led to an undeclared war, the Quasi-War, between the French and the American Republics from 1798 to 1800. Federalist press helped propagate anti-French sentiments among the American public. William Doyle, Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution (New York : Oxford University Press, 2009), chap. 4. Hébert, “Demise of the American Dream,” 246-247. Furstenberg, When the United States Spoke French, 367-375.

and French windows. The colonists also used dress as a means of emphasizing their distinctiveness. Archaeologists unearthed an elaborate buckle that would have been used for a sword belt or knee breeches, both essential components of masculine aristocratic attire. Yet, the remoteness of the frontier as well as reduced circumstances made it difficult for residents to follow the latest fashion and most of the objects unearthed at Asylum point to a style of dress more akin to that of the bourgeoisie than that of an aristocratic elite. The émigré colonists’ attempts to recreate forms of Ancien Régime elite sociability as well as their efforts to replicate aristocratic material culture must be understood as a means of resistance against the levelling efforts of the French Revolution. It was also an attempt to affirm their national distinctiveness when confronted with the American Republic’s egalitarian dimensions and unrefined manners.

However, these accounts of the French colonists’ dissipated and prosperous lifestyle present a distorted picture of the Asylum settlement. The presence of these French émigrés on the Pennsylvanian frontier with their peculiar manners and tastes must have been a curious affair, but it seems that for the greater part they were not as idle or affluent as these accounts suggest. Émigrés might have hoped to live as gentlemen farmers but the harsh realities of the frontier required hard work and considerable expenses. In fact, many of Asylum’s notable residents took up some activity. Liancourt reported that the notable inhabitants had what he considered a simple lifestyle. He added: “l’esprit des colons est bon, chacun est bien franchement occupé de ses affaires, laboureurs, tavernier, teneur de store, comme si c’eût été son état toute sa vie.” According to Liancourt, the marquis de Blacons and Monsieur de Bec-de-Lièvre owned shops and Messieurs de la Roue ran a tavern. Aristide du Petit-Thouars joined the settlement where he hoped to build a refuge for his siblings who were still in France. He worked for the Asylum Company: he cleared land, filled iceboxes, transported provisions, harvested maple sap, cooked, cleaned, made furniture, and built houses. As a reward for his work, he was granted 300 acres of land. He built himself a twelve by twelve feet log house. Overall, he did not enjoy great material

comfort: he did strenuous work, sometimes slept on the ground, and did not always have a fire. Yet, his ability to contribute to his family’s wellbeing pleased him.120

Despite the appearance of prosperity, the Asylum colony did not last. Liancourt believed that the settlement had potential. He hoped that “le temps peut n’être pas éloigné où cette colonie florissante attesterà au monde entier que le courage et les efforts des Français sont aussi distingués dans le malheur que dans la prospérité.” Still, he argued that, in order to prosper, it would be essential to attract colonists of the useful sort: “il faut convenir que tout gentleman que l’on soit, on ne peut se passer d’artisans, de laboureurs, et que ceux-ci peuvent beaucoup plus aisément se passer de gentlemans.”121 The notable colonists were unsuited to pioneer life. One of them, Jean de Montulé, complained to Robert Morris: “I did flatter myself that the farming business would enable me to support my family; but for all I exerted myself to the utmost, I could raise but small crops. I sunk money every day in the improvement of new land and impaired my health by labour altogether too hard to a man not used to work from his infancy.”122

Other émigrés’ evaluations of the settlement’s potential were less favourable. Talleyrand wrote that a good scheme should not necessitate constant promotion by agents in Europe and in American ports.123 In his account of one of the company’s agents’ visit in Philadelphia, Moré deplored the Company’s attempts to benefit from his unfortunate countrymen’s gullibility by selling them sandy plots covered with pine trees.124 Édouard-Charles-Victurnien Colbert, comte de Maulevrier who visited Asylum in 1798 also judged that the location was poorly chosen. “Dire ce qui … a séduit dans ce local est impossible,” he wrote, “peu de positions plus vilaines, point de bonnes terres à proximité de [la] ville, tout autour des montagnes arides et très élevées le séparant du reste du monde, point de creek où l’on peut établir des moulins.”125 Even du Petit-Thouars, who settled in Asylum because of his relationship with Talon and Blacons, judged the settlement’s location mediocre. “Milles situations m’ont paru préférables,” he confessed.126

120 Du Petit-Thouars, Lettres et documents, 313-322
121 Liancourt, Voyage, vol. 1, 157, 163.
123 Hugh and Pugh, Talleyrand, 29.
124 Moré condemned Noailles for his role in the Revolution and particularly for his role in the creation of the ci-devants, by abolishing titles and privileges. Moré, Mémoires, 152-154.
126 Du Petit-Thouars, Lettres et documents inédits, 315.
Once again, the colonists were ill suited for frontier life and their social pretensions alienated many of their neighbours, to the detriment of the settlement’s development. Liancourt observed: “Quelques raisons tenant aux opinions et aussi aux mœurs françaises, ont bien jusqu’à présent éloigné des familles, même de France, de se placer sur cet établissement.”\textsuperscript{127} The colony reached its peak sometime between 1795 and 1798. Colbert de Maulevrier noted that the settlement counted about fifteen to twenty houses and a hundred or so inhabitants in 1798. He reported 300 acres of cultivated lands and three stores. Still, according to his description, the settlement was already waning. He explained that the initial capital influx had allowed the settlement to prosper but that the situation had deteriorated since: “Trois stores se sont levés et d’abord réussi. Maintenant l’argent a disparu et ils font à peine de quoi vivre. La plupart des personnes honnêtes que M. Talon ou différentes circonstances y avaient attiré se sont en allées. Celles qui y sont encore en gémissent et n’attendent que l’instant de pouvoir en sortir.”\textsuperscript{128} Noailles sold his shares in 1795, Talon followed shortly after. In 1803, the Land Company was dissolved. The settlement was completely deserted by 1809.\textsuperscript{129} One important problem was the half-hearted commitment of the French and Saint-Domingue settlers who rarely intended to make a permanent establishment. Talleyrand had warned promoters about the émigrés’ lack of commitment: “Do not count on that class of emigrants to clear the forests of America.”\textsuperscript{130} Despite the settlement’s relative failure, Noailles successfully improved his fortune through his various business dealings during his stay in the United States.\textsuperscript{131}

\textit{A Colony of Émigré Soldiers: The Windham Settlement in Upper Canada}

North American colonies had a number of significant advantages for émigrés seeking a secure and permanent establishment. That both the British authorities and the French refugees considered the Canadian colonies as a relocation option was not out of the ordinary. British imperial authorities had experience with resettling political refugees in its North American

\textsuperscript{127} Liancourt, \textit{Voyage}, vol. 1, 156-157.  
\textsuperscript{128} Colbert de Maulevrier, \textit{Voyage}, 34-35.  
\textsuperscript{130} Huth and Pugh, \textit{Talleyrand as a Financial Promoter}, 38-39.  
\textsuperscript{131} Furstenberg, \textit{When America Spoke French}, 197, 234, 374.
colonies, as they had done with some Huguenots and Thirteen Colonies Loyalists.\textsuperscript{132} Projects to resettle émigrés in Canada were put forward as early as 1792. These sought to reduce émigrés’ dependence on charity: British authorities would grant lands to émigrés as well as funds and resources until their settlement became self-sufficient. These plans had two main advantages: the émigrés would ultimately regain their independence and simultaneously improve the colonies.

In 1793, the British government sent three envoys to Canada to examine the possibility of resettling some of the French ecclesiastical refugees there. Although colonial and British statesmen as well as the émigré bishop Saint-Pol de Léon agreed that the plan was wise, very few ecclesiastics departed for Canada.\textsuperscript{133} In the fall of 1792, Charles Grant, vicomte de Vaux, another reader of St. John de Crèvecoeur, wrote a pamphlet to publicize his plan for an émigré establishment in British North America. Vaux thought this could help relieve his fellow exiles’ sufferings. By settling on Canadian lands, he argued, “les émigrés [auraient], enfin l’avantage de trouver, sans s’écarter de leurs meilleurs principes, la fin de leurs maux, dans une retraite paisible & simple d’abord, mais qui leur assurerait des possessions brillantes pour eux & leur famille par la suite.”\textsuperscript{134} According to him, a return to land was the best means for noble émigrés to regain their independence, ensure their subsistence, and even reestablish their social status. Between 1793-1794, he periodically attempted to raise support for his project: he published more texts and corresponded with British statesmen, including William Windham and Henry Dundas.\textsuperscript{135} Despite his repeated efforts to enlist the British public and government’s support, his project never materialized. Nor did he make the crossing to settle on the lands he had personally been granted in Canada.\textsuperscript{136} He lacked the necessary means for his passage and establishment. Furthermore, Britain’s entrance in the Revolutionary Wars meant that a large number of émigrés, including Vaux, were able to secure employment in British émigré regiments and many felt honour bound to join the counter-revolution.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{133} N.-E. Dionne, \textit{Les ecclésiastiques et les royalistes français réfugiés au Canada à l’époque de la Révolution, 1791-1802} (Québec : n.p., 1905), 63-71, 89-90.
\textsuperscript{135} See \textit{Adresse à toutes les puissances de l’Europe} and other texts republished in Vaux, \textit{Recueil d’Essais}. Vaux to William Windham, BL, Add MS 37856, fo. 315. Vaux to Henri Dundas, April 1, 1794, TNA, HO 1/2.
\textsuperscript{136} Charles Grant was of Scottish descent and had a number of influential Scottish relatives. These connections helped him obtain a grant in Canada. TNA, T93/5, 121.
\textsuperscript{137} Vaux to William Windham, 10 October 1794. BL, Add MS 37856, fo. 315. TNA, T93/5, 121.
Canadian settlement projects were revived by the end of the decade. Indeed, the counter-revolution’s plight inspired some officers, led by Joseph-Geneviève, comte de Puisaye, to seek a more peaceful and permanent retreat in Upper Canada. Puisaye fell out of favour with the Bourbons following the failure of the Quiberon Bay expedition and the defeat of Chouannerie in Brittany in 1796, both of which he had commanded. Shortly after, he submitted a memorandum to the British government detailing his plan for the creation of an émigré settlement. He used his privileged relationship with William Windham, the Secretary-at-War, to obtain land grants. He proposed to resettle thousands of émigrés and Breton royalists in Upper Canada. His letters show that he considered himself bound by honour to ensure the safety of the Chouans who had served faithfully under his orders since he judged that the pacification of Brittany offered them no protection. He believed that a massive relocation of Breton royalists was imperative. He emphasized these men’s loyalty to the royalist cause as well as the services they had rendered the British war effort and sought to persuade the British authorities to grant them lands in Canada just as they had done for the Loyalists.

In order to convince the ministers, Puisaye drew upon developing notions of modern refugees. He appealed to Britons’ growing conviction that it was a national moral duty to provide humanitarian relief to deserving political refugees. He highlighted the project’s public utility. Specifically, he argued that in the long run it would reduce émigré reliance on British charity by providing able-bodied men with resources to support themselves and eventually to provide for their families. Crucially, it would allow noblemen to regain their independence. He also argued that a large settlement of French royalists in Canada would help Britain develop non-settled lands at little cost. Finally, he contended that it would certainly be wise to settle proven royalists as a bulwark against the spread of republican ideas in the colonies. Puisaye’s proposal complied with all the requirements of British land grant practices: he was well connected and benefited from Windham’s protection, he had been a loyal and worthy servant of the British crown even if...
his military missions failed, and he promised to improve the lands that he and his companions would be granted. Windham agreed: “It has always appeared to me that this plan was not only wise and humane, but that it would also in the end be a measure of economy.”

In the aftermath of the American and French revolutions and of the 1791 Constitutional Act—an act which sought to increase the powers of the king, aristocracy, and church—the loyal, aristocratic, royalist, and Christian—although Catholic—émigrés were suitable candidates for a Canadian settlement.

Puisaye was aware of the difficulties of forming a new establishment. He declared that “mere grants of lands & slight advances of provisions & tools would not be sufficient assistance for men not used to hard labour.” Consequently, instead of ordinary colonists, he intended to send a regiment of émigré soldiers who would do all the preliminary clearing and building work.

Despite his grandiose plan to settle hundreds and eventually thousands of émigrés in Canada and despite the hundreds of demands he received from émigrés who wished to be part of the venture, only forty-one followers sailed with him from Plymouth in August 1798. The group consisted of fourteen officers, seven women, and twenty-three privates and servants. Windham estimated that the expense would be of about £4000 for the forty or so settlers.

Windham, in a letter to Peter Russell, who was in charge of the administration of Upper Canada, explained the goal of the establishment: “The general purpose is to provide an asylum for as many as possible of those whose adherence to the ancient laws, religion and constitution of their country, has rendered them sacrifices to the French Revolution.”

Indeed, the letters William Cavendish-Bentinck, Duke of Portland sent to Russell indicated that the British ministers were not yet ruling out the possibility of sending other groups of French royalists

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147 Sketch political and financial of an establishment to be formed in Canada for the settlement of French Emigrants. TNA, CO 42/324, fo. 394-401.
148 For the demands Puisaye received see: BL, Add MS 8075. For the list of the passengers see: Douglas Brymner, _Report on Canadian Archives 1888_ (Ottawa : A. Sénécal, 1889), 85-86. For biographical information about the settlers see: Marcel Fournier, “Notices biographiques,” _Les Français émigrés au Canada pendant la Révolution française et le Consulat_, 1789-1804 (Sillery, QC : Septentrion, 2015), 165-265.
150 Reproduced in Brymner, _Report_, 79.
following Puisaye’s installation.\textsuperscript{151} The colony’s goals and structure were clearly spelled out: it was to be a hierarchical and patriarchal agrarian community. Puisaye, Portland, Windham, and Russell were determined to put in place an orderly and well-policing community. In order to preserve the colonists’ royalism and Catholicism, they thought it best to put in place a “feudal” and military society. Windham instructed Russell “to give [the émigrés] as much of a feudal institution as the laws of the Colony admit of.”\textsuperscript{152} These men subscribed to the traditional European idea “of anchoring social order with landed estates.”\textsuperscript{153}

In his memoranda, Puisaye insisted that the “regime féodal” – by which he meant a mixture of the feudal and seigneurial systems – should govern the colony. He explicitly referred to the feudal institutions of homage, fief, and vassalage. The social and proprietary structure he envisioned was modelled on the feudal suzerainty pyramid with him as the overlord receiving the homage and oath of fealty on behalf of the British King from his “grands vassaux,” who, in turn, would receive the homage of their own vassals in their “arrière-fiefs.” He requested and was permitted to be the colony’s sole head. He would supervise the admission of new settlers and the distribution of land. He would review prospective colonists’ credentials and probity and make sure that they had pure principles.\textsuperscript{154} Overseeing land distribution would also enable him to create a clear hierarchy. He did not believe equality was natural: “les différences de faculté et d’aptitude qui classent naturellement les hommes donnent ensuite par cela seul, cette hiérarchie de fortune et d’état, qui devient le système et la garantie de l’ordre public.”\textsuperscript{155} These powers would enable him to recreate the patronage and reciprocity relationships at the heart of the seigneurial system. Indeed, the obligation the settlers would feel towards him would reinforce the colony’s hierarchy. Since the settlers were Catholic, Puisaye did not go so far as to try to obtain the right to dispense justice; the settlement would not enjoy any aspect of sovereignty. He also wrote that the settlement would be exclusively agrarian and would steer clear of the “ideas of independence and

\textsuperscript{151} Peter Russell, \textit{The Correspondence of the honourable Peter Russell} (Toronto : Published by the Society, 1935), vol. 2, 204.
\textsuperscript{153} Weaver, \textit{The Great Land Rush}, 213.
\textsuperscript{155} Observations sur le mémoire de Mons.r le C.te Joseph de Puisaye à Sa Majesté Britannique pour obtenir une concession dans le Canada, en faveur des royalistes, Puisaye to Windham, 24 November 1797. BL, Add MS 37864, fo. 214.
science that commerce and luxury engender.”¹⁵⁶ Puisaye’s rejection of enlightened ideas was much more comprehensive than that of Lezy-Marnésia and Noailles.

Windham and Puisaye thought that it was essential to preserve subordination among the émigrés. To that effect, they tried to persuade Portland and Russell that it would be desirable to preserve the military structure to which they were accustomed and organize them into a militia under Puisaye’s command. Puisaye explained how critical a militia would be: “cette institution, par l’esprit de discipline, de subordination et de vigilance qui lui est inhérent, devant être considérée comme le principe d’activité et le moyen nécessaire de la prospérité prompte et durable de l’établissement.”¹⁵⁷ Religion also had a role to play to preserve social order. Accordingly, Puisaye wished to establish a Catholic colony and he requested permission for the free practice of the faith.¹⁵⁸

The colony’s regulations stipulated that settlers would receive a certain number of acres in proportion to their military rank and to the number of their dependents: “Pour maintenir l’inégalité qui existait entre les partageans, il a été fait des lots inégaux… A chaque officier une petite ferme de cinquante acres, sur laquelle il pût se retirer tandis qu’il placerait des fermiers sur les lots plus considérables défrichés par son travail, ou a ses frais. A chaque officier non commissioné ou soldat une ferme de cent ou de cent cinquante acres.”¹⁵⁹ Puisaye’s plan included seigneurial dues and obligations. The regulations stipulated that colonists were required to spend two days a week working for the general needs of the colony or working for the officers’ establishments. The fact that these émigrés settled in an area that was not pacified, since it could be the target of indigenous attacks, provided an important justification for the decision to implement a seigneurial social order. Landlords, who were also officers, had a duty to protect the commoners who would settle on their lands; in return, the latter would perform services for the officers. On Sundays colonists were required to attend mass and to dedicate the rest of the day to military duties, a plan the bishop of Quebec sanctioned.¹⁶⁰ The regulations prescribed that settlers would not be allowed to alienate their lands before ten years of occupancy. Clearly, the British

¹⁵⁶ BL, Add MS 37864, fo. 173.
¹⁵⁷ BL, Add MS 37864, fo. 21, Add MS 37865, fo. 324. Russell, Correspondence, vol. 2, 319-320, 323.
¹⁵⁹ The land repartition was as follows: Puisaye 850 acres, comte de Chalus 650 acres, d’Allègre, 450 acres, St Georges 400 acres, vicomte de Chalus 350 acres, Farcy 350 acres, Marzeul 300 acres, Renoult 150 acres, Segeant 150 acres, Fauchard, Furon, Bugle, Marchand, Langevin, 100 acres each. LAC, “Correspondence of the Military Secretary of the Commander of the Forces,” RG8-I, C-series, vol. 620, “Settlers,” fo. 44-45, microfilm reel C-3158.
¹⁶⁰ Évêque de Québec to Puisaye. BL, Add MS 8075, fo. 69.
government wished to avoid any speculation. The goal was to ensure the colony’s long-term viability as well as the émigrés’ eventual independence and help develop Canadian lands.

Interestingly, the Puisaye settlement and its regulations were similar to those imposed by the French crown on the Carignan-Salières soldier-settlers in the Richelieu Valley in 1665. Officers of the regiment were granted seigneuries and about 400 soldiers settled on their officers’ estates. A modified version of the seigneurial regime was put in place: settlers owed military service and corvée to the crown and owed dues to their seigneurs. The soldiers would help develop the colony and protect it from Iroquois attacks. The French monarchy also did not grant lands as a recompense the beneficiaries could dispose of as they pleased. In both the Puisaye and the Carignan-Salières cases, the settlers and officers were expected to work for the improvement of the colony. The objectives the British government pursued with the resettlement of demobilized soldiers after the Seven Years War and of Loyalists in its colonies similarly aimed at consolidating its imperial domain. It improved the colonies and provided opportunities for groups, such as demobilized soldiers and exiles, who could cause social instability. The imperial policies adopted by the British and French crowns both rewarded loyal servants and helped bolster the security of sparsely settled parts of their empires.

The British colonial authorities still had some reservations about the settlement of French, albeit loyal, émigrés in their recently conquered Canadian colonies. However, as Russell explained, “[t]he very high Character given to me by Mr. Windham of Mr. de Puisayes Principles Integrity & Honor encourages me to place a Degree of Confidence in him which I should have been cautious of reposing at this important Crisis in any other Frenchman not so well recommended.” Russell’s letters to Portland made clear that he meant to keep a close eye on the émigrés. He decided to grant them lands fifteen miles north of York, where there was no significant French population, since proximity to the colony’s administrative center would facilitate efforts to provide them with assistance but also “subject all their movements to the immediate inspections & Comptrol of the Administration.”

Puisaye’s first impressions of Canada were very favourable. He enthusiastically told Windham: “Je dois vous parler de notre etonnement a la vue de ce superbe pays dont on se fait généralement en Europe, une idée beaucoup en dessous de ce qu’il est réellement… nous avons

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remarqué partout, un ordre et une régularité frappante. tous les habitans sont contens de leur sort et vivent dans l’abondance… les mœurs sont simples et douces, et l’hospitalité est la vertu favorite de ces hommes heureux de la paix dont ils jouissent.“

He had no doubt that his plan would succeed. Russell was also firmly invested in the success of the enterprise and sought to advance Puisaye’s views and provide the colonists with resources to facilitate their installation whenever possible. During the first few months, some of the émigrés, most likely the privates, busied themselves with clearing land and building thirteen houses in the settlement they named Windham after their protector. Puisaye was very satisfied with the early progress made, so were the colonial authorities who expected that the émigrés would be self-sufficient before long.

Their hopes were soon dampened. The colony encountered important difficulties from the start.

The group had not yet reached Upper Canada that it had lost ten of its members. Three never left Portsmouth, two drowned and four abandoned the project in Quebec and one left in Montreal. Most of the early deserters were servants who obtained better positions in Lower Canada. Puisaye replaced four of them with local inhabitants whom he deemed better suited for clearing and building work. Altogether, he considered this early loss inconsequential but recruitment and desertion problems continued to plague the venture. By September 1799, the émigrés had only been able to hire twenty-one Canadian workers and servants. Most émigrés settlers did not have sufficient means to hire the necessary help. For example, a man to cut firewood cost six shillings and three pence Quebec currency per day, an expense that most of them could not afford. This severe want of manpower undermined the settlers’ ability to make their establishment viable.

Furthermore, only a few months after their arrival, some of Puisaye’s gentlemanly companions started leaving. In February 1799, Jean-Yrieix, marquis de Beaupoi de Saint-Aulaire, his wife, son, and cousin as well as Jean-Baptiste Coster de Saint-Victor abandoned the venture. As reasons for their departure, they cited the resumption of war against revolutionary France and the impossibility of earning their subsistence in an agrarian community. Coster de Saint-Victor explained: “N’ayant point été éduqué pour le travail de la terre, il me seroit impossible d’en

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164 BL, Add MS 37865, fo. 324.
165 Russell, Correspondence, vol. 3, 197-198
166 Russell, Correspondence, vol. 3, 121-123, 156-157.
168 Brymner, Report, 87.
169 BL, Add MS 8075, fo. 73, 90. Russell, Correspondence, vol. 2, 330.
obtenir ma subsistance et me trouvant absolument sans argent, il m’est également impossible de l’espérer par des domestiques.”170 Saint-Aulaire was incensed by questions of rank and honour. He wrote a long letter to Windham in which he exposed his outrage over the usurpation of titles and honours by some of Puisaye’s companions. He complained that the fraudulent conferment of titles, military ranks, and decorations upon some members of the group would undermine their value and look illicit in the eyes of the local population. It would also exacerbate the jealousy the latter already felt towards the émigrés. He explained that some privates and servants mocked their pretensions and attachment to such marks of distinction by calling their social superiors “chevalier de la Betsey,” the Betsey being the ship on which they had sailed to Canada. He was most outraged by Puisaye’s award of the croix de Saint-Louis to some of his companions. He considered such an act an usurpation of sovereignty and an unpardonable affront to Louis XVIII since the right to confer orders of chivalry was the last remnant of their King’s puissance.171

Questions of rank and honour were very important for the colonists. Already on their way to Canada, some of the noble settlers complained about their treatment when they were forced to eat with the ship’s crew. They wrote that they did not mind dietary privations. What they minded was that they were not treated with the consideration they felt entitled to and they resented being mixed with the servants. They wrote: “Nous voulons bien faire diette, mais nous voulons le faire avec honneur.”172 In their reduced circumstances, Puisaye’s noble companions attached great importance to the acknowledgment of their superior social status. This attachment to distinction also pushed Puisaye to ask that their land grants would be at some distance from any other Francophone settlement since he considered his companions of a better sort and since he doubted the purity of the French Canadians’ principles.173 This furthered the community’s isolation. The émigrés’ emphasis on social distinction impeded the development of the Windham settlement.

French noble émigrés were not the ideal candidates for pioneer life and the Puisaye group was no exception. Puisaye himself wrote to the colonial authorities to explain that his followers belonged to different classes and that many were ill suited to harsh conditions due to their social origins, age, gender, or education. Soldiers and men accustomed to hard labour were the only ones of his followers who could initially be destined for the Windham settlement. Thus, only

170 BL, Add MS 8075, fo. 65.
171 BL, Add MS 37866, fo. 53.
172 BL, Add MS 8075, fo. 12.
about half of the colonists could tackle the preliminary clearing and building work. Puisaye sought a more suitable position for the nobles, women, and elderly near York.\footnote{Russell, \textit{Correspondence}, vol. 3, 121-123.} Moreover, his few noble companions who took an interest in the agrarian settlement generally did so because they had no other options. Unfortunately, they lacked the necessary skills to successfully manage their establishment. René-François, comte de Marzeul, born in 1750, faced considerable obstacles. His age, health, lack of financial resources, lack of hired help, lack of skills, and plain bad luck all conspired to make his installation extremely arduous. In a letter to Puisaye, he outlined his litany of troubles: he injured his finger which prevented him from working, he worked on others’ – presumably his superiors’ – lots and managed to clear and sow only a little parcel of land, his oxen broke free from their pen and ate his harvest and he subsequently lost them, a tree branch fell on his house and caused important damage. He had difficulties securing the help that was indispensable for clearing his plot and asked Puisaye to help him get funds or credit. His trials were endless. A few years later, fire consumed his house and one of his oxen broke its neck and died. However, he wrote to Puisaye that he was not losing hope.\footnote{BL, Add MS 8075, fo. 73, 93.} His lack of resources more or less condemned him to try his outmost to make his establishment viable. He constantly wrote to Puisaye to ask for some little advance or favour in the hopes of improving his lot.\footnote{BL, Add MS 8075, fo. 73, 90, 92, 93.}

Few colonists had Marzeul’s resilience. In August 1799, a private named Pierre Padioux succumbed to his state of desperation and took his own life.\footnote{Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard-Gabriel, marquis de Saint-Tronc d’Allègre to Puisaye, 16 August 1799. BL, Add MS 8034, fo. 22.} Many of those who had other skills, means, or connections chose to leave the settlement. Laurent Quetton St George turned to trade and Lambert de la Richerie left to seek acquaintances who had connections with the sugar islands.\footnote{BL Add MS 8075, fo. 75, 117. Russell, \textit{Correspondence}, vol. 3, 200. Lucy Elizabeth Textor, \textit{A Colony of Emigrés in Canada, 1798-1816} (Toronto : University Library, 1905), 69-70.} Two more colonists, Champagne and Polard, left the settlement around June 1800. Champagne even abandoned more than an acre of wheat he had sown.\footnote{Comte de Chalus to Major Green. York, 10 June 1800. LAC, “Correspondence of the Military Secretary of the Commander of the Forces,” RG8-I, C-series, vol. 620, “Settlers,” fo. 129, microfilm reel C-3158.} Furthermore, the hordes of French royalists, upon whom a great part of the enterprise’s success depended, never materialized. Despite Windham’s efforts to recruit more settlers, the resumption of war against
France convinced most to stay in Europe. Puisaye’s plan had not been entirely popular among royalist circles either. Some judged that it would sap the counter-revolution’s forces.

The location of the colony, fifteen miles north of York, impeded its development and provisioning. Communications were inadequate, the cost of transport prohibitive, and the roads often impassable. Puisaye had been offered close to 70,000 acres along Lake Ontario by the loyalist Joseph Brant and the Mississaugas who felt kinship with the émigrés’ plight. Just like Brant, the émigrés had suffered and been uprooted because of their loyalty. Puisaye lobbied for years to get the British authorities’ approbation but he could not prevail. The latter thought that the conditions for the purchase set by Brant would create a risky precedent and undermine their ability to purchase land from native inhabitants cheaply in the future. Russell was concerned that it would establish “that Indians have a right to sell their land to whom they please and that the King shall never again offer them less than 1/3 Quebec Curr’y per Acre, these are points that the E. Council of this province as well as myself judge to be Injurious to His Majesty’s Interest & consequently improper to [be] acceded to, not to mention the extreme Indecency of their presuming to shackle their cessions to the King by any condition whatsoever.”

Although Puisaye retained his Windham grants and made minimal improvements, he chose to settle elsewhere. Contrary to most of the émigrés who followed him, he was in an advantageous position because of his personal fortune. He acquired a 300-acre farm in Niagara for £600 and settled there with two other émigrés, his housekeeper, and a domestic servant. He turned his new situation into a gentlemanly establishment. He rebuilt the house and enlarged the grounds, imported furniture, books, and even trees from England. With its elegant mahogany furniture, Turkish carpets, mirrors, paintings, with its manicured grounds and its fifteen hundred-volume library, Puisaye had indeed affirmed his superior social status.
Confronted with so many obstacles, the settlement’s numbers continued to dwindle. By September 1799, only twenty of the colonists still resided there. In 1802, the number had shrunk to thirteen. Puisaye had returned permanently to England that year. 188 In 1803, he wrote to Windham and bemoaned his companions’ situation: “Leur sort est affreux; j’ai fait au dela de mon pouvoir pour l’adoucir. Si les promesses qui m’ont été faites pour eux avaient été remplies, ils seraient aujourd’hui, heureux sujets de Sa Majesté Britannique et a l’abry de toutes inquiétudes pour eux et pour leurs enfans ils auraient au Canada une retraite honorable et tranquille, tandis que le séjour de pres de cinq années qu’il y ont fait jusqu’a ce jour ne peut être considéré que comme une cruelle transportation.” 189 By 1806 the settlement had been abandoned. Most émigrés had chosen to return to France disillusioned with their Canadian experiment.

Not all the members of the Puisaye group failed to prosper. More adaptable and skilled émigrés fared better. In fact, Laurent Quetton St George considerably improved his situation over the two decades he spent in Canada. Unlike many of the émigrés who joined Puisaye, St George was not of noble stock and had mercantile training. Soon after his arrival in Upper Canada, he got involved in the fur trade. After Puisaye decided to return to England in 1802, St George opened a store in the former’s house in Niagara. 190 He diversified his operations and started provisioning military garrisons. By 1808, the fur trade had become a sideline. His prosperity allowed him to acquire considerable landed property. In fact, he acquired many of the acres his fellow émigrés abandoned once they returned to France. His Canadian landed possessions eventually totalled 26 000 acres. In 1815, he returned to France but he retained his Canadian properties. His commercial success – he had amassed an estimated fortune of £20 000 Halifax currency – enabled him to support his social ascension and become a landed gentleman. He acquired an estate near Montpellier and married Adèle de Barbeyrac de Saint-Maurice, a noble widow. 191

Conclusion

The fact that these experiments were far from resounding successes does not mean that they are devoid of historical interest. For émigrés land was an ideal setting to experiment with

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188 Statement of the actual situation of the French Emigrants under Count Joseph de Puisaye, 3 September 1799. TNA, CO 42/324, fo. 332. Peter Hunter to Lord Robert Hobart, 3 June 1802. TNA, CO 42/329, fo. 37.
189 BL, Add MS 37869, fo. 186.
190 BL, Add MS 8075, fo. 117.
relatively traditional definitions of nobility. Whether they hoped to create paternalist utopias or even havens of French sociability, landownership was a privileged means of survival for noble émigrés. For aristocratic men, regeneration projects often focused on the creation of paternalist establishments in the New World. They believed that North America’s vast wilderness offered an opportunity to start anew, to set in place a regenerated society where the virtues of the state of nature and those of European civilization could be profitably combined. These men were convinced that it was only natural that they would become the leaders of these moral communities. However, all of these émigrés overlooked one essential element for the success of their projects: peasants. Indeed, the difficulties they had in recruiting and retaining peasants and workers suggest that very few members of the lower orders had any interest in going abroad to cultivate others’ lands. Noblemen might wish to return to an idealized seigneurial past but hardly anyone from the unprivileged orders shared that desire. The failure of these North American settlement projects demonstrate how these noble émigré men’s ideas were divorced from both North American and post-revolutionary realities. Still, it is revealing that, despite well-known failures such as that of the Scioto, several émigrés kept devising new settlement projects. Clearly, noblemen were reluctant to give up landed settlement as a means of finding a place in the modern world. In all three cases, “[t]hese emigrants searched for a new environment but not an entirely new way of life.”¹⁹² Their attempts to adapt were limited.

From our vantage point, these experiments may appear almost irrevocably doomed to fail, but, considering the influence of Enlightenment utopian literature, considering the widespread enthusiasm for land speculation in America, and considering the importance of land in the overall economic order, their projects were not illogical. Indeed, land continued to have great importance for the nobility in nineteenth-century France. David Higgs even speaks of “a real psychological falling back on landownership” in émigré and noble circles. Nobles still considered landownership as an important component of status and essential support of social hierarchy. The nobility continued to privilege land over commerce and finance in the early decades of the century and, considering that land was the most valuable asset and by far the main source of wealth and influence, these economic strategies were quite rational.¹⁹³

Chapter 2

Noble Merchants: Enterprising Émigrés and Commerce

In the early 1780s, Augustin Millon d’Ailly was part of a group of investors who had received a contract for the illumination of the streets of Paris and Versailles. The project was a financial disaster and he lost a considerable part of his fortune. As a result of Necker’s reforms, he also lost his office of administrateur des domaines du roi around the same time. In order to settle his debts, the unsuccessful noble investor was forced to sell his family’s ancestral seat to his younger brother. No longer the owner of the Ailly estate, he changed his name to Verneuil. He then sought to improve his fortune by engaging in colonial trade. Years later, his daughter, Madame de Journel, praised her parents’ courage and resignation in the face of adversity. As she explained, “À cette époque, les gens que l’on appelait bien n’entraient jamais dans le négoce… Aussi chercha-t-on à détourner mon père d’une résolution contre laquelle on ne pouvait avancer que de vains préjugés. Il eut le bon esprit d’y persister.”¹ She also criticized the légèreté that some émigrés affected when they, too, faced reduced circumstances only a few years later: “Ma mère n’affecta pas cette grâce dégagée avec laquelle j’ai vu depuis tant de personnes parler de la perte de leur fortune, causée par la Révolution. Le vrai courage consiste à supporter et non à tourner en plaisanterie les privations et les disparates de position.”² Journel’s position contrasted with that of most émigrés because, in her family’s case, the déclassement was permanent. In her experience, the loss of fortune was not something to be made light of.

Noble codes required that members of the order show indifference towards pecuniary concerns. Noble émigrés’ affected légèreté was a manifestation of their adherence to these principles. In reality, most émigrés did not consider their precarious financial circumstances with indifference. Many turned to whatever occupation they could think of in the hopes of preserving their independence and ensuring their subsistence. A few lucky ones found employment in a foreign administration or army and continued to have a traditional noble occupation. Many turned to the skills they had acquired during their noble socialization. They became teachers and gave French, music, drawing, or dancing lessons. Others sold items of their own confection. Others

² Journel, Le fond de mon tiroir, 9.
still tried to earn a living from their pens. Finally, several followed in Verneuil’s footsteps and tried to restore their fortune through trade.

This chapter shows that it was easier for Madame de Journel to take pride in her father’s course of action by the time she wrote her memoirs in the mid-1830s precisely because of the Revolution and ensuing emigration. By then, Verneuil’s decision was no longer condemnable but rather praiseworthy. Julie de Gantès, a young émigrée, also praised her father’s resourcefulness and his efforts to support his family in exile and after. In her memoirs, written around the same time as Journel’s, she claimed that hard work was preferable to ennui. In the Gantès family, work had become normal and sons followed in their father’s steps. Exile allowed, and sometimes required, nobles to experiment with work. This brought about an evolution of noble attitudes with regards to derogation. In his novel L’Émigré, Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan explained how émigrés ennobled work. His character, the duchesse de Montjustin, made and sold artificial flowers to support herself. She counted herself lucky to have a talent that enabled her to face the trials of exile with dignity. She argued, “comment être humilié d’un malheur général” and added, “n’est-il pas plus satisfaisant de pouvoir se suffire à soi-même, et de n’avoir d’obligations à personne?” Noble émigrés’ new attitudes towards work can be explained by the fact that it often was a temporary matter of necessity and the result of their loyalty to what they considered to be a righteous cause. Exile and loyalty to the Bourbons had enabled émigrés to work “sans déroger.”

Prior to the Revolution, any moneymaking activity such as retail trade and manual métiers were considered vile, driven by self-interest and therefore incompatible with nobility. However, for several émigrés faced with reduced circumstances, commerce became an acceptable, even honourable, means of securing their independence and living. Émigrés took pride in their ability

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to avoid dependence and the loss of status and authority it entailed.\textsuperscript{8} The fact that it helped patriarchs support their dependents and even extend their beneficence to less fortunate émigrés also lent a noble mantle to their commercial activities. This attitude was far removed from the opinion against commerce that had prevailed amongst most of the pre-revolutionary nobility. Verneuil’s experience and the objections he encountered neatly sum up the French nobility’s attitude towards trade in the eighteenth century: despite its profitability, commerce was a base occupation. In the absence of landed patrimony and royal patronage, old notions about dérogeance and distinction became less relevant. In their stead, émigrés’ new social standards prized independence, resignation, resourcefulness, and even industriousness.

This chapter first surveys the nobility’s relationship with commerce during the eighteenth century. It shows that despite the monarchy’s best efforts, nobles were generally reluctant to become négociants before 1789. The following sections examine the cases of two émigrés who dabbled in trade, the duc Gaston de Lévis and the comte-général Anne-Pierre de Montesquiou, and two others who adopted trade as a new profession, the marquis Étienne Bernard de Sassenay and the comte Albert-François de Moré de Pontgibaud. These émigrés had two main strategies. For Lévis and Montesquiou, trade was a temporary means of supplementing their meagre resources, thereby seeking to maintain a relatively idle lifestyle while waiting for an opportunity to return to France. For Sassenay and Pontgibaud, however, commerce became a new profession. Their extensive activities enabled them to restore part of their fortune and reclaim some social influence in post-revolutionary France. Their commercial networks also made them important intermediaries for the Napoleonic regime. What is striking in these cases is that none of these merchant-émigrés overtly expressed any concerns about their activities’ propriety.

**Commerce and Nobility in the Ancien Régime: The Noblesse (Non-)Commerçante**

The study of the emergence of political economy in the eighteenth century has recently garnered significant attention. Historians have shown particular interest in the debate over the importance of commerce and luxury from Louis XIV’s reign to the Revolution.\textsuperscript{9} They, just like


enlightened commentators, move beyond a mere consideration of the economic importance of commerce to consider the moral, social, and political ramifications of these public debates. Eighteenth-century French writers expressed some ambivalence about the merits of trade. Most commentators noted that commerce was an agent of change and that, although it could have come civilizing effects, it could also corrupt.\textsuperscript{10} Montesquieu argued that it fostered peace and noted its civilizing effects: “L’esprit de commerce entraîne avec soi celui de frugalité, d’économie, de modération, de travail, de sagesse, de tranquillité, d’ordre et de règle.” Yet, he also warned that it could corrupt and result in excessive inequalities and, by extension, in social disorders.\textsuperscript{11}

Central to the debates was the question of merchants’ status. Acknowledging the importance of commerce for the kingdom’s prosperity, French kings and their ministers, starting with Jean-Baptiste Colbert, offered incentives to foster economic growth and interest in trade. The monarchy pursued two interrelated strategies to improve the status of trade and make it an honourable occupation. First, it removed obstacles to nobles’ involvement in commerce. Second, it sought to elevate the prestige of trade by ennobling noteworthy merchants.\textsuperscript{12} Colbert took major steps towards the removal of obstacles to the nobility’s full participation in economic life. With the creation of the Compagnies des Indes in 1664 and the royal edict of 1669, the monarchy allowed nobles to engage in wholesale trade without derogation. The 1701 edict stated: “Nous avons toujours regardé le Commerce en gros comme une Profession honorable & qui n’oblige à rien qui ne puisse raisonnablement compatir avec la Noblesse.”\textsuperscript{13} From the 1660s to the eve of the Revolution, the monarchy would issue a series of edicts to encourage the nobility’s participation in most sectors of the modernizing economy. Several members of the court aristocracy formed alliances with the financial milieu and participated to the development of court capitalism. They invested in tax farms, government bonds, and state-sponsored manufacturing, and international trade. These aristocrats played crucial role in the establishment of a number of enterprises, especially overseas trading companies after 1770. In spite of the


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Edit du Roy portant que tous les Sujets de sa Majesté nobles... puissent faire librement toute sort de commerce en gros} (De l’Imprimerie de Frederic Leonard, Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy, 1701), 1. Mousnier, \textit{Les institutions de la France}, vol. 1, 110.
monarchy’s efforts, few nobles availed themselves of the new commercial opportunities and almost all of those who did belonged to the court nobility. Since many courtiers belonged to the noblesse de race – their nobility was immemorial –, they could more easily engage in trade because their honour was “unassailable.”

The monarchy also ennobled a few prominent merchants but by the mid-eighteenth century, the status of trade had not much improved. In the Encyclopédie, François Véron de Forbonnais argued that merchants still did not enjoy consideration proportionate to their social utility. For successful merchants, the most common way of achieving nobility remained the acquisition of ennobling offices and, more often than not, those who did preferred to relinquish their commercial activities and adopt a noble lifestyle. Véron de Forbonnais argued that “such fortunes would not be withdrawn from commerce if the condition of the trader were as honored as it deserves to be.” The general opinion remained that merchants were driven by self-interest and lacked the honour and virtue necessary to promote the general good and wield public authority. In sum, regardless of the monarchy’s repeated attempts to raise the status of trade and noble interest for commerce, the second order continued to shun this activity.

Despite the second order’s apparent lack of interest for trade, the proper or desirable relationship of the nobility with trade remained the topic of many discussions throughout the century. In De l’esprit des lois, Montesquieu argued that a noblesse commerçante would be undesirable in a monarchy like France since it would stifle emulation and the desire for social promotion among the merchant class. In the midst of the Seven Years War, the debate between the abbé Coyer and the chevalier d’Arcq on the noblesse commerçante shed light on diverging conceptions of patriotism and of the nobility’s role in French society. In 1756, Gabriel-François Coyer published a controversial text, La noblesse commerçante, in which he argued that French

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16 Chaussinand-Nogaret argues that ennoblement did not lead to the abandonment of commerce especially since the letters of ennoblement specified that the family should continue its commercial activities or risk losing its newly conferred nobility. The 1701 edict however highlight the monarchy’s concerns over ennobled merchants’ withdrawal from trade. Furthermore, Richard has shown however that very few letters of ennoblement were given to merchants and that ennobling offices were the most common means of obtaining nobility. Edit du Roy, 2. Chaussinand-Nogaret, The French Nobility, 95. Richard, Noblesse d’affaires, 48-50. Véron de Forbonnais, “Commerce.”
economic growth was stunted because of the lack of consideration merchants endured. He argued that nobles should engage in trade and help make it more honourable. He claimed that commerce was a selfless and patriotic – therefore honourable – pursuit and denied that the mercantile classes were driven by self-interest. In a previous publication, he had also challenged the nobility’s monopoly on patriotism and virtue and argued that these qualities in fact belonged to the most useful classes, including merchants. D’Arcq’s response to Coyer, La noblesse militaire, rejected the claim that trade was a selfless pursuit. He contended that the pursuit of private interests, a practice at the core of mercantile activities, was incompatible with the self-sacrifice that was required of a warrior class. To push the nobility to get involved in vile activities, he argued, would be the ruin of the order and of France. The debate over La noblesse commerçante highlighted different conceptions of trade, social utility, and patriotism. Both men considered what place commerce should have in France and how the noble order could best serve the state. They came to different conclusions. Coyer argued that the development of a commercial society would promote enlightenment and help France’s emancipation from its “anachronistic, feudal social order.” D’Arcq argued that the development of commercial society would place money above honour and merit and signal the death of civic virtue. He argued that agriculture was a more reliable and virtuous source of wealth and power for the French state.19

The creation of the école militaire in 1751 and the 1781-Ségur règlement suggest that both the monarchy and the nobility still firmly believed in the second order’s military vocation and were deeply concerned about the professionalization of the army. Furthermore, military reformers agreed with d’Arcq: money and luxury had no place in the army. They impeded the professionalization of the officer corps and were held responsible, in part, for France’s poor performance during the Seven Years’ War.20 Cupidity and self-interest, qualities associated with trade, were the army’s enemy and, by extension, antithetical to the noble ethos.

In the last two decades of the Ancien Régime, discourses meant to improve the status of commerce borrowed from larger public discussions about the nobility’s merits and faults.

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Starting in the 1770s, social commentators routinely challenged the nobility’s monopoly on virtue and honour and built on Coyer’s arguments that commerce was a source of progress, that merchants were socially useful and, therefore, virtuous and honourable. A new approach to luxury claimed that it was a social and political phenomenon whose roots were to be found in the extravagances and corruption of the aristocracy, rather than a consequence of the development of commercial society. New representations of commerce emphasized how merchants were driven by a desire for honour at least as much as a desire for profit. Writers mobilized the concept of emulation – “a form of gentlemanly competitiveness – a drive to imitate or surpass others in virtue and merit” – to explain how merchants had an aptitude for honour and public spiritedness. Interestingly, this discourse seeking to elevate trade generally did so by endowing it with traditional noble qualities such as honour, public spirit, and patriotism.\(^{21}\)

Commerce was recognized as an efficient means of raising fortunes. Although financiers were generally more successful in integrating the upper echelons of the nobility, a number of mercantile families did amass sufficient capital to purchase ennobling offices or to obtain letters of nobility (*lettres patentes*) and to acquire seigneurial estates.\(^{22}\) Some mercantile families strengthened their claims to nobility by forming matrimonial unions with members of the second order. Commerce could be an effective means of upward social mobility.

The Revolution brought about rapid changes. The spread of bourgeois notions of honour and virtue raised the status of trade. Revolutionary Claude-Emmanuel Pastoret observed: “des préjugés honteux cherchèrent longtemps à flétrir le commerce… Le temps et la philosophie ont révélé à la France la dignité de tout ce qui est utile et le commerce est remonté au rang où doivent le placer les services qu’il rend à la patrie.” Revolutionary discourses placed emphasis on the honourability of industriousness, competence, and prosperity.\(^{23}\)

The émigrés’ activities differed from the large-scale capitalist ventures of the Ancien Régime nobility. They did not invest in overseas trading companies or other grand ventures.

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Rather, they limited their activities to small-scale trade or to family-based businesses, areas that had been largely disregarded by their predecessors.

**Gentlemen Traders**

“Je suis honteux de t’écrire toutes ces drogues:” *Gaston and Pauline de Lévis and the Channel Luxury Trade.*

Gaston de Lévis belonged to an old but relatively poor family of the sword nobility. The family’s fortune had considerably improved as a result of his father François de Lévis’s brilliant military career. François had been an important commander during the Seven Years’ War and, after, he was appointed governor of Artois. As a reward for his services, he was made *maréchal de France* and *duc et pair.* François also raised the family’s fortune by marrying Gabrielle Augustine Michel de Tharon who belonged to an ennobled merchant family from Nantes. The bride brought a sizeable dowry of 560 000 livres to the union. Matrimonial strategies continued to support the Lévis’s elevation. Gaston married Pauline Charpentier d’Ennery, who belonged to another family of recent nobility but of considerable fortune. Pauline was the heiress of a number of estates in Val-d’Oise and, through her mother, of plantations in Martinique. On the eve of the Revolution, the couple enjoyed a comfortable fortune of at least 500 000 livres.

Gaston de Lévis followed in his father’s footsteps. He was one of the two captains of the comte de Provence’s guard. He had a close relationship with Provence and was his favourite from 1788 to early 1790. Political events eventually drove them apart. In 1789, Lévis was chosen as a delegate for the nobility of Senlis and he supported early revolutionary reforms. He professed liberal ideas and favoured the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. He showed great interest in the question of France’s finances. He notably opposed the creation of the assignats and committed his thoughts on the matter to print. Despite a few divergences of opinions with the revolutionary leaders, he was committed to the work of the National Assembly and attended regularly.

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Lévis opposed the early emigration of intransigent aristocrats.\textsuperscript{28} As a moderate, he found himself in an uncomfortable position after the flight to Varennes: he did not support the émigrés nor did he agree with the more radical voices clamouring for a republic. He summed up his position in a letter to his wife written on July 23, 1791: “Vous me connaissez assez pour savoir que je n’aime pas le despotisme, c’est pour lui, quoi qu’ils disent, que les princes viendront combattre, vous voyez donc bien que je serais entre le marteau et l’enclume, craignant également le succès des fous pour lesquels je me battrais et des tyrans que j’attaquerais… [L]a neutralité devient impossible puisqu’il faudrait fuir et c’est ce que je ne ferai jamais, je servirai donc dans l’armée patriotique…”\textsuperscript{29} Although his political convictions and honour, as well as material considerations retained him in France, he did not object to his wife’s emigration in December 1790. He believed that her situation, as a woman, was different. According to his letters, Pauline was afraid and unhappy. He thus acceded to her request to leave France even if, as he put it, “cela me fait un certain tort.”\textsuperscript{30} He urged her to seek refuge in England, which he considered the only politically suitable and safe asylum.\textsuperscript{31} There she would be removed from the potential war theater and avoid the society of compromising \textit{ultra} émigrés. For his part, he expressed the wish to spend as little time as possible in France in September 1791 but only resolved to leave permanently after the storming of the Tuileries on June 20, 1792.\textsuperscript{32} Lévis had witnessed the attack firsthand and had helped repel the assailants. This event convinced him that he could no longer play a useful role in France. He wrote to Pauline the next day: “Je crois pourtant qu’une pareille scène recommencera la semaine prochaine et que les suites, cette fois, en seront tragiques, mais je ne l’attendrai pas. J’ai fait preuve de dévouement, l’on paraît absolument décidé à se laisser égorger comme des moutons, j’ai vu qu’il était impossible de les en empêcher et qu’on périrait très gratuitement.”\textsuperscript{33} He concluded that his only option was emigration. He left Paris in July 1792 and belatedly tried to join the army of the Princes before finally joining an Austrian regiment.\textsuperscript{34}

Lévis showed more foresight than the average émigré. In January 1791, he assessed his financial situation. He tallied what he had already lost and what he might still lose as a consequence of the Revolution. He had lost his revenue from his position in Monsieur’s guard, he

\textsuperscript{28} Pailhès, “Introduction,” 61.
\textsuperscript{29} Lévis, \textit{Écrire la Révolution}, 353-354.
\textsuperscript{30} Lévis, \textit{Écrire la Révolution}, 269-270, 369.
\textsuperscript{31} Lévis, \textit{Écrire la Révolution}, 267, 269-270, 276.
\textsuperscript{32} Lévis, \textit{Écrire la Révolution}, 369.
\textsuperscript{33} Lévis, \textit{Écrire la Révolution}, 435.
\textsuperscript{34} Martin, \textit{Lévis}, 131.
had lost the seigneurial revenues of his estates, and hurricanes and slave revolts in Martinique further threatened a significant part of his income. To this he added his debts and the annuities he had to pay: over 120,000 francs to be repaid over four years. Lévis concluded by writing: “Cela est réellement effrayant.”35 He communicated this assessment to Pauline and repeatedly entreated her to practice economy during her exile since their future revenues were by no means secure.36 He also criticized his mother-in-law’s profligacy and her decision to bring her chef with her:

Soit par gourmandise, soit délicatesse, votre maman fait donc venir son cuisinier. Ce qu’il y a de plus drôle, c’est qu’elle tiendra la maison de tout le monde… Vous remarquerez donc que ces dames sont toutes (sauf respect) vilaines comme des chouettes, que votre maman est généreuse, que ces dames lésineront et que votre maman paiera. Voilà qui est déjà mal, mais ce qui l’est bien davantage, c’est que… je paierai la moitié de ce ridicule arrangement. Et c’est, comme vous dites élégamment, ma bête d’aversion de donner aux gens qui, dans ma conviction, ne me rendraient pas au lieu que je donnerais tout au monde aux personnes serviables et généreuses, quand je serais parfaitement sûr de ne jamais être dans le cas de recevoir d’elles. Voilà pourquoi un soupeur de vos amis dont l’égoïsme m’est démontré, me choque toujours.37

This example reveals a complex clash of attitudes among the émigré nobility. For Madame Charpentier d’Ennery, having her chef seemed like a necessity: if she was to fulfil a noblewoman’s hospitable duties, she would need to properly feed her guests. By the eighteenth century, the concept of hospitality had evolved from Christian generosity and largesse towards social peers, strangers, and the poor alike to an obligation of civility. By then, it mostly meant reciprocity among peers.38 Eighteenth-century nobles’ conception of hospitality and the development of the idea of aristocratic bon goût (both in terms of cuisine and culture) made the employment of an expert chef a requirement of noble status: hospitality required that guests be fed and haute cuisine became a mark of social distinction and Frenchness.39 Commensality was at

35 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 280.
36 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 274, 325-6, 363.
37 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 278.
the heart of French sociability practices: “l’art de parler” and “l’art de manger” were integral parts of the French “art de vivre.”

Madame Charpentier d’Ennery could not close her table to her émigré acquaintances without violating the noble codes of honnêteté and hospitality.

Lévis’s objections were manifold. First, he judged that it was more prudent to reduce household expenditures immediately. Second, he objected that his mother-in-law’s guests’ opinions were compromising. Third, he considered that her guests broke the convention of reciprocity central to aristocratic hospitality. According to him, they were self-interested and did not display noble largesse. He did not require exact reciprocity but he expected the commensals to be inclined to be serviceable and generous even if he may never have occasion to call upon their services. Here, Lévis parted with aristocratic customs and rejected the principles Antoine de Courtin outlined in his Traité de la civilité. Good hosts should not shrug off their duties so as to avoid being plagued by numerous visitors, Courtin argued, since “[i]l est non-seulement de l’honnêteté, mais même de la prudence de se bien mettre avec son voisinage; la civilité demande que l’on ne refuse point sa maison à ses voisins; & la nécessité où l’on peut tomber par quelque accident, ordonne que l’on s’en fasse aimer, afin qu’ils courent à notre secours.”

Lévis’s role as the patriarch and manager of the family finances, including his mother-in-law’s, led him to advocate economy and prudence at the expense of aristocratic codes of civility. He judged that his mother-in-law should cut her expenses by a third since her finances were in even worse shape than theirs. He explained to Pauline that it was preferable to lower their living standards “by degrees” rather than fall into “the horror of poverty.” His letters contain several details about his own efforts to curb his spending. He sold horses, dismissed his gardener, and limited his monthly expenses to 400 livres. He also moved some of his capital out of France and invested it in the Bank of England. He feared that the Revolution would have dramatic financial repercussions. Fiscal responsibility was an imperative in these uncertain times.

Not content to limit his expenditures, Lévis also tried to improve his financial situation by finding new sources of revenue. In February 1791, with the help of the mechanical engineer

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40 Litli, Le monde des salons, 229-233.
41 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 276, 278.
43 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 278-279, 348.
44 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 274, 314.
45 He had at least 1400 pounds in the Bank of England. Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 297, 387.
Claude-Pierre Molard, who sought to implement English technology in France, he established a cotton spinning manufacture on his Ennery estate from which he expected “des merveilles.” Lévis was by no means the only French noble who showed an interest in the textile industry. From the 1770s onwards, a number of aristocrats – including the ducs de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt and d’Orléans – had installed manufactures on their estates. These initiatives were generally seen in a positive light. They were considered an extension of the seigneurs’ social responsibility to provide resources and employment for local inhabitants. By March 1791, Lévis’s manufacture was transforming cotton worth 50 sous into cotton worth 110 sous and he hoped that his product would soon sell for 160 sous. The exact size of his establishment is unknown but Molard, commenting on the enterprise during the Restoration, wrote: “M. le duc de Lévis… m’honora de sa confiance pour la construction de plusieurs machines à coton… Il mit à ma disposition les fonds nécessaires pour l’organisation des ateliers de menuiserie de tour et de forge.” Despite the fact that Lévis was certain that the enterprise would be both lucrative for him and useful for the local inhabitants, he told Pauline that he was building it slowly.

A year later, in April 1792, Lévis turned to small-scale trade in order to supplement his income. He took advantage of Pauline’s stay in England and tried to capitalize on demand for French luxury items. As he was beginning to prepare his exile, he acquired desirable merchandise to export to England. The items he considered for his commerce varied widely but all were small luxury goods: gloves, corsages, veils, and tuckers, lace and cloth, rouge, jewellery, and decorative candy boxes, wallpapers and mirrors, honey and wine. No doubt he purposefully restricted his activities to the luxury trade, an area that was expected to yield high profit. When choosing what items to export, Lévis considered how conveniently they could go through customs and how much profit he could derive from them. For example, he calculated that veils were some of the most advantageous or profitable items since a single individual could bring up to 10 000 livres-worth across the border and that veils bought for 140 livres apiece could be sold for 4 guineas, or 176 livres, and he believed that they would soon fetch 200 livres.

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In order to make informed business decisions, Lévis sent a series of inquiries to Pauline. He asked her to get detailed information about a number of goods from individuals who had good knowledge of imports and retail practices. He instructed her to ask the grocer Dupuis about the price, duties, and demand for honey. She was to ask Monsieur Collins about the price and dimensions of English rolls of wallpapers. She was to inquire about the price of mirrors. He advised his wife to be cautious when making these inquiries to avoid raising the suspicion of customs agents. He took advantage of his noble status to evade the customs and regulations to which merchants were subjected.

Furthermore, Lévis was aware that upper class women constituted an important segment of the British consumer base. His activities targeted their appetite for French fashions. Except for the wine, the honey, the mirrors, and, to some extent, the candy boxes, wallpapers, and cloth, all of the items he considered were destined for female consumers. He did not have an extensive knowledge of British fashion, or at least he thought that his observations in that respect were deficient. Thus, he had to rely on Pauline’s opinions. He asked her if feathers and corsages would be desirable. Among his earliest trading efforts, he came up with “un beau projet pour le rouge” and asked his wife whether there would be any demand for the fifty jars he thought of sending her. A rather controversial cosmetic in England at the time, he seems to have abandoned this project and there were no further mentions of this plan in his letters.

Although Pauline played an important subsidiary role in the commercial venture, Lévis clearly retained the initiative and the decision-making power. He was the one who decided which items to send. There is limited evidence about which goods he sent her. He did send some lace, veils, and tuckers as well as jewellery, candy boxes and at least 300 bottles of champagne between April and July 1792. His letters also contained detailed calculations and instructions.
about the price at which each item should be sold in order to make a profit. The champagne, for example, should be given to Dupuis to be sold at four or five shillings per bottle and he estimated that a ring with a yellow diamond was worth about 25 guineas.59

Lévis did apologize to his wife for bothering her with such matters. His letters from April 1792 are filled with lengthy details about their commercial activities and he wrote to her: “Je suis honteux de t’écrire toutes ces drogues…”60 Although Pauline’s letters are lost, it seems, from his responses, that she was a somewhat reluctant participant in this commercial scheme. She suggested recourse to an intermediary to deal with retailers. He concurred and added, “je serais même fâché que vous alliez chez les marchands.” It was improper for aristocratic women to enter the marketplace as anything but consumers. For the sake of propriety, Lévis suggested that she should supervise the operation and offer a 2 percent commission to her intermediary. He asked if Madame and Monsieur Grillon, members of her suite, could not be convinced to act as such.61 The Grillon agreed and he started writing them directly about his commercial operation.62

Although Lévis was concerned about propriety when it came to his wife’s role in the trade, he appears to have shown no special unease about his own involvement. Even if he did not engage in retail trade, it was singular that an aristocratic man concerned himself with such purchases. It was also singular that he felt no shame about dealings that could be judged base. His family history, the extraordinary circumstances, and his efforts to adapt to the changing world explain why he considered his commercial enterprise necessary and normal. His letters suggest that he often dealt directly with the merchants and retailers from whom he acquired items for his commerce. There is evidence that he dealt directly with some marchandes de modes and that he chose merchandise for female consumers himself. For instance, he wrote to Pauline that he had been to examine various pieces of jewellery.63 The extraordinary circumstances of exile altered traditional gender roles and men in émigré milieus sometimes made what would normally have been considered feminine purchases. The comtesse d’Escars, for example, asked Louis d’Arthez to buy her some wool. She mentioned that while the errand was not “[de] son genre,” he would

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59 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 392-393, 424, 438.
60 Drogues should be understood as merchandise sold by grocers. “Drogue” in Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, 5th edition (1798) in Dictionnaires d’Autrefois, The ARTFL Project, CNRS and the University of Chicago, accessed March 27, 2015, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=drogue
Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 382.
61 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 390.
62 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 382, 393, 402.
63 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 391, 402.
surely do fine with some feminine advice. Upon reception of the wool, she quipped “vous avés
dans ce genre de commission une intelligence qui a surpassé mes éesperances et peut être les
votres on se découvre tous les jours quelques talens.” Émigré networks’ thinness forced them to
rely on who they could and prompted them to develop new skills to be serviceable to their friends.
Lévis did not keep his dealings secret either. His operation depended on his personal
connections. His letters indicate that he used French diplomats to facilitate his merchandise’s
movement across the Channel. In April 1792, he sent tuckers and veils to Pauline. He relied on
Talleyrand and François Bernard, marquis de Chauvelin – French envoys to Britain – to bring the
items across the border. Lévis’s experience supports R. Darrell Meadows’ conclusion that
émigrés’ personal connections and networks, even weak ones, endured throughout the
revolutionary period and often crossed class and political boundaries. Personal connections and
the principle of obligation prevailed over questions of political convictions.
Lévis’s familial background explains why he was so concerned with financial matters and
why he apparently felt that his commercial activities were in no way inappropriate. For one thing,
as a good paterfamilias, he claimed that he was mostly concerned about his children’s welfare.
He wrote to his wife that carelessness was unacceptable since they had to think about their
children. Financial security was necessary to ensure the successful social reproduction of the
line. For another thing, his mother’s family had founded their fortune on commerce. His maternal
grandfather, Gabriel Michel de Tharon, was a ship-owner from Nantes. Michel participated in the
slave and colonial trades, he had trading houses in Spain, Holland, and in Northern Europe. He
had also been a director of the Compagnie des Indes. His fortune enabled him to acquire the
seigneuries of Tharon and Doulon and he obtained royal letters confirming his nobility in 1747.
Michel provided generous dowries for his daughters and marital alliances further elevated his
family’s social status. The marriage between François de Lévis and Augustine-Gabrielle Michel
de Tharon had also allowed the Lévis to rise in consideration. Gaston de Lévis mother’s fortune
had provided the necessary means for his father to uphold his rank as maréchal de France and

64 Duchesse d’Escars to Louis d’Arthez, Dusseldorf, 20 May and 6 August 1794. AN, 477 AP 1.
65 Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 388, 390, 396
66 Karine Rance makes similar observations. Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés,” 190-191. R. Darrell Meadows,
“Engineering Exile: Social Networks and the French Atlantic Community, 1789-1809,” French Historical Studies 23,
124-125.
duc et pair. Lévis’s family history reveals how instrumental fortune acquired through trade was to their efforts to maintain and even improve their status. Considering his roots, it is not too surprising that he turned to commerce in the hopes of raising his family’s fortune once more. Finally, as an enlightened nobleman, he subscribed to the ideas of merit and utility. The growing popularity of “bourgeois” ethics that valued industriousness and that stipulated that only useful activities were truly honourable may also have influenced his endeavours.69

In the end, Lévis’s enterprise was short-lived and it ceased when he emigrated. To support themselves during their exile, the couple resorted to more traditional survival strategies: they sold Pauline’s diamonds and he joined an émigré regiment employed by the British army and participated in the Quiberon Bay expedition.70 His episodic commercial ventures did not damage his position among the French nobility in the long run. After his return to France in 1800, he reacquired some of his confiscated properties and began a literary career. Upon the Bourbons’ return, he was made member of the Conseil privé and pair de France. Pauline became a celebrated hostess.71 In short, the Lévis were fully integrated into the post-revolutionary elite.

“Il ne s’agit plus d’être riche, il s’agit de subsister.” Montesquïou’s French-European Trade

Anne-Pierre, marquis de Montesquïou-Fézensac belonged to an ancient family of the sword nobility. Montesquïou spent a significant part of his youth in close proximity to Louis XVI and the royal family. In 1754 he began a military career and in 1780 he was made maréchal de camp. As a reward for his military services, he obtained the croix de Saint Louis and the Ordre du Saint-Esprit. As an enlightened nobleman, he also developed a taste for letters and he was elected to the Académie française. In 1789, he was chosen as one of the delegates for the nobility of Paris for the Estates General. Despite his past intimacy with the royal family, he supported the early Revolution and professed liberal ideas. Just like Lévis, he was concerned about France’s finances. He became a member of the National Assembly’s financial committee.72 Montesquïou continued his military career under the revolutionary regime. In 1792, he received the command of the Armée du Midi and conquered Savoy. However, his refusal to invade Geneva in November

70 BL, Add Ms 37859, fo. 311, Add Ms 37860, fo. 23. Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 455.
72 In 1791, he published two memoranda: Mémoire sur les finances du royaume and Mémoire sur les assignats.

Montesquiou’s role during the revolutionary wars seriously limited his asylum options: the Swiss cantons and the United States were his only options. With the help of the bailiff Jean-Henri Hottinguer, to whom he had been recommended, Montesquiou settled in Bremgarten. His right to asylum was not easily won. In January 1793, the Zurich authorities seemed to waver under French pressure and considered expelling him. Montesquiou wrote letters of vigorous protestations against a treatment which he considered unwarranted. He claimed that asylum was a fundamental human right, that his conduct in Zurich had been beyond reproach, that he aspired to nothing less than to live a quiet life, that Zurich was an independent state and, accordingly, that it did not have to give in to foreign pressures. He added that, in Britain, French émigrés enjoyed hospitality and legal protection.\footnote{Général de Montesquiou (Chevalier de Rionel) to Bailiff Hottinguer. 5 January 1793 and 6 January 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1. Max Gérard, Messieurs Hottinguer, banquiers à Paris (Paris : Draeger frères, 1968), 144-145.} In the end, he was allowed to stay.

Montesquiou was pleased with this new establishment and generally considered that it was far preferable to follow the dictates of honour and integrity and to live in exile than in France, even if that resulted into a loss of status. Shortly after the news of Louis XVI’s execution had reached him, he made this claim most adamantly: “Ils [the French] croiroient me faire une grace en me recevant parmi eux, je n’en veux pas. J’aime mieux cultiver de mes mains un de vos champs, et être au dernier rang de vos citoyens.”\footnote{Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 24 January 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.} In July 1793, he told Hottinguer that he would rather continue his quiet life in exile rather than join the federalist uprisings. By then, he refused to compromise with the revolutionaries and wished for the monarchy’s return. He did not consider lending his sword to the Federalists honourable.\footnote{Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 9 July 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.}

Montesquiou’s Swiss establishment was modest compared to his pre-revolutionary lifestyle. He was a \textit{grand seigneur} who had enjoyed an annual income in excess of 75 000 livres
before the Revolution and spent lavishly in order to fulfill the requirements of representation. He told Hottinguer, “Vous avez vu les debris de mon ancien luxe, autre temps, autres mœurs.” By August 1793, he assessed that his financial situation was becoming rather critical. He, once again, turned to Hottinguer: “C’est avec peine que je vous parle de moi, mais vous ne voudriez pas que je demandasse la charité et je n’ai plus que pour six mois de subsistance.” He estimated that, no matter how economically he lived, he required at least 6000 livres per year. By talking about his personal situation, he infringed upon noble codes of politeness but his aversion for dependence and charity was clearly more important. He explained that he had been considering means to improve his financial situation “sans vous être trop a charge” and that he had found only one. With Hottinguer and other members of the latter’s family’s help, he would procure French goods to be re-exported from Switzerland and sold in Europe. He hoped that his commerce would enable him to live honourably, independently, and in modest ease. As he wrote, “il ne s’agit plus d’être riche, il s’agit de subsister.”

Montesquiou’s plan was somewhat more ambitious than Lévis’s. In its initial iteration, he hoped to acquire goods worth between 20,000 and 24,000 livres although he later revised that figure to 16,000 livres for the first shipment. The list of items he considered was also more extensive. He sought to acquire French books, maps, and engravings, porcelain and mirrors, clocks and small furniture, works of art, and fine wines from Bordeaux and Champagne. His plan showed good business acumen. First, it sought to capitalize on European demand for French luxury goods and on the relative decline of demand for such goods in France. Second, he sought to profit from trade restrictions between France and the European states with which the Republic was at war. By importing French goods into Switzerland and then exporting them to other countries, he would be able to circumvent trade restrictions and satisfy consumer demand. Third, he sought to get rid of unstable assignats. For example, he wished to inquire after English taste for French paintings. In the spring of 1793, Philippe d’Orléans had sold parts of his art collection to British collectors and realized a handsome profit. Gilbert Elliot reported that the works were

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79 Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 16 December 1792, 8 and 15 August 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
80 Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 8 August 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
81 Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 8, 18, and 20 August 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
Montesquiou thought that French artists were not likely to be very busy at the time since their primary clientele had either emigrated or sought to keep a low profile. He also thought it advisable to purchase books, engravings, and maps for their commerce since these items’ price in assignats had been little affected by inflation and since they retained a good value in European markets. These would allow them to get the most out of their assignats.

Montesquiou relied on his personal connections to facilitate his enterprise, notably on Hottinguer, on his son, and on the Dutch woman Henriette-Amélie de Nerha. Hottinguer was a natural choice. He had been Montesquiou’s main protector since his arrival in Zurich and his family had extensive business connections in both Paris and Zurich. Jean-Henri’s nephew, Jean-Conrad, had extended his family’s financial activities to Paris in 1784 and founded Hottinguer et cie. in 1790. Already in 1791, Jean-Conrad was trading his assignats for goods such as cotton, coffee, and sugar. His Zurich-based associates also advised him to move his capital outside of France. Jean-Henri’s familial network was well suited to the sort of international trade Montesquiou had in mind. Montesquiou believed his son would be the ideal intermediary for their art trade. His son had excellent knowledge of fine art and his services would necessitate no monetary advance. He objected to Hottinguer’s suggestion of retaining the art dealer Jean-Baptiste Lebrun’s services. He conceded that Lebrun was “le premier connoisseur de l’Europe” but explained that he was a “frippon” who should not be trusted. Montesquiou also relied on his friend Nerha, who, according to her, he considered her “comme sa sœur.” He relied on her expertise of all things feminine such as stockings, fabrics, and ribbons but, more importantly, he often relied on her to move capital and goods between Switzerland and France. As a woman and a foreigner, she had a greater facility crossing the French border, a decisive advantage. She had already demonstrated her skills in circumventing border restrictions: in 1784, she had smuggled one of Mirabeau’s censored publications into France. On September 17, 1793, she took 15 000 livres in assignats for his trade back with her to Paris.

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83 Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 8, 15, and 18 August 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
85 Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 22 août 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
Despite having devised the plan, Montesquiou does not appear to have been extensively involved in the enterprise’s daily operations. He wrote to Hottinguer: “mon seul regret est de n’être pas chargé de tenir un livre, de n’être associé qu’aux avantages et de pas l’être aux peines.” No doubt, the latter, with his professional expertise and connections, was in a much better position to direct their venture. It is difficult to assess the full extent of Montesquiou’s commerce. His correspondence with Hottinguer details his project but is overall uninformative when it comes to their enterprise’s actual operations. His letters mention that he sent 6000 livres in assignats for their commerce on August 27, 1793 in addition to the 15 000 livres Nerha took with her but his surviving letters to Hottinguer after October 1793 do not make any significant mentions of his trade project. Travel restrictions and the deterioration of the French and European situations likely posed an insurmountable obstacle to their international enterprise.

Montesquiou’s commercial enterprise shared many similarities with Lévis’s. Both sought to improve their financial situation by capitalizing on European demand for French luxury goods. Both also depended on female intermediaries for their success. Pauline de Lévis and Nerha played essential roles. First, for their knowledge of feminine things, especially fashion. Second, because they were less likely to attract the suspicion of customs and borders officials. Lévis and Montesquiou sought to improve their financial situation with small-scale and quick trades and did not make a long-term commitment to commerce as a profession. Finally, and most importantly, they did not consider that their activities contravened noble codes of honour.

Montesquiou does not seem to have questioned the propriety of his plan, nor did he appear particularly concerned that it would tarnish his honour. His main goal was simple – he wished to remain independent – and that goal was decidedly noble. He did tell Hottinguer once that it would be highly desirable for his name not to be mentioned anywhere but that was most likely due to the secrecy surrounding his stay in Zurich and to his troubled relationship with the Swiss and French authorities rather than any concern about his honour. Moreover, he shared the noble tendency to devise grand plans. Just like the marquis de Lezay-Marnésia, the vicomte de Noailles, or the comte de Puisaye, had done for their North American colonization ventures, Montesquiou came up with an elaborate project, did not pause to consider starting small and

\[87\] Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 20 August 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
\[88\] Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 25 and 27 August and 17 September 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
\[89\] Montesquiou to Hottinguer. 15 August 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
building up, and mostly relied on others for its execution.\textsuperscript{90} Nowhere in his correspondence did he question his own righteousness as the architect of a mercantile endeavour, nor did he specifically ask for Hottinguer’s input. He submitted to his partner what he thought would be the most practical or sensible course of action and Hottinguer was left with the execution.

“Je n’aimerais pas cette voie qu’en grand, et avec une loyale honnêteté:” The Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt against Trade

Not all noble émigrés were easy with small-scale trade. François-Alexandre-Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld, duc de Liancourt presents an interesting counter-point. Liancourt was a grandee who had enjoyed a considerable income of 446 000 livres before 1789. Both before and after the Revolution, he established manufactures on his estates and promoted industrial innovations in his writings. As a benevolent landowner, he wished to provide employment opportunities for his tenants.\textsuperscript{91} His aversion towards trade, however, remained strong. During his exile, he preferred to downgrade his lifestyle and endure privations rather than to seek to increase the modest sum of 69 000 livres he had taken in exile in ways that raised the specter of derogation. In 1796, he wrote to his wife and explained that privations had allowed him to preserve most of his capital. He wrote that these privations were “pénibles” but that his “extreme determination” would have enabled him to support even more severe ones. He concluded, “Je vous parle de cette privation de fortune quoique ce soit pour moi le plus petit mal. Je n’ai rien fait pour l’augmenter ici par aucune spéculation d’affaire d’aucun genre. Je n’aimerais pas cette voie qu’en grand [wholesale], et avec une loyale honnêteté.”\textsuperscript{92}

An impoverished refugee in a materialistic society, Liancourt found himself in a vulnerable situation. He chose to affirm his elevated social status not by pursuing profitable economic activities – which he considered ignoble – but rather by clinging to whichever aspects of his nobility that remained within his limited reach. He continued to cultivate and showcase his extensive culture through his travels, publications, and sociability practices. He also wrote to his wife that he found solace in his continued independence. In overt defiance of American values, he also sought to maintain his idle lifestyle even if his reduced circumstances prevented him from

\textsuperscript{90} On Lezay-Marnésia, Noailles, and Puisaye’s North American ventures see chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{92} François-Alexandre Frédéric, duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, \textit{Journal de voyage en Amérique et d’un séjour a Philadelphie, 1 octobre 1794-18 avril 1795} (Paris : E. Droz, 1940), 126, 128.
adequately upholding his rank. His resolution to avoid derogation remained steadfast. It became a means to set himself apart from his greedy American hosts and to reaffirm his Frenchness and his elevated social origins.

During his stay in the United States, Liancourt limited his financial activities to the acquisition of 800 acres of land. Nevertheless, his letter also reveals that he was not opposed to trade per se but that two main obstacles made that option undesirable. First, he would only consider engaging in large-scale, wholesale, and thus non-derogating trade. This option was no longer available to him since he lacked the sufficient capital to do so. Second, he judged that American business culture, which was, he argued, driven by greed, constituted an insurmountable obstacle to a gentleman’s attempt to conduct his business honourably. Liancourt’s actions and discourses reveal that he had internalized Ancien Régime ideas about trade and about nobility. Unlike émigrés who turned to trade and showed some flexibility in their attempts to adapt to their new circumstances, Liancourt chose to hold fast to traditional noble principles.

Noble Négociants

“Je n’ai rien a me reprocher qui puisse blesser l’honêteté:” Sassenay and Transatlantic Trade

Étienne Bernard de Sassenay was born into the robe nobility. His family had been magistrates in the Dijon parlement for generations, and his father was a président à mortier. The président broke with family tradition and, for his eldest son and heir, he chose a military career. Upon his father’s death, Sassenay inherited a sizable fortune of about three million livres. In 1789, he represented the nobility of Chalon-sur-Saône at the Estates General. He was not a liberal aristocrat. In June 1789, he registered his disapproval of the forced fusion of the three orders and, by November, he had resigned from the National Assembly. Although he strongly opposed the revolutionary regime, he delayed his emigration over concerns about the confiscation

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95 On Liancourt’s ideas about land see chapter 1. La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Journal*, 109.
96 La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Journal*, 126.
of his properties. He finally left in June 1792 with about 30 000 francs and joined Condé’s émigré army. In 1793, he moved to the Hompesch regiment, hired by the British government. In November 1795, the regiment was sent to Saint-Domingue. There it was decimated; most of the soldiers fell to tropical diseases. After the corps was disbanded, Sassenay found refuge in the United States. His movements followed pre-established French and Saint-Domingue networks. He first went to Lancaster in Pennsylvania where he found other French exiles. Then, in March 1798, he settled in Wilmington in Delaware where there was a significant French exile community. There, he met the Bretton des Chapelles, a noble family from Saint-Domingue who had fled after the slave uprising. A few months later, he married Fortunée, the youngest of the three Bretton des Chapelles daughters.99

Sassenay thought that the 30 000 francs he had at his disposal were insufficient to ensure his family’s future well-being, especially since the fate of his French assets and of his wife’s inheritance seemed uncertain. Consequently, he decided to join his brothers-in-law’s commercial operations. Pierre de Bauduy de Bellevue – a créole refugee and plantation owner from Saint-Domingue who had had a military career in France before the Revolution –, John Keating – a noble Irish-French soldier and land developer who was part of the Asylum venture –, and Sassenay developed an international enterprise and traded in South America.100 Trade with South American Spanish colonies was reputed to be very profitable among the American merchant class. French refugees were aware of the increasing globalization of trade and sought to improve their fortunes by profiting from South American demand for manufactured goods and from European demand for South American leather and wool. Sassenay, Bauduy, and Keating exported watches, hats, and other items from the United States to Argentina which they sold for twice their initial value. They used this revenue to purchase hides that they then exported to Europe.101 They did not have sufficient capital to fund their enterprise independently so they obtained the necessary

additional funds from the Philadelphian firm of Joseph Summerl and Israel Brown. Sassenay took his new career seriously.

These commercial operations were not without risks and Argentinian customs officials could be notoriously capricious. The brothers-in-law’s first two expeditions in 1799-1800 and 1800-1801 were quite successful but the last expedition, which left for Buenos Aires in August 1801, encountered serious difficulties and did not result in significant profits. Sassenay was the supercargo for the first and third expedition, Bauduy the second. Keating, who was actively engaged in land development projects, had a more limited role in the venture.

Details from Sassenay’s letters during the third voyage reveals that after he managed to get his cargo auctioned in Buenos Aires, he disposed of 53 000 dollars with which he purchased South American goods to export to Europe. He wrote to his insurance broker that he intended to purchase 16 000 ox hides or 12 000 horse hides, 70 000 pounds of vicuna wool and 36 000 skins of inferior quality. He also acquired 3373 ox hides for his and Bauduy’s personal account. The hides cost him just under 7000 dollars and he expected to sell them for seventy-five to eighty francs per quintal in Europe. This enterprise was of considerable volume and value. Sassenay’s descendants claimed that his notes showed how he took great pains to learn his new profession.

It is apparent from Bauduy and Sassenay’s correspondence that they did not enjoy their dealings in South America and that trading was first and foremost a matter of necessity. They suffered from the separation from their family. Bauduy wrote, “The joy of being with my dear Juliette [his wife] again, and in the midst of all of you, would console me very quickly for my own loss.” He added, “Nothing will induce me to make this trip again – money is so hard to earn!” Sassenay’s letters contain similar complaints: “j’ai bien du regret de m’éloigner encore de ma femme et de mes enfants et de tous vous autres mes bons amis… je suis trop heureux d’avoir rencontré dans mes beaux frères de vrays et sinceres amis.” During his last trip to Argentina, he was without news from his family for over a year. The modern and traditional values to which he and Bauduy subscribed put them in an uneasy situation.

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105 Sassenay, Napoléon Ier, 113.
feeling, their marriages were based on the companionship ideal, they expressed deep affection for their wives, and familial intimacy was an essential component of their happiness. Their families were emotional refuges. Yet, they also felt compelled to provide for their dependents, to enable them to live in comfortable ease, and to ensure the successful social reproduction of their lines. Their limited resources did not allow them to fulfil the latter expectation adequately. Commercial activities became essential.

Bauduy and Sassenay disliked South American people. The latter complained about “living among people worse than savages.” They considered the Argentinians with whom they interacted dishonest. As a French nobleman who placed a premium on his honour, Sassenay expected scrupulous probity from all the individuals he dealt with. His experience during the 1801-1803 expedition shows how interactions with the local merchants could be troublesome. His cargo was seized by Francesco del Sar, a customs agent, and it took him two years to get it released. He was shocked by del Sar and the business community’s dishonest proceedings.

Despite his strong desire to return to his family, as a man of honour Sassenay was bound to see his business through and obtain the best possible resolution. It was his duty to protect his brother-in-law’s interests as well as to vindicate the trust that Summerl and Brown had placed in their enterprise. His business and personal correspondence reveals how he considered honour the measure of all things. He condemned del Sar’s conduct because it was not honourable and he took comfort in knowing that, despite his difficulties, he had always acted honourably. He wrote to Summerl and Brown to explain what obstacles he had faced and assured them that he had done his outmost to protect their interests. He explained: “I have taken [a commission] only on the neet[sic] proceeds, which I assure you is not a compensation adequate for the time I have spend here and for what I have suffered, which I assure you is beyond any description, but as I had undertaken that business I thought my honour interested to see the end of it, and to do all in my power for the interest of those which had placed in me their confidence.” He also vented his frustration to Bauduy and explained how he found some consolation in the fact that his honour was intact: “J’ai fait de mon mieux et grace a dieu je n’ai rien a me reprocher qui puisse blesser

l’honêteté, et je suis toujours digne d’être ton ami.”\footnote{Sassenay to M.M. Summerl & Brown, Buenos Aires, 24 November 1802. Sassenay to Pierre de Bauduy, 20 December 1802. AN, 337 AP 13.} He exercised restraint and self-control in order to facilitate the conclusion of his business but could not tolerate attacks upon his honour, as the escalation of the conflict between him and del Sar demonstrates:

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il y a deja longtems que j’ai remarqué que ma presence dans la maison de votre beau pere lui etoit a charge, et je n’eusse pas attendu jusqu’à ce moment à en sortir si les interets majeurs pour lesquels je suis venu dans ce pays ne m’avoient prescrits la dure loi, de souffrir beaucoup de desagrements et d’incomodités, pour ne pas m’éloigner des personnes entre les mains desquelles etoient ces mêmes interets, mais je vois avec chagrin que j’ai perdu inutilement tems et patience, et comme je ne veux plus m’exposer a m’entendre dire, ce qui m’a été dit hier, que j’avois été trop bien traité, chose à laquelle les oreilles d’un homme d’honneur, ne sont pas accoutumées, je prends le parti de me retirer de la maison de votre beau pere.\footnote{Sassenay to Francesco del Sar, 22 October 1802. AN, 337 AP 13.}
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Sassenay expected hospitality and assistance from a family with whom he was conducting business. As their business and personal relationships soured, he could no longer accept this hospitality, especially since he was accused of abusing it. He left to protect his honour.

Del Sar’s conduct compared unfavourably to Sassenay’s. Sassenay called him a “fripon,” a “coquin,” and a “Jésuite.”\footnote{The term \textit{Jésuite} when employed in derogatory manner refers to a dishonest, scheming or hypocritical person. \textit{“Jésuite” in Dictionnaires d’Autrefois}, The ARTFL Project, CNRS and the University of Chicago, accessed March 27, 2015, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/publico1look.pl?strippedhw=jesuite. Sassenay to Bauduy, Buenos Aires, 22 November 1802. Sassenay to Summerl & Brown, 24 November 1802. AN, 337 AP 13.} As he was leaving Buenos Aires in 1803, he admonished del Sar about his behaviour. First he lectured him about the importance of honour. He wrote that a merchant’s reputation was “la richesse la plus assure d’un marchand, parceque la fortune peut se perdre (et qui le sait mieux que moi) mais l’honneur une bonne réputation sont des biens imperissables.” He then reproached del Sar for his uncharitable actions arguing that defenceless people required protection and that it was appalling and dishonourable to take advantage or people’s misfortunes.\footnote{Sassenay to del Sar, on board of the Hyde Park, 26 May 1803. AN, 337 AP 13.} Sassenay hoped to profit from his commercial dealings but he would not do so at the expense of his reputation. As a proper nobleman, he placed honour above money.

Sassenay and his brothers-in-law’s business had a decidedly international dimension. They were well integrated into the Atlantic trade networks. They exported manufactured goods from the United States and Europe to South America. They used the capital raised from the sale of these goods to purchase hides that they then shipped to Europe to be sold either in the Netherlands or in Hamburg. Bauduy’s personal capital came from his plantation in Saint-
Domingue. Their financial backers were from Philadelphia. They had business contacts with Honorat Lainé in Bordeaux. Finally, their insurance broker, Francis Baring, was English.115 This was a serious and elaborate venture conducted by professionals. Yet, an analysis of Bauduy and Sassenay’s South American venture as well as their subsequent business endeavours reveal that personal connections, family ties first among them, played a dominant role in their transatlantic business. Despite the development of modern capitalist and financial tools, the question of trust remained dependent on personal connections. Émigrés like Bauduy and Sassenay had significant advantages. Their personal networks extended to both sides of the Atlantic. Bauduy, a planter selling the product from his plantations to North America and Europe, was already integrated in transatlantic networks. A nobleman with a reputation of honour, Sassenay disposed of important advantages — namely influence and trust — when it came to securing credit and investments. French noble émigrés were often considered trustworthy intermediaries who could facilitate the transfer of European capital and credit to America.116

FIGURE 2.1: SASSENAY AND BAUDUY’S NETWORK

115 AN, 337 AP 13.
Although Sassenay and Bauduy did not enjoy their dealings in South America, these commercial activities certainly helped them restore their fortune and influence. Bauduy had sold some of his Saint-Domingue possessions and, by 1803, he came to the conclusion that his remaining properties on the island were most likely lost. His wife, Juliette, wrote to her daughter: “It is necessary, my dear child, that you accustom yourself to the idea that you will have no fortune, and it is only by the work of your father and not by our income that we will be able to exist. It is necessary that you acquire a taste for work.” Fortunately, Bauduy was successful in business. His professional reputation and the capital he had accumulated from his commercial activities made him a vital player in the founding of the DuPont chemical empire in the United States. In 1801, when Eleuthère-Irénée du Pont de Nemours sought essential funds and a location for the establishment of a gunpowder manufacture, Bauduy came to his rescue. Du Pont settled on a site close to Bauduy’s residence in Wilmington, the latter’s good reputation and the trust he had earned in the local and national business communities were deciding factors. Bauduy was one of the initial investors in the manufacture and he acquired two of the eighteen shares each priced at $2000. When an investor backed out of the venture, Bauduy purchased his two shares. He also provided additional capital and credit when Pierre-Samuel du Pont de Nemours gave his son Eleuthère-Irénée $16,471 instead of the promised $24,000 for twelve shares. Not only did he furnish capital, he also worked for the manufacture. Eleuthère-Irénée, who was reluctant to share credit for his manufacture, begrudgingly accepted Bauduy as the first and only partner of the DuPont Company. In a letter to his brother, Victor du Pont explained how vital Bauduy’s support was: “when the manufacture begins the acquaintances and the credit of Bauduy could not be too highly paid.” The agreement between him and du Pont stipulated that in exchange for his investment, his credit, and his time and efforts on behalf of the manufacture, he would receive a 2.5 percent commission on the sale of powder as well as an additional three parts of the profits. In the end, Bauduy claimed to have furnished about $22,000 which represented a quarter of the

118 Du Pont, *Life of Eleuthère Irénée Du Pont*, vol. 6, 97.
119 The only exception was James A. Biderman who was related to the du Pont by marriage. For the long dispute between E. I. du Pont and Bauduy over the latter’s status as a partner see: Du Pont, *Life of Eleuthère Irénée Du Pont*, vol. 5, 226, vol. 7, 50-97. Garesché Holland, *The Garesché*, 42, 52-53.
capital and at least half the credit for the establishment of the E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company gunpowder manufacture.\textsuperscript{121}

In 1808, the du Pont brothers and Bauduy diversified their company’s activities and set up a woollen mill. Eleuthère-Irénée was convinced that the textile industry could be profitable since it was underdeveloped in the United States. Bauduy thought that the business would offer a career path for his son Ferdinand whom he sent on an extensive European textile industry Grand Tour. In 1812, Bauduy, du Pont, and Bauduy’s in-laws, the Garesché, established another woollen manufacture to be directed by Ferdinand and Vital-Marie Garesché. The textile branch of the DuPont Company failed but Bauduy had, by then, already left the partnership following interpersonal conflicts with Eleuthère-Irénée.\textsuperscript{122} In 1815, he sold his shares to the du Pont brothers. The value of his shares and of his cut of the manufacture’s profits came to $108 690.31. In 1819, Bauduy moved to Cuba where he had acquired a sugar plantation.\textsuperscript{123}

As for Sassenay, he decided to return to France with his wife after the conclusion of his unpleasant business in Buenos Aires in 1803. The Sassenay’s integration into imperial society was facilitated by the letters of introduction that Eleuthère-Irenée du Pont gave them for his father as well as by the Bretton des Chapelles’s childhood connection with the Tascher de La Pagerie creole family, most notably with Joséphine Bonapart.\textsuperscript{124} His French properties had been confiscated. His estates of Saint-Aubin, du Tartre, and Sassenay, his vineyard of Montrachet, and his \textit{hôtel particulier} in Dijon had been sold, but with Joséphine’s assistance, he was able to recover 383 hectares of woods from which he extracted an annual revenue of about 5000 francs. This income was not sufficient for him to fully re-establish his social footing in France. His mercantile activities became key to the restoration of the family’s grandeur. He used the resources he had accumulated through trade to reacquire the château de Sassenay for 40 000 francs and to restore its gentlemanly character. He managed his recovered landed possessions with care, but he also continued to trade in order to supplement his income.\textsuperscript{125} He maintained business connections with Bauduy. He was one of the founding shareholders of Bauduy,

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{121} Du Pont, \textit{Life of Eleuthère Irénée Du Pont}, vol. 7, 61, 70.
\bibitem{123} Garesché Holland, \textit{The Garesché}, 124, 131-132.
\end{thebibliography}
Garesché & Co., Bauduy’s woollen mill, in which he purchased four shares for $8000. He also lent Bauduy $20,000 in 1819, probably to help him purchase his Cuban plantation.¹²⁶

Sassenay’s South American experiences made him a key intermediary for the imperial regime. During his first visit to Argentina in 1800, he struck a friendship with Jacques (or Santiago) de Liniers who became viceroy of Rio de la Plata in 1807. In 1808, Napoléon sent Sassenay on a diplomatic mission to Argentina. He was to convince Liniers to ally with France. Unfortunately, he was taken captive in Montevideo. His captivity lasted until 1810. For his services, he received an annual remuneration of 6000 francs but that revenue stopped a few months after his return to France.¹²⁷ After his release, he does not appear to have directly resumed his mercantile activities, his career as a noble merchant was over and, although he continued to invest in different ventures, for the most part he turned to more traditional noble occupations of landowner and state servant in his later years.

Sassenay’s occupations did not hurt his social position. On the contrary, he was able to use his business activities as a means of social promotion upon his return to France. He became the duchesse de Berry’s secrétaire and was close to the court. He was elected to the Chambre des députés in 1830 but retired from public life after the July Revolution.¹²⁸ His financial situation also improved significantly under the Restoration. He received the considerable sum of 728,938 francs as part of the 1825 indemnity for the sale of émigrés’ properties.¹²⁹

“Que M. Labrosse veuille bien nous vendre quelques-unes des marchandises colportées par le comte de Pontgibaud.” The Comte and the Comtesse de Pontgibaud’s Dual Identity¹³⁰

Albert-François de Moré, comte de Pontgibaud belonged to the sword nobility. Although an old noble family from Auvergne, it was only in 1756 that his father acquired an estate that conferred a title: the comté de Pontgibaud.¹³¹ In 1789, Pontgibaud presided over the election of Auvergne’s noble delegates for the Estates General. He opposed revolutionary reforms. In August 1791, he emigrated with his brother, Charles-Albert, comte de Moré, and his eldest son,
Albert. They went to Coblenz where they joined the coalition d’Auvergne and fought for the Counter-Revolution in 1792. Pontgibaud handed over almost the entirety of the funds he had brought with him – 10 000 livres – to the émigré army’s treasury.\footnote{Oscar de Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse e gli emigrati Francesi a Trieste,” Archeografo Triestino XVIII-XIX, 1 (1953), 100. René Dollot, “Un émigré Français à Trieste: Le comte de Pontgibaud: Joseph Labrosse (1754-1824)” Revue d’histoire diplomatique 56 (1942), 6-7. Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cent ans, 65.}

In the fall of 1792, the Pontgibaud family were reunited in Lausanne where Victoire Pecquet, comtesse de Pontgibaud and her younger son Armand had found refuge. The family lived off the 10 000 livres and jewels that the comtesse had been able to take with her when she escaped from France. However, in 1794, their resources were almost entirely depleted and, as Moré put it, “ils commencèrent à travailler ce qui s’appelle pour vivre.”\footnote{Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse,” (1953), 107-108. Moré, Mémoires, 139.} The comtesse and her maid took up embroidery. Other émigrés joined her atelier. Embroidery was a common occupation among émigré circles. It was a polite skill for women of the upper classes and one of the few ways in which they could earn revenue in emigration. This was handiwork that was not too ignoble. The comtesse reported that about forty émigré women were involved in this small manufacture.\footnote{Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cent ans, 72. Kirsty Carpenter, Refugees of the French Revolution: Émigrés in London, 1789-1802 (New York : St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 69.} As for the comte, he started trading merchandise for refugee Lyon merchants in the Swiss cantons and at European fairs – notably in Frankfurt and Leipzig – for a commission.\footnote{The “commerce par balle” at fairs was non-derogating. Moré, Mémoires, 141-142. Bourdin, “Mémoires d’ex-, mémoires d’exil,” 8. Mousnier, Les institutions de la France, vol. 1, 110.}

During his trips as a travelling salesman, the comte de Pontgibaud created the persona of Joseph Labrosse. The adoption of a pseudonym was a common practice amongst the eighteenth-century enterprising nobility. Nobles who got involved in activities that were considered ignoble often used a pseudonym to do so without tarnishing the family name.\footnote{Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse,” (1953), 107-108. Moré, Mémoires, 139.} By temporarily setting aside his identity as the comte de Pontgibaud and embracing the persona of Labrosse, he could sell merchandise as a matter of necessity while making sure that the comte’s honour remained intact.\footnote{Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse,” (1953), 110. Richard, Noblesse d’affaires, 228.} An anecdote recounted by his descendant in the Histoire de cent ans – the family history – demonstrates how this dual identity functioned. Travelling in the German states to sell goods, Labrosse stopped at an inn for the night. The local margrave, with whom Pontgibaud was acquainted, heard of his whereabouts. The margrave had him fetched and insisted that he dine with the court. After dinner, the margrave supposedly said: “Maintenant que M. Labrosse veuille
Whether or not this anecdote is apocryphal is of limited relevance. What this story reveals is that Pontgibaud wished his connections and his descendants to understand that his life as the comte de Pontgibaud – the French noble with a military career and court connections – and his life as Joseph Labrosse – the honest businessman – were complementary but nonetheless distinct.

Labrosse acquired a reputation of honesty and probity. Although his capital was insufficient to independently fund his own trading house, he gained enough trust and credit to be able to secure investments to start his own operation. Over the next few years, his business prospered. Following the advances of the revolutionary armies in Switzerland in 1798, the house of commerce relocated to Trieste where it continued to grow until Pontgibaud’s death in 1824. Trieste was an Austrian free port on the Mediterranean. It was a cosmopolitan city, welcoming to strangers, removed from the war theater, and it was an important hub of the growing Levantine-German trade axis. The 1797 Treaty of Campo Formio had removed Venetian competition and Triestine trade flourished. Between 1801 and 1804, its value climbed from fifteen to fifty-five million florins. It benefited from the development of Istria, Dalmatia, and of the transalpine region. Labrosse had gathered detailed information about the Triestine trade before deciding to settle there instead of Venice. He had sent the marquis de Ligondès on a reconnaissance mission with a detailed questionnaire: he had seven sets of questions about imports – he inquired about the number and tonnage of ships coming from the Levant and about the type of Levantine goods that were imported – and eleven sets of questions about exports – he asked about the number and tonnage of ships sent to the Levant, about the types and value of the goods that were exported, and about the different dues and customs that applied to the trade. The relocation to Trieste was carefully planned.

Labrosse’s commercial activities were wide-ranging. Among other things, he sold cloth, linens, lace, and garments, tea, coffee, and maraschino. In 1806, he added banking to his activities. He profited greatly from the redirection of the Levantine textile trade to an overland

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138 Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cent ans, 73.
139 Moré, Mémoires, 141.
141 The questionnaire is reproduced in Oscar de Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse e gli emigrati Francesi a Trieste,” Archeografo Triestino XX, 3 (1955-1956), 82-83.
route transiting via Trieste under the Continental System.\textsuperscript{142} It is also possible that he profited from smuggling under the blockade since Trieste was an important hub of contraband trade with Austria facilitating its illegal activities.\textsuperscript{143} Although the Mediterranean remained his main focus, Labrosse also sought to profit from the growing Atlantic trade. In 1815, he sent an expedition to the West Indies and, two years later, he sent one to Peru.\textsuperscript{144}

Familial solidarity enabled the Pontgibaud to survive, and even improve their situation, during their exile. An example of household economy, the family and the household staff worked together to support and develop the business.\textsuperscript{145} Both the comte and the comtesse were directly involved in the day-to-day operations. Labrosse managed his Triestine outlet and continued to travel to European fairs. His wife repeatedly refers to him as “le patron” in her letters. The sobriquet referred to the multiple roles Pontgibaud fulfilled as Joseph Labrosse. Following the modern acceptation of the term, he was the head of the business, the master. Following early modern definitions, he was also the head of the household and his dependents’ protector.\textsuperscript{146} Madame Labrosse did not adhere to the ideal of domesticity and its emphasis on removing women from the productive sphere. Just like many middle-class merchant wives, she managed the household, took care of the business correspondence and bookkeeping, and, when her husband was away, managed the outlet. Hers was one of the house of commerce’s two authorized signatures, as a circular published in 1802 made clear. Armand, the couple’s second son, was also involved in the business: he sent merchandise to his parents from France and, after his return to Trieste in 1806, was actively involved the business’s activities.\textsuperscript{147} The Pontgibaud’s conception of the family also encompassed members of the household, such as servants and clerical staff, who were not related by blood.\textsuperscript{148} Madame Labrosse’s 1802 description of their routine

\textsuperscript{142} Moré, Mémoires, 199. Dollot, Trieste et la France, 80-81.
\textsuperscript{143} Dollot, Trieste et la France, 64-66.
\textsuperscript{145} Bourdin, “Mémoires d’ex-, mémoires d’exil,” 8.
reinforced the idea that theirs was a family business: “Dès le matin au bureau jusqu’à une heure que nous dinons, ils se remettent à l’ouvrage à trois heures jusqu’à neuf heures, excepté dans la belle saison, où une promenade est encore plus affaire de régime que d’agrément… Le dimanche toute la maison fait une grande promenade; les soirs d’hiver, de petits jeux, et cinq ou six fois dans l’année, la comédie.” According to her, their house of commerce had a familial atmosphere which fostered the clerical staff’s loyalty and attachment to the owners in a manner that was not seen in their rivals’ businesses: “Dans presque toutes les maisons on change de commis, on est obligé de surveiller la probité… au lieu que l’on ne peut imaginer rien de mercenaire dans [notre] maison; tout y paraît, par l’intérêt, une même famille.”

She praised the clerks’ good qualities, but also implied that they were superior employers.

The Labrosse household was an émigré microcosm: a small French colony in Trieste who assembled to facilitate their survival and find emotional comfort. The ménage usually counted between ten and fifteen members. In addition to family members and servants, it also comprised a few émigré friends and hired clerks. Family members included the comte and the comtesse and at various times, their son Armand, Pontgibaud’s brother Moré and his wife, and his cousins Baboin. The household also included the musician Jean-Baptiste Leriche and Julie Portelette, the comtesse’s maid, who remained loyal to their former masters. It was not rare even for destitute émigré families to have at least one domestic servant and it seems that while the imperatives of noblesse oblige impressed upon émigrés that their duty to provide for their loyal servants, in some cases at least, servants themselves did not wish to abandon their masters. The comtesse praised her maid’s dedication and aptitude to make herself useful. Pontgibaud also opened his house to his former brothers-in-arms: Charles-Laure de Mac Mahon, his former colonel, Joseph de Raynal de Montamat and his two sons, and the brothers François and Barthélémy de Spinette. It finally included the brothers Karl, Christian, and Adolphe Schwachofer, who brought their professional expertise to the enterprise.

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149 Madame Labrosse to Armand-Victoire de Pontgibaud, Trieste, 17 March 1802. Cited in Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cent ans, 141.
151 Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cent ans, 69.
In her study of noble émigrés in the German states, Karine Rance argues that the extrafamilial solidarities that developed during emigration were strictly based upon common, but limited, interests. She claims that these alliances of convenience did not stem from a shared feeling of solidarity.\(^\text{154}\) The Pontgibaud/Labrosse household and house of commerce certainly had shared economic interests but it also had an important emotional component. The household was as much an economic as an emotional unit. Indeed, personal connections, male-bonds, and friendships determined the household’s composition. Leriche, according to Moré, remained with the Pontgibaud, even after they were no longer able to pay his pension, out of friendship and the comtesse’s letters to Armand mention how they treated their diligent clerks “avec amitié.” She argued that the judicious choice of staff and household members was necessary for “la douceur de l’intérieur.”\(^\text{155}\) Friendship, loyalty, and solidarity brought the Labrosse household together and offered resources and consolation in exile.

Pontgibaud extended his hospitality and offered work to his comrades-in-arms. These, according to Moré, were “naufragés” to whom his brother tactfully offered an honourable

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\(^{154}\) Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés,” 195.

\(^{155}\) Moré, Mémoires, 141. Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cents ans, 140-142.
livelihood. Moré further claims that, for the most part, these fellow soldiers were his brother’s subordinates. Pontgibaud’s decision to call upon his brothers-in-arms proceeded from a multiplicity of causes. Principles of noble largesse and honnêteté pressed more fortunate individuals to extend generosity or charity, notably in the form of hospitality, to their peers as well as to the less fortunate. Pontgibaud may have felt some sense of obligation towards his military subordinates. Exile eliminated many of the traditional resources upon which nobles in difficult situations could rely: credit, liquidation of assets, court pensions, and traditional noble employments were often out of reach. Pontgibaud, who had found a way to support himself and even realize a profit, used his privileged position to assist others. His patron sobriquet highlights both how he was the head of the household and a purveyor. His compassion towards his unfortunate peers also conformed to the new cult of sensibility which emphasized that the ability to show feeling in the face of suffering was the mark of true honnêteté. Furthermore, the bonds of friendship, trust, and loyalty that the brothers-in-arms had developed constituted a sound foundation on which to build their economic endeavour. Personal connections as well as bonds of loyalty and friendship played a significant role in the formation and maintenance of émigré networks. The disintegration of traditional mechanisms of social control after the dispersal of the Coblenz émigré society and the relative anonymity of exile meant that it was easier for con artists to usurp titles and defraud émigrés and foreigners alike. In the absence of institutions of social control, only personal connections could be trusted.

The Labrosse’s enterprise became an important source of assistance for émigrés. They provided employment, loans, investment opportunities, goods, and countless small services including the transmission of émigrés’ correspondence. From the very beginning, they employed resourceless émigrés. The comtesse’s embroidery workshop employed émigrées and the comte’s old comrades-in-arms participated in the burgeoning trading house’s activities. Labrosse helped émigrés obtain cash and supervised the sale of their diamonds, including those of the princesse de Lorraine and the comte de Chastellux. After Mesdames’s deaths, Louis XVIII asked him to sell their jewels. He also supplied émigrés with consumer goods. Joseph de Lorraine asked for some tea, coffee, and maraschino, the comte de Nantouillet requested tea for the duc de Berry. He helped émigrés get funds safely out of France and obtain passports. Moreover, the trading house

156 Moré, Mémoires, 141.
became a sort of émigré mutual aid society. They lent émigrés money and merchandise to sell for a commission. In 1801, for example, they lent money to the marquis de Castellane and to Monsieur de Choiseul.\footnote{Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cents ans, 71, 75-76, 79-80, 190-195.}

More importantly perhaps, Labrosse’s trading house offered émigrés a safe, trusted, and advantageous investment opportunity. Moré’s memoirs extoll the trust his brother’s business enjoyed: “sous le nom de Joseph Labrosse, [il] avait à Trieste la maison la plus brillante et la plus solide. Cent mille florins tirés sur lui étaient acquittés par lui à la minute.”\footnote{Moré, Mémoires, 177.} The Labrosse generally offered interest rates from seven to ten percent on émigré investments. In 1800, the marquis de Pimodan entrusted them with a significant part of his limited resources. The fact that he could trust Pontgibaud explained his decision. He wrote a letter to Labrosse detailing his situation and his requests with regards to his investment:

\begin{quote}
... j’avais remis à Montamat six mille francs, en le priant de t’en faire part et d’être assez bon pour les faire valoir dans ton commerce; je te remerciais de vouloir bien me conserver et me faire valoir ce triste reste de ma fortune qui est anéantie, et je te disais que, d’après le peu de sûreté que présentent les négociants d’Hambourg, je me trouvais heureux de remettre entre tes mains ce peu qui me restait… Vu la modicité de mon capital, j’avais demandé à Montamat de tâcher d’obtenir de tes associés qu’on m’en donnât dix pour cent, n’étant pas un gros objet pour toi, à cause de la petitesse de mon capital; mais si tu ne pouvais pas absolument m’en donner cet intérêt, qui me serait cependant bien nécessaire pour me faire exister, ne pouvant me flatter de recevoir aucun secours de ma famille, je te prie toujours de me traiter favorablement.\footnote{Cited in Pontgibaud-Moré, Histoire de cent ans, 76-79.}
\end{quote}

Pimodan continued that, should his situation become even worse, the 2000 écus he would receive annually from this investment would enable him to subsist.

Labrosse’s émigré associates had provided an important share of the initial capital. The Spinette brothers had invested 80 000 livres, Mac Mahon 7000, Montamat 4000, and Moré at least 1800 livres. Other émigrés, not directly associated with the business also invested: the abbés de Pons and de La Combe as well as Messieurs de Sully and de Fargues trusted Labrosse with their capital. Given that émigré capital played an essential part in the enterprise’s early success, the quick succession of withdrawals that followed the émigrés’ return to France between 1800 and 1804 did cause important, if momentary, financial difficulties. The Spinette brothers, Mac Mahon, Montamat, Pimodan, La Combe and many others took their funds out of Labrosse’s business upon their return to France. Some, like Pimodan, hoped to use their capital to re-acquire
their French properties. In 1801, the Labrosse trading house vacated the *dogana vecchia* and relocated into smaller and less expensive premises.

Interestingly, Labrosse, like so many of his associates, could have chosen to return to France. He could have used the resources he had accumulated through trade to reacquire his French assets. But he did not. When the great majority of émigrés decided to return to France between 1800 and 1802, he stayed put. When his political convictions and his loyalty to the Bourbons no longer stood in the way of his return to France in 1814-1815, he once more chose to remain in Trieste and continued his business activities. Perhaps Labrosse believed that the French situation was still too volatile. More importantly, it seems that Pontgibaud had become Labrosse; he had wholly embraced his new existence and preferred Labrosse’s way of life instead of the traditional noble lifestyle. Moré, who praised his brother in his memoirs, commented on his transformation: “L’extérieur de mon frère était si simple, sa figure calme et son maintien s’étaient si bien mis en harmonie avec les chiffres, avec les états à parties doubles, qu’en le voyant à son bureau, on aurait juré qu’il n’avait pas fait d’autre métier toute sa vie.” The first few years of the new century also saw the increasing professionalization of the house of commerce’s staff: émigrés who left were replaced by trained clerks. Another indication of Labrosse’s professionalization was that the services he rendered and the business he conducted crossed loyalty, nationality, and political convictions boundaries. With his pragmatic attitude, he served the Bourbons and their loyal followers as well as Austrian and French imperial authorities.

Over the years, Labrosse had earned a good reputation among the business community and among French and European aristocratic circles. He was praised for his noble character by his brother, his friends, and even the Austrian emperor. In an interview, emperor Francis I reportedly told Pontgibaud of his satisfaction with regards to his conduct: “vous vous en êtes tiré avec cette noblesse qui caractérise les personnes de votre naissance; vous avez su combattre pour vos princes lors de leur sortie de France, vous soumettre ensuite à des circonstances impérieuses; vous avez su n’être à charge de personne, vous créer des ressources.” This interview, if it indeed took place, would sanction Pontgibaud’s redefinition of nobility. Labrosse’s quest for

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163 Dollot, *Un émigré français à Trieste*, 16, 36.
independence was laudable. More importantly perhaps, the fact that his work allowed him to provide for his dependents and assist less fortunate émigrés, that it was not entirely driven by interest, reinforced its noble character. Moré thought it was remarkable that his brother managed to restore his fortune while helping so many émigrés “sans qu’il y eût le moindre calcul de sa part.” Even if Labrosse profited from his commercial activities, he did not tarnish his noble honor because he did not show any signs of the calculating attitude usually associated with the commercial classes, an attitude which was deemed incompatible with the noble ethos since it placed private interest before the public good. Moré continued that his help earned him the esteem, goodwill, and gratefulness of many émigrés. The comte d’Albon wrote that Labrosse “ennobled” the merchant condition. Labrosse’s friend Ambroise-Polycarpe de La Rochefoucauld, duc de Doudeauville, who had invested 35 000 francs in the house of commerce wrote: “plus que personne vous avez uni dans vos entreprises, courage, noblesse, délicatesse et loyauté.” He also enjoyed a good reputation among the Triestine commercial community. This general esteem and his birth made him an ideal intermediary between the local community and the French forces during the second and third French occupations of Trieste in 1805-1806 and 1809-1813.

As prominent member of the Triestine business community and a Frenchman of distinguished social origins, Labrosse had significant assets as a diplomatic intermediary. During the 1805-1806 occupation, he had reportedly refused the preferential treatment French authorities offered him and insisted on paying his full share of the war contribution imposed on Trieste. During the third occupation, Pontgibaud approached French authorities and tried to negotiate substitutions for the forty hostages that had been taken from preeminent Triestine families. Contrary to what Moré’s memoirs and the family history claim, his efforts were not successful. At the local community’s request, he also served as their envoy to Charles-Amédée Joubert, the French intendant des finances for the Illyrian provinces. He tried to negotiate a reduction of the war contribution imposed on the city and its partial conversion to payments in kind.

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During the Empire, Labrosse’s pragmatic attitude prevailed over his loyalty to the Bourbons. He acted with diplomacy and managed to navigate between the alternating French and Austria authorities without alienating any parties. He established good relationships with French authorities as well as with the local community and the Austrian authorities. The Pontgibaud had sustained relationships with the legitimists. They were part of Mesdames’ society. Pontgibaud also had cordial personal and professional relationships with French imperial personages. His house provisioned French troops in Illyria. He socialized with the French general Emmanuel de Grouchy, with the consul Maurice Séguier, and with the general Henri-Gatien Bertrand and his wife Fanny Dillon. Labrosse advised marshal Auguste-Frédéric-Louis Viesse de Marmont, duc de Raguse, governor of the Illyrian provinces. Once the French imperial authorities left Trieste in 1813, he took care of countless little things for them and notably expedited Joseph Fouché’s personal belongings. A fellow Auvergnat who had served the French Empire, the comte de Chabrol, even left his children in his care: “Je vous adresse, mon cher ami, mes enfants. Je vous prie de leur donner tous les soins que j’attends de votre amitié.” Labrosse’s relations with the French imperial authorities were more than pragmatic and, in some cases, he developed genuine friendships with members of the occupying forces. According to Moré, he had cordial relationships with both Austrian and French authorities until the end of the occupation in 1813. Moré even claimed that he became an unofficial diplomat, writing, “mon frère, en ce moment de crise politique, allait de Trieste, encore occupée par les Français, au camp autrichien, et du camp autrichien à Trieste, comme parlementaire chargé de la confiance des deux nations.”

Pontgibaud’s exile experience was atypical. Unlike the majority of noble émigrés who opted for a “migration de maintien” and who minimally adapted to their host societies while keeping their sights firmly set on France, his experience was one of “rupture.” He broke with a large part of his pre-revolutionary identity as a sword noble and made consistent efforts to adapt to his new circumstances. His decision to change his name embodied this rupture since patronyms and toponyms were often one of the few elements upholding the continuity of émigrés’ noble lineage and identities. Labrosse took his new role as a businessman with the outmost

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173 Moré, Mémoires, 206.
seriousness. Still, he did not completely renounce his noble origins. He saw his business activities as a rational decision that was in line with the changing times and in no case did he consider that they led him to derogate.\textsuperscript{175} Moreover, Labrosse’s existence made the continuation of the Pontgibaud lineage possible. It allowed him to re-establish his family in France on a favourable footing. It also provided the family with the resources necessary to ensure its survival should the Bourbon restoration fail. Pontgibaud thus pursued a sort of hybrid existence.

The social reproduction strategies the Pontgibaud adopted highlight this hybridity most clearly. Their sons Albert and Armand’s educations and career paths demonstrate that they actively sought to maintain their noble status and adapt to the post-1789 world. Their eldest son, Albert, pursued a traditional noble military career. He remained with Condé’s army until it was disbanded in 1801.\textsuperscript{176} He then briefly went to Trieste but does not seem to have had a significant hand in the trading house’s operations. Albert died of illness in Milan in 1806. Armand’s education was a lot less conventional. Since his place in the nobility was not assured, especially since he was not, initially, the heir, Armand might need a career. Consequently, his parents gave him a mixed education that combined elements traditional noble instruction and more practical training. Armand was trained to take over his parents’ business.\textsuperscript{177}

The comte and the comtess de Pontgibaud’s lifestyles also placed them at the intersection of the professional and aristocratic worlds. Although the Labrosse spent a significant portion of their time managing the trading house, they did also maintain cultural practices that were consistent with that of the nobility. They acquired a 250 hectares estate called Ronchi near Trieste. When staying in the countryside, the Pontgibaud led the traditional life of the landed nobility. The comtess called their estate “l’hermitage,” no doubt in an attempt to highlight how it marked their retreat from their city life as Monsieur and Madame Labrosse. Their decision to have their family coat of arms sculpted above the villa’s door further indicated that there, they


\textsuperscript{176} Sources about Albert are very scant. Oscar de Incontrera traced a few letters from the comtesse de Pontgibaud to Armand in which she mentions the youthful failings of her eldest son. Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse,” (1954), 402. Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse,” (1957-1958), 80-81.

resumed their life as the comte and comtesse.\textsuperscript{178} The comtesse had Armand send her seeds and plants from France to embellish the gardens and the comte, who was interested in agronomy, conducted experiments.\textsuperscript{179}

The Pontgibaud also socialized with members of the French and European elite and Victoire de Pontgibaud had a sustained literary correspondence. They were part of the few people Mesdames received. They also socialized with the deposed Swedish King Gustav IV.\textsuperscript{180} Moré reported that Gustav was their neighbour and that he frequently visited them. The conversations seem to have been rather informal and Moré described them as being “sans cérémonie.” Moré highlighted how his sister-in-law adroitly mixed conversation and business during the ex-king’s visits: “Mon imperturbable belle-sœur, tout en se mêlant de la conversation avec beaucoup de bon sens et de réserve, ne s’en dérangeait en rien, n’en vaquait pas moins à heure et à point aux soins domestiques et aux affaires de commerce de la maison.”\textsuperscript{181} The continuation of these activities in a sociable context broke with Ancien Régime noble practices.

Furthermore, Victoire de Pontgibaud’s extensive epistolary commerce enabled her to keep abreast of the latest Parisian cultural innovations and to remotely participate to the 
\textit{conversations mondaines}. It also enabled her to reaffirm her belonging to the \textit{beau monde}. Her main correspondents, the marquise de Villaines and Mathieu de Villenave, sent her detailed chronicles of Parisian life. During the winter of 1807-1808, Villaines related doctor Gall’s Parisian visit and claimed that his popularity was due to the imperial elite’s ennui: “Il fut accueilli et fêté comme eux [Mesmer et Cagliostro] par toute la classe riche et ignorante, avide de tout, parce qu’elle est ennuyée de tout et ne sait que faire de son temps.”\textsuperscript{182} With her friends’ help, the comtesse was able to get the latest news about art and science, important foci of the \textit{beau monde}.

It was literature that figured most prominently in the lengthy missives the comtesse received from Paris. Her correspondents reviewed the latest literary productions. The prolific Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis, was a frequent target of their criticism. On her \textit{De l’influence des femmes sur la littérature française}, Villenave wrote: “Voilà cette dame ne pouvant se passer

\textsuperscript{179} Moré, \textit{Mémoires}, 198, 200-201.
\textsuperscript{180} Incontrera, “Giusseppe Labrosse,” (1954), 386-387.
\textsuperscript{181} Moré, \textit{Mémoires}, 208.
d’écrire et réduite à compiler.” Villaines reported on Genlis’s inability to elicit emotions and condemned her for her hypocrisy. On *Le siège de La Rochelle*, she wrote: “c’est un sermon perpétuel, orné de fréquentes citations des psaumes, des Pères de l’Eglise, et enrichi par toute cette vapeur de faussetés et d’hypocrisie qui me la rend si odieuse, de sorte que c’est à jeter le volume par la fenêtre, ne pouvant y jeter l’auteur.” Overall, the comtesse’s epistolary circle had a poor opinion of the state of literature during the Empire. Revolutionaries had weakened both the nobility and France’s cultural leadership.

Pontgibaud took full advantage of the extraordinary circumstances and of the widening range of socio-professional opportunities these entailed – often by necessity – to improve his situation in ways that, although they would have been frowned upon in Ancien Régime France, became commendable in exile. The upheavals created by the Revolution and emigration enabled him to break with and to perpetuate some of the traditional noble values and attitudes. The commercial fortune he amassed allowed him not only to restore but to improve his family’s standing in France. After years of inquiries and negotiations, Labrosse reacquired the château de Pontgibaud. Even if he showed some doubts about the value of the property, Moré wrote to his brother that it was only right to repurchase the family seat. Status and family history clearly influenced Labrosse’s decision even if the Pontgibaud estate had been a relatively recent acquisition. He was also able to secure a good match for his heir. In 1818, Armand married Amantine de La Rochelambert. The marriage contract showed that Armand was a desirable match. His portion included the Ronchi domain valued at 190,000 francs and 110,000 francs in cash. He also received, as an advance on his inheritance, 415 hectares of wood and a market hall situated in Pontgibaud. Amantine’s dowry consisted of 100,000 francs, her trousseau of 6000

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187 Moré wrote numerous letters to his brother about the state of affairs in Auvergne and the possibility of repurchasing the family’s properties. The process took a number of years, Moré started gathering information as early as 1815 and the sale had not yet been concluded in January 1819. See: Moré, “Lettres du comte de Moré,” *Mémoires*, 215-233.
francs, and her future inheritance of 200,000 francs. The marriage contract was signed by the King and several prominent French nobles.\textsuperscript{188} By all accounts, this was a good aristocratic match. Notwithstanding his apparent prosperity, Labrosse did not return to Paris during the Restoration. In fact, he continued his business activities in Trieste until his death in 1824. Armand, despite his previous involvement in the trading house, chose to sell it after his father’s passing. The Schwachofer brothers acquired their former employer’s business but Armand refused to cede over the rights to the Joseph Labrosse name.\textsuperscript{189} Armand resumed a more traditional aristocratic lifestyle as a landed nobleman. In 1827, wishing to have a country property closer to Paris, he purchased the Labrosse estate for 600,000 francs. He did show some degree of entrepreneurship when he decided to develop mineral deposits on his estates; mining was a longstanding tradition among the French nobility.\textsuperscript{190} In addition to his activities as a noble landowner, he became a servant of the state. In 1827, he was made pair de France. On the two occasions he spoke in the Chambre des Pairs, his commercial training resurfaced. Both times, he stressed the importance of developing France’s international trade.\textsuperscript{191} Even if he gave up commercial pursuits, he still believed that trade was an important aspect of France’s economic prosperity and his peers and country could benefit from his expert advice.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Emigration altered some nobles’ perception of work and trade. The dislocation of Ancien Régime social structures forced many noble émigrés to expand their socio-professional activities. Some occupations, especially employment in foreign armies or administrations, were in line with traditional noble employment. Others, like commerce, clearly were not. Despite the monarchy’s repeated efforts to direct noble capital towards trade, there was no noblesse commerçante in France before 1789. Profit seeking and self-interest were widely considered to be incompatible with the noble ethos. Exile changed that conception. Focus shifted from the merchants’ supposed profiteering attitude to the noble search of independence by any honest means. Noble émigrés who took up unconventional occupations to support themselves, help out others, and avoid becoming recipients of charity often found some pride in their resourcefulness and resignation. Lévis, Montesquiou, Sassenay, and Pontgibaud did what was necessary in order to survive and

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\textsuperscript{188} Pontgibaud-Moré, \textit{Histoire de cent ans}, 289-293.  
\textsuperscript{190} Richard, \textit{Noblesse d'affaires}, 121-123.  
\textsuperscript{191} Pontgibaud-Moré, \textit{Histoire de cent ans}, 371-372.
they were not ashamed of their activities or, if they were, they kept it to themselves. Sassenay and Pontgibaud adapted to their changing circumstances and changing times. Commerce was, at least for a time, a career for these men, a career they used to support more traditional aspects of noble lifestyle. They used the means they had accumulated through trade to reacquire their family estate. No doubt, these noblemen judged that estates were rational investments and constituted an essential element of noble representation.192

Yet, few émigrés continued their mercantile activities when given another option. The Restoration and the recovery of some of their possessions enabled nobles to return to more traditional social standards. Labrosse was a notable exception. His decision to continue his mercantile activities suggests that although he worked to restore his family’s status, he left it to his heir to enjoy the full extent of his house’s improved situation. By the time that the Restoration appeared more or less consolidated, Pontgibaud, who had been born in 1754, was an old man and one who had been engaged in commercial activities for over twenty years. His identity and life as Joseph Labrosse had become normalized. It is likely that the Labrosse persona was, by then, an integral part of his habitus. Although duty remained a prime source of motivation, he may very well have liked his new career. His family seem to have been somewhat less at ease with his activities. His son preferred to sell his father’s profitable operation, perhaps his wife preferred to relocate to Paris.193 Moré praised his brother’s work ethic: “C’est avec un souvenir toujours mêlé d’admiration et de respect que je pense au travail de jour et de nuit, aux progrès lents, successifs, annuels de ce ménage, et que je me rappelle les essais plus ou moins heureux qui ont caractérisé la reconstruction, la réédification de la fortune de mon frère.” Yet, he also went to great extents to show that his family name had not been tainted by business.194 Despite the adaptation of several émigrés, only a handful of French nobles engaged, or avowed that they engaged, in commerce in the first half of the nineteenth century. They invested in land and in modern ventures such as insurance and transportation but not so much in trade. More often than not, nobles opted for more traditional professions such as service in the military, judiciary, and in central and local administrations.195

192 Higgs, Nobles in Nineteenth-Century France, 126.
Chapter 3

Émigré Social Reproduction Strategies: Children, Mothers, and the Challenges of the Noble Patriarchal Family

In his 1797 novel *L’émigré*, Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan summed up many émigré parents’ anxieties. The duchesse de Montjustin, one of the characters, claimed that her daughter’s death a few years before the Revolution could almost be seen as a blessing since it saved her from the miseries of exile. She laid bare the concern that her daughter’s fate would have caused her:

Que ferais-je de ma Charlotte, qui aurait aujourd’hui quatorze ans ? Forcée de la perdre de vue quelquefois pour m’occuper de… mon petit commerce, comment la garantir des impressions qu’elle pourrait recevoir ? Et si les affaires de la France ne s’arrangent point, quel sort lui préparait l’avenir !... Son éducation lui avait inspiré des sentiments conformes à sa naissance, comment supposer que dans une personne de cet âge, la raison aurait eu en affaiblir le souvenir sans l’étendre, et l’amener à une résignation exempte de bassesse et d’abattement ?… Il serait venu un temps… où le cœur de ma Charlotte aurait éprouvé des besoins… Dans un moment où l’égalité parmi les hommes est réduite en système, il m’aurait été bien difficile… de la préserver de la séduction de l’homme le plus vil par son état, ou sa naissance… Je n’ai jamais été… enivrée de l’éclat des titres et de la noblesse ; mais je n’aurais pu voir ma fille se dégrader par une alliance honteuse.

Émigré parents were concerned about their inability to socialize their children, to keep them in proper company, to teach them good principles, and, eventually, to find them suitable matches. Yet, children also brought them solace. Montjustin stated that, despite this sombre picture of her daughter’s probable fate, more often than not, she regretted her absence: “Mon cœur me présente bien plus souvent un autre aspect, et je vois Charlotte partageant mon travail, me prodiguant les plus tendres soins ; je vois dans elle une compagne chérie, à qui j’ouvre mon cœur, enfin l’objet d’une affection qui par sa nature et sa vivacité suffit à l’âme la plus sensible et la plus active.”

Emigration forced noble men and women to experiment with different conceptions of the family. Parenthood in exile brought challenges and rewards. Parents developed closer relationships with their children than they would normally have done prior to the Revolution. They more often had their children at their side and they worked together for the family’s survival. For émigrés, the family was an emotional refuge: love and affection a resource against the trials of exile. As Sénac de Meilhan argued, “On n’a peut-être jamais mis l’économie au nombre des avantages que procure la sensibilité, rien n’est cependant plus vrai ; plus on est capable d’aimer, plus le cœur est rempli d’un sentiment profond, et plus il est facile de se suffire

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à soi-même.” A mediocre existence, he continued, fostered greater intimacy. The émigré emotional community placed greater emphasis on familial affection than Ancien Régime noble practices had. Émigré writings speak of their authors’ love for their spouses, parents, and children. Some even argued that exile was more propitious to the development of love and affection. In his memoirs, Joseph-Alexis de Walsh reflected, “en exil, on aime peut-être mieux encore qu’au pays natal; n’est-ce pas sur la terre étrangère que l’on a le plus besoin d’anges consolateurs.”

The companionate marriage was an emotional refuge: a safe haven where men and women could dispense with the emotional effort required to comply with the prevailing elaborate honour code of the Ancien Régime. The family was also a refuge from the harshness of modern economic and political life. This familial refuge had greater significance in exile: it provided consolation and commiseration for the traumas and trials émigrés experienced. Enlightenment social commentators ascribed great regenerative power to the family and to family love. The family was the linchpin of les mœurs: an “[ideal] of ethically based social unity” that stressed “family love,” a “sense of human kinship,” and a “selfless community spirit.” Reformers held that the family was the source of “moral sensibility” and a prototype for other social bonds. Private emotions acquired public significance. Virtue and morality were increasingly defined in relation to individuals’ ability to love. Revolutionaries believed that emotions as well as reason had a significant part to play in the reconfiguration of a hierarchical society in the form of a horizontal citizenship. Women, in the domestic sphere, had a vital regenerative role to play. These conceptions of the family as an emotional refuge and as the basis of a regenerated moral order explain why familial love acquired greater importance in exile.

In exile, noble family dynamics changed. The traditional patriarchal family faced significant challenges. In addition to the greater influence of affection, émigrés’ lack of resources meant that the social reproduction of their lineage was uncertain. To ensure the perpetuation of his line, it was the patriarch’s duty to procreate, but also to provide sustenance, an education, and

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2 Sénac de Meilhan, L’émigré, 54.
3 Joseph-Alexis de Walsh, Souvenirs de cinquante ans (Paris : Bureau de la mode, 1845), 64. All mentions of Walsh’s Souvenirs refer to the 1845 edition unless otherwise noted.
6 Auslander, Cultural Revolutions, 8.
a suitable establishment for their progeny. Revolutionary reforms to family law also undermined the puissance paternelle. Individuals enjoyed more rights than they hitherto had: equal inheritance, the end of forced religious vocation, the insistence on freely chosen spouses, and the legalization of divorce removed many of the means by which patriarchs had enforced a familial strategy upon the corporate unit. Uprootedness compounded the challenges to social reproduction. No longer able to enforce his will through legal means, the noble émigré patriarch had to adapt. Persuasion – through the inculcation of proper noble principles, which placed the interests of the corporate unit above that of the individual – became an important means to maximize the lineage’s chances of successful social reproduction.

Following the pattern of social reproduction from procreation, to education, to establishment, this chapter explores the first two components and examines the parent-child relationship. The next chapter explores émigré matrimonial and domestic habits. Together they show that the examination of family life is essential to understand the transformations to the group’s ethos.

This chapter first examines noble émigrés’ reproductive strategies and shows that, in spite of precarious situations, the imperative of procreation often prevailed. Second, it explores the challenges of motherhood in exile. It demonstrates that many mothers enjoyed the closer relationships they developed with their offspring but they were worried about their children’s prospects. The more limited role of kinship and the reduced scale of émigré sociability undermined parents’ ability to find suitable positions for their children. Third, this chapter examines émigrés’ efforts to educate their progeny and shows how the trials of emigration led many parents and educators to modify young émigrés’ training. They experimented with a hybrid education that sought to prepare noble scions to face the trials of exile but also to reclaim their proper place as France’s ruling class in the event of a restoration. These strategies sought to maximise the corporate unit’s survival chances. Children who grew up in exile often existed between two worlds. They subscribed to traditional noble values of honour, ancestry, and service.

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8 Suzanne Desan, The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 92.
but also absorbed some enlightened values such as domesticity and industriousness. This chapter concludes with a study of the challenges exile posed to the patriarchal family. It shows how, on one hand, distance and separation and, on the other hand, proximity and affection undermined patriarchal authority within the domestic sphere.

Émigré Procreation: The Survival of the Noble Lineage

Émigrés, despite the long-standing anti-poppery tradition, were permitted to establish their own Catholic chapels in England. The 1791 Catholic Relief Act that allowed the creation of Catholic institutions made it possible and the heavy concentration of both ecclesiastical and lay refugees in England – where an estimated 12 000 émigrés sojourned annually – made it necessary. In 1795, the French community consecrated its first chapel, the Chapelle de la Sainte Croix, in Soho. Four years later, the émigrés used their financial resources and manpower to erect the Chapelle de l’Annonciation, in Marylebone.

These and other French Catholic institutions were important centers of exile life. Émigrés turned to refugee clerics to officiate important life events. The civil registries kept by these institutions constitute the most comprehensive data set on noble émigré demography but they have not been systematically analyzed by historians. Because of the exceptional circumstances of exile, individuals who figured in the registries had to provide several details about their parentage, origins, and age in order to establish their identities. These records are therefore more informative than ordinary civil registries. Between 1795 and 1814, noble émigré families appear in over 300 entries: 252 baptisms and eighty-six weddings.

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11 Karine Rance briefly addresses challenges to authority in her dissertation. She argues that familial solidarity among émigrés increased since survival depended on it. She also posits that the essential role women and children played altered family relations. Her conclusions deserve more attention. Karine Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés dans les pays germaniques pendant la Révolution Française,” (PhD diss., Université de Paris I, 2001), 186-189.


14 The vast majority of the 2000-plus acts concern non-noble families. Furthermore, identification of noble families, especially members of the lower nobility, can be problematic. The registries were transferred to French embassy’s chapel when the other chapels closed. They were later transferred to the embassy’s archives. AAE, Nantes, *Etat Civil*
The data about émigré reproduction collated from the *registres* sheds light on a partial but not complete delay of establishment for noble émigré families. There were few baptisms in the early years of emigration, though this can partially be explained by the absence of specific French Catholic institutions. Yet, even after the first chapels opened in 1795, only thirteen baptisms were recorded. There was a noticeable increase in the number of baptisms in 1797: there were thirty-three that year and, at its peak, in 1799, there were thirty-nine. Émigré procreation was most active between 1797 and 1800: 119 children were baptized during those four years, that is 47.2 percent of all noble émigré children christened in the French chapels in Britain for the entire emigration period. This increase can be linked to the parallel increase in the number of weddings, since recently married couples figure prominently in the baptismal records. The discernable tendency was for parents to not delay their children’s christening and to do so within the first month of their births. Finally, since most émigrés returned to France after the 1802 amnesty, the number of baptisms plummeted. There were only sixty-nine baptisms recorded between 1803 and 1815, an average of 5.3 per annum compared to an average of 29.8 for the 1797-1800 period. Émigrés delayed starting families in the early years of exile but modified their strategies around 1796-1797 when a return to France seemed unlikely. By then, a greater number of them attempted to resume a more or less normal life even if they were still uprooted.15

**FIGURE 3.1: NUMBER OF RECORDED BAPTISMS OF NOBLE ÉMIGRÉ CHILDREN PER ANNUM**

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When compared to the overall number of émigrés who had sought refuge in Britain, the number of births and baptisms appears relatively small. Indeed, for the year 1797, there were approximately 6650 lay émigrés in Britain. The nobility represented 22.5 percent of lay émigrés, thus, approximately 1496 of these 6650 lay émigrés would have belonged to the nobility. The thirty-three baptisms recorded in 1797 point to a relatively low birth rate among the refugee nobility, that is 22 per thousand, well below the French average of 37 to 41 per thousand during the last fifty years of the Ancien Régime. However, this data is skewed because of the overwhelming predominance of men in émigré ranks.

Another picture of noble fecundity emerges if we consider the number of births in relation to the number of noble émigrées. Indeed, following Donald Greer’s estimates, only about 1014 to 1277 of the 6650 lay émigrés were women. If noblewomen accounted for 17.89 percent of all lay émigrées, or 15.25 percent of all noble émigrés, there would only have been approximately 181 to 228 noblewomen in Britain in 1797. Thus, if we adjust the birth rate by integrating it in a normal demographic model and calculate it based on the number of possible couples, then it would have been much higher: somewhere between 43 and 54 per thousand. In sum, according

16 The estimation of the number of émigrés in Britain at any given time is also difficult considering that fact that many émigrés were peripatetic. The proportion of noble émigrés in Britain in 1797 might have been higher since émigrés who did not belong to the privileged orders generally returned to France sooner than nobles and clerics. Donald Greer’s numbers and these calculations provide an interesting impression of noble émigrés’ reproductive practices but cannot be considered to be entirely accurate. On issues with Greer’s methods and the estimation of the number of émigrés see Introduction. Donald Greer, The incidence of the emigration during the French Revolution (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1951), 8, 71, 96-99, 112. Carpenter, Refugees, 43.


18 The first step is to calculate how many lay émigrés in Britain were likely to be women. By looking at the identifiable social origins of the women recorded in the French émigré lists, Greer calculated that women accounted for 15.25% of noble émigrés. If we add all the lay women Greer identified, regardless of their social origins, and compare this figure (14 004 lay female émigrés) to the total of lay émigrés (72 949), women represented 19.2% of the total lay émigrés. Thus, if we accept that between 15.25 to 19.2% of the lay émigrés in Britain in 1797 were likely to have been women, we arrive at a range of 1014 (15.25% of 6650) to 1277 (19.2% of 6650) lay émigré women. Greer, The incidence of emigration, 113.

19 The second step is to estimate the number of lay émigrée women who belonged to the nobility. Out of the 14 004 lay female émigrés identified by Greer, 2506 were noble. Noblewomen accounted for 17.89% of the total of lay émigré women. We can now establish the range of noble émigré women in two ways. A) By calculating their proportion among the total lay émigré women. Thus, 17.89% of 1014 and of 1277 giving a range of 181 to 228 noble women in Britain in 1797. B) By calculation the proportion of women out of the estimated number of noble émigrés in Britain. Based to Greer’s numbers, the nobility represented 22.5% of all lay émigrés. Thus, 1496 of the 6650 lay émigrés were likely to have been nobles. If 15.25% of the noble émigrés were women, then, 228 of the 1496 noble lay émigrés were women. In sum, there would have been an estimated 181 to 228 lay noblewomen in Britain in 1797. Greer, The incidence of emigration, 112-113.

20 The final step is to reintegrate the number of lay noble émigrée into a normal demographic model approximating a general population from which to calculate the birth rate. This step eliminates the imbalances created by the overrepresentation of the clergy and of men in émigré ranks. Assuming that the 181 to 228 women were over twenty years of age, and doubling that number to include the number of men with which these women could have been
to these estimates, the fecundity of the noble émigré women does not appear to have been significantly curtailed by exile and a great many started or continued to procreate. A close examination of the number of births taking into account the specificities of émigré demography reveals that noble émigré women did not have fewer children during their British exile; in fact, the birth rate for 1797 was very high.\textsuperscript{21} This high birth rate suggests that a considerable number of women who were of reproductive age – close to one in six if we consider that all of the noble lay émigré women were fecund, and, since that is unlikely, perhaps as many as one in four – delivered children in 1797.\textsuperscript{22} A large proportion of French noblewomen who were of reproductive age in England were either pregnant, had recently delivered or miscarried, or were nursing infants. Noble émigrées were heavily invested in the community’s reproduction.

Poverty did not constitute a major obstacle to reproduction for the émigré community in England. By cross-referencing the data from the registres de catholicité with the 1799 account books of the Wilmot Committee – the British committee in charge of dispensing financial assistance to destitute lay émigrés – and the 1797 compte des secours payés aux émigrés de Jersey venus en Angleterre – the list of poor émigrés who had found refuge in the Channel island and then moved to England –, it is possible to get some indication about émigrés’ financial situation.\textsuperscript{23} At least one parent received government relief in 118 out of the 252 baptisms recorded in the registres. The parent receiving relief usually was the mother since able-bodied men were not eligible and were expected to serve in the military if they required any government assistance. Since resourceless émigré parents in Britain received £1 2s. per month in relief for

\textsuperscript{21} It would be problematic, however, to generalize these findings to non-British cases. The financial support émigré parents could expect from the British government could have influenced their decision to have children despite their precarious situation whereas émigrés elsewhere could rarely count on additional help to support their children.

\textsuperscript{22} 33 out of 181 or 228 gives a range of 14 to 18\% of women having delivered in 1797. Furthermore, since the number of births is probably underrepresented because not all births were recorded in the registres de catholicité and since it is very unlikely that all women were of reproductive age, the proportion may have been as high as 25\%.

\textsuperscript{23} The year 1799 was chosen because the accounts are in excellent condition and clearly kept. They detail family composition, the number of men, women, children, servants, and artisans receiving support in any given family. By 1799, many émigré families had stretched their resources to the limit and were relatively destitute. Furthermore, few noble families had returned to France yet. This ledger was completed with the account book that listed the émigrés who were relocated to Britain in the spring of 1797. The Prince of Bouillon had been, until then, responsible for the distribution of British relief to the émigrés in the Channel Islands. TNA, T93/16 and T93/31.
each child, it seems likely that many made no special effort to limit their fecundity. Fortune did not influence the choice of godparents significantly either. In ninety-four, or 37.3 percent, of the cases, at least one of the godparents was the recipient of government relief. In fifty-six cases, or 22.2 percent, parents and godparents received support. Whether for lack of better options, familial tradition, or disregard of financial matters, parents were not deterred by the godparents’ precarious finances. Nor is there any evidence that they systematically pursued a strategy of improving their children’s prospects by securing more affluent godparents. The choice of godparents remained remarkably consistent with pre-revolutionary practices and sought to reinforce the child’s place in his or her kinship network.

Table 3.1: Noble Parents and Godparents Dependent on British Relief

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Parents receiving relief</th>
<th>Godparents receiving relief</th>
<th>Total recorded baptisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1799</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The case of the Jacques-Joseph, baron de La Roque and Anne-Pauline de Taillevis de Jupeaux illustrates how emigration and poverty were not always sufficient obstacles to émigré reproduction. The couple were married in June 1796 and had two children. A girl was christened in July 1797 and a boy in September 1799. Three out of the four children’s godparents were family relatives. La Roque and the Jupeaux families relied on government subsidies but only one of the children’s godparents figured in the Wilmot account books. Anne-Pauline’s sister’s situation was somewhat better. In March 1799, Marie-Charles married Christophe-Marie-Joseph, chevalier de Gomer. Over the next three years, they had three children: a girl baptized in February 1800, a boy in April 1801, and finally a girl in May 1802. Their financial situation appeared to have been better than that of the La Roque and the Taillevis. Indeed, Gomer cannot be found among the recipients of British charity in 1799. It seems that he was able to support his wife and children or that he served in the émigré regiments. Only two of the six godparents – the maternal grandparents – depended on government relief. In sum, family tradition trumped financial considerations when it came to the choice of godparents.

24 Règlement du comité français de juillet 1794. TNA, T93/1.
26 AAE, Nantes, 2 mi 1840, Registres A and Q. TNA, T93/16.
Other émigrés who had more prominent connections and whose financial situation was not so dire had more options when it came to having children and selecting godparents. Pierre-Louis-Auguste Ferron, comte de la Ferronnays married Albertine-Louise de Bouchet de Souches in Klagenfurt in 1802. The comte de La Ferronnays served as the duc de Berry’s aide-de-camp during his exile and only returned to France in 1814. The couple had seven children born in exile and one after the Restoration. They chose relatives as godparents for their daughters. They were notably linked to the Tourzel, Montsoreau, and Nantouillet. However, for their son Albert, they chose Louis-Étienne-François, comte de Damas and his wife who had a close relationship with the royal family. They no doubt hoped to secure a notable protection for their son.\(^{28}\) Their desire to ensure the survival of their line, the early deaths of two of their daughters, and their relative ease explain why they had a large family.\(^{29}\)

These examples also reveal that noble émigrés often started families immediately upon marriage. Indeed, at least eighty-six of the 252 émigré children who were christened in Britain were born to parents who had married during their exile. They account for more than one-third of the recorded baptisms. These eighty-six children were born to fifty-one émigré couples. Émigrées often bore children within the first year of their marriage. The relatively advanced age of many brides could explain why couples chose not to delay procreation any further.\(^{30}\)

The 252 children of noble birth found in the registres were born to 171 couples and one unwed mother. In 124 cases, the parents had only one child baptized in Britain, in twenty-nine cases they had two, in ten cases they had three, and in nine cases they had four or more. Although the majority of parents had only one child during their exile in Britain, the slight majority of émigré children – 128 out of 252 – were born to families who had more than one child. This majority increases when considering children born to parents who had married in emigration. Thirty-two couples had only one child, but nineteen had two or more. Fifty-four out of eighty-six children of parents who had wed in exile belonged to families with multiple children, that is 62.8 percent. Furthermore, couples who remained in emigration after 1802 were more likely to have larger families. In six cases, they had only one child, but eleven had two or more children. Thirty-five children born after 1802 were born to families with multiple children, while six did not have


\(^{29}\) Costa de Beauregard, \textit{En émigration, souvenirs tirés des papiers du comte A. de La Ferronnays} (Paris : Plon, 1900), 301-312. AAE, Nantes, 2 mi 1505.

\(^{30}\) See chapter 4.
any siblings born in exile in Britain. For *ultra* émigrés delaying procreation until their return to France was not a viable option since that possibility seemed remote.

**TABLE 3.2: NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN IN BRITAIN PER NOBLE ÉMIGRÉ FAMILY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children per couple</th>
<th>Total Baptisms</th>
<th>Married in emigration</th>
<th>After 1802</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of couples</td>
<td>Total number of children</td>
<td>Number of couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>172</strong></td>
<td><strong>252</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, forty-six of the ninety-eight émigré couples whose marriage figured in the *registres* do not appear to have had children or else did not have them baptized in the French Catholic chapels. Some, like Henri-Louis, marquis de Viart and Anne Michel, both of whom had been widowed, were probably too old: Michel was aged forty-one when she remarried. Others, like Adèle d’Osmond, preferred to remain childless. In some cases, like that of Antoine Bourdois and Marianne Burney, one of the spouses passed away before any children were born. Others, like the Busnel de Montoray, had children but their baptisms were not recorded in the *registres*. Others still, like Louis-Marie-Joseph Rouph de Varicourt who married Marie-Jeanne Nadal de Saintrac in August 1797, left Britain. The Varicourt went to Martinique where a child was born in October 1799. Some parents chose to have their children baptized in Anglican churches so as not to disadvantage their progeny should they remain in Britain. Alexandre d’Arblay and Fanny Burney chose to have their son, born in December 1794, baptized in the parish church of Great Bookham. Burney reported that although her husband found that the differences between Catholicism and Anglicanism were “trifling” and although he had wished to be naturalized English, he could not bring himself to convert to Anglicanism. He did, however, wish for his son to be raised Anglican since, as she noted, “he was an Englishman born, he should be an Englishman bred.” He later became a minister of the Anglican Church.\(^{31}\) Thus, a number of these

couples were not childless but circumstances, including the peripatetic nature of exile, made the recording of these births in the registres irregular.

Noble émigrés’ procreation patterns were consistent with that of their caste in the last decades of the Ancien Régime. The practice of birth limitation had been common among the urban nobility. Claude Lévy and Louis Henry’s study of the demographic practices of the ducs et pairs reveal that they had relatively few children in the last half of the eighteenth century: out of twenty families, seven families had none, three had one child, another three had two, and seven had three or more. Members of the pairie also tended to concentrate procreation to the first years of their unions. In order to ensure the successful social reproduction of their lines, nobles needed to strike a balance between, on the one hand, the risks of premature deaths and, on the other hand, in the event of an excess of children, the scattering of family patrimony and the necessity of providing for each child according to their station.

Overall, émigrés might have postponed procreation to some extent but only up to around 1797. Procreation was a time-sensitive issue for noblewomen who had already often delayed marriage by a few years. With this in mind, émigrés chose to have children in spite of their precarious situation. Indeed, relative poverty does not appear to have forced them to limit the size of their families any more than they would have done in pre-revolutionary France, nor did it significantly impact their choice of godparents, at least not in the case of those who had sought refuge in Britain. They also do not appear to have had significantly fewer children then they would have had before 1789 since many nobles had already started to voluntarily limit the size of their families. Ultimately, ensuring the survival of the lineage was a priority. Still, the successful social reproduction of the noble lineage depended on education and establishment as much as on procreation. In a context in which traditional structures of social reproduction were being dismantled and in which the role of kinship declined, noble parenthood proved challenging.

34 Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés,” 186.
Émigré Mothers: Noble Women, their Bodies, and their Children

Women’s bodies and their roles as mothers profoundly marked their exile experience. As the previous section has shown, the proportion of noblewomen who were, or had recently been, pregnant was remarkably high in Britain in the late 1790s. Pregnancy and nursing posed distinct challenges to émigrées. Enlightenment science and thought put forward a conception of womanhood that essentially reduced women to their bodies and, more specifically, to their reproductive organs. These determined women’s nature and place in the social and political order. This biological determinism and the republican motherhood ideal held that motherhood defined women’s public usefulness. Pronatalist advocates described pregnancy as a healthy state, as opposed to the classical conception that considered it a diseased state. These new discourses – championed by doctors, philosophes, and, in some cases, women alike – idealized motherhood and shamed “bad mothers.” Although their aim was to domesticate women and exclude them from the Enlightenment project, they also had the reverse effect of providing women with newfound authority as mothers and educators. Women could play a vital role in the creation of more intimate, affective families.35 Émigrées displayed some ambivalence towards these new ideas and ideals. On the one hand, when speaking of their pregnancies, they were more likely to describe it as a state of vulnerability, a state exacerbated by revolutionary trials. On the other hand, they were more prone to accept the idea that their role as mothers had great importance.

Élisa de Ménerville’s family decided to leave France in the fall of 1791 because of her pregnancy. In her memoirs, she claimed that the revolutionary agitation had caused harm to her first child born in 1790. Indeed, contemporary physicians argued that pregnant and nursing women’s mental and physical health had direct impact on their progeny’s health. Her doctors argued that “la faiblesse de cette chère petite créature, ses cris déchirants au milieu de son sommeil, l’état nerveux qui se montrait en elle depuis sa naissance, tenaient au trouble affreux

que me causaient les événements dont j’étais témoin.” The family decided that she should spend the last months of her second pregnancy away from France. She gave birth in Tournai in 1792.  

Pregnancy and motherhood could make the physical and mental hardships of revolution and exile harder for women. It curtailed their freedom of movement, which exposed them to danger. Lucie de La Tour du Pin wrote in her memoirs that her family would probably have left France earlier had it not been for her advanced pregnancy in the fall of 1793. She was still recovering from childbirth when she and her family crossed the Atlantic in the spring of 1794. To make matters worse, her husband suffered from acute seasickness and she had to care for him. La Tour du Pin gave birth to five of her six children between 1790 and 1800. As she wrote, “les enfants naiss[ent] partout.” In 1800, after a difficult crossing from England and strenuous overland travels, she gave birth prematurely in the Hanover electorate. Her daughter, born at seven and a half months, was very frail. On this occasion she was forced to obtain a special permission since émigrés were not allowed to stay for more than a day in Hanover.  

Adélaïde de Kerjean, marquise de Falaiseau’s situation in Holland in the winter of 1794-1795 became very perilous because of the French revolutionary armies’ advances. Her late stage of pregnancy and her general physical weakness prevented her from leaving. She had attempted to leave for England two months earlier but her health had worsened as a result of the endeavour. In her journal, she wrote: “de l’avis de tous les médecins, il était impossible de songer à m’embarquer sans me résigner à accoucher au premier mouvement du vaisseau, et à y périr faute de secours. Il paraissait même dangereux de me faire entreprendre un voyage par terre.” Falaiseau reported that another émigrée who had attempted the journey had died in childbirth. She wrote that everyone around her was agitated but that, for the sake of her unborn child, she had to remain calm. She feared that any mental agitation would have dramatic repercussions for her and her child. From her diary, it is apparent that she thought that her pregnancy curtailed her freedom, especially her freedom of movement. In order to alleviate her husband’s fear, she moved from The Hague to Amsterdam where she waited for her “deliverance” with the princesse

de Berghes, another pregnant émigrée.\textsuperscript{38} The two complained about the poor state of their accommodation and Falaiseau wrote that their situation resembled that of “[les] femmes du peuple les plus misérables.” She also complained about her isolation and wrote that, if she were to die in childbirth, she would not even have the consolation of seeing her loved ones since her family had been forced to flee to avoid the revolutionary armies. She was still in Amsterdam when it fell to the French in 1795 but the troops did not trouble her.\textsuperscript{39}

Exile also modified aristocratic nursing practices. There were two schools of thoughts on nursing in the second half of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, a plethora of texts published by Rousseau and pronatalist writers encouraged mothers of all social origins to nurse their children. On the other hand, aristocratic writers argued that nursing was too animalistic and degrading for women of quality who, in any case, had more important functions to fulfill. They also argued that it fostered the development of a familiarity between mother and child that was detrimental to a proper noble education based on distance, respect, and authority. Moreover, the recourse to wet-nurses reinforced patrilineality in noble families.\textsuperscript{40} Although these ideas influenced émigrés’ choices, more practical concerns often had a more decisive impact.

La Tour du Pin was pregnant with her first child in the fall of 1789 and almost suffered a miscarriage as a result of the October Days. In her memoirs, she claimed that this incident weakened her and that she had not yet fully recovered when she gave birth to a healthy boy in May 1790. She was not allowed to nurse him, although she claimed to have wished to, since she was still too weak. Since the decision to hire a wet-nurse belonged to the father who was responsible for the perpetuation of his lineage, it is likely that her husband or doctors made the decision for her. A sturdy nurse came from the countryside, reputed to be a healthier environment than cities. According to the memoirist, the wet-nurse’s milk was good since the infant soon gained a healthy plumpness. La Tour du Pin likely breastfed her second child born at the end of 1793, while she was living in hiding near Bordeaux since finding a wet-nurse would have been a dangerous endeavour. She also nursed her third and fourth children in Paris in 1797 and in England in 1798. Her fourth child died during his infancy. She, in agreement with pronatalist

\textsuperscript{38} Hervé de Broc, \textit{Dix ans de la vie d’une femme pendant l’émigration. Adélaïde de Kerjean, marquise de Falaiseau} (Paris : Plon, 1893), 205-206, 211.

\textsuperscript{39} Broc, \textit{Dix ans}, 225-229.

writers who believed that hired caregivers’ lack of affection led to neglect, attributed her child’s
death to his nanny’s neglect. She became very sick after her son’s death and claimed that it was
because her milk had turned. Her desire to breastfeed her children was ideologically motivated
and, by the time she penned her memoirs, it had become a quasi-requirement for good
mothering.\(^{41}\) Falaiseau had a wet-nurse for her son born in 1793 but she nursed her daughter born
in 1795 herself. She wrote that she was worried that her perpetual state of agitation affected the
daughter she was nursing since it was believed that milk transmitted temperament.\(^{42}\) In her case,
it was a lack of options and not ideological convictions that led her to nurse her daughter. In 1796,
Joséphine de Montaut-Navailles, duchesse de Gontaut gave birth to twins. She wrote that she
decided to breastfeed them since they could not afford to hire two nurses. In her memoirs, she
referred to her decision as “courageous.” Both material and ideological considerations influenced
her decision. According to her, however, this resolution had drawbacks and her delicate
aristocratic constitution was not particularly suited to this animalistic exertion. She had nursed
her daughters for about nine months when her doctor told her to stop. She explained: “Elles
m’affaiblissait visiblement, sans que je voulusse en convenir.” Joséphine was completely weaned
while Charlotte, who was more delicate, got a wet-nurse.\(^{43}\)

Émigré mothers’ desire to ensure their children’s safety and to provide for them met with
considerable challenges. The comtesse de La Ferronnays, who was more privileged than most
émigrés, despaired over her surviving children’s prospects. After her daughter Pauline had
recovered from illness around 1812, she wrote: “Quel sera son avenir ?… Triste, désolante idée
qui me poursuit et me jette dans ces accès sombres que je n’avais jamais connus… Je veux que
mes enfants soient fidèles à leurs principes et ne comptent pas avec leur vie pour nos princes et
notre malheureuse patrie. Mais pourront-ils seulement la donner cette vie à ces intérêts si chers ?
La misère, l’abandon, le malheur n’auront-ils pas mis fin à leurs jours avant qu’ils puissent servir
notre cause ?”\(^{44}\) Des Cars – then the widowed marquise de Nadaillac – worried about her
children’s future. She resolved to work, with little success, to provide for them. It was the

\(^{44}\) Beauregard, *En émigration*, 315-316.
possibility of improving her children’s lot that convinced her to leave the tranquil retreat she enjoyed and go place herself under Frederick-William II’s protection.\textsuperscript{45}

Other émigrées relied on their talents to provide for their children. Adélaïde de Souza – another widow – used her literary talents and, for the first time, committed one of her productions to print. With the help of her British friends, she published her novel \textit{Adèle de Sénange} by subscription in 1794. She read part of her manuscript at sociable gatherings, a practice that helped promote it. Gilbert Elliot, who attended a reading, commented: “I thought it pleasing and well written, but without extraordinary merit.”\textsuperscript{46} Charles de Flahaut later claimed that his mother had earned about 500 louis with this publication. Her choice to publish by subscription enabled her to earn money with delicacy. A large number of subscribers were her friends who contributed according to their means and to what they deemed appropriate. Her friend, the général de Montesquiu, wrote that she was “bien heureuse, dans sa détresse totale, d’avoir ce petit talent et des amis pour le faire valoir.”\textsuperscript{47} In his memoirs, Charles nonetheless defended his mother from any accusation of professional authorship. He related that she had arrived in England completely resourceless and then published a novel “qu’elle avait écrit pour se distraire, sans se douter qu’il deviendrait un jour son seul moyen de subsistance aux besoins les plus pressants de la vie.”\textsuperscript{48} He and his mother emphasized how the publication paid for his education. She exposed her situation in her novel’s preface: “Seule dans une terre étrangère, avec un enfant qui a atteint l’âge où il n’est plus permis de retarder son éducation, j’ai éprouvé une sorte de douceur à penser que ses premières études seraient le fruit de mon travail.”\textsuperscript{49} Writing also brought her solace, especially since would provide for her son. She wrote to William Windham: “d’abord je me suis désolée, ensuite a force de travail je suis devenue tranquille. et à présent je vis contente… l’ouvrage que je viens de finir doit achever l’éducation de Charles ; et… il pourra etre a son aise un jour.”\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{45} Des Cars, \textit{Mémoires}, 47-48, 58.
\textsuperscript{46} Gilbert Elliot Minto, \textit{Life and letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto, from 1751 to 1806} (London : Longmans, Green, 1874), vol. 2, 130-131.
\textsuperscript{48} AN, 565 AP 19. Charles de Flahaut, \textit{Souvenirs de son enfance}.
\textsuperscript{49} Adélaïde de Souza, \textit{Adèle de Sénange, ou lettres de Lord Sydenham} (London : Debrett, Hookham, 1794), xxii.
\textsuperscript{50} Souza to Windham, 30 janvier [1794]. BL, Add MS 37916, fo. 223.
Educating Émigrés: Preparation for an Uncertain Future

In her 1798 novel *Les petits émigrés*, Félicité de Genlis claimed: “Si les enfants émigrés ne gagnent pas au milieu de tous ces désastres une meilleure éducation, ce sera sans doute la faute de ceux qui les conduisent.”51 This assertion failed to take into account many émigrés’ lack of resources, the time some families spent working to support themselves, and the dearth of institutions that could support parents’ educational efforts. Still, Genlis was partially right. Many émigrés did attempt to better prepare their progeny for an uncertain future. They adapted children’s curriculum to include more practical skills and dedicated their free time to the improvement of their minds. Parents had three main options: they could educate their children at home – sometimes with the help of an émigré ecclesiastic –, they could mobilize their patronage networks to find a place for their children in traditional institutions such as colleges and convents, or they could send their children to charity schools established for the express purpose of educating émigré children. They generally agreed that the education of noble youth was of great importance and many also believed that education and knowledge were effective means of protecting their children from revolutionary reversals of fortunes.52

By the seventeenth century, formal education had become an important part of noblemen’s socialization. A concurrent shift in definitions of manhood posited that power did not stem from physical domination but rather from inner qualities such as culture and urbanity. Personal excellence legitimized authority. The nobility’s innate qualities had to be nurtured and perfected through education. Servants of the state were expected to dispose of the knowledge and manners necessary to fulfill their duties. Noblemen’s curriculum generally included classical languages, rhetoric, mathematics, history, geography, drawing, fencing, dancing and deportment, and hunting. These acquired skills combined with their innate honour made noblemen fit to rule: they could exercise public authority and they had the skills necessary to fight or to serve the state. Culture and sophisticated manners were also requirements of masculine ideal of the *honnête homme*. These reaffirmed noble distinctiveness but it also excluded poor nobles who could not achieve the same level of refinement and, at the same time, opened the door to emulation from

more affluent *roturiers* who had access to the same conduct manuals and colleges and who could challenge the nobility’s monopoly on merit.\(^{53}\)

The idea that noble girls should receive an education also gained wider acceptance. Education prepared women for one of two social roles: that of wife and mother or that of *religieuse.* Noble girls were educated to please and they rarely learned more than domestic skills, reading, writing, arithmetic, the *arts d’agréments* – dancing, music, and drawing – and *l’ouvrage* (needlework). They sometimes studied history, geography, and modern languages. Above all else, their instruction focused on their moral edification. Modesty, virtue, and piety were essential qualities. If a woman acquired extensive knowledge she was to use it to altruistic ends: for her husband and her children’s benefit, not for her own enjoyment. The *femme savante* was often an object of ridicule. Still, during the eighteenth century, fashionable convents expanded their pupils’ curriculum to include the *arts d’agréments.* Noble girls had to be instructed to fulfill their roles in the noble household and in the *monde.* Education aimed to reinforce their innate qualities: their sensibility and their civilizing influence on their noble male counterparts. Noble sociability valued women’s sensibility and delicate manners. Uncorrupted by scholarly pursuits, their manners and ways of expression were held to be natural, agreeable, and informed by feeling. Noble girls had to be educated in the home, convent, and salon, to fulfill their destiny as wives and mothers as well as guardians and teachers of noble refined manners.\(^{54}\)

The state of noble émigré youth who were being deprived of the advantage of a good education was a serious source of concern since it could prevent them from properly fulfilling their social functions. Many worried that children were being neglected, that their families’ poverty forced them to consort with the rabble. Many foresaw, like the fictional duchesse de Monjustin, poverty and failure for impressionable and purposeless noble youth wasting its time.

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French émigrés and British philanthropists advocated for a proper education for these young exiles. Many believed, like Edmund Burke, that a well educated nobility was an essential basis of the social order. Consequently, they supported efforts to create charitable educational institutions for destitute émigré children.

Emigration also revealed that traditional education had not adequately prepared members of the second order for the trials of exile. Walsh, a young émigré, criticized Ancien Régime rearing practices, which had not been varied enough to make the future émigrés resourceful, and applauded post-1789 educational reform: “de nos jours, on donne tant de maîtres à ses enfans, on les fait tellement savans et artistes, que l’on a l’air de prévoir pour eux des revers de fortune et de nouvelles saturnales révolutionnaires, contres lesquels on veut les mettre à même de lutter. Ce sont là de bonnes précautions contre les caprices et les inconstances du sort.” Émigré parents and educators adapted children’s instruction to their new circumstances. The objective was to turn them into good but resourceful nobles. As a result of this hybrid education, noble children raised in exile existed in two worlds. They embraced their noble status and the traditions specific to that social station, but they also adopted more modern values.

**Homeschooling the Petits Émigrés**

During his emigration, René-Eustache, marquis d’Osmond took charge of his daughter’s education and expanded her horizons beyond the traditional spheres of feminine knowledge. Although it was a father’s duty to ensure that his progeny was educated, it was unusual for a nobleman to oversee his children’s studies himself. Increased free time and more limited financial means motivated d’Osmond to be more involved in his daughter’s upbringing. Adèle d’Osmond had fond memories of the time she spent under her father’s tutelage:

> Mon père, dans le temps de cette retraite, s’était exclusivement occupé de mon éducation… J’étudiais l’histoire, je m’étais passionnée pour les ouvrages de métaphysique. Mon père ne me les laissait pas lire seule, mais il me les permettait sous ses yeux. Il aurait craint de voir germer des idées fausses dans ma jeune cervelle si ses sages réflexions ne les avaient pas arrêtées. Par compensation peut-être, mon père, dont, au reste, c’était le goût, ajoutait à mes études quelques livres sur l’économie politique qui m’amusaient beaucoup.

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55 Walsh, *Souvenirs*, 121.
She had a deep affection for her parents and, more particularly, for her father. No doubt the time he invested in her education fostered an intimate relationship.

Parents, too, could find great satisfaction in their efforts to educate their children. Gontaut wrote that she spent every day with her daughters and supervised their education with her mother’s help. Her relationship with her daughters brought her great satisfaction: “donner une idée du bonheur et du charme que me firent éprouver mes filles bien-aimées me serait impossible.” After the death of her daughter Séraphine in 1795, La Tour du Pin found consolation and distraction from her sorrow by taking care of her son Humbert’s instruction. Des Cars wrote that, after her first husband’s death, her children’s education became her sole preoccupation and a source of consolation. She added, “ils m’ont bien payée de toutes mes peines.” La Tour du Pin and Des Cars spoke of their love for their children.58 By the time that these women penned their memoirs, the idea that women had a duty love their family had become widely accepted. Indeed, a significant number of noble memoirists claimed that they found contentment in their new domestic roles. Although this claim may have been a politically motivated and meant to parry revolutionary criticisms, it is likely that they enjoyed the newfound value placed on motherhood even if they rejected attempts to limit their activités mondaines.59

Although their mother and grandmother were more closely involved than they would normally have been in pre-revolutionary France, Charlotte and Joséphine de Gontaut received a traditional feminine education and were raised to be accomplished noblewomen. They had masters for music, dance, and drawing. They also had a thorough religious education under the supervision of an émigré ecclesiastic.60 Overall, noble émigré girls’ education was remarkably similar to the one dispensed in Ancien Régime France. Their destiny and social roles did not change much as a result of the Revolution or exile: they were to be wives and mothers or religieuses. The belief that noble women had a role to play in the preservation of aristocratic

60 Gontaut, Mémoires, 100, 107.
manners also persisted and even gained heightened importance since *la vie élégante* was an important source of noble distinction.61

Curriculum changes were more expansive in the case of young male émigrés. Their role of paterfamilias did not change but the means by which they were expected to attain independence and ensure the successful social reproduction of their lines did: they could no longer count on landed revenues and rarely on traditional careers, even noble status was no longer a legal category. Émigrés often claimed that nobility was a biological fact, or *race*, and that it was transmitted through blood and semen. Ange-Achille-Charles de Neuilly, whose education was interrupted by the Revolution, argued that familial honour and respect for his ancestors led him on a straight path. He may have received a limited education but he still possessed the essential attributes of the nobility. He wrote: “Livré à moi-même depuis l’âge de quatorze ans… j’ai trouvé en moi ce principe d’honneur inhérent de tout temps à la noblesse : les traditions d’un sang fier m’ont préservé des écarts qui pouvaient ternir l’écusson que j’avais reçu sans tache.” Yet, nobility was also a cultural fact, one that required extensive culture and refinement, and Neuilly frequently mentioned that his lack of education was a disadvantage.62

Albert-François de Moré and Victoire Pecquet, comte and comtesse de Pontgibaud, pursued a comprehensive social reproduction strategy. While their eldest son Albert continued the family tradition and pursued military career – he lent his sword to the Condé army –, their younger son Armand received a thorough hybrid education to prepare him to take over the family’s business. Armand was sent back to France to live with his maternal grandmother in 1799 and, his education was placed under the tutelage of the abbé Gautier.63 His curriculum included subjects traditionally part of noble education as well as more modern ones. He learned Latin, philosophy, rhetoric, poetry, and drawing. By 1805, the comtesse acknowledged her son’s progress and pointed out that, even though she was a well-read woman, his skills would soon render his productions beyond her critical abilities. Acquainting himself with noble pursuits,

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Armand also learned to hunt. Even the pragmatic and adaptable Pontgibaud believed that there was value in classical culture and traditional noble education.

Armand’s parents also insisted on him becoming fluent in German. To that effect, he corresponded with Christian Schwachofer, a clerk in his parents’ business. Labrosse’s commercial activities necessitated regular contacts with European business communities and it was imperative for Armand to acquire extensive modern language skills. He also learned accounting during his apprenticeship in Scherer and Finguerlin’s Parisian trading house. This apprenticeship departed from traditional noble education practices. The Pontgibaud decidedly wished to provide their son with an education that would enable him to maintain his rank among the nobility but also to participate in their bourgeois business. This is particularly apparent in the comtesse’s advice with regards to her son’s correspondence skills: “Je viens de recevoir, mon cher fils, avec un plaisir infini, votre lettre…, et votre bonne écriture m’a paru avoir été faite aussi couramment que la diction en est facile; vous avez acquis de la régularité; enfin, pour une lettre de particulier c’est bien.” However, she concluded, his business letter writing skills required improvement: “Pour un homme de bureau, vous avez à continuer de vous exercer. J’attache beaucoup de prix à ce que vous ayez une bonne expédiée : elle est agréable dans toutes les positions sociales, et il est vraisemblable que c’est d’elle que vous aurez un besoin journalier, soit pour la correspondance [commerciale] ou autrement.” Letter-writing manuals emphasized the importance of clarity in business letters. The elegance and eloquence expected from noble correspondents had to be accompanied by a clear business style. Letters had practical function for the Labrosse and their son had to acquire the skills specific to business correspondence. The comtesse, who had an extensive correspondance mondaine and who took care of business letters, was in a good position to guide her son’s efforts.

The Pontgibaud/Labrosse attached a high value to their second son’s education. They believed that a good education was of paramount importance since it would ensure his livelihood. As Madame Labrosse wrote, “Pendant que tout se débrouille ou s’embrouille, vous faites tout ce qu’il y a de mieux, vous vous instruisez. C’est la richesse qu’on porte partout avec soi.” Monsieur Labrosse was very pleased with his cadet son’s application and progress: “Il m’est bien agréable, mon cher Armand, de n’avoir jamais à votre égard qu’à réitérer l’assurance de ma

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satisfaction. Vous jouissez de l’avantage de n’avoir qu’à mettre du zèle à suivre la direction d’un bon tuteur ; j’aime à me flatter que lorsque vous vous conduirez par vous-même, ce sera sur les mêmes bases. Cette espérance fait la consolation de ma vie et celle de votre mère.” The Pontgibaud’s satisfaction was heightened by their disappointment towards their eldest son who did not live up to expectations and committed some “erreurs de jeunesse” of which the family did not speak. They were keenly aware that their son’s education needed to be adapted to the uncertain and changing world; Armand’s place in the upper classes was in no way guaranteed and it was his father’s duty to provide him with an establishment that would keep the family honour intact. The comte de Moré, Pontgibaud’s brother, attributed his brother’s success in emigration to his extensive knowledge and culture as well as his natural resourcefulness and self-discipline.

The Labrosse sought to cultivate the same qualities in their younger son. In order to follow in his father’s footsteps, Armand had to be groomed both to take over the family business but also, if circumstances improved, to take up his role as an accomplished member of the French nobility.

Some émigrés opted to send their children to local schools. In her memoirs, Ménerville confessed her concern: “Mes filles grandissaient; leur éducation me donnait des soucis; leur précoce intelligence y répondait si bien!” She sent her daughters to a British school. Jean-Baptiste Dudon d’Envals sent the children he had from his marriage with a German woman to local schools. Women did not usually oversee the education of boys over seven years of age and, when her son Charles was about nine years old, Souza enrolled him in an English school a few miles from London. In his unpublished Souvenirs, Flahaut reminisced about his school days: “Les premiers moments furent durs. Je ne savais pas un mot d’anglais & j’étais Francois deux faibles recommandations…” When Souza left Britain in 1794, Charles stayed put. Her English connections – including the Marquess of Lansdowne and Robert “Bobus” Smith – looked after

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the boy until he joined his mother in Altona, near Hamburg, in 1796.\textsuperscript{70} There, he learned German and, in his mother’s salon, he learned noble manners and polite codes. Souza had reason to congratulate herself on this difficult decision when Charles sought refuge, once more, in Britain after the Hundred Days. She wrote to him in December 1815: “que je me felicite d’avoir été une mere barbare, et de t’avoir mis dans cette ecole angloise, toi pauvre petite creature qui n’entendoit pas un mot de ce qu’on y disoit.”\textsuperscript{71}

Charles de Flahaut had a successful military career and became Napoleon’s aide-de-camp. In 1817, during his second exile in Britain, the charming Frenchman concluded a most favourable alliance. He married the heiress Margaret Mercer Elphinstone, daughter of Admiral George Keith Elphinstone despite the bride’s family’s protests. Her father objected: “so far as I have been able to learn his habits of life have not been satisfactory nor such as to induce me to suppose he is calculated to make a good husband and render you happy according to the notions of this country which differ widely from those of others.”\textsuperscript{72} Flahaut returned to France under the July Monarchy. Louis-Philippe named him \textit{lieutenant-général} and peer of France. He later became ambassador in Vienna.\textsuperscript{73} Flahaut was well integrated into the French and British elite circles.

\textit{Charity schools or, how “to inculcate … principles suitable to [the] present deplorable situation”}

During the late 1790s charity schools for émigrés were founded in Britain. 1796 saw the inauguration of a school for French \textit{demoiselles} in Hammersmith and the Penn school for the orphans of Quiberon in Beaconsfield as well as the transfer of the abbé Carron’s schools from Jersey to Somers Town, London.\textsuperscript{74} These institutions had similar goals: to provide a suitable education for destitute noble émigrés, that is to inculcate principles appropriate to their station and to their present circumstances, to provide them with the skills necessary to ensure their

survival. Hundreds of émigrés attended these schools. At any given time, the école de demoiselles could have as many as thirty pupils and Carron’s school for girls about forty. Carron’s school for boys had about sixty, so did Penn.75

Boys who grew up without fathers risked missing out on their intellectual and civic development since women were not considered capable of providing that kind of instruction. Mothers could transmit a sense of family history, and thus support the perpetuation of the noble patriarchal family, but they could not supply to all the needs of the future ruling class. Léon de Rochechouart explained that his mother spoke to him about proper noble principles while they worked: “Nous parlant sans cesse de notre famille, des devoirs qu’imposait un grand nom, par là elle habituait notre esprit à se diriger vers les choses élevées, distinguées, et nous donnais le goût des bonnes manières, aussi bien que celui de la bonne compagnie.” However, she could not give him the means to ensure his independence and, at age twelve, he left to pursue a military career under his uncle’s patronage.76 Moreover, French and British elites held that boys should be removed from their mothers’ influence since it prevented them from achieving maturity.77

Émigrés and observers worried about noble émigré children not being brought up in the social spheres to which they belonged by birth. According to the abbé Lubersac, the Ladies’ Committee – an association of noble and gentry British women under the leadership of the Marchioness of Buckingham put together to respond to émigrées’ distress after the Quiberon disaster – deemed that the establishment of the école de demoiselles was necessary since “le dénuement absolu, la détresse de leurs familles auroient privé [the demoiselles] de l’instruction nécessaire pour la destination à laquelle elles étoient appelées dans la société.”78 Edmund Burke’s proposal for the establishment of an émigré charity school at Penn clearly reflected the alarm this situation caused in higher social spheres. Of impoverished noble émigré children, especially those who had lost their fathers at Quiberon, he wrote: “They are growing up in poverty and wretchedness; inevitably mixed with the children of the lowest people, in the

75 Lubersac, Journal, 87, 111, 151. The entry in the relief committee 1799 account book suggests that there might have been only between twelve and fifteen pupils left at the école de demoiselles. By 1801, that institution had been merged with Carron’s school for girls. NA, T93/16, n° 681. Carpenter, Refugees, 105.
miserable lanes and alleys of London, in which the poverty of their parents obliges them to reside. From wretchedness and bad company, the transition is easy to desperate vice and wretchedness. In this bad society they grow up without any sort of education.” He worried that this upbringing destined them to a life of vice and licentiousness. He also believed that these young gentlemen “[would] be utterly incapable of filling up their place in society… if providence should restore them to their country.” In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke argued that order and civilization depended on religion and aristocracy. He denounced the false philosophical systems promoted by revolutionaries and feared that higher learning, the foundation of civilization, would suffer greatly as a result of the Revolution. He hoped that the Penn school would allow émigré boys to be “well fed, lodged, clothed, and instructed in a manner not wholly unbecoming persons intended to fill a decent situation in life.” It would prepare these noble boys for the “great work in the restoration of so great and so undone a Kingdom as France.”

Appeals to raise funds for charity schools highlighted how theirs was a mission of public utility. In 1796, the comte de Botherel published an letter asking for subscriptions to finance the relocation of Carron’s schools from Jersey to London. He cajoled the public and appealed to the emerging British conviction that it was a national humanitarian duty to provide for deserving refugees. He stated: “public establishments and acts of benevolence are the delight and characteristics of a true Briton.” He then described how Carron supplied to the needs of young émigrés whose parents were “unable to give them a proper education.” He continued: “The end of the institution is to inculcate in the minds of children principles suitable to their present deplorable situation; the love of virtue and labour, the most entire submission to the laws and government of His [British] Majesty.” If that was not enough to persuade the public to interest itself to these unfortunate émigrés’ cause, he added that many of them had fathers and relatives who had perished or been injured in Britain’s service.

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81 Comte de Botherel to William Windham, 1796. BL, Add MS 37862, fo. 284.
Charity schools sought to instruct their pupils and to inculcate sound moral principles. The *école de demoiselles* meant to shape the pupils into “virtuous Christians.” Carron was the “spiritual and temporal father” of his charges and fostered the development of their moral and civic virtues. He spoke of the Bourbons’ great deeds at length to his noble pupils. The Penn school was placed in the hands of émigré ecclesiastics who oversaw the pupils’ moral and general education. It is hardly surprising that Burke and other promoters of charity schools wished to give émigré youth a solid moral education considering the widespread opinion that philosophy and irreligiosity were to blame for the Revolution. These institutions aimed to produce both good royalists and good Catholics. The schools also put emphasis on a number of other virtues such as cleanliness, utility, industriousness, orderliness, and mutual support. In order to instil habits of cleanliness and fulfill the requirements of representation, since an individual’s exterior was held to reflect his or her status and inner qualities, the headmaster of the Penn school, the abbé Maraine – former superior of the Saint-Nicolas seminary in Rouen – thought it essential for the pupils to have two sets of clothes. He petitioned Penn’s governors for additional funds with which to clothe the boys and mentioned that, in order to conciliate public opinion in the school’s favour, it was imperative to keep them clean and decently attired.

The schools’ curricula reflected these principles. The abbé de Lubersac was convinced that Carron would make his young charges useful to their families, king, and country. His account of the *école de demoiselles* left no doubt that the institution strove to turn the young women into useful members of society; to shape the pupils into virtuous Christians and resourceful mothers. To that effect, the girls were taught grammar, English, geography, in addition to female accomplishments and useful skills. He continued, “il n’est aucune branche de travaux propres aux femmes qu’on n’y cultivât, tels encore que broder et coudre, occupations ordinaires du sexe: tellement que ces différents exercices… accoutummoient, peu à peu, les jeunes demoiselles à l’habitude si précieuse de ne laisser aucun instant vide, et de les consacrer tous au

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84 Lubersac, *Journal*, 111.
développement de connoissances et de talens utiles.”\textsuperscript{85} This curriculum was quite traditional but it emphasized the virtue of industriousness to a greater extent.

Carron’s pupils learned writing, mathematics, English, and the boys learned Latin. Interestingly, his schools seem to have taught both boys and girls needlework. While noble girls had long been trained in needlework since it was believed to inculcate good habits of self-control, especially bodily control, and humility, noble boys were not normally taught it. The impoverished noble girls who attended Saint-Cyr were extensively trained in l’ouvrage, first, for the virtues it fostered and, second, because it was considered an appropriate source of income for poor noble girls who may have to earn their livelihood. During their exile, needlework often became one of the émigrées’ main sources of income and it was a useful skill for a soldier. With this in mind, it seems that Carron taught both his male and female pupils a useful and marketable skill thereby breaking with the gendered practices of needlework among the nobility. A destitute émigré officer, the comte Joseph de D., who was not unskilled with a needle, became a tailor in London.\textsuperscript{86} Furthermore, Carron’s pupils learned from distinguished tutors. The teaching staff was composed of noble émigrés – Messieurs du Houx, de Guéry, de Godefrey and Mesdames du Quengo, de Kersalio, and de Cornulier-Lucinière – who, as Lubersac reported, “se sont généreusement et pieusement voués à ce pénible, mais bien honorable état.” Teaching was a common profession for impoverished émigrés.\textsuperscript{87} As for the boys at Penn, under the tutelage of two or three émigrés ecclesiastics and one military officer, they learned French, English, and Latin, rhetoric, writing, poetry, mathematics, geography, science, and received some military training. The Penn school, a unique case of Franco-British cooperation, deserves closer analysis.

\textit{Edmund Burke vs. the French émigré clergy, or how best to educate the young émigrés at Penn}

When Edmund Burke came up with a plan for a boarding school for the orphans of Quiberon at Penn, near his Beaconsfield home, he resolved that his role would limit itself to that of a protector. He explained that he would not interfere with the student’s nomination or with the curriculum. He would leave these decisions to émigré bishops and nobles. After Burke had used

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\item \textsuperscript{85} Lubersac, \textit{Journal}, 87-88.
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the full weight of his political connections to get the plan approved, the British authorities turned
to the bishop of Saint-Pol de Léon to oversee the hiring of masters and the students’ selection.88

Maraine, Saint-Pol de Léon, Burke, and the British authorities were often at odds with
regards to the school’s goals and direction. The first two leaned towards the seminary model
while Burke and the British authorities were much more inclined to give the pupils a military
education.89 Burke got into a heated argument with the two ecclesiastics shortly after the school
received its first pupils. He sent them several letters stressing the necessity of adapting the
curriculum to prepare the pupils for the post-1789 world. In May, he pleaded with Maraine:

These young persons are in very peculiar circumstances. They are all born in an
honourable station. They are to be inspired with sentiments and with a character not
misbecoming that place. At the same time they are the most compleatly destitute of the
human race, and the most helpless; and the more so, perhaps, from the circumstances of
their birth. They have not only a fortune to make; but even a country to seek; as to the
first, they do not possess one of the usual means of advancing themselves. Every thing
must depend wholly upon their personal qualifications. To enable them to proceed in their
very difficult and delicate situation a meer French education, according to the routine of a… [religious] college, will never answer for them. They wou’d be ruin’d by it.

Burke believed that since these young men were unlikely return to France, it was absolutely
necessary to give them “a good dash of English education.” He argued that the mastery of
English was essential since Britain was their only refuge and since they would otherwise remain
disadvantaged foreigners. He solicited the help of the vicar apostolic John Douglass to recruit an
English Catholic priest who would be able to teach the boys his native tongue. He thought that
Saint-Pol de Léon’s opposition in this matter was “intollerable.” He deplored the selection of
masters, saying that Saint-Pol de Léon “has not one right idea on the subject.”90

Burke believed that the only career path that would be open to the young French noble
refugees was with the British army. Their education had to be tailored to this professional
prospect. He was also aware that the prospect of French recruits for the British military was one
of the most persuasive arguments to convince the British government to sponsor the school.91
Furthermore, any attempt to train additional Catholic ecclesiastics was likely to raise strong

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89 Edmund Burke to Walter King, April 1796. Burke to the Abbé Maraine, 2 May 1796. Burke to the Marquess of
Buckingham, 24 May 1796. Burke to the Rev. Thomas Hussey, 25 May 1796. Burke to Dr. John Douglass, 5 June
90 Carpenter, “Quiberon, its Orphans, and the French Émigré School at Penn.”
91 Carpenter, “Quiberon, its Orphans, and the French Émigré School at Penn.”
objections. Britain already had to succour an abundance of French clerics. Burke deplored Saint-Pol de Léon’s efforts to run the school like a seminary, calling this approach “downright madness.” Hoping to make his opinion clear, he sent a forceful letter to the bishop in June 1796: “Jai fait demander … les sentimens de personages les plus qualifies et les plus eclairés de la noblesse francoise. J’en suis instruit. Ils sont entierement de mon avis. Ils ne veulent pas du tout que cette ecole soit conduite apres le principes ou sur les reglès d’un seminaire de pretres. Ils sont entierement opposes a ce projet.” Burke revised his initial non-interference stance.92

Even after Burke’s death in 1797, disagreements persisted between the schools’ British governors and Maraine. The relationship between the military and ecclesiastical tutors was tense. Maraine argued that “un militaire dans l’école sera toujours un obstacle au bien. Il est impossible qu’il ait les mêmes pensées et la même manière de conduire, que des prêtres et voila un sujet de division.” Moreover, the headmaster and the bishop were dissatisfied with the baron de Bellegrade – the military officer who taught at Penn from 1796 to 1802 – and who, according to the bishop, did not make sufficient efforts to instruct the boys and let them be idle.93 The situation between the baron and other teachers had deteriorated to the point that, in September 1799, the former requested an “honourable retreat.” He reported that Maraine and Le Chevalier, another tutor, sought to “offend,” “humiliate,” and “persecute” him.94

In 1800, when the governors pressed for the recruitment of another military officer and of an English master, Maraine raised objections. First, he mentioned that the pupils’ elementary level of instruction would render the hiring of an artillery or engineering officer “une depense couteuse sans une utilité équivalente.” He added that the employment of a military officer had thus far been useless. He also questioned the necessity of hiring a Briton to teach English. He argued that, under the two previous British masters, the pupils had made no progress in Latin and almost none in English. He added: “[les maîtres anglois] ont eu de plus un grand desavantage en ce qu’ils ne peuvent ecrire un mot de francois sans faire d’horribles fautes de constructions et d’ortographe.” He believed that a French priest with a good mastery of English would be preferable since he would be able to teach his native language as well as English.95

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94 Guillaume-Marie du Pac, baron de Bellegrade to unknown, 23 September 1799. BL, Add MS 45723, fo. 20.
95 Maraine to the gouverneurs de l’école de Penn, 10 January 1800. BL, Add MS 45723, fo. 24.
Born out of a most beneficent initiative, the Penn school faced considerable obstacles and was a qualified success. The main issue remained the lack of adequate resources to fully support its needs. Burke’s death only aggravated the problem. Maraine struggled to keep the boys decently clothed, to fill the vacancies, and to get the treasury to pay the school’s subsidies on time.\textsuperscript{96} In July 1799, for example, there were only thirty-eight boys at the school. He wished to hasten new nominations to fill the vacancies since the expenses was more or less the same but the British government adjusted the subsidies according to the number of pupils.\textsuperscript{97} Furthermore, the limited teaching staff could not effectively cater to the students’ needs. In January 1800, Maraine wrote to the school’s governors and pleaded for more teachers. He reported that, despite their best efforts, the three masters could not meet the boys’ needs:

Si on considere que ces soixante jeunes gens sont de differents ages, de differente capacité, et qu’ils sont venus avec plus ou moins d’instruction, que les uns ne savoient ni lire ni écrire, que les autres un peu plus avancés, ne l’etoient pas tous au même point, et que pour ne pas leur faire perdre tout a fait leur temps il a fallu les diviser en six et sept classes differentes, il sera aisé d’appercevoir qu’avec le zele le plus actif, et la santé la plus robuste, on n’a pu leur donner toute l’instruction necessaire pour developper leurs facultés. en consequence quoique quelques uns aient fait des progrès asséz sensibles, ou parce qu’ils avoient plus des dispositions, ou parceque dans les instructions qu’ils ont reçues ils ont été mieux partagés, … un grand nombre est resté derriere.

Maraine wrote that some parents had removed their children because of the inadequate instruction they received from English masters. In September 1799, Alphonse de Beaupreau and Achile de Savignac transferred to Carron’s school.\textsuperscript{98} Although inadequate instruction may have motivated these transfers, a number of émigré parents, who lived in London, probably chose to bring their children closer to home since the Penn school stood twenty-eight miles away. Children who resided with their parents could attend Carron’s school and participate in the domestic economy. Yet, Penn’s problems did not deter émigré parents from seeking places for their sons. In 1799, for example, three new pupils were admitted in March, five in April, two in May, and one each in August and November. Nicolas-Louis-Marie Hue, marquis de Montaigu, a président of the Breton parlement solicited a place for his nine year-old son Maurice. The boy joined the school in August 1799.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{96} BL, Add MS 45723, fo. 4, 6, 54, 59. Carpenter, “Quiberon, its Orphans, and the French Émigré School at Penn.”
\textsuperscript{97} Maraine to King, 14 December 1798. BL, Add MS 45723, fo. 4. TNA T93/16, n° 873.
\textsuperscript{98} TNA, T93/16, n° 413, 873. Maraine to the gouverneurs, 10 January 1800. BL, Add MS 45723, fo. 24.
\textsuperscript{99} BL, Add MS 45723, fo. 14, 16.
The Penn pupils left no testimonies about their school life but a letter from 1820 that Gustave de Roquefeuill wrote to Casimir de Genouillac, former Pennites, reveals that their attachment to Britain and its culture remained strong. Roquefeuill wrote: “j’irai faire une tournée en Angleterre, c’est une paix [perhaps pais (country)] qui me plait toujours infiniment. J’aime John Bull, j’aime les beef-steaks et comme dit Lord Byron j’love a porter beer as well as any.”

In spite of its shortcomings, the Bourbons were very satisfied with the Penn school. They were equally pleased with Carron’s initiatives. Monsieur visited these establishments and distributed prizes to the pupils who had distinguished themselves. The prizes promoted principles of honour and distinction, principles dear to the nobility. Maraine laid out the advantages of awards for the students: “les enfans ont besoin d’un aiguillon, pour s’appliquer, et il n’y en a pas de plus puissant pour eux que l’honneur de remporter un prix.” The schools performed valuable services in the Bourbons’ eyes: not only did they educate the young émigrés but they also inculcated proper principles and ensured that the pupils would be loyal and good royalists and Catholics. Louis XVIII wrote to Carron: “Vos jeunes élèves apprendront par vos leçons, et surtout par vos exemples, à aimer et à respecter Dieu, à connoître et chérir les véritables lois de notre patrie.” Although the curricula also included the development of skills that would enable émigrés to get by should their exile persist, there is little doubt that these schools prepared young noble émigrés for the traditional professions that their order had pursued in Ancien Régime France: the army, the magistrature, and the Church for boys and an essentially domestic existence for girls. These charity schools also reveal that French and British elite masculinity standards were similar; they emphasized self-control, independence, honour, and civic responsibility.

The noblesse internationale and the perpetuation of the nobility’s traditions

A number of émigrés whose networks extended to the European nobility were able to obtain places for their progeny in traditional institutions or careers. As a general rule, however, this option was only available to the order’s higher echelons.

Adélaïde-Paule-Françoise, comtesse de La Boutetière de Saint-Mars used her connections to find places for her daughters Henriette and Alexandrine in the convent of the Visitation in

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100 Cited in Carpenter, Refugees, 111.
103 On the British gentry’s educational practices see French and Rothery, Man’s Estate .
Vienna. Her brother, Anne-Louis-Henri de La Fare, bishop of Nancy, acted as Louis XVIII’s agent in Vienna and his intercession secured the protection of the Archduchess Maria-Anna of Austria for his nieces. The Archduchess paid for the girls’ education and acted as their godmother at their confirmation. Henriette and Alexandrine left the convent in 1801 when they were sixteen and seventeen years of age but their marriage was delayed until their return from emigration.\(^{104}\) La Boutetière de Saint-Mars’s son, Louis-François, was educated by Jesuits at the St. Omer College in Liège where he was placed in 1792.\(^{105}\) Walsh, who also attended St. Omer, highlighted the college’s international character whose pupils came from Europe’s most distinguished Catholic families. Once in exile, the Roncherolles, Nédonchel, Choiseul, and others chose the reputable institution for their progeny thus resuming with the long-standing French aristocratic practice of Jesuit education.\(^{106}\) The curriculum included English, French, German, Latin, Greek, literature, philosophy, history, geography, mathematics, astronomy, and physics.\(^{107}\)  

The cost of the Jesuits’ pupils’ pension became onerous for many émigré families. Walsh confessed that, unbeknownst to him, his relatives had been incapable of paying for his education for the last four of the seven years at the College. Other pupils transferred to charity schools. Eugène and Xavier de Choiseul, two of Charles-Etienne de Choiseul-Beaupré’s sons, and La Boutetière de Saint-Mars’s son left the Jesuits to attend Penn. Choiseul struggled to properly educate his five sons. In 1799, he wished to withdraw Eugène from Penn and send his cadet Octave instead. He wanted to finish Eugène’s education personally and the ten year-old Octave was in great need of instruction. Octave was “peu avancé pour son age ne sachant pas encore bien lire.” Choiseul was taking care of his cadet son’s illiteracy and promised that he would be ready to attend the school in the near future. Maraine declined the request arguing that, for the time being, Eugène was in a better position to profit from the instruction dispensed at Penn.\(^{108}\)  

When he was nine years old, Maxence de Damas’s family’s financial situation deteriorated. The young Maxence had spent a few years at St. Omer but when the college moved to Britain after the French invasion of 1794, his parents looked for a less expensive option. He

\(^{105}\) La Boutetière de Saint-Mars, Mémoires, 18-19.  
\(^{106}\) Walsh, Souvenirs, 22. Damas, Mémoires, 2.  
\(^{107}\) T. E. Muir, Stonyhurst (Cirencester : St Omers Press, 2006), 77-78, 198-200.  
\(^{108}\) The président de Granvelle to King, 3 July 1799. Maraine to unknown, 4 July 1799. BL, Add MS 45723, fo. 12, 13. Walsh, Souvenirs, 50. TNA, T93/16, n° 873.
was sent to the *école des cadets d’artillerie* in Saint Petersburg. A year later, his father died during the Quiberon expedition. The patronage of Charles-Eugène-Gabriel de La Croix, maréchal de Castries, a family friend, and Armand-Emmanuel du Plessis, duc de Richelieu, a relative, helped the Damas secure a free military education for their eldest son. At the *école des cadets*, he found a number of students and officers from France’s first families including the Broglie, Saint-Priest, Choiseul, and Grignan. Damas had important relations with the local elite and émigrés in Russia. He also benefited from his kinship’s advantageous connections, most notably Roger de Damas, who had served in the Russian armies against the Turks and in the Condé army during the Revolution, and Étienne de Damas, who had regular relations with the duc d’Angoulême. Maxence de Damas embraced the traditional military vocation and had a successful career. Richelieu was quite successful in helping his kinsmen find employment in the service of Russia. In addition to Damas, he promoted the careers of his nephew, Rochechouart, and of two more of his cousins. Rochechouart eventually became Tsar Alexander’s aide-de-camp.

The narrative Damas constructed in his memoirs reveals how despite the challenges of exile and its negative impact on his education, in the end, true noble spirit prevailed. He began by claiming that his early education suffered from important deficiencies. He spoke Russian better than French, knew almost nothing of French literature and culture, and excelled at mathematics but was unfamiliar with almost all other subjects. He had no religious instruction. Worst of all, he had unsophisticated manners and his education had not instilled in him the elevated feelings a nobleman ought to have. This, likely exaggerated, account was followed by that of the revelation of his innate noble spirit and the realization of his noble potential which inspired him to improve his education. During a visit to his mother in France in 1803, he took the first steps towards self-improvement. He took mathematics lessons from a student of the *École polytechnique* and riding lessons from men who had belonged to the *Maison du Roi*. He wrote: “Un nouvel horizon semblait s’ouvrir devant moi : aux idées étroites que j’avais retirées de l’école militaire, à celles un peu plus étendues que j’avais trouvées dans mon régiment, venaient s’ajouter les sentiments, le souvenir des vertus et des défauts de la noblesse de France.”

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Émigrés children worried about adding to their parents’ charges. Albéric d’Hespel d’Hocron and his brother sought to alleviate their family’s financial burden and joined the Condé army when they were aged fifteen and sixteen. Rochechouart shared this concern. He solicited the patronage of his uncle the duc de Mortemart, left his mother’s side, and begun a military career when he was twelve years old. He wrote that he was quite young to become his own master and he suffered greatly from his lack of parental guidance. Rochechouart and Hespel d’Hocron noted how emotionally difficult the separation with their parents was. Yet, as the former explained, necessity prevailed. Separation between parent and child had been the norm in eighteenth-century noble milieus. Children, especially boys, were commonly raised outside of the familial household and displays of affection were rare. The baronne La Roque’s father’s behaviour followed traditional noble codes. According to her, “mon digne père regardait les caresses comme un acte de faiblesse qui compromettait la dignité de l’autorité paternelle, et il admettait la sévérité comme base du gouvernement de la famille et le principe du respect dû au chef.” In order to successfully transmit the family’s patrimony and honour to the next generation, the noble patriarch had to exercise full authority over his dependents. In this context, displays of affection could make him seem vulnerable. The early modern noble emotional regime emphasized parental – especially fatherly – aloofness and sternness in an effort to elicit fear and love from children. By the end of the Ancien Régime, however, this model of fatherly behaviour had been criticized by Rousseau and other social commentators. Instead, these writers erected the ideal of the affectionate father and promoted a new fatherly emotions and behaviour best described as “parental friendship.”

This affectionate family ideal and conception of the family as an emotional haven spread to émigré ranks. Indeed, noticeable changes in parent-child relationships took place. Émigrés were often conflicted between their desire for an intimate family and their duty to provide all the possible advantages to their offspring. Caste imperatives dictated that they place their lineage’s interests above their private desires. This often necessitated separation. In their letters and memoirs, parents and children regularly commented upon the fact that separation was difficult.

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albeit necessary. La Boutetière de Saint-Mars wrote that parting with her son and with her daughters was painful. Yet, she claimed: “le désir de [leur] donner une bonne éducation eut le dessus sur une tendresse qui aurait été mal placée.” The advantages her children would gain from a traditional education and her duty to provide them with the best opportunities outweighed her desire to keep them close to her. The comtesse de Neuilly had become a marchande de modes to supply to her and her children Clémentine and Achille’s needs. Her children were concerned about the expenses their mother incurred to support them. Achille, with the help of his uncle, secured a position in the Austrian infantry. The comtesse told her daughter that the pain of the separation was beyond words. Achille also regretted their parting but his calling for the military profession prevailed. The comtesse found a position for Clémentine as a lady’s companion. The latter’s letters show that she was unhappy and would rather have shared her mother’s poverty: “j’aimerois cent fois mieux, je te l’assure, ma chère maman, aider ta servante à éplucher ses pois et sa salade, que d’être ici à faire la dame de compagnie.” The comtesse missed her daughter and wrote that her presence would bring her comfort but she believed that the separation was for the best and that her daughter’s comfort should come before her own. As a result of these new ideals and of the difficulties of exile, noble émigré families’ emotional regime changed.

**Patriarchs, Wives, and Children: Challenges to Patriarchal Authority**

Exile dictated familial solidarity. It often became necessary for all the members of a family to participate in the group’s survival efforts which caused important changes to power relations and family dynamics. Distance, need, networks, opportunity, and love often undermined the noble patriarch’s traditional authority within the domestic sphere. The greater role women and children played for the group’s survival gave them increased consideration. Moreover, revolutionary ideals and laws brought about important changes in the conception and structure of family relations: the patriarchal household was replaced with more a more egalitarian family structure. Revolutionaries wished to guarantee individual liberty and posited that love should temper paternal authority and affection foster familial solidarity. Although many émigrés rejected these principles in theory, in practice they partially influenced the noble émigré

family. The good father, one who consulted his dependents, replaced the absolute ruler. Women and children also enjoyed greater influence and autonomy. Finally, closeness, adversity, and trauma fostered more affectionate family relations.

Women and children could play a central role in a family’s decision to emigrate. Pauline de Lévis and her mother left of their own volition. Ménerville claimed that she had wished to leave France almost from the onset of the Revolution. In 1791, she told her husband of her very serious desire to leave France. At first reluctant, he later changed his mind. Decision-making could also be more collective. When Gontaut suggested that their little émigré colony – the Montaut-Navailles and the Gontaut – should settle elsewhere than in expensive London, the decision to relocate to Epsom was taken collectively in what she referred to as “notre petit conseil.” Falaiseau used the same terminology when discussing her immediate family’s decision to move from Aix-la-Chapelle to Holland in 1793. This collective type of family government can also be found in émigré fiction. In Eugénie et Mathilde, a fictional but vraisemblable portrayal of an émigré family’s experience, Souza addressed the shifts in family government that the Revolution and emigration brought about. For the first time, Monsieur de Revel consented to consult his family’s wishes over the decision to emigrate. He explained: “Depuis que nous vivons ensemble dans cette terre, je me suis accoutumé à croire que nous ne faisons qu’une même famille ; et je ne puis prendre un parti de cette importance dans connoître vos intentions.” The Revolution had entered family government.

Lucie de La Tour du Pin took charge of her entire family’s emigration. She called upon her acquaintance Thérésia Cabarrus – Tallien’s mistress and later wife – and obtained passports for her family. She had her husband fetched from his hiding place and the whole family left

118 Sarah Maza argues that the cult of the family promoted in what we now call “drames bourgeois” initially meant to transcend class distinctions and appealed to the upper classes. Maza, The Myth of the Bourgeoisie, 61-67.
France in March 1794. Her English fluency, not to mention her general resourcefulness, enabled her to take a leading role in her family’s exile experience. Her husband had a good understanding of English but he only spoke it with great difficulty. Her British connections also made their sojourn there easier. The regularization of their status with the Aliens Office was facilitated by the fact that she was a British subject and the niece of Lord Dillon, Lord Kenmare, and Sir William Jerningham. A number of her English relatives also provided for them. Lady Jerningham hosted them at her residence of Cossey and later rented a house for them in Richmond. The overall impression that emerges from the narrative she created in her memoirs is that it was her resourcefulness that was principally responsible for her family’s survival. Her husband appears to have played a secondary role.

Separation made the exercise of patriarchal authority difficult. Jacques-Alexandre-Reine de Beaurepaire de Louvagny could not exercise authority over his wife who had stayed in France. Despite his ardent wish for domestic happiness, the couple did not have a harmonious marriage. He wrote his wife, who was nine years his junior, “au lieu d’être avec toy comme avec mon amie j’y ay été comme avec ma fille, que je voulois et que je croyois devoir former… il n’a peut être fallu rien moins que l’absence, que les circonstances orageuses où tu t’est trouvée pour me convaincre que je doit prendre des leçons de celle à qui j’en voulois donner.” When she requested that he send their son back to France in order to keep him from being considered an émigré, Louvagny found himself in the unusual situation of obeying his wife. He obeyed even though he thought this was an unnecessary precaution: “malgré mes regrets malgré les maux que me causera mon obéissance, qui sont d’autant plus grands que je croy la mesure que vous prennes tout au moins inutile sy elle n’est dangereuse je n’ai pas différé d’un jour à avaler le calice d’amertume que vous m’aves envoyé.” Other émigrés took advantage of the greater liberty distance allowed them. In 1797, Albert-Quentin-Jean-Baptiste d’Estrées married Anne-Marie-Camille Loisel le Gaucher in London. He did so against his father’s wishes.

The Lévis had a loving union but, once separated by exile, Pauline did not always heed her husband’s desires. His letters for the 1791-1792 period show that she ignored his advice on

several occasions. He chided her about her spending habits. He advised her about the conduct she should adopt. He explained that her situation was delicate since she was related to known aristocrates while he was a moderate. He told her: “Songez que vous êtes ma femme, que vous avez vous-même d’autres principes, tonnez contre la licence, contre les atrocités, parlez avec respect du roi et de la reine, avec attachement de la monarchie, mais pénétrez-vous bien de cette vérité, c’est que le mieux est encore de ne rien dire… De tout ceci, concluez que moins vous pourrez voir de monde, mieux cela vaudra, c’est triste, j’en conviens, mais vous n’êtes pas à Tournay pour vous amuser.” A few weeks later, he criticized her frivolity and told her that any appearance of gaieté would be unseemly, suggesting that she had not fully complied.

The Lévis argued over her travel plans in the spring of 1791. She wished to go to Holland but he insisted on her removing to England: a physically and politically safe refuge. She ignored his wishes, left their daughter in the care of her nurse, and went to Holland. Lévis was furious and told her not to expect another letter until she had returned to Tournay, adding that she should never have left. He told her that he had entrusted his daughter to her, not to a nurse. He continued to admonish her in his following letter, telling her that he was disappointed that she had not observed his wishes. To her claim that she would have obeyed him had he expressly forbidden it, he countered, “Si je vous avais écrit sèchement que je ne le voulais pas absolument, vous auriez répondu que vous ne cèderiez jamais au despotisme.” Lévis resolved that, henceforth, he would abstain from giving his wife orders and that he would only advise her. In the same letter, he discussed her plans to travel to England and advised her to go by Ostend but added, “Remarquez que ce n’est qu’un conseil, je me suis imposé la loi de ne jamais même vous presser sur quelque chose que ce soit, je vous dirai mon avis mais rien de plus.”

Lévis’s views about his rights over his daughter Augustine were different. He insisted that she should go via Ostend and that, if Pauline disregarded his orders, he would use his paternal rights to make sure it did not happen. He told his wife: “Je ne veux plus exercer sur vous aucun des droits que la force des choses et les conventions humaines donnent également dans les contrées sauvages et dans les pays policiés aux hommes sur leurs femmes, mais c’est un devoir sacré pour moi et auquel je ne renoncerai jamais de conserver les droits que la nature et les lois de

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127 See chapter 2.
128 Lévis to Pauline, 31 December 1790 and 3 March 1791. Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 276, 310.
129 Lévis to Pauline, 30 March and 12 April 1791. Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 324, 326.
130 Lévis to Pauline, 3 May 1791. Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 327-329.
tous les empires me donnent sur ma fille.” Should she choose to go by another way, he would make the necessary arrangements for Augustine. His usual affectionate tone was replaced by a much colder one.131 The couple reconciled but Pauline’s travels displeased him once more. Just before his departure from France in July 1792, she took a longer than expected trip to Southampton. He delayed his departure since, as he sulkily told her, “si j’étais parti la semaine dernière, … j’aurais eu l’agrément en arrivant à Londres de ne point vous y trouver.” Pauline’s whereabouts were a source of friction for the couple. Despite his assurances to the contrary, he at least once resorted to his husbandly authority over his wife and forbade her to return to France in July 1791. He was concerned about her safety and justified his resolution by saying: “je n’ai pas moi-même le droit de renoncer à l’autorité que la nature et la loi me donnent sur vous.”132

In the Burney-d’Arblay household, it was Fanny Burney who provided for her husband and son, at least until Alexandre d’Arblay’s return to France in 1802. The couple lived off her £100 pension, the occasional gifts she received from Queen Charlotte, and a £20 annual return on investment. Burney also turned to her pen as a means of improving her household’s financial situation. Already in June 1793, Mrs. Lock had urged her to write and publish stating: “here is a resource – a certainty of removing present difficulties.”133 Soon after her marriage, Burney resumed work on Camilla, her third novel. She overcame her earlier reluctance and published the novel by subscription in 1796. The publication raised about £2000, enough for the couple to build a cottage based on d’Arblay’s plans. They aptly named their new residence Camilla Cottage.134

Still, forced into public inactivity, d’Arblay refused to be idle. Burney reported that he spent his days improving his English, reading, writing, working on their house, and tending his garden. Her letters chronicled his horticultural pursuits. The picture that emerges from them is one of a gardener who was not the most skilled or knowledgeable but who was determined. His former military life had not exactly prepared him for gardening. She commented on the comical juxtaposition of her “chevalier jardinier[s]” military skills and his new activities. She wrote to her father: “I wish you had seen him, yesterday, mowing down our hedge – with his sabre! – & with an air, & attitude so military, that if he had been hewing down other legions than those he

131 Lévis to Pauline, 3 and 5 May 1791. Lévis, Écrire la Révolution, 327-329.
encountered – i.e.: of spiders – he could hardly have had a mien more tremendous, or have demanded an arm more mighty.”  

Burney also related her husband’s disappointment when he learned that the strawberry plants he had planted would not bear fruit the first year, when he confused the asparagus with weeds, and when most of his harvest was destroyed by a series of calamities. He did have some partial successes as well. His cabbages perfectly exemplify his successes and shortcomings as a gardener: “O, you have no idea how sweet they tasted! we agreed they had the freshness & a goût we had never met with before. We had them for too short a time to grow tired of them, because, - as I have already hinted, they were beginning to run to seed before we knew they were eatable.” D’Arblay had no practical knowledge of agriculture but, despite his early failures, he remained undaunted. The produce he harvested from his garden enabled him to provide for his family’s sustenance in a limited but concrete way. He also undertook a number of improvement projects and repairs around the house and tried his hand at carpentry, again with very limited success. His constant activity reveals that, although he expressed no particular unease vis-à-vis his material destitution, he still wished to make a contribution to his family’s welfare through his labour. In turn, Burney expressed no discontent with regards to her husband’s incapacity to support his family. Instead, she repeatedly emphasized how industrious he was even when she related his, mostly failed, attempts at horticulture and carpentry. She dreaded that he might return to his former military profession, and told her father “God knows – I am ‘the most’ contentte personne in the world to see his sabre so employed!” She did not demand or expect him to be their family’s breadwinner and was quite satisfied with this quiet life.

Émigré Children and Writing Exile

Émigré children who remained with their parents often participated in the domestic economy, sometimes of their own initiative. In an attempt to ennoble their activities, both Marie-Octavie-Mélite de Nédonchel, comtesse de Dauger and Gontaut presented their efforts to raise money with their handiwork as their own initiative, their attempt to alleviate their parents’ sufferings. Gontaut wrote that, even before her family had completely exhausted their resources, she took painting lessons in the hope of turning her aristocratic accomplishments into a profitable

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135 Burney to Dr. Burney, 10 August 1794. Burney, The journals, vol. 3, 73, 443.
137 Burney to Dr. Burney, 10 August 1794. Burney, The journals, vol. 3, 73. McCrea, Frances Burney, 118-119.
skill. She added that she drew some comfort from knowing that she could, one day, be useful to her beloved mother. Dauger explained that in the early days of exile, when they still had resources, her family had worked in order to help destitute émigré families. Their first venture into manual labour had served a charitable and noble purpose. Once their funds became scarcer, Dauger and her sister tried to help their parents by making horsehair rings. They did this, Dauger claimed, in secret and hoped to surprise their parents with the profits.\textsuperscript{138}

Dauger and Gontaut’s early experience eventually played a crucial role in their family’s survival. The latter explained: “Voyant ma mère accablée d’inquiétude, j’eus peur un moment de manquer de courage; mais, chargée par la Providence de soutenir celui de cette pauvre mère, je pris la résolution de chercher à donner par mon travail un peu d’aisance à notre petit ménage, et ma gaieté revint.”\textsuperscript{139} When Madame de Nédonchel told her daughters that they would have to work to help support themselves, Dauger reported that she and her sister courageously applied themselves to the task. They made mittens, straw-hats, decoupages, they embroidered, and her sister taught drawing at a local convent. Their father cultivated a garden he had rented. Despite their courage and resourcefulness, their father despaired over his inability to provide for his family. Dauger explained that she was less pessimistic: “Il ne se tourmentait pas pour lui, mais il craignait le lendemain pour sa femme et ses enfants. Que de fois je l’ai vu se désoler, en disant: ‘mes enfants, mes pauvres enfants, que deviendrez-vous, et vous verrai-je mourir de faim!...’ Mais nous, nous le renencouragions: ‘Nous avons des mains, répondions-nous, et avec de la bonne volonté, du courage et l’aide de Dieu, nous saurons bien nous tirer d’affaire.’” Dauger’s maternal grandparents, the Puységur, who had sought refuge at the Brunswick court and enjoyed some degree of ease, did little to help her family, it thus fell to the youngest generation to work for their subsistence.\textsuperscript{140} Fictional narratives created by émigrés like Souza also shed light on noble children’s impulse to help their parents.\textsuperscript{141}

Memoirists and novelists did not present children’s work as a sacrifice to filial duty but rather as a freely chosen or ungrudgingly accepted situation. Their narratives embellish their relationship with work. Julie de Gantès, for example, wrote that work was better than idleness.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{139} Gontaut, \textit{Mémoires}, 39.
\textsuperscript{141} Souza, \textit{Eugénie et Mathilde}, 176.
\textsuperscript{142} Cuvilliers, Fontaine, and Moulis, “Julie de Gantès,” 493.
This embellishment was frequent in the case of émigré daughters. Their scripts emphasized that they were worried about their distressed and less resourceful parents, that their labour served a noble purpose, and that they were resigned but also dignified and cheerful. All of this added up to noble émigrées claiming that the service of others brought them fulfilment. They subscribed to the Christian ideal of women achieving virtue through abnegation and passive suffering.¹⁴³

Children also endured humiliation and mortification for their parents’ sake. Noble émigrés forced to sell their work often experienced shame. Souza described at length the shame Eugénie and the fictive Revel family felt when they were overpaid or when merchants scrutinized their work. The shame lay not in the work itself but rather in its remuneration. Eugénie presented their work to merchants who appraised its value. During the encounter she blushed, paled, and teared up. She thought about fleeing but remembered that she had to provide for her parents. She took the payment “la mort dans le cœur” and resolved never to let her parents know of the mortification she experienced.¹⁴⁴ The vital role Eugénie played for her family’s survival enabled her father to esteem her and made him regret his earlier decision to force her to a religious life. Souza used her novel to highlight how exile allowed women to break free from convention and step beyond accepted social roles. Her female characters played an instrumental role in their family’s survival and their subordination to self-serving patriarchs thus appeared arbitrary.¹⁴⁵

Memoirists’ accounts of their work and retail experiences shared important similarities with the one Souza outlined in her novel. Rochechouart and Walsh were both responsible for the sale of their émigré workshop’s output because of their age and language skills. Rochechouart spoke German with some ease and Walsh, English. The former took handiwork to Hamburg shops. The merchants’ haggling tired him. Walsh disliked these transactions too: “Oh! c’était là le dur métier… et je me souviens comme le rouge me montait au visage… Il fallait que je prisse mon courage à deux mains pour paraître, moi, humble commis-voyageur, devant les superbes commis du comptoir… Je devais avoir l’air bien gauche en leur montrant notre marchandise, car je me rappelle encore les battements de mon cœur et les sourires de leur sot orgueil.”¹⁴⁶ His embarrassment revealed his superior breading; his social standing could not be hidden. He was

¹⁴³ This theme of abnegation was a regular feature in literature: Suellen Diaconoff, Through the Reading Glass: Women, Books, and Sex in the French Enlightenment (Albany : State University of New York Press, 2005), 176-177.
¹⁴⁴ Souza, Eugénie et Mathilde, 177-179.
gauche, his polished manners unsuited for this type of base dealings, humility did not come naturally to him, and the lowly merchants displayed misplaced self-importance.

Adult émigrés often made no special efforts to integrate their host societies and learn foreign languages.\(^{147}\) This was not the case for émigré children who often learned foreign languages, mainly English, German, Russian, and Italian.\(^{148}\) Their linguistic skills and greater integration into foreign societies gave them significant advantages over their parents. They also often had more tenuous links to their patrie. They often existed in two worlds. Their multiculturalism meant that, in addition to their hybrid class identity – noble with a dash of “bourgeois” – they also had a hybrid national identity – French with a dash of cosmopolitanism.

From these accounts, it seems that children – who were not yet fully socialized – and sometimes wives, were more adaptable and fared better in exile than the noble patriarch who was more prone to cling to his pre-revolutionary ways. The disintegration of Ancien Régime noble society’s structures made it difficult for patriarchs to control their children and force their adherence to noble and national traditions with which they had had limited contacts.\(^{149}\) Dauger’s father despaired over his inability to raise his daughters in accordance to proper noble standards. She, on the other hand, was less concerned about the prospect of earning her livelihood. Women could draw upon a few marketable skills such as embroidery to support themselves.\(^{150}\) Women and children’s adaptability enabled them to face the trials of emigration with creativity and many learned to be pragmatic. Margaret Weiner even argues that women were generally more successful than men when it came to earning a living in emigration since they were able put their accomplishments and “natural taste and elegance” to good use and capitalize on demand for new fashion.\(^{151}\) Another side to this story, however, suggests that women’s emigration trials might have been greater than men’s since they had fewer employment opportunities and they oftentimes could not rely on the kinship networks that normally assisted them.\(^{152}\)

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\(^{149}\) Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés,” 188-189.

\(^{150}\) La Roque, “Les Mémoires,” 23.


that the interdependence created by the trials of exile allowed for women and children to gain more autonomy, even authority, in the family.\textsuperscript{153}

Conclusion

Emigration caused significant changes to the noble family structure. The resourcefulness of children and wives, distance, opportunity, and the development of affective families could challenge traditional patriarchal authority. The Revolution did enter noble émigré families. New educational and childrearing practices also brought about important changes. The dissolution of the traditional structures of noble society and the scarcity of conventional educational institutions compelled many émigrés to modify their progeny’s instruction. Indeed, many parents and charitable observers thought it necessary to adapt children’s education to their uncertain future. They sought to provide émigré youth with skills to survive in the post-revolutionary world should they fail to return to France as well as give them some elements of traditional noble training which would be required for them to properly fulfil their role as members of the French ruling class should they ever be restored. The development of a modern, hybrid skill set that would provide them with the ability to engage in diverse activities was considered key for the nobility’s youngest generation’s survival and for the successful social reproduction of the noble line.

One thing was sure, for the nobility to survive as a group, for noble lines to be preserved, it was imperative to continue to procreate. A close examination of the registres de catholicité and a comparison with the demographic models of the pre-revolutionary nobility reveal that, as a group, noble émigrés who had sought refuge in Britain did not have significantly fewer children than they would have had during the last decades of the Ancien Régime. In fact, the émigré community invested considerable time and energy in the group’s reproduction.

\textsuperscript{153} Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés,” 189.
Chapter 4

Émigré Social Reproduction Strategies: Matrimony and Domesticity

Victorine de Chastenay summarized the dilemma surrounding marriage that many noblewomen faced in the eighteenth century: “On m’avait inculqué, comme à toutes les jeunes filles élevées dans le monde, qu’un mari est un maître auquel on obéit, quand on n’élude pas ses ordres ; on désenchantait le mieux possible le grand but du destin des femmes.” She described her astonishment when she met a couple that shared a deep love for one another. From that point on, love seemed to her as life’s sole delight. Still, she remained determined to fulfill her filial duty: “je me promis mieux que jamais, ou de rester à mes parents, ou de ne me marier que pour eux, mais alors de tout surmonter si leur intérêt l’exigeait.” In the end, she never married.

Chastenay’s recollections shed light on two, often diverging, principles that guided matrimonial practices towards the end of the eighteenth century. Many families, especially noble families with substantial patrimony, approached marriage as a social and financial transaction meant to perpetuate or augment familial status. Marriages of convenience in which connections, patrimony, and status were given the greatest importance were the norm. These unions placed filial duty above all else. Yet, with the development of Enlightenment and pre-Romantic thought, more writers advocated for the importance of affection in the choice of marital partners. Critics of marriages of convenience highlighted how they were not conducive to population growth and how they undermined morals. Others argued that they did not lead to personal fulfillment and happiness. The companionate marriage ideal, based on mutual affection and esteem, was gaining grounds. Voltaire, Diderot and Marivaux, among others, criticized traditional marriage and argued that affection, mutual esteem, and respect – not material considerations or interest – should be the principal deciding factors for matrimony. Rousseau’s two most widely read works – Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse and Émile – did much to popularize the companionate ideal. This ideal was based on the idea of gender complementarity and held that love was both a goal and a duty. This modern ideal was slow to gain acceptance among the nobility. Noble girls may be

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given the option of rejecting a suitor, but the negotiations remained a familial affair and affection alone rarely determined matches.

The Revolution dramatically altered family dynamics and laws. Revolutionaries promoted the ideal of republican motherhood, of dedicated mothers who raised and nurtured future citizens. They also held that domestic felicity fostered male citizens’ sensibilité and made them more empathetic and humane citizens, and thus more attuned to the general good. New laws made freely given consent the linchpin of matrimony. Nevertheless, in noble circles, marriage mostly remained one of the most effective means of ensuring the lineage’s successful social reproduction. In sum, marriage, as an institution, was widely debated and undergoing significant transformations by the end of the century. Still, it remained a fundamental institution and contemporaries continued to argue that it was the bedrock of the social order.

This chapter considers noble émigrés’ matrimonial strategies and shows that exile disrupted normal practices. Families with sons and daughters of marriageable age, single men who had emigrated alone, as well as widows and widowers who wished to remarry faced important challenges. The loss of fortune and the uncertain future often modified noble émigrés’ marital strategies. They generally tried to strike a balance between prudence and expedient means to preserve the noble line. Although the circumstances of exile were not propitious to the conclusions of marriages, noble families’ concern with the perpetuation of their lineage often forced them to overlook their short-term issues and to try to settle their children to the best of their abilities. The prospect of an improved immediate situation could trump hopes a more suitable match in the long term. Endogamy and marriages of convenience remained the norm.

Still, the dislocation of the traditional structures of social control that accompanied emigration and the dismantling of the Ancien Régime gave the individuals more flexibility when it came to marriages. Émigrés experimented with different family models in order to ensure their own survival, their lines’ survival, and in order to find some emotional comfort in these trying times. On the one hand, the precarious circumstances of exile could justify unions that would have been frowned upon in pre-revolutionary France. As long as they were loyal to the cause, misalliances could be considered as a social sacrifice to sound royalist principles. On the other hand...

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3 Desan, The Family on Trial, 37, 83-84, 91.
hand, the context of exile and the Revolution’s social ideals provided some less conservative émigrés with more freedom in their choice of spouses. The general disorganization of aristocratic society, the émigrés’ uprootedness, and the growing acceptance of the idea that unions should be based on mutual affection allowed individual émigrés to free themselves from some of the restrictions that had previously been placed on noble matrimony. Several émigrés concluded marriages of inclination. A close examination of émigrés’ writings about their marriages and families reveal that a close-knit family was not only necessary to survive in emigration, it also brought considerable consolation: it was an emotional refuge.4

This chapter first surveys the strategies families divided by exile pursued in order to maximise their chances of preserving their patrimony. Next, it studies émigré matrimonial practices in Britain. It then considers examples of marriages of convenience and of inclination. It examines the growing popularity of the cult of domesticity among émigré noble men and women. It concludes with an overview of the specific challenges of widowhood in exile.

**Separated Families’ Survival Strategies**

The continued presence of a émigrés’ relatives or family members in France – often wives – could, in some cases, facilitate the preservation of the noble family corporate unit. During the early days of emigration, before laws and war rendered communications and the circulation of people rather difficult, family members who remained in France could send resources to their émigré relatives. In 1793, Gilbert Elliot’s old French schoolfellow La Porte praised émigrés’ wives saying that they “have in general shown the greatest fidelity and fortitude, and have been the means of saving their husbands from absolute want.”5

Émigrés’ wives used revolutionary legislation to minimize property loses. Reforms implemented in September 1792 made marriage a contractual agreement between two individuals that could be dissolved by either spouse. Divorce was legalized. Wives and, less often, husbands of émigrés could obtain a divorce for desertion. Noblewomen got divorces for three main reasons. First, for their personal protection: divorce allowed spouses of émigrés to dissociate themselves from their compromising partners and to demonstrate their loyalty to the French state. Second, it allowed spouses to put an end to an unhappy union. Third, it allowed émigrés’ spouses to salvage

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5 Gilbert Elliot Minto, *Life and letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto, from 1751 to 1806*, ed. Emma Eleanor Elizabeth, Countess of Minto (London: Longmans, Green, 1874), vol. 2, 144.
part of the family’s patrimony by shielding it from confiscation. Courts generally granted divorced wives full control over community property in emigration cases. Soon enough legislators started to suspect that émigrés’ spouses’ motives were not entirely patriotic and that they pragmatically used revolutionary laws to protect the Republic’s enemies’ interests. 6 Aimée de Coigny Pulchérie de Valence, Felicité de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, and Marie de Lameth obtained divorces and thereby protected some of their families’ properties. In 1792, Lady Malmesbury observed that “all the French women who were [in London] are gone back to get divorced from their husbands, and by that means keep their estates.” Some couples, like the Lameth, resumed conjugal life after the Revolution. 7 Not all couples approved of this strategy. Liancourt’s snide comment to his former wife about “votre divorce” suggests that he was not entirely pleased with her actions. Others refused to request a divorce. The marquise de Lage de Volude claimed that her émigré husband had authorized her to do so and added that it would have made her life considerably easier. Safety and fortune, however, were not sufficient motives for her to renege on her sacred vows. 8

Émigrés also occasionally chose to send children back to France to try to preserve some of their properties. In year V, the Directory adopted a decree that stipulated that children who had been under ten years old when they emigrated would be reinstated in their civil rights, including their right to inheritance. The duchesse Des Cars, in 1796, and the comte and comtesse de Pontgibaud, in 1799, sent their children to live with their grandparents in France. 9 If, under the


right conditions, these strategies could help sustain the corporate unit, they also entailed important risks. Conjugal separation could result in a decline in fecundity and imprisonment and execution were real possibilities. Consequently, some families decide to leave together.

**The registres de catholicité: Émigré Marriage Practices in Britain**

The necessity to ensure the perpetuation of the noble line prevailed for émigré families who had children – especially daughters – who were too old to return to France and who were of marriageable age. Émigré fathers sought to fulfil their duty to establish their children to the best of their abilities despite the extraordinary circumstances of exile. The registres de catholicité contain details about the spouses’ age, origins, families and personal history for eighty-six weddings in which at least one of the spouses was a noble émigré. Baptismal records contain information about an additional twelve émigré marriages contracted while in exile in Britain that do not appear in the matrimonial records. This brings the total to ninety-eight émigré weddings. By cross-referencing the registres de catholicité with the account books of British Committees in charge of charitable relief for émigrés – in this case the 1797-compte des secours payés aux émigrés de Jersey venus en Angleterre and the Wilmot Committee account book for 1799 – it is also possible to get some indication about the émigré spouses’ financial situation.10

The first conclusion that emerges from the registres is that émigrés continued to conclude endogamic alliances. In all but a few cases, both spouses belonged to the nobility or, in the case of mixed national unions, the British spouse generally belonged to the gentry. There were a few exceptions. Some grooms who identified themselves as écuyer had a lower social status than their brides. For example, Jean-Justin de Loménie – son of François de Loménie, écuyer, and Jeanne Rivière – married Julie-Pauline Grignard de Champsavoy. Loménie was a docteur en médecine who did not own any estates while his bride was the daughter of the comte de Champsavoy. The groom, however, was employed as a physician for émigrés by the Wilmot Committee and had a stable income.11 The most striking example of exogamy was the marriage of Adèle d’Osmond, daughter of the marquis d’Osmond, to the wealthy commoner général Benoît de Boigne. In most other cases, however, the spouses had a comparable social status. The perpetuation of the nobility’s endogamic practices show that the émigré family continued to operate as a corporate

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10 For more details about the registres de catholicité and the British relief account books see chapter 3. AAE, Nantes, Etat Civil Postes. Londres: Registres de Catholicité, 1792-1846, 2 mi 1840, 2 mi 1841, 2 mi 1505. TNA, T93/16 and T93/31

11 AAE, Nantes, 2 mi 1840, Registres M. TNA, T93/16, n°558.
unit in which the interests of the lineage took precedence over individual desires. New scientific theories about race and the transmission of characteristics as well as the emphasis placed on the definition of nobility as a biological fact made endogamy preferable.\textsuperscript{12}

Second, despite prolonged cross-cultural contacts, trans-national unions were relatively rare. Of the ninety-eight noble marriages recorded in the *Registres de catholicité*, non-French spouses – the vast majority of whom were British – appear in thirteen cases: two non-French husbands and eleven non-French brides.\textsuperscript{13} It is hardly surprising that few Frenchwomen married foreigners since most émigrés ultimately hoped to return to France and that husbands generally determined their family’s place of residence. Clémentine de Brunet de Neuilly rejected a German suitor since she had resolved to only marry a Frenchman.\textsuperscript{14} This shows that the noble emigration was one of “maintien” and not one of “rupture.”\textsuperscript{15} Frenchmen marrying foreigners faced fewer limitations. For example, Antoine Bourdois de Bréviande thought that, because of English domestic ideals, an English wife would suit his idea of happiness but he also thought that his resolve to return to France might be an obstacle to him marrying a foreigner.\textsuperscript{16}

The fact that British spouses and any children born from these unions were not eligible for relief from the Wilmot Committee might have acted as a deterrent for mixed marriages among the most destitute émigrés. In 1794, Charles Grant, vicomte de Vaux married the Englishwoman Mary Catherine Jones, the couple had many children. His military employment and writings helped him support his family for a while, but ultimately he was placed on the relief Committee’s list. In 1803, he petitioned the Committee and asked that his wife and children be granted relief.


\textsuperscript{13} This data could also be misleading since Frenchwomen marrying Britons may have done so in Anglican churches.\textsuperscript{14} Ange-Achille-Charles de Brunet, comte de Neuilly, *Dix années d’émigration: Souvenir et correspondance* (Paris : Charles Douniol, 1865), 176.


His request was turned down since they were not eligible. Ultimately, émigrés’ precarious situations, their uncertain future, often did not make them prudent matches for the British gentry.

Third, historians have generally argued that exile delayed marriage for many noble scions. The statistics collated from the registres do, to some extent, corroborate this assumption. Data for the pre-1795 period is sparse since the émigré community did not yet have its own religious institutions and anecdotal evidence would suggest that some émigrés did delay marriage. It is likely that few marriages took place during the first years of exile because émigrés, who often expected a quick return to France, chose to postpone the celebration of their unions until then. This is what happened to Marie-Louise de Montaut-Navailles, the future duchesse de Gontaut. Charles-Michel de Gontaut Saint-Blacard had asked for her hand around 1790, even before their definitive emigration in 1792. The suitor was received positively by her mother but the latter wished to postpone the marriage until the French state of affairs had returned to some degree of normalcy. Gontaut spent a significant part of his time in exile with his fiancée and her family. He renewed his demand around 1793 or 1794, when it became clear that a return to normalcy in the foreseeable future was not likely. His fiancée’s mother finally gave her consent and the couple were married in the Spanish ambassador’s chapel in London.

Even after the first French Catholic chapel was established in London in 1795, only four noble weddings were recorded that year. There was, however, a noticeable shift around 1798. There were forty-seven unions celebrated between 1798 and 1802 in which at least one of the spouses belonged to the nobility. There had been nineteen between 1793 and 1797 and there would be thirty-two marriages between 1803 and 1814. Moreover, there was a slight increase in the number of brides and grooms who depended on British relief. Of the forty-seven weddings that took place between 1798 and 1802, twenty-one brides and seven grooms can be found in either or both the 1797 compte des secours payés aux émigrés de Jersey and the Wilmot Committee 1799 account book. The fact that able-bodied adult males under the age of fifty were not eligible for government relief explains the clear predominance of émigré brides who received

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17 The committee’s decision read: “Neither the wives of emigrants married since the revolution and who are not themselves emigrants, nor the children of such marriages can partake of this relief.” TNA, T93/5 fo. 121. T93/16
relief. Indeed, although British authorities held that men, women, and children were deserving refugees, the 1794 Enlistment Bill – adopted in context in which the British were in great need of manpower – stipulated that all able-bodied men, with the exception of the clergy, should enlist in the military service if they required financial assistance. Thus, usually only one of the spouses relied on British charity during that period – sixteen brides and two grooms – but in five instances, both spouses were not financially independent. In twenty-three of the forty-seven unions, or 48.9 percent, the spouses depended at least partially on émigré relief.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Number of Noble émigré Marriages</th>
<th>Receiving British relief:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grooms</td>
<td>Brides</td>
</tr>
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<td>1794</td>
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<td>1800</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1814</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On April 4, 1799, Louis Augustin Enjobert, chevalier de Martillat, aged 24, married Agathe Marie Josephe de Derval, aged 22. Both spouses received support from the British government and continued to do so after their union. It is not possible to ascertain Martillat’s familial situation at the time of his marriage but he was listed independently and with no relation

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20 “No single man in health between the ages of 16 & 50 to partake in this bounty.” BL, Add MS 18592, fo. 106. TNA, T93/1
22 Since there were no French Catholic chapels in England before 1795, weddings that may have been celebrated before that date are unlikely to have been recorded in the chapels’ civil registries.
in the Wilmot Committee’s book. It seems likely that he had either emigrated alone or lived alone
by 1799. The fact that the young man received relief suggests that he may have been injured in
the line of duty. Derval had emigrated with her brother and four sisters. Her parents had died
before 1789 and her brother perished during the Quiberon expedition. The sisters all depended on
British relief. A year later, her sister, Pauline-Jeanne-Marie, aged 32, married Philippe de
Bonafos de la Mothe, aged 41. Bonafos did not rely on British charity.23

In three of the five cases where both spouses were dependent on British charity, they had
attained the age of majority.24 Six of the seven men who relied on relief who married between
1798 and 1802 had also attained the age of majority, so did thirteen of the twenty brides. In sum,
the data of the registres reveal that many émigré families delayed marriage for a few years but
when it became clear that a return to France was not imminent, some families thought it best to
establish their children in spite of, or as a result of, their precarious financial situation.

The case of Rose-Louise-Eulalie de Freslon and Alexandre de Chastellux illustrates how
financial insecurity was not always a sufficient impediment to prevent marriages. On June 4,
1796, Freslon wrote to the Philippe d’Auvergne, prince de Bouillon who was in charge of
distributing assistance to the émigrés in the Channel Islands. She wrote that she had become
engaged to Chastellux and explained that she and her family expected the union to contribute to
her happiness. Her parents deemed Chastellux a suitable match and she hoped to marry as soon as
he could secure a position. She told Bouillon that her fiancé’s command of English was good and
asked if he could not find him a place as his secretary, aide-de-camp, or if he could be employed
in any other way. She added that it would be preferable for him to get a position in Jersey since
she did not wish to leave her parents who required significant care. Her petition does not seem to
have succeeded but they were still married on July 4, 1796. Shortly after, Freslon wrote to
Bouillon again and asked to be placed on the liste des secours. She received British relief but her
husband did not. Nor did the newlyweds postpone having children. Their first son was baptized

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23 AAE, Nantes, 2 mi 1840, Registre M. TNA, T93/16, n° 37 and 795. René-François-Laurent Le Men and François-
Marie Luzel, Inventaire sommaire des archives départementales antérieures à 1790. Archives du Finistère. Archives
Bachelin-Deflorence, 1873), 13.

24 The age of majority in France was fixed at 25 with the Ordonnance de Blois (1579) although majority did not
automatically confer legal emancipation.
May 14, 1797 and a daughter followed in November 1798. Chastellux and Freslon’s financial situation only briefly delayed the celebration of their union and the start of their family.

The spouses’ advancing age and a prolonged exile did, in many cases, overcome financial obstacles. Anne-Pauline de Taillevis de Jupeaux explained that her family, composed of two adults and three children, had exhausted their financial resources by 1794. They let their servants go, sold their remaining valuables, and started to work to support themselves. Jupeaux drew from her aristocratic skills – she embroidered, drew, and made straw hats – to supplement her family’s income. In 1793, she had met the baron Jacques-Joseph de La Roque in Dusseldorf. The pair became engaged shortly after but the marriage was not celebrated until June 1796. She attributed the delay to her age, writing that she was but 15 years old when they first got engaged. Yet it was not uncommon for noblewomen to marry before they turned 18. It seems likely that precarious financial situations at least partially accounted for the delay: La Roque and the Jupeaux can be found among the recipients of British charity in 1799. La Roque and Gontaut commented on their nuptials’ small scale: from their humble appearances to the modest festivities. Thus, when émigrés resigned themselves to a long exile, they celebrated the unions they had postponed until then, even if the celebrations were limited.

Further evidence supports the argument that émigrés delayed marriage by a few years. There are some indications about the brides’ age in seventy-six of the ninety-eight marriages recorded in the registres. Forty of them were minors and thirty-nine had attained legal majority. Of the forty-three cases for which the age of the bride is stated, twenty-one brides were 22 years old or younger, and twenty-nine, or 67 percent, were aged under 25. On average, the noble émigré women found in the registres married at 23 years old, well below the national average.

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25 TNA, PC 1/117A, fo. 34-35. AAE, Nantes, 2 mi 1840, Registres B and I
27 La Roque’s recollections of the chronology of her courtship and engagement are unclear. She wrote that she got engaged when she was 15 years old, which would have been in 1793. She also wrote that she became engaged in London, the Jupeaux de Taillevis arrived in London around 1795. Finally, she wrote that she got married in 1797 when it seems that the ceremony took place June 13, 1796. La Roque, “Les mémoires,” 22. Louis de la Roque, Armorial de la noblesse de Languedoc (Montpellier: Felix Seguin, 1860), tome 1, 301-302.
that hovered around 26 for the 1780-1810 period. However, when compared to the average age of marriage for French noblewomen during the second half of the eighteenth century which was between 18 and 22 – 18 in the case of ducs et pairs families – it becomes clear that noblewomen married later in emigration than they would normally have in pre-1789 France.

TABLE 4.2: AGE OF NOBLE ÉMIGRÉ SPOUSES IN THE REGISTRES DE CATHOLICITÉ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grooms</th>
<th>Brides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 and under</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>35-39</td>
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<td>60 and over</td>
<td>1*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>23.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average for first marriages only</td>
<td>33.10</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Indicates second marriages

The data collated from the registres de catholicité also shows that émigré noblemen often married later in exile than in pre-revolutionary France. In fact, it seems that they might have delayed marriage even more than noblewomen. While Frenchmen married on average at 28 years old during the 1780-1810 period, noblemen married much earlier, on average around 20 for the second half of the eighteenth century. Considering that these men could count on careers, patronage, and familial patrimony, early establishment was logical. Noble émigrés, who did not dispose of such considerable advantages, married significantly later. None of the thirty-eight grooms whose age was recorded in the registres were under 20 and only four of them were minors when they married. If we take into account all the entries in which the celebrant recorded the legal status of the grooms, the overwhelming majority of them were aged 25 and over: four were minors and seventy-five were majors. There were also a significant number of émigrés who did not get married until they reached their thirties and even their forties. Thus, a number of

émigrés who were of marriageable age on the eve of the Revolution went into exile still single and often did not marry until the second half of the 1790s. On average, not taking into account the widowers who remarried, noble émigré men married at 33. These numbers suggest that exile had different impacts on noble men and women’s marriage practices. While women delayed marriages by just a few years in most cases, on average no more than five years, men waited much longer to get married, often between five and ten years and sometimes even more. Considering the scarcity of noble émigrées and the fact that fecundity was a time sensitive issue, it is logical to assume that young women could have several suitors and did not delay marriage by many years. As for men, the considerable delay may have been caused by the ineligibility of most adult males to government relief. Their potential wives and children would have been eligible but it is likely that a lack of resources prevented many from forming an establishment.

The age difference between the émigré spouses was also important. In all but three known cases, the groom was older than his bride. For first marriages, the average age difference between the spouses was of 9.96 years and the median was 8 years. Even if we leave out the four cases in which the husband was his wife’s senior by more than thirty years, the average age difference was still 7.57 years. There were only six cases in which the groom was no more than five years his wife’s senior. In the few cases where the wife was older than her husband, the age difference is much less significant: one year in two cases and three in the other.

In some cases, a much older – and presumably well-off – husband married a much younger and less prosperous wife. On December 31, 1802 Charles-Marie-Thérèse de Tinseau, who was then 53 years old, married Albertine-Louise-Rossine Escouffier, who was 19. Tinseau’s name does not appear in the 1799 Wilmot account book, being 50 at the time he would have been eligible but he does not appear to have needed them. Escouffier’s family, however, received governmental support. It thus seems more than likely that Tinseau was a materially attractive match for an impoverished émigré family. This practice was not uncommon among the nobility in Ancien Régime France.

Not all young brides, however, were pleased with this type of union. Adélaïde de Flahaut – later de Souza – was the victim of this type of union. In 1779, the 18 year-old Adélaïde Filleul married the 53 year-old comte de Flahaut. The comte was a good match: his status and connections were far superior to that of his bride. His revenues, however, were modest and

33 AAE, Nantes 2 mi 1840, Registre P. TNA, T93/16, n° 265.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Age of Grooms</th>
<th>Age of Brides</th>
<th>Age Gap between Groom and Bride</th>
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<tr>
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<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
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* Indicates second marriages
insufficient to support the lifestyle that his rank and connections required of him. Their marriage remained childless and financial problems put a strain on the union.\textsuperscript{34} In \textit{Adèle de Sénange}, the partially autobiographical novel she published during her emigration, Souza criticized mercenary unions. In the novel, the young Adèle is married to the much older Monsieur de Sénange by her greedy relatives. The young Lord Sydenham, who met Adèle shortly before her marriage, was shocked by the unnatural union and by the bride’s parents’ vanity and greed.\textsuperscript{35} The union with Monsieur de Sénange was not completely disastrous but it became clear that the young woman’s affection lay elsewhere. She finally found happiness after Sénange passed away and she married Sydenham with her first husband’s blessing but against her ever-greedy family’s wishes who would have preferred to marry her to her cousin. This second marriage was what Souza considered a marriage of reason: it united two young people of similar age and tastes.\textsuperscript{36}

As the eighteenth century progressed, the question of affection came to matter more in noble matrimonial strategies. In exile, the importance of emotional satisfaction within the family intensified. Émigré nobles faced an important dilemma: the breakdown of the Ancien Régime’s traditional structures could give them enough liberty to conclude marriages of inclination. Yet, their precarious financial situation could also push them to conclude financially advantageous, but often emotionally unsatisfying, unions.

\textbf{Mercenary Unions, or How to Improve One’s Situation in Exile}

Adèle d’Osmond belonged to a distinguished Norman family and she had spent her early years in the royal family’s intimacy.\textsuperscript{37} In emigration, the d’Osmond’s revenues and the pensions they received from the French and Neapolitan royal families evaporated. It was in this context that Adèle d’Osmond married Benoît de Boigne. The général de Boigne – a Savoyard native who had been naturalized English – had had a glorious and highly profitable military career in India.

Adèle d’Osmond’s marriage to the général de Boigne was explicitly a mercenary union. The memoirist made no attempt to hide the fact that, on her part, materialist motives were the only ones that led to the marriage. The narrative she created in her memoirs vindicated this

\textsuperscript{34} Charles de Flahaut, officially the comte and Adélaïde de Flahaut’s son, was the latter and Talleyrand’s illegitimate child. André de Maricourt, \textit{Madame de Souza et sa famille: les Marigny, les Flahaut, Auguste de Morny (1761-1836)} (Paris : Émile-Paul, 1907), 39-46.
\textsuperscript{35} Souza, \textit{Adèle de Sénange}, 33.
\textsuperscript{36} Kirsty Carpenter, \textit{The Novels of Madame de Souza in Social and Political Perspective} (New York : Peter Lang, 2007), 37.
misalliance, this déclassement: a young, rather naïve girl, sacrificed herself on the altar of filial piety. This narrative highlighted how virtuous self-sacrifice and dedication to the wellbeing of others were her life purpose. The memoirist unambiguously stated: “J’ai toujours pensé que, pour conserver de la dignité à son existence, il fallait la diriger dans le sens d’une principale et persévérante affection et que le dévouement était le seul lien de la vie des femmes.” She continued that she had dedicated her life to “l’amour filial.”

In her memoirs, Boigne portrays herself as the main protagonist in the marriage negotiations. She started her tale by shedding light on her parents’ sufferings, reporting on her mother’s desolation and lamentations and on her father’s grave silence and insomnia as a result of their precarious financial situation. She claimed to have taken charge of every aspect of the negotiations with the général. She reported that she was forthright with him: “Je fis la faute insigne, quoique généreuse, de lui dire que je n’avais aucun goût pour lui, que probablement je n’en aurais jamais, mais que, s’il voulait assurer le sort et l’indépendance de mes parents, j’aurais une si grande reconnaissance que je l’épouserais sans répugnance.” By doing so, she had put her conscience at ease and could continue the marriage negotiations as a plain and simple financial transaction, thus following a well-established practice among the nobility. The général had a yearly income of 20 000 louis and offered his bride-to-be a dower of 2500 louis and a yearly allowance of 400 louis. In addition, she was able to negotiate an annuity of 500 louis for her parents. By taking charge, she both created a heroic persona, one of a child who sacrificed her potential happiness to take care of her parents, and preserved her parents’ virtue by denying their involvement in this base transaction. According to her narrative, their role had been limited and they were only privy to the end result: “Ma mère était un peu blessée que je l’eusse quittée dans un moment où il s’agissait de mon sort. Je lui racontai ce que j’avais fait; elle et mon père, quoique fort touchés, me conjurèrent de bien réfléchir. Je leur assurai que j’étais parfaitement contente… Je me sentais sûre de remplir les devoirs que j’allais contracter et, d’ailleurs, tout était absorbé par le bonheur de tirer mes parents de la position dont ils souffraient.”

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39 Boigne, Mémoires, 203.
40 Boigne, Mémoires, 204. Françoise Wagener, La comtesse de Boigne (1781-1866) (Paris : Flammarion, 1997), 78.
However, a letter from the marquis d’Osmond to the family’s patriarch, Mgr. Charles-Antoine-Gabriel d’Osmond de Médavy, written the day after the nuptials reveals that he had been much more involved than his daughter’s memoirs acknowledged. Indeed, it would have been highly unusual for a daughter to negotiate her marriage. The marquis’s letter shows that General O’Connell, a mutual acquaintance, approached him with the général’s proposal and asked him to “convert his daughter’s heart.” D’Osmond also wrote that before broaching the subject with his daughter he had met with the général to negotiate the financial settlement. The 17-year-old Adèle d’Osmond consented to the agreement and, on June 11, 1798, twelve days after their first meeting, she married Benoît de Boigne.

The d’Osmond seemed satisfied with the match. In a letter, the marquis wrote that he had told the général: “Je l’assurai bien que je n’étais pas de ces Français qui se flattaient du retour à leur ancien état, que nous étions dans l’abîme…” The général was an advantageous match for many reasons: beside his fortune, he had good manners, a glowing military reputation, and was a modern man, that is a remarkable self-made man. The extended family also seemed to approve of the union, though their praises were not disinterested. In a letter congratulating the général upon his marriage, Mgr d’Osmond talked of his gratefulness and praised the général’s respectability and generosity. He added: “Si le spectacle d’une famille nombreuse unie dans le malheur a pu faire quelque impression sur votre cœur généreux et sensible, j’ose croire que je n’étais pas indigne de figurer dans ce tableau intéressant.” Boigne later complained about her relatives leeching off the général’s well garnished purse regardless of the couple’s troubled domestic life. Even after the first conjugal hitches, a letter d’Osmond wrote in August 1798 shows that he remained satisfied with this marriage. The match was advantageous for the whole familial unit.

Adèle de Boigne’s recollections of her marriage were very different in tone. She saw it as an unequivocal déclassement. Although mercenary unions were not uncommon among the high nobility, they usually brought together the son of a good noble family and the daughter of a moneyed family. Considering that the principle of patrilineality that governed French society meant that a wife and any children would take her husband’s status and the belief that for

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42 Letter from June 12, 1798, reproduced in Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, 76.
43 Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, 76.
44 Cited in Wagener, *La comtesse de Boigne*, 85-86
procreation the male mate’s characteristics were dominant, the honour of the noble family was left intact. 47 In Boigne’s case, she was marrying down and took her husband’s inferior social status. The général might have had a considerable fortune and a good reputation, he was nonetheless a commoner. 48 The marriage was unusual for another reason. Although prolonged interactions with foreign societies brought about a number of trans-national marriages, it was overall uncommon for women to marry foreigners. 49 The age difference between the spouses, while considerable, was not entirely uncommon. At least another three émigré couples who married in Britain had an age difference of thirty years or more. The promise of independence that widowhood brought and an amelioration of their immediate situation could convince young women to accept a much older suitor. In sum, the marriage both kept in line and broke with aristocratic matrimonial traditions. It was a marriage of convenience that joined a good name with a fortune, a relatively poor young woman with a moneyed older man. It broke with traditions, however, since the marriage was unmistakably a déclassement, a misalliance that was accepted as a necessity by an impoverished noble émigré family who realized that a return to their pre-revolutionary situation was unlikely.

The marriage caused a sensation in émigré society. 50 Gilbert Elliot wondered about the obviously mismatched couple: “M. de Boigne… does not look above fifty, and is a tall stout, hale-looking man, with a coarse rough sort of [f]avour, and very much like one’s idea of a foreign sergeant become an officer. The contrast with his wife is no doubt striking, for she is the smallest and most delicate piece of Sèvres china I ever saw unbaked, and extremely beautiful in that way; which, however seems fitter for a mantelpiece than the home of a Swiss grenadier.” Elliot continued, “I am told that M. de Boigne’s good health and constitution gives great discontent to all her family, who are languishing for a chance of his death.” 51

The union was a disaster. Boigne had fulfilled her filial duty by marrying to improve her parents’ situation but that did not bring her happiness. 52 She explained that far from finding satisfaction in her newfound wealth, she was insensible to its advantages. She even argued that she did not abuse her husband’s fortune as much as “une femme plus âgée, plus habile, un peu

48 He was made comte héréditaire in 1816. Wagener, La comtesse de Boigne, 434.
50 Joseph-Alexis de Walsh, Souvenirs de cinquante ans (Paris : Bureau de la mode, 1845), 69.
52 Rossi, Mémoires aristocratiques féminins, 80-81.
artificieuse, mettant un grand prix aux jouissances que donne l’argent… [qui] aurait pu tirer beaucoup meilleur parti pour elle et pour lui de la situation où j’étais.” Furthermore, she accused her husband of having lied about his origins and his past. According to her memoirs, the général had concealed his more than modest origins – he was the son of a Chambéry furrier. She hinted at, though did not fully disclose, his previous marriage to an Indian woman with whom he had had two children, and whom he had installed in England.

Boigne’s memoirs betray her contempt for and lack of interest in her husband’s background. She wrote: “Né dans la plus petite bourgeoisie, il avait été longtemps soldat. J’ignore par quelle route il avait cheminé de la légion irlandaise au service de France jusque sur l’éléphant d’où il commandait un armée de trente mille cipayes.” The général was a farcical warrior not a noble one, he did not even command his troops from a noble steed. She glossed over his military exploits in an attempt to belittle him. Indeed, despite his wife’s dismissal, his exploits had attained the status of legend in Europe at the time. She further ridiculed his manners, the manners of a nouveau riche: “La rapidité avec laquelle il avait passé de la situation la plus subalterne à celle de commandant, de la détresse à une immense fortune, ne lui avait jamais fait éprouver le frottement de la société dont tous les rouages l’étonnaient.” Frottement that would have polished his unrefined manners. His “oriental jealousy” and his refusal to try to be agreeable made him the antithesis of the good aristocrat. Seen through his wife’s eyes, the général had no chance of earning her respect. The only quality he possessed was his money and that was too vulgar to merit the consideration of a person of such distinguished lineage.

After a few months of “stormy” conjugal life, the général offered to return Boigne to her parents. She accepted and wrote that, although it made her parents’ joy, it irked other émigrés who wished to profit from his wealth. However, she was unable to enjoy her recovered freedom since he refused to provide her with the necessary funds to ensure her “tranquility.” She resumed common life with him shortly thereafter but their relationship did not improve and the couple separated and reunited a few more times. Boigne’s memoirs paint a sombre picture of

53 Boigne, Mémoires, 206-207.
57 Boigne, Mémoires, 208-209.
matrimony, of her sacrifice. She wrote that her youth was “poisoned” by her tumultuous relationship with her husband. She accused him of having robbed her of her illusions when she was but 17 years old. She also blamed her youthful ignorance for her decision to accept his hand: she had never been courted and she could only think of her parents’ wellbeing.58

The union failed mostly because the spouses had very different conceptions of the marital state to begin with. Accustomed to aristocratic practices, it is likely that Boigne expected to return to a life independent of her husband after a few months of cohabitation and of minimal interactions with him. The général, however, expected submission from his wife.59 Considering the marked disparities of status between the spouses, submission was probably not natural for her. Her father reminded her of her duty but she struggled to come to terms with her new situation. In a letter to him, she wrote: “Enfin… papa, tu as beau me prêcher la soumission et la résignation, jamais, non, jamais je ne m’accoutumerai à un si grand malheur.” The couple had many disagreements. For example, they disagreed about who she should visit. She wrote to her parents: “Monsieur de Boigne… me persécute pour aller chez madame Cockburn. Vous imaginez bien que je n’en ferai rien, au moins pour aujourd’hui.” The quarrel lasted a few days before she relented. She also resented how her wifely duty separated her from the parents she worshiped.60

As for the général, he desired companionship and assumed that he had bought a ticket into high society.61 Boigne’s descriptions of the couple’s entertaining habits show that the général was determined to gain access to the pleasures of high society: “Nous avions un assez grand état, des dîners très bons et fréquents, de magnifiques concerts où je chantais. Monsieur de Boigne était, de temps en temps, bien aise de montrer qu’il avait fait l’acquisition d’une jolie machine bien harmonisée.”62 She felt objectified: a “jolie machine” that he could put on display to affirm his improved social standing. Furthermore, the général developed strong sentiments for his wife. He explained: “Je parvins à voir une jeune personne, à toutes apparences susceptible d’inspirer le sentiment de l’amour le plus vif. Trop persuadé que je pourrais l’aimer à l’adoration, j’ai tenté d’en avoir la possession, je l’ai obtenue et ce moment je me suis vu au comble du bonheur.”63 He

58 Boigne, Mémoires, 204-205, 208-209.
59 Vanderboegh, The life and works, 104.
61 Rossi, Mémoires aristocratiques féminins, 84.
62 Boigne, Mémoires, 207.
63 The général to Adèle during first separation, late 1798. Reproduced in Saint Venant, Benoît de Boigne, 85
expected that his wife would at least develop some amicable feelings towards him and that he would be able to mould the tastes and character of so young a person. She did not share his tender disposition and was not amenable to his influence. She made her sentiments clear in a note she sent him during the first year of their union: “Je ne vous ai point épousé par amitié, encore moins par amour; je n’y ai vû qu’un mariage d’arrangement et de convenance… Je pensois qu’un homme de vôtre age en m’épousant jeune comme je le suis, de ma naissance et de mes talents, n’eut éxigé de moy que des egards et non de l’amitié que pensant sagement et raisonnablement vous vous fussiez contenté d’ètre mon mari et très satisfait de pouvoir vous coucher auprez de moy.”

The spouses’ expectations with regards to conjugal life were irreconcilable. She idealized the marriage of convenience; he expected companionship. She expected that the union would enable her to ensure her family’s independence, that her commitment to conjugal life would be minimal, and that gratefulness, in the absence of affection, would satisfy her husband. The général expected that his wife would help him solidify his position in high society but he also expected her to develop some affection for him. It is not possible to ascertain if Boigne was as forthright with him as she claimed to have been in her memoirs about her conviction that she would not develop any affection for him, but it seems likely that he either disregarded her warning or expected that cohabitation would change her feelings and he was later angered when the affection he probably felt entitled to did not materialize. Boigne had sold herself to save her parents from the horrors of poverty but she regretted it bitterly.

Boigne held her husband in contempt and her anger towards him is clearly detectable in her memoirs. However, recent historiography has argued that she, in fact, showed some restraint and did not defame her late husband’s memory. She did not disclose the full extent of the physical and psychological cruelty she endured at his hands. In the letters she wrote to her parents during a trip to Germany she undertook with her husband in 1799-1800, she complained about his impatience and the scenes to which he repeatedly subjected her and wrote: “Il me fait les menaces les plus effrayantes, m’assure qu’il emploiera tous les moyens possibles pour détruire ma réputation, m’assure que je ne reverrai l’Angleterre que déshonorée ou soumise.” After repeated verbal abuse, Boigne claimed to have grown insensible to the général’s insults and threats: “J’ai passé toute la soirée à dire et à m’entendre dire amicalement les choses les plus

64 Reproduced in Saint Venant, *Benoît de Boigne*, 143.
dures et les plus offensantes ! Je ne conçois pas moi même comment les scènes les plus violentes ont pu s’échanger dans ce calme parfait… Je crois que j’ai été si malheureuse, que j’ai souffert si cruellement depuis dix-huit mois que je ne suis plus susceptible d’être affligée par ces mêmes choses qui, il y a quelque temps, me mettaient la mort dans l’âme.” The général also occasionally physically abused her. Her letters to her parents mentioned that he once struck her twice after she had appeared, he judged, indecently attired in front of their servants.65 The memoirist also skirted topics that would have been publicly damaging for her husband, as well as for her own reputation, such as his polygamy and his extramarital affairs.66

Like many other, though certainly not all, female memoirists writing around 1830, Boigne expressed a deep dissatisfaction with the marital state, a testimony to the changing mentalités of the French aristocracy. The marriage of convenience remained an important tool for social reproduction in the post-1789 world but unlike aristocratic women who had concluded a marriage of convenience before the Revolution, those who did after were more likely to criticize how they had been sacrificed to fulfill their family’s ambition.67 The prevailing practice of arranged marriages for the upper classes could result in significant emotional suffering. Indeed, the propagation of the ideal of romantic love – aided by a considerable body of sentimental literature as well as Christian ideals – and the growing insistence that spouses were to find emotional satisfaction within the marital bond – and not in extramarital affairs which were increasingly condemned, especially for women – made loveless marriages more unsatisfying.68

Boigne was by no means the only émigré to consent to a mésalliance that promised improved material circumstances. In 1795, Eugène d’Arnauld, baron de Vitrolles married Thérésia de Folleville, the duchesse de Bouillon and the prince de Salm’s illegitimate offspring.69 Money and connections justified the conclusion of this controversial alliance. Vitrolles was introduced to Folleville during the winter of 1793-1794.70 Folleville was an appealing party for impoverished émigré nobles since Bouillon and Salm provided her with a dowry, a rare

67 Rossi, Mémoires aristocratiques féminins, 79.
occurrence in émigré circles. All things considered, he was also an attractive party for an illegitimate daughter. He was the son of a conseiller of the parlement d'Aix, and a member of a well established family of the Provençal robe nobility. Furthermore, he held the right political opinions and had demonstrated his loyalty to the Bourbon cause by participating to the 1792 and 1793 campaigns, something that was important to her parents.

The marriage took place in 1795 after which Vitrolles left the Condé army and, under Bouillon and Salm’s wing, entered the elevated spheres of the European nobility. He noted the drastic transformation in his memoirs: “Jamais changement de vie ne fut plus complet que le mien. Après trois ou quatre années de guerre, d’activité, de misère, je me trouvais sans occupation, sans ambition, et en pleine jouissance d’une fortune qui n’était pas à moi.” He added that he did not spend his newfound days of prosperity in idleness and that he used his free time for the improvement of his mind under Bouillon’s guidance.

However, Vitrolles’s narrative suggests that he had some reservations about his bride’s origins, her connections, and the calculating motives that led him to agree to the union. First, the memoirist took care to emphasize his passivity during the whole affair: their mutual acquaintance suggested his name to Bouillon as a potential suitor, the comte de Bussy, his military officer, encouraged him to pursue the match when Vitrolles had declared that he could not leave his regiment, and Bouillon and Salm made it clear that they were only waiting for him to ask for Folleville’s hand. He repeatedly mentioned that he sought his mother’s advice but that she was rather quiet on the subject and that distance made communications difficult. He wrote that his mother deferred entirely to his judgment on the matter. Only after he had made his decision did he obtain a firm response from his mother who consented to the union. Second, the memoirist also detailed his wife’s supposed origins at length: an old Norman Huguenot family who had relocated in the German states after the Wars of Religion and who had fallen into poverty as a result of protracted judicial proceedings. The family had attracted Bouillon’s interest who had taken one of the younger girls in as her adoptive daughter. Third, Vitrolles indirectly justified the irregular relationship between the duchesse de Bouillon and the prince de Salm. As a good

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71 Vitrolles, Mémoires, 97, 99.
72 Vitrolles, Mémoires, 87.
73 Vitrolles, Mémoires, 105-106.
74 Vitrolles, Mémoires, 87, 90-91.
75 His father had died in 1791. Vitrolles, Mémoires, 90, 99-100.
76 Vitrolles, Mémoires, 84-85.
memoirist, he explained that Ancien Régime mores had been considerably different and that married men and women with similar tastes not infrequently formed lasting attachments that, although somewhat morally reprehensible, were tolerated since “legitimate unions” were solely based on questions of rank and fortune. He went on to criticize how girls were secluded into convents only to come out to be married off to men they neither knew nor loved. Finally, he exposed to some extent his motives for consenting to the union. As he bluntly stated, Folleville’s dowry was significant and the settlement most advantageous since he was to receive half of it directly. This, he called the “calculs de la raison” but he hurriedly added that the future spouses felt “une tendresse mutuelle, la plus vive et la plus animée.” He wished his readers to understand that this was not merely a mercenary union, Folleville was a financially attractive party but he was also emotionally invested in the marriage. The disintegration of the society of orders and the precarious conditions of exile led to, if not justified, unions which would have been regarded as misalliances in pre-revolutionary France. The usual mechanisms of social control were much looser in émigré circles.

Companionate Marriage: The Rise of the Aristocratic Affectionate Family

Emigration altered the noble family’s functions and imposed new demands on family members. In conjunction with the rise of the affectionate family ideal, the hardships of exile made emotional comfort an important function of the noble family. Love became one of the family members’ moral duties. This was particularly the case for émigrées who were expected to create a haven – an emotional refuge – and provide comfort for their husbands and children within the domestic sphere. With this emphasis on the family as a refuge, the state of exile was propitious to the conclusion of marriages of inclination. Changing sensibilities and vehement revolutionary criticisms of aristocratic family practices affected émigrés, leading some to seek tranquility, domestic happiness, and love. Several émigré noblemen aspired to domestic felicity perhaps thinking that a wife would add to their emotional and material comforts in this difficult time. The noble conception of love, however, maintained its aversion for passion – which was

77 Vitrolles, Mémoires, 94-95.
78 Vitrolles, Mémoires, 99.
81 Amanda Vickery has argued that English bachelors often longed for domestic happiness and the material and emotional comforts provided by a wife. Amanda Vickery, Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England
considered fleeting and threatening to corporate interests – and insisted instead on esteem, friendship, and definite, but moderate, affection.⁸²

Alexandre d’Arblay’s marriage to English novelist Frances Burney illustrates many of the challenges and peculiarities of émigré matrimony. After the September Massacres, d’Arblay, a career soldier, and his friend Louis, comte de Narbonne-Lara sought refuge in England. They settled in Surrey, at Juniper Hall, a house rented by Narbonne’s lover, Germaine de Staël. The émigrés socialized with their new neighbours: Susanna Burney Phillips and the Locks of Norbury Park. While visiting her sister in late 1792, Fanny Burney was introduced into the émigré society.⁸³ A courtship between the 38-year-old d’Arblay and the 40-year-old Burney ensued. She helped him improve his English and he helped her with French. Burney had severe reservations about the married state. To a friend, she wrote: “I had never made any vow against Marriage, but I had long - long been firmly persuaded it was for me - a state of too much hazard, & too little promise, to draw me from my individual plans & purposes.” Her good opinion of d’Arblay pushed her to overcome her reservations. She spoke of him to her father in glowing terms, praising his “sincerity,” “frankness,” and his “most singularly interesting [character].” ⁸⁴

Though they were both partial to each other, d’Arblay’s financial situation posed a considerable obstacle to the conclusion of an alliance. In early April, Burney told her sister Susanna: “It is dreadful to me to seem to listen to distress & poverty, so nobly incurred, as any impediment - Were he secure of only Bread & Water, I am very sure I should gaily partake them with him.”⁸⁵ His political opinions and relations with Staël and Narbonne, known constitutionnels, further rendered d’Arblay suspicious in Burney’s father and royal patron’s eyes. Not only did he lack sufficient means to support a wife, she could risk losing her royal pension by marrying a man whom many Britons considered a supporter of the Revolution.

Burney’s friendship with Staël became an embarrassment in the spring of 1793 when the latter’s sojourn in England without her husband and her cohabitation with Narbonne at Juniper

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Hall caused a scandal in English society. D’Arblay attempted to justify his friends’ conduct. He told Burney that French mores were so very different from English ones and explained that it would be unfair to judge French marriages according to British standards, standards he claimed to admire. He criticized the marriage of convenience that had been the norm among the nobility in pre-revolutionary France: “Tous, pour ainsi dire, n’étaient qu’autant de sacrifices, plus ou moins douloureux, à des convenances dont les femmes ont toujours été les victimes.” His matrimonial aspirations were completely different from that of the Ancien Régime aristocracy. He wrote to Burney that he wished for a quiet life. He told her that is conception of happiness: “vivre dans un cercle bien resserré, dans l’unique et douce occupation de jouir de l’amitié et de l’estime fondées sur une connaissance intime et mutuelle.” He clearly subscribed to the companionate ideal. Still, his financial situation prevented him from achieving domestic felicity. He told Burney that he did not mind privations but added that it would be irresponsible, dishonourable even, for him to expose her to his misfortune and poverty.

During the spring of 1793, while he was courting Burney, d’Arblay sought to secure a position in England that would allow him to retain his “freedom” and to “liv[e] in comfortable mediocrity near [their] friends.” He first wished for a position in the British civil or military service. He enlisted his English connections’ help and hoped that Burney could solicit the Queen’s favour. Her answer was not what he expected: “I told him plainly it was utterly impracticable… I saw him disappointed; he imagined more could be done: - alas! much less can be done than I could shock him by owning! for though I have really made the Queen hear his praise, nothing is so difficult as even to mention Any Frenchman at this time, without exciting displeasure.” D’Arblay also suggested that he could tutor some English boy destined for a military career and asked if William Lock could not help him find a place. He relentlessly tried to improve his mastery of English as he saw his lack of fluency as the main obstacle to his successful employment. Burney who did not share his hopes was somewhat distressed by her suitor’s optimism. She confided in her sister and in Mrs. Lock: “But he does not know as I do the difficulties attending all application for places… I fairly confess I see no prospect of success in

86 Kelly, Juniper Hall, 41-42, 45-47.
this his only hope!... My mind is inexpressibly disturbed by seeing such reliance on what, to me, seem false expectations.”91

By July 1793, d’Arblay’s feelings for Burney had trumped his resolve to secure a position before asking for her hand. He was an independent man who did not have to consult his family but she was not. Her father expressed his sorrow at having to refuse his consent but argued that their circumstances made the match imprudent. Dr. Burney further raised some doubts about the propriety of an alliance between a member of the French nobility and a modest Englishwoman: “A person of your abilities and habits of life has a right to aspire at something better than obscurity and a cottage.” He then objected that his daughter had limited financial resources and concluded by saying that that the marriage should be postponed until d’Arblay’s circumstances improved.92 Dr. Burney’s letter to Mr. Lock was even less encouraging:

M. d’Arblay being a foreigner, and of a party against which our court, as well as the chief part of my daughter Fanny’s friends, have strong prejudices, will be likely to impede his advancement in his original profession, or in any enterprise wh he may in future plan in this country... [T]he alliance wh probably shut my daughter out of that society in wh she has hitherto been so earnestly sought. This, though unpleasant to reflexion, may be supported; but the displeasure of the Q[ueen] may have very serious consequences.93

In the end, d’Arblay and Burney prevailed and, although Dr. Burney did not attend the ceremony, they married on July 28, 1793 in both the Anglican and Catholic churches so that the spouses and any progeny might enjoy civil rights in France and in Britain. This practice was not uncommon in émigré circles.94 In a context of uprootedness, some concluded that practical considerations were more important than strict religious orthodoxy.

D’Arblay and Burney were a good match. Their personalities were well suited to each other and they were both satisfied with a quiet, domestic life. He reportedly argued, “Can life... be more innocent than ours? or happiness more inoffensive?” While she wrote, he worked in his garden, studied English and mathematics, and wrote. He read to her when she did needlework and they took “long & romantic strolls.” They were content: “These resources for sedentary life are certainly the first blessing that can be given to Man, for they enable him to be happy in the extremest obscurity, even after tasting the dangerous draughts of glory & ambition.”

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94 The La Roque and Boigne, too, chose to have their wedding sanctified in both churches. La Roque, “Les mémoires,” 22. Wagener, La comtesse de Boigne, 77.
through her papers and letters years later, Burney added a note that read: “NEVER – NEVER was a Union more exquisitely blest & felicitous.”

Burney and d’Arblay’s domestic felicity inspired their émigré friend Antoine Bourdois de Bréviande to seek a similar establishment. After he had repaired his lost fortune through trade, Burney urged him to marry. He reportedly replied: “I assure you … domestic life has long been all I have covetted: I may truly say ever since I saw how happy it has made M. d’Arblay.” He cared little about questions of status or dowry and placed more importance on affection. When Burney asked him if his prospective wife should have some money, he answered that an “irreproachable conduct,” “amiable manners & character,” as well as affection were decidedly more important criteria. D’Arblay believed he had found the ideal match for him: Burney’s niece Marianne. D’Arblay and Burney facilitated their courtship. Bourdois met Marianne in June 1800. They were married on October 30.

D’Arblay’s marriage to Burney could be considered as a somewhat improper union since it was a misalliance. Burney belonged to a respectable British family with some significant connections to the gentry – and monarchy – but d’Arblay’s social status was vastly superior to that of his wife. Nor did Burney possess a large fortune that could enhance her husband’s social position. Her resources only enabled them to live in comfortable mediocrity, which apparently satisfied him. What made the union possible was the general relaxation of aristocratic societal norms in exile and the growing importance of sentiment among the French nobility.

This was the case even among more conservative émigré circles. In February 1802, Albertine du Bouchet des Sourches, daughter of the comte de Monsoreau, married Auguste Ferron de La Ferronnays, son of the comte de La Ferronnays. Montsoreau and La Ferronnays spent most of their exile in the Bourbon Princes’ entourage. In 1802, they were the duc de Berry’s aides-de-camp, a position for which they received a monthly stipend of ten louis. Albertine’s marriage followed Ancien Régime customs. It was decided and negotiated by her parents, mainly her father. In her memoirs, the comtesse de La Ferronnays mentioned that she had several suitors besides Auguste and she feared her parents might decide to marry her to one she disliked. Once they had agreed to the match with Auguste, her parents informed her of her

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96 Marianne or Hannah Maria was the daughter of Burney’s sister Esther and Charles Rousseau Burney. Fanny Burney to Esther Burney, c.20 June 1800. Burney, *The Journals*, vol. 4, 422-423.
fate and told her: “nous allons vous marier.” She was only given the opportunity to consent or refuse the husband they had chosen for her.\textsuperscript{97}

At first, the comte de Montsoreau had been reluctant to agree to the match and La Ferronnays had to overcome many hurdles. He hesitated to marry his youngest daughter before the eldest. He also argued that given their present circumstances, marriage would be a “folly.” The financial obstacles were removed when Berry provided Auguste with a dower but still Montsoreau hesitated. According to Albertine, her father was not in the least “préoccupé par le sentiment.” Rather, he focused on material and patrimonial considerations. Eventually Albertine and Auguste’s fathers agreed to the match, a match that had Berry’s support.\textsuperscript{98}

The couple enjoyed a relative prosperity: they had an annual income of about 9000 to 10 000 livres. Still, the comtesse de la Ferronnays specified that her trousseau was modest: three dozen chemises, and as many handkerchiefs and three dresses, including her wedding gown. Her father, who had received 3000 louis from France gave her a third of the sum, which provided her with an annual rente of 1200 francs. Her wedding gifts, most of which Berry had paid for, included jewellery, a watch, white crepe, gloves and 100 ducats.\textsuperscript{99}

The union between Albertine and Auguste partially departed from pre-revolutionary matrimonial customs. Their union was clearly one of inclination. The letters the couple exchanged as well as the comtesse’s memoirs show that they had a deep affection for one another. According to her memoirs, he cried on their wedding day and she was very happy. He frequently told his wife about his love for her and his happiness. In a letter to her, he wrote: “Ce n’est pas tant ta jolie figure, mon Alberte, qui m’attache si passionnément à toi ; ce qui fait que je t’aime par-dessus tout, c’est que tu as un cœur que je n’ai jamais connu qu’à toi, et surtout un caractère incomparable. C’est ta douceur, ta complaisance, cette dénégation de toi-même qui fait que tu ne t’occupes que des autres, cette égalité d’humeur que je n’ai jamais vue qu’à toi.” As for her, she wrote in her memoirs: “J’étais sa femme, et pour moi, c’était tout. Les chances de la vie allèrent comme Dieu les fit. Les vicissitudes se succédèrent. Des angoisses sans nombre survinrent. Mais j’étais sa femme ! Que le bonheur de vivre uniquement pour ceux qu’on aime est donc grand !”

The comtesse claimed to have found fulfillment in her dedication to her husband and children.

\textsuperscript{97} Costa de Beauregard, \textit{En émigration, souvenirs tirés des papiers du comte A. de La Ferronnays} (Paris : Plon, 1900), 108-109, 114, 119-120.

\textsuperscript{98} Beauregard, \textit{En émigration}, 116, 118-119, 124.

\textsuperscript{99} Beauregard, \textit{En émigration}, 119, 125-127.
Auguste also aspired to domestic felicity. He claimed that emigration made his domestic ambitions achievable. Shortly after their wedding, he told her that émigré unions were better than Ancien Régime ones since the latter privileged interest and ambition whereas the former made possible “cet amour épuré que l’on ne trouve que dans la pauvreté.” He also argued that marriages of convenience could not inspire strong feelings and attachment.  

Women were raised to please and to find fulfillment through abnegation and dedication to others, especially to their families. Several émigré women claimed to have found happiness in the new intimate and affectionate noble family that emerged in exile. What is perhaps more interesting in these cases is that émigré noblemen also frequently aspired to domestic bliss. They certainly did not consider limiting their activities to the domestic realm but a significant number of émigrés wished for a wife who would be a loving companion. Their practices reveal that they considered their family as an emotional refuge. This more affectionate noble family could showcase their virtue, sensibility, and, by extension, their humanity.

Finding Happiness in Domesticity: The Marquise de La Tour du Pin’s Conversion

When she was 16 years old, Henriette-Lucie Dillon’s grandmother and father began to think of her marriage. Mademoiselle Dillon was anxious to marry and leave the house of a grandmother who made her life “miserable.” A first match with Adrien de Laval failed because his family preferred to marry him to one of his cousin. She then rejected two offers from young men whose families she did not consider illustrious enough. Then Frédéric-Séraphin, comte de Gouvenet, and later marquis de La Tour du Pin, proposed. Frédéric was eleven years her senior and had fought alongside général Dillon, her father, during the American War of Independence. His kin – his grandmother and aunts first among them – actively pressed her and her family to agree to the match. She agreed without having even met her future spouse – although she had seen parts of his estate. The two were married in May 1787.

In her memoirs, the marquise de La Tour du Pin argued that her marriage was fate and that her decision was divinely inspired: “C’était un instinct, un entraînement venant d’en Haut. Dieu m’avait destinée à lui!” All indications from La Tour du Pin’s memoirs suggest that the couple had a harmonious and affectionate relationship. This good relationship helped them

102 Roberts, “*Philosophes Mariés and Epouses Philosophiques*,” 512.
103 La Tour du Pin, *Journal*, vol. 1, 66-70, 77-81.
weather the revolutionary storm. The marquise was a resourceful woman, with a thirst for knowledge, which made her a valuable partner in emigration. Perhaps more than any other émigrée, she described herself as a full partner to her husband, especially during their exile.

In May 1794, the marquise de La Tour du Pin, her husband Frédéric, and two children landed in Boston after she had orchestrated their narrow escape from the Terror in Bordeaux. While the La Tour du Pin had the means to settle in Philadelphia with numerous other émigrés, they purposefully chose to “forgo worldly pleasures” and led the simple life of farmer-philosophers, an ideal opportunity to reflect on their situation and to reinvent themselves. In the fall, they acquired a farm in Troy, near Albany. Their American estate consisted of 150 acres of cleared cultivable land, almost as many acres of pastures and woods, an orchard of mature apple trees, a vegetable garden, eight cows and four horses. The La Tour du Pin acquired the land and the five-room newly built farmhouse for 12,000 francs. Their establishment was comparable to the average size of the area’s great farms. They purchased four slaves – three men and one woman – to assist them. Even with this help, La Tour du Pin insisted that she and her husband were never idle; she spent her days in the dairy, doing laundry, and working on the farm.

La Tour du Pin’s goals seem to have been similar to that of Voltaire’s Candide. Her decision to “cultivate [her] garden” was both a means of survival and a philosophical experiment in resignation and regeneration. Her attitude was decidedly realistic and pragmatic. While she and her husband were looking for a farm to purchase, they moved in with the van Burens, a prominent American farmer family, where they pursued an apprenticeship of sorts. She wished to extend her knowledge of farming and domestic chores so as to be able to take care of her own establishment. She started rising at dawn and took up sewing – she made her family’s mourning clothes after her and Frédéric’s father had been guillotined – and cooking, using La cuisine

bourgeoise as her guide. She wished to actively contribute to her establishment’s prosperity. The four slaves helped them and did some of the most strenuous work, but she and her husband lent a hand to their farm’s daily operations. She was adaptable and made consistent efforts to integrate into the local community. The La Tour du Pin’s experiment was successful and they did not suffer from the disillusionment that plagued many émigrés who ventured to North America. She may have intended to make a long-term establishment in America, but her stay was short; she spent just over a year on her farm before returning to France in May 1796.

La Tour du Pin’s memoirs highlight how her resourcefulness and pragmatism were instrumental in her family’s escape from France and American success. This quality, as well as her resignation, earned her Liancourt’s praises. He lauded her ability to successfully and cheerfully transform from a “jolie femme,” a court lady accustomed to the ease and luxury of the aristocratic lifestyle to a dedicated farmer’s wife who took care of her own “ménage” and who was satisfied with this simple existence. Furthermore, it was to her that Liancourt attributed the credit of making her family’s new existence bearable, especially since that existence did not agree with her husband’s natural tastes and habits. La Tour du Pin had shed all the frivolous aspects of her previous life and wholeheartedly embraced her domestic existence; she was a prime example of how the aristocracy could regenerate itself through simplicity and domesticity.

La Tour du Pin narrativized her transformation from great lady to housewife in her memoirs. Although her Journal d’une femme de cinquante ans remained unpublished during her lifetime, her American experience was widely known among the French elite and beyond. According to her memoirs, she had “une sorte de réputation romantique. Je la devais à mes aventures en Amérique… Cette dame de la cour de Marie-Antoinette… qui avait été dans ces pays lointains, traire les vaches et vivre au milieu des bois, se présentait avec quelque chose de piquant qui excitait la curiosité.” Furthermore, rather than assuming, as one historian argues,
that La Tour du Pin’s metamorphosis was only natural since her dedication to her family’s survival gave her to courage to “triumph over a critical situation” it would be more accurate to see her life story as a carefully constructed narrative and her espousal of domesticity as, at least partially, politically motivated. Not that her recollections of her experiences and feelings were insincere, but her memoirs present a somewhat artificial narrative that sought to impart sense to her exile experience, to turn it into a meaningful experience not just for herself and her family but also for the French nobility at large. Her story, as she and her admirers wrote it, could serve as an exemplum. It was a tale of complete noble regeneration: her family had renounced aristocratic vice and embraced a virtuous lifestyle of dedication to the family and of service to the state. Through this temporary exercise in simple living, La Tour du Pin was able to set her family apart from the corrupted aristocracy. In her memoirs, she criticized Ancien Régime aristocratic mores – particularly the endemic contempt for virtue – and argued that the Revolution was a divine punishment for the upper classes’ vices. Ultimately, however, it is precisely the scripted nature of La Tour du Pin’s memoirs that is significant. It sheds light on how she wished her story to be represented to her descendants as well as to the wider public. She made herself into the epitome of the good aristocrat and her display of the nobility’s natural superiority in the face of adversity was a story worth telling.

La Tour du Pin made her dedication to her family the linchpin of her conversion narrative. In doing so, she embraced the cult of domesticity and responded to criticisms of aristocratic mores held to be unnatural, solely focused on appearances, lacking genuine virtue, and even dangerous for women’s moral and physical health. For many eighteenth-century thinkers, domesticity and devotion to the family were the main features of female virtue. These ideals of virtue and domesticity could prove empowering for women since it gave them an important role to play in the moral regeneration of society as well as an authoritative voice with

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115 Her husband, Frédéric de la Tour du Pin-Gouvernet, would serve both the imperial and restoration governments.
which to promote their interests. By renouncing aristocratic vice, by embracing domesticity, and by dedicating her existence to her family’s wellbeing, La Tour du Pin created a narrative that provided her with the necessary moral authority to speak of emigration as a valuable experience of aristocratic regeneration instead of a betrayal of revolutionary values.

The first step of La Tour du Pin’s metamorphosis from aristocrat to gentlewoman farmer, and eventually regenerated noble, occurred during her transatlantic crossing when she experienced privations for the first time. She explained: “Ma vie à bord, toute dure qu’elle fût, m’était pourtant utile en ce sens qu’elle avait forcément éloigné de moi toutes les petites jouissances dont on ne connaissait pas le prix quand on les a toujours possédées.” Finding her hair tangled after having been unable to attend to her toilette for several days – she has been busy taking care of her sick husband and children – she took a drastic step and cut it short. She ascribed great symbolic importance to this event. Cutting her hair was a fundamental part of her renunciation of her former aristocratic lifestyle, a lifestyle criticized for being focused on appearances rather than substance. She wrote that she threw her hair overboard “et avec eux toutes les idées frivoles que mes belles boucles blondes avaient pu faire naître en moi.” She also changed her dress and habits. Once in Boston, she sold many of their possessions – garments, cloth, laces as well as a piano, sheet music, and porcelain pieces – all of which she judged superfluous for their future establishment as farmers.

La Tour du Pin made conscious efforts to adapt to her new environment. She adopted the local dress, a decision that earned her the respect of her American neighbours. This simple attire consisted of a woollen skirt, a cotton bodice, a kerchief, hair tied up with a comb, woollen socks and moccasins in the winter or cotton socks and shoes in the summer. While this was her normal attire at home, when visiting neighbours or going into town, she changed out of her role as a farmer, donned dresses and other clothes more suitable for social occasions, and transformed into a “dame élégante.” Her family’s integration into American society had been facilitated by letters of recommendation from Angelica Church, an American living in London who was

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121 La Tour du Pin, *Journal*, vol. 2, 10-11.
122 La Tour du Pin, *Journal*, vol. 2, 70.
acquainted with a number of émigrés and who had very important connections with the American elites, including the Schuylers, van Rensselaers, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson. These letters played a crucial role in the creation of the La Tour du Pin’s American network. It was no coincidence that they settled in upper state New York, in close proximity to the van Rensselaers and the Schuylers’ estates. In fact, La Tour du Pin regularly socialized with these prominent American families. She may have embraced a domestic lifestyle but she did not renounce elite sociability practices. Her American experiment revealed that she could be both a dedicated wife and mother as well as well bred aristocrat.

When Liancourt visited her farm, La Tour du Pin showed that, despite her family’s reduced circumstances and their decision to embrace a simpler lifestyle, she was still able to uphold her rank, even better than he could. She had appropriate apparel to wear when visiting her friends. By comparison, Liancourt had a rather shabby appearance. According to her, his clothes were covered in mud and torn: “il avait l’air d’un naufragé échappé aux pirates, et personne n’aurait pu se douter que sous cet accoutrement bizarre se cachait un premier gentilhomme de la Chambre.” Even after he had done a bit of toilette, La Tour du Pin judged that her visitor cut a paltry figure. She proved very critical of her fellow émigré. She reproached him for failing to adapt to his post-revolutionary circumstances and for his reluctance to learn anything from his host society: “ce grand seigneur philanthrope, avec sa prétention de toujours en remonter aux gens du pays sans en vouloir rien apprendre, m’avait déplu extrêmement.” When still in Europe during the early years of the Revolution, La Tour du Pin had criticized the émigrés she had observed in Lausanne and The Hague who clung to their Versailles airs and who, as a result, were ridiculous and antagonized the local population. In her eyes, it was imperative to adapt to the new circumstances and to address criticisms of aristocratic corruption.

La Tour du Pin’s rejection of what many Americans saw as French arrogance and her attempts to adapt to local life accounted for the positive reception she had from her neighbours. Talleyrand, writing to Staël, mentioned that her English fluency, simple manners, and the fact that she shared the conjugal bed helped her make a favourable impression on Boston society.

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American anti-aristocratic sentiment in the late eighteenth century vindicated her behaviour.\textsuperscript{127} As she explained: “J’évitais toujours de faire allusion à la place que j’avais pu occuper dans l’échelle sociale. J’étais la propriétaire d’une ferme de 250 acres. Je vivais comme ceux qui en possédaient autant, ni plus ni moins. Cette simplicité et cette abnégation me valaient beaucoup plus de respect et de considération que si j’avais voulu jouer à la dame.” She believed that merit played an important role in acquiring social distinction.\textsuperscript{128}

La Tour du Pin embraced a simple life but she did not lose sight of her elite social origins. On the contrary, her memoirs emphasized her exceptionalism. No matter how she lived, observers would perceive her superior breeding and merit. She found means to display her family’s elevated rank. She stamped her family crest on the butter she produced. This distinctive sign made her produce easily identifiable and provided a guarantee of authenticity.\textsuperscript{129} Her decision to imprint her crest on her butter was certainly imbued with meaning. It was significant that of all the signs she could have used to mark her product, La Tour du Pin chose her crest, a decision that would have been natural in Ancien Régime society but that was questionable from the perspective of the anti-aristocratic local population. Yet, her butter, she claimed, was very popular at the local market. Although this might seem trivial, it reveals that despite her claim that she did not seek to make any allusions to her former life, her noble status was an ingrained part of her identity and her neighbours tacitly acknowledged it. Even when she was performing menial tasks, observers would be able to discern her elite status. Happening upon her while she was preparing a leg of mutton, Talleyrand reportedly exclaimed: “On ne peut embrocher un gigot avec plus de majesté” suggesting that she ennobled this task. The pigsty her husband built also reportedly had a noble air.\textsuperscript{130}

Even “unrefined” or “uncivilized” people could perceive her family’s superiority. They noticed the La Tour du Pin’s distinctive ethos, most notably their kind behaviour towards their social inferiors and their different attitude towards money. La Tour du Pin, Servanne Woodward argues, mobilized the myth of the “noble savage” to emphasize her distinctiveness with regards

\textsuperscript{128} Abramson, “Une réfugiée de la Terreur en Amérique,” 178.
\textsuperscript{129} La Tour du Pin, Journal, vol. 2, 52.
to her American neighbours and to highlight the natural roots of her nobility.\textsuperscript{131} She wrote that the Mohawks who visited her farm perceived her family’s distinctiveness because of her amicable and generous disposition: “Ils avaient bientôt compris que nous n’appartenions pas à la même classe que les autres fermiers nos voisins. Aussi disaient-ils en parlant de moi: Mrs Latour ... from the old country ... great lady ... very good to poor squaw.” The “noble savage” could identify the common roots of their and her nobility. Her memoirs also used the myth to show how the rise of bourgeois acquisitiveness threatened both European and Native American nobilities, it threatened their ethos of generosity.\textsuperscript{132}

The La Tour du Pin’s noble origins and their adherence to noblesse oblige proved to be an advantage. Indeed, her family’s noble moral code, which put emphasis on honesty, integrity, generosity, and protection, seemed to set it apart from their neighbours’ profiteering attitude. This reputation helped them sell their farm products. Their “renommée de probité” convinced their neighbours that they had not watered down their cider and allowed them to sell it for twice its usual value.\textsuperscript{133} This different noble ethos also transpired in her dealings with her subordinates, especially with her slaves. La Tour du Pin contended that their paternalist benevolence towards people who were their social inferiors helped set them apart. She explained that she had earned a reputation of generosity which made her into a sought after employer and even owner. She claimed that slaves approached them in the hopes of being purchased by them to escape abusive owners. One man, called Prime, sought them out after they had purchased his son: “Il brûlait d’être avec des gens nouveaux qui ne seraient pas uniquement guidés par des préjugés.” According to her, she and her husband “fîmes le bonheur” of the slaves they acquired by removing some from abusive situations and reuniting families. She claimed that her slaves were well treated and that, following the good example that their masters set, they worked cheerfully alongside them. Upon their departure from America, the La Tour du Pin manumitted their slaves.\textsuperscript{134} Her idealized description of her harmonious household and of her good relationship with her slaves – one which recalls the seigneur-serf relationship of protection, service, and

\textsuperscript{133} La Tour du Pin, Journal, vol. 2, 92.
bondage – shows that she believed, as did the marquis de Lezay-Marnésia or the comte de Puisaye, that it was possible to recreate some version of an idealized feudal past in America, one that went against the self-interest and vile cupidity of the emerging commercial society.\textsuperscript{135}

La Tour du Pin rejected “bourgeois” cupidity but she embraced domesticity, or at least appeared to. This philosophical retreat enabled her to shift her attention entirely to the wellbeing of her family: “Je n’avais plus et je n’ai jamais eu depuis dans l’âme que deux sentiments qui la maîtrisèrent entièrement et exclusivement: l’amour de mon mari et celui de mes enfants.”\textsuperscript{136} She had shed noble idleness and frivolity. She even embraced piety after her daughter Séraphine’s death in 1795.\textsuperscript{137} Her American secular and religious conversion experience was a programmed response to criticisms of pre-revolutionary aristocratic mores. Her decision to embrace domesticity may have been genuine, she may have found some purpose or fulfillment as a devoted wife and mother, but her decision was also politically motivated. Furthermore, La Tour du Pin did not abandon elite sociability practices. In reality, the fact that she could be seen as a good wife and good mother made her activities as a \textit{mondaine} less controversial.\textsuperscript{138}

La Tour du Pin’s American experience proved that she was exceptional: she had become an exemplary farmer. She used this experiment in simple living to shed light on the true superiority of the noble condition; she did not seek to obscure it. She was no ordinary farmer and every aspect of her daily life on the farm was marked by her excellence; she elevated her mundane activities “to the level of exemplary destiny.”\textsuperscript{139} She clearly took pride in her ability to take up the role of a farmer and excel at it. She was also an exceptionally dedicated wife and mother who enjoyed her domestic existence. She embraced “bourgeois” values for the purpose of reaffirming innate noble superiority. She had used this experience to reinvent herself, to redefine what it meant to be noble and to be a noblewoman in the post-revolutionary world, and to show that it was imperative for the nobility to reform itself if the group wished to reclaim its leadership role in the new political order. She had harsh words for those nobles who, as she wrote, “n’ont


\textsuperscript{139} Harsanyi, “The Good Aristocrat and the Rogue,” 151.
rien appris, rien oublié.” In her memoirs, she claimed to have genuinely enjoyed her existence as a farmer. Although she left her farm in May 1796, never to return, her experience lived on in the émigré imaginary: her regeneration tale was worth publicizing.

Representations of the Émigré Family: Émigré Novels and the Cult of Domesticity

The trials of emigration were suited to the sentimental novel. As Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan wrote in his novel *L’émigré* published in 1797: “Tout est vraisemblable, tout est Romanesque dans la révolution de France.” Émigré novels were rarely simply long laments on émigrés’ misfortunes. They explicitly sought to offer a representation of emigration that was accurate, believable, and truthful (*vraisemblable*). They addressed some of the revolutionary criticisms about noble degeneracy and sought to make the émigré figure more relatable by showcasing its sufferings and, by extension, its humanity: the émigré was a victim worthy of interest. These novels often included articulated social commentaries. Indeed, they perhaps constituted the most sustained challenge to pre-revolutionary aristocratic familial strategies coming from the nobility itself. Novelists regularly criticized matrimonial and parenting practices of the Ancien Régime nobility and promoted a vision of the family as an emotional refuge.

Sénac de Meilhan unequivocally condemned pre-revolutionary aristocratic marital practices. In *L’émigré*, he wrote: “Quel homme, en y réfléchissant, pouvait se décider à s’unir pour la vie entière, comme l’on faisait en France, d’après les seules convenances de la naissance et de la fortune?” Marriage, according to him, was only appropriate in these situations: companionship or an older man’s desire to improve a young woman’s fortune. Souza did not agree with Sénac de Meilhan’s last proposition and she used her novels to criticize the practice of marrying young girls to old men. In *Adèle de Sénange* and in *Eugénie et Mathilde*, Souza showed

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142 The La Tour du Pin were forced into a second emigration after the 18 Fructidor coup and sought refuge in England. La Tour du Pin, *Journal*, vol. 2, 100-101, 156.
how unions in which the spouses did not share the same tastes, habits, or disposition were ultimately unfulfilling.145

Félicité de Genlis’s works about emigration emphasized the importance of good marriages and strong families. Her stories put virtue and merit before rank and fortune. Although she warned her readers against passion, she also insisted that respect and esteem were absolutely necessary for any successful marriage. In *Les petits émigrés* published in 1798, the comtesse de Lurce rejected the wealthy baron de Zurlach’s proposal, not because of his political opinions, since she believes that a royalist could love a republican, but rather because the man was a fool. She wrote: “nulle femme honnête ne peut prendre l’engagement solennel de respecter, d’honorer et de soigner toute sa vie l’objet le plus méprisable et le plus complètement ridicule.” The comtesse de Lurce also congratulated her friend the baronne de Blimont on the conclusion of an alliance with an “aimable et vertueux négociant” for her daughter. She believed that the marriage would ensure her friend’s daughter’s happiness. Genlis’s niece, Henriette de Sercey, had in fact married a Hamburg négociant in 1796.146 After her first husband’s death, Sercey married a Finguerlin, a member of a Parisian business family. This misalliance did not undermine the Sercey-Finguerlin progeny’s status: their daughter married a Montesquiou-Fezensac.

Genlis’s works also suggested that the trials of emigration helped bring families closer together and that misfortunes strengthened affection. She contended that family was a great source of consolation, writing, “au milieu de ces revers épouvantables, nous avons trouvé dans le choix de nos cœurs toutes les consolations et tous les dédomagemens.”147 More specifically, the trials of exile enabled wives and mothers to reveal their hidden virtues and to take a greater role in family affairs. Misfortunes shed light on women’s strength of character and sensibility.148 She explored this idea further by telling a romanticized version of La Tour du Pin’s American experience. Genlis detailed her character Dorsaine’s surprise when he discovered his wife Lucie’s hidden qualities: her sensibility, courage, dutifulness, resignation, virtue, reason, and sagacity. “Voilà les trésors inépuisables de bonheur que nos revers m’ont fait découvrir,” concluded Dorsaine.149 He and Lucie lived an idyllic life in the countryside. This “happy mediocrity” suited

145 Carpenter, *The Novels of Madame de Souza*, 149.
147 Genlis, *Maison rustique*, vol. 1, 8, vol. 4, 278.
her: “Mon ami, je sens que dans l’intérieur de cette jolie petite habitation je serai mille fois plus heureuse que je ne l’ai jamais été. Je n’aurai pas un moment d’oisiveté, de contrainte et d’ennui ; il y aura un accord délicieux dans nos goûts, dans nos occupations, dans cet échange continu de services rendus, dans ce besoin mutuel l’un de l’autre ; enfin, dans cette création d’une nouvelle destinée, si noble et si douce.” The “rural idyll of love and poverty” was a common sentimental topos.150 Lucie’s life – and La Tour du Pin’s American experience – was praiseworthy because she fulfilled her destiny by dedicating her existence to her husband and children.

Émigré novelists attempted to construct relatable narratives in which noble émigré characters demonstrated that they were redeemable and could undergo moral regeneration. Although embellished, these narratives still sought to be vraisemblable. They displayed noble and virtuous traits and these displays often took place within the familial context. Émigré novels played on the emerging romantic sensibility and on revolutionary idealization of the affective family to demonstrate that émigrés were not the monsters the revolutionaries made them to be. Incorrigible nobles who refused to amend their immoral ways generally came to an infamous end in these tales. The corrupted aristocrat had not place in post-revolutionary society.

“Privée de mon unique appui”: Widowhood in Exile

At least ten of the ninety-eight weddings recorded in the registres de catholicité featured widows and widowers. The records indicate that there were eight unions in which one of the spouses had been married before and two in which both spouses had been widowed. Émigré remarriage followed a similar pattern than that of French pre-revolutionary society. Widowers – of whom there were eight – were more likely to remarry than widows – there were four.

Emigration posed distinct challenges for women who found themselves on their own, often with children. Widowhood was not uncommon. The British Enlistment Bill had tragic consequences. Opponents of the bill had pointed out that refugees caught in arms against the French Republic would most likely be executed.151 They were proven right. The Quiberon Bay expedition of 1795 was a disaster and 690 of the 1000 or so émigrés who were captured by the

151 Shaw, Britannia’s Embrace, 36-39.
French were executed. This pushed a large number of widows in London into destitution. Many impoverished émigrés had placed all of their hopes in the royalist expedition’s success and in their subsequent return to France. Memoirists often commented on the dramatic impact that the expedition’s failure and the mass executions had in émigré circles. The abbé Lubersac noted how it had reduced many émigrés to abject poverty. The vicomte de Walsh noted the general despair of the London émigrés of whom many had lost a relative. Élisa de Ménerville, though not closely acquainted with most of the émigré soldiers who perished, related the shock Quiberon caused among the more affluent émigré circles: “Le deuil de ces familles malheureuses, livrées à la douleur, vouées à la misère sur une terre étrangère, nous parut plus affreux que tous ce que nous avions éprouvé jusqu’alors.”

Following the general consternation, tales of destitution and extreme misery started to emerge. A noblewoman died of starvation, another went insane and abandoned her children, some pregnant women were completely resourceless, others were unable to properly clothe their children. In fact, the shame some of these noble émigrées probably felt as a result of their inability to support themselves might have concealed the severity of the problem from the British public. That so many well-born women suffered from such acute want shocked a number of their female British peers who resolved to help them. The Ladies’ Committee provided relief for Quiberon widows. They were to receive £10 per annum. The Committee also sought to provide an education for young émigré girls as well as assistance to sick and pregnant women.

Not all émigré widows were as destitute as the Quiberon ones and although some valued the independence widowhood afforded them, they were sometimes distressed by their situation’s precariousness. Rosalie de Rancher, marquise de Nadaillac – later duchesse Des Cars – had emigrated with her husband and two children in May 1791. The marquis de Nadaillac contracted small pox in England and died in January 1794. Her husband’s death was a terrible blow for her: “Rien ne peut donner une idée de l’état de douleur, de désespoir même, dans lequel je tombai. Je

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me trouvais privée de mon unique appui ; j’étais abandonnée de l’univers entier, chargée de deux petits enfants, sans ressources, sans espérance !’¹⁵⁶

Although the widowed marquise seemed to enjoy her independence, she was constantly worried about her ability to support herself and her children. Shortly after her husband’s death, she wrote that she tried to earn a living with her handiwork. She had spent two days embroidering a cravat for which she received one shilling but concluded: “Ce n’était pas un moyen de gagner ma vie.” She decided to leave Britain because of the high cost of living. Eventually the King of Prussia Frederick-William II offered her his protection. She settled in Berlin in January 1795. Yet, her future, and that of her children, was far from certain. The King made her occasional gifts of money and gave her a bit of land but, overall, she felt that her subsistence was not secure.¹⁵⁷

While trying to decide what to do, the marquise wrote that she often felt in need of a “guide.” After Frederick-William invited her to Prussia, she sought the baron de Breteuil’s advice. He urged her to go place herself under this “august protection” He convinced her by invoking her sacred duty towards her children. Once in Berlin, she also wrote that a guide to this unknown place would have been of great help.¹⁵⁸ Despite her complaints about her lack of guidance and her general anxiety about her and her children’s future, the widow rejected a number of marriage proposals. She wrote: “J’avais un moyen de changer de position, ce moyen si légitime et si naturel était un mariage ; il s’en présentait plusieurs, tous bien supérieurs à ceux auxquels je pouvais prétendre ; mais tous à mon avis inférieurs à la liberté qu’il fallait leur sacrifier.” For example, she claimed that one of her suitors, the high born and wealthy Prussian baron de Keith, had made it a condition that she should send her children, to whom he deemed she was too attached, back to France to live with their grandmother. That was an unacceptable to her. She added: “je regardais comme un triomphe de trouver une raison de me soustraire à ce terrible engagement.” Like many other women, she prized the legal independence widowhood afforded her and worried that remarrying would undermine her ability to look after her children’s interests. She may also have been attached to her first husband’s memory. In her memoirs, she paid tribute to his virtues and to the happiness he had brought her.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Des Cars, Mémoires, 46
¹⁵⁷ Des Cars, Mémoires, 47, 55, 58, 74-75, 77, 85-86, 111-112.
¹⁵⁸ Des Cars, Mémoires, 58, 62.
Her situation changed with the death of her royal patron in 1797 and her children’s return to France in 1796. Frederick-William’s death threatened her financial independence. Her children’s departure left her with an abundance of free time and a feeling of loneliness. She wrote: “j’étais toute désémparée et sentais mon isolement, mes amis revenaient toujours sur le terrible mot : ‘Il faut vous marier ; vous n’avez plus de point d’appui.’” She continued to hesitate. She believed that this new bond might prevent her from returning to France to be with her children as she projected, especially if she married a foreigner. She finally agreed to marry the widower Jean-François de Pérusse, then baron Des Cars.

Des Cars explained that he had offered his services to Nadaillac upon her arrival in Berlin in 1795 since he had been one of the few Frenchmen who lived there at the time. In his memoirs, he explained that he was touched by her precarious position. He was also charmed by “son extrême amabilité, son esprit infiniment brillant, son instruction rare pour une femme et son caractère d’une douceur parfaite.” Des Cars introduced her to his Berlin acquaintances and, specifically, to the diplomatic corps. This accomplished and distinguished Frenchwoman became a sought after host. Diplomats and other members of European courts frequented her société. Her qualities could be very appealing for an émigré with some resources. The marquise de Nadaillac might have lost her fortune to the Revolution and she did have children from a previous marriage but she possessed important talents for an aristocratic wife: she was an accomplished host and had connections with European courts. Des Cars proposed to her probably sometime in 1797: “Je ne tardai pas à lui faire des réflexions sur l’instabilité des secours du Roi, sur le danger que si ce Prince venait à manquer, elle ne se trouvât sans ressources, elle et ses enfants. Je lui proposai donc de partager avec elle la petite fortune qui me restait en pays étranger.” His proposal also had the distinct advantage of being supported by her parents to whom he had written. She hesitated for some months but the two finally wed in January 1798.

Madame Des Cars was still determined to return to France to try to salvage part of her fortune. She left for France in March 1798 and claimed that she had not informed her new husband of her plans. She spent a year trying, without success, to recover part of her property and

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160 Des Cars, Mémoires, 78, 80, 112.
161 Des Cars, Mémoires, 73, 244-245.
162 A letter from August 26, 1797 reproduced in the duc’s memoirs show that he had already asked for her hand by then but that she had not yet given her consent. Des Cars, Mémoires, 113-114, 273.
to obtain her radiation from the émigré list. She left France once more, with her daughter, in September 1799 and met her second husband in Vienna.163

Family and marriage played a central role in Madame Des Cars’ emigration experience. While she was distraught after the loss of her first husband and sometimes lamented her lack of guidance, she was reluctant to give up the independence she enjoyed as a widow. Financial considerations did not outweigh her resolution to take care of her children to the best of her ability. She clearly felt that remaining independent was the best way for her to look after their interests. The bond of marriage seems to have been heavy for her to bear.164 She was ambivalent about marriage even if she considered it a natural means for women to secure protection. Had her resources been secure, she might not have agreed to a second marriage. Writing her memoirs during the Napoleonic Empire, she clearly wanted her reader to know that her children had been the center of her emigration experience and existence.

Conclusion

Emigration posed distinct challenges for noble families. Marriage and widowhood were important life events that were unsettled by the experience of exile. The uncertain future and precarious situations threatened the survival of noble lineages. While many émigrés did delay marriage and procreation for a while, when it became clear that a prompt return to France was unlikely, they often decided to wait no longer. The Revolution and emigration also led to a breakdown of traditional mechanisms of social and familial control. For noble families, that meant that the choice of a spouse could rest on considerations that would have normally been dismissed in pre-revolutionary noble society. Need drove a certain number of misalliances, money and connections were not easily snubbed in the post-1789 émigré society. The context of exile was also liberating for nobles who chose to overlook aristocratic matrimonial conventions and concluded marriages of inclination. Some émigrés emancipated themselves from their caste’s expectations and followed their hearts. In their letters, memoirs and fictional works about exile, émigrés men and women chose to portray a more affectionate version of the aristocratic family. This may have been an attempt to fend off revolutionary attacks on the corrupted and despotic noble family but the affectionate ideal was also clearly gaining grounds. Love and affection became an important function of the family in exile. Women’s memoirs even hint at the idea that

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163 Des Cars, Mémoires, 114-115, 129.
love became a duty. Émigré literature also made a case for a more sentimental family. In these idealized representations of emigration, familial affection, devotion, and support were key to survival, morality, and happiness. Noblewomen’s contribution to émigré families’ survival and to the group’s emotional comfort also gave them more esteem and authority within the family. Indeed, as the last two chapters have shown, exile often challenged traditional patriarchal authority and brought about a more democratic noble family.
Chapter 5

Émigrés’ Imagined Community: Emotional and Cultural Practices in Exile

Emotional and cultural practices were important components of émigrés’ noble and national habitus. Their identity relied, in part, on the performance and reproduction of specific emotions, comportments, and practices of sociability. These emotional and cultural practices, upon which there was some degree of consensus among the émigré diaspora, helped them assert their distinctiveness; they helped give coherence to their émigré imagined community. Since these practices were beyond the revolutionaries’ reach, they also used them to resist the Revolution. The counter-revolution was not limited to taking up arms; it also took place in émigrés’ daily lives on cultural and emotional planes.

Noble émigrés delineated their class and national identity in contrast to revolutionary and foreign peoples through a process of differentiation and “othering.” They developed a sort of “defensive nationalism” in response to the nationalism that the revolutionaries were engaged in creating and resisted acculturation to host societies. Émigrés’ national identity were complex – there generally was some consensus over their Catholicism and royalism – but, by the end of the eighteenth century, culture and emotions were also central components of the conception and performance of national identities. By then, David A. Bell argues, “the French increasingly defined themselves not as Catholics, or subjects, but as members of a société, public, nation, or patrie (and soon, civilisation) – forms of association that were not structured from without, by God or a king, but arose from supposedly natural human qualities such as ‘sociability’ or ‘patriotism.’” These more voluntary forms of association made the creation of imagined communities – including the émigré imagined community – possible.¹

The first part of this chapter examines the émigré emotional community – a group who “adhere[s] to the same norms of emotional expression and value or devalue the same… emotions.” It studies the three sets of emotives – “the process by which emotions and managed and shaped” – and their related comportments that constituted the émigrés’ emotional regime – “the set of

normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them.”

First, it examines emotives with “negative” or “unpleasant” connotations such as nostalgia and melancholy. These reveal that émigrés emphasized their victimhood and expressed anguish over their uprootedness. Second, it studies more “neutral” emotives such as resignation and pride. Émigré discourses represented these emotions and behaviours in a positive light. This reveals that émigrés often refused a degrading emotional capitulation to the Revolution. Third, it examines emotives with more “positive” or “pleasant” connotations such as gaieté and joie de vivre. Taken as a whole, émigrés’ emotional regime shows that the affirmation of French and noble identity depended on the performance of appropriate emotions and behaviours.

The second part examines noble émigrés’ cultural practices within the Republic of Letters and the public sphere. It shows that the salon and print culture enabled them to cultivate and display the emotions and linguistic and cultural practices specific to their station and national identity. The exiled francophone public sphere mobilized literature and sensibility to undermine the Revolution. This second part also pays particular attention to how émigrés used emotional expressions to further their cause. It shows that feelings played a fundamental part in the émigré public sphere and nuances Jürgen Habermas’ claim that the public sphere was primarily the realm of reason. In émigrés’ minds, sensibility, emotions, and reason were fundamentally intertwined.

Their writings subscribed to the idea that the heart was the natural source of justice and virtue.


Émigrés’ Emotional Communities

The émigrés’ imagined community was also an emotional community. Their emotives, reveal that they valued the expression and display of specific emotions and comportments. Emotions played a crucial role in their moral and political counter-revolution. They used emotives to question the revolutionaries’ humanity and to emphasize that nobles were men and women of feeling, that they were endowed with sensibilité: they were not the monsters revolutionary rhetoric painted them to be. They sought to refute the accusation that nobles hid their emotions behind masks, that they were inauthentic. Furthermore, they relied on national emotional stereotypes – an emotional disposition assumed to be natural to a given nation – in the affirmation of their French identity. The noble émigré community established a distinction between their elevated and restrained emotions and the popular violent and unbridled emotions unleashed by the Revolution, which led to excesses. The masses’ inability to control their destructive impulses meant that they could not offer a sound basis for social order. Emotional restraint was construed as evidence of social differentiation.

Noble émigrés’ behaviours were performances, or mises en scène, of their state of mind and of their way of being. Considering the importance of representation in noble culture, deportment and the manner of presenting oneself to the world could not be separated from the émigré emotional regime. Embodiment of a state of mind was one of the principal ways in which emotions were expressed. Thus, this section proposes to add another dimension to the history of emotions and studies the prescribed comportments associated with given emotional states. Émigrés’ conception of honour relied on the adoption of a proper conduct and of proper emotional displays. They engaged in emotional management to abide by their honour code and to exhibit the valued public emotions and comportments, namely grief, resignation, and gaiety.

Melancholy and Nostalgia: “Personne ici tout à fait selon mon esprit ou selon mon cœur.”

Many émigrés suffered acutely from “le mal du pays,” a term Chateaubriand coined. He explained that *le mal* was an affliction that could only be cured by returning to one’s native land.  

Nostalgia received significant philosophical and medical attention during the revolutionary era, a time of great displacement. Writers and scientists linked it to the natural love one’s homeland elicits. Several émigrés borrowed Chateaubriand’s phrase to describe the longing they experienced. The baronne du Montet, who was just six years old when the Revolution uprooted her family, still claimed to have experienced *le mal* most acutely. She spent her youth in Vienna and, even if she had access to the Habsburg court, she missed her patrie. In her memoirs, she described her persistent sadness even in the midst of the most brilliant fêtes. She deplored her rootlessness: “on ne s’attache à rien qu’à ce que l’on croit pouvoir emporter avec soi dans ce pays que l’on désire souvent sans le regretter.”

Although she could only have vague recollections of her patrie, the fact that she claimed to have missed it is not surprising. As part of the émigré emotional community, it was critical that she experienced and expressed appropriate emotives: in this case her attachment to France, perhaps impressed upon her in émigré circles. Although an *a posteriori* performance in her memoirs, it is also plausible that she did experience the melancholy that pervaded exile circles. Indeed, as the emotive concept suggests, performing an emotion does impact the performer’s state of being.

Nostalgia pushed many émigrés to return to France despite their reservations. Rosalie de Rancher, duchesse Des Cars, returned in 1799 but her efforts to sort her affairs failed and, to her despair, she had to leave again. The danger she was exposed to while in France – émigrés caught on French soil could be executed – failed to assuage her regrets. Many felt, like her, that “la

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misère en France valait mieux que la misère en pays étranger.” Staël was most adamant, “La fortune, l’état, ne me sont rien ; mais vivre là [Paris] est, à mes yeux, la seule raison de vivre.”

Nostalgia had political implications. The classical conception construed the feeling of homesickness as evidence of loyalty. It argued that assimilation to a host society signified the abandonment of one’s identity and convictions. In this context, nostalgia was a noble feeling. Expressions of nostalgia not only underlined émigrés’ longing for their patrie but also their longing for a golden age, in this case for the idealized pre-revolutionary past. Indeed, wars and revolutions often lead to especially acute expressions of homesickness. Nostalgia, psychologists argue, plays an instrumental part in individuals’ efforts to maintain their identity through reminiscing. The feeling can also be a tool for survival and support exiles’ resolve to return. In sum, expressions of nostalgia allowed émigrés to substantiate the claims that they were attached to their patrie; it also helped them maintain their French identity in exile.

The trials of exile elicited unpleasant emotions. Jacques-Alexandre-Reine de Beaurepaire de Louvagny’s letters are filled with expressions of melancholy: “Qu’il est cruelle de végéter loing de tout ce qui vous est cher.” He wished to return to France most ardently. The comtesse de La Boutetière de Saint-Mars wrote that separated from her family, she became dispirited and fell sick. Des Cars claimed that her first husband died as a result of his profound sadness about revolutionary crimes and his lost fortune. His death afflicted her deeply: “Rien ne peut donner idée de l’état de douleur, de désespoir même, dans lequel je tombai.” Emphasis on suffering and grief were common in counter-revolutionary discourses.

Émigrés’ sorrowful tales served to underline their sensibilité and, by extension, their humanity. Sentimentalism and melancholy were considered evidence of a noble soul, one that could experience sympathy and empathy, feelings of fellowship that moral philosophers

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considered essential for a good social order.\textsuperscript{21} During the last decades of the Ancien Régime, the aristocratic model of the *honnête homme* had been reconfigured to include the “art of feeling” in addition to the “art of pleasing.”\textsuperscript{22} Christian dolorism also promoted sadness and suffering as evidence of virtue. Suffering was the path to salvation; pain was ennobling. Émigrés drew upon dolorism: they presented the Revolution as an act of divine punishment and claimed that their sufferings had expiatory and redemptory qualities which facilitated their rehabilitation.\textsuperscript{23}

Émigrés reserved some of their most profound expressions of sorrow for Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette’s deaths. Such tragic events required the public release of tears. Anne-Pierre de Montesquieu-Fezensac, who closely followed Louis’s trial, wrote in a letter from December 1792 that the King’s bearing during his “humiliating” interrogation brought him to tears. Ange-Achille-Charles de Brunet, comte de Neuilly reported on the lachrymal effusion that accompanied the news of the Queen’s execution in émigrés circles: “Je me mis à pleurer, à pousser des sanglots de rage…. Des cris de vengeance, des larmes de fureur, sortaient de tous les cœurs et de tous les yeux.”\textsuperscript{24} Fanny Burney reported on the physical and emotional toll the king’s execution took on the Juniper Society: “M. de Narbonne & M. D’Arblay have been almost annihilated – they are for-ever repining that they are French.”\textsuperscript{25}

Émigrés also suffered because of the perceived inferiority of foreign sociability. As polished and refined French noble men and women, they had been raised to believe that French sociability was superior.\textsuperscript{26} Eighteenth-century *philosophes* had argued that French people were particularly sociable, polite, and refined. They had emphasized the French proclivity for conversation. “On dit que l’homme est un Animal sociable. Sur ce pied-là il me paroît qu’un

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\item Ange-Achille-Charles de Brunet, comte de Neuilly, *Dix années d’émigration: Souvenirs et correspondance* (Paris : Charles Douniol, 1865), 76.
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François est plus homme qu’un autre: c’est l’homme par excellence; car il semble être fait uniquement pour la société,” noted one of Montesquieu’s Persian travellers, while Voltaire noted that “l’esprit de société” was natural to French men and women. Émigrés perpetuated these national stereotypes. Germaine de Staël claimed: “Il me semble reconnu que Paris est la ville du monde où l’esprit et le goû de la conversation sont le plus généralement répandus; et ce qu’on appelle le mal du pays, ce regret indéfinissable de la patrie, qui est indépendant des amis mêmes qu’on y a laissés, s’applique particulièrement à ce plaisir de causer, que les Français ne retrouvent nulle part au même degré que chez eux.” Exile from one of the most important spaces of refined conversation – Paris – caused emotional suffering. Talleyrand disliked London: “Je m’ennuie ici… Personne ici tout à fait selon mon esprit ou selon mon cœur.” For him, happiness was inconceivable as long as he was separated from his friends. The duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, was prone to bouts of depression, a situation aggravated by his exile. He chronicled his persistent low-spirits in his diary: “Si je me laissais aller à ma disposition, je serais bien des jours sans sortir: à quoi bon ? A qui suis-je utile, ou même bien agréable ?” His dejection can be linked to the identity crisis that many noble émigrés experienced. He felt purposeless since he could no longer serve his country or friends and since his limited social relations did not enable him to display a most important noble trait: his ability to please.

Foreigners often agreed that the French were remarkably accomplished conversationalists. Upper class Britons had long sent their scions to France on a Grand Tour to be trained in the art of conversation. Burney, a notable bluestocking herself, was dazzled by the émigrés’ skills. She had high praises for Talleyrand – “a man of admirable conversation” –, Staël – “a woman of the

first abilities” –, and Narbonne – “a Man of the World.” She conceded that the bluestocking
society was inferior to Juniper’s. Staël made a less favourable impression on Gilbert Elliot. He
was introduced to her when he attended Adélaïde de Souza’s salon in London. Staël, he judged,
was “greedy of admiration” and had “to be the center of every company she is in.” He
disapproved of her demeanour but he “was not ill amused.”

Different gender norms influenced Elliot’s opinion of Staël. Critics of the Grand Tour
denounced French noblemen’s effeminacy – they spent too much time in the company of women.
The English upper classes’ manly ideal increasingly differed from French notions. Furthermore,
during the late eighteenth century, gender boundaries in the cultural sphere became increasingly
strict in Britain. British sociability ideals favoured masculine interactions. Women asserting their
views in more masculine ways faced considerable criticism, especially if their views were
considered seditious. It is no surprise that the constitutionnel Staël, who actively participated in
political as well as literary discussions, drew negative criticisms from British observers. Elliot
was well acquainted with French sociable practices; he had been partly educated in Paris and had
been a guest of the marquise du Deffand. Yet, he could not help remark upon how different
French practices were, especially in terms of gender dynamics, when compared to British ones.
Indeed, after having attended Souza’s reading of her Adèle de Sénange manuscript, he noted: “I
think few Englishwomen could sport that sort of exhibition.” Just like the British gentry,
Philadelphian society hostesses were both enthralled by and uneasy with French practices of
sociability, especially in terms of female participation. Francophile Philadelphian salonnières
sought to emulate French habits: they recreated the material environment by decorating their
houses with European items and sought to replicate French manners. However, they drew the line
at what they judged to be inappropriate gender relations, namely women taking on a semi-public
role in the salons and the familiarity between salonnières and their male guests.

33 Burney, The journals and letters, vol. 2, 11-12, 14, 17, 19.
34 Gilbert Elliot Minto, Life and letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto, from 1751 to 1806, ed. Emma
Eleanor Elizabeth, Countess of Minto (London : Longmans, Green, 1874), vol. 2, 125-126.
36 Lucy Peltz, “A Revolution in Female Manners’ Women, Politics and Reputation in the Late Eighteenth Century,”
Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings, ed. Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz (London : National Portrait Gallery,
37 Benedetta Craveri, L’âge de la conversation (Paris : Gallimard, 2002), 429-430. Minto, Life and letters, vol. 2,
130-132.
38 Doina Pasca Harsanyi, Lessons from America : Liberal French Nobles in Exile, 1793-1798 (University Park, PA:
Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 66. Susan Branson, These Fiery Frenchified Dames : Women and
Frenchmen judged foreign imitations harshly. Liancourt was less than impressed with Philadelphian society. He criticized women’s lack of social skills and their inability to properly fulfil the role of the salonnière. He ridiculed Robert Morris’ wife’s pretensions: “[F]emme à presentation, sans esprit, qui se croit a reine d’Amérique parce qu’elle est dans un beau salon.” According to him, Mrs. Morris was vulgar. He concluded that society was inexistent in Philadelphia: “Un Européen qui en venant dans ce nouveau monde apporte le besoin des usages des agréments de celui qu’il quitte; celui sur-tout qui apporte le besoin de ce que nous appelons en France le charme de la société, que nous savons si bien apprécier, dont nous savons si bien jouir, qui nous vaut une suite si longue de momens heureux, celui là ne trouvera pas en Amérique à se satisfaire, et ses souvenirs jetteront toujours quelque mélancolie sur sa vie.” He criticized his hosts’ vanity, superficial civility, rusticity, and lack of discernment. They were not a genteel people: “Grands diners, grands thés, pour les arrivans d’Europe... de toute classe, de tout caractère: philosophe, prêtre, homme de lettres, prince, arracheur de dents, homme d’esprit ou idiot, et le lendemain à peine ce fête de la veille est-il reconnu dans la rue, à moins qu’on ne le suppose riche...; alors les civilités se prolongent.” The elites’ excessive pursuit of wealth, and its attendant egoism, stifled the development of friendship and sociability. He resented the fact that the elites failed to appreciate that he was un homme de qualité. His modest means did not allow him to establish reciprocal relationships with them and earn their respect. His distinguished origins gave him access to the highest spheres of American society but his reduced circumstances and the importance his hosts placed on fortune left him in an uncomfortable position.

Émigrés complained that their lack of means forced them into isolation since they could not properly fulfil their hospitable obligations or uphold their ranks. Amable Émilie de Châtillon, duchesse d’Uzès, who had rented lodgings far from the émigré community in London, felt her isolation most keenly. She could rarely afford a coach and London, unlike Paris, was so large that she could not walk to visit her friends. The comtesse d’Escars was distraught when her exile

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companion fell sick: “C’est ma seule resource ici jy connais peu de monde quoi quil y en ait beaucoup et les nouvelles connoissances sont peu tentantes dans ce triste temps ou l’on ne se permet plus même d’offrir un verre d’eau chaude il n’y a aucun especes d’objet de réunion et chacqu’un reste dans son coin a broyer du noir et a compté ses derniers écus qu’on ne peut pas partager avec des malheureux tant ils sont réstreints.” La Boutetière de Saint-Mars related how the tone of the assemblies she held during the winter of 1793-1794 was glum since many of her guests were concerned about their financial situation. Émigrés, who could not uphold their rank, afford the necessary expenses to attend foreign courts, or whose reduced circumstances prevented them from fulfilling their hospitable and charitable duties, often preferred retirement to the humiliations to which their poverty would have reduced them.

*Dignified, Resigned and Retired: Bearing the Pains of Exile Nobly*

In order to protect their dignity through the trials of exile, many émigrés claimed to have embraced resignation and preferred to live in peaceful retreat. Resignation was an important tool for émigré noblemen who underwent an existential crisis. These were men who had been accustomed to power and influence, who believed they could control not only their but their countrymen’s destinies, and who often fell into insignificance during their exile. Forbearance was not only necessary, it was virtuous and it enabled them to preserve their honour. For women, resignation and retreat was often linked to their dedication to the family.

Desire to safeguard their pride could lead émigrés to refuse charity. In 1792, Gilbert Elliot offered his hospitality to Aimée de Coigny, who was “starving,” claiming that “this is the only way of feeding a gentlewoman.” Souza was reluctant to accept charity although she did accept hospitality. She preferred to return to her “miserable” London lodging rather than stay at her absent friend’s house: “[J]e suis honteuse de rester a boire et manger chez Lord Wycombe pendant son absence ; lorsqu’il étoit ici, sa présence… m’empechoit de craindre de lui etre a charge.” She had a close relationship with him yet she refused to stay under his roof when she could no longer repay his kindness by delighting him with her company. She did not wish to be uncivil. Being a bothersome guest, inattentive to one’s host, was a breach of codes of

44 Furstenberg, *When the United States Spoke French*, 125.
45 Minto, *Life and Letters*, vol. 2, 72, 126. Adélaïde de Souza to Lord Shelburne, 10 November 1793. AN, 565 AP 5.
politeness.\textsuperscript{46} The line between hospitality – which could be honourably accepted since it was based on friendship and reciprocity – and charity – which could not be honourably accepted – was a fine one; it was a line that émigrés would rather not cross. They wished to avoid being dependent on their friends.\textsuperscript{47} Émigrés’ limited means and the disappearance of the social structures on which their influence rested put them in an uncomfortable position. They lost the ability to ensure the reciprocity at the core of patronage relationships: they had little influence and favours that they could offer in return for services.

In her memoirs, Marie-Joséphine-Louise, duchesse de Gontaut acknowledged the numerous “preuves d’intérêt” that her family received from their English friends. She explained that they were grateful but that their pride led them to refuse charity. Instead, émigrés stressed their noble poverty: “Dans un malheur public les privations deviennent faciles à supporter. On aurait honte de s’en plaindre; la pauvreté même n’a rien qui puisse faire rougir, quand la cause en est honorable; l’humiliation serait de ne pas savoir se soumettre courageusement à la nécessité.”\textsuperscript{48} Des Cars felt embarrassed by her withered appearance when she encountered one of Frederick-William II’s aides-de-camp but her shame was soon replaced by pride when she remembered the noble cause behind her sacrifice.\textsuperscript{49} A \textit{posteriori} expressions of pride were part of the émigré memoirs’ script and were proof of their belonging to the émigré emotional community.

Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan claimed that “cette facilité à se soumettre à son sort, à se conformer aux circonstances, est un des attributs du caractère français.” Noble émigrés’ belief in their righteousness coupled with the influence of Christian and stoic philosophy – which enjoined forbearance in difficult situations – led many to embrace resignation.\textsuperscript{50} Despite repeated complaints about the pains of exile, Beaurepaire claimed to have been resigned.\textsuperscript{51} Souza detailed her personal conversion from despair to resignation in a letter to her friend William Windham: “je pourrois vous demander un grand tribut d’estime ; car je supporte sans me plaindre tous les revers de la fortune…; enfin l’extreme malheur qui suis toujours l’extrême pauvreté…; … la résignation m’a sauvé du désespoir ; dabord je me suis désolée, ensuite a force de travail je suis

\textsuperscript{46} Marie-Claire Grassi, “‘Sous l’ombre de mon toit’: l’hospitalité dans le manuel de civilité d’Antoine de Courtin,” \textit{L’hospitalité au XVIII\textsuperscript{e} siècle}, ed. Montandon, 8.
\textsuperscript{48} Joséphine de Montaut-Navailles, duchesse de Gontaut-Biron, \textit{Mémoires} (Paris : Librairie Plon, 1891), 31, 40.
\textsuperscript{49} Des Cars, \textit{Mémoires}, 49, 78.
devenue tranquille. et a present je vis contente.” \(^{52}\) Resignation, which the stoic and Christian traditions regarded as a positive act, allowed nobles to protect their honour since it revealed their strength of character, courage, and virtue. \(^{53}\)

The theme of resignation occupies a prominent place in émigré memoirs, especially those of women or younger émigrés. Dedication to the family and piety played an instrumental role in bringing about female memoirists’ conversion to resignation. \(^{54}\) Gontaut wrote that her Christian forbearance and her love for her mother alone gave her the strength to support the privations of exile. Marie-Octavie-Mélite de Nédonchel, comtesse de Dauger tried to hearten her father who worried about their fate by telling him: “Nous avons des mains… et avec de la bonne volonté, du courage et l’aide de Dieu, nous saurons bien nous tirer d’affaire.” \(^{55}\) Genlis clearly linked resignation and piety. She praised Mademoiselle d’Orléans’s fortitude, how she transitioned from a most privileged life to a much simpler convent one and preserved her dignity: “Sa piété… lui donne la philosophie chrétienne, qui consiste dans la patience, le courage, la résignation, et le mépris sincère du faste et des grandeurs.” \(^{56}\) Genlis rejected the stoic tradition and claimed that it offered no philosophical recourse; only religion could. \(^{57}\) Other, less zealously pious émigrés also described how faith helped them achieve forbearance. Lucie de La Tour du Pin underwent a religious awakening experience and embraced resignation after her daughter’s death in 1795. She wrote in her memoirs: “Dieu… me donna le courage de me courber très humblement sous le coup dont je venais d’être atteinte et de me préparer à supporter sans plaintes les nouvelles douleurs par lesquelles, dans sa justice, il jugerait à propos de m’éprouver à l’avenir.” \(^{58}\) The religious revival that followed the Revolution, particularly among French women, as well as the common belief that women found purpose through abnegation and dedication to others explain why

\(^{52}\) Souza to Windham, Zurich 30 January 1794. BL, Add MS 37916, fo. 222.  
\(^{54}\) Britt Christina Petersen argues that female conversion narratives were essentially secular and that dedication to the family played the most important part. This underplays the importance of religion among émigré ranks. Britt Christina Petersen, “Aristocracy Redeemed: Narratives of Redemption and Regeneration in Noblewomen’s Memoirs of the French Revolution and Emigration” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2011), chap. 5.  
émigrée memoirists gave a prominent place to resignation in their writings. Émigrées engaged in some emotional management in order to meet their community’s norms.

Male memoirists did not systematically establish a link between faith and forbearance. In their case, resignation was also inspired by the masculine stoic ideal of self-discipline and control as well as by the noble ethos of sacrifice. Walsh’s account, for example, mentions the émigrés’ courage and resignation time and time again but does not connect it to their piety. Resignation was something they learned as a result of their trials.

Even if they were not completely defeated, many émigrés judged it best to retire from public life. As Genlis put it, “lorsqu’on est tout-à-fait déchue du côté de la fortune, on ne peut conserver de la dignité qu’en évitant de se montrer, en ne faisant d’avances à personne, en ne cédant qu’à celles de l’amitié, et en vivant dans une profonde solitude.” Moreover, many equated retreat with tranquility. After a few years being tossed on the raging revolutionary seas, émigrés often sought quietude. Overwhelmed by the events, they decided to leave public affairs and quietly and economically while away the days until they could return to France. Retreat had the additional benefit of offering them an emotional refuge where they could spend these difficult moments among friends and family and enjoy a comforting intimité des cœurs.

When émigrées correspondents and memoirists remarked upon their retraite, they often expressed a sense of relief. Souza claimed to have liked her quiet life: “Au milieu de si grands malheurs, je trouve des consolations dans notre retraite paisible, la société des animaux, la vue des arbres, même dépouillés de leur verdure a plus de charme pour moi que le monde.” La Tour du Pin, after her return to France in 1796, said that she bitterly missed the quietude of her American farm. Even Genlis claimed that after a life of dedication to others, she had earned the right to live a quiet life suited to her taste. It is hardly surprising that many aristocratic women chose to lead a less public life in exile. For one thing, they rarely had the resources and networks

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necessary to lead a public life comparable to their pre-revolutionary one. Souza did reopen her salon abroad but her chronic lack of resources restricted her hospitality: her London lodgings in Half-Moon street were not suited to grand gatherings in the way that her apartment at the Louvre had been. Furthermore, revolutionaries had vilified the public roles women – especially those of aristocratic origins – had had during the Ancien Régime and considered that they had a corrupting influence over politics. Noble émigrées’ retreat into a more domestic life can in part be seen as a response to their critics. Nevertheless, their retreat should not only be seen as a capitulation, in fact, evidence shows that for many noblewomen, the decision to dedicate themselves to their families came from a genuine desire to develop stronger affective bonds.

Retraite had different implications for noble men than for women. Men, accustomed to occupying prominent political, social, and economic positions, often had to transition to relative obscurity. For some, though, a quiet life was a welcomed relief. In January 1793, Montesquiou wrote that he wished for peace and tranquility, and had no desire for éclat. In July, he reiterated, “Je ne quitterai pas ma douce tranquillité pour une nouvelle carrière qui ne représenterait pas une fin honorable.” Many noblemen came to the conclusion that their services were not only no longer required but that they were ill qualified to deal with the current situation, especially if they were not soldiers. In view of the extraordinary circumstances, retreat was an honourable option. Noblemen were also influenced by the Roman noble ideal of otium – meaning both ease and peace – a concept notably theorized by Cicero which emphasized the productive use of leisure time in retirement after a life of service to the state.

In 1796, after having spent five years in England, Eléonor-François-Élie, comte de Moustier judged that his depleted resources would not allow him to remain there any longer. When he first got to the part of Germany, presumably Hamburg, where he had intended to settle, he found the place “overrun by [his] countrymen who [he] did not choose to fraternize with.”

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65 See chapters 3 and 4.
66 Montesquiou to Hottinger, 6 January and 9 July 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
68 Comte de Moustier to William Windham, 1 October 1796. BL, Add MS 37862, fo. 262.
He was not the only émigré who wished to avoid the society of other French exiles. The divisions that ran through the ranks of emigration led many to shun émigré society. A diplomat, Moustier had forged many connections with European courts and statesmen and he secured Frederick-William II’s protection. He then used what resources he had left to acquire a country settlement near Potsdam. There, he resigned himself to the “life of a solitary gardner.” He compared his plight – “exile, poverty, forsaking” – to that of the stoic philosopher Cicero. His letters from 1796 to 1801 frequently mentioned how overwhelmed he felt. He told Windham that his country life was “the only resource” he had left. “I have long and vainly strived, first to save, then to rescue mine [country],” he continued, “Fate was adverse to my endeavours. I submit to it… I shall be henceforth busy only with what I may be a match for, and endeavour to forget what I was, what I might have been, what I enjoyed, and what I have sufferr’d. oblivion shall be my aim.” A few years later, he declared that he would abandon himself to the stream of events that were beyond his control. He felt that he, and other noblemen of his generation, had failed. He concluded that retirement was not only finally possible because of his advanced age but that it was his only viable option. Influenced by Cicero’s example, he considered that his solitary existence occupied by reading and gardening was “really calculated for a man who, after having vainly devoted his life to the welfare of others, has acquired a right to live a little for himself.”

For the French nobility, especially for the order’s upper echelons, country life was a symbol of political failure. It was a symbol of disgrace and was incompatible with the noble ethos. Indeed, humanist philosophy required a *vita activa*, engagement with the temporal sphere. Although the negative conception of the countryside and country life had diminished as a result of the Physiocratic movement and Rousseauian enthusiasm for nature, the relationship between the nobility and the countryside remained one suffused with power: they owned and exploited estates. Émigrés who opted for a country life in exile rarely owned estates on par with their French possessions. Their relatively small country retreats could not provide them with significant power. For them, retreat was both a result of their failure and a means of finding some quietude in the aftermath of the revolutionary upheaval. Their attitude was similar to Candide’s...

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69 Moustier to Windham, 17 October 1801. BL, Add MS 37868, fo. 138.
70 Moustier to Windham, 1 October 1796 and 17 October 1801. BL, Add MS 37862, fo. 262. Add MS 37868, fo. 138.
71 Moustier to Windham, 9 November 1796. BL, Add MS 37863, fo. 24.
who resolved to cultivate his garden. It was a symbol of resignation, of the principle of self-help, and of renunciation to an unpredictable, even cruel, world.73

Other noblemen welcomed this forced retirement. For Alexandre d’Arblay, the difficult circumstances meant that he could leave the military profession and emancipate himself from some of the duties of noblesse oblige. A life of service was no longer expected since there were very few opportunities to serve to begin with. D’Arblay was free to pursue his inclination for a quiet life. As his wife, Fanny Burney, explained: “He had intended retiring from public life: his services and his sufferings in his severe and long career, repaid by exile and confiscation, and for ever embittered to his memory by the murder of his Sovereign, had justly satisfied the claims of his conscience and honour; and led him, without a single self-reproach, to seek a quiet retreat in domestic society.”74 In the aftermath of the Quiberon debacle, Gaston de Lévis, wished to spend his time in his family’s bosom and limited his ambition to a light, nonbinding occupation. Despite being a career soldier and a descendant of a glorious sword family, he had shown little enthusiasm for the expedition. His letters reveal that he was conflicted between his duties to his family and the imperatives of honour. He considered his military career as his natural place but conceded that he did not have any particular proclivity for it. In a surprising confession which betrayed a lack of courage – the military and noble cardinal virtue – and excessive sensibility, he told his wife: “J’abhorre la cruauté et le meurtre, je me détourné avec horreur d’un cadavre, je ne peux pas voir même saigner, comme vous savez, sans me trouver mal. Depuis que les malheurs de toute espèce [his mother and sisters were guillotined] ont affecté mon système nerveux, il est bien plus irritable encore, la moindre chose me donne des tressaillements ou même des tremblements qui ressemblent à ceux de la peur parfaitement.” His tastes were “simples, champêtres et doux.”75 For d’Arblay and Lévis family and retraite were emotional refuges.

That is not to say that émigrés were recluses who shunned all society. As the comtesse d’Escars put it, “nous sommes dans la solitude. c’est une belle chose (disoit [Geuz de] balsac) mais il faut avoir quelqu’un a qui le dire. et nous avons tout juste cet avantage. quelques amis, et

73 Voltaire, Candide or, Optimism, transl. Peter Constantine (New York : Modern Library, 2005), 119.
Even for those aspiring to tranquillity, retreat usually included family members and close friends.

_Gaieté and Esprit: “Les Français sont naturellement gais”_

In _Les éclats du rire_, historian Antoine de Baecque explained how he came to the topic of laughter while studying death during the Revolution: “le rire était mon refuge au milieu de ces pulsions morbides.” Baecque’s intellectual journey and his study’s findings reveal that laughter and gaiety were means of resistance against the Revolution. Indeed, émigrés’ political project, their idea of civilization, and their class and national identities were tied to specific notions of _gaieté_. They engaged in significant emotional management to maintain the appearance of gaiety.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the idea that the French people were particularly gay was widely accepted. Memoirists perpetuated this national stereotype. Statements asserting that _gaieté_ was part of French nature were commonplace in émigré writing. La Tour du Pin contended, “Les Français sont naturellement gais. Aussi, malgré que nous fussions tous désolés, ruinés, furieux, nous trouvâmes pas moins le moyen d’être de bonne humeur et de rire.” Dauger argued that merriment was not only a natural inclination but also a coping mechanism. Memoirists’ emotional scripts asserted their Frenchness, nobility, and opposition to the Revolution. According to them, _gaieté_ was the dominant way of being of the noble émigrés’ emotional community. This emotional script is not limited to émigrés’ discourses and contemporary testimonies, especially from foreigners, reveal that émigrés engaged in emotional management to maintain what they held to be a defining trait of Frenchness and nobility. Elliott wrote that “[i]n general, the Émigrés are wonderfully cheerful and contented.” Upon hearing of Liancourt’s misfortunes, Burney reported, “Yet his animal spirits are naturally high & gay.” Gouverneur Morris noted that the members of Staël’s _société_ were “as gay as the circumstances will permit.”

Considering that noble honour was tied to public displays of emotions and attitudes like _gaieté_, it is not surprising that émigrés engaged in emotional management to elicit the proper

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76 Comtesse d’Escars to d’Aine, Hamm, 10 January 1793. AN, 291 AP 1, dossier 22.
emotives. Levity, gaiety, and laughter had political implications. First, émigrés and critics of the Revolution held that it was unnatural since the French were naturally gay and since the Revolution was overly serious. Laughter and gaiety were also essential components of noble culture. French bel esprit – facility with bons mots, repartee, and causticity – was an important attribute of honnêteté. French codes of politeness promoted gaieté and bel esprit and attempted to make these characteristics the nobility’s preserve. Royalist writers used laughter as a weapon against the Revolution from the very beginning. The periodical Actes des Apôtres used satire to ridicule and mock revolutionaries and to promote a traditional definition of Frenchness as gaiety. Antoine de Rivarol argued that the ability to laugh at everything was the sole weapon against revolutionaries’ pretensions.81 For émigrés, wit and humour were coping mechanisms, means of resistance against an austere Revolution, as well as the epitome of polished Frenchness.

Some aspects of emigration were comical, or, at least, it was considered better to laugh at them than to despair. Montesquiou made light of his changes of fortune and revealed the tragicomic aspects of his exile situation. He spoke of the “debris de mon ancien luxe” and of his need for silverware, “un sujet plus noble.”82 His behaviour and the emotional management he engaged in, consciously or not, to keep up the appearance of gaiety were influenced by Christian and philosophical conceptions of happiness. The Christian tradition postulated that eutrapaly – a disposition to joie de vivre – was a virtue since it demonstrated the ability to patiently and cheerfully accept one’s fate. Eutrapaly was a contented, cheerful Christian resignation.83 Another philosophical defense of gaiety emerged during the Enlightenment: earthly happiness acquired heightened importance. Happiness was defined as “rational contentment” and was to be achieved through the management of passions and virtuous conduct. Some writings called for the maintenance of a cheerful countenance even in the face of adversity. Individuals had an “emotional duty” to keep their spirits up, this attitude was considered evidence of their ability to improve their lot through their own efforts.84 Cheerfulness had social and moral value. This philosophical reasoning also shows that reason and feelings were interconnected: reason was an

82 Montesquiou to Hottinguer, 16 December 1792. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
important tool for emotional management. Noble honour was tied to the ability to master public emotions and to display the valued emotives.

When reduced circumstances forced émigrés to earn their living, they often claimed to have done so cheerfully. The vicomtesse de Laval raised money with her needlework. Staël, who hosted her at Coppet, thought that her guest’s attitude was somewhat peculiar: “C’est avec la gaieté la plus originale et la plus simple que la mère de Mathieu [de Montmorency-Laval] parle des commandes dans le dernier goût de Berne qu’elle a reçues dernièrement.” Her phrasing suggests that Laval’s gaiety was genuine – simple – and not the result of affectation.

For the comtesse d’Escars, humour was also an emotional refuge. Her letters are filled with *bons mots* and banter that enabled her to display her mastery of aristocratic codes and served as a way of processing traumatic events. She penned a long letter to Marius-Jean-Baptiste-Nicolas d’Aine, who, with his family, was besieged in Maastricht in 1793, in which she expressed her relief, in a comical manner, about the defeat of the revolutionary armies: “Je félicite ces dames [d’Aine’s relatives] de n’avoir été ni tuée ni blessée ni pillée ni violée… mais voila assés plaisanter c’est pour vous éxprimer ma joye de vous scavor heureusement délivrés.” She attempted to lighten her friends’ trauma with humour. The siege was indeed traumatic. Witnesses left vibrant accounts of their fear. Aglaé de Franclieu had to evacuate her lodging. In her flight, she encountered traumatic sights: burning houses and people fleeing and crying. Dauger wrote that women and children sought refuge in basements where they cried but also worked to provide munitions for the defence of the city. She explained that although she was able to laugh about the experience after the fact, during the siege she was overcome by fear. She claimed that she had never been, nor ever was, more frightened in her life. In situations of imminent danger, emotional management could not repress an emotion as dominant as fear.

In less dire situations, the appearance of gaiety could signify émigrés’ defiance, their refusal to capitulate to revolutionaries. Some observers thought that émigrés who had suffered trauma displayed an odd joviality. Staël remarked upon Laval’s strange behaviour: “Il vous paraîtra singulier comme à moi qu’une femme dont le fils a péri sur l’échafaud soit remarquable pour sa gaieté. Cela serait affreux si elle n’était pas familiarisée par ses propres dangers à l’idée

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86 Comtesse d’Escars to Marius-Jean-Baptiste-Nicolas d’Aine, 16 mars 1793 AN, 291 AP 1, dossier 22.
de la mort. Elle plaisante sur la peur qu’elle avait d’être conduite à la guillotine, et cet ensemble est plus sauvage que féroce.”88 These displays were odd because they were too contrived, but they were part of noble émigrés’ efforts to preserve their honour.

Noble émigrés also drew on the aristocratic tradition of persiflage to mock and ridicule those who broke with the genteel codes of politeness. Already during the Enlightenment, groups of noble satirists had attacked *l’esprit philosophique* for its excessive seriousness and for the ennui that characterized philosophical writing, all of which went against French nature. Noble satirists continued to wield their pens during the Revolution. Persiflage and satire were often present in anti-revolutionary writings.89 Émigrés used their wit to shed light on the ridiculousness of certain situations. Montesquiou resorted to persiflage in his public debates with revolutionaries. He claimed that it was “la seule manière de repousser l’insolence portée au point d’être ridicule.”90 Talleyrand ridiculed the groundless fears that prompted his expulsion from England in 1793. He believed that the cause of his exile was the pressure European rulers were putting on England. “Apparemment que l’empereur et le roi de Prusse craignent les gens qui pêchent à la ligne l’été et corrigent les épreuves d’un roman pendant l’hiver. C’est à cela qu’a été employé cette tête active dont le séjour en Europe est si inquiétant,” he jested to Staël. Although he highlighted the absurdity of his situation, Talleyrand was most distressed by his expulsion.91

Practices of sociability were a privileged locus of expressions of *gaieté*. In 1761, Joseph-Antoine Cérutti had argued in *Sur la gaieté française*: “La gaieté semble être leur élément ; ils l’apportent ou la cherchent en tous lieux : elle préside à tous les repas, à toutes les fêtes, à tous les cercles. En France, on ne s’assemble que pour s’égayer… Un couplet ingénieux, un trait de raillerie, une réplique de farce, une caricature, font oublier aux Français de vraies calamités.”92 The preference for a cheerful conduct was enshrined in contemporary codes of *honnêteté* (although they did not preclude from demonstrations of tearful *sensibilité*). *Gaieté* was altruism. However, émigrés may not have always felt gay and they engaged in emotional management to abide by polite emotional norms. François-Dominique de Reynaud, comte de Montlosier sometimes feign gaiety in society. He wrote: “J’étais arrivé à ce déjeuner fort triste ; quand je vis

90 Montesquiou to Hottinguer, 17 January 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
toute cette famille en gaieté, *je me mis en gaiété aussi*. Le déjeuner fut aussi brillant, aussi élégant qu’il aurait pu l’être à Paris. De retour chez moi, cette gaieté m’abandonna."93

For impoverished émigrés, work and sociability were intertwined: sociability became a means of supporting the rigours of manual labour or, conversely, manual labour funded their sociable practices. In London, groups of émigrés met and worked together in *ateliers* where they embroidered or made straw hats. They commiserated and shared their troubles.94 Walsh explained how émigrés came to a designated salon where a workshop was set up in the morning. This communal work, he claimed, had a certain charm. In the evenings, the tools of the trades were put away and the space reconverted to its original sociable purpose. Charlotte-Hélène, comtesse de Saisseval hosted such a multipurpose gathering. Her drawing room was daily successively transformed from a chapel, to a workshop, to a salon. Her guests bore their trials with courage and their well-deserved evening amusements helped them find respite from their daily “solicitudes.”95 Courage, resignation, and gaiety went hand-in-hand. What was at stake for the émigrés was nothing less than their definition of (French and noble) civilization which placed great importance on *gaieté* as proper demeanour.96 Boigne remarked upon how, for less fortunate émigrés, work and pleasure were intertwined: “Des femmes de la plus haute volée travaillaient dix heures de la journée pour donner du pain à leurs enfants. Le soir, elles s’attifiaient, se réunissaient, chantaient, dansaient, s’amusaient la moitié de la nuit, voilà le beau.”97

The emotional management émigrés engaged in as well as the importance their emotional community placed on a particular set of emotives shed light on how emotions had moral and political implications. Public emotives were closely tied to noble honour and distinctiveness. Noble émigrés’ ability to restrain their emotions, to exercise self-control, namely through resignation and displays of *gaieté*, highlighted how they were different from a populace whose unbridled emotions and urges had had such destructive consequences during the Terror.98 Indeed, denunciations of aristocratic dissimulation and lack of emotional transparency ebbed after the

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94 Carpenter, *Refugees*, 69.
Terror.\footnote{Reddy, The Navigation of Feeling, 203-207.} In the end, it mattered but little if noble émigrés truly felt happy or gay although we may speculate that the deep emotional distress caused by the Revolution may have triggered feelings of euphoria as well as of profound sorrow. What mattered was that they could exercise the necessary emotional discipline to conform to the émigré emotional regime, that they participated in the noble émigrés’ efforts to uphold codes of *bienséance* and to defend a specific definition of civilization that made attention to others and emotional control a duty.\footnote{Reddy, The Navigation of Feeling, 145-148. Wahnich, Les émotions, 19. Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Theories of change in the history of emotions,” A History of Emotions, 1200-1800, ed. Jonas Liliequist (London : Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 18. See also Elias, The Civilizing Process.}

**The Exiled Republic of Letters and Public Sphere: French Émigrés vs. Revolutionaries**

*Émigré Salons: The Epitome of French and Aristocratic Identity*

Salons were revived wherever noble émigrés went.\footnote{Baldensperger, Le mouvement des idées, vol. 1, 16. Steven Kale, French Salons : High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to The Revolution of 1848 (Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 63. Hervé de Broc, Dix ans de la vie d’une femme pendant l’émigration. Adélaïde de Kerjean, marquise de Falaiseau (Paris : Plon, 1893), 48.} Émigrées opened their houses to their fellow exiles and some foreigners. Despite reduced material circumstances, noble sociability flourished, or so émigrés claimed. Élisa de Ménerville left a detailed account of London émigré sociétés. She wrote that in spite of their poor surroundings, their assemblies had a superior unity, singularly charming conversations, unparalleled *esprit* and manners.\footnote{Elisa Fougeret de Ménerville, Souvenirs d’émigration (Paris : P. Roger, 1934), 171} Descriptions of émigré sociability took an important place in women’s memoirs. Their role as the *salonnières* of the emigration clearly held great significance for them.

Salons – and *salonnières* – played an essential role in bringing the dispersed, uprooted noble émigrés together. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the sociable institution had become an important, even essential part of French noble habits. As Steven Kale contends, “they had become central to the way aristocrats organized their collective lives.”\footnote{Kale, French Salons, 63.} In the absence of other traditional sociable institutions – principally the court, academies and French theaters – they became essential venues of aristocratic lifestyle and an important emotional refuge. Adélaïde de Kerjean, marquise de Falaiseau highlighted the need for society that she and many of her exiled compatriots experienced: “il semble que, depuis leur émigration, ils aient encore plus que jamais le besoin de se chercher, de se voir, de se rassembler… On a besoin de courir après les
nouvelles, les opinions, les présages des uns, des autres, et l’on n’est satisfait que quand on a accroché quelque chose de nouveau qui donne un mouvement à l’espérance ou aux combinaisons. Aussi personne ne vit seul, et partout on se réunit.” Ménerville explained that sociability helped émigrés forget their pains and sustain their hopes. 104 Noblewomen had a crucial role to play to preserve the distinctive aristocratic codes of honnêteté. Several promptly established salons in exile. Souza moved her société from her Louvre apartment to Half Moon street in London and later to Hamburg, Genlis opened her salon to company in Hamburg, Staël hosted her friends at Coppet and at Juniper Hall. Women of all political convictions provided émigré milieus with much needed and sought after sociable opportunities. The relatively small number of noblewomen who emigrated conferred great importance to the salonnières of exile. 105

Early historians of the emigration, tend to essentialize noblewomen’s roles. Following their analyses, women were naturally sociable, their role as the salonnières of the emigration became their “raison d’être,” and preserving traditional sociable practices in exile allowed them to fulfil their destiny. For his part, Fernand Baldensperger dismisses the importance of the émigré salons and claims that noblewomen, accustomed to a frivolous lifestyle, transplanted salons abroad in an effort, conscious or not, to avoid any serious introspection. 106 However, more recent studies have shown that, due to preexisting traditions and previous experience, women were generally in a better position to reconstitute some aspects of noble social life in exile. Their presumed lack of ego placed them in a good position to bring together émigrés whose political opinions might diverge. Men and women wished to restore the sociable practices that would provide their exile experience with some degree of normalcy. Émigrés generally continued to lead a relatively idle life and sociability had become an essential aspect of aristocratic oisiveté. Salons re-emerged because of these pre-revolutionary aristocratic habits and because of the émigrés’ gradual stabilization. 107

Émigré salons had many important functions. First, assembling helped exiles manage their limited resources. Second, salons were news hubs. Third, urbanity was means of resistance against the perceived coarse and unrefined manners of the revolutionaries. It was also a way to resist assimilation into host societies. Fourth, the salon, the defining institution of French

104 Broc, Dix ans, 80. Ménerville, Souvenirs, 172.
105 Broc, Dix ans, 79.
aristocratic sociability, promoted class cohesion and helped émigrés affirm their Frenchness. Fifth, *mondanité* helped them experience some of the *douceur de vivre* specific to their social station and to their native land. Sociability brought the uprooted émigrés comfort and solace, it also brought some degree of normalcy to their exilic experience. It enabled them to escape the “existential drift” that menaced individuals accustomed to controlling their own destiny. In short, salons were emotional refuges. Lastly, it allowed them to form connections with local elite.108

Émigré *salonnières* invited foreigners to their gatherings. Des Cars hosted foreign diplomats in Berlin, Souza’s society continued to mix Frenchmen and Britons. Coppet, Staël’s Swiss pied-à-terre, was a cosmopolitan society. Elliot had frequent contacts with émigrés in London, so did Windham and Burney. Salons played an important role in the maintenance of a francophone – even Francophile – cosmopolitan Republic of Letters. They fostered closer links between émigrés and the local elite and in some instance, provided émigrés with vital patronage. For example, Souza’s British friends helped her publish *Adèle de Sénange* by subscription.109

Social gatherings allowed émigrés to pool their limited resources. Madame du Haut, who enjoyed a relative prosperity, helped her less fortunate compatriots by extending her hospitality to them. Hostesses had long been expected to feed their guests but émigré *salonnières*’ struggled to fulfil that hospitable duty.110 Contemporary descriptions of émigré salons tended to stress their modesty. Falaiseau described the modest scale of Coblenz’s gastronomic hospitality: an omelette, a salad, and, at most, a third dish. The comtesse de Neuilly sought to strike a balance. “Elle ne voulait pas avoir l’air de donner un souper, parce que ni sa bourse, ni son local, ni ses accessoires, ne le lui permettaient ; il fallait garder un juste milieu, et ne donner qu’une collation simple et sans apprêt : ne pas inviter trop de monde pour ne pas avoir l’air cohue, et en avoir assez pour s’amuser, jouer et souper,” recollected her son.111 The duchesse de Fitz-James hosted elegant dinners in London but her guests were expected to make a contribution of three shillings and place them under a cup on the mantelpiece. Hiding the offending coins protected the émigrés’ delicacy. Other assemblies opted for a potluck system.112

109 See chapter 3.
In addition to commensalité, émigrés revived a vast array of French salon activities, including readings, music, theater, gambling and games, and, of course, conversation. They hoped, in part, to restore the distinctive French douceur de vivre and recall the pleasures of their lost patrie. Walsh’s memoirs insisted that sociable activities, especially readings of French theatrical masterpieces, helped remind émigrés of their homeland’s delights. He continued, “Pour les exilés, ce plaisir avait un grand attrait; ils y retrouvaient des sensations, des émotions et des souvenirs du pays.” These diversions had social and political implications. Enlightenment conceptions of happiness promoted the pursuit of pleasure. Leisure, occupied with agreeable pursuits, was a defining aspect of living nobly. The practices that took place within the salons also implied that French cultural productions were able to elicit specific emotions and states of being associated with their national and class habits. They kept a specific noble way of life alive. These practices were deeply embedded in noble émigrés’ identities. Émigrés displayed their defiance against revolutionary ideals by perpetuating these distinctive pleasurable entertainments. These could not be more different from the vulgar revolutionary amusements and festivals.

By making salon sociability a cornerstone of their class and national identities, émigrés also implied that foreigners and members of the lower classes could attempt to emulate their practices but that they were unlikely to succeed. Noble émigrés conception of politeness was similar to the one outlined in the Encyclopédie. They held that “politeness cannot be learned without a natural disposition, which in truth needs to be perfected through education and experience in the world.” It was a social virtue, one which inclined individuals to be attentive to others’ needs and to seek to please. French nobles were considered predisposed to politeness.

The important place of women in sociability was a distinctive aspect of French elite habits and identity and it was construed as evidence of France’s advanced level of civilization. French women were considered to be gifted conversationalists and most agreeable. Émigrées perpetuated this idea. Des Cars, for example, boasted: “Un grand désir de plaire, une facilité de m’exprimer

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113 Emphasis in original. Walsh, Souvenirs, 63-64, 155.
très remarquable, et un enthousiasme pour tous les sentiments élevés... donnait de l’éclat à ma conversation.” Aware of criticisms of aristocratic women’s sociable activities, however, she quickly added that such talents did not threaten her virtue since her love for her family and her piety “diminuaient les dangers dont est entourée dans le monde une femme agréable.”

Salonnières also played a vital role in the perpetuation of bonnes manières. Walsh explained that young émigré noblemen were able to experience the civilizing influence of women in émigré salons. He attended some of the most renowned salons of the emigration and, as he contended, “il n’y manquait pas d’élégance, et nous autres jeunes hommes, nous trouvions là une excellent école de bonnes manières et de beau langage.” Young émigrées could learn the necessary skills by attending their relatives or other émigrées’ salons. Du Montet pursued her apprenticeship in her mother’s société. She also visited the comtesse de Brionne, a celebrated salonnière, and she socialized with European nobles who were well versed in French culture. She later had her own salon. In émigrés’ minds, French sociability was undeniably superior. According to some, Britons envied their gaieté, grace, amiability, and esprit.

Ideals such as honnêteté and bienséance that were honed in salons retained moral significance even after the Revolution. They were part of nobles’ claim to virtue. Contemporaries claimed that politeness was conducive to social peace and that polite conversation could foster political reconciliation. Moreover, the Republic of Letters’ humanist ideals contended that manners reflected interior disposition: good manners revealed a good character. This theory came under attack during the late Enlightenment when some argued that politeness could be an inauthentic mask but overall, after the Revolution, politeness was still considered an essential quality for harmonious social and political relations. It was a desirable skill for a ruling class.

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117 Des Cars, Mémoires, 29-30.
120 Liancourt, Journal, 102. Walsh, Souvenirs, 64, Ménerville, Souvenirs, 171.
Furthermore, in spite of the Revolution and of political divergences among their ranks, few émigrés questioned the assumption that they naturally formed France’s ruling class. They generally kept their sights fixed on France and, more than simple literary gatherings, émigré sociable reunions became important loci for political discussions. “[O]n faisait de la politique; on parlait du gouvernement à établir en France, des hommes à y employer. Des projets d’avenir, de paix, de bonheur, nous occupaient tous. La patrie était au fond de toutes les pensées de tous les discours de tous les cœurs,” reported Ménerville. Other accounts shed light on how thoroughly preoccupied with politics émigré assemblies were. La Tour du Pin explained that the princesse d'Hénin’s London society was “toute à la politique.” As a child, du Montet witnessed the unending political discussions that occupied her mother’s guests night after night. Walsh had a similar experience. Des Cars’s Berlin assemblies – which brought together émigrés, diplomats, and foreigners – were more diversified but they were no less preoccupied with politics.122 Noble émigrés’ political discussions were not only a testament to the fact that they were very interested in their patrie’s affairs but, more importantly, that they still believed they could, eventually, influence their course. Émigrés continued to plan their return to power although they often disagreed on the means or on the changes to the government that were required or desirable.

Revolutionaries criticized the salon which they saw as an aristocratic institution steeped in conspiracy, incompatible with women’s domestic roles as well as with popular, transparent sovereignty.123 In response to these criticisms, noble émigrées were most anxious to deny that they had had any political involvement. Consequently – and with the exception of Staël –, émigrées, particularly memoirists, emphasized that they took no part in any sort of political manœuvrings. La Tour du Pin claimed that political discussions bored her. Some of Des Cars’s acquaintances sought to persuade her to use her influence with the Prussian King to advance their interests; she flatly refused: “on essaya de me jeter dans les affaires politiques; je n’y ai vu que des intrigues et j’ai toujours refusé de m’en mêler.”124 Genlis was most eager to refute accusations of being an intrigante. In 1796, in an attempt to facilitate her return to France, she published an essay in which she repeatedly denied having ever been involved in public affairs and claimed that no one would seriously believe that a woman who had dedicated her life to

literature and to children’s education, who had renounced court life had been an “intriguante.”\textsuperscript{125} Accusations of hypocrisy abounded. Genlis’s claims were disingenuous but denying her political role was essential to enable her rehabilitation in post-revolutionary France. The rehabilitation of noblemen’s social and political leadership also depended on noblewomen’s effacement. Noble men and women refuted the claim that aristocratic power was or had been feminized. Although émigrées addressed these criticisms and insisted that they had no involvement in political spheres, they did not abandon mondanité.\textsuperscript{126} In fact, French elites rejected Rousseauian critiques of a “feminized high society” and argued that noblewomen had important public responsibilities as the guardians of elite polite codes. Furthermore, in the Revolution’s aftermath, nobles contended that removing women’s semi-public roles in \textit{le monde} led to social disorder.\textsuperscript{127}

Considering the prevalence of political discussions in émigré salons, it is not surprising that societies assembled not only following parentage or friendship relations, but that they were also divided along political lines. Starting with the \textit{Assemblée des Notables} in 1788, salons became much more politicized and polarized. Contacts between the different factions were still possible since salons did allow for some nuance and since \textit{salonnières} were able to reconcile or harmonize men with diverging political views.\textsuperscript{128} However, politically nuanced and more inclusive sociability became untenable in exile due to deep-seated divisions between more moderate émigrés and the \textit{purs}. Émigré sociability became less tolerant of diverging political opinions. Staël’s society brought together the\textit{ constitutionnels} and more moderate republicans. Souza hosted émigrés who leaned towards constitutionalism. After having made the acquaintance of Louis-Philippe, her salon became suspect to the Bourbons since \textit{orléanistes} attended her soirées. D’Hénin’s salon, in which Trophime-Gérard, marquis de Lally-Tollendal was a permanent fixture, brought together a number of \textit{monarchiens}.\textsuperscript{129} While some superficial contacts between factions persisted, émigré sociable practices were overall more clearly defined according to political allegiances than pre-revolutionary ones.\textsuperscript{130} Salons were forums where

\textsuperscript{125} Genlis, \textit{Précis de la conduite}, 6-7, 10-12, 18, 20.
\textsuperscript{126} Kale, \textit{French Salons}, 75.
\textsuperscript{128} Lilti, \textit{Le monde des salons}, 401, Kale, \textit{French Salons}, 50.
émigrés discussed politics and read the news and the latest works. They were well integrated into the cosmopolitan public sphere.

**Print Culture and the Émigré Public Sphere**

Print culture had paramount importance among the noble émigré diaspora: it facilitated the creation of an imagined community. Émigrés’ letters are filled with requests of books, pamphlets, and newspapers. A great many were busy writing texts of all genres, a handful even set up print shops and bookstores to keep the Republic of Letters alive in exile. Modern political practices relied extensively on print culture and émigrés waged war against the revolutionaries with their pens as, if not more, mightily than with their swords. They were well aware of the need to court public opinion and used the tools of the public sphere to promote their cause. The public they had in mind did not indiscriminately include every single French man and woman. They appealed to the educated public – capable of using its reason – and to the public with pure hearts – a sign that it was open to the claims to humanity and reason that the émigrés made. They excluded the lower classes who did not possess the refinement of feeling and the rationality necessary to be judges. In that sense, their conception of the public remained remarkably similar to that of the Enlightenment. They also excluded revolutionaries from this public. Émigré writers established a distinction between the revolutionaries and the French people who had not directly partaken in the former’s crimes and who were also, to some extent, victims.

In 1795, Staël described the impulse that drove many émigrés to contribute to public debates: “Quelquefois l’indignation qu’on ressent contre les fautes qu’on voit commettre… vous commandent d’écrire. Dans ces moments d’inspiration raisonnée on a presque l’orgueil de croire que c’est un devoir de contribuer de tous ses moyens à repousser le fléau qui nous menace, et dans l’instant qui suit ce mouvement d’exaltation, on se demande ce que peut valoir un livre au milieu de toutes les fureurs de la vengeance et de la haine?” Books were agents of reason

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against unbridled and destructive popular passions. Despite a few passing doubts, émigrés, just like their revolutionary adversaries, believed in the power of the written word.

Émigrés used the institutions of the public sphere that they recreated abroad to challenge the French Republic’s cultural policies. They emphasized how the Revolution was “a force for cultural and moral decay.” Revolutionary artistic productions’ subjects and goals differed greatly from pre-revolutionary – and aristocratic – ones. Émigrés argued that post-1789 works were inferior. Their ignoble subjects failed to celebrate le beau and their vulgar taste was incompatible with aristocratic bon goût. In 1808, the marquise de Villaines called revolutionary men of letters “des vilains reptiles qui nous ont non seulement assassinés, mais ennuyés.” She judged that literature had “tellement dégringolé.” She also saw no “genius” in Jacques-Louis David’s Le Sacre de Napoléon. Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis deplored the deleterious effect of the Revolution on art: “Un despotisme sanguinaire nous a privés depuis long-temps de la plus grande partie des talens utiles et agréables dont la France s’honorait encore.” Yet, according to her, revolutionaries were incapable of entirely depriving the French people of their cultural grandeur since it survived among the exile community.

Émigrés sought to keep the Republic of Letters’ ideals – cosmopolitanism, free speech, and egalitarian debate, all of which the ultra-nationalist brand of republican culture threatened – alive in an extraterritorial, pan-European francophone cultural sphere. Emigration, and its discourses, undermined the French Republic’s reputation, including Paris’s reputation as a cultural capital, since it showed that the new regime had failed to unite all of its citizens behind its vision. Ultimately, émigrés used the institutions of the public sphere – salons, periodicals, works of fiction and non-fiction – to challenge the revolutionary project and impose their own interpretation of history and politics. Émigré journalists, Simon Burrows shows, propagated a conception of Frenchness based on esprit and sensibility. Sensibilité humanized émigrés and shed

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light on the revolutionaries’ monstrosity. Émigrés appropriated high culture, notably literature, to
define their diaspora and to contrast it with republican France. They claimed French literary and
cultural patrimony for themselves.\footnote{Burrows, “The cultural politics of exile,” 160.}

Print culture and institutions of the public sphere allowed émigrés to bear their trials with
fortitude. In addition to being a source of income, the written word was a source of
consolation.\footnote{Genlis, Mémoires, vol. 4, 300. BL, Archives of the Royal Literary Fund, MSS Loan 96 RFL 1, n°75.}
Recent publications and newspapers enabled them to react to and participate in contemporary events. Émigrés were avid readers. Montesquiou asked for the works of
Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Montaigne. “Je croirai rentrer dans le monde le jour que je
les aurai,” he wrote. He also asked for newspapers and explained, “je suis avide de nouvelles.” Print materials were particularly important for émigrés who chose to live quietly. Souza asked
Windham to send her some English novels “to keep her company.”\footnote{Montesquiou to Hottinguer, 6 December 1793 and 8 January 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1. Souza to
Windham, c. 9 November 1796. Moustier to Windham, 9 November 1796. BL Add MS 37863, fo. 24, 28. La Tour
Men often read philosophical and political works. Women were more likely to read novels and devotional works.

Émigrés read to entertain themselves, but education, edification, and information were
also important motivators. Reliable information was hard to come by and émigrés relied on
periodicals and on correspondence to obtain news. Montesquiou received gazettes from France
but he was also interested in the activities of the exiled Bourbon court and read foreign
Francophone papers.\footnote{Montesquiou to Hottinguer, 24 February 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.}
Talleyrand was desperate for news from France. While in London in 1793, he complained to Staël: “je suis excédé de ne pas avoir de nouvelles de France ou plutôt
des personnes que j’aime ou que je connais en France.” This scarcity of news was difficult to
bear. Talleyrand acknowledged that he had but an imperfect grasp of French events and he told
Staël that he relied on her, whom he judged better informed, to enlighten him. In an attempt to
provide direction for her political activities, the latter consumed tremendous amounts of print
material: she read royalist and republican papers, brochures, and polemical texts in addition to
periodicals that aligned with her political opinions. She, or some other member of her society,
regularly read the news aloud in her salon.\footnote{Staël subscribed to or read the Moniteur universel, Journal de Paris, Nouvelles politiques, nationales etétrangères, Logographe, Chronique de Paris, Journal d’économie politique, morale et politique, and Républicain
français. Talleyrand to Staël, London, 20 August, 1 November 1793 and 1 March 1794. “Lettres de M. de Talleyrand

Staël’s well-documented activities reveal how the institutions of the émigré public sphere—salon, correspondence, and print culture—were interdependent and allowed her to devise a political strategy.\footnote{I am indebted to Marie-Ève Beausoleil’s compelling analysis of Staël’s political activities. See Beausoleil, “Germaine de Staël as political activist,” 25-30.} It also shows that the émigré public sphere had a clear pan-European dimension. Staël used her salon as a laboratory where she read her manuscripts before committing them to publication. While at Juniper Hall in 1793, she read parts of De l’influence des passions, which Burney judged to be “truly wonderful, for powers both of thinking & expression.”\footnote{Burney, The Journals, vol. 2, 17. Maria Fairweather, Madame de Staël (New York: Carroll and Graff, 2005), 172.} She also read newspapers and letters in order to obtain the most complete picture of events possible. She expected her correspondents to send her detailed accounts of what could not be found in print and to provide personal details and impressions; periodicals and letters were complementary. She reproached her husband, who had access to diplomatic networks, for neglecting to write her a more personal news report and sending periodicals instead.\footnote{Staël worried that signing her work would be damaging for her in France. Staël to Mr. Lock, 11 September 1793. Staël, Correspondance générale, vol. 2, part 2, 476. Talleyrand to Staël, 28 September and 3 October 1793. “Lettres de M. de Talleyrand à Madame de Staël,” 81-83.}

Staël relied on her friends and used the periodical press to promote her literary and political works. She sent a copy of her Réflexions sur le procès de la reine originally published in Switzerland in August 1793 to Talleyrand who had it reprinted in London. He wrote to her about his efforts on her behalf: “Votre nom ne sera pas à la tête, mais l’ouvrage sera annoncé dans les papiers avec les précautions que vous m’indiquez. Le libraire a la permission de dire qu’il est de vous… [ainsi tout le mode le saura comme il faut]… Je vous enverrai les articles qui seront dans les journaux; j’en ai fait faire deux.”\footnote{Staël to Pierre-Louis Roederer, 5 November 1796. Staël to Adrien de Mun, 7 November 1796. Staël, Correspondance générale, vol. 3, part 2, 266-267, 270.} Staël devised concerted strategies to promote her and her friends’ works. When she published De l’influence des passions in 1796, she complained that her friends had not publicized it: “Mes amis ont eu le grand tort, ce me semble, de négliger de faire faire des extraits de mon ouvrage dans les journaux amis. Il y a un silence sur cela pas très flatteur d’abord, et surtout très nuisible.” She asked Adrien de Mun to rectify this situation and asked Pierre-Louis Roederer why there was no mention of her work in his Journal de Paris.\footnote{Staël to M. de Staël, 22 July 1791. Staël, Correspondance générale, vol. 1, part 2, 462. Beausoleil, “Germaine de Staël as political activist,” 27.}
Émigré men adopted similar strategies. They orchestrated publicity campaigns by placing excerpts and favourable reviews in the press and by having their friends disseminate their work all over Europe, including in France, in an effort to sway public opinion in their favour. Montesquiou waged an intellectual and political war against his adversaries in print. He published texts to justify his actions and to publicize his opinions, most notably about France’s financial affairs. He did, however, ask the opinion of his friends and protectors before committing his manuscripts to print. He sent the manuscript of his *Réponse au ministre Clavière* to Hottinguer and asked him to give him his honest opinion. “Je sollicite votre severité,” he told him. Once his text was printed, he sent copies to his protector and asked him to distribute them among his Swiss friends, no doubt in an attempt to mollify the Zurich political authorities.149

Émigré noblemen continued to comment on politics and to advise political leaders. They wrote countless memoranda that they sent to the Bourbon Princes, to their ministers, as well as to foreign rulers.150 This practice was not new, nobles had long advised rulers. What had changed by the second half of the eighteenth century was that noblemen, especially more liberal ones, were more likely to make use of the institutions of the public sphere to create momentum for their ideas rather than simply submitting them to ministers and rulers.151 Before the Revolution, André Morellet had criticized France’s “manuscript-based political culture” and argued that publishing memoranda, instead of sending them directly to ministers, would ensure that rational discourse would prevail and that good ideas would receive the attention they deserved.152 Noble émigrés, who often had lost their privileged access to ministers and rulers, turned to publication in the hopes that their ideas would gain influence.

Periodicals played an important role in the development and maintenance of the public sphere and in the creation of imagined communities. They allowed readers to keep abreast of the latest political and cultural developments and, by creating a public forum, they also allowed readers to remotely engage with current events.153 It is therefore not surprising that émigrés quickly established their own periodicals or took over some of the preexisting European and

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149 Montesquiou to Hottinguer, 13, 17 and 20 January, 7 and 10 March, 4 and 9 April, and 3 May 1793. AN, AB XIX 5350, dossier 1.
150 For example: BL, Add MS 37855, fo. 156, 208. Add MS 37864, fo. 173, 212. D’Arthez papers, AN, 477 AP 2
American francophone ones once in exile.\textsuperscript{154} For example, Charles-Alexandre de Calonne purchased the English-based \textit{Courrier de Londres} established in 1776 and transformed it into a central organ of counter-revolutionary publicity. Jean-Gabriel Peltier, who had founded the royalist periodical \textit{Actes des Apôtres}, also founded or contributed to several émigré papers once in exile.\textsuperscript{155} In 1797, Pierre-François Fauche and Amable de Baudus founded the Hamburg-based \textit{Spectateur du Nord}. Although these papers were often short-lived, the facts that new titles were regularly launched and the fact that émigrés continued to try to earn a living as journalists reveal that periodicals had important functions among the exile community, even if the readership was often too limited to make them economically viable.\textsuperscript{156}

Journalism was a male sphere of activity.\textsuperscript{157} For noblemen who had lost their positions of power, print culture became one of the only means available to maintain their traditional advisory role and to influence opinion. More often than not, they considered that they still had a civic duty to serve their countries. Periodicals were particularly suited to the dislocated emigration context and to the political uncertainty of the times. They were rapidly produced and reflected the diversity of opinions among émigré ranks. Their coverage included contemporary events and recent literary works. They relayed information from a large variety of sources, transcended national boundaries, and brought together a dispersed émigré imagined community. Although women did not take a great role in the émigré press, they avidly consumed newspapers.\textsuperscript{158}

Montlosier’s endeavours reveal how closely entwined émigré sociability and journalism could be. In 1797, he founded the \textit{Journal de France et d’Angleterre}, an organ of the monarchien party. The princesse d’Hénin, the group’s main hostess, gave him twenty-five guineas to fund the \textit{Journal} even if she did not like him very much. She thought that a monarchien paper would be most useful. The \textit{Journal} failed after seven months.\textsuperscript{159} Montlosier nonetheless continued his journalistic career and joined the abbé Calonne as co-editor, and then as editor in 1798, of the

\textsuperscript{154} For a complete list of French periodicals published in the United States see Frances Sergeant Childs, \textit{French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800: An American Chapter of the French Revolution} (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1940), 207.


\textsuperscript{156} On Peltier’s financial difficulties: BL, \textit{Archives of the Royal Literary Fund}, MSS Loan 96 RFL 1, n°147.

\textsuperscript{157} Burrows, \textit{French Exile Journalism}, 40.


Courrier de Londres. Despite being one of the most successful French periodical in England, Montlosier claimed that its limited circulation did not make it very profitable. His sociable relations once more came to his assistance: the baron de Montalembert, the husband of a salonnière he frequented, gave him 100 louis as a “subscription.” He was then able to hire his friends – including his political allies Mallet du Pan and the chevalier de Pradel de Lamasse – as contributors. Unsurprisingly, the paper was primarily concerned with politics.\textsuperscript{160}

The connection between émigré sociability and journalism was not solely monetary. Montlosier shared his political writings in d’Hénin’s salon, where he also heard Lally-Tollendal’s productions. After he became acquainted with Chateaubriand – following his review of the latter’s Des Rêvolutions anciennes et modernes in the Courrier – he took part in an all-male literary circle. This circle included Chateaubriand, René-Chrétien-Auguste de Lamoignon, the chevalier de Panat, and Louis de Fontanes – who had incidentally formed a friendship with Baudus and possibly contributed to the Spectateur du Nord. These men discussed each other’s literary works including drafts of Montlosier’s Des mystères de la vie humaine and Chateaubriand’s Génie du Christianisme.\textsuperscript{161} Salons, literary societies, and the periodical press were closely intertwined in exile, as they had been in pre-revolutionary France.\textsuperscript{162}

The Spectateur du Nord, was one of the most successful émigré papers. From 1797 to 1802, its monthly instalments were sent from Hamburg to its 500 subscribers. Rivarol and Souza were among its contributors.\textsuperscript{163} Excerpts of important literary productions were published \textit{en primeur} in its pages, including part of Chateaubriand’s Génie du Christianisme, Benjamin Franklin’s memoirs, and Rivarol’s preface to his Dictionnaire de la langue française. Some of its articles were also reprinted in other European and French periodicals. The paper was a successful literary trendsetter and an important organ of the émigrés’ cultural opposition to the French Republic; it tied the émigré Republic of Letters together.\textsuperscript{164}

\textsuperscript{160} Montlosier, Souvenirs, 247-249, 250, 252.
The *Spectateur*’s editor, presumably Baudus, outlined his program in the third instalment published in July 1797. The periodical was a moderate one but the editor promised some degree of impartiality: “Je promis cependant moins de me conformer à telle ou telle opinion, que de n’en épouser et de n’en choquer aucune… Toutefois, en m’engageant à de justes égards pour toutes les opinions, j’en exceptois de droit celle des hommes qui aiment les révolutions et l’anarchie.” He believed that impartiality, that his decision to eschew the *esprit de parti* that plagued émigré ranks, was essential to allow him to fulfil his goals. He argued that any person of talent – and any periodical – had a civic duty to help his fellow men and women to see the light: “diriger cette influence vers le bien de l’humanité, c’est-à-dire, vers tout ce qui peut servir au repos des peuples, à la stabilité des gouvernemens, au bonheur des individus.” One of the ways in which he and Charles de Villers – a frequent contributor on German literature – envisioned the paper contributing to peace and concord was by cultivating *belles lettres*, especially by making German literature and culture known. Although attached to their patrie, the pair wished to keep the Republic of Letters’ cosmopolitan ideal, an ideal likely to promote peace, alive.

In July 1798, Villers urged émigré literati to take advantage of their unprecedented proximity to German culture for the benefit of French and European culture. Not only should they seek consolation in their work and studies, but they should also work for the benefit of the Republic of Letters by translating German works into French. He believed that the French Republic would not close its borders to science and knowledge and that the émigrés could influence French minds by spreading the German principles of moderation and wisdom among the French educated public. Villers, for his part, attempted to introduce Frenchmen to Kant’s philosophy. Although Villers’s enthusiasm for German culture was unparalleled, Baudus shared his conviction that disseminating a greater knowledge of German culture could help restore peace. Villers argued: “La morale sensée des philosophes de cette nation [Germany] doit faire une guerre plus sûre que les armes de ses princes ; c’est le calme de la raison qu’il faut opposer à la fougue des passions ; j’ai cette idée… qu’un jour la philosophie calme et froide du

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The Terror had discredited the public use of popular emotions which were recast as destructive rather than virtuous. Post-Thermidorian writers, revolutionary or not, insisted that the use of reason was necessary to moderate passions. Villers argued that German philosophy could help achieve this goal and foster a more stable social order. With French literature and politics dominating its pages, the *Spectateur* often fell short of its ambitious program. Nevertheless, the journalists clearly used culture in their attempts to influence opinion and politics. If émigré papers were not exactly tools of propaganda, they often disseminated a very specific anti-revolutionary worldview and were essential tools in émigrés’ attempts to control the francophone – and cosmopolitan – public sphere.

In 1797, Lally-Tollendal published his *Défense des émigrés français*. He had started drafting the text after the elections of year V had returned a government favourable to the royalists and when peace with Britain seemed possible. He judged that the time was right to bring the émigrés’ plight to public attention. Despite the less favourable context after coup d’état of Fructidor – which removed royalist influence from the government and halted the peace negotiations – he still decided to submit his text to the public. His premise was that émigré laws were unjust because they failed to discriminate between innocent and guilty émigrés, between the *fugitifs*, who had left out of concern for their safety, and the *émigrés* who left to fight against the Revolution. He argued that the crime of emigration was limited to having borne arms against the Republic. He highlighted the legislation’s iniquitous nature by showing how absurd it was to apply it indiscriminately to women and children and to consider them traitors. He was not the first to highlight the fundamentally unjust nature of émigré legislation; however, his decision to directly appeal to the French people to right this wrong was somewhat more original.

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173 Trophime-Gérard, marquis de Lally-Tollendal, *Défense des émigrés français adressée au peuple français* (Hamburg : Fauche, 1797), vol. 1, III.
Lally-Tollendal was more interested in convincing the “French people” of the emigration laws’ injustice than political leaders. He explicitly stated that he hoped to convince ordinary citizens. He courted the tribunal de l’opinion with his publication: “PEUPLE FRANÇAIS, c’est à vous que je… défère [cette cause si pleine de justice & d’intérêt] ! Non pas à ceux qui ont joint à toutes leurs usurpations celle de s’approprier exclusivement votre nom… Mais tous les Français qui, même au milieu de l’effervescence des passions, ont gardé un cœur pur… C’est vous que je reconnais pour juges, vous qu’il est utile d’instruire, vous qu’il est noble d’implorer.”176 His conception of the public was somewhat capacious; he included soldiers, yeomen, as well as “hommes de bien de tous les rangs & de toutes les conditions.” He recognized the political power of public opinion and emphasized how crucial it was to convince the general population of the bien-fondé of the émigrés’ cause. Nevertheless, he was acutely aware that not every Frenchman’s opinion was equally weighed and his primary audience, the people he most sought to convince, were the men who were eligible to vote in the upcoming elections.177 He refused to believe that the revolutionaries had represented the entire French nation and he postulated that there was a significant cleavage between the revolutionary leaders and the actual people.

Lally-Tollendal appealed to his readers’ sensibilité as well as to their reason. His demonstration highlighted the absurdity of émigré legislation and appealed to the natural sentiment of justice that Frenchmen who had “cœurs justes & sensibles” would not help but feel when reading his plea on behalf of the unfortunate émigrés. Doing so, he, perhaps unwittingly, subscribed to the Revolutionary idea that truth and justice could be found by looking into one’s heart.178 It was not sufficient for him to show how unreasonable anti-émigré laws were; in order to truly achieve his goal and convince the French public of his cause’s righteousness, he had to impress this conviction upon their hearts, it had to be emotionally validated. Furthermore, he thought that in order for his plea to be successful, it was necessary for him to “reveal his soul” to his readers since it was only by accounting for the emotions émigrés sincerely felt that the French people to whom he appealed would be able to fully grasp the implications of exile and the émigrés’ true attachment to their patrie.179 Emotions were important rhetorical tools; reason alone was not sufficient to change minds on the topic of emigration. An estimated 40 000 copies of the

177 Lally-Tollendal, Défense des émigrés, vol. 1, V, 8-10.
179 Lally-Tollendal, Défense des émigrés, vol. 1, 11-13, 55, 60.
Défense were sold. Yet, it did not achieve the results its author had hoped for. The appeal received significant acclaim but it came mostly from the moderate ranks of emigration and less so from French republicans and staunch royalists.\textsuperscript{180}

Émigré authors could also appeal to their readers’ sensibility and convey a political message by incorporating it more subtly into fictional productions. After all, contemporaries acknowledged that the boundaries between fiction and reality were somewhat blurred during this extraordinary time.\textsuperscript{181} Eighteenth-century fiction, as Malcolm Cook notes, was “a form of social history.” Writers used fictional genres, especially novels, to reflect changes to their society and to promote their own interpretations of events taking place around them.\textsuperscript{182} During the revolutionary period, novels relied heavily on history and novelists sought to recreate, and criticize, their society. Novelists emphasized their works’ realism (\textit{vraisemblance}) and contemporaries recognized that they could have important didactic functions since they were ideally suited to illustrate the moral value of sentiments and to promote readers’ identification with virtuous characters.\textsuperscript{183} The Revolution and exile were fertile grounds for the sentimental and gothic novels – popular genres at the time – which focused on misfortune and suffering. Their main character was usually a victim. In émigré sentimental novels, the émigré, particularly the refugee who fled to ensure his safety, became the archetype of revolutionary suffering.\textsuperscript{184} The preface of the \textit{Mémoires d’une famille émigrée} published in 1798 by Jeanne-Françoise Polier de Bottens – a Swiss writer who socialized with émigrés – highlighted how fertile the theme of emigration was: “Les infortunés furent répandus sur la surface de l’Europe. La compassion prit la place de toutes les idées politiques. Le romanesque, le poétique de l’imagination, se trouvèrent au-dessous de la réalité… L’esprit, occupé à tracer une situation sentimentale, trouvait son ouvrage bien faible, en écoutant le récit d’un si grand nombre de circonstances malheureuses et véritables.” Her novel aimed to combine “les sentiments du cœur” and “les traits de l’histoire.”\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{181} Michel Delon, “Préface,” \textit{L’émigré}, Sénac de Meilhan, 33.
\textsuperscript{185} Jeanne-Françoise Polier de Bottens, \textit{Mémoires d’une famille émigrée} (Hamburg : Fauche, 1798), vol. 1, vi-vii.
Emigration was not merely a convenient theme, writers used the abundant pathos of exile in their efforts to alter public opinion. Émigré novels generally contained political messages.\footnote{Cook, “The Émigré Novel,” 152-153. 11 Claire Jaquier, Florence Lotterie and Catriona Seth ed., “Introduction,” *Destins romanesques de l’émigration* (Paris : Éditions Desjonquères, 2007), 11. Some also penned novels against émigrés. For a list of émigré novels and plays see: Genand, *Romans de l’émigration*, 533-537.} The émigré was a polemical figure, especially between 1795 to 1802 when it was not completely reviled as it had been during the Terror or tolerated as it would be after the 1802 amnesty, a polemical figure, then, whose values were hard to define. Novels played on that ambiguity in the hopes of imposing their own interpretations. They emphasized the émigrés’ sensibilité and victimhood and appealed to the readers’ sympathy.\footnote{Genand, “Préface,” 16-17.} These novels’ heroes were rarely intransigent counter-revolutionaries, rather, they were men and women of feeling who were at the mercy of events beyond their control and who were capable of learning from their mistakes.

Sénac de Meilhan had written overtly political texts but he eventually chose to write a work of fiction, one which could possibly interest a broader audience, to disseminate his ideas about emigration.\footnote{His political texts include *Des principes et des causes de la Révolution en France* in 1790 and *Du gouvernement, des mœurs et des conditions en France avant la Révolution* in 1795.} He reflected upon the power of novels as a medium in *L’Émigré* and recognized their ability to give accurate and morally useful accounts of society. He argued that while history books shed light on destructive human failings such as ambition and fanaticism, novels drew attention to virtuous actions and to human sensibility. In his opinion, French writers should emulate their English peers who faithfully represented individual and national mores and integrated useful moralistic elements to their tales.\footnote{Sénac de Meilhan most likely had Samuel Richardson in mind. Sénac de Meilhan, *L’émigré*, 265-266.} For him, novels had a clear didactic component. He sought to take advantage of the genre’s popularity and possibilities.

*L’Émigré* was the most political novel penned by a supporter of the emigration. Its noble characters were at a loss. Their experience of exile was one of dislocation, a situation that the quasi-cacophonous epistolary form of the novel emphasized. Revolutionary upheavals and exile forced the characters into an involuntary identity quest.\footnote{Michel Delon, “Préface,” 14, 28. Nicolas Perot, “Epistolaire et romanesque dans l’émigration : Chateaubriand, Sénac de Meilhan, Senancour, Madame de Staël,” *Exil et épistolaire aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles. Des Éditions aux inédits*, ed. Rodolphe Baudin et al. (Clermont-Ferrand : Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2007), 148.} The novel offered a literary exploration of and experimentation with the definition of nobility in the post-1789 world. It examined how nobles could conciliate former aspects of their identities to their new realities.
Sénac de Meilhan criticized the meaninglessness of social life before the Revolution. However, he did not explicitly target aristocratic corruption. Rather he highlighted how the values of pre-revolutionary society had not enabled nobles to display their true character, namely their virtues and their honour. It was only when faced with adversity that nobles were able to showcase the true roots of their superiority. Their resourcefulness and resignation revealed how worthy they were. For the vicomtesse de Vassy, for example, exile was a chance to create a new identity. Her metamorphosis from innocent, but misunderstood, coquette before the Revolution, to loving wife was made possible by the creation of a new identity in exile and by her emancipation from pre-revolutionary aristocratic prescriptions. Her tragic end, her imprisonment ruined her health, underlined Sénac de Meilhan’s message: exile allowed nobles to reinvent themselves and, ultimately, émigrés were the victims of a cruel Revolution.

Émigrés in novels penned by Genlis and Souza displayed similar resourcefulness and resignation. However, female novelists were more concerned about the impact of exile on families than Sénac de Meilhan. Speaking of exile as a familial experience conferred authority to women writers. They also presented a more nuanced account of emigration and drew distinctions between “good” and “bad” émigrés. Genlis, in Les petits émigrés (1798), and Souza, in Eugénie et Mathilde (1811), extolled the virtues of good émigrés and criticized those who were misguided – rather than vicious – for their failure to adapt to the post-revolutionary world.

Genlis had clear didactic goals when writing Les petits émigrés. On the one hand, she criticized émigrés who clung to their Ancien Régime ways for their failure to reform their habits and for their failure to learn anything from their host societies. On the other hand, she celebrated, glorified even, émigrés who were able to adapt and reform. She reserved her highest praises for those who used exile as an opportunity to improve their education and who chose to work to support themselves rather than to rely on charity. About a noble family living in reduced circumstances, she had her young character Édouard say: “Mon père loue beaucoup leur industrie et leur résignation, et en effet, il est beau de voir des gens qui avoient cent mille livres de rentes,  

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192 Sénac de Meilhan, L’émigré, 99.
supporter aussi courageusement une ruine entière, et vivre honorablement de leur travail, sans avoir recours à personne et sans faire de dettes.” Another character complained about the repugnance she felt at having to give lessons for which she was paid but conceded that it was honourable. These émigrés displayed the required emotions and had a noble comportment. Genlis wished to provide her young noble readers with a sort of philosophy to help them adapt to their new circumstances. She stressed the fleeting nature of material possessions and of glory. True virtue glory, and happiness were to be found in piety, justice, service, and honour.

Souza’s *Eugénie et Mathilde* had less overtly moralizing intentions, rather she wrote a sort of history of the emigration. Although the combination of situations she related was of her own making, she did rely on tales of her friends’ experiences as well as on her own. In that sense, Kirsty Carpenter suggests, her novel should be seen as a form of “oral history” transcribing experiences that had often been told in salons. The changing status of the émigré, who had become a far less controversial figure by 1811, made the novel less polemical. Souza still sought to soften public opinion vis-à-vis ex-émigrés and portrayed the good émigré archetype in a sympathetic light. She used many of the tropes of the sentimental novel to highlight the misfortunes or tragedy of exile and elicit feelings of sympathy. Her work was also one of the few non-epistolary émigré novels. By narrating the story in the third person, she claimed greater authority as a storyteller and could appeal directly to the reader.

Émigré fiction humanized the figure of the émigré by endowing it with feeling. Even Sénac de Meilhan’s more conservative marquis de Saint-Alban was a figure full of pathos whose tragic fate – caught sword in hand fighting against the Republic, he was executed – might compel readers to shed tears. Sénac de Meilhan, Genlis, and Souza used sensibility and sought to excite readers’ sympathy which could prompt them to criticize the Revolution. By drawing on themes of the popular sentimental novel and by making the émigré a victim rather than an uncompromising opponent of the Revolution, authors of émigré novels sought to make the figure more palatable to the public. After all, Lally-Tollendal’s *Défense* had struck a chord among émigré milieus but had failed to make a lasting impression on the French public. Writers of émigré fiction thought that novels could perhaps achieve this goal. Émigré novels often promoted

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198 Carpenter, “Introduction,” 1-3, 16.
a revisionist approach to the history of the Revolution, one shedding light on its dark side and its tales of human suffering. In that sense, they paved the way for future narrativization of émigrés’ experiences in memoirs and autobiographical texts written after their return.

**Conclusion**

Émigrés sought to maintain and display distinctive emotional and cultural habits in exile. These affirmed their national and class identities. Their resistance took more than one form. While a number of émigrés actively fought, sword in hand, against the Revolution, the counter-revolution’s most significant and lasting impact came from the cultural sphere. Resistance could be as minimal and symbolic as continued displays of *gaieté* and *esprit* in aristocratic salons or it could take much more public forms with print culture. What émigrés sought to publicize was that they were indeed truly superior, that the strength of character they displayed when faced with adversity revealed an innate and legitimate nobility. Christian and stoic resignation played a crucial role in the nobility’s claim to superiority; it showed that their status was not based on material displays but rather on their virtuous character.

Émigrés also actively used the institutions of the public sphere to influence opinion. They used salons, periodical press, and print culture to propose alternatives to the revolutionary cultural program. To that end, they often promoted Republic of Letters ideals such as concord and cosmopolitanism. They also used culture to draw distinctions between them, the civilized French people, and the revolutionaries. Ultimately, their efforts, especially the émigré novels, aimed at humanizing the figure of the émigré thus proposing an alternative to the monstrous *ci-devant* lambasted by the revolutionaries.

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Chapter 6

Remembering the Revolution and Emigration: Émigré Memoirs and History

Henriette-Lucy Dillon, marquise de La Tour du Pin is one of the best known and most appreciated memoirists of the French Revolution and emigration. Her powers of observation, her critical evaluation of revolutionary circumstances, and her wit make her memoirs both valuable and enjoyable. Still, the marquise had a clear agenda when she penned her “rhapsodies.”¹

When they returned to France under the Consulate, the La Tour du Pin regained most of their past importance. La Tour du Pin reported that she was courted by Joséphine: “Dès que Mme Bonaparte connut… ma présence à Paris, elle désira que je vinsse chez elle. Attirer à soi une femme, encore jeune, ancienne dame de cour, très à la mode, voilà une conquête, si j’ose le dire, dont elle était très impatiente de se vanter au premier consul. Aussi me fis-je un peu prier, pour donner du prix à ma condescendance.”² Bonaparte wanted the La Tour du Pin, a prominent noble family, to rally to his cause.³ Eventually, they served the imperial regime. In 1808, Frédéric was appointed prefect of the Dyle. His career continued under the Restoration. He was a French representative at the Congress of Vienna and, from 1820 to 1830, he was appointed ambassador to Turin.⁴ As his example shows, nobles continued to serve the French state in many capacities after the Revolution: in the civil service, in the diplomatic corps, and in the army.

Yet, things had irrevocably changed. La Tour du Pin’s letters reveal that she was troubled by societal changes. She criticized misalliances between nobles and parvenus. She thought that the nobility was losing its footing. She wrote: “Je voudrais que chacun se remît dans sa province et tâche de regreffer un peu sa considération sur celle de ses ancêtres. Au lieu de cela, notre pauvre noblesse fait de son mieux pour effacer les souvenirs, sur lesquels elle aurait dû se replanter, puisqu’il n’y a que les ancêtres que les industriels ne peuvent acheter.” Contemporaries agreed: noble mystique – history, traditions, and culture – could not be bought and constituted one of the group’s most important sources of distinction.⁵

Moreover, if the La Tour du Pin were able to restore some of their political importance after the Revolution, they were unable to recover from its financial impact. La Tour du Pin calculated that their annual income had decreased by 58,000 francs. In 1835, they were forced to sell the family estate of Le Bouilh to Florentin Hubert de Lisle de Montfleury, a planter from La Réunion. She had a very poor opinion of the buyer – whom she called a “cochon” – and was exasperated by his “pointilleries,” “ladreries,” and “cochoneries.” She claimed that the difficulties the buyer put up forced them to drink “la lie du calice.” This was a particularly difficult event. She told her grandson that selling the family seat was a calamity and told her friend, Félicie de Duras, that it felt like a premature death. She struggled with the idea of selling some of their material possessions and furniture to the new owner and with the fact that her family would now be rootless. “Descendez de votre muraille, lord Middleton, qui vous êtes donné tant de peine pour remettre votre maître Jacques II sur son trône, et vous, ma grande tante, qui est revenue d’Écosse avec Charles-Edouard… entrez sans façon dans cette caisse et allez dans le grenier de je ne sais qui, car je n’ai plus de maison où vous donner asile,” she lamented as she took down her Jacobite ancestors’ portraits. Châteaux were a crucial part of noble symbolic capital: ancestral seats emphasized a family’s antiquity, its traditions, and its prestige. Nobles forced to sell their estates often chose to remove completely from their former area and opted for urban anonymity where they would not be reminded of their déclassement. The La Tour du Pin spent the rest of their lives in Italy where they could maintain an idle aristocratic lifestyle at a much lower cost. Their noble lineage also became vulnerable. Of their six children, two died in their infancy, and three more died between 1816 and 1822. A sign that the aristocratic code of honour was still very much alive, their eldest son Humbert died in a duel in 1816. Only their cadet son Frédéric-Claude-Aymar survived his parents.

It was under these difficult circumstances that La Tour du Pin penned her memoirs. She started drafting them around 1820 when Frédéric was posted in Turin and probably wrote them intermittently over the next two decades, putting the finishing touches to her manuscript in the

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8 La Tour du Pin, “Correspondance,” 518-519.
years following her husband’s death in 1837. Her life had spanned many political regimes, she had witnessed tremendous change and, when she was writing, France’s future seemed far from transparent. With her memoirs, she could hope to influence the still debated revolutionary legacy.

La Tour du Pin’s motivations were manifold. First, she wished to bear witness to the extraordinary events that had punctuated her existence. She paid particular attention to the changes that French society had undergone from her days at Versailles to the Hundred Days. The rapid transformations brought about by the Revolution and its ensuing wars led to the emergence of a historical consciousness among wide segments of the European population. An unprecedentedly large number of people came to believe that they could offer their own interpretation of the momentous historical events they had lived through. Narration enabled individuals who had experienced displacement, uprootedness, and dislocation to make sense of and ascribe meaning to their experiences. Second, La Tour du Pin sought to place her existence firmly in the continuity of her family history, from her ancestors to her descendants. Her memoirs display a strong conception of her family’s past as well as its posterity. History had didactic purposes: it taught noble scions fundamental noble values and, more importantly, it taught contemporaries to avoid past mistakes. La Tour du Pin’s memoirs are part of a wider, long-term aristocratic project to wrest control over the historical interpretation of the Revolution, particularly over the liberal interpretation that equated nobility and emigration with anti-patriotism or treason. Revolutionary events had engendered a divided and “fractious political community” which made the future uncertain and open to contestation. In this context, history – as a means of deciphering and judging past events – had political significance. Nineteenth-century individuals and groups thus “struggle[d] over the authority and legitimacy of the past, and over the shape of the future.” The production and consumption of history exploded.

Noble émigrés continued to experiment with the meaning and definitions of nobility in their writings, well after their return to France. They used memoirs, this chapter argues, to define and defend the nobility as a social caste and to fashion the identity they wished to transmit to future generations. The discourse they developed in their memoirs was an attempt to influence

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French and noble collective memory and history. If they could not win the social and cultural fight against the revolutionary heritage in the immediate, then, perhaps, their mémoires historiques could help them win it in posterity.

This chapter explores, first, the French peculiarity that made memoirs the preferred form of historical production. It then examines how noble émigré men and women framed their memoirs and how these frames endowed their narratives with credibility. Finally, it considers the historical discourse memoirists developed in an effort to reintegrate their experience into the collective memory, to shed light on the Revolution’s destructive side, and to refute the liberal discourse that equated emigration with treason. Overall, their memoirs were a collective project meant to define noble distinctiveness and to justify nobles’ continued relevance and importance in nineteenth-century French society.

**Memory and History: A French Peculiarity**

In his *Génie du Christianisme*, François-René de Chateaubriand claimed that memoirs dominated the French historical field to the point that France had no proper historiographical tradition. He was not the first to note this French predilection for memoirs, often over more scholarly historical productions. He, and others before him, concluded that memoirs were best suited to the French character since they gave free rein to its genius and since they were a more conversational genre than formal histories. This emphasis on memoirs’ informal, conversational features rendered them compatible with the noble traditions of amateurism and mondanité.

Ever since the emergence of positivism, however, historians, especially those of the English-speaking world, have paid little attention to the memoirs written about the Revolution. Their dismissal of these texts as a serious historical source and as an object of study can be explained by the fact that they are uncomfortably situated between history and literature, a sort of hybrid genre. Their narrativization techniques borrow heavily from fiction writing which casts doubt upon their narratives’ authenticity. Historians ignoring memoirs or neglecting the context of their production ultimately deny them the role of credible historical sources that their authors

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Contemporaries believed that memoirs were important historical sources and the 1798 *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* clearly stated that memoirs were written to “serve history.” Memoirists of the Revolution and emigration unmistakeably wished to serve history even if, and perhaps especially because, the legacy of the Revolution was still unclear when they penned their recollections. They judged it essential to leave a multiplicity of testimonies for future professional historians to sift through to get a complete picture of events. A prospectus published by the editors of a collection of memoirs on the Revolution explained how crucial such breadth was: “Les Mémoires, qui isolément, sont sans valeur et sans autorité pour l’histoire, offrent, ainsi réunis, le tableau complet d’une époque.” Émigrés contended that their perspectives and experiences were significant.

Memoirs, especially memoirs about contentious events like the Revolution and emigration, had specific agendas, yet it would be a mistake to entirely dismiss them as valuable sources. It is precisely these agendas and the discourses they produced that require closer study. In recent years, French historians have begun to examine the considerable corpus of memoirs that emerged from the revolutionary period. They have paid particular attention to their authors’ motivations and to their structure. Damien Zanone’s exhaustive study seeks to bring memoirs out of oblivion. He shows how they articulated specific discourses that were meant to become part of French collective memory. They enabled individuals to make sense of the Revolution and inscribe their individual destiny within the national destiny. Furthermore, he contends that, following the abolition of the Ancien Régime, “la mémoire” became a sort of noble privilege. Memory, according to Natalie Petitateau, became a “patrimoine symbolique.” Memoirs, like portraits, showcased a family’s grandeur. During the first few decades of the Restoration, Zanone and Emmanuel de Waresquiel argue, the nobility sought to establish a monopoly over France’s history: they sought to impose their interpretation of the Revolution by asserting control

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over the production of historical discourse. Waresquiel even speaks of the elite’s obsession with history during the Restoration. History became a central component of the elite’s legitimizing discourse. Memoirs, a long-standing aristocratic tradition, played an instrumental part in the nobility’s efforts to shape its collective identity and gain an interpretative monopoly France’s collective memory. This strategy was not new. As Pierre Nora has shown, Ancien Régime memoirists were already engaged in a symbolic struggle meant to establish a monopoly over the interpretation of past. Memoirists hoped to reclaim the influence they had lost as a result of monarchical consolidation. Memoirs challenged royal propaganda and official history; they were “anti-histories.” In post-revolutionary society, memoirs were unprecedentedly accessible to and in high demand from a more diversified reading public. Memoirists and publishers played on French people’s fascination with the revolutionary period. The genre’s overt subjectivity, its existence outside the professional realm, and the fact that it was more conversational than academic, made it particularly attractive or suited to aristocratic women. Indeed, noble women were exceptionally active in this historico-literary sphere.

Building on Nora’s work, Faith E. Beasley shows that seventeenth-century French aristocratic women had used memoirs and novels, particularly historical novels, to challenge the official narrative articulated by Louis XIV’s historians. A large number of these women had played an important role during the Fronde and they used their writings to articulate a revisionist historical account. They highlighted the importance of particular history over general, military history and established the former’s ability to shed light on personal motivations overlooked by, although impacting, the latter. Noble women were aware that particular history had political implications since it shifted focus away from the battlefield and towards the court, a realm in which they wielded considerable influence. Noblewomen once more turned to memoirs to inscribe their experiences in historical discourses after the Revolution.

Henri Rossi’s study of aristocratic women’s memoirs of the revolutionary era concludes that they form a sort of collective autobiography that displayed noblewomen’s nostalgia. They wrote these memoirs, he claims, to bring the upper classes’ pre-revolutionary worldly existence

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24 Zanone, Écrire son temps, 23.
back to life, a world in which they had had much more influence.\textsuperscript{26} This interpretation relies too heavily on contemporaries’ complaints about the decadence of the \textit{monde} and on a now criticized interpretation of the French Revolution that stipulates that women were pushed out of the public sphere and left without any sort of influence beyond the domestic sphere. Anne Martin-Fugier shows that sociability had not disappeared and nineteenth-century women still held prominent positions.\textsuperscript{27} Nonetheless, Rossi’s conclusion that aristocratic women penned memoirs in an effort to provide some anchoring points for a caste that had gone through deeply unsettling changes deserves further exploration. These texts aimed to showcase aristocratic distinctiveness, of \textit{la vie élégante}, and often did so in appealing ways.

Women’s memoirs about the revolutionary period have also attracted the attention of English-speaking scholars. Jacqueline Stockdale-DeLay argues that female memoirists used the genre to subvert early nineteenth-century gender ideologies by seemingly submitting to them: in conformity with gender ideals, they represented themselves as enshrined in the domestic sphere – writing innocuous family histories – but they used the opportunity to voice their ideas about, and even demonstrate their participation in, revolutionary events.\textsuperscript{28} Stockdale-DeLay thus reinforces Carla Hesse’s argument that during and following the Revolution, women were able to resist the essentializing of their identity by using their pens to engage in self-creation and thus achieve modern subjectivity.\textsuperscript{29} As for Britt Christina Petersen’s study of émigré noblewomen’s memoirs, it argues that the authors framed their narratives as sentimental family dramas in which the trials of exile brought about noble regeneration or redemption. Family became the cornerstone of these \textit{émigrées}’ regeneration tales.\textsuperscript{30} Together these studies highlight the paramount importance that memory, history, and family held for the restored nobility.

A “fièvre des mémoires”

Memoirs became a very popular genre after the Revolution. It was a “moment de mémoire plein.”31 The extraordinary number of memoirs being written, published, and read led the duchesse d’Abrantès to claim that they were experiencing a “fièvre des mémoires.”32 Editors even created special collections.33 Of the 640 memoirs published between 1815 and 1848, 444 concerned recent history. Dozens, if not hundreds, more texts were written but remained unpublished until later or even still. Alfred Fierro inventoried over 1500 titles in his Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur la Révolution.34 Using Fierro’s bibliography, we can find 186 texts written by or about émigrés, roughly twelve percent of the total number of texts he inventoried. Eliminating texts that are not properly memoirs and texts written by commoners and ecclesiastics, we are left with a total of 101 memoirs penned by noble émigrés, including seventeen by women. Based on Fierro’s list, we can calculate that women authored approximately nine percent of all the memoirs on the Revolution, or 139 out of 1502, and émigré noblewomen wrote about fifteen percent of all the female-authored memoirs.35 Considering that émigrés, and noble émigrés, represented a very small percentage of the French population, considering that emigration was by and large a masculine phenomenon, and considering that men still dominated the literary and historical fields, both émigrés and émigrées were overrepresented among the corpus of memoirs on the Revolution. Indeed, noblewomen, who accounted for approximately fifteen percent of the noble émigrés, wrote about fifteen percent of the noble émigré memoirs.36 Proportionally, noble women wrote about as many memoirs as noble men did.

32 Laure Junot d’Abrantès, Mémoires de la duchesse d’Abrantès (Paris : Mame, 1835), vol. 1, 266.
33 Claude-Bernard Petitot and Jean-Louis Montmerqué, for example, launched their Collection complète des Mémoires relatifs à l’histoire de France in 1820. Over the next nine years, they released seventy-eight volumes about France’s Ancien Régime from Henri IV to 1763. Memoirs on revolutionary events were even more popular. Between 1821 and 1827, editors Albin de Berville and Jean-François Barrière released fifty-three volumes for their Collection des Mémoires relatifs à la Révolution française.
34 Fierro’s bibliography, however, includes a handful of texts that are not proper memoirs: it includes fakes – what contemporaries called teinture – biographies based on personal papers, a few novels, and edited papers and diaries. Zanone, Écrire son temps, 33-34, 41, 392. Alfred Fierro, Bibliographie critique des mémoires sur la Révolution écrits ou traduits en français (Paris : Service des travaux historiques de la Ville de Paris, 1988).
The Revolution had significant impacts on memoir writing practices. First, it acted as a catalyst: it prompted an unprecedented number of men and women to commit their recollections to writing. It gave them legitimacy: they had witnessed or been part of something monumental. Second, it also acted as a democratizing agent. Until then, memoirs had been almost exclusively an aristocratic genre. With the Revolution, individuals from more diverse backgrounds judged that they had something of interest to say, that their experiences or points of view were important to record. Furthermore, the emergence of modern subjectivity, fostered by Romanticism, contributed to the democratization of memoir writing. This seemingly uncontrolled proliferation of memoirs was not welcomed by everyone. Many nobles believed that the genre’s democratization had the potential to undermine not only its quality but could also have significant historiographical implications. The nobility’s quasi-monopoly over the interpretation of the past, its ability to set the limits of what was historical (historicité) was threatened. Chateaubriand mocked, deplored even, the lower classes’ historical pretensions: “Il n’y a personne qui ne soit devenu, au moins pendant vingt-quatre heures, un personnage, et qui ne se croit obligé de rendre compte au monde de l’influence qu’il a exercée sur l’univers. Tous ceux qui ont sauté de la loge au portier, qui se sont glissés de l’antichambre dans le salon, qui ont rampé du salon dans le cabinet du ministre, tous ceux qui ont écouté aux portes, ont à dire…” For him, memoirs should remain the aristocracy’s preserve; their purpose, to showcase noble distinctiveness.

On the whole, the nobility continued to dominate the genre, writing about half of all the memoirs. After all, continuing the tradition of the mémoires d’épée and mémoires spectacles, nobles, due to their proximity to power, were more likely to have been important actors or privileged spectators of historical events. History was of great significance for nineteenth-century nobles. The Bourbons may have returned but the Ancien Régime nobility was definitely gone, its legal basis and privileges abolished. The nobility was therefore limited to a “fait social,” its legitimacy limited to its specific culture and history. Nobles relied on history more

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40 On mémoires d’épée and mémoires spectacles see Nora, “Les Mémoires d’État.”
systematically than ever in an effort to assert their distinctiveness and merit; memoirs played an instrumental role in the affirmation of the noble je ne sais quoi.\textsuperscript{42}

Moreover, émigrés, who wrote a disproportionate number of noble memoirs on the Revolution, contended that their experiences and interpretations of the past were worth preserving. They not only sought to impose a distinct, often royalist, interpretation of the events, they also sought to reintegrate their exile experience into the history of the Revolution. They had to somehow explain their emigration and make it part of their nation’s historical experience in order to justify the often still prominent economic, cultural, and political positions they held. The narratives they created emphasized their victimization: they were loyal, honourable people who had been victims of barbarous revolutionaries because of their convictions. They also used their texts to define what it meant to be noble in post-revolutionary society. They framed their memoirs in specific ways in order to follow aristocratic memoir-writing conventions and convince readers that they offered truthful retellings of their experiences.

\textbf{Framing Émigré Memoirs: The Acts of Writing and Publicizing}

In his \textit{Souvenirs et Portraits}, Gaston de Lévis summed up memoir writing aristocratic codes:

On convient généralement qu’il est impossible d’écrire l’histoire du temps où l’on vit ; il n’en est pas de même des Mémoires. Ces matériaux de l’histoire doivent être l’ouvrage de ceux qui ont vu de très près les événements qu’il s’agit de raconter. Mais la curiosité des contemporains n’y gagne rien ; car ces Mémoires, qui pour être intéressants, ne doivent rien taire d’important, ne sauraient être publiés qu’après un long espace de temps. Et, en effet, puisqu’il est malheureusement impossible de parler de la conduite des affaires sans avoir plus ou moins à blâmer, les égards que l’on doit aux vivants, et même aux familles des morts, font de ce délai une loi de bienveillance et de délicatesse.\textsuperscript{43}

The framing, or packaging, of émigrés’ memoirs shed light on their authors’ motivations as well as on their collective identity. Noble authors generally addressed the act of memoir writing in their preface or elsewhere in their texts. The tropes and language used reveal that despite the fact that they were writing individual stories, their texts were somewhat scripted, namely they subscribed to the same conventions and shared similar goals. First, they framed their memoirs as belonging to their familial patrimony. Second, in keeping with the noble imperative of amateurism – the opposite of profit-seeking, all-consuming professionalism – they avoided

\textsuperscript{42} Harsanyi, “A Resilient Elite,” 292.

scholarly productions that were too close to derogating métiers and emphasized that they were not professional authors.\textsuperscript{44} Third, they claimed that due to their privileged observer or actor status, it was their duty to leave sources for future historians. Fourth, they tried to win their readers’ trust by stressing their sincerity. Fifth, they downplayed the importance of the first person in their narratives and emphasized their accounts’ broader historical relevance.

Memoirists placed their texts squarely within the familial patrimony. They often emphasized that they were writing for their descendants or at their behest. Élisa de Ménerville stated that her interest in her ancestors made her wish they had left accounts of their lives. While she claimed that such accounts would have no interest for the public, it would have the merit of teaching her descendants about honourable conduct. In this roundabout manner, she was able to justify her own memorial enterprise. She claimed that her grandchildren would perhaps be intrigued by her eventful life. Joséphine de Montaut-Navailles, duchesse de Gontaut-Biron claimed that her daughters asked her to commit her recollections to paper so that they could, in turn, tell her story to their children and keep the family history alive. Louis-Victor Léon, comte de Rochechouart wrote for his children, particularly his sons, and he compiled a familial history to complement his memoirs. He urged his children to leave memoirs of their own. Memoirs, according to him, were no “fairy tales” but rather useful guides for their descendants.\textsuperscript{45} Thus most memoirists sought to avoid oblivion, exalt their lineage, and transmit some useful lessons to their posterity. Rosalie de Rancher, duchesse Des Cars had a clear program: “J’ai voulu, en faisant réparer cette maison, y déposer un écrit contenant l’abrége des principaux événements de ma vie, afin que quand on la détruirra, mes successeurs, soit mes descendants ou d'autres, puissent se faire une idée des maux que la Révolution m’a fait souffrir.”\textsuperscript{46} Memory and family history were patrimony as much as estates.

In their prefaces, aristocratic memoirists commonly stated that they were writing solely for their posterity. Alexandrine Prévost de La Boutetièrè de Saint-Mars, baronne du Montet, for example prefaced her work with this warning: “Si vous imaginez donner à mes pauvres petites


feuilles détachées d’autre intention que celle d’une *causerie intime de famille* … vous serez dans l’erreur.”\textsuperscript{47} Roger de Damas explicitly stated that he wrote his memoirs exclusively for his family’s benefit: “je me flatte qu’ils auront trop de tact pour ne pas sentir que le temps ni la mort ne justifient pas la publication d’observations et de réflexions faites pour soi seul, ou au plus pour ses amis les plus intimes et les plus sûrs.”\textsuperscript{48} The memoirists’ intended audience was not as limited as they disingenuously claimed. Many tales were first recounted orally before being written down. Sections of memoirs were circulated in manuscript or read in sociable gatherings. La Tour du Pin’s American experience was widely known. Talleyrand read and lent excerpts to his friends. According to his niece, the duchesse de Dino, he did so excessively. He also stipulated in his will that his heirs might consider publishing his memoirs thirty years after his death if they deemed it appropriate. Adèle d’Osmond, comtesse de Boigne made a legible copy of her manuscript so her friends could read it. Rochechouart believed that his memoirs might be interesting beyond his limited family circle.\textsuperscript{49} Yet, émigré memoirists, and noble memoirists in general, rarely took care of publication themselves and, as Chateaubriand’s magnum opus made clear, memoirs were meant as a *prise de parole* “from beyond the grave.”\textsuperscript{50}

Noble émigré memoirists’ decision not to publish their manuscripts during their lifetime furthered their claim that they belonged to their family’s patrimony. Of the 101 memoirs they wrote, only twenty-two were published before their author’s death and seventy-six were published posthumously.\textsuperscript{51} Of the seventeen memoirs written by noble *émigrées*, four were published during their authors’ lifetime. Only roughly 24 percent of female and 22 percent of male memoirists took the initiative to publish. Memoirists’ relatives were responsible for sixteen posthumous publications. The fact that descendants played an important part in the publication of their families’ memoirs indicate that the texts were valued and constituted an important part of


\textsuperscript{51} In three cases, either because the author’s year of death is not clear or because the memoirs were published the same year they died, it is not clear whether publication was posthumous or not. See Fierro, *Bibliographie critique*. 
their patrimony. Nevertheless, the fact that close to 80 percent of the memoirs were published by
individuals who were not related to the authors—although, no doubt, some of these publishers
were doing so on behalf of family members—also emphasizes how these texts circulated and
were popular beyond family circles.

Noble émigrés’ predilection for posthumous publication went against the period’s
dominant trend. Indeed, the majority of memoirs published between 1815 and 1848 were released
during their authors’ lifetimes.\(^{52}\) In this respect, émigrés perpetuated the aristocratic tradition of
speaking from beyond the grave and commonly only after some time had elapsed. It was not
considered polite to expose contemporaries’ flaws to public scrutiny during their lifetime:
aristocratic memoirs were supposed to be a posthumous vindication. Chateaubriand, who was
driven to sell his manuscript to settle his obligations, deplored his memoirs’ future exposure most
ardently: “Personne ne peut savoir ce que j’ai souffert d’avoir été obligé d’hypothéquer ma
tombe… Par un attachement peut-être pusillanime, je regardais ces Mémoires comme des
confidents dont je ne m’aurais pas voulu séparer… [S]i j’étais encore maître de ces Mémoires, ou
je les garderais en manuscrit ou j’en retarderais l’apparition de cinquante années.”\(^{53}\) His noble
principles would no doubt have been offended had he learned the fate of his text which was
published by instalment in the newspaper La Presse starting only a few weeks after his death.\(^{54}\)

Noble authors, by placing their memoirs squarely within a noble family’s patrimony,
came up with a convenient excuse to justify their decision to take the pen. Noblewomen played a
significant role in the transmission of the lineage’s history and of the proper codes of conduct.\(^{55}\)
Almost all noble female memoirists relied on this rhetorical strategy. Indeed, by writing a family
history, they maintained the illusion of domesticity and somewhat deceptively claimed not to
enter the public sphere. Boigne and du Montet, who had no direct descendants, had to be creative.
In the end, they claimed to be writing for their nephews and nieces.\(^{56}\)

By emphasizing the family history aspect, memoirists were also able to fend off the
stigma of professionalism antithetical to the noble ethos: they might have occasionally taken the

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\(^{52}\) Zanone, Écrire son temps, 87-88.
\(^{53}\) François-René de Chateaubriand, Mémoires d’outre-tombe, ed Jean-Claude Berchet (Paris : Garnier, 1989), vol. 1,
63-64.
\(^{54}\) Zanone, Écrire son temps, 88.
pen to amuse themselves but they were no writers, nor were they historians. From La Tour du Pin’s “je n’écris pas un livre” to Talleyrand’s “ce n’est point un ouvrage,” memoirists reiterated again and again that their memoirs were not literary chef-d’œuvres. Aglaé de Francleieu, like du Montet and others, claimed that her text was not a book but rather a “causerie.” This strategy was particularly popular among noblewomen who were known for their conversational skills. By framing their memoirs are yet another causerie, they did not violate feminine codes of propriety.

Adding another layer to their amateurism discourse, memoirists downplayed their literary abilities and claimed that they had no skills or method. Talleyrand stated that his text was repetitive. Joseph-Geneviève, comte de Puisaye warned his readers: “On ne doit s’attendre à trouver, dans cet écrit, ni l’ordre ni la précision méthodique qui conviennent à l’histoire. Je n’ai ni le temps, ni l’habitude, ni peut-être l’inclination de me livrer à un travail trop régulier, qui d’ailleurs ne remplirait pas mieux mon objet.” La Tour du Pin wrote that she had no method. Georgette Ducrest declared: “Je ne me sens pas les moyens nécessaires pour être auteur.”

Boigne explicitly framed her memoirs as part of her leisurely aristocratic lifestyle. “Je n’ai voulu qu’une distraction et non pas un travail,” she continued, “Je n’y met pas plus d’importance qu’à un ouvrage de tapisserie. Je me suis successivement servie de ma plume pour laisser reposer mon aiguille et de mon aiguille pour reposer ma plume.”

It was this nonchalance, this effortless elegance that came across in noble writings – just like it did in their sociability practices – that asserted the group’s cultural leadership. The memoirists’ narratives idealized Ancien Régime noble lifestyle and were instrumental in the restoration of the nobility’s cultural appeal. They also outlined distinctive sets of noble and bourgeois values and they then created a clear dichotomy between the two:

57 Fiette, La noblesse française, 210-211.
60 On Boigne’s novels see: David S. Vanderboegh The life and works of Adèle d’Osmond comtesse de Boigne, 1781-1866 (Lewiston, N.Y. : E. Mellen Press, 2002). Boigne, Mémoires, 48.
gracefulness, sophistication, and urbanity as opposed to unrefined, gauche manners, generosity as opposed to acquisitiveness, and amateurism as opposed to professionalism.\textsuperscript{61}

Memoirists apologized for their memory’s possible failings and appealed to their readers’ indulgence. “[M]on petit esprit s’embrouille de temps en temps,” wrote Franclieu.\textsuperscript{62} They also generally denied that they were writing history in any way; they were writing their personal story not History. As La Tour du Pin repeated many times: “je n’écris pas l’histoire.” For her part, Gontaut judged that relations of events that belonged to “le domaine de l’histoire” were far beyond her abilities. Boigne stated that she had not done any research before writing her memoirs.\textsuperscript{63} Noblewomen systematically made such claims since it enabled them to safeguard codes of propriety – modesty first among them – but noblemen also regularly used similar language to underline their amateurism. These prominent displays of modesty raise the question of memoirists’ reliability as historical witnesses. What value could their memoirs have if they were no talented writers, no professional historians? They answered these questions by insisting on their complete sincerity and by showing how they had witnessed important events first-hand. They had seen or done significant things and, if they were incapable of writing general history, they certainly could write particular histories. As Puisaye told his reader: “Je ne prétens assurément pas écrire l’histoire de la révolution Françoise, pas même celle du parti que j’ai suivi, mais je puis laisser des matériaux utiles.” He went on to emphasize how misconceptions about the Breton uprisings were common and how he, who had been one of the uprisings’ leaders, could provide a more reliable account of the events.\textsuperscript{64}

Authors of autobiographical texts, such as memoirists, entered into an agreement with their readers: they would tell the truth. This is what Philippe Lejeune referred to as “le pacte autobiographique.”\textsuperscript{65} Lévis reflected upon this pact in his \textit{Souvenirs et Portraits}: “la seule garantie que le lecteur puisse avoir est la confiance que l’auteur lui inspire. Il s’informe donc moins de son talent que de son caractère, de son rang dans le monde, et surtout de la facilité qu’il a eue de connaître les événements qu’il raconte.”\textsuperscript{66} In addition to their credentials, modesty played an important part in memoirists’ attempt to earn their readers’ trust. Indeed, simplicity and

\textsuperscript{61} Harsanyi, “A Resilient Elite,” 292-294.
\textsuperscript{62} Franclieu, \textit{Mémoires}, xx.
\textsuperscript{64} Emphasis added. Puisaye, \textit{Mémoires}, vol. 1, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{66} Lévis, \textit{Souvenirs-Portraits}, 55.
modesty were seen as gages of truthfulness.\textsuperscript{67} The fact that they were no professional writers made them seem more reliable. Their professed lack of literary skills supposedly made it difficult for them to hide the truth behind literary artifice.

Émigré memoirists provided the details of their pact in the first few pages of their texts. La Tour du Pin assured her readers that she was committed to revealing her true character: “ quoique j’eusse de la répugnance à divulguer mes fautes, je veux pourtant me montrer telle que je suis, telle que j’ai été.” Jean-François de Pérusse, duc Des Cars argued that he had no reason to hide the truth since, as he was no longer living a public life, people of influence were powerless to censure him: “qui pourrait donc nuire à la franchise de mes écrits? Qui pourrait s’opposer à l’expression de ce que je croirai dans ma conscience être la vérité?” Talleyrand professed his honesty: “bien ou mal, j’ai eu, en commençant cet écrit, l’intention de faire connaître franchement mon opinion.” Chateaubriand stated that he was determined to tell the truth, that he was writing his recollections in good faith. Boigne insisted on her complete sincerity: “Je n’affirme rien si ce n’est que je crois sincèrement tout ce que je dis. Je professe peu de confiance dans une impartialité absolue, mais je pense qu’on peut prétendre à une parfaite sincérité: on est vrai quand on dit ce qu’on croit.”\textsuperscript{68} Their understanding of the truth was not based on objectivity but rather on sincerity, after all revolutionary events “demanded judgment” and as long as they exposed their sincerely held convictions, they could not be accused of being unreliable.\textsuperscript{69} Their authenticity would excuse any factual mistakes that might have slipped into their manuscripts; their good faith would excuse what posterity might consider errors in judgement.

Memoirists sometimes stipulated that they wrote their recollections reluctantly: they did so to please friends or family members and because they understood the significance of the events they had lived through.\textsuperscript{70} They believed that, as privileged witnesses or historical actors, they had a duty to leave materials for future generation and historians who would not have a direct knowledge of revolutionary events. “De si grands événements ont occupé la vie de la génération qui vous a précédé et l’ont tellement absorbée que les traditions de famille seraient perdues dans ce vaste océan si quelque vieille femme comme moi ne recherchait dans ses

\textsuperscript{69} Fritzsche, \textit{Stranded in the Present}, 38.
\textsuperscript{70} Writing at friends’ request was a longstanding aristocratic tradition. Nora, “Les Mémoires d’État,” 1410.
souvenirs d’enfance à les reproduire,” explained Boigne. Chateaubriand, who feared his memory would be sullied by his enemies after his death, thought that he had a duty to leave a more credible account to protect his reputation: “Dans un siècle où les plus grands crimes commis ont dû faire naître les haines les plus violentes, dans un siècle corrompu où les bourreaux ont un intérêt à noircir les victimes, où les plus grossières calomnies sont celle que l’on répand avec le plus de légéreté, tout homme qui a joué un rôle dans la société doit, pour la défense de sa mémoire, laisser un monument par lequel on puisse le juger.” Rochechouart, who eventually achieved a somewhat lofty position in French society, concluded that he had something of value to offer: “je me suis trouvé amené insensiblement à écrire des mémoires qui auront dans quelques années une certaine portée historique, puisqu’ils ont rapport aux grands événements qui se sont passés pendant plus de soixante années.” His unique experience, his important position allowed him to make historically relevant observations. Noble émigrés assumed that their testimonies would be important for future historians who would examine them impartially.

Memoirs were not modern autobiographies. Memoirists constantly apologized for talking about themselves even if they admitted, in the end, that it was somewhat inevitable. “J’ai parlé de moi, trop peut-être, certainement plus que je n’aurais voulu ; mais il a fallu que ma vie servît comme fil à mes discours et montrât comment j’ai pu savoir ce que je raconte,” wrote Boigne. La Tour du Pin admitted that she was writing the diary of her life but rejected the Rousseauian autobiography. “Je ne prétends pas écrire mes confessions,” she protested. Memoirists’ objective was not introspection: they were not the subjects; history was the object. The memoirists’ object went far beyond the self, they offered their own perspectives on historical events, and their ultimate goal was to contribute to the collective history of the group to which they belonged, in this case: the nobility. These motivations made the extensive use of the first person incongruous. These were mémoires historiques, not vulgar autobiographies.

To accomplish their goal of writing historical memoirs, noble émigrés had to engage with historical events and promote their perspective, be it their individual or caste perspective. Like their Ancien Régime aristocratic predecessors, they were writing particular histories, anti-

71 Boigne, Mémoires, 51.
73 Rochechouart, Souvenirs, v.
75 Boigne, Mémoires, 48. La Tour du Pin, Journal, vol. 1, 2.
histories, not general histories. They sought to show how the master historical narrative did not take into account their side of the story. Most aristocratic memoirists subscribed to this idea but it was of particular relevance to émigrés who strove to reintegrate their exile experience into the narratives on the French Revolution. Telling their personal experiences was essential in order to show how events considered part of general history impacted individual lives. Their narratives offered what French historians have called *l’histoire incarnée*. Whenever their lives intersected with important events, they offered their perspective on them; they showed how these influenced their lives while simultaneously refusing to write a general history of the events. For example, La Tour du Pin explicitly refused to write a history of the Constituent Assembly, the flight to Varennes, Louis XVI’s execution, the coup of 18 Fructidor, and the Hundred Days. She only explained how these events affected her family or added details she had learned from reliable witnesses. Under her pen, the events of 18 Fructidor revealed how *l’Histoire* intersected with domestic and intimate history: her narrative detailed her fright upon hearing artillery – which interrupted her nursing her daughter – and upon meeting the crowds, her efforts to obtain information about the fate of the returned émigrés from Germaine de Staël, Benjamin Constant, and Talleyrand, and finally her family’s disarrayed second flight into exile. The duchesse Des Cars also argued that there was no need to comment on the Revolution’s general history: “Comme tous les événements de cette exécrable révolution sont recueillis par l’histoire, je n’ai nulle prétention de les écrire, je ne relate que ce qui m’est personnel.”

Puissaye’s approach was similar. He stressed how his object was larger than himself but also highlighted how enlightening his individual perspective could be: “En entreprenant d’écrire mes mémoires particuliers et l’histoire de ma vie, c’est le testament que je veux laisser à mes amis et à ma famille… mais comme, en les donnant au public… je n’aurai pas… la présomption de l’occuper uniquement de moi… Je ne prétens assurément pas écrire l’histoire de la révolution… La longue et sanglante guerre que j’ai eue à soutenir, sera, sans doute, l’objet principal de ces mémoires.” He used his memoirs to refute the fanciful notions about the Breton uprising that had been spread. His memoirs would be valuable on two accounts: they would offer a priceless testimony about an important aspect of revolutionary history and they would vindicate his memory. In some cases, memoirists could write accounts of important events when they

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believed they possessed a particularly valuable insight. Boigne, for example, chose to relate the flight to Varennes in great details in her memoirs, even if the event was well known, because she had had access to an official version. “Il y a bien des relations de ces évènements, mais l’authenticité de celle-ci, recueillie de la bouche même de la reine, me décide à retracer les détails qui me sont restés dans la mémoires parmi ceux que j’ai entendu raconter à mon père,” she wrote. She used this tale to emphasize Marie-Antoinette’s magnanimity.\textsuperscript{79}

Personal experience not only enabled memoirists to humanize general history, it also made it possible for them to bring nuance to and correct the historical record. “[D]ans un siècle où l’on voit les biographies sur les personnages vivans se multiplier, il devient presque indispensable de publier ses mémoires lorsqu’on a pris la peine de les écrire afin de rectifier un nombre infini d’erreurs et de calomnies,” wrote Genlis.\textsuperscript{80} Talleyrand pre-emptively denounced the publication of apocryphal memoirs he presumed would be published under his name and urged his heirs to denounce fake publications. His assumption was justified since, shortly after his death in 1838, Étienne-Léon de Lamothe-Langon, a prolific author of fake memoirs, published four volumes of Talleyrand’s supposed memoirs.\textsuperscript{81} Des Cars, for her part, thought it was imperative to reveal the truth about Napoleon, even if she admitted that the enterprise was dangerous.\textsuperscript{82} Revealing hidden or censored parts of history was memoirists’ duty.

The possibility of vindicating one or one’s friends’ conduct led a number of émigrés to publish their memoirs during their lifetime. The disgraced comte de Puisaye, for example, published his memoirs as early as 1803. He explained his decision at length. He wished to debunk the assumption that it was not polite to opt for a contemporary publication. “C’est un de ces faux axiomes trop généralement répétés sur parole, que l’on ne doit point publier les mémoires de son temps ; qu’écrire l’histoire de son siècle, c’est \textit{disséquer les vivans}, et donner de nouveaux alimens aux haines et aux animosités,” he continued, “l’honnête homme cherche la vérité.” He argued that the only way future historians would be able to discerned between truth and fiction was to submit memoirs to contemporaries’ judgement: people who had been witnesses were able to form an informed opinion about their contents. He believed that it was essential for memoirists to sign their work and to not hide behind the cover of anonymity. He also

\textsuperscript{79} Boigne, \textit{Mémoires}, 145.
\textsuperscript{80} Stéphanie-Félicité, comtesse de Genlis, \textit{Mémoires inédits de Mme la comtesse de Genlis} (Paris : Ladvocat, 1825), vol. 1, viii.
\textsuperscript{82} Des Cars, \textit{Mémoires}, 23, 206.
argued that he owed it to his friends, his protectors, and his family to do what he could to leave
an untainted reputation and refute the calumnies spread about him in the “venal press.”

Still, in most cases, by focusing closely on their personal experiences as well as by
stressing that they wrote for their posterity, noble émigré memoirists were able to claim that their
texts were not meant for the public, that they were private documents meant for the familial
archive. Memoirs were of great importance, especially if, as in La Tour du Pin’s case, a noble
family had lost its most important piece of patrimony, its ancestral seat, in addition to its pre-
revolutionary legal justification. These claims and the cloak of modesty they donned were
somewhat disingenuous: their ambitions were not as limited as they might have wanted their
readers to believe. In fact, it seems doubtful that they were able to fool readers. These were
rhetorical tools meant to preserve aristocratic tradition, displays of *bon goût* which emphasized
the authors’ *honnêteté*. Readers, who were thus admitted into an imaginary inner circle, were
complicit in keeping this illusion intact. Readers beyond the intimate circle of the intended
audience were intruding and their intruder status disqualified them as judges.

Framing Masculine and Feminine Émigré Memoirs

Female émigré memoirists relied on aristocratic conventions and on self-deprecation more
heavily than their male counterparts. Even if he downplayed the literary merits of his life’s
account, Talleyrand emphasized how he had led a public life: he was undeniably a historical actor.
His memoirs were meant to vindicate his political career and defend his legacy. His goal was not
to be truthful but rather to be persuasive. Male memoirists whose political careers were not
quite as exalted as Talleyrand’s still discussed their public roles in their texts, in fact, they
featured prominently. Émigré noblemen’s memoirs emphasized their ethos of public service.
*Noblesse oblige* required self-sacrifice, disinterestedness, and service to the dynasty, state, or
*patrie*. By exalting these noble qualities, memoirists justified their continued prominent civil
and military roles. A comparison between the memoirs of the duc and the duchesse Des Cars
sheds light on the gendered aspects of aristocratic memoir writing.

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1798. BL, Add MS 37865, fo. 108.
the Old Regime : Europe to the Great War* (New York : Verso, 2010), 8.
The memoirs of the duc and duchesse Des Cars are particularly suited to this type of comparison. First, the memoirists’ lives were closely intertwined. They met during their emigration in Berlin in 1795, married in 1798, and had been sharing their lives for more than a decade by the time they started working on their texts. They shared similar political convictions, convictions that led Napoleon to place them under house arrest. It was in 1810-1811, while they were confined to the duchesse’s estate of La Ferrière, that they drafted their memoirs.

Their memoirs have significant similarities. Indeed, they complied with conventions of aristocratic memoir writing. They claimed that they were primarily writing for a limited audience. The duc claimed that he had not written his memoirs to make them public and expressed his wish that his souvenirs remain within the confines of his intimate circle and the duchesse assumed that her reader would be her successors. They also emphasized that they were amateurs. The duchesse asked for the reader’s leniency towards inaccuracies and stated she would not read over her manuscript. As for the duc, he explained that writing was difficult since he did not have the skills that authors usually have. He wished that he possessed “une plume digne des sujets dont je vais parler.” Both claimed to write particular, not general histories. “Je ne prétends point écrire l’histoire de notre temps. Je ne parlerai que des grands événements dont j’ai pu être témoin,” prefaced the duc. The duchesse avoided narrating the events of 18 Fructidor stating: “c’est une trop importante pièce de la Révolution pour que je me mêle d’écrire ce que l’histoire recueillera ; je n’en parlerai donc que dans les rapports qu’elle eut avec ma destinée.”

The main difference between their narratives was that the duc emphasized his involvement in public affairs while the duchesse downplayed hers. The duc explained that he had been on intimate terms with many influential people and that he had had a front row seat to the Revolution’s “théâtre extérieur.” The first few lines of his memoirs also explained how his public life would be at the centre of his narrative: “Cette vie a été longtemps agitée par les différentes carrières que j’ai parcourues : le service de mer, celui des troupes de terre, la Cour sous deux

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87 In her comparison of the duc and the duchesse Des Cars’ memoirs, Guillemette Samson concludes that it is impossible to see the texts as prototypes of écriture féminine and écriture masculine even if she notes some similarities and differences between the texts. However, she did not consider how gender prescriptions might have affected their narratives. See Guillemette Samson, “Les Mémoires du duc et de la duchesse d’Escars,” Mémorialistes de l’exil, ed. Jacob and Rossi, 173-189.
règnes, et quelques missions dans différents pays de l’Europe, vont faire le sujet de ces Mémoires.”

His service to the patrie and to the dynasty was worthy of memory, not only because he had had a role in shaping historical events but also because it affirmed his abiding by noblesse oblige. He penned his memoirs during a period in which he was deprived of any political influence. His text, focusing on his past authority and influence, enabled him to challenge the emasculation and fall into irrelevance that his exile to La Ferrière caused.

The duchesse, for her part, put great emphasis on her familial devotion and sought to refute any accusation that she may have been involved in public affairs: “on essaya de me jeter dans les affaires politiques ; je n’y ai vu que des intrigues et j’ai toujours refusé de m’en mêler.”

In addition to being subjected to caste imperatives, her memoirs were also subjected to gender specific codes. In her case, writing was a “double derogation.”

Aristocratic women’s authorship was fraught with controversy. Definitions of feminine virtue emphasized morality and its essential corollary: modesty. Women writers had to reconcile prescriptions of modesty with their decisions to take the pen. Authors of fiction often did so by arguing that their works served a higher purpose, that they served morality. They also used modesty and self-deprecation as a means of coxing their friends to reassure them about their abilities. Furthermore, as long as women defended the right cause, their decision to make their voices heard was somewhat excusable. The extraordinary circumstances and the necessity to disseminate royalist accounts could thus justify women’s prises de parole. By explicitly claiming that their memoirs were written from a limited perspective, enshrined in the domestic realm and familial history without falling into the distasteful realm of autobiography, that they imitated conversation, and that they were generally not meant for publication, female memoirists

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91 Duc Des Cars, Mémoires du duc, vol. 1, 1, 4.
92 For an in-depth analysis of Des Cars’ family devotion see chapter 4. Des Cars, Mémoires, 90.
were able to make their endeavours socially acceptable. Their authority depended on their ability to convince their audience that they did not threaten the social order.  

Although a majority of noble émigrées’ memoirs seemingly conformed to the domestic ideology, upon closer inspection, they reveal the inadequacy of the separate spheres theory. No clear distinction can be drawn between a public and a private “sphere” for aristocratic women even after the Revolution. First, although supposedly enshrined in the domestic realm, memoirs are undeniably public acts. This alone reveals that the public and private are fundamentally intertwined. Second, noblewomen’s homes were not entirely private spaces. Their memoirs can be seen as an extension of their semi-public existence: they are part of a discussion on public events and, as an attempt to shape the interpretation of the Revolution – even if that attempt was limited to the reintegration of particular histories to the history of the Revolution – the act of writing had public implications. Their place in post-revolutionary courts, salons, and memoirs reveal that their roles were far from confined to a private sphere. Their memoirs should not solely be seen as a swansong lamenting the diminished influence their caste and gender enjoyed in post-revolutionary society. In fact, they should be seen as holdouts against ideological attempts to limit their sphere of action and influence to the domestic realm. Although seemingly conforming to the domestic ideal since they were framed as private acts of speech, the contents of émigré noblewomen’s memoirs – particularly their celebration of the public roles they had held in pre-revolutionary society – embodied a rejection of strict domesticity.

Stéphanie-Félicité de Genlis was one of the few noble memoirists who chose to break with tradition and publish their memoirs before their deaths. She was well aware that her decision would attract criticism: “Je m’applaudis d’être le premier auteur qui ait donné l’utile exemple de publier ses mémoires de son vivant ; j’ai eu quelque mérite à prendre cette résolution, car j’imaginois qu’en général les gens du monde désapprouveroient.” She used her memoirs’ first pages to justify her choice. First, she criticized the cowardice of memoirists who feared publishing their text during their lifetime because of the expected criticisms. She claimed that this decision casted doubt upon their texts’ authenticity. She argued that the brave and honest thing to

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98 Susan Dalton has examined the inadequacy of the separate spheres model for the late eighteenth century. See Dalton, Engendering the Republic of Letters.
100 Dalton, Engendering the Republic of Letters, 6, 122-125.
do was to publish and give contemporaries the opportunity to corroborate or challenge their contents. Only then could memoirs be trustworthy and useful. She argued that the proliferation of lies rendered the publication of one’s memoirs almost indispensable. She framed her publication as an act of justice: with it she would be able to rectify mistakes and calumnies reported about people she knew. She also emphasized how she had been a privileged witness of the pre-revolutionary “grand monde” and, thus, able to offer a reliable account of the vanished society.102

Genlis also addressed the fact that she was a woman writer. She expected that her decision to publish would give rise to criticisms such as “il ne faut pas se mettre scène,... une femme surtout doit éviter l’éclat.” To fend off such objections, she denied any ambition. She claimed that her predilection was for solitude and that she was naturally timid and reserved. She somewhat disingenuously claimed that she had reluctantly entered the public sphere in the name of morality. She claimed that this was the only motivations behind every single one of her books and that she dedicated her life as an author to uninterrupted attacks against “les mauvaises doctrines” and “les philosophistes.”103 Considering that many nobles did blame the philosophes to some extent for the Revolution, and considering her efforts to improve morality, Genlis’s prise de parole was not, as she tried to convince the public, inappropriate.

A more detailed examination reveals that her decision to publish her memoirs was at least partially motivated by material concerns. Genlis was already a well-known author with an international audience before 1789 but the Revolution forced her to rely on her pen to earn her living. In 1824, she tried to sell her manuscript to the Irish historian John Wilson Croker for 130 000 francs. In a letter to Croker, she claimed that her initial intention had been that her memoirs should only be published after her death but that, if he acquired them, he could publish them after two years. He rejected the proposal. She then sold her manuscript to the publisher Pierre-François Ladvocat for 1000 francs.104 Her decision to publish her recollections did not please her family. Her daughter Pulchérie de Valence and her niece Henriette de Sercey were embarrassed by the publication. In 1826, Sercey wrote to Valence and her daughters: “Auras-tu pu te procurer… les deux derniers volumes de ces terribles Mémoires? Au moins, ils inspirent la consolante sensation que ce sont enfin les derniers et que l’on n’a plus à attendre et à éprouver le

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102 Genlis, Mémoires, vol. 1, iii-viii, 1-5.
103 Genlis, Mémoires, vol. 1, iii-viii, 1-5.
104 Gabriel de Broglie, Madame de Genlis (Paris : Perrin, 1985), 444-446. [Librairie Ladvocat], Prospectus : Mémoires inédits de Madame la comtesse de Genlis (Paris : Imprimerie de Fain, [1824]).
chagrin de se voir traduit au tribunal de l’opinion publique et de voir publier toutes les
particularités même les plus frivoles de sa famille et de son intérieur."105 Clearly, Genlis’s family
felt that she had violated codes of propriety by publishing her memoirs and that subjecting
individual lives to the court of public opinion was vulgar. The reception of her memoirs outside
her family circle was divided. Members of the aristocracy reproached her for passing severe
judgements on her contemporaries and benefactors. Literary circles and unrelated readers were
more positive and acknowledged their author’s achievement when describing pre-revolutionary
society. They generally agreed that the work had historical significance.106

Émigré Memoirs and the Production of a Historical and Identity Discourse

Émigré memoirists developed specific discourses in their texts. Individual experiences did
introduce some degree of variety in the stories they presented but, overall, their memoirs follow a
similar script and recurring themes are discernable. These similarities created a collective identity
discourse. The most significant commonplaces found in émigré memoirs’ contents are their
emphasis on genealogy, their conclusion that French society had undergone deep transformations
during their exile, and an interpretation of the Revolution’s origins that chiefly placed the blame
on the decadence of the aristocracy. This interpretation implied that the nobility was responsible
for the Revolution and thus limit the revolutionaries’ historical agency. Memoirs also provided a
justification of the nobility’s continued importance among the post-revolutionary elite: male
memoirists emphasized their service ethos while female memoirists were more likely to highlight
how exile led to moral regeneration. Finally, memoirists had to address the issue of emigration in
one way or another and justify or excuse their actions.

The Memory of the Ancien Régime: Genealogy and Legitimacy

Memoirists acknowledged that the Revolution was a watershed in France’s history. The
fact that the changes had been so significant justified their decision to write. Indeed, the event
had fostered profound social transformations and part of their mission was to resurrect the
vanished Ancien Régime which was now only extant in their recollections. Memoirists, like
Chateaubriand, shared the conviction that they had “vu finir et commencer un monde.”107 It befell

105 Henriette de Sercey to Pulchérie de Valence, 16 January 1826. Cited in Broglie, Madame de Genlis, 447-448.
106 Broglie, Madame de Genlis, 448-450. [Librairie Ladvocat], Prospectue, 1-2.
them to keep the memory of France’s past alive. By writing about pre-revolutionary, revolutionary, and post-revolutionary France, noble memoirists could bridge the revolutionary gap and highlight the continuity in their family history: their lineage had existed well before 1789, it survived the revolutionary decades, and it would continue after their own deaths.

The Revolution may have deprived noble émigrés of their fortunes and their positions, but it was powerless to deprive them of their ancestors’ glorious feats. During the nineteenth century, nobles who had lost some of their social and political prominence mobilized their genealogy and family history to assert their distinctiveness. Past grandeur accounted for much of their social and cultural clout. Chateaubriand was most eloquent when it came to the heightened importance of genealogy in the Revolution’s aftermath: “si j’avais écrit ces mémoires avant la révolution, j’aurais peut-être évité de parler longtemps de mon origine. Né avec un sentiment absolu d’indépendance, je n’estimais peut-être pas assez, autrefois, l’avantage d’être sorti d’une ancienne maison ; mais depuis qu’on a voulu prouver que la noblesse n’était rien, j’ai senti qu’elle valait quelque chose.” He explained that if his family did not have an éclat comparable to that of the Grands, it did enjoy a great antiquity and a reputation as honourable, hospitable, and pious, all of which he considered very laudable qualities.

Memoirists unequivocally linked their lineage’s glorious past with the services their forbearers had rendered to king and country. Ménerville explained that her grandfather advised princes and ministers. La Tour du Pin related that the Dillon regiment had served in France’s service after James II’s defeat at the battle of the Boyne in 1690. Her father had served in the American Revolutionary War and was governor of Tobago and her mother had been one of Marie-Antoinette’s ladies-in-waiting. Lévis stressed his father’s service, particularly his military service in Canada where he took over the command of the forces after Montcalm’s death and his service as governor of Artois, which, according to his son, led to his premature death. He concluded his father’s portrait with the following: “Ses biens, ses titres ont péré; il n’est resté de

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lui qu’une réputation sans tâche et de glorieux souvenirs; substitution d’honneur qu’avec l’aide de Dieu, leur antique devise, ses descendants s’efforceront de conserver.\footnote{Lévis, Souvenirs-Portraits, 111-115.}

Eugène-François-Auguste d’Arnaud, baron de Vitrolles descended from the Provençal high magistrature. His genealogy was not as distinguished as that of the court nobility, but he emphasized his family’s probity and loyal service to the state. He argued that unlike the high nobility, the parlementaires had not been corrupted by the absolute monarchy and by Enlightenment philosophy. The magistrates’ mores had not been corrupted because, Vitrolles claimed, they could not curry favour: “C’est ainsi qu’ils s’étaient élevés à la plus complète et la plus noble indépendance, et qu’ils ne pouvaient plus avoir d’autre ambition que celle de la considération publique.”\footnote{Eugène-François-Auguste d’Arnaud, baron de Vitrolles, Mémoires de Vitrolles (Paris : Gallimard, 1950), vol. 1, 39-40.} In line with the aristocratic patriotic tradition, he situated the most efficient and systematic checks on the absolute monarchy’s abuses squarely within parlementaires’ ranks. Noble independence was essential to avoid despotism and although writing about his pre-revolutionary ancestors, this theme retained contemporary relevance under the restored constitutional monarchy. His narrative sheds light on the emergence of a modern conception of service to the state among the nobility. He conceived of service as service to the public good, to the state, rather than to the dynasty. This conception prevailed among the nineteenth-century nobility whose members would serve successive political regimes. The notion of public utility allowed for a transfer of loyalty from the Bourbons to the depersonalized state.\footnote{Fiette, La noblesse française, 23-24, 255. Higgs, Nobles in Nineteenth-Century France, 10, 16.}

Such emphasis on pedigree and on royal or state service – on a long-standing service ethos – helped nobles bolster their claim that they legitimately formed France’s ruling class. Their wealth, connections, influence made large segments of the defunct second order the de facto political elite but the service ethos memoirs promoted helped make them seem like a deserving, natural even, elite. Mythic or genuine, glorious origins also provided a convenient and convincing source of legitimacy for restoration nobles.\footnote{Waresquiel, L’Histoire à rebrousse-poil, 19, 98-99, 141-142. Mayer, The Persistence of the Old Regime, 8-9, 12, 103, 135.} Moreover, distinguished genealogies were not simply pragmatic defence of the nobility’s prominence, they were an integral part of the caste’s raison d’être. They were at the core of the group’s identity. Glorious ancestors, noble blood, did not depend on temporal possessions such as estates, fortunes, and positions. They
could outlast revolutionary upheavals. They could also hold firm in the face of economic and societal changes brought about by the emergence of capitalism. As La Tour du Pin stated, “ce ne sera pas avec toutes les machines à vapeur du monde qu’on se fera une généalogie.”  

*Remembering the Ancien Régime and the Revolution*

Genealogy was one of the few things that connected the émigré nobility to the pre-1789 world. Memoirists argued that French society had changed so profoundly as a result of the Revolution that it was unrecognizable. The culture shock between pre- and post-revolutionary society they experienced was exacerbated by the fact that they had spent most of the transitional years in exile. A common theme in their narratives was how the changes had undermined the nobility’s role as tastemakers and cultural leaders. Genlis inventoried societal and cultural changes most diligently. She detailed her shock upon returning to Paris in 1800: “Tout me paraissait nouveau.” Street names had been changed from saints to *philosophes*, her noble acquaintances’ confiscated carriages, libraries, and portraits were in the hands of strangers or being sold by *brocanteurs*. She was appalled by the proliferation of improper expressions which she condemned as “aussi vides de sens qu’ignobles.” She deplored the general decline of politeness and the parvenus’ bad manners. They had no notion of *bienséance* and flaunted their superiority in a most unbecoming manner: “Les [parvenus] pleins d’orgueil et de suffisance, prenoient l’impolitesse pour de la dignité ; les mots respect, honneur, n’entrent jamais dans leurs formules.” She also judged that sociability had most dramatically declined and she claimed that she could not find any *bureaux d’esprit* – gatherings that brought together nobles, writers, men of science and artists and in which the conversation focused on learned subjects. She concluded that men and women, and society in general, were much less polite than they had been. Contemporary obsession with prestige and consideration violated codes of politeness and led to stilted interactions, whereas, during the Ancien Régime, “[l]a politesse étoit parfaite, et par conséquent, toujours aimable ; elle ne dégénérerait jamais en froid cérémonial, et l’on éviterait avec soin, dans la société, tout ce qui pouvait ressembler à l’étiquette et rappeler l’idée de quelque inégalité dans les rangs.”

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Émigrés recorded how the superior pre-1789 society had functioned. Doing so, they often emphasized an aristocratic “douceur de vivre,” an ease that they believed had disappeared since. The painter Élisabeth Vigée Le Brun, who regularly hosted and frequented members of the aristocracy as well as artists and writers, regretted the disappearance of her society: “On ne saurait juger ce qu’était la société en France, quand on n’a pas vu le temps où, toutes les affaires du jour terminées douze ou quinze personnes aimables se réunissaient chez une maîtresse de maison, pour y finir leur soirée. L’aisance, la douce gaieté qui régnaiennent à ces légers repas du soir, leur donnaient un charme que les dîners n’auront jamais plus.”

Nevertheless, émigré memoirists often acknowledged the failings of Ancien Régime society and the aristocracy’s faults were a recurrent theme in their texts. Boigne, who had an intimate relationship with the royal family, criticized the court indirectly by saying that her father’s independence and reason prevented him from being a proper courtier. Marie-Octavie-Mélite de Nédonchel, comtesse de Dauger criticized extravagant courtly fashions. La Tour du Pin also had harsh words for the court: “Le règne dévergondé de Louis XV avait corrompu la haute société. La noblesse de la Cour donnait l’exemple de tous les vices.” Gambling, irreligiousness, debauchery plagued the aristocracy. Corruption had even spread beyond the court. Boigne criticized the loose mores of the society gathered at Hautefontaine around Monseigneur de Narbonne and Madame de Rothe. La Tour du Pin, who, as Rothe’s granddaughter and Narbonne’s great-niece, grew up at Hautefontaine, corroborated Boigne’s assessment: “Mes plus jeunes années ont été témoin de tout ce qui aurait dû me gâter l’esprit, me pervertir le cœur, me dépraver et détruire en moi toute idée de morale et de religion.” By examining the Ancien Régime’s flaws – the second order’s lack of noble virtue and Christian morality –, émigré memoirists thought that they had identified the origins of the Revolution.

Talleyrand ascribed a great levelling influence to the emerging public sphere: “Tous les jeunes gens se croyaient propres à gouverner. On critiquait toutes les opérations des ministres. Ce que faisaient personnellement le roi et la reine était soumis à la discussion et presque toujours à l’improbation des salons de Paris.” He continued that this desire to know and judge everything led to the confusion of ranks. He concluded that public opinion became a dangerous power just

before the Revolution: “Son action était trop puissante pour pouvoir être arrêtée et même dirigée : elle approchait des marches du trône ; déjà on commençait à dire des ministres qu’ils avaient ou qu’ils n’avaient pas de popularité, expression nouvelle qui, prise dans l’acception révolutionnaire, aurait dégradé à leurs propres yeux les conseils de Louis XIV, qui ne voulaient que l’estime du roi et une grande considération.”

According to him, therein laid the Revolution’s roots.

Chateaubriand considered that the confusion of ranks was a catalyst: magistrates wished to fight rather than to judge, présidents wanted to be femmes d’esprit rather than venerable mothers. Nobles were evading their duties. La Tour du Pin concurred: “Il était du meilleur air de se plaindre des devoirs qu’on avait à remplir envers la Cour… Tous les liens se relâchaient, et c’étaient, hélas! les hautes classes qui donnaient l’exemple.” She blamed absentee bishops who preferred Paris to their sees or colonels who spent only four months with their regiments. Worse the lower classes emulated the nobility’s dissolute ways: “je considère que la Révolution de 1789 n’a été que le résultat inévitable et, je pourrais même dire, la juste punition des vices des hautes classes, vices portés à un excès tel qu’il devenait infaillible, si on n’avait pas été frappé du plus funeste aveuglement, que l’on serait consumé par le volcan que de ses propres mains on avait allumé.” Charles-Albert de Moré blamed the “réformateurs à talons rouges,” the liberal aristocracy for its admiration of constitutionalism.

Émigré memoirists generally reduced the origins of the Revolution to a few main factors. First, the upper classes were licentious, isolated from the lower classes and, consequently, they lost their legitimacy as a ruling class. Second, the Church lost its grip over the lower orders because the hierarchy was neglecting its duties. Third, the ideas of the Enlightenment and its sociable manifestations undermined royal authority. They blamed the philosophes, they blamed Necker who pandered to the people, they even blamed Louis XVI for his perceived weakness and capitulation to public opinion. Fourth, some argued that the Revolution was an act of divine punishment for the aforementioned sources of corruption.

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126 Moré, Mémoires, 125-126.
Memoirists nevertheless argued that they were not personally responsible for the monarchy’s collapse. They often, like La Tour du Pin, positioned themselves as outsiders: they had observed the corruption of the upper classes but had not partaken. What is lacking in their narratives is any sort of acknowledgement of the lower classes’ agency beyond their uncontrollable destructive pulsions: influence and authority did not belong to the lower classes. Few could fathom that roturiers could be independent historical actors. France’s problems, the roots of the Revolution, were ultimately to be found among the failings of the upper classes, not among the desires or ambitions of the lower classes. By indirectly taking responsibility for the Revolution, émigré memoirists sought to minimize the lower classes’ constructive historical role.

Commoners were generally presented in two ways in émigré memoirs: first, the good peasants or loyal servants who loved their benevolent landowners or masters and who rejected the Revolution or, second, the violent, threatening mob. According to Adélaïde-Paule-Françoise, comtesse de La Boutetière de Saint-Mars, her “brave” peasants disagreed with revolutionary measures, felt that seigneurial dues were fair, and threatened to rise against the Revolution. They were loyal peasants who would not, she believed, have approved the nobility’s spoliation. François-Dominique de Reynaud, comte de Montlosier narrated how his loyal servant François had saved his possessions from the French armies and how he had burst into tears upon being reunited with his master. Far more common were accounts in which memoirists felt threatened by the populace. Des Cars wrote that she was surprised to find the same fermentation in her estate as she did in Paris where peasants burnt and pillaged châteaux. She also claimed to have experienced the Parisian mob’s violence. They supposedly forced her out of her coach: “Je marchai au milieu de cette foule hurlante se consultant pour savoir s’ils ne me pendraient pas, et vociférant des mots si infâmes que je souffrais plus de les entendre que je n’étais effrayée de leurs menaces.” They later left her to go abuse some Sisters of Charity. Although this account was probably embellished, it is a rather typical description of the revolutionary mob. Incidences of popular violence like these not only justified the memoirists’ decision to emigrate but also

disqualified commoners as rational and great historical agents. Violent acts needed to be remembered because they disqualified the common people from political leadership.

While claiming to serve history by leaving details of their personal experiences that could enrich or rectify the historical record, memoirists were also actively shaping historiographical possibilities. They selected what was worthy of remembrance and thereby delimited the scope of the historical field; they tried to assert control over the possible interpretations of the past. The discourses developed in their memoirs emphasized the destructive nature of the Revolution and the general unworthiness of the revolutionaries: these men were memorable only insofar as the havoc they caused should not be forgotten. Doing so, they participated to the restored Bourbon’s national reconciliation strategy that combined oubli – collective amnesia – and expiation.131

According to émigré memoirists, revolutionaries, especially the Jacobins, were not Great Men. Memoirists rarely referred to revolutionaries by name and considered them as an indistinct, destructive, group instead. Talleyrand mentioned Robespierre in passing twice in his monumental memoirs, Brissot once, while Danton, Desmoulins, Saint-Just, Marat, and Hébert do not get a single mention. Thus, men traditionally considered revolutionary leaders are not part of his narrative. While authors of memoirs generally claimed to write solely about their personal experience, and while émigrés were absent from France during the most turbulent revolutionary years – they did not have a first-hand experience of more revolutionary regimes – it is significant that they still chose to ban important revolutionary figures from their texts. Of the revolutionary actors listed above, La Tour du Pin and Boigne only mentioned Robespierre. By avoiding any mention of the revolutionaries by name, memoirists tried to facilitate collective oubli. Moreover, historical importance belonged to the privileged classes. Puisaye wished to push revolutionary figures into oblivion all the while promoting the great actions of men he considered virtuous: “je livreraï à l’oubli, ces êtres insignifiants [the revolutionaries]… [C]e sera pour moi, une jouissance bien douce, lorsque le récit des événemens amènera sous ma plume les noms de quelques-uns de ceux qui ont donné tant de grands exemples de fermeté, de courage et de dévouement.”132

Talleyrand wrote that it was difficult for him to retrace the history of the Revolution. After all, he had spent four of the crucial revolutionary years in exile. Additionally, he stated that he had not wished to know those years’ horrible details. He compared the revolutionaries to great

kings, namely Henri IV and Louis XIV, and argued that it was more problematic to trace the history of the latter who gained and lost power in quick succession. Talleyrand even posited that their inability to leave a lasting imprint on history might be due to their popular origins: “Peut-être aussi y a-t-il une légèreté d’empreinte attachée à tout ce qui émane du peuple ; ses actions laissent après elles une trace passagère, et la nature des hommes qu’il emploie n’aide point à la mémoire. Inconnus jusqu’au jour où il paraissent sur la scène, ils rentrent dans l’obscurité dès que leur rôle est fini.” Talleyrand did not deplore the revolutionaries’ predicted fall into oblivion, on the contrary, these men, he argued, had limited historical importance: “Quelles leçons les hommes auraient-ils à tirer d’actes sans plan, sans but, produits spontanément par des passions effrénées ?” According to his conception of history, that was not what needed to be remembered. What was important was an examination of the events leading to the Revolution and of its causes. He argued that common men’s quasi-accidental rise to power was greatly facilitated by the upper classes’ failings. It was Great Men’s duty to write their recollections since they were the ones who were responsible for the Revolution.133

By recognizing the failings of the Ancien Régime nobility and by emphasizing that the common people were not qualified to be leaders, memoirists were able to position themselves as the best option for France’s political elite in the Revolution’s aftermath. Émigré noblemen’s narratives sought to demonstrate that they possessed the qualities, traditions, and skills necessary to be the governing class. In that sense, male memoirs were an exercise in performativity: they were meant to display specific class and gender attributes.134 Émigré noblewomen, for their part, created narratives that showed how the trials of exile had enabled them to experience a regeneration which made them once again fit to be France’s elite.135

The noble masculine ideal émigrés developed in their memoirs first and foremost emphasized service. Discussions of their genealogy gave them the opportunity to illustrate their forefathers’ service. Their own life stories also shed light on their personal service, be it service to the state, to the cause, or to the dynasty. Their memoirs further highlighted the different ways in which they had wielded authority over other men – commonly their social inferiors – and over women. Male memoirists defended a conception of noble masculinity that emphasized the disinterestedness and spirit of self-sacrifice that made them perfectly suited to a life of service

133 Talleyrand, Mémoires, 205.
134 Todd W. Reeser, Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction (Chichester : Blackwell & Wiley, 2010), 81.
either in the military, diplomatic corps, or bureaucracy. After all, service was a one of the most important source of distinction during the Empire and Restoration.

Émigré noblemen’s memoirs often read like états de services: narratives in which the authors detailed the multiple ways in which they had served and in which they had been historical actors. Rochechouart claimed that the part of his memoirs dealing with his service would be of interest: that part “captivera d’autant plus l’intérêt, que je n’y parlerai pas uniquement de moi et qu’aux faits qui me concernent, viendra se mêler le récit d’événements publics, qui correspondent avec eux, ou qui y seront mêlés même.” Great parts of émigré soldiers’ memoirs are taken up by detailed account of the counter-revolution’s military manoeuvres and of their roles in them. Other émigrés who played significant political roles often detailed their political actions and opinions in their memoirs. Montlosier’s memoirs read as a journal de campagne, a travel diary, and an account of his political ideas and acts. Talleyrand’s are a long justification of his political life. Émigrés sometimes conceded that they may have served the wrong cause but what mattered was that they had served nonetheless, that they had kept the noble spirit of self-sacrifice alive. In his discussion of his decision to emigrate, Moré wrote that he believed he had done his duty by joining the émigré Princes’ army. Dutifulness could hardly be considered a fault. To the contrary, such dedication and spirit of self-sacrifice were essential qualities for a ruling elite. Furthermore, male memoirists took care to emphasize that the counter-revolution failed through no fault of their own. Moré blamed foreign diplomacy stating, “[l]a guerre de 1792 ne fut qu’une guerre d’intrigue de cabinet, de négociations fallacieuses, de faux calculs.” Others blamed their leaders’ inaptitude and their insufficient resources.

The formation of a new generation of nobles in emigration is particularly interesting. A few privileged young men were able to learn the ropes of service during their exile. Rochechouart explained that he had learned to govern men by emulating his uncle, the duc de Richelieu – Odessa’s governor during the Empire and one of the most important political figures of the Restoration. He explained that, while in Odessa, “en ma qualité de neveu du gouverneur général,  

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136 Fiette, La noblesse française, 201, 255.
138 Rochechouart, Souvenirs, 87.
139 Montlosier, Souvenirs. Talleyrand, Mémoires.
140 Moré, Mémoires, 133.
tout le monde recherchait ma protection…, me faisant dans ce but toutes les offres de services dont il n’eût tenu qu’à moi de profiter et d’abuser si je n’avais eu constamment devant les yeux l’image de la probité la plus austère, unie au désintéressement le plus vrai… de ce vertueux duc de Richelieu.”142 Young émigrés like him and Ange-Achille-Charles de Neuilly learned to command men during their military career under foreign banners. Neuilly argued that a military career was the only one that suited him. He claimed to have earned his subordinates’ respect by adopting an irreproachable conduct both on and off the battlefield. He cared about his soldiers’ well-being, treated them with dignity, and avoided drinking and gambling. This brought him “happiness” and “contentment.”143 Rochechouart took care to emphasize that he had earned his promotions through merit – not favour – and described how he was fit to command. After the Restoration, the Bourbons recognized the experience Rochechouart and Neuilly had acquired in foreign armies. The former was named commander of Paris and the latter continued his military career under French flags and at court as an écuyer.144

Rochechouart and Neuilly’s memoirs also contain coming-of-age narratives, Bildungsromans of sorts. This is particularly striking in the former’s case. He detailed how, when he was about thirteen or fourteen years old, at the same time as he received his first commission as an officer – assuming responsibility and command over his inferiors – he had his first sexual encounters. During his youth, he continued to make sexual conquests, and was, he confessed, dominated by his senses.145 Neuilly claimed that he had a number of liaisons, although he was more circumspect and wrote that he would refrain from detailing his youthful mistakes.146 Sexual encounters were still considered important steps’ in young noblemen’s manly and coming-of-age experience. Montlosier, who did not share Rochechouart or Neuilly’s youth, also wrote thinly veiled accounts of his sexual conquests in his memoirs.147 Sexual probity did not constitute an important part of early nineteenth-century aristocratic masculinity. From what these memoirs convey, seducing servants, bourgeois’ daughters, unhappily married women, and forcibly confined nuns was still very much part of aristocratic masculinity’s performativity.148 Male

142 Rochechouart, Souvenirs, 136.
145 Rochechouart, Souvenirs, 55-60, 64, 92-94, 101-106.
146 Neuilly, Dix années, 132.
147 Montlosier, Souvenirs, 211-212.
aristocratic memoirs put no special emphasis on sexual continence. To the contrary, sexual conquests – and they were conquests since they denied or downplayed women’s influence – parried accusations of an enervated, effete aristocratic masculinity. They affirmed young noblemen’s virility and played an important role in the rehabilitation of male noble authority.\textsuperscript{149}

Dedication to the family and sexual virtue had much greater importance for female émigré memoirists. Family was the foundation of their regeneration narratives.\textsuperscript{150} Emigration led Des Cars to mend her ways. She confessed that she had been prone to \textit{coquetterie} during her youth. In exile, however, she chose to forgo \textit{coquetterie} since it could damage her honour and her domestic happiness.\textsuperscript{151} Her joyous emigration came to an end after the dispersal of the Coblenz émigré society in 1792. She began to experience privations and dismissed all but one of her servants. She started to take care of some domestic chores. Her children became her main source of consolation. After her first husband’s death in 1794, her friends entreated her to embrace Christian resignation and reminded her of her duties towards her children. Her memoirs show that she heeded the advice and her narrative put great emphasis on her attachment and devotion to her children.\textsuperscript{152}

La Tour du Pin’s memoirs offer the most articulated example of noble regeneration. They detail her secular and religious conversion from Ancien Régime aristocrat to reformed noble during her American sojourn. She had shed noble frivolity – cutting her hair and throwing it overboard and into the sea on her way to Boston had great symbolic significance – and had embraced Christian resignation – her daughter’s death acted as a catalyst. She claimed that her family became the center of her existence. La Tour du Pin’s experience was received positively among émigré circles, as evidenced by Liancourt’s glowing account of his visit to her farm and by Genlis’s insertion of her experience as a didactic example in her \textit{Maison rustique}.\textsuperscript{153} La Tour du Pin was remarkably adaptable and the discourse she developed in her memoirs demonstrated that she had been able to reinvent herself and to redefine what it meant to be noble. She also strongly suggested that it was imperative for the nobility to reform itself if the group hoped to reclaim its leadership role in the irrevocably altered social and political order.


\textsuperscript{150} See Petersen, “Aristocracy Redeemed,” chap. 5

\textsuperscript{151} In Des Cars’s words: “altérer ma réputation et nuire à mon bonheur intérieur.” Des Cars, \textit{Mémoires}, 31-32.

\textsuperscript{152} On Des Cars’s family life see chapter 3. Des Cars, \textit{Mémoires}, 33, 43, 46-47.

\textsuperscript{153} See chapters 4 and 5.
Noblewomen may have put some emphasis on the rewards of domesticity but, they also explained that they were not able or willing to forgo sociable practices. Indeed, La Tour du Pin showed how she was a valuable helpmate for her husband’s career. In 1808, Frédéric was appointed prefect in Brussels. She explained that this was a judicious choice since Brussels was a capital and court city with a prejudice for great aristocratic names. The previous prefects had not been distinguished enough to placate the conquered city’s elite. The couple’s mission was clear: they were to alleviate the local elite’s aversion for French domination: “Cette tâche nous incombait, à mon mari et, j’ose le dire, à moi également, puisque la source de toute influence de cette nature se trouvait dans le salon.” She continued that she was well received by Brussels society: “On y aime beaucoup le monde, et on était bien aise d’avoir enfin un salon de préfet tenu par une femme qui appartînt à la classe aristocratique.” Indeed, the fulfillment of diplomatic duties commonly required diplomats to extend their hospitality to local elites and ministers. As society hostesses, noblewomen played an important role in European diplomacy. La Tour du Pin’s memoirs illustrate how strict domesticity was impractical for socially prominent women whose husbands had service obligations.

**Justifying Emigration: Patriots and Victims**

The Restoration gave émigrés the opportunity to publicly defend their actions. Royalist and émigré discourse developed under the Bourbon and Orléanist monarchies sought to refute the liberal accusation that equated emigration with treason. The restitution of unsold émigré properties in 1814 and the indemnity to émigrés in 1825 prompted important public discussions about the ex-émigrés’ loyalty and patriotism. Caricatures, popular literature, and liberal publications disseminated a representation of émigrés as unpatriotic, alien to the French nation, ridiculous, and anachronistic. It was in this context that a majority of émigré memoirists drafted their accounts. Royalists argued that the Revolution, by breaking with France’s customs, institutions, and traditions, had destroyed the patrie and therefore justified emigration. Royalist writers and memoirists emphasized their Frenchness and sought to reconcile émigré and patriot.

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The liberal historiographical tradition has long maintained that the émigrés had betrayed or deserted their nation and were unpatriotic since, as proponents of this interpretation argue, émigrés equated patrie with King.\textsuperscript{158} This conclusion relies on a too rigid definition of patriotism – one generally associated with the Third Republic. Although the monarchy developed a version of royal patriotism during the eighteenth century – one that coalesced around the king – by no means all nobles, and noble émigrés, subscribed to that definition. Patriotism, broadly conceived, implied love for one’s patrie and love of the common good. Such vagueness allowed for competing notions of patriotism to emerge during the century, including “aristocratic,” “parlementaire,” and more popular conceptions. Contemporary observers themselves noted that the term patriot was remarkably versatile. Aristocratic patriotism – inspired by Boulainvilliers and Montesquieu’s writings – stressed the crucial role the noble order could play to moderate the defects of an absolute monarchy and the ills caused by capitalism’s early developments. This conception held that nobles were patriots because they were in the best position to prevent an absolute monarchy from falling into despotism and because their ethos put them in an ideal position to fight the egoism concomitant with the growing importance of money. Their attachment to honour directed them to place public good above private interest and inspired the spirit of self-sacrifice necessary to protect their patrie. The parlementaires’s patriotism, in part derived from aristocratic patriotism, emerged as a result of conflicts with the crown in which the self-appointed parti patriote argued that sovereignty rested in the nation, of which they naturally were the leaders. A modified version of aristocratic patriotism survived into the nineteenth century: liberal aristocrats argued that the existence of an intermediary corps to check the monarchy’s abuses as well as the unfettered egoism fostered by the development of commercial society was necessary to safeguard civil liberty. As for the more popular and, eventually, revolutionary conception of patriotism, it stood against privileges and emphasized equality. According to this conception, no single group was predisposed to patriotism and any man who loved his patrie and served it was a patriot.\textsuperscript{159}


Fernand Baldensperger was one of the first historians to recognize that the émigrés might be patriots in their own way. He argues that although émigrés had trouble defining precisely where their patrie lay – they neither equated it with the king nor with the treacherous revolutionaries – they could not reconcile their definition of their patrie with the revolutionaries’ radical break with France’s traditions. Émigrés’ discourses and the language they used in their letters, literary productions, and memoirs support Baldensperger’s revisionist stance and even suggest that he is too moderate in his re-evaluation of émigré patriotism. Although émigrés established a distinction between the revolutionary patriotes and themselves, they nonetheless sought, during and after the Revolution, to reclaim the title of patriot: they were the true patriots because they loved their patrie and stood for order, tradition, and peace. The revolutionary reforms’ staunchest opponents refused to concede a revolutionary monopoly over the definition of patriotism and re-appropriated its language for their own purposes. In 1792, a royalist epistle printed in the Almanach des émigrans urged the comte d’Artois to restore France’s true character:

Venez rappeler notre malheureuse patrie à ses anciens principes de douceur & d’urbanité ; accourez à la tête de la Noblesse Françoise ; renversez tous les monumens édifiés par la licence ; chassez des places qu’ils ont usurpées tous ces fripons dont la vie n’a été qu’un long tissue d’infâmes ; rendez aux fidelles leurs vrais Pasteurs, à la Justice ses vertueux Magistrats, & au trône le plus infortuné des Monarques… C’est alors que… le règne de l’ordre & de la paix, remplacera celui de la licence & de l’anarchie, & les loix protectrices rappelleront pour jamais le bonheur en France… Tels sont, Monseigneur, les vœux de tous les vrais Français, qui pleurent amèrement sur leur malheureuse patrie.161

Dramatic changes in laws and customs pushed many émigrés to claim that revolutionary France was not only unrecognizable, but that it was no longer their patrie. Royalist thinkers attempted to dissociate patrie and country. Louis de Bonald argued: “Le sol n’est pas la patrie de l’homme civilisé… L’homme civilisé ne voit la patrie que dans les lois qui régissent la société, dans l’ordre qui y règne, dans les pouvoirs qui la gouvernent, dans la religion qu’on y professe, et pour lui son pays peut n’être pas toujours sa patrie.” This idea was popular with émigrés memoirists who emphasized their Frenchness and patriotism. Walsh, for example, wrote: “il y a une patrie

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160 Baldensperger, Le mouvement des idées, vol. 1, 298-300, 305.
morale, une patrie qui n’est faite ni avec des champs, ni avec des hameaux, ni avec des villes, mais avec des opinions, des coutumes, des sentiments et des principes communs.”

Émigré also used their memoirs to show how their detractors had misunderstood the human dimension of emigration. Emphasis on victimhood and suffering became common after Thermidor and memoirs and other literary productions repeatedly drew upon these themes. Émigrés of all political convictions painted themselves as victims.

In order to justify their emigration, memoirists developed two lines of argumentation: emigration was the path of honour and/or emigration was the best means to ensure personal safety in these dangerous times. Those drawing on the latter argued that they were refugees instead of émigrés. More liberal émigrés tended to put more emphasis on the latter argument while more conservative ones preferred the former. Indeed, with the Restoration, ultras began publicly arguing that emigration had been a “ligne droite,” a straight line of conduct, whereas the decision to stay put in France had been a “ligne moins droite.” Émigrés’ discourses also varied depending on when and under what regime they drafted their memoirs. It is worth noting, however, that there is a remarkable lack of consensus among émigré memoirists over Louis XVI’s position with regards to emigration.

For the duchesse Des Cars, honour drove the émigrés. In that respect, they were comparable to the crusaders: “Il faut rendre cette justice à la noblesse, elle se montra dans ce moment digne de descendre des anciens Croisés: rétablir la religion et rendre au Roi son autorité, devint le cri général et l’enthousiasme s’opposa à la réflexion.” For his part, the duc Des Cars believed that by emigrating he was serving “la plus juste, la plus touchante, la plus sainte des causes.” The duc and the duchesse left France early and drafted their memoirs during the Empire. Their strong opposition to Napoleon led them to idealize displays of loyalty to the deposed Bourbons. La Boutetière de Saint-Mars, who penned her memoirs in 1816, shortly after

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the Restoration, argued that the decision to emigrate was “courageous” and that if more nobles had followed her example, fewer would have perished at the hands of the Revolution.167

Writing in 1817, Ménerville used her memoirs to refute accusations of disloyalty to the nation or King such as “Quel délire vous a portés à quitter vos foyers ? Pourquoi ne pas vous rassembler autour du roi ? Vous êtes cause de sa perte, vous l’auriez défendu.” She judged those questions either ignorant or asked in bad faith. She listed the dangers nobles supposedly faced in France: their châteaux set aflame, their properties stormed, death pursuing them everywhere. She also drew upon the idea that the King was the prisoner of the Revolution and that his most faithful servants were powerless to help him. Louis XVI, she argued, even secretly urged his loyal servants to flee. She recounted the comte de Provence’s noble appeal: “que la noblesse se range sous mes étendards, … un roi captif [nous] appelle, nous allons briser ses fers.” Ménerville even used this appeal to criticize the restored Louis XVIII’s moderation.168 Memoirs written during the early years of the Restoration were less likely to see emigration as an error. They drew on other royalist public discourses that presented emigration as a “ligne droite.”

Moré, another ultra, published his memoirs in 1828 during Charles X’s more conservative reign. His text came to light shortly after the fierce debate over the 1825 indemnity granted to émigrés for their losses during the Revolution.169 He discussed his decision to emigrate in his work and explained how difficult it was to judge the nobility’s conduction during the Revolution: “Je crus me mettre du côté de la monarchie en émigrant ; un plus grand nombre peut-être encore de personnes, que je ne condamne pas, ont cru se mettre du côté de la monarchie en restant en France… Je ne traite nullement de cette question ; des milliers de pages ne suffiraient pas.”170 He argued that he had acted in good faith and that believed his emigration was an act of loyalty. His refusal to condemn those who had remained in France is not as innocent as it appears: by refusing to condemn, he implied that their actions might be condemnable. Montlosier, a monarchien, argued that emigrating was a constitutional right and that it became the only option for the reviled noble class since their patrie offered them no safe refuge. It was the patrie’s fault for failing to protect its citizens. The nobility was in a bind: reviled and unable to assist the king. By 1792, he

167 La Boutetière de Saint-Mars, Mémoires, 9.
168 Ménerville, Souvenirs, 40-43.
170 Moré, Mémoires, 133.
thought that his duty was with the émigré Princes, even if he did not consider them the most reasonable interest group.¹⁷¹

Montlosier, Moré, the duc Des Cars, and many other émigré noblemen fought for the Counter-Revolution. They argued that lending their sword to the royal cause was their duty. Involvement in the counter-revolutionary armies was the predominant form of noble male service during the emigration. The military sub-culture occupies an important place in noblemen’s memoirs. They emphasize the high hopes they had on the eve of the 1792 campaign and the bitter deception that followed their defeat. Montlosier compared their 1792 retreat to a funeral march.¹⁷² The counter-revolution’s lack of success was a severe blow for male émigrés. Their opportunities to serve dwindled. Moreover, noblemen who had defined their identities through their military vocation had lost at the hands of an army whose officer corps could not boast as many great aristocratic names as theirs could.

Boigne discussed her father’s decision to leave France in her memoirs. Contrary to what Ménerville argued, she asserted that Louis XVI had condemned the emigration and his brothers’ manoeuvres. “Coblentz a été aussi fatal et presque aussi hostile à Louis XVI que le club des Jacobins,” she judged. The marquis d’Osmond resolved to emigrate relatively late in the spring of 1792. According to Boigne, her father decided to leave when he felt that he could no longer be of service to the royal family, when his convictions rendered his situation precarious, and even then, he decided to emigrate only with the King’s permission. Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette were supposedly grateful for the fact that he did not join the counter-revolution.¹⁷³ It is impossible to determine whether the King actually approved of his plan but by framing her father’s emigration in this manner, Boigne was able to justify the fact that he did not take part in the Princes’ military endeavours. Furthermore, she drafted her memoirs between 1835 and 1838, during the July Monarchy. Memoirists, even émigrés, writing during that period were more prone than their predecessors to describe emigration as folly or a mistake.¹⁷⁴

Liberal émigrés rarely joined the counter-revolution. Although he claimed that he did not blame the émigrés, Talleyrand argued that emigration – before all hopes of salvaging the monarchy from within had disappeared – was an error: “Qu’elle eût pour motif, ou la crainte du

¹⁷¹ Montlosier, Souvenirs, 42, 68-69.
¹⁷³ Boigne, Mémoires, 152-155.
danger, ou l’amour-propre offensé, ou le désir de recouvrer par les armes ce qu’on aurait perdu, ou l’idée d’un devoir à remplir, elle ne me paraissait sous tous ces rapports qu’un mauvais calcul.”

He further argued that it was the emigration itself that was responsible for the perils to which the nobility was subsequently subjected. He claimed that he had resolved to stay in France until there were concrete threats to his safety. He left during the summer of 1792. At that point, he judged that it was “useless” and “dangerous” for him to stay in France. Writing most of his memoirs during the interval between his disgrace after 1815 and his return to power with the July Monarchy, Talleyrand sought to persuade the restored Bourbons that he had been a useful and faithful servant of the constitutional monarchy all along.175 His liberal friend, Germaine de Staël, established a clear distinction between voluntary and forced emigration in her Considérations sur la Révolution française. The latter was the result of imminent personal danger and was justifiable while the former, comprised of the military officers who joined foreign armies, should be blamed. She condemned the military emigration for its disregard of the nation’s will and for its feudal reflex of banding European nobles together – in the name of a “droit de conquête” – to subdue the French people whom they perceived as “vassaux révoltés.” According to her, these émigrés’ willingness to put their country’s independence at risk by forming alliances with foreign powers was unforgiveable. Doing so, she argued, “le parti des aristocrates s’est séparé de la nation.”176

Even if they disagreed on the acceptable motives for emigration, memoirists from all convictions emphasized how their exile was a difficult trial. This was a common strategy meant to make the émigrés more sympathetic. They even relied on a “romantisme des perdants.”177 This was not the joyeuse émigration that some of their detractors had depicted. Ménerville explained that émigrés could not escape torments: they were subjected to persecution in France before their emigration, and despoiled once they had sought safety abroad. She complained that being buffeted by the revolutionary storm aged her prematurely but concluded that her trials were very common: “à quelques particularités près, mon histoire est celle de vingt mille autres.”178 Des Cars hoped that her memoirs would give an idea of the sufferings she endured while du Montet highlighted how she had to suffer all the humiliations and privations of exile when she was but a child. Rochechouart repeatedly lamented his cruel fate but conceded that he at least had learned

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177 Rance, “Mémoires de nobles émigrés,” 412.
178 Ménerville, Souvenirs, 12, 41.
resignation and resourcefulness from his trials. The duc Des Cars emphasized how the Revolution had despoiled him but he explained that he managed to bear this divine punishment with forbearance: “Une affreuse révolution nous a tous privés de nos existences et de nos fortunes, et nous nous bornons à réfléchir sur l’instabilité des choses humaines, adorant respectueusement la volonté divine qui dirige tout, mais sans nous permettre ni plainte contre ses décrets, ni de trop vifs regrets sur nos pertes.”179

Walsh ended his memoirs with a passionate defence of the émigrés: “Oh! c’est ici le moment de le dire, l’émigration a été grande, forte et chrétienne dans ses revers. Elle a su souffrir et pardonner, et il faut enfin imposer silence à ceux qui s’en vont toujours répétant qu’elle n’a rien oublié ni rien appris.”180 Overall, émigré memoirists wanted to convince their readers that they had not deserved such extensive misfortunes. They also wanted to project an image of themselves as virtuous and dignified: they faced their trials nobly and with forbearance.181 Such displays of noble character could be used to illustrate their superiority and worthiness: they were not an undeserving ruling class.

Conclusion: Having Faith in Posterity

Memoir writing was an exercise in self-fashioning.182 The persona memoirists created emphasized their illustrious genealogy, noble character, sincerity, and, most importantly, their relevance. At the core of each narrative was the idea that the memoirist’s experience had historical significance. Memoirs were an act of self-promotion and self-defence as well as an act of self-creation. Émigré memoirists trusted, or at least hoped, that future generation would be better judges of their experiences and of the Revolution. In 1816, when he concluded his memoirs about the Restoration, Talleyrand hoped that posterity would judge him more fairly: “La postérité portera un jugement plus libre et plus indépendant que les contemporains sur ceux qui, placés comme moi sur le grand théâtre du monde, à une des époques les plus extraordinaires de l’histoire, ont droit par cela même d’être jugés avec plus d’impartialité et plus d’équité.”183

180 Walsh, Souvenirs, 373-374.
181 See chapter 5.
182 Lejeune, Le pacte autobiographique, 23.
183 Talleyrand, Mémoires, 765.
The numerous memoirists of the emigration considered that their texts could help posterity form a fair judgement of their experiences. These texts also helped shape the possible future interpretation of the Revolution. The return of the Bourbons did not mean a return of privileges and the nobility had to search elsewhere for the source of its legitimacy. After almost a quarter of a century of upheavals and drastic changes, the nobility turned to one thing that seemed somewhat stable: the past. They drew on their glorious ancestry to justify their social, political, cultural, and even economic prominence. They also understood the social and political importance of history and embarked on a mission to assert control over the interpretation of the revolutionary period. Émigrés actively participated to this project. They drafted numerous memoirs that aimed first to reintegrate their exile experience into the revolutionary narrative and second to emphasize the destructive nature of the Revolution. By often delaying publication, they also showed that their ability to win the battle over the meaning of the Revolution might lie in the future rather than in the present. For a caste that emphasized tradition and continuity through generations and even centuries, the prospect of being vindicated in the future was not so daunting. They could wait.
Epilogue: Émigrés and Early Nineteenth-Century France

Between 1833 and 1842, Lucie de La Tour du Pin wrote a series of letters to Aymar, her only surviving child, who lived in exile as a result of his involvement in légitimistes plots, including in the duchesse de Berry’s 1832 rebellion. She was proud of her son’s actions and when her acquaintances called his banishment an injustice, she corrected them and said that it was an “honour.”¹ The La Tour du Pin had served the imperial state, but they refused to serve the Orléans monarchy. Frédéric de La Tour du Pin thought that having sworn an oath of allegiance to Charles X, he could not shift his loyalty to Louis-Philippe. The seventy-one year-old marquis even offered his sword to the deposed Bourbon monarch. As a result, he was forced out of the Chamber of Peers and he resigned from his diplomatic post in Turin.² In 1832-1833, he spent three months in prison for a letter he published in the royalist Journal de Guyenne defending Aymar’s actions.³ Nevertheless, the La Tour du Pin did not emigrate again. Their financial interests and their parental duty to provide for their son to the best of their abilities convinced them to stay in France, at least until they sorted out their affairs.⁴

The La Tour du Pin’s zealous legitimism was somewhat unusual among ex-émigrés. Only a handful of nobles who were part of the royal family’s intimate circle followed them, and often only temporarily, into exile in 1830.⁵ Most tolerated the new regime, the main opponents often simply choosing to retire to the legitimist Faubourg Saint-Germain or to their country estates.⁶ Ex-émigrés commonly had no desire to repeat the experience of exile. No doubt old age, the memories of their previous trials, and more favourable conditions under the Orléaniste regime than under the Republic convinced them to put up with the July monarchy. As La Tour du Pin

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² Moorehead, Dancing to the Precipice, 409-410.
³ Moorehead, Dancing to the Precipice, 417-421.
⁴ Lucie’s letters to Aymar are filled with references to their parental duties regarding their son’s inheritance. For example Bordeaux, 16 May 1835. La Tour du Pin, Une dame et deux rois, 97.
told Aymar: “s’il est de bonne compagnie d’être royaliste, on ne veut pas faire le plus léger sacrifice à son opinion, qui puisse vous priver du moindre agrément, pourvu qu’on ait la plus légère distinction… ; on ne s’embarrasse pas… si on a menti à son nom ou à sa race, en aidant à renverser le trône.” She added, “il n’y a que d’aller aux Tuileries qui soit de mauvais goût.”

The letters also chronicled how France had changed. La Tour du Pin deplored the “egoism” and “amorality” that characterised contemporary society. In her opinion, the development of capitalism, imperialism, and competition from the bourgeoisie had altered the nobility’s ethos for the worse. She told Aymar that noblemen were preoccupied with speculations and other business matters to the point that it contaminated their sociable encounters. Talk of money had entered noblemen’s conversations. “Autrefois la noblesse aurait répugnée à gagner autrement que de tâcher de hausser un peu les fermages de ses grandes terres ; elle n’a profité de la licence du temps et de la destruction des principes nobiliaires, que pour se croire permis tous les genres d’industrie quelconque, sans que aucun lui répugne,” she decried. One of their cousins was selling the château of Fontaine-Française, site of Henry IV’s historic 1595-victory of over Spain, so that he could speculate on Algerian land and profit by selling it to individuals she considered the “rebut de la société.” Other nobles were selling their lands to real-estate capitalists that then proceeded to parcel them up. This was, in her mind, a “coup funeste” for the nobility. She concluded her bleak assessment by exclaiming: “ah ! que tout est laid et répugnant dans ce pays mercantile, industriel et immoral !”

La Tour du Pin still held that the nobility had a crucial leadership role to fulfill for the welfare of the French nation. Several nobles, like her, argued that the erosion of great estates in post-revolutionary France undermined public spiritedness as well as the nobility’s ability to check the ruler’s despotic tendencies. Ultimately, they argued, this encouraged egoism and raised the specter of social and political anarchy.

La Tour du Pin’s complaints and her principles are, for the most part, representative of the ex-émigrés’ political opinions. Tradition – land, Catholicism, monarchism, patriarchy, and hierarchy – was of paramount importance. One of the émigrés’ most significant contributions to post-revolutionary French and European society was the development and spread of conservatism as a modern political ideology. The La Tour du Pin can hardly be considered reactionary nobles.

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7 La Tour du Pin to Aymar, Paris, 6 and 22 March 1835. La Tour du Pin, Une dame et deux rois, 69, 77.
8 La Tour du Pin to Aymar, 5 and 24 October 1835. La Tour du Pin, Une dame et deux rois, 19, 24.
They had been mostly supportive of the early revolutionary developments, they had served the constitutional monarchy, they had emigrated late and they had first returned to France under the Directory in 1796, only to be forced into emigration a second time after the 18 Fructidor coup. They returned in 1799 and retired to their estate but eventually Frédéric agreed to serve the Napoleonic state. Yet, by 1830, they had clearly become traditionalists. La Tour du Pin had become more pious. She also stressed the importance of a hierarchical agrarian order and of a legitimate dynasty as the foundations of a stable and peaceful society. The La Tour du Pin were not the only noble émigrés to undergo a religious and political conversion in the Revolution’s aftermath. Germaine de Staël’s friend, Mathieu de Montmorency-Laval, reneged on his liberal sympathies. During the Restoration, he became a prominent conservative political figure and the grandmaster of the *chevaliers de la foi*, a Catholic and monarchist secret society.10 This “conservative turn,” Jay M. Smith argues, should not be construed as hypocrisy on the part of previously liberal nobles but, rather, as the result of the conservative, reactionary even, potential of the nobility’s pre-revolutionary enlightened or progressive ideas.11

Uprootedness and alienation provided noble émigrés with the critical distance necessary to reflect upon their own condition and society.12 The experience of exile triggered a critical self-reflection. This reflection encompassed how noble émigrés defined, experienced, and performed their class, gender, and national identities. They considered how they could maintain their distinctiveness and how they could justify it. The specific context of exile and Revolution – the dissolution of Ancien Régime structures of social control and individual emancipation – allowed, and, indeed, sometimes compelled, émigrés to experiment with the different definitions of nobility, of masculinity and femininity, and of Frenchness that had emerged during the eighteenth century. Their practices and discourses aimed to provide the nobility with renewed legitimacy. To that effect, they altered their socio-economic and social reproduction strategies, their emotional regimes, their cultural practices, and their discourses as well as their relationship with history.

Despite the diversity of individual experiences, ultimately, noble émigrés developed a strong class ethos in exile.\textsuperscript{13}

The emigration was an intellectually and culturally creative movement. The experience of exile played a fundamental part in the emergence of modern French conservative thought. Two of the most important early conservative theorists – Louis de Bonald and the Savoyard Joseph de Maistre – experienced exile.\textsuperscript{14} The former had supported the aristocratic revolution but rejected the revolutionary project articulated after 1791. His traditionalism was not, at first, contingent on Bourbon rule and he served the imperial state. Only in 1814, did Bonald give his allegiance to the Bourbons.\textsuperscript{15} Maistre also rejected the revolutionary ideals he had previously professed around 1792. Conservative theorists argued that corporate structures and traditional hierarchies could preserve social order and alleviate the oppressive nature of modernity, including the development of capitalism, urbanization, and the centralization of the state.\textsuperscript{16} That is not to say that émigrés were all reactionary. Maistre himself opposed absolute government – be it republican or monarchical – and argued that the \textit{ultras} were as much a threat to order as the Jacobins.\textsuperscript{17}

Conservative thought was a product of the Enlightenment just as the counter-revolution was a product of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{18} After all, conservatism was a modern political ideology. Exile was the crucible in which French conservatism was forged and émigrés provided a large segment of the French nobility with a coherent political ideology with which to respond to the changes and challenges brought about by the Revolution.

Other émigrés – including Staël and her friends, Benjamin Constant, Talleyrand, and Liancourt – contributed to the development of liberalism as a modern ideology. Proponents of aristocratic liberalism contended that nobles were the natural leaders of a regenerated French society. An intermediary power, they argued, was necessary to guarantee individual liberty from democratic and despotic excesses. Yet, by the end of the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras, liberal nobles were fewer than they had been in 1789 and conservatism was the dominant

\textsuperscript{13} Steven D. Kale “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” \textit{French Historical Studies} 25, 1 (2002), 143.
\textsuperscript{15} Klinck, \textit{The French Counterrevolutionary Theorist}, 3-4
\textsuperscript{16} Klinck, \textit{The French Counterrevolutionary Theorist}, 6, 57-59.
\textsuperscript{17} Bradley, \textit{A Modern Maistre}, 233-234, 237.
ideology among the post-revolutionary nobility. Conservative or liberal, the émigré nobility had learned essential components of modern politics: they played an instrumental role in the development of modern political ideologies, understood the significance of public opinion, and used the institutions of the public sphere to influence opinion.

Land remained a centerpiece of noble identities. During her emigration, La Tour du Pin had settled on a sizable farm near Albany, New York. Reconnecting with her landed roots had led to her a moral regeneration. This experiment revealed her natural superiority. Several émigrés fell back on land as the basis of the noble way of life and identity during, and even after, their exile. Land was an important component of the hegemonic layer of noble masculinity: it was a source of authority, independence, and status. Social imperatives, in addition to economic ones, explain the nobility’s persistent attachment to land. Noble émigrés’ landed reflexes stemmed from an idealized conception of the order’s past as well as from the adoption of enlightened notions about the interconnectedness of utility, paternalism, and landownership.

Émigré noblemen who sailed to North America to create utopian-like agrarian communities assumed that they would find their natural place as leaders of these settlements. In the end, their experiments mostly failed. The cases of the marquis de Lezay-Marnésia and the comte de Puisaye reveal an important gap between these noblemen’s conception of their place in the world and contemporary social realities. As for Noailles’s venture, it reveals that the nobility was also aware of the capitalist potential of land speculation. None of these men had an impact in post-revolutionary France. Noailles perished in Cuba in 1804 while serving in the Napoleonic armies. Lezay-Marnésia returned to France after his American dreams were shattered and was imprisoned. After his release, he went to Switzerland. He returned to France during the Consulate but died in 1800. Puisaye’s disgrace was permanent and he spent the rest of his life in Britain.

Despite their failures, these noblemen’s notions were not entirely fanciful and their projects had extensive intellectual roots. The Revolution, the uprootedness of exile, and the failed

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North American ventures taught nobles that they should not neglect their relationship with the countryside. After all, restarting elsewhere was no easy task. Ex-émigrés had learned that to vindicate their prominence and make their superiority accepted, they needed to cultivate good relationships with country inhabitants. To do so, they relied on paternalism and beneficence. Moreover, landownership was one of the most, if not the most, important source of influence and the constitutional monarchies’ electoral systems favoured prominent rural proprietors.

More modest socio-economic experiments enabled a number of émigré noblemen to find their place and purpose in the new world ushered by the Revolution. The duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt’s example shows that noble economic modernization was often closely connected to landownership. Liancourt, whose divorced wife had salvaged part of his extensive properties, re-embraced paternalism upon his return to France. His extensive readings and travels inspired him to diversify his economic activities. He developed his estates’ resources, bred merino sheep, and expanded the textile manufactures he had set up before 1789. He added the newest technological innovations and his manufactures grew from about twenty employees in 1802 to over 400 twenty years later. He actively acquired land.22 He wrote to Arthur Young that he had removed water features, decorative gardens, and other ornamental parts of his estate to make way for cultivation.23 Jacques Cambry, the Oise prefect, lavished praised on the ex-émigré:

Le parc est abattu. Retiré dans un pavillon qui n’a qu’un raiz-de-chaussée, et un seul étage, le propriétaire, fermier, cultivateur, manufacturier de Liancourt, réalise, exécute toutes les conceptions que ses lectures, que ses voyages, que la fréquentation des hommes ont pu lui procurer ; il perfectionne toutes les especes de cultures, soigne les plus belles races d’animaux, et répand chez tous ses voisins les procédés de la nouvelle agriculture ; il leur inspire pour leur état l’amour qu’il éprouve lui-même, les aide de ses conseils, de ses moyens, de ses exemples, et réalise tout ce que nous nous promettons de l’établissement de grandes fermes expérimentales. Si chaque canton de la France possédait un homme aussi tourmenté de l’amour du bien, faisant pour l’opérer d’aussi grands sacrifices, la terre de France, aidée dans sa fécondité naturelle par tous les moyens de l’industrie, effacerait bientôt les récits vrais, quoiqu’étonnants, de la prospérité de l’agriculture en Angleterre.24

Liancourt joined the société impériale d’agriculture, published works in which – inspired by Adam Smith – he contended that manufactures did not harm agriculture, and showed continued

interest in education, prison reform, and other benevolent initiatives.\textsuperscript{25} This was the type of nobleman that the imperial and restoration regimes valued.

Ex-émigrés who were able to recover some of their landed possessions managed them with great care. Financial prudence and charitable efforts were central elements of the restored nobility’s relationship with the countryside.\textsuperscript{26} Sassenay’s descendants claimed that he carefully managed his estate and forests.\textsuperscript{27} The La Tour du Pin did their outmost to avoid selling their estate of Le Bouilh. La Tour du Pin enjoyed her rural occupations. Although their financial situation was precarious, she did not abandon her charitable activities. She claimed that these were not very costly and that they kept the local inhabitants happy.\textsuperscript{28} Rochechouart and Damas retired to their country estates after they left public life. Under the July Monarchy, Damas devoted his time to agricultural improvements and charitable causes. He attempted to breed silkworm, became the governor of the local hospital, and put in place a system of credit for local inhabitants.\textsuperscript{29} Rochechouart also retired to his estate of Jumilhac. In 1835, he helped create and became president of an agricultural association. The association provided financial rewards to peasants who made significant improvements and it gathered knowledge about agrarian innovations for the peasants’ benefit. Rochechouart declared that agriculture was “l’art le plus utile de tous, et le fondement de toute propriété.”\textsuperscript{30}

Charitable activities were an important part of noble masculinity and femininity. The nobility’s paternalism was a Christian and civic duty and a justification of its superiority. Charity meant to mitigate the nobility’s political failures, act as measure of social control, and preserve noble local influence. Some segments of the émigré nobility had absorbed the principles of merit,\textit{ bienfaisance}, and duty.\textsuperscript{31} Noblewomen’s charitable activities remained closely tied to alms giving and caring for the poor and sick. These meant to reinforce the hierarchical social order and it


provided women with some social leadership beyond their role as society hostesses.\textsuperscript{32} Noblemen took a more proactive and extensive approach and sought to assist the lower classes’ efforts to improve their lot. The général and the comtesse de Boigne’s activities shed light on the gendered dimension of charity. Among other things, the général financed a retirement home for the poor, created an asylum for mentally ill individuals, and sponsored urban improvement projects in Chambéry. His charitable activities were one of the few things that won his wife’s approval. She even willingly travelled to Chambéry in the early 1820s for the inauguration of the retirement home. She explained: “Je m’identifiai fort à cette noble pensée et je fis, avec satisfaction, les honneurs du premier repas donné aux réfugiés [the residents]… et aux autorités du pays.”\textsuperscript{33} As the founder’s wife, it was both her duty and her right to preside over the inaugural repast but the creation of such charitable institution was beyond the scope of noblewomen’s activities.

Yet, the social relationships in the countryside had irrevocably changed. La Tour du Pin returned to Le Bouilh in 1826 after a lengthy absence. She reported that the local people were eager to see her and that all those to whom she had given charity were grateful. She noted, with some humour, that the warm welcome she received did not bring back their seigneurie. “Si ‘notre chère dame’ demandait la corvée pour niveler son pré, on l’enverrait promener,” she wrote.\textsuperscript{34}

The dislocation of traditional social structures in exile prompted many émigrés to find new points of reference. Independence was a highly prized achievement. As Boigne argued in her memoirs, “pourvu qu’on pensât bien, tout était pardonné.”\textsuperscript{35} As a result several noblemen experimented with commerce. They generally did not consider it as a dishonourable occupation. Lévis, Montesquiou, Sassenay and Pontgibaud’s endeavours reveal that noble émigrés were aware of trade’s profitable potential. It enabled them to maintain their independence and, in some cases, to support the less fortunate. The Labrosse house of commerce, for example, assisted many émigrés over the years, although it helped Pontgibaud even more. Pontgibaud’s mercantile activities enabled him to rebuild his fortune and re-establish his family on a favourable footing after the Restoration. His son Armand had been trained to take over the business but he chose to sell it and opted for a more traditional aristocratic lifestyle. Yet, he did not forget his training. He

\textsuperscript{34} La Tour du Pin, “Correspondance,” 490.
\textsuperscript{35} Boigne, \textit{Mémoires}, 190.
actively developed his estates’ mineral resources and his political activities promoted French commercial interests. More often than not, émigrés gave up the trades that they had adopted – and ennobled – after their return to France. The recovery of some of their landed possessions and the return of the monarchy restored more traditional social structures that made the continuation of mercantile activities often unnecessary and perhaps unseemly.

Still, émigrés’ experience with work and commerce had altered their ethos. Independence and industriousness gained influence among their ranks, particularly among the younger generation. Émigrés learned the importance of diversifying their sources of revenue in order to facilitate their lineages’ successful social reproduction. Although few nineteenth-century nobles got involved in trade, they were more likely to invest in capitalist ventures. Sassenay eventually gave up his mercantile activities but he continued to invest in new business ventures. Overall, even if the legal foundation of dérogeance had been abolished, the principle continued to influence noble practices since honour was the quintessential noble trait.36

The disintegration of Ancien Régime corporate structures threatened noble émigrés’ social reproduction practices. During their exile, nobles learned that the family could be a refuge from hardship. Émigrés experimented with more intimate, affectionate families. Love became more important. Proximity, necessity, and trauma modified noble familial practices. Noblewomen, often motivated by the growing popularity of domesticity, were more likely to claim to have found satisfaction in their dedication to their families. Émigrée memoirists subscribed, or at least claimed to subscribe, to the affectionate family ideal. By framing their narratives so, they could address criticisms of aristocratic family practices and appear to conform to new feminine ideals. Nonetheless, their expressions of love for their family may have been genuine. What is more surprising is that a number of émigré noblemen – freed from their caste’s expectation – also aspired to domestic happiness. Noblemen were expected to show self-control and use reason to regulate their public conduct but they were also expected to love their families.37 The use of reason in public and the ability to love made them fit to rule.

The accrued importance family and sentiment acquired in exile did not translate into a complete adoption of the “bourgeois” cult of the family. The sheer weight of history and of

36 Brelot, La Noblesse réinventée, 409, 502.
tradition bequeathed a conception of family honour that differed from that of the bourgeoisie.\(^{38}\) The rise of individualism and the disappearance of the society of orders drove many émigré families to seek a balance between individual wishes and corporate strategies. Exile taught noble émigrés the crucial importance of education for the younger generations. They often gave their children a hybrid education – a traditional noble education and a more practical one – in order to facilitate the corporate unit’s survival chances. Young émigrés had to be adaptable since their place in the upper classes could not be taken for granted. As a result, children raised in exile often existed in two worlds; they adopted some modern values in addition to traditional noble ones. Émigrés’ ability to impart proper noble principles to their children in exile – notably the paramount importance of family – helped them salvage the noble lineage’s corporate identity in spite of the disappearance of the society of orders.\(^{39}\)

Noble social reproductions strategies imposed significant constraints on the choice of a spouse and on childrearing practices. Rochechouart’s case illustrates the tensions between corporate imperatives and the desire for greater intimacy that marked noble family practices from the Ancien Régime to the Restoration. Rochechouart, who internalized some of the affectionate family’s ideals, took issue with his aristocratic rearing. He resented being abandoned by his parents and the fact that he had spent most of his childhood separated from them. He also blamed his mother for getting involved in political intrigues. He reproached her for her conduct: “inconsidérément, elle s’était lancée dans une intrigue politique… sans avoir réfléchi aux suites qu’elle pouvait avoir. Leçon terrible pour une mère de famille dont les actions doivent être si mesurées, si restreintes !” He disapproved of his father’s divorce and remarriage to a woman from the peasantry.\(^{40}\) He had learned – probably under the tutelage of his uncle the duc de Richelieu – to place the family’s interest over his individual desires. The military education he had acquired during his exile and his family connections had allowed him to rise to social and political prominence during the Restoration. However, he lacked the financial resources to consolidate his influence. In 1821, he concluded a marriage of convenience. His wife, Élisabeth Ouvrard, was the daughter of a \textit{richissime} entrepreneur and her considerable dowry of one million francs decidedly improved his situation. It enabled him to restore his landed base and he

re-purchased the chateau of Rochechouart and acquired that of Jumilhac. He claimed that he and his wife took their parental responsibilities much more seriously than his parents had done: “votre excellente mère et moi, nous sommes trop pénétrés de nos devoirs, nous vous chérissons trop sincèrement pour vous abandonner un seul instant.” Childhood neglect and revolutionary trials led to a revolution in the Rochechouart lineage’s childrearing practices. Affection and respect were at the heart of his relationship with his children. He took an active role in their lives and wished to be their guide but also their confidant and friend. He attached great importance to the transmission of proper noble values and, to that effect, he penned memoirs and a family history. He appears to have been successful in his attempts to preserve his lineage’s corporate identity intact and his children – two daughters and two sons – kept the family traditions alive. His sons pursued military and diplomatic careers and his daughters concluded proper aristocratic marriages. Nevertheless, the family’s standing weakened in 1862 when his son Aimery sold the Jumilhac estate to a Nantes sugar refiner for one million francs.

Corporate social reproductions strategies continued to prevail. Several émigré youth married well and used matrimonial strategies to increase their family patrimony and improve their social standing. Damas married Charlotte-Laure d’Hautefort, a descendent of the Choiseul-Praslin family. The bride brought the estate of Hautefort to the union. The duchesse de Gontaut’s daughters, Charlotte and Joséphine, married, respectively, François, comte de Bourbon-Busset – a descendant from a Bourbon illegitimate branch – and Fernand, duc de Rohan-Chabot, prince de Léon. These families’ court positions made them appealing parties. The fact that endogamy and marriages of convenience continued to be the norm can explain why, although affection was clearly important, it more commonly applied to the parent-child relationship than to that between spouses. Gontaut developed a strong bond with her daughters but she eventually separated from her husband. In 1831, Ouvrard requested a séparation de biens from her husband.

42 Rochechouart, Souvenirs, iii-iv.
45 Mansel, The Court of France, 145.
Émigrés’ cultural activities played an important role bolstering the noble class ethos’ cohesion. Émigrés learned that emotions and culture had political implications. These played a fundamental role in the affirmation of their national and class identity and in their resistance to the Revolution. They belonged to an imagined (emotional) community. Emotions and comportment, specifically self-control, served to distinguish them from the violent revolutionary masses. The lines between public and private emotions, between reason and sentiment were also blurred among the émigré community. Private emotions, love for one’s family for example, had public repercussions: the moral rehabilitation of the honnêtes hommes and femmes depended on their ability to experience and express feelings of love and compassion. Emotions played a crucial role in nobles’ attempt to reclaim the humanity that their most fervent critics had denied them. Émigrés’ practices and discourses challenged the reason/emotion dichotomy. Novelists relied upon the idea that feelings could access truths that were beyond the reach of mere reason. Appeals to readers’ sensibility were a concerted strategy meant to influence the representation and definition of the émigré figure. Doing so, they challenged the exclusionary politics upon which the construction of the modern French nation was predicated.

Ci-devants and émigrés were part of the excluded groups against which the revolutionary French polity coalesced. Throughout the nineteenth century, liberals continued to define themselves as anti-aristocratic heroes. Although ex-émigrés were for the most part peacefully tolerated, they remained the target of frequent critiques. The 1802 amnesty, the 1814 restitution of unsold émigré properties, and the 1825 indemnity bill led to discussions about the place of ex-émigrés in French society. Despite the Bourbons’ policy of oubli, of national amnesia, emigration continued to be a source of debates: the main point of contention was whether or not émigrés could overcome their self-imposed alienation from – and crimes against – the nation and be reintegrated in its midst. Were the émigrés perpetual strangers to the new French polity? During

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47 Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” 143.
their exile, émigrés had learned to use the public sphere to articulate their defiance and disseminate their ideas. They engaged in self- and collective fashioning. They developed discourses that sought to dispel the revolutionary representation of the decadent, degenerate, and reactionary Coblenz aristocrat and, instead, painted émigrés as unfortunate victims capable of reform who could be reintegrated into the nation’s fold.

It was in the cultural sphere that émigrés won their most enduring victory. Although their challenge of the revolutionary representations of emigration had limited impact, they were more successful in their efforts to perpetuate the noble mystique. A large part of post-revolutionary noble distinctiveness rested on the ex-order’s manners and cultural practices. The elites’ culture and value system changed but slowly and residual elements of the noble ethos continued to have a strong sway over early nineteenth-century society. 51 La vie élégante played a fundamental part in the continuation of noble ascendency.

The aristocratic salon played a great role in the perpetuation of the noble mystique and in the nobility’s ability to control upward social mobility during the transition from a corporate to a class-based society. Culture and refinement, as determined by the nobility, became essential characteristics of elite status. 52 Ex-émigrées like Boigne, Pauline de Lévis, and the baronne du Montet became celebrated salonnières. Émigré salons had allowed them to learn and perpetuate the distinctive manners of Ancien Régime sociability. Back in France, their gatherings sought to reproduce pre-revolutionary manners and habits. 53 Due to the development of parliamentarian politics, a number of salons also focused on political matters and salonnières, like Staël, sought to create a space in which they could “moderate hostility,” “teach civility,” and facilitate the rise of men of talent and merit to positions of leadership. 54 Sociability and hospitality remained an essential component of aristocratic femininity.

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52 Kale, “Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,” 142-146.
Literature also helped perpetuate the noble mystique. Félicité de Genlis, Adélaïde de Souza, and Gaston de Lévis were successful authors who relied heavily on the appeal that an idealized past – especially the pre-revolutionary nobility – held for readers. Lévis turned to literature to occupy his time after his return to France in 1800 since he refused to serve Napoléon. His literary endeavours were eclectic and he published works of fiction as well as social commentaries and political texts. The question of France’s public finances continued to be one of his privileged realms of activity but he also put the extensive knowledge about Britain he had acquired during his exile to good use and published a treatise entitled *L’Angleterre au début du XIXe siècle* in 1814. A proponent of aristocratic constitutional monarchism and of economic modernization, he believed that the English model could offer valuable lessons for France. In 1816, his literary efforts were rewarded when he became a member of the *Académie française.*

In his *Maximes*, Lévis had proclaimed that “l’ennui est une maladie dont le travail est le remède.” Walsh claimed to have loved “le travail” and added that work brought him solace. Souza argued that “toute occupation matérielle est un grand bien.” Émigrés had learned to value *otium*, the ideal of productive idleness. They were not indolent. *Le travail* was a resource against adversity and ennui but more importantly, the noble dilettante was able to contribute to society with his – or her – intellectual pursuits. Intellectual activities enabled the group to develop a “culture d’ordre” which in turn justified its superiority and exclusivity. Having an occupation, although not a profession, whether it was serving the state, charitable works, land improvements, or intellectual pursuits, became an important part of aristocratic masculinity.

Émigrés also developed the habit of resorting to the periodical press to publicize their ideas. Bonald, Fontanes, and Chateaubriand, for example, were involved with the *Mercure de France* during the Empire. The latter ardently defended the freedom of the press during Charles X’s reign. Ex-émigrés turned to the press to voice their opposition after the 1830
Revolution. Walsh’s efforts on behalf of the legitimist party were persistent and, from 1833 to 1837, he was the editor of the legitimist periodical *Écho de la jeune France*. The contributors to this publication supported the young duc de Bordeaux’s claim to the throne rather than that of the deposed Charles whose politics they judged obsolete. Two movements ex-émigrés popularized in France, Romanticism and the Catholic revival, also featured prominently in the paper.59

Emigration intensified the French nobility’s contacts with foreign societies and cultures. As a result, they often became more open to foreign ideas and ultimately questioned the French Enlightenment’s cultural supremacy. Cultural transfers were one of the group’s most significant contributions to post-revolutionary European society. Indeed, Chateaubriand and Staël, among others, played a vital role in the spread of Romanticism in France. Émigrés brought back a heightened appreciation of nature, of deep feelings, and of introspection. These new sensibilities transpired in their writings. Exile and uprootedness – in addition to cross-cultural contacts – altered the noble émigrés’ ways of being and ways of feeling. French classicism offered no satisfying aesthetic and intellectual tools with which to account for the disorder that characterized the experience of exile. English spleen and German Romanticism provided the heuristic tools with which they were able to reflect upon, and make sense of, their personal trials. Personal point of view was necessary to account for a hectic life and the “moi” became an unavoidable feature of their memoirs.60 In sum, émigrés played a crucial part in the transition from Enlightenment to Romanticism and in the emergence of modern subjectivity. Romantics writers and artists initially supported royalism, before shifting to liberalism under Charles’s more reactionary reign.61

Émigrés’ good conduct made a favourable impression on their host societies, or so they claimed. They argued that their good behaviour – which allowed them to make true Frenchness known and respected – contrasted with the devastation caused by the revolutionaries. The conduct of the French clergy in Britain, according to Boigne, even earned them the admiration of


a notoriously anti-papist people. Émigré children, writing decades after the events, were particularly prone to highlight their parents’ noble comportment and the good impression they made on their hosts, “Bannis et proscrits, ils ont su faire honorer partout le nom et le caractère français,” concluded Walsh. With such credentials and with their knowledge of foreign societies, it is not surprising that the Bourbons relied on several ex-émigrés to staff the French diplomatic corps. La Ferronnays, Vitrolles, La Tour du Pin, and Chateaubriand were ambassadors to various European courts during the Restoration.

Duty governed ex-émigrés’ conduct in early nineteenth-century France. The fact that nobles, and émigrés, were over-represented among the higher echelons of the civil and military service reveals that the service ethos remained an essential component of aristocratic masculinity. Noblemen perpetuated the idea that it was their duty to freely bestow their time and skills for the public good. The abolition of nobility as a legal category endowed this service ethos with accrued importance; it was a source of legitimacy. Émigrés had often deplored their inactivity during their exile. Back in France, they were determined to serve the French state.

Émigrés had a disproportional presence in the political arena since, as Philip Mansel argues, “The restoration monarchy was a cause as well as a government: it was determined to take care of former servants and of those who had suffered for its sake.” Louis XVIII and Charles X rewarded ex-émigrés who had remained loyal and returned only in 1814/15 – Damas and Gontaut, for example. They rewarded some who had returned during the Empire but who had refused to serve Napoléon – Lévis and Des Cars, among others. They rewarded some who had served the imperial state – Liancourt, d’Arblay, and La Tour du Pin, for example. In truth, the restored Bourbons needed the help of imperial officials and of old nobles to consolidate their power. Still, the favour they showed ex-émigrés sparked some outrage.

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65 Fiette, La noblesse française, 201.
66 Mansel, The Court of France, 181.
67 The Bourbons’ decision to respect the titles and right of precedence of the noblesse impériale also caused some outrage among the old nobility. Mansel, The Court of France, 104-105, 107.
Service – to the dynasty, and, to a lesser extent, to the state – replaced birth, class, and wealth as the dominant criterion for court appointments. Many émigrés and courtiers received military promotions. Des Cars, d’Arblay and Damas, were made *lieutenant-généraux*. Lévis, La Ferronnays, Rochechouart, and Montmorency-Laval were promoted to *maréchaux de camp*. In some instances, such as in Des Cars’s case, promotions were not based on military ability but simply on loyalty. The restored monarchs held that nobles made good household staff since they had service “in their blood.” Émigrés’ monarchism and appetite for court positions grew as a result of exile. Several obtained positions in the royal households. The duc Des Cars was the King’s *premier maître d’hôtel* while the duchesse was an official hostess at the Tuileries. Arguably, these positions and the conferment of a more prestigious ducal title were compensation for the comte Des Cars’s being denied a peerage. The duchesse’s daughter – Madame de Podenas, née Nadaillac – was one of the duchesse de Berry’s ladies-in-waiting. Lévis, who had wished for a diplomatic or ministerial appointment, had be satisfied with an appointment to the *Conseil privé* and with an official position as the duchesse de Berry’s *chevalier d’honneur*. Montmorency-Laval filled the same position for the duchesse d’Angoulême. Rochechouart was a *gentilhomme honoraire de la chambre*. Damas was d’Angoulême’s *premier gentilhomme* and, later, the duc de Bordeaux’s *gouverneur*. Gontaut was the *gouvernante des enfants de France*. Court positions satisfied the nobility’s vanity but it did not give them significant political influence. Unlike its Ancien Régime predecessor, the restoration court was not a center of power or a source of careers for young nobles. It answered the nobility and the monarchy’s desire for prestige and bolstered their cultural leadership – the court was well attended and became one of the main loci of the élite’s social life – but, in the new constitutional regime, power belonged to the King, to his ministers, and to the peers and deputies. Court positions could, however, facilitate nominations to political offices.

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70 Mansel, *The Court of France*, 109, 158-159.
Émigrés were overrepresented in the peerage. The *Chambre des Pairs* was a powerful political institution. It, Emmanuel de Waresquiel contends, sought to guarantee the “sovereignty of reason.” Bicameralism was part of the post-revolutionary compromise to guarantee the constitutional order against popular and monarchical excesses. It also provided the elite with a legal justification for its existence and power. Of the 440 peers the Bourbons nominated between 1814 and 1830, 200 were ex-émigrés. The proportion of ex-émigrés chosen as new peers increased during more the regime’s more conservative phases, including at the time of the second Restoration in 1815 (67 out of 94 new nominations as opposed to 52 out of 154 during the first Restoration) and under the Villèelle ministry in 1827 (42 out of 76). La Tour du Pin, Armand de Pontgibaud, Gontaut, Lévis, d’Osmond, Chateaubriand, Damas, Talleyrand, Montmorency-Laval, Lally-Tollendal, Malouet, Richelieu, La Ferronnays, La Bourdonnaye, Vitrolles, Choiseul-Beaupré, and Bonald, among many others, were *pairs*. As a whole, the Chamber’s collective mentality was royalist and conservative, but members – including court officials – did not refrain from asserting their independence, notably by voting against the King’s ministers. They had sacrificed too much to risk letting the King’s policies cause another revolution. With the *Chambre des pairs*, the nobility enjoyed unprecedented political power. However, towards the end of the Restoration, the peerage’s recruitment practices were increasingly perceived as anachronistic and as a vestige of Ancien Régime nobility.

Ex-émigrés also occupied several ministries until 1830. Richelieu served as *président du conseil des ministres* and as minister of foreign affairs. Because of their extensive knowledge of foreign courts and conservatism, several émigrés – Talleyrand, Chateaubriand, La Ferronnays, Damas, Montmorency-Laval, and Malouet – were appointed to foreign affairs, and to the war and navy ministries. These prestigious and influential positions confirmed the restored nobility’s belief that it was its duty to serve the state and exercise authority.

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During the Revolution, the overlap between private interests and service to the state – a characteristic of Ancien Régime venality – was eliminated. Revolutionary authorities, and Napoleon after them, established a truly public civil service. From that point forward, civil service was, in theory, divorced from private interest. These regimes also raised the civil servants’ prestige and made service the main basis for acquiring distinction. Civil servants were part of the new elite. 79 Local and national influence, merit – which included loyalty and competence – as well as favouritism and nepotism qualified noblemen for state service. 80 Émigrés and their children, including Rochechouart, Lévis, and Noailles’s sons, continued to serve in the army’s officer corps. 81 Émigrés also served in the judiciary although their influence in that sphere was more limited than it had been before 1789. Revolutionary reforms had opened the higher ranks of the judiciary to legal professionals of common origins but Napoléon had spearheaded efforts to attract former parlementaires back to the judiciary. 82 Descendants from great parlementaire families who had emigrated – such as the Lamoignon, Molé, and Séguier – continued to serve in the judiciary during the Empire and Restoration but others – like Vitrolles – broke with the family tradition. 83 Instead Vitrolles served the state as an ultra deputy and as a ministre d’État. He was also made pairs in 1827 and maréchal de camp in 1828. 84 No doubt his wife’s family’s influence assured him a more distinguished career.

Émigrés who, for the most part, were able to reassert their influence in the French countryside served the state in local administrations as well as in central ones. Napoleon made Vitrolles mayor of his eponymous locality. Lévis was mayor of Champs-sur-Marne from 1826 until his death in 1830. Rochechouart was mayor of Jumilhac under the Second Empire. In all of these instances, the mayors had important local landed interests. 85 Émigrés also entered the

82 Higgs, *Nobles in Nineteenth-Century France*, 37, 139.
modern state’s civil administration. Walsh, for example, served as the maître des postes in Nantes. Charles de Maquillé, who had attended the Penn school, became a municipal councillor, a commander of the national guard in Angers, and an elected deputy. Successive political regimes relied on nobles, who, because of patronage and neo-seigneurial relations, had influence in the countryside, to fill positions in local administrations. Noblemen were generally disposed to serve the state. Participation in political and administrative responsibilities helped them meet noble requirements of prestige and authority. Status and state service remained closely connected and a modern noblesse de fonction emerged during the nineteenth century. In his memoirs, Rochechouart hammered the importance of honour and duty:

Jamais plus qu’aujourd’hui, le proverbe qui dit noblesse oblige ne peut être mieux appliqué qu’à l’époque actuelle. Oui, nous sommes obligés plus qu’à aucune autre époque antérieure, à tenir une conduite qui ne nous fasse pas déroger à l’illustration acquise par neuf siècles de gloire ; c’est le seul privilège qui nous reste ; remplissons en tous les devoirs et supportons avec patience toutes les charges qu’ils nous imposent, pour en recueillir les avantages; jouissions du plaisir pur et glorieux tout à la fois, de voir notre nom mêlé pendant plus de huit cent ans aux fastes de l’histoire de notre pays. C’est un avantage, celui-là, que personne ne peut nous contester et que tous les niveleurs du monde ne sauraient effacer de nos annales.

The ex-émigré’s opportunities to serve the State dramatically decreased in the aftermath of the July Revolution. The Orléans regime purged Bourbon supporters from the bureaucracy. Not all noble émigrés were able to recover from the Revolution. Fortunately, during their exile, they had learned to embrace resignation and patience. The La Tour du Pin were among those who suffered the most severe losses. By the 1830s, they had accumulated around 300 000 francs in debt and they were forced to sell their remaining properties. La Tour du Pin attached great importance to the nobility’s landed base; this was an unmistakable déclassement for her. Yet, she approached her new condition with Christian resignation. She wrote to Aymar: “je crois avoir lu quelque part, qu’il y avait des gens qui avaient des voitures, des chevaux, des gens, des gens, des

88 Rochechouart, Souvenirs, vii.
91 Moorehead, Dancing to the Precipice, 410.
maisons, mais je suis bien certaine que cela ne m’est jamais arrivé, car je ne m’en souviens pas ; le Bon Dieu me fait la grâce de ne plus me soucier de ce que je ne puis plus avoir ; j’aimais la campagne, la vie de château, etc. Et bien je n’y pense… plus maintenant.”

Her exalted genealogy and past, her sophisticated manners, her Christian resignation, and her disdain for business were all that remained of her noble distinctiveness. She preserved the memory of what she had been and of what she had suffered in her memoirs.

History and memory played a crucial role in the affirmation of nineteenth-century noble superiority. Émigré nobles embarked on an entreprise mémoriale. They penned a large number of memoirs to bear witness and narrate the changes they had lived through. Still, memoirs were more than simple retrospective accounts. They were acts of self-creation and collective autobiographies. They provided their authors with an unparalleled opportunity to shape their identity and, together, they shaped their caste’s identity. Memoirists used their pens to highlight how emigration had, in women’s cases, led to a sort of regeneration, or, in men’s cases, how noblesse oblige continued to regulate their conduct. Memoirs emphasized noble distinctiveness and promoted its continued appeal. Doing so, they partially justified the prominent positions, nobles, including émigrés, held in post-revolutionary society. At the same time, they also reflected on their loss of status and attempted to prevent further erosion. Indeed, emulation from the upper bourgeois classes enabled the nobility to keep its social ascendancy for the first few decades of the century.

Memoirists also sought to reintegrate their exile experience in the national historical narrative. Although they claimed that they were not writing history, they all claimed to be writing for historians. Their accounts sought to delineate the revolutionary episode’s possible meanings and described it as a destructive event. They understood that the past had political significance and they sought to win their fight against the Revolution in the long run. Thus, émigrés and their memoirs are of considerable importance for the study of the Revolution’s contested interpretations.

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92 La Tour du Pin to Aymar, Bordeaux, 1 November 1834 and 16 May 1835. La Tour du Pin, *Une dame et deux rois*, 26, 98.

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