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George Canning, Liberal Toryism, and Counterrevolutionary Satire in the Anti-Jacobin

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George Canning, Liberal Toryism, and Counterrevolutionary Satire
in the *Anti-Jacobin*

Paige Thompson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

George Canning, Liberal Toryism, and Counterrevolutionary Satire
in the *Anti-Jacobin*

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One of the most defining moments in the histories of British satire and the public sphere took place in the late 1790s in an abandoned house in Piccadilly. Here George Canning and several fellow conservatives began writing and circulating their weekly newspaper the *Anti-Jacobin*. Although the periodical has been critically neglected, it is a valuable model for exploring how literary (partisan) politicians attempted to form a rational and critical public sphere through their satiric poetry. Founded by George Canning and edited by William Gifford, the *Anti-Jacobin* seems to reflect a reactionary conservative's ideology and has been summarily dismissed because of this one-sided nature. In this essay, I suggest a more nuanced reading of both Canning's biography and his *Anti-Jacobin* poetry that will give a fuller and more accurate version of Canning, one that illustrates a moderate reformer who is concerned with moderating the extremism of the 1790s.

Keywords: George Canning, Liberal Toryism, Satire, *Anti-Jacobin*

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George Canning, Liberal Toryism, and Counterrevolutionary Satire in the *Anti-Jacobin*

In the autumn of 1797, in an abandoned house in Piccadilly, George Canning undertook what would become one of the landmark publications in the annals of British satire. There he and several friends began writing and circulating their weekly newspaper, the *Anti-Jacobin*. In the face of the radical fervor that had spilled over from the French Revolution into Britain, Canning and his supporters printed a loyalist publication to curtail the Jacobin threat. Founded by Canning and edited by William Gifford, the *Anti-Jacobin* appeared every Monday during the parliamentary session that ran from November 20, 1797 to July 9, 1798.

Although the *Anti-Jacobin* has sometimes been overlooked in modern discussions of Romantic-era poetry and politics, the periodical was widely read in its day. As C.C. Barfoot points out, most English readers would have been familiar with the magazine based on its multiple reprinted editions, including one pirated version and an official compilation by Canning. Within fifteen years of its original publication, the magazine had appeared in at least six subsequent editions, and more followed throughout the nineteenth century (127). In the magazine's last issue, the authors thanked their loyal readers, estimating that the *Anti-Jacobin* had reached 50,000 readers during its initial publishing run alone (*Selections* 616). While only 2,500 copies sold each week, by accounting for readers in coffee houses, circulating libraries, and large families, it's not altogether unlikely that the total readership was somewhere near this reported figure.

The magazine may have been short-lived, but it drew readers from across the political spectrum, despite the fact that many were predisposed to embrace neither its contents nor the men who authored them. While Canning certainly did not write everything in the magazine, as its founder and figurehead he made many enemies because of its contents. In his 1839 history of Britain, John Wade described Canning as a man with

a taste for invective and ridicule, which he not unfrequently disfigured by virulence....He was a clever partisan, but occasionally failed in candour, dignity, and generosity, in his political hostilities....He was too personally susceptible of, as well as obnoxious to, attack, and lacked that gravity of character and intellect essential to the steady government of an empire. (831)

Wade's description, in which Canning is cast as a clever politician and obnoxious Tory attack dog, most notably anticipates Canning's legacy in modern scholarship. With few exceptions, like John Halliwell, C.C. Barfoot, and Stephen Lee, Canning is usually reduced to either a footnote or a villain.

One of the most widely publicized and enduring images that both vilifies and dismisses



Fig. 1. Isaac Cruikshank, "Killing no Murder, or a New Ministerial Way of Settling the Affairs of the Nation!!" (1797)

Canning is Isaac Cruikshank's political cartoon "Killing no Murder, or a New Ministerial Way of Settling the Affairs of the Nation!!" (see fig. 1). Here we can clearly see how contemporaries portrayed Canning. The cartoon depicts the aftermath of the duel fought between Castlereagh, another legendary Tory, and Canning on September 21, 1809. Castlereagh was offended after hearing Under Secretary of State Canning had threatened to resign if Castlereagh would not step down as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. After confirming the rumors of Canning's threat, Castlereagh challenged him to a duel. As we can see, Canning is left weaponless and clutching his wounded thigh after being shot. While this is historically accurate, as Canning was shot less than an inch from his femoral artery (Hunt 137), his fictionalized reaction is the most damning aspect of the illustration. Canning, obviously terrified and angry, foppishly cries, "Zounds I'm wouDED [sic] in my Honor take me Home; take me Home," as his hat is thrown off his head. Perhaps begging to be taken back to the punned In addition to failing to act the part of the stoic man of honor, Canning cries that he had been "wounded *in* my Honor" (italics added). Rather than the expected "on" his honor that would suggest that he is truly injured, he is wounded "in" honor. It is not just his leg that is shot but his honor and reputation, and Cruikshank twists the knife even further by using "honor" as a seeming euphemism for Canning's physical manhood. Emasculated by the gunshot, Canning is dismissed as a rabble-rouser set on disturbing the peace. The editor of the liberal *Morning Chronicle*, John Perry, condemned both men for participating in a self-indulgent duel in the middle of wartime while they should have been focusing on their duties to the nation. "It will scarcely be credited by posterity," he writes, "that two of His Majesty's principal Secretaries of State should so far forget [their] duty...to fight a duel. Yet the fact is actually so...[It is] most serious that His Majesty should have committed the affairs of State to persons whose intemperate passions were so little under the controul [sic] of reason" (qtd. in Hunt 143).

Such revulsion over Canning's public behavior endured well beyond his lifetime. John W. Derry, for instance, claimed that "Canning's gibes counted for less than has often been imagined" (128), and many, including late-eighteenth-century Whig leader Earl Grey, regarded Canning as little more than a "political charlatan who was more concerned with self-advancement than with principle... [His policies were] an exercise in irresponsibility, an example of opportunistic effrontery" (176). In an 1846 review of Robert Bell's *The Life of Canning*, the *Spectator* described Canning as a self-appointed crusader: "his insolent demeanor, his mocking personalities, and his almost scurrilous invective rendered him one of the most unpopular men with Whigs and Radicals, without giving him much estimation in his own party... It was Tierney¹ yesterday, 'the Doctor,'² today, and anybody else tomorrow, who might commit the unpardonable offence of crossing his path" (351). Even for those readers who could understand Canning's frustration with England's flirtation with republicanism in the face of the French Revolution's barbarities, "his spite seems misdirected" (Menely 1). Simply put, the historical record has often made Canning more of a splenetic reactionary than a serious politician and man of letters. Instead of commemorating how he attempted to guide English society in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Canning is generally represented the way William Hazlitt condemns him in *The Spirit of the Age*, where he suffers "from a want of sympathy with any thing but forms and *common-places*, [and] he can easily let down the sense of others so as to make *nonsense* of it" (205).

¹ The prominent Whig George Tierney opposed Pitt's administration, while Pitt deemed Tierney unpatriotic; the two even fought a duel on May 27, 1798 (Evans 81). Canning used the *Anti-Jacobin* as a platform to come to Pitt's defense during this on-going feud.

² Canning famously dubbed Henry Addington, 1st Viscount Sidmouth, "the Doctor" because he was the son of a country physician. Addington succeeded Pitt as Prime Minister after the latter resigned.

This “nonsense” Hazlitt refers to is, in part, the *Anti-Jacobin* magazine that Canning founded and helped write. In 1851, *Hogg’s Weekly Instructor* opined of the *Anti-Jacobin’s* poetry that “it is almost painful to look at these poems of George Canning, so redundant are they in proofs of the falsity and folly of almost all human predictions” (162). More recently, Canning has been remembered for his “coarse lampoons...[that were] as indecorous as they were indefensible” (Marriott 243) and his “savage attack[s]” on the first-generation Romantic poets (Johnston 90). Chris Hokanson suggests that Canning’s arguments generally dissolved into “*ad hominem* attacks...[seeking] to silence through ridicule and verbal caricature the works of writers and thinkers who sided with the radical aims of the French revolution” (85). Indeed, many readers over the past two centuries have found Canning’s *Anti-Jacobin* magazine, as Tobias Menely puts it, nothing more than “an organ for disseminating Church, King, and Country propaganda” (2). Even the generally sympathetic C.C. Barfoot concedes that the *Anti-Jacobin* could seem “nasty, brutish, and often not as short as one would have liked it to have been” (142). “It was written,” John Styles argues, “in the true *spirit* of jacobinism [sic], though it was avowedly directed against the *letter*. It was the literary Robespierre of the day” (194).

Such arguments reflect the general consensus regarding Canning’s *Anti-Jacobin*, namely that in order to check the rise of Jacobin extremism, Canning resorted to extremist rhetoric of his own. To some degree, this assessment is warranted. Especially in prose pieces like “Lies, Misrepresentations, and Mistakes” and “Lies of the Week,” the magazine mercilessly mocked and abused members of the press who opposed Pitt’s policies. Writers in the *Anti-Jacobin* routinely positioned themselves as the resolute enemies of the Jacobins and anyone else threatening the traditional English polity.

That said, the common treatment of Canning and his magazine as paragons of thoughtless reaction limits our understanding of him historically and his greater project in the *Anti-Jacobin*.

In this essay I will argue that when we look more closely at its poetry, we can see how the magazine and its creator were more moderate than generally assumed. In many accounts of the 1790s, the *Anti-Jacobin* is essentially brushed off because of Canning's seemingly one-sided approach. In response to such dismissals, this essay will explore how Canning used the *Anti-Jacobin* as a way to navigate the English public away from the extremes brought about by the Jacobins on one end and "King and Crown" mobs on the other. Of course, based on the title *Anti-Jacobin*, it is immediately clear that Canning's main concern is the Jacobin threat, and a survey of the magazine's poetry makes that even more apparent. But a more subtle interpretation is that Canning is concerned with dangerous reactionaries as well. Although this intention is less obvious, it is important to consider while studying the magazine and its place in the revolution debates of the late 1790s. By directing his satiric barbs at both radicals and reactionaries, Canning had a more far-reaching goal in mind than just skewering his political opponents. His overarching goal was to police the English public sphere from extremes on both sides of the Parliamentary aisles. Using his satire, Canning hoped to mediate violent reactions to the French Revolution, and, in so doing, to curry favor for himself and his party.

In order to make these claims, I have organized this essay into three parts. The first is a general overview of Canning's life, with particular emphasis on the patterns of moderation in his political career. From there, I will turn to the *Anti-Jacobin*, carefully exploring how several of its poems reflect Canning's project of moderation. I will end the essay by discussing the magazine's greater role in the culture wars of 1790s and the development of Britain's public sphere and how it resonates with political and social theory of the late twentieth century.

An Irishman "Accidentally Born in London"

To begin to understand Canning's purpose in writing the *Anti-Jacobin*, we need to examine his early life and political evolution. In addition to being Pitt's staunchest supporter,

Canning saw himself as an Irishman “accidently born in London” (O’Donogue 62), an outsider who was lucky to rub elbows with London’s elite, let alone become the Prime Minister.

Canning’s father died soon after being disowned by his family because of his alignment with Irish Independence (and his penchant for penniless young ladies), leaving his wife and child without the modest allowance they had been receiving. The newly widowed Mary Anne Costello Canning became a stage actress to provide for her impoverished family but could not accrue the money or social clout necessary to send her son to a “proper” school. Canning’s uncle, Stratford Canning, eventually took on this responsibility and sent him to Eton (Temperley 18). Here he met many future national leaders, including William Wilberforce and William Pitt the Younger and discovered an interest in politics that would only grow during his time at Oxford.³

Stratford Canning took his nephew’s social circles as seriously as he did his school. As a staunch Whig, Stratford introduced his young ward to prominent Whig politicians such as Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who, in George Canning’s words, “proved himself both to the family and myself in particular a most kind friend” (*George Canning and his Friends* 19). He also met Charles James Fox, who took special notice of the young man after seeing his wit displayed in Eton’s *The Microcosm*. Canning’s parodies for this magazine became so popular that they were published in a separate book, which then went through five editions. This collection drew the attention of even the famed moralist Hannah More, who called it “not unworthy of Addison in his happiest mood...elegant ridicule, and well-supported ironical pleasantry [that] is not often found at [Canning’s young] age” (254).

³ *Anti-Jacobin* editor and co-author, William Gifford, was also a “poor genius” (Bell 68). Because of his poverty, he was almost denied the education that his wealthier peers took for granted. Fortunately for Gifford, surgeon William Cookesley saw the young man’s potential and funded his Oxford education (*Cambridge* 44). Like Canning, Gifford flourished at school and excelled at his studies, though he never measured up to Canning’s aptitude for making friends in high places.

Canning's rise from being the son of an actress—which would make him “*ipso facto* disqualified from becoming Prime Minister” (Smith 242)—to a member of London's inner sanctum baffled many. In 1846, *The Spectator* described it as “an enigma, in what way a youth with no other recommendation than that of a...clever collegian, whose opinions, so far as were known, were Whiggish, and whose connexions were all among the extreme Opposition should suddenly become the friend of the Minister and a Member of Parliament” (350). It was mainly surprising that such a “Whiggish” man should become attached to this more conservative group. At one point, both Fox and Sheridan regarded him as a potential protégé for the liberal cause, and even after he traded these mentors for the more conservative William Pitt (and the position that he offered), Canning did not totally forsake his old principles. Instead, he melded his liberal and conservative ideals into what we might call “liberal Toryism.”

The term liberal Toryism was first used by historians like W.R. Brock and Barry Gordon to describe the Liverpool administration of the mid-1820s. Canning served as Liverpool's Foreign Secretary and brought his moderate principles with him to that office. Thus, while the “liberal Tory” label is certainly not exclusive to Canning, he is a prime case study for the movement, as, in the words of Stephen M. Lee, he “can be seen as moving, at times hesitantly, at others with greater sense of purpose, towards [this] political position” (1). Lee defines liberal Toryism as the “crucial concept of piecemeal reform of obvious abuses as antidote to calls for organic restructuring of the constitution” (2). We can look at Canning's reaction to the French Revolution to further illustrate this mentality. Contrary to the persona that dominates the *Anti-Jacobin*, he initially had high hopes for the French Revolution. He described his feelings in a December 4, 1792 letter to Edward Bootle Wilbraham: “I have all along wished that France might succeed in giving to itself, what it has all along appeared to *will* with a decision and unanimity almost unexampled in the history of nations, the form of a pure representative

Republick... a nation in Europe under such circumstances, as to be likely and willing to put this great experiment to the proof” (*George Canning and his Friends* 36).

Canning’s view changed after seeing the violent consequences when the “French fore-went the use of that opportunity and turned their thoughts to conquest, and the propaganda of their faith...wholly incompatible with the first principles on which they assumed a right to found their constitution” (37). Although he eventually came to fear revolutionary fervor, Canning’s willingness, even eagerness, to see how the republican experiment would develop discounts the idea that he was merely a monarchical propagandist. Lee, supporting this view of Canning’s pragmatic moderation, points, on one hand, to Canning’s aversion to substantial parliamentary reform and his fear about the French Revolution; and, on the other, to his advocacy for Catholic Emancipation and willingness to work with both Tories and Whigs (2). I contend that his literary achievements in the *Anti-Jacobin* should be added to this list. While the magazine was undoubtedly loyalist, its poetry is part of Canning’s larger attempt to balance liberal and conservative viewpoints and centralize their extreme ideologies.

Even after gaining a solid position in Parliament and becoming embedded in the Tory establishment, this Irishman “accidentally born in London” continued to align himself with the Irish, and generally Whig, demand for Catholic emancipation. Canning and William Pitt the Younger agreed that George III, and later George IV, should not ignore or be “‘annoyed’ by the Catholic question” (*Spectator* 350). Despite Pitt and Canning’s campaigning, George III insisted he did not want to hear about it anymore during his reign. In fact, as John Wesley Derry chronicles, the king “spoke of the Catholic relief as the most Jacobinical measure he had ever heard of, and accused his ministers of plotting to impose a policy upon him against his conscientious scruples in a way which was constitutionally improper and politically dubious. Once the king’s opposition become vocal the doubters in the cabinet deserted Pitt” (87).

Because of the king's unwillingness to change the discriminatory policies, specifically the Test Acts, Pitt resigned as Prime Minister in 1801. Despite advice from his colleagues, friends, and even Pitt himself, Canning followed his leader and resigned from his position on the Privy Council in a gesture of solidarity.

Before his grudging but well-intentioned resignation, Canning had gained extensive insight on the dangerous consequences of the French Revolution's radical experiments. Many British observers' attitudes had shifted when the once promising, contained revolution transformed into a potential threat to their way of life. The War of the First Coalition ended the same year that the *Anti-Jacobin* (1797) began its circulation, and the Second Coalition began the following year at the end of the magazine's run. Memories of France's 1793 declaration of war and the horrors of the Reign of Terror (1793-94) were still fresh. As Harold Temperley details, "men shudder[ed] to see Kings deposed and privileges overthrown, rivers of blood flowing and madmen declaring war...[T]he fixity and self-sufficiency of the old creeds and ideas of politics and life offered no standards by which to judge...the new movements" (38). While these physical threats must have appeared immediate to Canning, what seemed to concern him the most were these threats to the "old creeds and ideas of politics and life." While its violent beginnings occurred nearly a decade before Canning created the *Anti-Jacobin*, the revolution's consequences affected the British quotidian, and the young politician used his magazine to combat the changing social and political atmosphere caused by the Revolution. In Canning's view, England would be doomed to share the same fate as the French, who were living in the "rivers of blood" and under the rule of mad men, if his countrymen rejected the stable underpinnings of shared tradition. Canning believed the best method to deliver Europe from the "merciless tyranny" (*Select Speeches* 25) of France's troops was to point out the absurdity of Jacobin fervor that made the country weaker against its threat.

Poetry of the *Anti-Jacobin*

To see how the *Anti-Jacobin* attempted to establish the absurdity of the extremists Canning feared, the best place to turn is its satirical poetry. Four poems in particular stand out: “The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder,” “A Bit of an Ode to Mr. Fox,” “Translation of a Letter (in Oriental Characters),” and “New Morality.” Collectively, these poems showcase both the magazine’s parodic genius and the extent to which its editor was much more than the reactionary scribbler of popular lore.

“The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder” takes as its point of departure Robert Southey’s “The Widow,” a poem that attempts to evoke pity for outcast and victimized English women. Canning mocks Southey’s assumption that liberals are uniformly sympathetic to the poor while conservatives are heartless by exposing Whiggish oversentimentality and even intolerance for those who do not fit into their paradigm. Southey’s indictments on what he saw as Tory heartlessness are echoed in later poems such as Wordsworth’s “Resolution and Independence.” In each of these poems, the readers encounter a mendicant who teaches the inquirer life-lessons. While Southey and Wordsworth’s characters are generally sympathetic and sincere, Canning subverts this depiction in the *Anti-Jacobin*. At the outset of the poem, the Friend of Humanity approaches the Knife-Grinder with great compassion and asks,

[H]ow you came to grind knives?
 Did some rich man tyrannically use you?...
 (Have you not read the Rights of Man by Tom Paine?)
 Drops of compassion tremble on my eyelids,
 Ready to fall, as soon as you have told your
 Pitiful story. (lines 9-10, 17-20)

Instead of the sort of tale of woe offered by Southey's overwrought but pitiable widow, here we get an unexpected response. The Knife-Grinder recounts his drunken exploits of the previous night and then asks for sixpence to "drink to your Honour's health in a pot of beer" (lines 28-29). Rather than the political sympathy and pity the Friend waits to dole out in full force, the tears that were waiting to drop dry, and the enraged Friend storms away after cursing the Knife-Grinder and knocking over his grinding wheel. The Friend's false sympathy and violent change therefore exemplify the folly of overly sentimental radical leaders.

The contrast between the two characters, the Friend and the Knife-Grinder, is brilliantly portrayed in an illustration by Canning's prize recruit, the artist James Gillray. Canning believed that having visuals in the *Anti-Jacobin* would encourage readership and increase its influence. After drawing Canning in the cartoon "Promis'd Horrors of a French Invasion," Gillray accepted a paid but secret position within Canning and Pitt's government in return for setting his satirical sights on their political opponents (Haywood 433). While Gillray had thus become "loyalism's unofficial visual illustrator" (433), his moderate political attitudes mirrored Canning's. Such moderation can be seen in Gillray's "Friend of Humanity" (see fig. 2), which plays two important functions in the magazine. First, it helps visually juxtapose the tidy, refined appearance of the Friend and the tattered, stooped Knife-Grinder. The cartoon's other purpose is to help identify the Friend of Humanity: Southwark MP Earl George Tierney. The audience recognizes Tierney straightaway when faced with the "Tierney & Liberty" sign that graces the façade of the building behind the Friend. The carriage contains an earl's coronet, and footmen wait patiently on it for their earl to return from his do-goodery. If these images aren't enough to indicate the Friend's identity, Gillray makes it even clearer by dedicating the cartoon to



*The FRIEND of HUMANITY and the KNIFE-GRINDER . . . Scene The Borough.
in Imitation of M. Scuthey's Sapphics. — Vers. Anti Jacobin . . . 75.*

Friend of Hum? "Needy Knife grinder! whether are you going?
Rough is the road, your Wheel is out of order,
Blush blows the blast; — your Hat has got a hole out,
So have your Branches!
"Winey Knife grinder! little think the proud ones:
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpicks —
read what hard work tis crying all day Knives and
"Saffian, to grind O!"
"Till we Knife grinder how came you to grind knives?
Did some rich man tyrannically use you?
Was it the Squire, or Parson of the Parish?
Or the Attorney?
"Was it the Squire for holding of his Game, or
Covetous Parson, for his Tythes distrainings?
Or roguesh Lawyer made you lose your little
All in a law suit?
(Have you not read the Rights of Man, by Tom Paine)
Drops of compassion tremble on my eye-lids,
Ready to fall, or seem as you have told your
Pitiful story"

Knife-grinder... "Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, Sir,
Only last night a-drinking at the Chequers,
This poor old Hat and Branches, as you see were
Torn in a scuffle.
"Deputies came up for to take me into
Custody they took me before the Justice;
Justice Obdusson put me in the Parish —
Sends for a Vagrant!
"I should be glad to drink your Honour's health on
A Pot of Beer if you would give me Sixpence;
But for my part I never love to meddle
With Politics Sir."
Friend of Hum? I give the Sixpence! I will see thee damned first
Wretch! whom no sense of wrongs can raise to see
Sordid, unfeeling reprobate, degraded,
Spirits! outcast!
(Kicks the Knife-grinder, overturns his Wheel, and exit in
a transport of republican enthusiasm and universal-
philanthropy)

To the Independent Electors of the
Borough of Southwark: this Print is
most respectfully dedicated

Fig. 2: James Gillray, "Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder" (1797)

“Independent Electors of the Borough of Southwark.” Accustomed to the respect paid to him as an earl and Member of Parliament, Tierney would certainly have seen the dedication nearly as insulting as the poem itself. Down-turning his name on the edge of the drawing as if it were an afterthought insinuates that Tierney’s station and achievements were so unimportant that the artist overlooked them and, therefore, did not save enough space for him in the cartoon. Gillray’s conscientious placement illustrates what Canning is attempting to do in the poem—dismiss a political rival in order to gain support for his own political party.

At first glance, it is fully understandable how Gillray and Canning’s portrayal of the Friend of Humanity has consistently been treated as a classic case of the hard-core conservatism, bordering on reactionism, of 1790s-era Tories. Yet, when all the key contexts are considered, the cartoon is better read as a call for moderation than for radical conservatism. In a parliamentary meeting on December 11, 1798, Tierney sued for peace with France to save the country from financial ruin and asserted that, while the King has ultimate power to decide whether the country will go to war, Parliament has control over supplies that dictate whether those wars will be won. Tierney amplified his subtle threat of withholding supplies by directly stating, “The supplies granted to the crown shall be granted exclusively for England, as to say, what no man doubts I have a right to say, that there shall not be any supply” (*Parliamentary Register* 151). Tierney believed that withholding supplies would be for the common good: citizens at home should be the priority rather than soldiers abroad.

Canning, however, refused to accept this. Jeremy Black discusses Canning’s response in *Parliament and Foreign Policy in the Eighteenth Century* by tracing the rhetorical moves of his speech. First Canning conceded that the House does, in fact, have every right to advise the king whether to go to war or maintain peace with other nations. After addressing the basic rights of the House, however, he branded Tierney’s argument as opportunistic, maintaining that if the

French monarchy committed the same atrocities the French republic had, the Whigs would never call for peace (Black 133). Instead, Canning suggested, Whigs like Tierney wanted to reach a peaceful alignment with France in order to instate their republican values in the English government, a change that Canning and other loyalists were unwilling to accept. To Canning, the Jacobins may have fashioned themselves “friends of humanity,” but, like the poem suggests, they were moralizing for their own gain rather than the benefit of the country.

Yet, while the “Friend of Humanity,” obviously lampoons the idealistic and self-serving expectations of the covert Jacobin, there is a double-edge to the commentary. Reactionaries are held accountable for their sins as much as their radical counterparts, and this condemnation underscores Canning’s position as a liberal Tory. As C.C. Barfoot explains, while the Knife-Grinder seems to cause his own problems and is not the victim of the tyrannical rich man like the Friend is expecting, “one is still left with the conviction that the Knife-Grinder might be better off were he to read Paine and drink less. The Friend of Humanity might be unrealistic, he might even be self-deceived, but he is not exactly wrong” (168-69). Through this lens we can see that, yes, the Knife-Grinder “never love[d] to meddle / With politics” (lines 30-31) and his apathy toward his sociopolitical position threatened the Friend’s paradigm of what the down-trodden should be like, but the readers who would mock the Friend are indicted as well. Those tattered clothes and his stooped posture are not solely invectives against the Jacobins—the reactionaries, too, feel their sting.

Of course, although he complicated the conservative point of view with poems like “The Friend of Humanity,” Canning was far from sympathetic toward republican zealots and politicians. Case in point is how the *Anti-Jacobin* targeted Sir Robert Adair, a Charles James Fox devotee, in the first half of 1798 after rumors circulated that Adair had undermined Pitt’s government abroad. Adair was one of Fox’s foreign emissaries and was sent to the Continent to

survey the effects of the French Revolution on the surrounding countries (particularly Germany, Austria, and Russia) and to calculate their likely implications for Britain. It was Adair's 1791 mission to Russia that sparked enough controversy to place him as a character in the *Anti-Jacobin*. The Bishop of Winchester, George Pretyman Tomline, alleged in his biography of Pitt that Fox sent Adair to St. Petersburg in the hope that he would subvert Pitt's Tory government.⁴ The Bishop claims that Adair and Fox's supposed scheming caused Pitt's peace negotiations with Russia to fail (334-35). The best-known *Anti-Jacobin* poem that addresses this scandal is John Frere and George Ellis' "A Bit of an Ode to Mr. Fox." In terms of moderation, one of the most interesting elements of the ode is its introduction. As with "The Knife-Grinder," this poem's attempt to bring a tempering dose to conservative extremists is less conspicuous. The introduction to "A Bit of an Ode" explains how the authors acquired Adair's supposed confession. An anonymous courier dropped off the poem at the *Anti-Jacobin* offices, and the editors included it in the magazine because of its quality, regardless of the origins. They emphasize this attitude by explaining, "for our parts, as we are 'not at war with Genius,' on whatever side we find it, we are happy to give this Poem the earliest place in our Paper; and shall be equally eager to pay the same attention to any future favors of the same kind, and from the same quarter" (*Selections* 56-57). While this statement might seem disingenuous because Adair clearly did not write the ode, the message is compelling—especially for those who believe the *Anti-Jacobin* is unqualified propaganda. It concedes that there are valuable perspectives outside of the conservative canon. More than that, there can be genius in those opposing viewpoints. In the midst of its satire, the poem underscores the magazine's project of moderation, and reactionaries are the focus of this subtle criticism. Frere and Ellis subtly fault King and Crown

⁴ Adair responded to this allegation, deeming it "diplomatic gossipry" (25), in two letters, one sent directly to the Bishop and one later published. Winchester never rescinded his allegation, and Adair never conceded guilt.

mobs that are so fearful of change that they are unwilling or unable to listen to opposing viewpoints, even if they have potential to improve the nation.

Of course, the poem has a strong message for Jacobins as well. One of the most impactful moments in “A Bit of an Ode” comes in the last stanza, where Frere and Ellis’ caricatured Adair declares,

Though Criticism assail my name,
 And luckless blunders blot my fame,
 O! Make no needless bustle;
 As vain and idle it would be
 To waste one pitying thought on me,
 As to ‘UNPLUMB’ a Russell. (lines 31-36)

This “unplumbing” imagery shows the authors’ fear about what treachery like this might do to England. Here, they are referring to Edmund Burke’s fear that Jacobins and French troops would travel to England and begin “*unplumbing* [sic] the dead in order to destroy the living” (*Poetry* 53). Burke meant that the French would dig up lead coffins, melt them down, and reuse the metal once used to protect corpses to kill more English. The *Anti-Jacobin* takes this imaginary scenario one gruesome step further by qualifying the statement with “a Russell.” Francis Russell, Duke of Bedford, was Fox’s ally in Parliament and consistently appears as an antagonist in the *Anti-Jacobin*. With this addendum, the threat isn’t limited to the body’s protective casing—now the bodies themselves might literally be used for cannon fodder. Not even the dead are safe from the French if they march onto English soil, and Frere and Ellis drive the point home by using their Whig opponent. They accuse Fox and Adair of undermining Pitt’s government for personal and political gain, but they also use a Whig *supporter*’s figurative corpse as the ammunition that the French would use if allowed. Based on Bedford’s hypothetical misfortune, supporting perfidious

leaders would not grant Jacobins immunity if the French arrived. Frere and Ellis thus criticize Adair and Fox in an attempt to influence citizens, not the MPs themselves. While the direct mocking might not change their minds, it might affect their followers. By exposing alleged sabotage and general clandestineness, citizens who once subscribed to their leaders' radical beliefs might be disillusioned.

While Canning only had an editorial role in the publication of Frere and Ellis' "Bit of an Ode," he revisited the Adair controversy six months later with his "Translation of a Letter (in Oriental Characters)." Here Adair appears as "Bawba-dara-adul-phoola" (i.e., "Bob Adair, a dull fool"). Where Frere and Ellis focused on Adair's real-life mission to St. Petersburg, Canning imagines Adair voyaging from Spithead to the Middle East and Northern Africa. Here a star-studded crew, including such free-thinkers and radicals as Dr. Samuel Parr, Erasmus Darwin, and William Godwin, joins forces on a mission that is "the most surprising and splendid ever taken...and the most widely beneficial to mankind" (*Poetry* 216). Following this satirical build-up, Bawba-Dara-Adul-Phoola describes the "exclusively human" stench that arose from his crewmates (line 26). Rotten environment aside, Adair looks forward to fulfilling his task of "opposing all we know, / To the knowledge and mischievous arts of the foe" (lines 43-44). The smell enveloping the ship clearly symbolizes the crew's corruption in betraying their country to those who would hurt it, and the catalyst for their moral decay is the secrecy in which they conduct the mission. Like in his alleged mission to St. Petersburg, Adair secrets away on this expedition without discussing it with a Parliamentary opposition that might temper his faith in Fox and animosity toward Pitt. Here Canning is revealing a significant conviction that underscores his goal of moderation. In order to maintain a stable and rational mentality, Englishmen needed to converse and debate their viewpoints with those who might oppose them.

In short, bipartisan dialogue mitigates extremism and encourages rational debate. As seen in the Adair affair, when partisan agents work clandestinely, the state suffers.

Like “Bit of an Ode,” Canning’s “Translation” also aims to moderate reactionary fervor. Instead of simply providing reactionaries with ammunition, Canning wanted to make them reevaluate their own attitudes. While the poem’s background had serious ramifications for England’s government, its melodramatic tone makes it seem less dire. Adair is comically loyal, almost sycophantic, to Fox’s cause, which results in his undermining England’s interests abroad. Never questioning if he should, “oppose all we know,” Adair appears ridiculous. To Canning, reactionaries had the same issue, the difference being that they were loyal to the opposite side. This understated parallel warns reactionaries to be weary of the exaggerated devotion Adair’s tone represents. Helping reactionaries recognize that their rhetoric is just as problematic while making them laugh at the radical threat is a more understated but important goal for the poem. Dorothy Marshall captures this reaction in *Rise of Canning* when she states that the “young men [of the *Anti-Jacobin*]...taught the country to laugh at their opponents. They might be dangerous, they were certainly absurd, with their high flown sentiments and their equivocal conduct. England laughed, the most superstitious gloom lifted, and people forgot to feel afraid” (187).

While this humor is important throughout the magazine, the final poem takes on a more serious tone. Appearing in the final number of the *Anti-Jacobin*, “New Morality” directly addressed the hypocritical and opportunistic attitudes Canning perceived in the Jacobins and their apologists. Canning sought to draw both the radicals and reactionaries into the safety of political moderation and stability, and he believed that the way to inspire this change was to set himself up a leader of men whose patience with his followers was wearing thin. His frustrated tone is almost tangible as he chastens his readers who are

Now far aloof retiring from the strife

Of busy talents and of active life,
 As from the loop holes of retreat, he views
 Our stage, verse, pamphlets, politics, and news,
 He loathes the world, or, with reflection sad,
 Concludes it irrecoverably mad;
 Of taste, of learning, morals, all bereft,
 No hope, no prospect to redeem it, left. (63-70)

This antagonist Canning describes here is not the extreme, blood-thirsty threat that readers might expect; instead, he is apathetic and selfish. While the violent Jacobins were the immediate and fearsome threat, the seemingly apathetic citizens that held themselves apart from society rather than trying to improve it were also at fault. These self-fashioned outsiders chose to live “aloof” from the commonplace, even vulgar “stage, verse, pamphlet, politics, and news” that reveal the trials their country faces. This is a grave fear because, to Canning, a united England could withstand the French invasion. He underscores this belief in the final stanzas:

The sword we dread not: or ourselves secure...
 Let all the world confederate all its powers,
 “Be they not back’d by those that should be ours”...
 So shall we brave the storm: our ’stablish’d power
 Thy refuge, Europe, in some happier hour. (452, 454-55, 466-67)

Canning included extremists who would welcome a French liberation, but he could not help but berate the “solitary geniuses” he believed abandoned their fellow citizens to the violent Jacobin threat. Rather than trying to curtail this national distress, the apathetic citizen chooses to leave it and let his countrymen fend for themselves. By constructing his poetry with this patriarchal tone,

he hoped the fatherly reprimand would bring the misguided Jacobins back into the fold of participatory, informed citizenry.

In addition to taking on his usual enemies like Paine and Godwin, Canning exposed the set of poets who are exacerbating the extremist threat with their inactivity. These “five other wandering Bards” are “Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd, and Lambe [sic] and Co.” (340-43).⁵ Canning encapsulates their mentality in story of a man who is prone

To lisp the story of his wrongs, and weep;
 Taught her to cherish still in either eye,
 Of tender tears a plentiful supply,
 And pour them in her brooks that babbled by;—
 Taught by nice scale to meet her feelings strong,
 False by degrees, and exquisitely wrong; —
 For the crush'd beetle first, —and the widow'd dove,
 And all the warbled sorrows of the grove;—
 Next for poor suffering guilt;— and last of all,
 For Parents, Friends, a king and Country's fall....
 They hear—and hope, that all is for the best. (130-39,157)

By comparing active, liberal Toryism with the ineffectual meanderings of the “five Bards,” the *Anti-Jacobin* writers sit above the pamphleteers warring during the era and, importantly, the influential poets they are parodying (Halliwell 42). Rather than retreating into nature and merely “hop[ing] that all is for the best,” Canning uses his poetry as a method for social change. He expects others with similar talents to do the same because extremists (Jacobins and King and

⁵ The unnamed “Co.” here is generally believed to be Wordsworth (see Hickey and Johnston).

Crown mobs alike) are true threats to England only when people “on whatever side” (*Selections* 55) allow them that power. He wrote “New Morality” to ask fellow Englishmen to reevaluate their priorities and realize that the travails of beetles and doves are trivial compared to an unstable government. Inaction is the sin here. Separating from the society that needed them is equated to Pontius Pilate washing his hands. While Canning still railed against the “Leviathan”⁶ (354) and “hydra” (42) of Jacobinism that would treacherously “install / the holy Hunch-back in the dome, St. Paul!,” he chooses a more subtle adversary on whom to focus in the magazine’s last issue. Canning’s closing argument emphasizes, then, that English citizens needed to moderate their rhetoric and stop their violence—and, importantly, participate in the nation’s improvement once they had come to this realization.

Partisan Public Sphere

To this point in this essay, I have established that, far from the intemperate hack he is often made out to be, Canning was actually one of the more reasoned and moderate voices in a tumultuous age. Building upon these ideas, I would like to further develop the complexity of Canning’s contributions to the *Anti-Jacobin* by briefly considering them in light of some of the more influential political and social theories of the twentieth century. Living in a time period characterized by (to use Mary Favret’s terminology) “war at a distance,” Canning realized the importance of focusing on the issues that affected citizens every day. He wanted to help citizens overcome their fear of the French troops and put their faith back in monarchy. With satire as the conduit, Canning spread the message that only those who could master the strong emotions the French Revolution incited would be allowed in on the joke. Otherwise, they were doomed to be mocked. Canning used socially encoded satire as a weapon in his counterrevolutionary arsenal.

⁶ See Burke’s 1796 letter to “Nobel Lord” for more information on the Duke of Bedford as a Leviathan (37).

Kevin Gilmartin suggests that, like Dryden and Pope before him, Canning envisioned satire as a key tool in his “project of social renovation, and . . . intervening in present conditions even to the point of adjusting inherited arrangements to block revolutionary designs” (3). Canning’s largest satirical objective, one might argue, was aligning the English public sphere with the conservative politics he and Pitt championed. John Halliwell has argued that the counterrevolutionary satire typical of the *Anti-Jacobin* represents a brilliant attempt to usurp political authority from the extremist Jacobins. Halliwell claims that “[w]hat Canning self-deprecatingly styles as humble imitation is . . . the periodical’s most concerted and sophisticated attack upon Jacobinism through a range of satiric forms . . . that represented a determined attempt to police the boundaries of the public sphere” (38). We have to remember that Canning was a politician first and an author second; his attempt to sway both Jacobins and reactionaries back toward moderation was also an attempt to increase the parliamentary influence from liberal Toryism.

In many key respects, the way Canning negotiates power and politics in the *Anti-Jacobin* resonates with some of the most important thinking in literary and cultural theory of recent generations. Specifically, Canning’s machinations can be productively reconsidered in light of Jürgen Habermas’s reflections on the development of a public sphere in Western societies, Louis Althusser’s notion of Ideological State Apparatuses, and finally Hannah Arendt’s philosophy of the Active Life.

Habermas describes the public sphere as a place where “the critical judgment of a public [makes] use of its reason” (24). Ideally, group members should disregard whatever perceived status they hold over each other and come together as equals to have debates based on rationality and solid argumentation. Once they have put aside their social statuses, discussions can center around matters of state that “until then had not been questioned” (36). Here, they address “common concern[s] . . . [to determine] meaning on their own (by way of rational communication

with one another) [and] verbalize it” (36-37). Viewing Canning’s career from the perspective of Habermas’s formations, we might say that he used the *Anti-Jacobin* as a way to capitalize on the English public sphere. He realized that the Jacobin debates would be won or lost depending on the everyday citizen, so he facilitated a new version of the public sphere that included moderation as the essential qualification. If readers could overcome the excessive tendencies of extreme Jacobinism and reactionism, they would function as members of a rational public sphere, one that thrived on moderation rather than extremism.

Habermas’ idealistic portrayal of the public sphere as a class-free space began shaping discourse on the public sphere even before the English translation of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989. In what James Chandler has called the first “serious attempt to rethink romanticism’s historical public through the Habermasian concept of the ‘public sphere’” (527), Jon Klancher’s 1987 *The Making of English Reading Audiences* mapped the transformation of Romantic-era readers. More than just a static group, these readers participated in two complex and dialectical relationships. The first, and more apparent, was between themselves and others. The second was between each member’s sense of individuality and the concept of him or herself as a member of the literati (527). Focusing on these relationships, we can see multiple public spheres negotiating their places in English society rather than a singular, monolithic “public.”

How Canning handled satire as a method to resolve the tension among the multiple public spheres becomes clearer when considered in terms of Louis Althusser’s famous essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” Here Althusser distinguishes between Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). The fundamental difference is that RSAs primarily function by using force, establishing a society where fear of legal, even physical, repercussions is the reason citizens conform (142). Examples of RSAs from 1790s England

include the sedition and treason trials of 1792-1794, the suspension of *habeas corpus*, and the dissolution of the London Correspondence Society. These actions were intended to cripple the radical movement in a show of political force. While, as Pitt's ally, Canning was obliged to publicly support these measures, he used the *Anti-Jacobin* as a supplement and corrective to the repressive aspects of Pitt's government. Instead of relying on oppressive laws to enforce obedience, Canning developed what Althusser would call Ideological State Apparatuses to create a sense of loyalty to the Crown and the Tory regime. For Canning, liberal Toryism was not just a temporary solution for the extremist threat—it was his vision for England's future. By relying less on RSAs than ISAs, the party would have a better chance at becoming a permanent part of English government. Internalizing what “one does” becomes ingrained in the citizens, and, as a general rule, this habituation sustains regimes more effectively than does repression (143).

For a classic case of an ISA at work, one need only turn to “New Morality.” As we've seen above, Canning did not threaten bloody-thirsty revolutionaries with conventional punishments for treason; instead, he systematically listed the qualities of True Englishmen (philanthropy, virtue, and justice) before showing how they were being perverted by the Jacobins. Following the model set by the *Tatler and Spectator* and their push to cultivate English taste and decorum, Canning went a step farther by associating the correct form of these virtues with conservative English politics in particular. Canning hoped that, by analogizing these virtues with liberal Toryism, he could win long-term converts for the cause. Once a reader adopted the idea that moderation is a moral virtue, he would temper his extreme reactions as a matter of course. Such an approach correlates directly with Althusser's suggestion that a citizen who fails to heed the “hail” of ideology comes to see himself among the “wicked”:

Indeed, if he does not do what he ought to do as a function of what he believes, it is because he does something else, which, still as a function of the same idealist

scheme, implies that he has other ideas in his head as well as those he proclaims, and that he acts according to these other ideas, as a man who is either “inconsistent” (no one is willingly “evil”), or cynical, or perverse. (168)

Of course, this move toward an ideological means of control is immediately apparent in Canning’s title “New Morality.”

Significantly, in Lloyd Sanders’ *Selections from the Anti-Jacobin*, he includes a footnote that classifies “New Morality” as Canning’s “confession of faith” (198). Appropriating the religious overtones the words “confession” and “faith” offer helps move the ideas expressed in the poem past mere punditry. In essence, Canning aimed to equate the already existing ideology of what “good” Christians believe with what “rational” citizens should do. Underneath the humorous and exaggerated poetry, then, he attempted to create a hegemonic structure, one that avoided revolutionary violence by enshrining rational patriotism. This manifests itself, in Canning’s world, as liberal Toryism.

I should clarify here that I am not attempting to claim ISA as an idyllic method of government. As Althusser puts it, “ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (160). By looking at ISAs in this light, it is clear that they may construct a false consciousness that would make it easier for leaders to manipulate and control their followers. This is particularly problematic for my claim about Canning wanting to create an inclusive, participatory public sphere where citizens were supposed to think individually and then discuss and weigh those opinions with others. How can citizens truly think as individuals if they are influenced by a controlling ideology? I posit that, while I cannot completely justify Canning’s choice to manipulate the public via ideology, his method supports my claim that he is heavily invested in centralizing forces for the nation. To Canning, that which does not incite violence is moderation. Therefore, by creating a non-violent ideology that would

bind British citizens together, he could stave off threats from the reactionaries and Jacobins that, he believed, would harm his country.

Parliament, and Pitt's government in particular, needed to draw citizens together in order to maintain control over Britain and avoid the inevitable violence King and Crown mobs and Jacobins would bring if they gained enough support. Canning's poetry attempted to achieve this by demonstrating that the government and its people were intrinsically tied together, struggling for the same ideals and destiny. Poems like "The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder," "A Bit of an Ode to Mr. Fox," "Translation of a Letter," and "New Morality" exemplify this attempt at establishing a national bond. The *Anti-Jacobin* consistently makes it clear that the only way the nation would remain stable is if citizens and their government worked together (and if the ideological struggle expressed itself in *discourse* rather than violence). Just as importantly, Canning encouraged the nation to publicly discuss and evaluate this conclusion. It was not enough to act because an authority figure mandated it. The nature of the ISA allows for disagreement, and, to Canning, this is potentially beneficial for Britain. The government shores up its own legitimacy by allowing rational dissent. Rather than fearing opposition and forcefully preventing it, the ISA government, genuinely or otherwise, demonstrates that it has a mutualistic relationship with its citizens. Just as citizens are expected to moderate their own beliefs for the sake of the common good, government should respond to its citizens' rational concerns and make changes if needed. With this mentality, reformers would not need to resort to violent and clandestine measures; they could openly discuss their views for the nation's benefit. Canning wanted his *Anti-Jacobin* audience to internally grapple with the idea—and then discuss the matter with others around them. Explaining why they subscribe to the liberal Tory ideology would help neighbors, friends, and other citizens side with Canning's political party and solidify its influence on the English public sphere.

This participation in public discussion is a key component for Hannah Arendt as well. Her book *The Human Condition* introduces the concept of *vita activa* (the active life), comparing it to *vita contemplativa* (the contemplative life). While a contemplative life—or one that attempts to follow Plato’s desire to experience what lies beyond the physical, common, and political world—is a noble pursuit, the active life is Arendt’s ideal. As she explains in *The Life of the Mind*, “The world men are born into contains many things, natural and artificial, living and dead, transient and sempiternal, all of which have in common that they appear and hence are meant to be seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled, to be perceived by sentient creatures endowed with the appropriate sense organs” (19). This participatory attitude is encouraged in the political realm as well. In fact, Arendt makes it clear that *vita activa* is equivalent to how free citizens in ancient Greece contributed to the polis. Jean Yarbrough and Peter Stern explain, “[a]gainst both classical and modern philosophy, Arendt begins by insisting upon the dignity of the world” (329), and she deems politics as essential to that world.

Canning would obviously have agreed. In “New Morality,” the “lispering,” inactive Bards who refused to engage in their civic responsibilities, the reactionaries that violently enforced the law, and the Jacobins that would topple the existing government were all at fault. And in the magazine as a whole, he effectively asked citizens to participate in democratic processes. For Canning, citizens’ support was absolutely essential for the military and government to hold off the French. His desire for Englishmen to unite is clear in “New Morality” when he challenges any army to rise against his united homeland: “‘Be they not back’d by those that should be ours,’ / High on his rock shall Britain’s Genius stand, / Scatter the crowded hosts, and vindicate the land” (455-57). While at first this may seem like an attack only on those who actively foiled the country’s interests, Canning had another important foe in mind. By refusing to act in the best interests of the nation, the inactive poets who removed themselves from society, and those of

their ilk, forsook Britain. Therefore, just as Arendt would later situate politics as a key component of the *vita activa*, Canning repeatedly urged civic engagement. The inactive bards discounted politics as vulgarity, and Canning's frustration is palpable as he warns "England is no more" (line 471) when its people will not prioritize its security over their solitude.

All told, then, while Habermas, Althusser, and Arendt differ on aspects of public sphere theory, a common thread throughout each is dialectic relationships. Habermas focused on debates taking place among citizens themselves, Althusser emphasized governments acting on its citizens, and Arendt stressed how citizens can work on their governments. In each, both members of the relationship are formed and reformed by the other. Following this strand of thought leads us to Canning's conviction that the government and its citizens needed each other. Jacobins actively opposing the government and welcoming a French invasion damaged this relationship. However, that does not mean that he expected, or wanted, the type of blind faith the King and Crown mobs represented. The extremes that both sides embodied threatened his ideal form of government that invited active participation from rational and centralized citizens. Englishmen needed to adapt and moderate their initial reactions to identify with each other and maintain a secure nation.

As much as he hoped every able-minded citizen would unite and participate together, there was a caveat: it was a privilege, not a right, to do so. Citizens were required to moderate their own beliefs while holding others responsible for extreme views that could put the nation and all its citizens in danger. It was only after they adopted a moderate attitude that they were allowed into what Canning would deem a legitimate public sphere, and the *Anti-Jacobin* was the tool he provided to help them to begin this paradigmatic shift. Once the citizenry established itself as a centralizing influence, one that promoted the liberal Tory ideals Canning espoused in

his own political career, they would be able to make piecemeal progression that could benefit England.

Given the wide array of evidence that Canning was, in fact, much more moderate than generally presumed, it is time to embrace a more nuanced approach to him and, by extension, the *Anti-Jacobin*. Instead of a reactionary firebrand, the Irishman “accidentally born in London” is better classified as a liberal Tory who remained loyal to the crown without falling victim to zealotry. He also played a vital role in the creation of a stable, more democratic society. The young Canning’s 1792 letter to Lord Borington sheds light on how he believed citizens could generate positive and lasting change as long as “they were struggling for their own liberty...as if with one soul and one voice” (Stapleton 7). He goes on to voice his firm conviction “that the right of a nation to choose for itself its own constitution, is a right which they claim from God and Nature alone” (7). While the French Revolution failed to live up to the ideal, England could be the nation to head peacefully down the road toward a stable, democratic state. Canning believed, however, that this could only happen if the citizens fortified themselves against extremism and embraced the sort of liberal Tory philosophies he endorsed. While England watched as France marched across the Continent, conquering as it went, Canning realized the true threat to England’s future was as much domestic as foreign. As long as the polity maintained its moderate outlook—and its ability, as the *Anti-Jacobin* modeled, to laugh at extremism—the British could brave the storm together.

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