THE COUNTER-ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE LOW-LIFE OF LITERATURE IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE*

Over a quarter of a century ago Robert Darnton published in the pages of this journal an article that has since become a classic: ‘The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France’.¹ Noting there that the ‘summit view of Eighteenth-Century intellectual history ha[d] been described so often and so well’, Darnton ventured demurely that it ‘might be useful to strike out in a new direction’. He proposed ‘digging downward’, viewing the Enlightenment from the bottom where a motley crew of Grub Street hacks had once toiled in obscurity, only to be subsequently buried in the accumulated dust of the French national archives.² By blowing carefully, and so raising these men and women from the dead, Darnton not only reanimated a lost world, but also changed fundamentally certain conceptions of the Enlightenment and of its perennially vexing relationship to the French Revolution.

The story, by now, is familiar. The rise to prominence towards the middle of the eighteenth century of a handful of great philosophes — the Voltaire, the Diderot, the d’Alembert — attracted to Paris a host of aspiring authors from the provinces eager to share in the burgeoning glory of the world of letters. Hoping to become Voltaire themselves, the majority of these aspirants encountered instead a closed world increasingly monopolized by a tight inner circle. Barred from the fame and fortune of the

* I would like to thank David A. Bell for his ever-insightful criticism, as well as John M. Merriman and Frank M. Turner for their general assistance and support. Geoffrey Cubitt, Mike Broers, Frank Tallet and the other participants at the 1996 Reading University Conference, ‘The Right in France’, graciously received an American interloper and helped to stimulate his thinking in numerous ways. Both Jack Censer and Timothy Tackett offered words of encouragement at opportune moments.


² Ibid., 1.
academies, the salons, the leading official periodicals and honorific posts, these literary hacks fell back into the rough-and-tumble world of Grub Street, venting their rage against the ‘pampered, pensioned’ high philosophes — and the monde for which they stood — in libelles, scandal sheets and other ephemeral publications. It was this literature, Darnton contended, that fed genuinely radical sentiment. Whereas the high philosophes of the final years of the ancien régime served as props for a dying society (‘frosting for France’s thin and crumbling upper crust’), the writers of Grub Street laid the kindling of Jacobin fire. Any relationship between the Enlightenment and the Revolution, thus, should be sought here, at the bottom, and not in the airy climes of the top.

In the twenty-five years since its initial statement, Darnton’s thesis has not gone unchallenged. Jeremy Popkin, for example, in an important article published in Eighteenth-Century Studies in 1989, pointed out that much of the radical pamphlet literature of the waning years of the ancien régime was in fact produced at the behest of ‘wealthy and powerful members of France’s traditional élites’. Instigated and funded by courtiers and others engaged in the intrigues of ministerial politics, this literature, Popkin argued, should not be seen as the product of marginalized writers driven by social resentment. Roger Chartier, too, has cast doubt upon certain aspects of Darnton’s thesis, questioning the ‘direct’ and ‘ineluctable’ association between radical literature and Revolutionary mindset, while calling for a more nuanced approach to reader reception. Rather than passively accept that the radical messages of pamphlets and libelles were simply ‘graven’ into the ‘soft wax’ of ‘readers’ minds’, Chartier argued with Foucauldian overtones that this literature should be viewed as part of a broader cultural transformation, specific facets of which resist direct causal connection with the Revolution. Finally, Sarah Maza and Dena Goodman have recently taken issue with Darnton on varying grounds. Maza highlights the importance of the mémoires judiciaires produced in startling volume by the avocats of the French bar, affirming that they had an impact on readers ‘at least

3 Ibid., 18.
4 This phrase is drawn from Darnton’s essay, ‘The Social History of Ideas’, in his The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History (New York, 1990), 229. In that essay, Darnton restated many of the central themes of ‘High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature’.
as great as that of the Grub Street down-and-outers'. Goodman, by contrast, notes that Darnton's unflattering portrait of the effete world of the High Enlightenment drew on a discourse originally stemming from Rousseau: one that painted the world of salon society in gendered terms, associating it with frivolity and femininity, and so unduly downplaying its importance.5

Each of these authors has offered significant qualifications to Darnton's work. Yet, as Maza herself observes, this very criticism attests to the staying power of Darnton's thesis, which continues to serve as a 'framework' against which to articulate other arguments.6 Fleshed out in a host of other writings by Darnton himself, his students and his colleagues, the people and productions of the Low Enlightenment have entered the common vocabulary of scholars of the ancien régime. Indeed, one might almost say that like the High Enlightenment of old, this story of the Low Enlightenment has too been told 'so often and so well' that perhaps it is time, once again, to strike out in a new direction.

It might be useful, on this occasion, to branch out horizontally rather than vertically. For while the authors cited above — to say nothing of countless other scholars working in different traditions — have of course travelled down fruitful paths not followed by Darnton, they have tended none the less to remain within the general lines linking eighteenth-century print culture to the Revolution. There was, however, another side to the ancien-réjime world of letters, one associated loosely with what Isaiah Berlin long ago termed the 'Counter-Enlightenment'.7 Oft-neglected and poorly understood, this world produced a host of fascinating characters, many of whom could trace their roots to an unlikely source: Grub Street itself. Sharing similarities with


6 Maza, Private Lives and Public Affairs, 4 n. 5.

7 Isaiah Berlin, 'The Counter-Enlightenment', in his Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas (New York, 1980). Berlin used the term to refer to the relativist, anti-rationalist, vitalist and organic strains in major European thinkers from Vico through Hamann, Herder and Maistre. As will be apparent, I employ the term 'counter-Enlightenment' much more broadly to characterize all those who positioned themselves in opposition to the principal philosophes of the Enlightenment.
the hacks on the other side of the pavement, these writers none
the less displayed profound differences. Whereas the liter-
ary rabble studied by Darnton shaped a world in which the
Revolution was conceivable, their opponents helped to lay
the foundations for an antithetical frame of mind, that of the
Counter-Revolution.

Take, for example, the case of Nicolas-Joseph-Laurent Gilbert
(1750–80), born in the Lorraine town of Fontenoy-le-Château in
the Vosges.8 The son of peasants, Gilbert hardly seemed destined
for a literary career, yet ambition and a keen intellect earned him
the recognition of the village priest who tutored him in Latin and
then procured for him a place at the Collège de l’Arc in Dole.
There Gilbert studied humanities and began to write verse and
prose, setting out afterwards for Nancy and then Lyon before
making his way to Paris in 1770. For like all young _hommes de
lettres_ on the make, Gilbert had his sights set on the great French
capital. Armed with a dossier of manuscript poems and a letter
of introduction to Jean le Rond d’Alembert, he presented himself
there full of fantasies of fame and fortune.

The particulars of Gilbert’s life in the immediate wake of his
arrival in Paris are not well known. But they appear to fall into
a recognizable pattern. His overtures to d’Alembert, it is clear,
were spurned, the celebrated _philosophe_ having extended him a
vague promise of assistance in the form of a minor position as
tutor, a post which he then secured unceremoniously for another
supplicant.9 And despite the fact that Gilbert eventually managed
to publish a small book of undistinguished verse in 1771, the
Début poétique, the work was greeted with philosophic indiffer-
ence, ‘read by no one’, Grimm’s _Correspondance littéraire_ later
mocked, noting that its author had seemingly come to Paris to

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8 The life and work of Gilbert have not been totally ignored. Indeed, his persecution
by the _philosophes_, his religious sensibility and premature death earned him a certain
cachet with nineteenth-century poets who saw in him a forerunner of Romanticism.
In this vein, see Charles Nodier’s appreciative introduction in _Oeuvres de Gilbert, avec
une notice historique_, par M. Charles Nodier (Paris, 1840). For biographical detail, see
Ernest Laffay, _Le Poète Gilbert: étude biographique et littéraire_ (Paris, 1898); Barbara
Wojciechowska Bianco, _Gilbert, poëta del malheur_ (Lecce, 1984); ‘Gilbert’, in
_Dictionnaire de biographie française_, ed. M. Prevost et al., 18 vols. (Paris, 1933–), xvi,
9–10; ‘Gilbert’, in _Nouvelle biographie générale depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu’à
_Gilbert_ (Paris, 1970), says as much about its author as its putative subject of enquiry,
but none the less possesses some useful insights.

‘make rhymes and die of hunger’. The author’s lack of sympathy for Gilbert’s plight characterized the uncharitable attitude of other of the philosophic brethren. As the anti-philosophe Année littéraire, the sole Parisian publication to speak favourably of the Début, commented in 1771: ‘M. Gilbert, born unhappy and without fortune, knocked on the door of several men of letters, some rich and the others less so. He addressed himself by preference to those who preached the most humanity in their writings; all refused — very humanely — to come to his aid’. Two further efforts to penetrate the philosophic establishment also ended in disappointment: a submission of the appropriately entitled ‘Le Poète malheureux’ for the poetry prize of the Académie française in 1772; and another offering the following year, an ode on the unlikely theme of divine justice, ‘Le Jugement dernier’. Disheartened and destitute, Gilbert suffered the disillusion experienced by countless aspirants to the philosophic monde. As the editor of a volume of his poetry, published posthumously in 1788, explained:

Full of seductive and magical ideas, Gilbert rushed to [Paris], the new Athens, the new Rome with his verses in hand, well assured that he would find there a crowd of Maecenes. His illusions were soon dispelled. The young poet had believed that a noble avowal of his indigence would win him benefactors. But all doors were closed to him. He realized with bitterness that the stories one heard and read were not always true . . . that, in a word, these great guardians of humanity were often ordinary men of society — that is to say, worthy members of that mob infected by the greedy and inhuman spirit of egoism, preachers forever in contradiction with their magnificent sermons. Gilbert, hopeless and heartbroken, discouraged on all fronts, ran to M. d’Arnaud.

One would be hard-pressed to find a more concise statement of the Grub Street dynamic: the hopeful young poet drawn to the capital by the allure of the grands philosophes, only to have the air sucked from his dreams by the vacuum pump of the literary establishment. But unlike the intellectual canaille studied by Darnton, however, Gilbert did not seek refuge in the pages of the radical underground press. Rather, he turned in a different direction.

11 Année littéraire, 1771, iii, 187. The editor of the Année littéraire, Elie-Cathérine Fréron, acknowledged signs of potential in the Début poétique, despite Gilbert’s youth and inexperience.
Through the Arnaud mentioned in the citation above — François-Thomas-Marie Baculard d'Arnaud (1718–1805), poet and adversary of Voltaire — Gilbert made the acquaintance of Élie-Cathérine Fréron, the celebrated editor of the *Année littéraire*. Fréron, whose life-work was devoted to opposing the principal *philosophes*, kept his eye out for promising young writers to enlist as combatants in his literary campaigns. Indeed, whereas the abbé Raynal, as Darnton comments, ‘functioned as a sort of recruiting agent for the socio-cultural elite known as *le monde*’, a talent scout for up-and-coming philosophic aspirants, Fréron served as his anti-*philosophe* counterpart. He took the young Gilbert under his wing, cultivated his writing, and helped to ease his entry into sympathetic circles. It was through these connections that Gilbert found a means of escape from his humiliating poverty, as well as a way to channel his frustration and resentment against the *philosophes*. He provided ample proof of his willingness to fulfil both these desires in the long, scathing poem, ‘Le Dix-huitième siècle’, first published in 1775.

Dedicated appropriately to Fréron, the work vented the author’s fury at the philosophic *monde* in no uncertain terms, tearing into the false ‘demi-gods’ of the eighteenth century, the ‘tyrants of Parnassus’, those ‘vain authors who never think’: the ‘arrogant Beaumarchais’, the ‘dull Diderot’, the ‘cold d’Alembert’, La Harpe, Marmontel, Thomas and others. Voltaire, the worst of the lot, is described as ‘a monster . . . cloaked in the mantle of philosophy’ who ‘snuffs out talent and destroys virtue’, reigning over the pampered *philosophes* of the Academy who ‘share amongst themselves all honours, riches and jobs’. ‘Parceling out glory’ and ‘judging writings’, these men acted as

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‘proud inquisitors’, despotically wielding their unjust power over the world of letters.¹⁶

Such invective, of course, was not unfamiliar to the Grub Street authors examined by Darnton, who also inveighed with jealous envy against the pampered philosophes on high. Gilbert shared other of their concerns as well. He lamented, for example, the moral decadence of the country, deploring the fallen state of ‘nos grands’ — effeminate, ‘enervated by softness’, volupté, debauchery and the absence of virtue — traits that were infecting society as a whole. And he decried luxe and avarice, ‘so much poverty amongst riches’, material splendour that sapped the moral fibre of the nation and turned men from the sacred to the profane.¹⁷

But if in these respects Gilbert engaged in a critique of decadence and corruption similar to that expounded by Darnton’s underground hacks, there were important differences. For while the libelists and pamphleteers of the literary underground ‘showed’, as Darnton comments, ‘that social rot was consuming French society’, they identified its source at the ‘top’. To them, the world of élites — degenerate aristocrats, dissipated clergy and a debased court — was the source of the contagion that plagued France. Seeing the philosophes as merely part of this larger, privileged monde, they attacked all in turn, slandering ‘the court, the church, the aristocracy, the academies, the salons, everything elevated and respectable, including the monarchy itself’. Imbued with a hatred of ‘the system’, these men were revolutionaries before the fact.¹⁸

Gilbert, by contrast, was, though angry, hardly a revolutionary. He devoted his verses to ‘avenging the public cause’, hoping to obtain the ‘friendly attention’ of his king, Louis XVI, whom he wished to serve faithfully. He defended the religion of the Church, and harkened back to halcyon days — the age of Louis XIV — when nobles and the people alike carried themselves with manly, Christian virtue, a respect for morals and a fear of God. Far from attacking the system, he aimed to rescue it by ‘unmasking’ the ‘dangerous sages’ who were eating away at the national fibre, corrupting its institutions and its character. These men, Gilbert warned, the philosophes on high, were the real source of the century’s depravity. False gods, they ‘usurped altars’, making

¹⁷ Ibid., 35–40.
faith a crime and treating all piety as ‘blind fanaticism’. They sanctioned mental and physical ‘aberration’ of every kind, placed ‘atheism in high regard’ while putting ‘God on trial’, ‘honoured license’ and ‘chased the Supreme Being from a deserted heaven’. Their success, moreover, was all too evident. Throughout Europe, ‘even Russia’, people devoured their works in ‘delirium’. To recount the history of the century was to tell a tale ‘of the power of the innovators of the times, of their fury to write and of their shameful glory’.

Gilbert thus identified the source of the century’s malaise in the writings and posturing of the philosophes. In doing so, he made reference to ‘two opposing parties’: those who fought for the ‘false gods’ of the new century and those who fought against them. And though he admitted that his rivals were ‘stronger in numbers and vaunted in all places’, he vowed to carry on the fight regardless — a promise he thoroughly fulfilled, publishing numerous diatribes that hammered home the themes outlined above, defending at once the throne and altar.

Such efforts did not go unnoticed. Recommended to the archbishop of Paris, Gilbert earned the prelate’s benevolence, as well as that of other important dévots, including the pious daughter of Louis XV, Madame Louise de France. The two took steps to secure Gilbert a pension, personally appealing to the dévot minister of foreign affairs, Charles Gravier, comte de Vergennes. As Madame Louise emphasized in a letter to Vergennes, dated 15 September 1776, Gilbert was a man of ‘great talents’ who had ‘entirely devoted himself to the defence of religion’, but who none the less lived ‘without bread’. Stressing in a second memorandum the following month that the ‘enemies of religion possessed unlimited hidden resources’ to win over even the most upright souls, she urged Vergennes to find support for him, lest Gilbert fall prey to the seductions of poverty. The intervention was successful. Following a check of his background, in which the

20 Ibid., 47. See, in particular, ‘Diatrise au sujet des prix académiques’ (1777); ‘Mon Apologie’ (1778); ‘Réflexions de M. Gilbert sur sa satire du dix-huitième siècle’ (n.d.). For examples of monarchical sentiment, see ‘Le Jubilé: Ode’ (1775); ‘Ode au Roi’ (n.d.). All poems are included in Oeuvres complètes de Gilbert.
21 Laffay, Le Poète Gilbert, 247.
22 Cited ibid., 248 n. 1.
foreign minister verified the poet’s moral character through the letters of some fourteen reputable attestants, Vergennes was able to write both Beaumont and Madame Louise with the good news that the king had awarded Gilbert an annual stipend of 1,000 livres.24 True to his billing, Gilbert continued his war against the philosophes until the end of his short life in 1780, earning his reward as well as the undying enmity of the philosophes.25

Gilbert’s life was undoubtedly unique. But was his case unique as well? Did the poet from Lorraine, that is, possess comrades in arms — men like him who came to the capital seeking philosophic glory, only to cross over, and to exit, from the right side of Grub Street? Or was he merely an aberration? Given the state of contemporary historiography, one is forced to admit that it is difficult to say. For despite the rich mining of eighteenth-century French intellectual life conducted in the last twenty-five years, few have gone in search of those who resisted the fashionable learning of the century. As Robert Palmer pointed out in 1939 in a book that stands as a notable exception to a general rule, ‘it must be confessed that the thought of the Age of Enlightenment, more than that of any equally important period in modern history, has been studied from writings which express only one side of the question’.26 Over fifty years later, his assertion still holds largely true.

To acknowledge this fact is to admit that in many ways historians of the Enlightenment have been inclined to repeat its own catechisms. For like the philosophes themselves, we have tended to depict the eighteenth century as the steady advent of ‘light’ at the expense of ‘darkness’, viewing their opponents as did Voltaire — as fanatics, reactionaries, the infâme — relegating them to obscurity, or neglecting them altogether. And though it is probably true that the century witnessed a gradual ‘de-Christianization’, along with both an absolute and relative decline

24 Gilbert’s letters of recommendation, as well as those from Vergennes to Beaumont and Madame Louise are reproduced ibid., 249–55.
25 An epitaph by La Harpe published in the Correspondance littéraire slandered the anti-philosophe poet mercilessly, accusing him of mental illness, alcoholism and slavish devotion to Fréron and the church: Correspondance littéraire, philosophique, et critique, ed. Tourneux, xii, 459–60 (Dec. 1780). For earlier attacks on Gilbert, see the anonymous pamphlets Le Dix-huitième Siècle vengé (The Hague, 1775), and L’Antigilbertine (Berne, 1778). Perhaps fittingly, Gilbert was at work at the time of his death on an encomium of the departed dévot hero, the dauphin, son of Louis XV.
in religious publication, as I hope this article will suggest, within
these broad parameters the dynamics were more complicated than
generally acknowledged. Indeed, if one is to conceive of the
Enlightenment as Margaret Jacob has argued, as a ‘vast cultural
upheaval’ similar in scope and repercussion to the Reformation,
then it stands to reason that the many-levelled expansion of
lumières would have generated greater opposition than historians
have appreciated. Long ago, the great pioneer of the cultural
history of the Enlightenment himself, Daniel Mornet, cautioned
against such oversight. As he stressed in his ground-breaking Les
Origines intellectuelles de la révolution française (1933), philosophie
did not flow like an ‘unhindered river’ (fleuve paisible), but rather
was forced to carve its way through ‘immobile masses’ and ‘hostile
terrain’ that forever impeded its course. This ‘passively hostile’
countryside of ‘powerful and tenacious tradition’, and the more
activist writers who claimed to speak for it, formed a ‘never
conquered resistance’, Mornet affirmed, one that helped ‘to
explain the future’.

Who were the men and women who spoke for this tradition,
fighting the philosophes ‘blow for blow’? Mornet referred to sev-
eral groupings, but like most observers, he placed considerable
emphasis on those who might be termed the ‘usual suspects’, the
reactionary elements of the first and second estates, pious aristo-
crats, members of the high clergy, and the religious writers who
produced the bulk of the Christian apologies enumerated in Albert
Monod’s 1916 classic, De Pascal à Chateaubriand: les défenseurs
français du Christianisme de 1670 à 1802. And indeed Mornet

27 On de-christianization, see Michel Vovelle, Piété baroque et déchristianisation en
Provence au XVIIIe siècle: les attitudes devant la mort d’après les clauses des testaments
au 18e siècle’, in Livre et société dans la France du XVIIIe siècle, 2 vols. (Paris and
The Hague, 1965–70), i. It is, however, worthy of note that, outside of Paris in the
French provinces, religious publication remained predominant throughout the eight-
eeth century. See Julien Brancolini and Marie-Thérèse Bouyssy, ‘La Vie provinciale
du livre à la fin de l’ancien régime’, ibid., ii.
28 Margaret C. Jacob, Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in
Eighteenth-Century Europe (New York, 1991), 215. Jacob, in fact, begins this rich
study by examining, and taking seriously, the claims of opponents of the Masons. In
this vein, see, as well, J. M. Roberts, The Mythology of the Secret Societies (New
29 Daniel Mornet, Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française (Paris, 1933),
205; see, in general, pt 3, ch. 1, ‘Les Résistances de la tradition religieuse et politique’.
30 Albert Monod, De Pascal à Chateaubriand: les défenseurs français du Christianisme
was not wrong to do so. For since the *philosophes* had first ‘arrived’ on the French scene with the splashing début of the *Encyclopédie* in 1751, zealous ecclesiastics, Sorbonne censors, parliamentary magistrates, royal officials and other members of the so-called *parti dévot* had inveighed with great violence against the sophists and sages of the new learning. ‘Guilty authors’, the *prétendus philosophes*, respected ‘neither the purity of morals, the inviolable rights of sovereign power, nor the saintly truths of religion’, charged the assembled clergy in 1755.\(^{31}\) They repeated these accusations down through the century, warning with ever-greater insistence of the spirit of ‘blasphemy’ and ‘sedition’ spread by the ‘coryphaeuses’ of the new learning, while summoning the spectre of the ‘horrors of anarchy’ and ‘bloodied thrones’.\(^{32}\)

In scores of weighty treatises, judicial rulings, pastoral letters, *mandements* and pulpit sermons, the *dévots* condemned philosophic ‘fanaticism’ and ‘intolerance’. They accused their foes of spreading atheism, materialism and the hatred of priests, of corrupting social morals, preaching debauchery and sexual licence, uprooting families, condoning divorce. The *philosophes* sanctioned a vile egoism and a vicious personal interest, they charged, that ripped apart ‘social ties’, reducing all to the pursuit of pleasure and the love of self. And they shamelessly rejected the counsel of tradition, the wisdom of the past.\(^{33}\) That such hideous production would have political consequences seemed only too clear. As the devout *avocat général* of the Paris *parlement*, Antoine Séguiier, charged in an *arrêt* published in 1770, ‘it was no longer possible to cover up the fact’, a ‘conf federation’, a ‘criminal league’, an ‘impious and audacious sect . . . decorating its false wisdom with the name of Philosophie’ had risen up. ‘With one hand, [it] sought to shake the throne, and with the other, to overthrow altars’. And unless authorities took proper measures, Séguiier warned, the ‘civil order as well as the

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\(^{33}\) See, for example, *Censure de la faculté de théologie de Paris, contre le livre qui a pour titre, de l’Esprit* (Paris, 1759).
spiritual’ would be destroyed.\textsuperscript{34} By 1781, speaking before the \textit{Grand’Chambre}, Seguier presented this horrible threat as more imminent still. ‘In vain’, he intoned, has the ‘administration established the wisest precautions, in vain has it multiplied obstacles to the publication of writings that spread audacity and irreligion throughout society. The wisdom of government is annihilated, the vigilance of the magistracy destroyed. More and more the \textit{esprit philosophique} becomes the spirit of the day’.\textsuperscript{35}

 Needless to say, this language, what I term elsewhere an ‘anti-philosophe discourse’ was greatly overstated, grossly unfair.\textsuperscript{36} Yet the fears it articulated were deadly earnest, and the frustration it expressed at the \textit{philosophes’} seemingly inexorable advance no less real. Moreover, as Mornet clearly realized, such resistance — this ‘bitter, violent, enduring’ polemic against the \textit{philosophes} — was by no means confined solely to an unenlightened rump of reactionary \textit{dévots}.\textsuperscript{37} Men of letters participated in these attacks, a fact that raises an enticing prospect. Was there a secular counterpart to these angry, clerical denunciations, a conservative public sphere that produced and consumed works other than the fulminations of priests and devout magistrates? Once again, it is worth asking if the case of Gilbert was merely an aberration.

 All indications are that it was not. Consider, as another instructive example, the life of Antoine Sabatier (1742–1817).\textsuperscript{38} Often referred to as the abbe de Castres or Sabatier de Castres, after his place of birth in the Midi, the young Antoine descended from a long line of magistrates. His parents, however, seemed not to

\textsuperscript{34} [Antoine-Louis Seguier], \textit{Réquisitoire sur lequel est intervenu l’arrêt du parlement du 18 Août 1770, qui condamne d’être brulés différents livres ou brochures} (Paris, 1770), 1–4.
\textsuperscript{35} Arrêt de la cour de Parlement, qui condamne un imprimé, in-8, ayant pour titre: \textit{Histoire philosophique & politique des établissements & du commerce des européens dans les deux Indes}, par Guillaume-Thomas Raynal (Paris, 1781). An extract from the registers of the Paris \textit{parlement}, the text, though not written by Seguier, was read aloud by him on 21 May 1781.
\textsuperscript{37} Mornet, \textit{Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française}, 206.
have followed family tradition. To believe Voltaire, they were wig-makers. Jean Sgard’s *Dictionnaire des journalistes* describes them somewhat less colourfully as ‘marchands’. Whatever the case, Sabatier fils was undoubtedly intent on leaving life at a higher station than where he began.

Following a stint at the seminary in Castres, from which he was expelled for devoting inordinate time to secular literary pursuits, Sabatier made his way to Toulouse, breaking with his family and vowing to establish himself as an independent *hommes de lettres*. For a man barely into his twenties, without familial or other support, this was a daunting task. Yet Sabatier appears to have made a go of it in good hack fashion, seeing his first play, *Les Eaux de Bagnères* (1763), through to production at the Comédie de Toulouse and supplementing his meagre income with a variety of publications: epigrams, madrigals, epistles and licentious verse. Encouraged by these early successes, he wrote to Helvétius on the recommendation of a mutual acquaintance, asking for assistance in 1765. Evidently impressed with the young abbé, the celebrated philosophe, wealthy and noted for his generosity to fledgling writers, extended Sabatier an offer to come to Paris with an annual stipend of 1,200 *livres*. He presented himself in the capital the following year.

This was an auspicious beginning, enough, in any event, to take Sabatier off the pavement of Grub Street. But the aspiring philosophe from Castres had his sights trained on far bigger game. Not content with a mere pension, he set about trying to take the literary monde by storm. He made the rounds of the salons. He sought out the eminent writers of the day. He published glowing panegyrics of Voltaire. But despite this determined effort, as well as the evident favour of Helvétius, Sabatier met with disappointment. His attempts to flatter the king of Ferney, and his overtures to the first minister of the intellectual world, d’Alembert, were bluntly refused. As d’Alembert later boasted

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40 In addition to his play, Sabatier published the *Lettre d’une dame de province à une dame de la cour* (1763), as well as an erotic poem, *Le Temple de la volupté* (n.d.).
42 Sabatier published in 1770 the *Dictionnaire de littérature, dans lequel on traite de tout ce qui est relatif à l’éloquence, à la poésie et aux belles-lettres*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1770), which contained, in marked contrast to the portrait he would paint the following year, a flattering description of Voltaire.
in a letter to Voltaire, the perpetual secretary of the Academy had ‘chased’ this ‘little vagabond’ (gueux), ‘come from Castres in sabots’, out of his house ‘like a lackey’.43

Sabatier did not forgive this rough treatment. There are signs, however, that his failure to win the good graces of the literary monde was not entirely the result of philosophic callousness. For in addition to what was by all accounts an irascible and transparently sycophantic character, Sabatier retained certain habits of old. In the very year of his arrival in Paris, for example, he published a book of libertine verse, Les Quarts d’heure d’un joyeux solitaire, ou contes de M. ***, replete with tales of rutting abbés, lascivious nuns and Italian women with poor bowel control, following up the work in 1767 with a callow satire that ridiculed the follies, literary and otherwise, of the better part of humanity, including the philosophes themselves.44 Redolent of Grub Street, this was not work to ingratiate its author in refined philosophic circles. And though Sabatier also managed to publish a more philosophically respectable apology for Spinoza, as well two romantic novels written somewhat in the style of Rousseau’s La Nouvelle Héloïse, his prolific output in these early years failed to reap the intended philosophic rewards.45 Nursing a sense of slight festered by frustrated ambition, his income dwindling with the expiration of the stipend from Helvétius, Sabatier crossed over to the opposition. Associating with Fréron, he published in 1771 the first instalment of what would prove a life-long literary vendetta, the Tableau philosophique de l’esprit de M. de Voltaire.

The work, in a word, was character assassination, of the homeopathic variety. Compiling an extensive list of Voltaire’s personal slurs, his bons mots and blows below the belt, Sabatier organized the text around the many unfortunate victims of

43 ‘D’Alembert to Voltaire, Paris, 26 Dec. 1772’, in Voltaire's Correspondence, ed. Theodore Besterman, 107 vols. (Geneva, 1953–65), lxxxiii, no. 17,035, 222. The word sabot, a play on Sabatier, refers to the wooden clogs worn by the peuple, and is thus a reference to the abbé’s less than genteel condition. Voltaire’s letters are replete with other such damning portrayals of Sabatier, described as a scélérat (scoundrel) and a petit monstre (little monster), whose writing is ‘the worst’ in the French language. See ibid., lxxv, lxxxvii, letters 17,410 and 17,810, 203 and 182, respectively.

44 [Antoine Sabatier], Les Quarts d’heure d’un joyeux solitaire: ou Contes de M.*** (The Hague, 1766); also La Ratomanie: ou songe moral et critique d’une jeune philosophe par Madame *** (Amsterdam, 1767).

45 Apologie de Spinoza et du spinosisme, contre les athées, les incrédules et contre les théologiens scolastiques-platoniciens, par M. Sabatier de Castres (Paris, 1766); L’École des pères et des mères: ou les trois infortunées (Amsterdam and Paris, 1767); Betsi: ou les bisarreries du destin (Amsterdam and Paris, 1769).
Voltaire’s acerbic wit, seeking to reveal the cruelty employed by the king of Ferney against whoever did not bend to his will. Punctuating the narrative with extensive insults of his own, Sabatier lashed out at Voltaire’s ‘cruel facility to turn the most atrocious injuries and absurd calumny into light comedy’. He railed at the man who had placed his prodigious gifts in the service of pernicious causes, whose genius took on force only when inspired by ‘hatred or impiety’. And he decried Voltaire’s ‘despotism’ in the world of letters. ‘Whoever has been his enemy’, Sabatier noted resentfully, or rather, ‘did not want to be his admirer, has seen himself mercilessly shredded’ by Voltaire’s esprit malin.46

Like Gilbert, Sabatier channelled the anger of frustrated ambition into a vicious attack brimming with Grub Street ressentiment. But also like Gilbert, and again in contrast to the authors studied by Darnton, Sabatier refrained from associating Voltaire and his corrupt philosophic world with the monde at large. Rather, he took pains to sing the praises of the powers that were, defending in particular the church against the onslaught of a man who even in the ‘most advanced old age’ found energy to ‘level new blows at Christianity and at those who respected and defended it’.47 He lauded the abbé Riballier, grand master of the Collège Mazarin, a syndic of the faculty of theology and the infamous author of that institution’s condemnation of Marmontel’s Belissaire. He commended the archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, and praised other stalwart antagonists of the philosophes. And finally, he warned of the menace to society posed by the ‘fanaticism’ of the new creed. If religious fanaticism in the past had proved dangerous to society, it was but a pale shadow of its philosophic variant:

It must be conceded that there is another fanaticism no less fearsome and equally in need of repression — le fanatisme philosophique. It is a fanaticism that obscures all, attacks all, confuses all, overturns everything; a fanaticism that takes its source in the illusion of the mind and the clotting of the heart; a fanaticism of reason that declares and decides on every subject; a turbulent fanaticism that wants to change and reform everything; an ambitious fanaticism that arrogates to itself every right and seeks to triumph over all . . . a bold and licentious fanaticism that respects nothing,

46 [Antoine Sabatier], Tableau philosophique de l’esprit de M. de Voltaire pour servir de suite à ses ouvrages, & de mémoires à l’histoire de sa vie (Geneva, 1771), vi–vii.
47 Ibid., vi.
that saps the throne and altar, deforms truth and disfigures virtue; an intolerant fanaticism.\textsuperscript{48}

As in the writings of Gilbert, who likewise condemned the ‘intolerance’ and ‘fanaticism’ of the philosophic ‘sect’, Sabatier thus charged that the \textit{philosophes} were the real source of the century’s \textit{malaise}. He focused his ire on Voltaire, but in doing so he implicated \textit{philosophie} as a whole — in sweeping, blanket terms. It was a critique that he would press with even greater force in a work destined to become his magnum opus, the \textit{Trois siècles de notre littérature}, first published in 1772, and subsequently expanded and reprinted in six new editions before the onset of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{49}

Although presented in the form of an alphabetical dictionary of the authors of France, the \textit{Trois siècles} was in truth anything but an innocuous work of reference. As the strident, introductory preface to the text made perfectly clear, it was, in fact, a forthright assault on the \textit{philosophie} of the century, one that offered its readers a deeply partisan interpretation of French cultural history. For prominently displayed in the work’s over 1,500 pages were unflattering portraits of all who claimed to speak for the new learning: Diderot, La Harpe, d’Alembert, Voltaire and the other leading lights of the \textit{siècle de lumières}, including even Sabatier’s former patron, Helvétius, a man, it seemed, who suffered from an ‘excessive love of celebrity’ and an ‘involuntary mania’. By contrast, Sabatier heaped honours on all those who fought against the \textit{philosophes}, while holding up as unsurpassed models of genius the great classical authors of the age of Louis XIV. In comparison to that heroic time — when men ‘were superior in everything because they were not \textit{philosophes}’ — the present age offered a sad spectacle. Indeed, the \textit{philosophes} had transformed a century of ‘genius, of reason, of grandeur and glory’ into one of ‘frivolity, of weakness, of dizziness and absurdity’. To subscribe to their doctrine was quite simply to ‘overthrow everything that one had respected until now: the most saintly truths and sacred principles, the most indispensable duties — heaven, earth, altar and throne’. They ‘exterminated every virtue, broke all social ties, attacked every law’. And they reduced human life ‘to a tissue of arbitrary motives, of personal interest, of sensual and unbridled

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 195.

\textsuperscript{49} [Antoine Sabatier], \textit{Trois siècles de notre littérature: ou tableau de l’esprit de nos écrivains depuis François I, jusqu’en 1772}, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1772).
appetites, of animal action'. Their vaunted lumières, in short, were ‘flaming torches, ready to spread conflagration’ throughout the realm.50

Coming from a man who had once aspired to be a philosophe himself, Sabatier’s hasty conversion, his attacks on philosophie and his attendant defence of the throne and altar seem more than a touch ironic, even, perhaps, hypocritical.51 As Condorcet suggested in an anonymous refutation of the Trois siècles published in 1774, one should be suspect of the conviction of a writer who had genuflected before Voltaire, written pornographic verse, and defended Spinoza as well!52 Yet these ironies notwithstanding, it is also true that having carried out his defection, Sabatier did not look back. He published tirades against the philosophes until the end of his life, and disavowed his earlier flirtations as so much youthful indiscretion.53 Moreover, in the circle of the Année littéraire, Sabatier seems to have found the respect and acceptance that had been denied him elsewhere. Fréron himself boasted of having ‘opened up Sabatier’s career’.54 Indeed he had, launching the abbé on the path towards national notoriety as an enfant terrible and a secular defender of the church. Never one to squander an opportunity, Sabatier put these credentials to good use,

50 ‘Préface’, ibid., i, i–x. In the second, and all subsequent editions, Sabatier added an ‘Avertissement’ to the preface that declared ‘war on philosophie’ in even more emphatic terms. This was followed by the still more hostile ‘Discours préliminaire au lecteur citoyen’ of the fourth edition of 1779.

51 Gustave Desnoiresterres, undoubtedly biased in Voltaire’s favour, claims that Sabatier’s defection to the anti-philosophe camp was motivated solely by intrigue: the desire for notoriety and financial gain. ‘At base’, he comments, ‘[Sabatier] had neither morals nor religion’: Desnoiresterres, Voltaire et la société française au xviiième siècle, vii, 489. Magliore Nayral, by contrast, sees Sabatier’s conversion as the product of more genuine conviction: Nayral, ‘Sabatier Antoine’, Biographie castraise, iii, 377. Both factors, I would argue, played their part.

52 [Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet], Lettre d’un théologien à l’auteur du Dictionnaire des trois siècles (Berlin, 1774). Condorcet accused the Jesuits of forcing Sabatier to write the Trois siècles as ‘pénance’ for his earlier sins. His pamphlet was merely one of a host of philosophic attacks on the author of the Trois siècles. For others, see Nayral, ‘Sabatier Antoine’, Biographie castraise, iii, 381–5.

53 Of the many examples of his later anti-philosophe polemics and philosophic retractions, see, in particular, Le Cri de la justice: ou remonstrance à Apollon sur la partialité, la jalousie et les mauvaises critiques des ouvrages de nos meilleurs auteurs (1773); Le Tocsin des politiques (1791); Lettres critiques, morales et politiques sur l’esprit, les erreurs et les travers de notre temps (Erfurt, 1802); Considérations politiques sur les gens d’esprit et de talent tirées d’un ouvrage inédit de M. L’abbé Sabatier de Castres (Paris, 1804). Louis XVIII rewarded Sabatier for these efforts by granting him a pension after the fall of Napoleon. Sabatier none the less managed to die penniless in 1817 in a charity house run by nuns on the rue Neuve-St-Etienne in Paris.

54 Année littéraire, 1773, ii, 27.
supplementing his revenue from the sales of the tremendously popular *Trois siècles* by obtaining a post as the tutor to Vergennes' children in 1777. Lodged in the Minister of Foreign Affairs' own apartment in Versailles, he exploited his proximity to secure no fewer than four pensions through the *dévot* count.55 The abbé de Castres had arrived.

In a glowing review of the *Trois siècles* in 1773, Fréron reflected fondly: 'It is no small satisfaction to finally see my example followed by daring, enlightened authors'.56 He could take satisfaction in one more charge, Jean-Marie-Bernard Clément (1742–1812), praised in Sabatier's *Trois siècles* as a writer who had managed to resist 'the contagion of literary failings of our century', while maintaining the 'courage to declare himself for *le bon goût*'.57 Born in Dijon, Clément hailed from a family of jurists, and though originally destined for the bar himself, he managed to persuade his parents to allow him to pursue a literary career.58 A brilliant student, he obtained a chair in *belles lettres* at the Collège de Dijon at a young age, but following a bitter dispute with the administration fled the town in 1768 to avoid legal action.59 That year he arrived in Paris with meagre means and on the run, fully intending, none the less, to make his grand début in the republic of letters.

Like Gilbert and Sabatier, Clément, too, began his career in the capital by extending overtures to the philosophes. Indeed, the young Dijonnais had been taken for some time with the new

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55 Milella, *Il Gusto des Sabatier de Castre*, 65; Nayral, 'Sabatier Antoine', *Biographie castraise*, iii, 386–7; Desnoiresterres, *Voltaire et la société française*, vii, 488–9; 'Sabatier (Antoine)', *Nouvelle biographie générale*, ed. Hoefer, xliii, 959. The *Nouvelle biographie* lists the sources of the pensions as the king, the économat, the department of foreign affairs, and the *Mercure de France*.

56 *Année littéraire*, 1773, ii, 27–8.

57 Sabatier, *Trois siècles*, i, 265.


59 Although the original cause of the quarrel is unclear, the hot-tempered Clément apparently aggravated the situation by writing two slanderous letters to his superiors in October and November of 1768. They pursued legal action and in December the *parlement* of Dijon issued an *arrêt* obliging Clément to appear in court. Rather than risk the vagaries of local justice, he absconded to Paris. See Desnoiresterres, *Voltaire et la société française*, viii, 2; 'Clément', *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, ed. Michaud, viii, 409; Deffain, Guitton and Loiret, 'Clément', in Sgard (ed.), *Dictionnaire des journalistes*, 95.
learning of the century. ‘In my youth’, he later recalled, albeit with repentance, ‘I was seduced by the new systems . . . It was above all philosophie moderne that I loved’. Nor was Clément’s seduction unconfessed. At the tender age of eighteen, he wrote to Voltaire beseeching guidance, describing himself as ‘a young man who loves you because he loves your works, who owes you everything because your writings have taught him how to think’, sending a stream of other such fawning epistles in the years to come. Apparently, Voltaire deigned to reply, for upon Clément’s arrival in Paris, he graced him with an introduction to La Harpe. The literary pretender sent a fable to Voltaire in appreciation, accompanied by a note bearing the inscription to ‘you whom I love as much as I admire’.

This, however, was the extent of Clément’s penetration of the philosophic establishment. His meeting with La Harpe failed to produce tangible results, and attempts to curry favours from Saint-Lambert, Marmontel, Delille and others fell flat. Without fixed income, Clément looked for work as a tutor or secretary, but came up empty-handed. And his play, Médée, was bluntly rejected by the Comédie française. Increasingly, Clément grew disillusioned with the men and women who vaunted the philosophie of the century.

The earliest clear sign of this disaffection came in 1771, in a book of literary criticism devoted in large part to the defence of the classic French authors of the seventeenth century. As Clément would later explain, he had taken to re-reading these masters shortly after his arrival in Paris, and slowly came to the conclusion that the pretension of eighteenth-century writers to have surpassed them was ill-founded. Applying the principles of classical taste to a number of contemporary works, he found them wanting, singling out for particular criticism St-Lambert’s,
‘Les Saisons’, an ‘eternally wearying monotony’. Such commentary, together with a rigorous critique of the poem’s style and structure, and intermittent outbursts at the devastating effects of *philosophie* on the century’s taste, was too much for the established *philosophe* to bear. Pulling literary strings, St-Lambert arranged for the suppression of Clément’s work. When the latter protested in a violent personal letter, St-Lambert had Clément thrown in the Fort Evêque prison for slander. And though he was released after only three days, in large part due to the kindly intervention of Rousseau, Clément’s rage was more lasting. Appealing to Fréron, he renounced his former admiration for Voltaire and the *philosophes*, attributing his error of judgement in a letter to the anti-*philosophe* journalist to the ‘illusion’ of youth. Having come in from the cold, Clément would devote the better part of his subsequent energy to berating the men he had once courted assiduously.

Clément’s first major onslaught against the philosophic establishment was a stinging *Lettre à Voltaire*, published in 1773, and praised by Fréron as a ‘necessary counter-poison to the extremes . . . of the false philosophy of our time’. A defence of the classical authors of the seventeenth century, the work purported to show the insidious means by which Voltaire had achieved literary supremacy in France, as well as the devastating effects this had had on the moral fibre of the nation.

Voltaire was a man, Clément conceded, of remarkable natural abilities. He had had, moreover, the good fortune to arrive on the French literary scene at a time when the golden age of Louis the XIV was fading into late autumn. Exploiting these propitious circumstances to the utmost, Voltaire set about clearing the field of all potential rivals. One by one he had discredited the great names of the past. And through a malicious campaign of calumny and defamation, he raged against all those who dared oppose him.

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68 Cited ibid., 336; [J. M. B. Clément], *Première lettre à Monsieur de Voltaire: où l’on examine sa politique littéraire, & l’influence qu’il a eu sur l’esprit, le goût & les moeurs de son siècle* (The Hague, 1773). In 1772, Clément published anonymously a brief pamphlet, *Boileau à M. de Voltaire* (1772), in which he rehearsed many of the themes developed at greater length in the *Première lettre*. 
in the present, erupting in great bursts like a ‘volcano’ spewing ‘hate, rage and fury’. Having eliminated his competition, Voltaire then took steps to consolidate his position, establishing by intrigue and abject flattery a network of important protectors. He placed himself at the head of a ‘sect’, a ‘party’ of ‘so-called philosophes’ who recognized him alone, and whom, in turn, he served as ‘chief’. Together they completed the domination of Parnassus, ‘condemning to obscurity’ all ‘who were not in their cabal’. ‘They and they alone’, Clément stressed, had the power ‘to make and un-make reputations’. They and they alone ‘procured favours, places and academic prizes’.69

Here, once again, was the same, angry critique of the philosophes’ ‘despotism’ evident in the writings of Gilbert and Sabatier — the bitter, resentful hostility of a man who had sought his place in the inner circle of the philosophes and been denied. Dogmatic, devious and unbearably proud, Voltaire epitomized all that was amiss in the republic of letters. Indeed, he had fashioned this petit monde in his own image. The republic of letters was a sham.

Even more disturbingly, Voltaire was rapidly transforming the larger world of French society, bringing the same ‘revolution’ he had carried out in the republic of letters to bear on the nation as a whole.70 Everywhere his works spread ‘dangerous poison’ that was eating away at France’s traditional values and morals. The scale of his success was shocking. One by one, young men and women succumbed to Voltaire’s pernicious maxims, throwing off the wisdom of the ages and denying God. They became libertines and freethinkers, proclaiming themselves ‘philosophes’, ‘despising duty, drying up the heart and incinerating the mind’. And they preached their opinions with a ‘fanaticism’ of ‘reason and incredulity’ that made the most inflexible pronouncements of the dévot seem benign. All this ‘frightening evil’, Clément charged Voltaire directly, was the result of the ‘contagious licence’ of the writings of ‘you and your philosophes’.71

Clément’s letter was relentless in its critique of Voltaire and the philosophes. It was not, however, exhaustive. For despite the fact that the ageing Voltaire resisted the temptation to engage the man he dubbed the ‘très inclement Clément’ in direct combat,

70 Ibid., 33–4.
71 Ibid., 34–41.
the prolific Dijonnais vented his resentment for the rest of his career, publishing eight more such Lettres (each weighing in at nearly three hundred pages a piece) and a hefty corpus of other writings that lashed out at his philosophic enemies.\footnote{Première-neuvième lettres à Monsieur de Voltaire par M. Clément (The Hague and Paris, 1773–6). In addition, see Clément's Anecdotes dramatiques (Paris, 1775); Satire sur la fausse philosophie (1778); Le Cri d'un citoyen: satire par M. Clément (Amsterdam, 1784); Saitres: par M. C*** (Amsterdam, 1786); Petit dictionnaire de la cour et de la ville, 2 vols. (London, 1788).}

In all of these works, Clément continued to develop the themes outlined above. He decried the hegemony of the philosophes over the world of letters, their fanaticism of reason, their intolerance. And like his two contemporaries, Gilbert and Sabatier, he was inclined to repeat the principal criticisms put forth by the dévots. The forms they employed, to be sure, were different; their style somewhat more engaging. But their substantive charges against the philosophes were frequently those levied in the magistrate’s arrêt or the theologian’s treatise: debauchery, sedition, greed, egotism, impiety, the dissolution of familial bonds, the rejection of tradition. This fact should not be surprising. For both Gilbert and Sabatier, as we have seen, received pensions from members of the parti dévot, and Clément, through his contacts at the Année littéraire, may well have obtained backing of this nature, although this is uncertain.\footnote{The efforts of the dévots to finance anti-philosophe literature deserves further research. Vergennes was clearly involved in this capacity, and the church, in the minutes of its 1782 general assembly, refers to a fund to subsidize worthy gens de lettres. See the séance of 6 December 1782 in Procès-verbal de l'assemblée-générale extraordinaire du clergé de France, tenue à Paris, au couvent des grands-augustins, en l'année mil sept cent quatre-vingt-deux (Paris, 1783).} In any case, whether bound directly by purse strings or by the prospect of future favour, these authors each possessed incentives to flavour their writings accordingly, inveighing against the philosophes with an eye to pleasing the men and women who could help them. To the philosophes, certainly, these writers were simply hypocrites and sore losers — impoverished ones at that — whose failure to achieve philosophic glory had sent them packing to the other side, for comfort and for gain.

Yet it would be wrong to dismiss these authors as simply three paid stooges of the throne and altar, as isolated misfits, or disgruntled hangers-on. Granted, dévots in the strict sense, they were not. Tainted by a philosophic past, they retained a primary allegiance to the world of letters that could translate quickly
enough into prickly independence.\textsuperscript{74} And more than a few of their writings were scattered with propositions of doubtful Catholic orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{75} But this notwithstanding, their hatred of the \textit{philosophes} was real and lasting. The volume and intensity of their literary output in this respect speaks for itself. It also highlights the fact that by screaming loudly, these writers could hope to be heard, earning, if not fame, then at least notoriety — and in certain circles — respect. There was, in short, a public for their brand of invective, as well as a community of like-minded authors who also defended religion, and attacked its enemies, with caustic ire. Popularizing anti-\textit{philosophe} themes while guarding varying degrees of independence from the throne and altar, these writers might best be thought of as \textit{dévot} ‘fellow travellers’. As opponents of the \textit{philosophes} waging war in the secular republic of letters, Gilbert, Sabatier and Clément were not alone.

As early as the 1750s, in fact, such figures as Abraham-Joseph Chaumeix (1730–90) and Charles Palissot (1730–1814) had demonstrated that relatively unknown men of letters could earn names for themselves, and a bit of cash to spare, by violently attacking \textit{philosophes}.\textsuperscript{76} Fréron perfected the art in the pages of the \textit{Année

\textsuperscript{74} When the well-connected abbé Beaudouin, grand master of the college of the Cardinal Lemoine, for example, wrongly accused Sabatier of cribbing material for the \textit{Trois siècles de notre littérature} from the abbé Martin, vicar of Saint-André des Arts, the abbé from Castres did not flinch from slandering the \textit{dévot} priest with the enmity he normally reserved for \textit{philosophes}. On this episode, which ended in a lawsuit heard at the Châtelet, see the entries for 7, 11, 17, 20 March 1779 in [Louis Petit de Bachaumont], \textit{Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres en France}, 36 vols. (London, 1777–89), xiii.

\textsuperscript{75} As a former canon of Savoy, the abbé Fontaine, observed in 1795, although Sabatier had admirably ‘sapped the dogmas of the new \textit{philosophie}’ and refuted dangerous ‘anti-monarchical politics’, his works were nevertheless riddled with principles contrary to the official orthodoxy of the church: \textit{Notes importantes sur l'ouvrage intitulé Pensées & observations morales & politiques, par M. l'Abbe Sabatier de Castres, par M. l'Abbe Fontaine} (Vienna, 1795), 4. For more on these writers’ tenuous relationship to the \textit{dévots}, see Belcroix, \textit{Gilbert}, 33; Milella, \textit{Il Gusto des Sabatier de Castre}, 11, 23.

\textsuperscript{76} Although later in life Palissot would reverse himself, slavishly seeking to make amends with the \textit{philosophes}, he earned his reputation as their enemy in the 1750s and 1760s. His play, \textit{Les Philosophes} (Paris, 1760), was a \textit{succès à scandale}, both in print and on the Parisian stage. See Hilde H. Freud, \textit{Palissot and Les Philosophes} (Diderot Studies, ix, Geneva, 1967). Chaumeix was an early Grub Street figure who, as Darnton himself acknowledges, sought to escape poverty by writing ‘anti-Enlightenment tracts for the bookseller Herissant’ in the 1750s: Robert Darnton, ‘A Police Inspector Sorts his Files’, in his \textit{The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History} (New York, 1985), 171. In 1758, Chaumeix published the \textit{Préjugés légitimes contre l'Encyclopédie et essai de réfutation de ce dictionnaire} (Paris, 1758), the first of many subsequent book-length attacks on the \textit{philosophes}. 
littéraire in the 1760s, and there were other old stalwarts about who were ready to blend conviction and ambition in explosive anti-philosophe concoctions: for example, the avocat Jean Soret (b. 1710), editor, with the père Hayer, of the journal La Religion vengée, ou réfutation des auteurs impies (1757–63), and author of scores of biting attacks on the philosophes;  
77 Jacques Cazotte (1719–92), composer of tales of the fantastic, for whom waging war on the philosophes was a lifelong obsession;  
78 Laurent Angliviel de La Beaumelle (1726–73), celebrated enemy of Voltaire and confidant of Fréron;  
79 Claude-Marie Giraud, the provincial physician whose scathing Épître du diable à monsieur de Voltaire went through over thirty editions between 1760 and the outbreak of the Revolution; Louis-Antoine de Caraciolli (1719–1803), Jacob Nicolas-Moreau (1717–1803), and others.  
80 By the early 1770s, younger men were following these leads. At Fréron’s table, Gilbert, Sabatier and Clément could commiserate with such like-minded contemporaries as the abbé Jean-Baptiste Grosier (1743–1823), a contributor to the Année littéraire who branched out on his own in 1779, founding the Journal de littérature, des sciences et des arts, a review devoted to combating the ‘league’ of philosophes who had worked to ‘for thirty years to enslave literature’.  
81 In the stalls of their favourite bookseller, Chez Crapart on the rue Vaugirard near the place Saint-Michel, these men might well have stumbled upon Fréron’s stepbrother, the journalist Thomas Royou (1741–92), the critic, Julien-Louis Geoffroy (1743–1814), or exchanged pleasantries with the celeb-

77 Soret was an avocat at the Paris parlement, a member of the Academy at Nancy and author of the Essai sur les moeurs (Paris, 1756), and Odes à la philosophie (Paris, 1782), among other works.  
78 Cazotte, who would be killed during the Terror for his violent counter-Revolutionary fervour and religious mysticism, allegedly ‘predicted’ the Revolution at a gathering in Paris in 1788. On this episode, and on Cazotte’s anti-philosophe sentiment and production, see George Décote, L’Itinéraire de Jacques Cazotte (1719–1792): de la fiction littéraire au mysticisme politique (Paris, 1984).  
79 On Beaumelle, see Charles Nisard, Les Ennemis de Voltaire (Desfontaines, Freron, La Beaumelle) (Paris, 1853).  
80 Épître du diable à monsieur de Voltaire was first published in 1760. Giraud, a medical doctor, hailed from Franche-Comté. The marquis of Caraciolli was a prolific secular defender of religion. In a characteristic vein, see his Le Cri de la vérité contre la séduction du siècle (Paris, 1765). Moreau, an important court propagandist and, after 1774, the royal historiographer of France, published his first infamous attack on the philosophes, the Nouveau mémoire pour servir à l’histoire des Cacouacs, in 1757.  
rated barrister, Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet (1736–94).82 The latter was a fiercely independent man, to be sure, one not always at peace with the church and the crown. But he enjoyed close ties with Royou and Sabatier, respected the Année littéraire and hated the ‘fanaticism’ of the philosophes with equal passion, making this enmity a standard theme of many pamphlets as well as of his highly influential journal, the Annales politiques, civiles, et littéraires du dix-huitième siècle.83 Ex-Jesuits, Royou and Geoffroy likewise edited a publication of their own, the mordant, thrice-monthly Journal de Monsieur, a review that made waging war on the monstrous philosophie of the day its raison d’être.84 They also contributed regularly to the Année littéraire. Finally, the drawing rooms of dévot patrons could serve all of these writers as settings in which to confer with seasoned veterans or to cultivate promising recruits:85 up-and-coming young men like Nicolas-

82 Nicolas Crapart, the owner of Chez Crapart, traded heavily in religious books. Upon his death in 1783, his son, Jean-Baptiste-Nicolas, assumed direction of the establishment. He was a friend of Thomas Royou and would later help the anti-philosophe journalist edit the counter-Revolutionary journal, Ami du roi, from 1790 to 1792. For a sampling of Chez Crapart’s holdings for the early 1770s, see the sales bulletin, Ouvrages proposés à un rabais considérable (Paris, 1770), preserved at the Newberry Library in Chicago.


84 See the introductory essay, ‘Tableau des révolutions de la littérature française (sic)’, Journal de Monsieur, Apr. 1781, i. Although the Journal de Monsieur was founded in 1779, Geoffroy and Royou did not assume editorial responsibility until 1781. They were the principal contributors to the journal during this period, though they obtained the help of other writers as well, including J. M. B. Clément. The Journal de Monsieur folded in 1783.

85 The world of dévot patrons, salon hostesses and benefactors is a subject ripe for investigation. Madame la Maréchale de Noailles, for one, was inclined to place her resources at the disposal of authors with the right convictions. There were others. It is worthy of note, furthermore, that Diderot’s celebrated Le Neveu de Rameau, begun in 1761, and reworked in 1773, 1778 and 1782, dwells at considerable length on the machinations of an anti-philosophe coterie. As Jean-Claude Bonnet observes in his illuminating introduction to the text, the story ‘is organized around the foundational

(cont. on p. 102)
Charles Salaun (b. 1745), who as early as 1774 was dedicating anti-philosophe screeds to the author of the *Trois siècles*; a reputable provincial writers like Jean-Antoine Rigoley de Juvigny (d. 1788), a defender of the great age of Louis XIV and avid opponent of the philosophes; or established partisans like Louis-Abel de Fontenai (1736–1806), another ex-Jesuit who edited the *Affiches, annonces, et avis divers*, a vitriolic weekly that dispensed anti-philosophe wisdom from Paris to the provinces from 1775 until the outbreak of the Revolution.

Not all of these figures were desperate men who had been forced to pull themselves up by the bootstraps with the tenacity of Gilbert, Sabatier and Clément. Royou and Geoffroy, for example, supplemented their income from writing by teaching classes at the prestigious Louis-le-Grand and Mazarin colleges; Grosier enjoyed the lucrative post of private secretary to Archbishop de Beaumont; and Rigoley was an honorary counsellor at the *parlement* at Metz. But what drove and united these men in any case was not economic determinism, or even social envy, but rather bitter, cultural resentment: the conviction that France had been hoodwinked by charlatans and was much the worse for it. They seethed at the philosophes’ monopoly of the cultural establishment and they articulated this rage with a nastiness that rivalled anything that came out of the depths of Grub Street. As the pro-philosophe Mémoires secrets noted with respect to Royou, the abbé was a ‘violently scene of the evil supper, [depicted] as a rite of anti-philosophie’. ‘Authors whose works are not read’ gather with other low-life — discredited actors, musicians, pamphleteers and hacks like the vagabond Rameau. Their ‘favourite target’ is the philosophes, and they spend their time dragging ‘genius’ through the mud, pillorying the likes of d’Alembert, Voltaire and Diderot himself. The portrait, of course, is stilted. But despite its exaggeration, it points to the existence of anti-philosophe counterparts to such well-known philosophic gatherings as those of the Baron d’Holbach. See Jean-Claude Bonnet, ‘Diderot l’oiseleur’, intro. to *Le Neveu de Rameau*, ed. Jean-Claude Bonnet (Paris, 1983), esp. 14–16.

86 See Salaun’s *Imitation de la neuvième satire de Boileau, adressée à M. l’Abbé Sabatier de Castre* (London and Paris, 1774), one of a number of his anti-philosophe productions.

87 Rigoley was in fact a member of the Academy at Dijon and author of the *Discours sur le progrès des lettres en France* (Paris, 1772); *De la décadence des lettres et des moeurs, depuis les grecs et les romains jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris, 1787); *Vie de Piron* (Paris, 1788) (a life of Alexis Piron). In addition, he edited Piron’s complete works, published in seven volumes in 1776.

88 In his most recent study of the eighteenth-century press, Jack Censer notes in a discussion of Fréron’s *Année littéraire* that the extremely violent personal attacks of that journal on the leading philosophes closely resemble those of Darnton’s Grub Streeters. Censer even speculates that the men of Grub Street may have been building on the ‘discourse of complaint’ originally perfected by Fréron and his colleagues. Regardless of point of origin, it is undeniable that the anti-philosophes shared a good

(contr. on p. 103)
hot-headed, bitter and caustic man of letters’. The same could have been said of many of his colleagues, and they no doubt would have congratulated each other on the compliment.

Indeed, they did. For sharing a common enemy, these men thought of themselves as comrades in arms. They reviewed each other’s works with partisan spirit, opened doors for one another when they could, scratched backs and obtained favours, all the while rallying together under the anti-philosophe banner. To fight against ‘the dogmas of the Encyclopedic school’, Grosier declared boldly in the preliminary discourse of his Journal de littérature, des science et des arts was to adhere ‘to a party’. Others agreed, including supporters of the philosophes themselves. As François Métra’s Correspondance secrète observed in an effort at neutrality in 1775, ‘French literature is today divided into two parties who hate each other as much as Jansenists and Molinists’. Three years later, the pro-philosophe pamphlet, the Satyre des satyres was declaring its allegiance more openly — and with somewhat greater alarm — decrying the ‘herd of vile and perverse writers’, lowly ‘enemies of philosophy’, who grouped together in defence of ‘despotism’ and ‘fanaticism’. The author singled out Freron, Sabatier, Grosier, Clément, Palissot, Gilbert and Linguet for particular vilification, noting with unease that lately it had become ‘fashionable’ to persecute philosophes — an extraordinary statement, seemingly, coming as it did in the year of Voltaire’s triumphant return to Paris! This notwithstanding, the
detail of the Grub Street style in their language, if not in their social origins. See Censer, French Press in the Age of Enlightenment, 107.

89 [De Bachaumont], Mémoires secrets, xxxiii, 47 (6 July 1783).

90 Grosier, ‘Idées préliminaires sur la critique’, Journal de littérature, des science et des arts, 1779, i, 27. In Grosier’s view his ‘party’ was one of ‘honesty, morals, the religion of [our] fathers and the laws of [our] country’. Sabatier made much the same point in the combative new preliminary discourse added to the 1779 edition of the Trois siècles (included in all subsequent printings). ‘To be partial against the philosophes’, Sabatier observed, was ‘to declare oneself for the love of order, for the general welfare, for submission to authority, for the maintenance of rules, for the glory of the Nation’: see his ‘Discours préliminaire au lecteur citoyen’, in his Les Trois siècles de la littérature française, ou Tableau de l’esprit de nos écrivains, depuis François I, jusqu’en 1781, par M. l’Abbé S*** de Castre, 5th edn, 3 vols. (The Hague, 1781), i, 84.


92 La Satyre des satyres (1778), 16–18, 27 n. 7. But perhaps we should not be so surprised. The Mémoires secrets commented amid the ferment accompanying Voltaire’s arrival in Paris that ‘Despite the great number of partisans and admirers of M. de Voltaire, he has even more enemies. He has against him all the party of the dévots and the clergy’: [de Bachaumont], Mémoires secrets, xi, 123 (28 Feb. 1778).
Correspondance littéraire was also expressing similar concerns, observing just months after Voltaire’s ‘apotheosis’ that ‘pamphlets of all kinds against philosophie and the philosophes multiply every day’. ‘The goal of these writings’, the journal lamented, was ‘to accuse the sect of Encyclopediasts for all our disorders, for all our woes: general depravation, the excesses of libertinage, the decline of taste, the progress of luxury, the weakening of all the orders of the State, bad harvests and the increase in the price of bread’.  

One must, of course, treat such comments with circumspection. For supporters of the philosophes were ever-inclined to exaggerate the strength of their opponents, whipping up the troops before that half-mythical beast, the infâme. By their own constant admission, moreover, the anti-philosophes were fighting a losing battle. As Clément lamented in 1786, the league of philosophes had largely succeeded in imposing its maxims on the morality of the century. Those who continued to fight for the ‘old taste and morals were scattered, without leaders, without credit and without honours’. Yet the anti-philosophes, too, were prone to rhetorical exaggeration. And while there is no need to deny the very real gains made by the philosophes over the course of the century — their conquest of the academies, their seduction of the salons, their garnering of sinecures and honorific posts, their influence over public opinion — it is also true that these same successes were not viewed with passive resignation by all. A recalcitrant minority refused to accept the fashionable learning of the century.

How great were the numbers of these anti-philosophe dissenters? How extensive was their influence? Who, exactly, were their readers? To believe the contemporary editor of a selected edition of Sabatier’s correspondence, their audience was broad. In his view, secular enemies of ‘modern philosophie’ like Sabatier were able to attract a readership that few theologians could. For ‘even the most able’ religious writers, the editor continued, even those ‘most immune to technical jargon’, were generally read only by other ‘ecclesiastics and dévots’. Sabatier’s writings, by contrast, were read by people of ‘all classes: men of the church, men of letters, men of the world, women and even the most frivolous

93 Correspondance littéraire, philosophique, et critique, ed. Tourneux, xii, 105–6 (May 1778). Revealingly, the publication of Clément’s Satire sur la fausse philosophie provided the impetus for the tirade.

94 Clément, Satires: par M. C***, 68.
minds’. Needless to say, this was a biased assessment. None the less there are other indications that the editor did not exaggerate unduly. An extant subscription list for the Année littéraire for the years 1774–6, for example, shows not only a high percentage of noble and clerical readers (20.1 and 17.2 per cent, respectively), but also of women (18.9 per cent), the liberal professions (16.6 per cent) and artisans (8.3 per cent). There is strong suggestion, furthermore, that the affordable Affiches, annonces, et avis divers, which under Fontenai’s editorship was consistently hostile to the philosophes, enjoyed extensive circulation during the last decade and a half of the ancien régime. And the Journal de Monsieur was being printed in press runs of between 470 and 750 copies for early 1782, respectable though not overwhelming figures for a journal whose editor the pro-philosophe Mémoires secrets sought to write off as barking with the ‘wildly satirical’ cries of a ‘mad dog’. For their part, Sabatier, Clément and Gilbert enjoyed considerable individual dissemination. The unsparingly anti-philosophe Trois siècles alone went through at least six editions by 1789. And though Sabatier’s other writings were not reprinted as rapidly, there were many of them, published in London, Amsterdam and Paris. Clément, too, could boast tremendous productivity and, when he and the infamously anti-philosophe Charles Palissot founded their own bi-monthly in 1777, the Journal français, the two were able to reach a subscription audience of 900 in their first year. Gilbert, finally, lay claim to his own fifteen minutes of fame. With the publication of the ‘Dix-huitième siècle’, the first of three separate editions, Métra’s Correspondance secrète observed that the satirical poem had found such great favour and pleased so ‘infinitely’, that it was ‘extremely

98 Archives Nationales, TS54695; as cited in Chisick, Ami du Roi, 20 n. 47; [de Bachaumont], Mémoires secrets, xxi, 166 (2 Nov. 1782). The reference was to Royou.
99 Philip Stewart, ‘Le Journal français’, in Sgard (ed.), Dictionnaire des journaux, ii, 677. This figure, however, dropped significantly the following year, and the journal folded in 1778.
widespread in our societies’. Indeed, the journal itself deigned to print it. Primed for this production, Gilbert’s audience gobbled up his subsequent satirical work, demanding four separate editions of the author’s anti-philosophe poem of 1778, ‘Mon apologie’, in the year of its publication alone.

These are tantalizing hints and suggestions, but admittedly insufficient figures in need of harder data. Still, they point unequivocally to a market for works that dared to defend religion — and to attack the philosophes — in something other than a stentorian, theological style. Increasingly, the dévots themselves were coming to appreciate the potential benefits of such an approach. As the rabidly conservative Dominican, Charles-Louis Richard, conceded with regret in 1785, the majority of the Christian apologists of the century had ‘by and large touched only a certain number of people for whom they [were] the least necessary’: that is, other theologians. They were, consequently, ‘useless to the multitude who, without arms and without defences, succumbs rapidly to Philosophie’. But taking a cue from the more accommodating style of the likes of the authors examined in this article, Richard and others were drafting works ‘conceived with the design of putting in the hands of all those who know how to read . . . victorious weapon[s] against the assaults of this turbulent Philosophie’. Again, as Mornet so aptly appreciated, there were defenders of the church capable of combating the philosophes on their own terms, producing ‘manuals of counter-philosophy’ that were ‘easy to read’, sentimental, ironic, satirical, even funny. If Richard’s own Exposition de la doctrine de la philosophie moderne, a primer chronicling the horrors of modern philosophy, did not entirely fit this description, others did (at least in the minds of their eighteenth-century readers): works such as the abbé Philippe-Louis Gérard’s, Le Comte de Valmont: ou les égarements de la raison, a virulently anti-philosophe novel published in at least seven editions between 1774 and 1784; Berton de Crillon’s, twice-published Mémoires philosophiques du Baron De ***; the melodramatic tale of a young man saved by faith from the clutches of a philosophe conspiracy; and the abbé Barruel’s epistolary novel, Les Helviennes: ou lettres provinciales philosophiques, published in

100 [Métra], Correspondance secrète, politique et littéraire, i, 140 (29 July 1775).
101 Charles-Louis Richard, Exposition de la doctrine des philosophes modernes (Malines, 1785), vii.
102 Mornet, Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française, 207–11.
at least five augmented editions between 1781 and 1788.\textsuperscript{103} There were others as well.

Clearly, further research is needed to explore in greater detail what was by all accounts a significant movement of resistance to the dominant trend of the century. Too long overlooked by historians, the implications of this anti-\textit{philosophe} resistance, moreover, are of potentially great significance. For one, opening up the closed world of the counter-Enlightenment promises to shed light on the Enlightenment itself. Just as historians have taken to depicting the revolutionary process in terms of a continuum of force and counter-force, of Revolution and Counter-Revolution, the Enlightenment, too, I would argue, must be viewed in this manner.\textsuperscript{104} In fact, the very construction of the idea of an Enlightenment was itself arguably first a product of that movement’s opponents. In this connection, the claim put forward most recently by Roger Chartier, that the Enlightenment was only constructed after the fact — ‘invented’ by the Revolution in an effort to give the rupture of 1789 paternity and legitimation — seems unconvincing.\textsuperscript{105} For in all of their writings against the \textit{philosophes}, the authors of the sort examined in this article displayed the tendency to reify \textit{philosophie}. They spoke collectively of the ‘doctrine philosophique’, of ‘philosophisme’, of the ‘philosophie de notre siècle’. And they continually lumped together the standard figures of the pantheon, those Clément termed the ‘Encyclopedic cabal’: Voltaire, d’Alembert, Diderot,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{104} See, for example, Donald Sutherland, \textit{France, 1789–1815: Revolution and Counter-revolution} (New York, 1985).
\item \textsuperscript{105} Chartier, \textit{Cultural Origins of the French Revolution}, trans. Cochrane, 5. As Chartier writes, ‘[S]hould we not consider . . . that it was the Revolution that invented the Enlightenment by attempting to root its legitimacy in a corpus of texts and founding authors, reconciled and united, beyond their extreme differences, by their preparation of a rupture with the old world. When they brought together (not without debate) a pantheon of ancestors including Voltaire, Rousseau, Mably, and Raynal, when they assigned a radically critical function to philosophy (if not to all the Philosophes), the revolutionaries constructed a continuity that was primarily a process of justification and search for paternity’ (ibid.). Chartier is drawing here on the work of Thomas Schleich, \textit{Aufklärung und Revolution: Die Wirkungsgeschichte Gabriel Bonnot de Mablys in Frankreich} (1740–1914) (Stuttgart, 1981). Much the same point is also made by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Rolf Reichardt in their ‘Philosophe, Philosophie’, in \textit{Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich, 1680–1820}, 10 vols. (Munich, 1985–), iii.
\end{itemize}
Grimm, Marmontel, La Harpe, Thomas, St-Lambert, Raynal and others. To be sure, the anti-*philosophes* could be deeply personal in their attacks. None the less, they drew few fine distinctions and were little inclined to engage specific authors in sustained and detailed debate. Rather, they asserted boldly, brashly and sweepingly, accusing the *philosophes*, collectively, of spreading atheism, moral turpitude, social dissolution and political unrest. To the authors examined here, *philosophie* was the sum of its worst parts, a coherent, unified doctrine that was ravaging society from top to bottom. Well before Kant had even asked, ‘What is Enlightenment?’, the anti-*philosophes* had answered him — darkness, masquerading as light. That this portrait was hardly just did not detract in the slightest from the power it would exert over the minds of many Europeans well down into the nineteenth, and even the twentieth, centuries.

There was, however, one figure frequently missing from the anti-*philosophes*’ pantheon of scourges: Jean-Jacques Rousseau. His absence is noteworthy. Clément, as we have seen, benefited from the Genevan’s kindness when imprisoned at the Fort Evêque. He did not forget it, remaining faithful to the ‘eloquent Rousseau’ until the end of his life. Sabatier, who devoted a chapter of his *Tableau philosophique* to chronicling Voltaire’s unjust slander of the Genevan philosopher, admitted perfunctorily that he ‘subscribe[d] . . . to the just condemnations that Rousseau’s works had attracted’, doubtless a reference the Sorbonne’s censure of *Émile* in 1762. Yet he also defended Rousseau, describing him in the *Trois siècles* as the ‘most manly, the most profound, the most sublime writer of the century’, despite his ‘paradoxes’ and ‘errors’. On the whole, Sabatier was inclined to treat him as a case apart. Gilbert, too, expressed admiration for Rousseau, as did many other anti-*philosophes*.106

Such indulgence should not be surprising, at least not any more so than that evinced by the literary hacks studied by Darnton.107 For the notoriously contradictory Rousseau breathed as much fire against *philosophes* as he did against ‘social élites’. Indeed, at times he could sound positively like the Sorbonne censors who had

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107 As Darnton comments, ‘the men of Grub Street saw Jean-Jacques as one of their own’: Darnton, ‘High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature’, 35.
condemned his Émile. In his final work, published posthumously as the Dialogues or Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques, he accused the 'sect' of philosophes of not only conspiring against him personally, but also of plotting more generally to co-opt public opinion and rule in tyranny over a dissipated France. He denounced their 'haughty despotism', their 'intolérance philosophique', likening their profane order to the inquisition, which 'burn[ed] without shame all who dared believe in God'. He accused the philosophes of teaching the most extreme form of egoism, of eradicating distinctions between vice and virtue, of propagating materialism, atheism and vice.\footnote{Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques, in Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnébin and Marcel Raymond et al., 5 vols. (Paris, 1959–95), i, 890–1, 967–8. Rousseau discusses the plot in detail in both the second dialogue (esp. 888–92) and the third (esp. 964–74).}

The Dialogues, it is true, written at the end of Rousseau's life, were the product of a mind suffering from physical infirmity, and probably clinical paranoia. Nevertheless, their critique of the philosophes was consistent with the writings of one who, since the publication of the Discours sur les arts et les sciences (1750), had equated the advent of lumières with decline in virtue and social corruption.\footnote{The Dialogues, moreover, were not Rousseau's first swipe at the philosophes. For other hostile caricatures, see, for example, Book IV of Émile, trans. Allan Bloom (New York, 1979), 312–13.} His criticism of pride and egotism (amour propre), his denunciations of luxe and depravity, and his constant self-fashioning as an outsider — a man more sinned against than sinning — commended him, it is true, to the proto-Jacobin hacks of Grub Street. But for similar reasons, the writers under consideration here also saw in Rousseau a kindred spirit. As we have seen, they too shared a sense of alienation, the feeling that they were at odds with the tenor of the century. And their condemnation of the century's depravity and dissolution, its devotion to luxe and rejection of virtue, clearly drew on Rousseauian themes.

Did this present a contradiction to the anti-philosophes' claims to defend both the throne and the altar? Perhaps. Yet it is too often forgotten that for all the classical-republican flavour of Rousseau's thought, he also enjoyed a strong following among avowedly Catholic, monarchist writers. Both prior to 1789, and well after it, when Counter-Revolutionaries sought to wrest the divine Jean-Jacques from the men, they claimed, who had wrongfully co-opted him, many otherwise-opponents of the philosophes.
found in Rousseau’s religion of the heart a potent weapon against the prevailing rationalism of the century.\(^{110}\) By quoting selectively and discounting his more ‘enlightened’ and anticlerical propensities, they set Rousseau apart from the other ‘incrédules’, echoing his dissatisfaction with a corrupt age, as well as his indictment of the \textit{philosophes}.\(^{111}\) It is likely that the authors under consideration here struck something of a similar compromise.

If further research into the world of the opponents of the \textit{philosophes} will thus help to flesh out the contours of the Enlightenment itself, it also promises to lend important insight into the origins of the Right in France, and so of the Counter-Revolution.\(^{112}\) Timothy Tackett has recently shown in an ambitious new study that vehement opposition to the Revolution came earlier and more forcefully than previously thought.\(^{113}\) It is a demonstration, as he himself acknowledges elsewhere, that begs the question of the ideological origins of this resistance.\(^{114}\) That question, of course, cannot be explored in any detail here. But it should be noted in closing that the language of opposition to the \textit{philosophes} — with its insistent warnings, its sweeping generalizations and its Manichean dichotomies between good and evil — lent itself extremely well to the language of revolutionary opposi-


\(^{111}\) The indulgence that many pre-Revolutionary Catholics, ‘in every other respect intimate friends of the right principles’, showed towards Rousseau prompted one commentator, the former Jesuit and orthodox \textit{dévot}, François-Xavier Feller, to remind his colleagues in his \textit{Journal historique et littéraire} in 1781 that one could be ‘an enemy of nasty, idiotic men without being oneself constantly reasonable’. The enemy of one’s enemies, in other words, was not necessarily a friend. See ‘Remarques sur la difference qu’on prétend mettre entre J. J. Rousseau & les autres incrédules’, \textit{Journal historique et littéraire}, 1 Apr. 1781, 580–4.

\(^{112}\) This is a point signalled by J. M. Roberts in an important article ‘The French Origins of the “Right”’, \textit{Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.}, 5th ser., xxiii (1973). His characteristically perceptive observations, however, have yet to be fully explored. As both a model for the fruitful connections to be drawn between opposition to \textit{philosophie} and the origins of the European right, as well as a suggestive point of reference for comparison with France, see Klaus Epstein, \textit{The Genesis of German Conservatism} (Princeton, 1966).

\(^{113}\) Timothy Tackett, \textit{Becoming a Revolutionary: The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture} (1789–1790) (Princeton, 1996).

tion. In the *philosophes*, Counter-Revolutionaries found a perfect scapegoat for the woes that had beset their country, the perfect cause of the perversion that even the most reactionary extremists conceded had defiled French institutions. In their repeated calls for a return to the ancien régime 'cleansed of its abuses', these men and women could argue that the *philosophes* had sullied their great nation, which, formerly, had functioned in Edenic perfection.

Even before the first deputies to the Estates General had arrived in Versailles, anti-*philosophes*-cum-Counter-Revolutionaries were reading the events of 1789 as the realization of fears they had been voicing for some time. As the archbishop of Lyon, Yves-Alexandre de Marbeuf, stressed in a pastoral letter (*mandement*) issued in January 1789, the 'general subversion threat[ening] all political, civil and religious institutions' was a direct result of the long chain of writings produced by the authors who adorned themselves with the title of *philosophe*. Writing in the same month, the abbé Barruel, too, ascribed the fermentation in Paris to the work of the *philosophes*, a 'sect' that had been 'rising up for over half a century'. He chastised his countrymen for failing to heed the insistent admonitions of the *philosophes' enemies, and warned of 'ruin' to come. Others were soon to follow suit, including none other than the abbé Sabatier, who berated the *philosophes* in his *Journal politique-national* in July of 1789 before emigrating at the end of the month. Gilbert, of course, was dead, but a republican pamphleteer writing in the Year VIII had no doubts as to where his allegiance would have lain. He decried the Lorraine poet as the 'master' of all those scribblers who had fought the Revolution — and the *philosophes* — since

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116 'L'Influence des moeurs et du philosophisme sur les événemens actuels', *Journal ecclésiastique*, Jan. 1789. This article, along with two others included in the April edition of the *Journal ecclésiastique*, was published by Barruel in pamphlet form as *Le Patriote véridique: ou discours sur les vraies causes de la révolution actuelle* (Paris, 1789).

117 See, for example, the *Journal-politique nationale*, no. 5. Edited with Rivarol, the journal was one of the first organs of the counter-Revolutionary press. See William Murray, *The Right-Wing Press in the French Revolution: 1789–92* (Woodbridge, 1986), 12–17. Sabatier also attributed the Revolution to the *philosophes* in his 1790 pamphlet, *Lettre sur les causes de la corruption du goût et des moeurs et sur le charlatanisme des philosophes du XVIIIe siècle* (Aix-la-Chapelle, 1790). He pursued this theme for the rest of his life.
its onset.\footnote{118} He could count Clément among their number, for the venerable anti-*philosophe* emerged in 1796 to bash the *philosophes* anew, drumming in his royalist *Journal littéraire* to the self-satisfied tune of ‘I told you so’.\footnote{119} For their part, Grosier, Royou, Geoffroy and Fontenai emerged as four of the most influential journalists of the Counter-Revolutionary press.\footnote{120}

This is not to say, of course, that all of those who fought the *philosophes* prior to 1789 necessarily became Counter-Revolutionaries. Clearly, this was not the case. And as Chartier cautions, one should beware of overly simplistic theories of reader reception. The messages of anti-*philosophe* were not graven into the ‘soft wax’ of readers’ minds. For like the writers studied by Darnton, the authors of the sort presented in this essay possessed no ‘coherent political program’, no preconceived platform or slate.\footnote{121} Rather, they shared a set of cultural concerns that could be channelled in different directions. Given the points of convergence with those authors on the other side of the pavement, it should not be surprising that some in their midst bought their peace with the Revolution. It should be even less surprising, however, that many did not, reading the events after 1789 as the realization of their worst fears — the outcome of a war they had waged, and lost, during the *ancien régime*. For if, as Darnton contends, the ‘crude pamphleteering of Grub Street . . . expressed the passion of men who hated the Old Regime in their guts’, then the writings examined here expressed the passions of men who hated the *philosophes* with equal fervour. And if, as Darnton continues, it was from ‘such visceral hatred that the extreme Jacobin revolution found its authentic voice’, then it was from the writings of anti-*philosophe*, men such as Gilbert, Sabatier and Clément, that the Counter-Revolution, in part, found its own.\footnote{122}

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\footnote{118}[Michel Cubières Palmézeaux], \textit{Le Défenseur de la philosophie: ou réponse à quelques sатires dirigées contre la fin du 18e siècle, satire, par un ami des arts, des lettres et des moeurs} (Paris, an VIII, 1800), 19.

\footnote{119}See the recurrent anti-*philosophe* tirades in the *Journal littéraire*, published in forty-four numbers from 13 July 1796 to 29 July 1797. Apparently, Clément guarded a cautious silence during the early years of the Revolution, for I have been unable to find any trace of activity on his part.

\footnote{120}On these men’s active careers, see Murray, \textit{Right-Wing Press in the French Revolution}; Jeremy Popkin, \textit{The Right Wing Press in France, 1792–1800} (Chapel Hill, 1980).

\footnote{121}Darnton, ‘High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature’, 37.

\footnote{122}Ibid., 40.