

## **RIEN APPRIS? CHILDREN'S ÉMIGRÉ NOVELS, FRENCH ÉMIGRÉ SCHOOLS IN BRITAIN, AND THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION IN EXILE<sup>1</sup>**

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*The limits of Talleyrand's pernicious (and partly apocryphal) dictum that the émigrés had "learnt nothing" and "forgotten nothing" become obvious with regard to émigré education. Educating their children as France's future elites after the imagined Restoration was a persistent concern for French émigrés after 1789. Under difficult living conditions and with unclear prospects of political exile, education became a consolidating strategy for combating the Revolution with pedagogy. The first part of this article discusses the social expectations of émigré education as reflected in children's émigré novels by Stéphanie de Genlis, Lucy Peacock and Mary Pilkington. The second part explores how British émigré schools put such expectations into practice. The social composition, educational programs and public engagement of émigré schools reveal their pivotal role in émigré community life, involving priests, women, writers, politicians, local supporters – and children. The article shows how education helped to strengthen the émigrés' identity and mobilise their hosts for the ideological, military and humanitarian struggle against the Revolution.*

Many high-ranking émigrés found themselves in a desperate situation once they left revolutionary France. Given the disastrous outcomes of the 1792-93 military campaigns and the 1795 Quiberon expedition, the option of combating the Revolution

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with arms faded away. Royalist émigrés' primary goals – bringing about the downfall of the revolutionary regime, restoring the monarchy or at least lawfully returning to France – were not realistically achievable in the short term. Throughout the 1790s, absence from France raised the question of how to deal with the children of émigrés.<sup>2</sup> The task of émigré education consisted of bringing up young members of the old elite in a foreign environment without losing the connection with the pre-revolutionary hierarchy of French society. For émigré nobles, education had to fill both the topographical gap created by their distance from France and their genealogical roots and estates, and also the socio-political gap resulting from the abolition of nobility and its privileges in 1790. They could only hope for a lasting political and social victory over the Revolution and its republican principles if they succeeded in transmitting “the true laws of our fatherland”<sup>3</sup> to their children and defending them against revolutionary ideas of egalitarian education.

This article explores how, for émigrés from noble families, education became a means of survival in exile, and how émigré schools became a platform for political engagement as well as for pedagogical initiatives and public and private charity. Education strengthened personal networks both within the émigré communities and with local supporters. It provided employment for priests and for other émigrés. Politics was a key factor: education was an instrument for mobilising émigré communities beyond military action and the propaganda war against the French Republic. It provided an opportunity to combat the Revolution away from the battlefield and served as a vehicle for political solidarity between émigré communities and their host societies.

In planning their children's education, émigrés had to prepare for two alternative scenarios. In the optimistic one, young émigrés had to be made ready for their return to France by endowing them with the ‘right’ political principles. In the pessimistic scenario, educational activities had to allow for the possibility that young émigrés might spend their entire lives in exile.<sup>4</sup> This obliged high-ranking émigrés to address the problem of subsistence and to consider socially acceptable occupations their children could be educated for. Edmund Burke, an

<sup>2</sup> French legislation prevented all émigrés over fourteen years' old from re-entering France; see Jennifer Ngairé Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007) 99-125.

<sup>3</sup> Louis XVIII to Guy Toussaint Jules Carron, 12 May 1797, quoted in Charles François de Lubersac de Livron, *Journal historique et religieux de l'émigration et déportation du clergé de France en Angleterre* (London: chez l'auteur, 1802) 114.

<sup>4</sup> See also Juliette Reboul, *French Emigration to Great Britain in Response to French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) 202.

influential advocate for French émigrés in Britain, underlined the pivotal function of education in providing émigré children with a future:

The young persons are in very peculiar circumstances. They are all born in an honourable station. [...] At the same time they are the most compleatly destitute of the human race, and the most helpless; and the more so, perhaps, from the circumstances of their birth. They have not only a fortune to make; but even a country to seek; as to the first, they do not possess one of the usual means of advancing themselves. Every thing must depend wholly upon their personal qualifications.<sup>5</sup>

Faced with these challenges, émigré schools turned to *ancien régime* models. The schools committed themselves to transmitting French aristocratic values to the younger generation.

The ideological motives for émigré education and the theme of childhood spent in exile figure prominently in children's literature of the time. Children's novels written by French émigrés and their British contemporaries provide an access point for understanding the cultural and social norms of émigré education since they closely resonate with the pedagogical programs of émigré schools. Despite the émigrés' divergent political views and their cultural differences from their host societies, the novels reveal a basic consensus on the urgency of education in exile as well as on the appropriate behaviour and knowledge that France's future elites were to acquire.

### Children's Émigré Novels as Educational Models

Children's émigré novels of the 1790s document a growing public awareness of the living conditions of children in exile. They confirm the "harmonising effect" Katherine Astbury observes in the European production of novels in the period of the French Revolution.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of whether the authors were émigrés or not, the novels are linked by an empathetic approach to their subject and they present cases of successful or failed educational attempts during exile.

<sup>5</sup> Burke to Jean Marin Maraine, 2 May 1796, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Thomas Wellsted Copeland, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958-78) 9:5.

<sup>6</sup> Katherine Astbury, "The Trans-National Dimensions of the Émigré Novel during the French Revolution," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 23 (2011): 801-802.

Following Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis's famous epistolary novel *Les petits émigrés* (1798),<sup>7</sup> these works were particularly successful in the British literary market, reflecting the high number of émigrés in Britain. Genlis's novel is largely composed of the correspondence of émigré children from noble families with different political orientations. The letters are centred on the young Édouard d'Armilly, whose family go first to the Austrian Netherlands before moving to neutral Switzerland, where they make a living from trade and bricolage. Through the prism of daily life in exile, the letters deal with different aspects of education, presenting it as a basis for a virtuous life even under adverse living conditions.

Madame de Genlis's reputation as governess of the children of the Duc d'Orléans undoubtedly contributed to the success of her novel, making it one of the most influential children's books in Europe at that time.<sup>8</sup> The popularity of *Les petits émigrés* was also due to its double message. While it discusses education under the unfavourable circumstances of exile, the presentation of a fictitious correspondence between children also dramatises the political divergences within the émigré community.

Advancing her own preference for a constitutional monarchy in post-revolutionary France, Genlis depicts the children of constitutionalists as well-educated role models. By contrast, young royalists rooted in their families' attachment to the *ancienne constitution* betray their intellectual superficiality through their ludicrously neglected orthography, while republican sympathisers are shown as lacking moral steadfastness. Although the children's opinions reflect parental influences,<sup>9</sup> Genlis carefully avoids exposing their convictions to general ridicule and upholds the aristocratic consensus on socially adequate behaviour and manners. In the novel, even the most arduous defenders of the *ancien régime* to some extent preserve the dignity associated with their former

<sup>7</sup> Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis, *Les petits émigrés ou Correspondance de quelques enfans: Ouvrage fait pour servir à l'éducation de la jeunesse*, 2 vols. (Paris/Berlin: s.n., 1798).

<sup>8</sup> Adriana Craciun, *British Women Writers and the French Revolution: Citizens of the World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 148; see also Francis Marcoin, "Les Petits Émigrés, entre Lumières et romantisme," *Madame de Genlis: Littérature et éducation*, ed. Martine Reid and François Bessire (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publications des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2008) 69-82.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew O. Grenby, "Very Naughty Doctrines: Children, Children's Literature, Politics and the French Revolution Crisis," *The French Revolution and the British Novel in the Romantic Period*, ed. Anthony D. Cousins, Dani Napton and Stephanie Russo (New York: Peter Lang, 2011) 23. The different characters in this novel are analysed by Regina Köthe, *Vor der Revolution geflohen: Exil im literarischen Diskurs nach 1789* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 1997) 160-81.



positions. This social integrity prevented the scandal that the author's well-known political positions could have easily provoked among French royalists and underlines the fact that education was primarily associated with the higher ranks of society.<sup>10</sup>

Genlis's programmatic emphasis on education as a primary concern in exile spread across the French diaspora and was vividly echoed among foreign publics as well. In Britain, her audience was not limited to constitutionalist sympathisers. Intransigent opponents of the Revolution such as Edmund Burke or William Pitt's coalition government had advocated similar ideas on the education and integration of young émigrés even before the publication of her novel. Several British writers followed Genlis's model in their own émigré novels for children, with Lucy Peacock's *The Little Emigrant* (1799) and Mary Pilkington's *New Tales of the Castle* (1800) as the best-known examples.

In Peacock's novel, Annette, the young shipwrecked émigré protagonist, is picked up by a Suffolk girl and integrated into the family of a curate. The girls spend their time teaching each other their languages and other skills. The setting then shifts to London where Annette finds traces of her parents. Happily reunited, the émigré family decides to live next to the curate in the countryside. Pilkington's novel, whose title alludes to Stéphanie de Genlis's *Tales of the Castle* (1785; the French original: *Les Veillées du château, ou Cours de morale à l'usage des enfants*, 1784) presents the reader with another French noble family living in a Welsh castle lent to them by a nobleman. Throughout the novel, scenes from a daily life dedicated to agriculture and spent in close proximity to the local population are interspersed with tales intended to develop children's moral judgement through good and bad examples. The tales strongly advocate Burkean values such as patriarchy and property.<sup>11</sup>

To a certain extent, political preferences also shine through these texts – Peacock's émigré families show more political flexibility than Pilkington's aristocratic-royalist protagonists.<sup>12</sup> More importantly, the attention given to appropriate political behaviour is linked to a self-fulfilling appraisal of British hospitality towards the émigrés and goes along with a strongly articulated anti-Jacobin bias. As Adriana Craciun suggests, children's novels complemented similar positions in adult literature and made a direct contribution to politicisation

<sup>10</sup> Gabriel de Broglie, *Madame de Genlis* (Paris: Perrin, 1985) 302.

<sup>11</sup> Craciun, *British Women Writers* 148.

<sup>12</sup> Craciun, *British Women Writers* 148.

against revolution.<sup>13</sup> Even if this argument has been nuanced by Matthew Grenby's emphasis on continuity with established agendas of education,<sup>14</sup> emigration novels were a powerful instrument for preventing "the apathy of victims"<sup>15</sup> and containing the risk of marginalising the émigrés in favour of the revolutionaries.

The variety of relationships that émigré children establish with their hosts in British novels demonstrated to readers how morally beneficial solidarity with uprooted young émigrés could be. In this sense, émigré novels provided role models for how to behave towards them in real-life encounters. Both Peacock and Pilkington depict the contingency of an émigré existence suspended between the everyday experience of exile and the expectation of a restored monarchy in France and/or a long-awaited return home. Overt political struggles are put on hold as shared values such as integrity, loyalty and moderation are emphasised as practical solutions for dealing with the day-to-day challenge of exile.

Following Genlis's example, British novels about emigration also present aristocratic émigré families willing to forget "both titles and estates" in favour of a "nobility of mind" inspired by Enlightenment thinking but also shaped by the experience of material deprivation.<sup>16</sup> Their precarious social rank due to the loss of their possessions in France is compensated for by gains in moral virtue and by affectionate relations with benevolent natives. The grounds of aristocratic identity shift from social privilege to standards of morality, which are complemented by the idea of "honest industry"<sup>17</sup> as the material basis for a dignified existence in "rational and tranquil pleasure."<sup>18</sup>

However, humility and industry did not imply egalitarianism. Social boundaries are only loosened as far as necessary and concessions remain linked to clearly defined situations. The endings of the novels anticipate the restoration of social hierarchies, a time when the aristocratic families scattered across Europe will be finally reunited. All concessions in rank and living conditions are shown as temporary, and the novels express the hope that former status will be regained.

<sup>13</sup> Craciun, *British Women Writers* 148; Adriana Craciun, "Citizens of the World: Émigrés, Romantic Cosmopolitanism, and Charlotte Smith," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 29 (2007): 173.

<sup>14</sup> Grenby 16, 28-29.

<sup>15</sup> Genlis 1:279.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Pilkington, *New Tales of the Castle or, the Noble Emigrants, a Story of Modern Times* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1800) 7.

<sup>17</sup> Pilkington 23, 51.

<sup>18</sup> Lucy Peacock, *The Little Emigrant: A Tale Interspersed with Moral Anecdotes and Instructive Conversations* (London: S. Low, 1799) 196.

With regard to relations with the British hosts, educational pursuits are shown as a vehicle for integration, based on solid knowledge of the English language and 'national character.' The protagonists in the novels are well aware of the need to integrate. Not only do they all progress in English at an impressive speed, inviting readers to compare them to 'real' émigrés, but many also have anglophile parents or even a partly English family lineage that provides additional motivation for learning.<sup>19</sup> National prejudices are systematically downplayed, not only because they would have added to the pernicious scenario of involuntary permanent exile but also because young émigrés are intended to serve as a universal political vaccine, preventing harm to the "truest rights of men" which elevate their British asylum above the perceived revolutionary anarchy of the *droits de l'homme*.<sup>20</sup>

### Education in Practice: British Émigré Schools

The literary discourse on émigré children relates directly to the experience of émigré life. The remainder of this article will examine how ideas of aristocratic cohesion, steadfastness and compliance with the necessities of exile are transmitted through institutions of émigré education in London and the surrounding areas. During the early years of the revolutionary emigration, education took place largely within individual families, who either arranged private lessons or hired a full-time tutor. Émigré parents in less favourable circumstances – both fathers and mothers – taught their children themselves, which also proved to be a means of avoiding the inevitable idleness of everyday life in exile. Alternatively, children were sent to English boarding schools in accordance with the former French custom of placing them in ecclesiastical *collèges*.<sup>21</sup>

Over the years, however, and especially after the Quiberon Bay disaster, exile turned out to be longer than the limited time span of childhood. Émigré children became adolescents or young adults in serious need of guidance and orientation. Diminishing financial resources and the loss of family members in the war risked the neglect of an educational program befitting the noble rank. A growing desire to overcome provisional solutions created a rising demand for émigré schools.

<sup>19</sup> Peacock 19; Pilkington 86-87, 130. See also Katharina Rennhak, "Tropes of Exile in the 1790s: English Women Writers and French Emigrants," *European Romantic Review*, 17 (2006): 577-78.

<sup>20</sup> Maria Julia Young, *Adelaide and Antonine, or The Emigrants: A Tale* (London: J.P. Coghlan, 1793) 13.

<sup>21</sup> Kirsty Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution: Émigrés in London, 1789-1802* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 100-103.

The first schools in and around London were set up in the mid-1790s, often with support from high-ranking local patrons. In Hammersmith, for example, it was the Marchioness of Buckingham who took the initiative on behalf of orphans and other émigré children, all of whom lacked the material means that would have assured them a living and an education. By attending the school, they were offered better prospects than their present circumstances gave them reason to expect. Similar institutions were created in Kensington, Chelsea and Somers Town, along the capital's periphery rather than in the main émigré quarters in central London.<sup>22</sup> The reasons for the separation of the children from their families were probably financial as well as pedagogical. Children's émigré novels suggest that education in an urban setting imposed a heavy financial burden on parents and was thought to expose children to the danger of moral corruption.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to their educational function, the schools had an impact on their social environments. They provided employment opportunities, especially for clergy who lacked the resources for subsistence and turned to teaching as a way to earn a living.<sup>24</sup> In some cases, notably the schools of the Abbé Carron, members of the nobility of both sexes also worked as teachers. The high reputation of some schools made them attractive, too, for British and other children, particularly (though not exclusively) those from Catholic families, sometimes from as far away as Ireland or even India.<sup>25</sup>

Not all émigré schools proved to be successful and long-lived. Two that did were Edmund Burke's school in Penn and the Abbé Carron's institutions on Tottenham Court Road and later in Somers Town, a poor neighbourhood on the northern fringes of London. Burke had several motives for becoming interested in émigré education. His hostility towards the French Revolution reached a new peak in 1795 when émigré troops supported by Britain glaringly failed in their attempt to land at Quiberon on the west coast of France.<sup>26</sup> The death of seven

<sup>22</sup> Examples are the École pour trente Jeunes Demoiselles Françaises in Hammersmith and the École de M. l'Abbé de Broglie in Kensington mentioned in Lubersac 87, 148-49. See also Louis Kerbiriou, *Jean-François de La Marche, évêque-comte de Léon, 1729-1806: Étude sur un diocèse breton et sur l'émigration* (Quimper/Paris: Le Goaziou/A. Picard, 1924) 446-47.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Peacock 126 and 176.

<sup>24</sup> See Dominic Bellenger's essay on the émigré clergy in the present issue.

<sup>25</sup> A. Antoine de Saint-Gervais, *Histoire des émigrés français, depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1828*, vol. 3 (Paris: L.-F. Hivert, 1828) 334; Carpenter, *Émigrés in London* 113.

<sup>26</sup> Maurice Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-revolution: Puisaye, the Princes and the British Government in the 1790s*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983);

hundred émigrés in this operation, together with the six thousand prisoners of war taken by the revolutionary army, induced Burke to strengthen his support for the humanitarian side of the émigré cause. Quiberon also fuelled his dissatisfaction with the British war effort against France, which by the mid-1790s fell short of the counter-revolutionary crusade he had called for earlier.<sup>27</sup> Now largely retired from public life and mourning the loss of his only son Richard, Burke compensated for his disillusion by promoting émigré relief.

In addition to these political, social and personal motives, education represented for Burke the very core of the long-term revolutionary challenge.<sup>28</sup> In the first of his "Letters on a Regicide Peace" (1796), he characterised education as the centrepiece of European values:

From all those sources arose a system of manners and education which was nearly similar in all this quarter of the globe [...]. From this resemblance in the modes of intercourse, and in the whole form and fashion of life, no citizen of Europe could be altogether an exile in any part of it.<sup>29</sup>

For Burke, questions of nationality ceased to be important when it came to education, a view similar to that found in children's émigré novels. By setting up an émigré school, he sought to reconcile his understanding of pan-European values with the difficult living conditions of the young French exiles:

The circumstance, the most unpleasant in the expulsion of the Gentlemen in France, is the situation of their children [...]. They are growing up in poverty and wretchedness; inevitably mixed with the children of the lowest of the people, in the miserable lands and alleys of London, in which the poverty of their parents obliges them to reside.<sup>30</sup>

Michael Wagner, *England und die französische Gegenrevolution 1789-1802* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994) 163-86.

<sup>27</sup> Wagner 34-71, 126-35, 280-89.

<sup>28</sup> Nigel Aston, "Burke, Boisgelin and the Politics of the Émigré Bishops," *The French Émigrés in Europe and the Struggle against Revolution, 1789-1814*, ed. Kirsty Carpenter and Philip Mansel (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 208-209.

<sup>29</sup> "First Letter on a Regicide Peace," *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, vol. 9: *The Revolutionary War 1794-1797, Ireland*, ed. Robert Brendan McDowell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 248-49.

<sup>30</sup> "Burke's Proposal for a School at Penn," Burke, *Correspondence* 8:396.

Providing education for émigré children was thus not only an act of justice and gratitude towards their fathers fallen in British military service, but was also aimed at saving the younger generation of French aristocracy as guarantors of a successful restoration: "If providence should restore them to their country they will be utterly incapable of filling their place in society [...]. If they are to remain in perpetual exile, they are nothing less than trained to Botany Bay or the Gallows."<sup>31</sup>

For his educational project Burke found favourable conditions in the village of Penn, near his mansion in Beaconsfield, where the government had previously acquired a house for the accommodation of French clergy.<sup>32</sup> Looking for funding, Burke decided to draw on public rather than on private money and gained the support of the Marquess of Buckingham, Teller of the Exchequer and a former minister under William Pitt. Part of the annual budget of £600 came from the government's extraordinary army expenses under the responsibility of Burke's close political ally, the Secretary at War William Windham. The rest was taken from the public relief funds. As an effect of full public funding Penn School admitted only French pupils. The administration was headed by a board of trustees consisting of Buckingham, the Duke of Portland and the Foreign Secretary Lord Grenville, all of whom had estates in the neighbourhood of Penn – a coincidence that would ensure continuous governmental interest in the project even after Burke's death.<sup>33</sup>

The boys' school opened in the spring of 1796 with the total number of pupils fixed at sixty. Most were aged between eight and twelve, but occasionally they stayed on until fourteen. They were selected primarily from military families of the *noblesse d'épée* living in London, with a number of places being reserved for sons of magistrates. Other pupils came from the French émigré colony on the Channel Islands.<sup>34</sup> For admissions, Burke and the trustees cooperated with Jean François de La Marche, former bishop of Saint-Pol-de-Léon, and relied on the French Committee in London, a body founded for handling the internal affairs of the émigré colony and consisting of distinguished members of the émigré clergy

<sup>31</sup> Burke, *Correspondence* 8:396.

<sup>32</sup> François-Xavier Plasse, *Le Clergé français réfugié en Angleterre*, vol. 2 (Paris: V. Palmé, 1886) 58; George Nugent-Temple-Grenville, Marquess of Buckingham to William Pitt, 10 March 1796, Sheffield Archives WWM/BkP/1/3183.

<sup>33</sup> Frederick P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*, vol. 2: 1784-1797 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006) 550; Woodford to Bouillon, 23 June 1797, The National Archives Kew, H.O. 69/1, no. 62.

<sup>34</sup> See Lock 550.

and aristocracy.<sup>35</sup> As proofs of nobility were difficult to procure in exile, families supported their applications by *actes de notoriété* signed by noble peers.<sup>36</sup> However, the procedure set up by Burke was occasionally bypassed by the bishop or ambitious parents who were determined to send their children from far away and could hardly be refused.<sup>37</sup> Judging by their names, a high proportion of students were of Breton origin and their male relatives had been involved in émigré military expeditions on behalf of their native western France.<sup>38</sup> Many more students had relatives who had been guillotined in France.

For teachers, Burke at first accepted the Norman clergy proposed by La Marche; the Abbé Maraine, formerly headmaster of a seminary in Rouen, was appointed headmaster. Maraine's intention was to make the school's curriculum as similar as possible to a French ecclesiastical *collège* with a strong emphasis on Latin, French and history.<sup>39</sup> Though this program was backed by La Marche, it only partly corresponded to Burke's original idea of a military academy that would strengthen aristocratic values and qualify the boys for a career in a restored French royal army or in British military service. The Penn school, by combining literary and military subjects, in practice provided a politicised educational program that was in some respects innovative: the next generation of nobles would be prepared for future occupations that would no longer rely exclusively on the preservation of their inherited status, but instead ensure that they took an active role in the struggle against the Revolution.

Among the literary subjects, the question of the place of English language was crucial. Burke, carrying overall pedagogical responsibility, considered a thorough command of English indispensable given the uncertain future of the students as "perpetual vagrants" at risk of "an universal exile."<sup>40</sup> The question became even

<sup>35</sup> Burke to Mrs John Crewe, 26 February 1796: Burke, *Correspondence* 8:385. The French Committee to Burke, 13 June 1796, Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO), Northampton, A.XX.14; Reboul 106-107.

<sup>36</sup> Jean Du Verdier, "Le Collège de Penn: une école pour la jeune noblesse française émigrée en Angleterre," *Bulletin de l'Association d'entraide de la noblesse française*, 223 (1995): 23.

<sup>37</sup> Burke to Jean François de La Marche, 28 March 1796: Burke, *Correspondence* 8:448-50.

<sup>38</sup> Some of the lists are conserved in NRO A.XXV.93; see also Kirsty Carpenter "Émigré Children and the French School at Penn (Buckinghamshire) 1796-1814," *French Emigrants in Revolutionised Europe: Connected Histories and Memories*, ed. Laure Philip and Juliette Reboul (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

<sup>39</sup> Plasse 59.

<sup>40</sup> Burke to Buckingham, 24 May 1796, Burke, *Correspondence* 9:17.

more delicate as some children, after several years in Britain, were already more fluent in English than their reluctant headmaster Maraine:

He is a perfect Clown [...]; He neither understands or speaks English, so well by an hundredth part as the Boy that speaks it worst. They are all pretty strong in English; in which, instead of improving, they will go back in this School; and be ruined in consequence; as it is by no means Likely, that they are to have any other Country.<sup>41</sup>

Behind the scenes, La Marche did everything he could to avoid employing a native English speaker, even a Catholic, thus provoking Burke's disapproval:

I really consider, the Idea of forcing the miserable French Boys to be foreigners here, is little less than downright madness; and the educating them as ecclesiastics [...] is I think no less so. I intend salvâ Religione parentum, to give them a good dash of English Education.<sup>42</sup>

The problem was only solved after Burke's death. The school accepted a French English teacher who, despite his "national accent," was preferable to having no English lessons at all.<sup>43</sup> As the later correspondence between the Marquis de la Belinaye and his England-born sons attending Penn demonstrates, the knowledge of the English language over time had become a matter of course to the point that the Marquis encouraged his children by writing to them in English himself.<sup>44</sup> Here, young émigrés fully conformed to the image depicted in novels.

After Burke's death in 1797, the school was able to uphold a mixed program of arts and military subjects, and the continuous existence of the school until 1820 accounts for its reputation among the remaining royalist émigrés and among British authorities. Meanwhile, several alumni from Penn made their way into the ranks of the British army.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Burke to Walker King, April 1796, Burke, *Correspondence* 8:460.

<sup>42</sup> Burke to Thomas Hussey, 25 May 1796, Burke, *Correspondence* 9:21.

<sup>43</sup> Maraine to the Trustees, 10 January 1800, The British Library (BL), London, Add. Mss. 45723, fol. 24v. For curriculum issues and the problem of finding qualified teachers, see Plasse 63; J. Gilbert Jenkins, *A History of the Parish of Penn in the Country of Buckingham* (London: The Saint Catherine Press, 1935) 152; and Lock 551-52.

<sup>44</sup> Armand to Henry de la Belinaye, 21 February 1811, BL Add. Mss. 47494, fol. 77.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, M. Chavagnac de Froger to Windham, 22 January 1805, BL Add. Mss. 37870, fol. 90 and Élise de Ménerville, *La Fille d'une victime de la Révolution française, Mme de Ménerville, née Fougeret. Souvenirs d'émigration* (Paris: Roger, 1934) 184.



### Schools in British Émigré Life

The educational institutions of the Breton vicar Guy Toussaint Julien Carron were run on a larger scale. Carron headed no fewer than four schools, two for boys and two for girls, all situated on the same campus in North London. Half of the pupils paid fees, while charity provided for the other half, thus making the schools more socially inclusive. They were part of an émigré support system in Somers Town which also included a food bank and was funded by the government and private British donors.<sup>46</sup> Carron's schools, which had about 250 pupils in total, were widely known for their high standards. Unlike Burke, Carron had no problem in finding émigré teachers of rank and talent. Priests and noblewomen started teaching not only to receive a salary but also to fulfil the symbolic function of taking care of French youth, which was seen as an honourable equivalent to military engagement. The Revolution was not merely to be defeated on the battlefield; France as a whole would be regenerated afterwards by well-principled and well-educated royalists:

What hope for the future generation to see, while their brothers, their relatives [...] fought on behalf of the peoples and the Kings, these generous Ladies dedicating themselves entirely to the education of their sex, and, by their lessons and their examples, training women to be useful for the future and to be virtuous mothers to their families.<sup>47</sup>

The school calendars with their annual prize ceremonies strongly influenced the rhythm of émigré life and helped to create social and political cohesion. After Burke's death, his position as a patron in Penn was taken over by the Comte d'Artois, who made regular visits to Penn for the annual awards, rewarding loyalty to the Bourbon family and the monarchical cause across all generations.<sup>48</sup> In London, the symbolic reunion between the royal family and their subjects became even more visible. The prize ceremonies in Carron's schools were public events that attracted the upper echelons of émigré society as well as representatives of the British government, foreign diplomats and other distinguished people.

<sup>46</sup> See Dominic Aidan Bellenger, *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789: An Historical Introduction and Working List* (Bath: Downside Abbey, 1986) 107; and Anon., *Vie de l'abbé Carron par un bénédictin de la congrégation de France* (Paris: Douniol, 1866) 359-61, 365-66.

<sup>47</sup> Lubersac 140. Carron's teachers are listed in Kerbiriou 447.

<sup>48</sup> Lubersac 158.

With their focus on the “childlike graces” and “naïveté”<sup>49</sup> of young émigrés, these assemblies served as a forum for the public display of emotions that strengthened émigré identity. The outpouring of community spirit usually culminated in collective chants of *Vive le Roi!* In his 1801 speech, Carron located his institutions at the very centre of the “interesting family, little France, new fatherland that we have formed ourselves in the midst of our exile.”<sup>50</sup>

Part of the prize ceremonies was devoted to the public examination of brilliant students by long-serving noblemen. These “little Olympic games”<sup>51</sup> established a symbolic link between generations and, more generally, between the glory of the *ancien régime* and France’s future royalist elites. The task consisted in applying historical and literary subjects from the school curricula to the future restoration of monarchy in France.<sup>52</sup> Émigré children recited by heart litanies of Roman and medieval history and their illustrious examiners invited them to draw parallels with the Estates General or the Vendée uprisings.<sup>53</sup> But the organisers also broadened the horizon towards the British audience. They praised British military engagement and anticipated the end of Anglo-French rivalry resulting in an eventual peace. Accordingly, conflicts with Britain among the heroic deeds of French kings were carefully passed over during these examinations. Instead Britain served as a counterexample to the French Revolution, thus ensuring that “the obligations the regenerated France will have undertaken during her long and painful misfortunes with Great Britain are not of the nature to ever be forgotten.”<sup>54</sup>

After graduating from the schools, young members of the *noblesse d’épée* were qualified to enter a military career or to take up other ‘noble’ occupations. Members of the *noblesse de robe* destined to become magistrates, however, needed further legal training. As men of law were expected to play a key role in administering the restoration, an École de Droit Civil was founded in London. Headed by the former Garde des Sceaux Barentin and protected by Lord Chancellor Loughborough, it aimed at passing on the administrative knowledge of the dying pre-revolutionary generation to future magistrates. Throughout its existence, the École de Droit Civil admitted about two hundred students. The public defences of the graduation theses gave a first impression of the judicial

<sup>49</sup> *Paris pendant l’année 1799*, 1.176 (15 March 1799): 175.

<sup>50</sup> *Vie de l’abbé Carron* xxxviii.

<sup>51</sup> *L’Ambigu*, 41.364 (10 May 1813): 326.

<sup>52</sup> See Lubersac 116.

<sup>53</sup> *Paris pendant l’année 1799* (15 March 1799): 170-71; Lubersac 130.

<sup>54</sup> Lubersac 127 in his account of 1801.

principles that could be expected after the Restoration. The particular role that was attributed to subjects like royal pardons suggests that this process was not seen as a way of exacting revenge for revolutionary destitution.<sup>55</sup>

Overall, along with salons, churches, libraries and book shops, émigré schools played a vital part in the life of the émigré community in London and provided a platform for public sociability. Although access was largely restricted to young nobles, schools were set up for both boys and girls of different aristocratic ranks. Especially for families of the lower nobility, they provided an education for their heirs that they could have hardly afforded otherwise. Public émigré education thus compensated for the material difficulties of exile and personal losses incurred in the revolutionary wars.

### Education as a Vehicle for Reintegration, Cohesion and Mobilisation

The manifold attempts at émigré education did not pass unnoticed in France. For example, the Abbé Carron's royalist program of education was publicly acknowledged by *Le Publiciste* in 1803.<sup>56</sup> Such articles point to the fact that émigré schools, albeit under different political auspices, ultimately contributed to the émigrés' return to France. With regard to their politicised pedagogical programs, this may at first appear to be a paradox. It was less so, however, in light of Napoleon's attempts to end the Revolution. Yet, would émigré education more generally prove to be a vehicle of integration into post-revolutionary France?

Due to scattered sources and a lack of historiographical interest in the reintegration of the émigrés, it is difficult to trace the later careers of those who attended émigré schools. Nonetheless, it is clear that noble émigré children ranked among the elites of the Napoleonic Empire and the Restoration. Alumni of the Penn school include Charles André du Bois de Maquillé, who entered the Chambre des députés and later the Chambre des pairs, and Marie Joseph Gabriel Xavier de Choiseul-Beaupré, who became an officer of the Légion d'honneur and was later appointed as prefect of Corsica. His brothers and fellow students also had successful careers in the French army.<sup>57</sup> Such trajectories not only account for

<sup>55</sup> Lubersac 159-67; Joseph Alexis de Walsh, *Souvenirs de cinquante ans* (Paris: Bureau de la Mode, 1845) 104-105; Maurice Champion, "Notice biographique sur M. de Barentin," *Mémoire autographe de M. de Barentin, chancelier et garde des sceaux, sur les derniers conseils du roi Louis XVI*. (Paris: Comptoir des imprimeurs-unis, 1844), v-xxxiii (xxix); Reboul 203.

<sup>56</sup> *Le Publiciste*, 19 Germinal XI (9 April 1803), also *Vie de l'abbé Carron* 391-96.

<sup>57</sup> Carpenter, "Émigré Children." Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Direction des Archives, *Personnel, 1<sup>re</sup> série: Cartons. Dossiers individuels*, [www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/personnel-1re-serie-cartons.pdf](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/personnel-1re-serie-cartons.pdf).

the importance of exile experiences in post-revolutionary France but also demonstrate the different regimes' need for high-ranking and capable administrators who could help to reconcile the revolutionary constitutional heritage with monarchical continuities preserved during exile. The few young émigrés who remained in Britain for the rest of their lives had also impressive and some cases unusual careers. Henry de La Belinaye – noted for his excellence in English at Penn – later qualified as a surgeon and, dropping the title of count, worked for several embassies, the Duchess of Kent and a number of Italian opera groups.<sup>58</sup>

To conclude, three points can be made about the stability and continuity that émigré schools provided for émigré communities. First, they served as a platform for communication between émigrés and locals, cultivating solidarity with the host community while also transmitting moral, social and political values to the next generation who were expected to fill the higher ranks of society in post-revolutionary France. Throughout the long period of exile, educational programs were predicated on an anticipated return from exile, the restoration of monarchy and the reintegration of the aristocracy. In their belief in the decisive influence of education on the political and social order, émigrés did not differ fundamentally from the revolutionaries. Their response to the latter's credo "sans pédagogie, pas de République"<sup>59</sup> can be summarised as "sans pédagogie, pas de Restauration." Particularly in Britain, émigré schools contributed to maintaining elements of a royalist identity over the years and to publicly strengthening the ties between the Bourbons, the aristocracy and the clergy.

Second, the search for educational values helped to reconcile the contingencies of exile with royalist expectations for the future. The program at Penn offered a serious alternative to the uncertain restoration of monarchy in France by preparing young émigrés for a career in British military service. A number of former students eventually capitalised on this opportunity, although in practice, assimilation rarely reached the degree imagined in émigré novels. To be fully successful, education had to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Madame de Genlis's educational ideas were shaped by constitutionalist thinking, but they did not question the restoration of the monarchy and the maintaining of social

<sup>58</sup> See Eileen Curran, "Count Henry George de la Belinaye," *Biographies of Some Obscure Contributors to 19th-century Periodicals*, Victoria Research Web, [victorianresearch.org/Obscure\\_contributors.html#belinaye](http://victorianresearch.org/Obscure_contributors.html#belinaye).

<sup>59</sup> Jean-Luc Chappey, "Les écoles de la Révolution: pour en finir avec la thèse de la table rase," *La Révolution française. Une histoire toujours vivante*, ed. Michel Biard (Paris: Tallandier, 2010) 339.

hierarchies. Rather, they put forward a broadened understanding of elites. In the same way, royalist schools in Britain reflected the necessity of adapting to local circumstances in case of a prolonged exile and of making political concessions for the restoration of the monarchy.

Finally, debates about émigré education raised awareness of the humanitarian dimension of exile. Contrary to the parents' generation whose political attitudes might give grounds for reservations, 'innocent' émigré children were an easier target both for charitable support and for politicisation against the Revolution. Children and adolescents facilitated contact between the émigrés and their hosts by meeting certain expectations such as learning the language of their host country. They contributed to the idea of a transnational alliance against the French Republic and provided an ideological immunisation against "revolutionary principles." Education thus represented a consolidating strategy for combating the Revolution via pedagogical means. It established options for the future during an exile with an uncertain end. In that respect, to take up Talleyrand's pernicious (and partly apocryphal) dictum that the émigrés had "learnt nothing" and "forgotten nothing,"<sup>60</sup> émigré children – in Penn, Somers Town, and elsewhere – certainly learnt something about how to face post-revolutionary life.

<sup>60</sup> On the origins of this *bon mot*, see Friedemann Pestel, *Kosmopoliten wider Willen: Die monarchies als Revolutionsemigranten* (Berlin: Oldenbourg – De Gruyter, 2015) 512-13.