

Francophilia and political failure: Lord Shelburne and Anglo-French interactions, c1760-1789*

Abstract

This essay draws attention to William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne's (1737-1805) capacity for fostering a culture of mutual respect and constructive interaction in Anglo-French relations that had no contemporary equivalent, and explores his contacts with the French political world before the Revolution. For someone who was usually lambasted for sophistry and inconsistency, his career long commitment to Anglo-French cordiality over three decades stands out, and his activities thus offer the historian a major case study in Gallophilia, that neglected enlightened counterpart to its obverse: rooted antipathy to the French 'other'. This paper argues that this apparently enlightened attitude played a significant and neglected part in explaining why an individual as gifted as Shelburne failed so conspicuously as a politician.

Keywords

International relations, Anglo-French exchanges, Francophilia, patriotism, political failure

The cosmopolitan statesman and sometime British Premier, William Petty, 2nd Earl of Shelburne (1737-1805)¹ was a major presence in the international political culture of his age, but his career in public office ended prematurely, months before the promulgation of the Treaty of Versailles in 1783, a peace settlement that he had done much to design. Appropriately, after decades of neglect, Shelburne is again attracting specialist attention for his role in fostering progressive exchanges between nations. He was central to Andrew Stockley's study of the negotiations with Vergennes and Raynal that led to the Versailles settlement; Richard Whatmore noticed his importance as a patron of the politically advanced Genevan exiles of the 1780s; and he figures heavily in Emmanuelle

des Champs's recent examination of Bentham and the French Revolution.² As Shelburne studies develop momentum, what has so far not been reconsidered is the underlying question: why did an individual as gifted as Shelburne fail so conspicuously as a politician? This essay suggests much of the answer might lie in a policy preference that enhanced the potential for his detractors to abuse him, namely his francophilia, his controversial fostering of mutual understanding in pre-Revolutionary Anglo-French relations.

Shelburne's attitudes and characteristics somehow hinted at there being something unEnglish about him,³ something unsettlingly unpatriotic, even treacherous. The charge was harsh: Shelburne belatedly stood up to France over the annexation of Corsica in 1768-9, and made anti-Gallican noises during the invasion scares of the late 1770s (though he was privately uncomfortable with the resumption of Anglo-French hostilities after 1778).⁴ Considered in the round, however, Shelburne's career long commitment to Anglo-French cordiality over three decades stands out.⁵ He wanted both states to be commercial partners and diplomatic arbiters, able to draw on the other's experience in such areas of current debate as executive reform, and introducing enlightened precepts and practices into administration. And he naturally cast himself as a potential minister well equipped to deliver a modernising programme under the protection of George III on the model of his ideological counterparts in France (especially Turgot) - those who shared his commitment to peace.

Though Shelburne was perfectly able, when in office, to calculate national advantage, his activities overall offer the historian a major case study in Gallophilia, an enlightened counterpart (partly the product of cosmopolitanism) to its obverse: the rooted antipathy to the French 'other', that 'sullen hatred of France and an almost morbid suspicion of all her intentions' that was the default setting for elite and popular opinion alike in later Georgian Britain, and of primary importance in constructing British national identities.⁶ But the consequences of the contrary predilection for the prospering of a

particular career in eighteenth-century British politics could be fatal, and no one illustrates that reality better – or paid a higher price for it - than Lord Shelburne. For though his Gallophilia might be considered a realigned British patriotism, acting as a personal vector of cultural transfer and policy benefits, it counted against him obtaining that lasting foothold in government that would enable him to translate his perspective into practice, especially when, in his case, his personality and conduct did nothing for his popularity. The adhesive power of the ‘Jesuit of Berkeley Square’ label was formidable. For Shelburne’s behaviour, his uneasy mixture of pride, obsequiousness, and lack of directness, militated against his making the impact his capacities merited.⁷ It was widely believed that he adjusted his language to the needs of the moment and was capable of holding diametrically opposed views, so that opponents never failed to register a hit by mere mention of the name of Malagrida (the Portuguese Jesuit executed in 1761 for plotting the death of his king, José I).⁸

That attitude has had a long after life. When it comes to Shelburne, historians until lately have been short on imaginative sympathy and long on criticism. Even the late John Cannon’s distinguished article in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* reads at times like an exercise in character assassination.⁹ But perhaps too much has been made of Shelburne’s contemporary unpopularity. He received occasional recognition in print from commentary commentators, as in this observation of 1778: ‘This noble Lord is an honour to the Peerage; he is a man of business, an eloquent and pointed Speaker. – A patron of learning and a disinterested Patriot.’¹⁰ There were also those in government who found much to admire in his qualities. John Robinson at the Treasury commended the ‘Ease and Openness’ displayed by Shelburne, and told Charles Jenkinson: ‘I think he has Spunk.’¹¹ With women, Shelburne’s relations were also generally excellent. He was devoted to each of his wives and, on both sides of the Channel, society women spoke highly of him and constantly asked to be remembered to him, not from sexual motives

but out of his regard for women who were ‘principled and strong, who could provide encouragement and training in the social graces, and who retained their femininity.’¹²

Of course, Shelburne’s unfavourable reputation can be explained by many considerations other than his francophilia: among them, his connections with the East India Company,¹³ his patronage of radical dissenters (in 1787, both George III and the archbishop of Canterbury thought him to be the secret mover of the campaign for repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts);¹⁴ his reluctance to consult others beyond his own immediate circle; and his links early in his career to the royal favourite, Lord Bute. Neither did his francophilia reach the heights of his cousin, the 3rd earl of Kerry (1740-1818), one of the first non-French patrons of Sèvres porcelain, a permanent resident in Paris who spent prodigiously fitting out no less than three *hôtels particuliers* in the latest fashion.¹⁵ Indubitably eclectic, Shelburne built up an enormous library for his mansion in Berkeley Square that included an extensive range of French titles¹⁶ whereas, in marbles, under the influence of Gavin Hamilton in Rome, his taste from the 1770s ran rather to Antique statuary.¹⁷ And French fashions in deportment, clothing and food, were also not matters in which Shelburne had strong feelings. As discussed below, it was government, politics, and political economy that engaged him, and he mingled easily with the French progressive élite who shared his passions rather than with the wider aristocracy. His personal commitment to Enlightenment values and their proponents was striking. Thus, in 1781, even as the war in the southern colonies was reaching its climax, Shelburne was entirely comfortable with being sent various proposals connected with Beaumarchais’ projected edition of Voltaire’s correspondence.¹⁸ Four years previously, the abbé Raynal had sought him out while making his English tour,¹⁹ and appears to have asked for his

advice on the second edition of the *Histoire philosophique et politique des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1781).²⁰

This fostering of friendship rested on an unparalleled familiarity with the conventions and personnel of French court politics that had no contemporary British counterpart, with the possible exceptions of William, 4th earl of Rochford and David, 7th viscount [of] Stormont, both one-time ambassadors to Versailles who subsequently served as a Secretary of State.²¹ Yet, remarkably, Shelburne's written and spoken French was faltering. Unlike another British minister with extensive French contacts, Lord Stormont (1727-96) (who, as a young man, stayed with a tutor in Caen to learn the language), Shelburne received no linguistic instruction. Over a correspondence of thirty years, he would always write to his friend and informant, André Morellet, in English, and receive a letter back in French. Morellet had established himself as Shelburne's middleman, fuelling his fascination for French public life, feeding him information and gossip in a correspondence of over thirty years,²² and briefing him in advance where he could when French politicians were visiting Britain. As Morellet playfully intimated: "Vous avés mylord en ma personne un french dog qui vous est fort attaché malgré l'inimitié naturelle qui doit etre entre les french dog[s] et les english-woolves."²³

Despite the language difficulties, Shelburne was always avid for news about France. Where he could, he tried to see things for himself. When he and Priestley were in Paris during the autumn of 1774, he stayed on ten days so that he could witness the pomp of a French state occasion: a *lit de justice* held to coincide with the restoration of the Paris *parlement* early in November.²⁴ More often, he consulted independent theorists and publicists, and relied on members of what is slightly misleadingly but commonly referred to as the 'Bowood Circle' to furnish him with it.²⁵ Shelburne was habitually 'reliably informed.' As one commentator noted:

'There was scarcely a principal city on the continent of Europe, ... in which he had not one

or more correspondents, from whom he collected every local event of importance, and often received intelligence which government had not the means of procuring.²⁶

On several occasions when he was not in office, French diplomats, savants and private travellers (including those in the confidence of Louis XVI's ministers) sought him out socially either at Shelburne (later Lansdowne) House in Berkeley Square or, sometimes, at Bowood where, as one later recalled, they were received by their host 'avec la plus noble politesse.'²⁷ They would be disappointed not to come away with tidbits of confidential information, under the impression that Shelburne's influence at court and with the Cabinet counted for more than the average minister in post.

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Shelburne's mature commitment to pacific Anglo-French relations could not have been foreseen at the start of his career. There was no Grand Tour for him. Like many Britons born in the 1730s, his first experience of the French came at the sharp end, on the battlefields of the Seven Years War as a subaltern in the 20th regiment of foot. He served with distinction on the coastal raids on France in 1757 and 1758, and later in Germany under Lord Granby.²⁸ In the winter of 1760-1, he gave up soldiering for politics and made an immediate impact on public life after the sudden death of his father, the 1st earl, in May 1761. With an Irish earldom, a brand-new British barony, English estates in Wiltshire and Buckinghamshire, one of the largest rent rolls in Ireland, and personal abilities in equal abundance, Shelburne at 24 had ample scope to make his political mark. For a while, Shelburne held Lord Bute's favour and served as President of the Board of Trade between April and September 1763, thereafter cultivating the friendship of William Pitt the Elder (created earl of Chatham in 1766),²⁹ one who certainly could not be described as friend of France. And neither – yet – could Shelburne, who made a cogent

case for British continental withdrawal in his first contribution to a House of Lords debate in support of the 4th duke of Bedford's motion of February 1762 against carrying on the war in Germany.³⁰

Still learning his trade, Shelburne in July 1766 entered the Cabinet and became Secretary of State for the Southern Department,³¹ an unknown quantity in international affairs, just 29 years old, unformed by first-hand knowledge of foreign courts gained by travel, let alone having held a foreign embassy. He was immediately on the back foot when confronted with Choiseul's naval build up and diplomatic initiatives designed to isolate Britain. In a Cabinet split over how far to risk war over Corsica, Shelburne was initially content to do nothing. Then he suggested a naval blockade to forestall France taking possession of the island³²; finally, under pressure from colleagues, he required Lord Rochford (the British envoy to France who had strongly protested at the Treaty of cession) to be temperate with Choiseul to allow time for British ministers to determine the reaction of other courts. The response was not encouraging: other powers were not interested in siding actively with Britain and, though Shelburne had some sympathy with Chatham as leader of an embryonic war party, his determining judgment was that public finances were too straitened to risk an armed showdown.³³ A few months later, in October 1768, he was forced to resign from office by George III and the duke of Grafton to begin a spell in opposition that would last for fourteen years.³⁴

These years in opposition coincided with his achieving political maturity, and the catalyst was the newly widowed Shelburne's extended tour of France and Italy beginning in May 1771. It was his Parisian months that were especially decisive for they immersed him in Salon society and afforded introductions to a gamut of enlightened figures.³⁵ Though he was impressed by Lamoignon de Malesherbes (the ex-Director of the Librarie and opponent of Maupeous' exiling of the parlements (1771-4)), and was a frequent

visitor to the Baron d'Holbach's cosmopolitan 'café de l'Europe,'³⁶ their impact counted for less than others. For it was on this visit that his friendship with Turgot's long-standing friend, second-generation physiocrat, and contributor to the *Encyclopédie*, the abbé André Morellet, began. Turgot, along with Lavoisier and the young Condorcet, were habitués of one of the most fashionable salons in Paris in the early 1770s, that hosted by Mme Trudaine de Montigny, and it was there that Shelburne first met Morellet³⁷ and, in effect, gained membership of the Turgot Circle.³⁸ Shelburne came away from this encounter with avant-garde Parisian political economy inspired afresh with that passion for open trade with all nations that would be central to his politics.

Anglo-French amity was a pre-condition for free trade to flourish, one that could have additional strategic benefits for, in common with other French and British politicians, Shelburne viewed the growth of Russian power during the Ottoman War of 1768-74 with trepidation, and wanted concerted action in Westminster and Versailles to forestall any partition of Poland. Indeed, he appears to have been involved in a shadowy, consultative role during secret conversations between Lord Rochford (secretary for the Southern Department since 1771) and the duc d'Aiguillon for an Anglo-French agreement in 1772 that might have revived Dubois's scheme of the late 1710s for settling European dissensions,³⁹ a plan that came to nothing because of the cool response of George III, and Gustavus III's French-inspired coup in Sweden in August that year.⁴⁰ In the event, Shelburne's opposition to the North administration and suspicion of his character and motives offset the value of policy insights derived from his being a well-informed ex-Southern Secretary.

If the first Polish Partition went ahead in 1772 with both Britain and France unable to stop it, at least the coming to power of Turgot as Louis XVI's first Controller-General in 1774 was a move in the right direction for francophile Britons like Shelburne. But before anything towards constructive inter-governmental contacts could be fostered, the American War of Independence had begun, Turgot was forced out of office in May

1776, and a Treaty of Amity and Commerce signed between France and the American colonists (February 1778) was the prelude to renewed hostilities between Britain and France. Expediency, 'patriotism,' and his association with Chatham required that Shelburne revert to a more gallophobe stance and, for once, he played his hand adroitly, standing out in Parliament as a Whig who would not recognize American independence but would instead work to conciliate the colonists and stand up to the Bourbon powers.⁴¹

This pragmatic and national interest dimension to Shelburne's francophilia was often obscured by his political opponents and through his own grating self-assurance. He found it hard to avoid speaking as though he uniquely knew what he was talking about and intimating that ministers were ignorant both of French intentions and capacities, and blind to British military and naval overstretch: 'I have had repeated advices,' he claimed in April 1778, 'within these three weeks, that the coasts of Brittany and Normandy are lined with troops. There is not a person who has lately left that country, with whom I converse, who has not assured me of the fact.'⁴² Domestic critics remained unconvinced either of his probity or his sincerity. Apart from the duke of Richmond (who had his own animus against Shelburne dating back to the Seven Years War), none of the Rockinghamites had their awkward ally's close links with or sympathies for France,⁴³ while, from the government side, in the spring of 1780 Lord Stormont, Secretary for the Northern Department, even denounced Shelburne for treasonable correspondence with the enemy, a charge he could not at that time substantiate. Press critics suggested that other sinister figures could be discerned in the background, those who had further enhanced his casusistical capacities:⁴⁴

‘you placed yourself in the rank of the English patriots; but having in vain, for a long time, strove in France to attain the French accent, you had associated yourself with Jesuits.’⁴⁵

Another work in this line was one of 1779 that made Shelburne prominent in a political satire purporting to be the correspondence of the French Minister for the Navy, Sartine, with a disbanded Jesuit acting as a spy in London and dining at Shelburne House.⁴⁶ The following year, following the Gordon Riots, it was pointed out to the king that he and his Commons spokesman, Isaac Barré, had been at Portsmouth the week before the riots, no doubt subverting the dockyard, a preliminary to his influencing the London mob.⁴⁷ Mischievous and mendacious such aspersions may have been, but they played on all the familiar tropes of gallophobia and served to limit public confidence in a seasoned Opposition politician.

Despite the sniping, Shelburne’s parliamentary prominence as the Chathamites’ leader (a status that sat uneasily with his emerging commitment to free trade) ensured that he could not be ignored when North’s administration ended in the aftermath of Yorktown. In the ministerial changes of March 1782, the Rockingham Whigs gained the bulk of the places, but Shelburne (who had regained the particular confidence of the king) became Home Secretary. However, the earl (the first ever holder of that office), had a limited orbit for manoeuvre in foreign policy, being officially confined to colonial affairs, with the ministerially inexperienced Charles James Fox installed as Foreign Secretary, partly to blunt independent policy initiatives by his colleague. With policy and personality clashes reinforcing each other, the working relationship between Shelburne and Fox had almost entirely foundered when Rockingham died on 1 July 1782 and the ministry fell apart, a small majority preferring to follow Fox into opposition rather than carry on in government with Shelburne as Premier. Despite an uncertain parliamentary position, the latter took his opportunity and assumed personal charge of the Peace negotiations with France, the career diplomat, Thomas, 2nd Lord Grantham, succeeding

Fox as Foreign Secretary.⁴⁸ Shelburne proved adept at working personally with French diplomats and it was in three secret meetings in late 1782 at Bowood and at Shelburne House on Berkeley Square that he and Vergennes's *premier commis*, Gérard de Rayneval, determined the general features of the settlement between Britain and France.⁴⁹ This amity did not preclude him from trying to secure the future goodwill of the former American colonists on the basis of a common suspicion of French intentions.

Peace preliminaries were finally agreed on 20 January 1783. Shelburne considered them defensible in Parliament, a miscalculation that neither made sufficient allowance for the resourcefulness of his opponents to combine against him nor gave his business managers in the Commons time to build up support. When his government lost the crucial votes in the Commons on 14 and 21 February, Shelburne resigned as first Minister on the 24th and threw away his best opportunity of formulating and implementing public policy, not least in Anglo-French relations. Shelburne lacked the stomach for a parliamentary fightback of the sort that his disciple, Pitt the Younger, evidenced a year later. He was tired, jaded, and felt personally betrayed by the king and the court for not commanding North and his followers to save his government, preferring to overlook the consequences for ministerial colleagues from his own rather abrupt throwing up of office.⁵⁰ The months as Premier had weakened his health and, with his second wife, he sought a cure at Spa, where he met up with Morellet and found himself revitalised by their friendship as much as by the waters. Yet there is no reason to assume – as has been done by some historians⁵¹ – that he was ruling himself out of a comeback in the medium term. When it looked like the Fox-North Coalition might be thrown out of office that summer, Shelburne briefly postponed his tour and unpacked his bags, ready for a summons to St James's Palace.⁵²

But when the Coalition was controversially replaced by a Pitt the Younger ministry in December 1783, there was no place for Shelburne in his Cabinet. An early recall could not be entirely ruled out given the expectation that Anglo-French relations would be conducted along the affirmative lines Shelburne and Grantham had laid down in 1782-3. The appointment of the inexperienced and essentially francophobe marquess of Carmarthen as Foreign Secretary⁵³ was a token that Pitt was planning in time to reserve the formation and conduct of British foreign policy to himself as Premier rather as Shelburne had tended to do.⁵⁴ It was a back-handed compliment to one who had been his senior as First Lord of the Treasury; an open-handed one, in an administration short on heavyweight politicians, would have been to make Shelburne Foreign Secretary. There is no evidence that Pitt ever contemplated compromising either his control or his popularity by bringing in his former chief.⁵⁵ Instead, he offered Shelburne promotion in the peerage to a British marquessate in December 1784.

Though he sulked at Bowood for the first months of 1784, his pride infringed at being cast aside, Shelburne's taste for political involvement soon returned. With his extensive international contacts, resident and non-resident domestic pundits, and prestige as a former Premier, Shelburne's pronouncements on policy could not readily be ignored. And central to Shelburne's creed in the mid-1780s was peace and partnership with France with free trade as its foundation. Vergennes in 1784-5, regretful at the ex-Premier's marginalisation,⁵⁶ remained wary of the policy direction of the Pitt administration, in as much as it was reflected in the unimaginative distrust of Lord Carmarthen and the British ambassador to France, John, duke of Dorset.⁵⁷ And, to leave no one in any doubt, he was blatantly open in stating his unstinting admiration for Shelburne in Dorset's presence, as the latter, with perceptible discomfort, informed Pitt: 'I am persuaded he [Vergennes] hates every thing English except guineas & every individual in England except

Shelburne, who he always talks of with encomiums beyond all conception....⁵⁸

Shelburne's opponents in Opposition, too, always found his attitude easy to traduce and misrepresent. The profoundly anti-Bourbon Fox in November 1785 thus gloomily told a friend, Richard Fitzpatrick, of his belief that France had grown stronger since the Peace: 'In short...there seems to be little left for England but to join the train and become one of the followers of the house of Bourbon, which would be almost as dangerous as it would be disgraceful. I am sure this was Shelburne's system.'⁵⁹ It was a travesty of Shelburne's thinking (and denied, for example, his undoubted determination to curb French influence in India) but indicates the ease with which a pro-French foreign policy stance could be depicted as a sign of British weakness.

From his contacts, the new Marquess of Lansdowne was, on the whole, confident that Pitt rejected the *parti pris* of the Foreign Secretary and the Ambassador in Paris, and was committed to a policy of international friendship sealed by commercial freedom.⁶⁰ He was accordingly pleased when in late 1785 the Cabinet resumed a serious attempt to negotiate an Anglo-French commercial agreement as Article 18 of the Treaty had laid down. Pitt would not tolerate Carmarthen's stalling and eventually sent out William Eden to complete the negotiation successfully in September 1786.⁶¹ Lansdowne was not personally involved in the negotiation⁶² but he saluted the determination of the ministry to ignore opposition to the treaty on grounds of maintaining the Navigation Laws and arguing that the French government was not genuinely committed to peace. With the Pitt administration lacking assertive spokesmen and leadership in the House of Lords, having Lansdowne (with his customary opaqueness)⁶³ in debate on 1 March 1787 assert the essential correctness of government policy in acting trustingly towards France as being in the national interest, was a bonus. France was, he said, a modern state where public

opinion really counted, and he laughed at the suggestion that she constituted Britain's 'natural enemy.'⁶⁴

Lansdowne found dabbling at a distance in French political intrigue hard to resist. Vergennes' death in February 1787 removed his main supporter in the French government, although Morellet soon gave him a limited channel of access to Versailles policy making with the arrival in office of the *abbé's* one-time student contemporary, Loménie de Brienne, archbishop of Toulouse, in the wake of the ministerial crisis brought on by the meeting of the first Assembly of Notables and the resignation of Calonne in April 1787.⁶⁵ Lansdowne had not met the archbishop personally since 1773, but he was familiar at first-hand with another aspirant to a ministerial post at Versailles – Mirabeau the younger. In the winter of 1784-5 Mirabeau had been introduced into what one might call 'the second Bowood Circle', one that included his secretary Benjamin Vaughan (a Unitarian merchant educated under Priestley at the Warrington academy, translator of Condorcet's admiring *Vie de Monsieur Turgot*, published 1786); Richard Price; two Genevan *représentant* refugees who had fled the city after the French intervention in 1782, François d'Ivernois, and Pierre-Etienne Dumont (appointed tutor in 1785 to Lansdowne's precocious youngest son, Lord Henry Petty);⁶⁶ the talented young barrister Samuel Romilly, and Morellet, who was coincidentally visiting England when Mirabeau stayed at Bowood. Dumont believed that Lansdowne's involvement could make all the difference in changing French ministerial attitudes and permit a democratic revival in Geneva, which was why Dumont wanted his new patron to endorse the libertine and pro-Genevan Mirabeau for government office. The latter impressed Lansdowne with the range of his talents and their interests converged, notably a mutual admiration for Turgot and his politics.⁶⁷ The compliment was returned. Mirabeau in his *Doutes sur la liberté* (Nov. 1784) (directed against Joseph II's attempt to force the United Provinces to open the river Scheldt) praised Lansdowne as a model minister and argued that commercial treaties were the surest means to international peace. Lansdowne was 'the only statesman who understands the true interest of England and foreign politics, and

who has extensive views, free from national prejudices'.⁶⁸ It was British corruption that prevented the nation accepting him as her salvation.

In fact any prospect of Lansdowne's imminent return to power was scotched when France was forced to back down in her support of the republican Regents in the United Provinces as a result of concerted pro-Orangist action by Prussia and Britain.⁶⁹ This outcome was widely perceived as a triumph for Pitt and Grenville, a token of a new virility in British foreign policy after the nadir of the early 1780s. Lansdowne stood sniffily at a distance from the public acclamation, critical of the diplomatic brinkmanship that had so nearly achieved the resumption of Anglo-French warfare only four years since the Peace he had intended for the good of both states. In the run-up to the crisis, Barthélemy, the normally astute French *chargé* in London, had sought out Lansdowne's reading of the situation,⁷⁰ and was told in confidence that George III was in favour of unlimited aid to the Stadtholder, while the Cabinet was divided. It was actually a misreading of British policy formulation,⁷¹ but one that was nevertheless fed back to ministers at Versailles, in an over-estimate of Lansdowne's importance within government circles at mid-1787.⁷² Ironically, this unintentional misinformation may have influenced the Versailles government's own policy miscalculations when the crisis came. Had word of such a confidential disclosure got out in the British press, it would only have reinforced the perception that Lansdowne's studied disinterest was a mark of his lukewarm patriotism.

Piqued by Pitt, and at a distance from the new drift of the British government's policy,⁷³ Lansdowne instead turned his attention to the reform politics of the Bourbon monarchy in 1787-8 in the hope that a new constitutional settlement for France would be negotiated by Brienne (with or without the summoning of the Estates-General) and that this achievement would inaugurate conditions in which a peaceful Anglo-French entente could be recreated. He worked hard to rebuild his elite contacts at the highest levels in

France through the agency of his son and heir, John, Earl Wycombe (1765-1809). The latter was there during the second half of 1787 and quickly found how much Lansdowne's reputation still opened doors at the highest levels of society: he was entertained by the archbishop's brother, the comte de Brienne [Minister of War], heard the duc de la Rochefoucauld enquire 'very particularly' after his father, Necker speak of the marquess 'with the utmost respect,'⁷⁴ and undertook commissions for him with the duc de Polignac, husband of the Queen's favourite.⁷⁵ The abbé Morellet, one of Brienne's *confidantes*, also sent Lansdowne regular bulletins on developments that enabled the marquess to think hopefully of the situation. The latter told Bentham in June 1788: 'The accounts from France are wonderfully serious. Sanguine people imagine a civil war must ensue. I cannot myself imagine that any other consequence can be expected, than a more speedy assemblage of the States, and a better constitution of the cour pleniére, with a Habeas Corpus, restricted to particular descriptions and bodys'.⁷⁶

Not for the first time, Lansdowne's political predictions turned out to be misguided. For Brienne, all ended in bankruptcy and disaster in August 1788. But if the archbishop had turned out to be a busted flush, at least by agreeing to call the Estates-General he had created the conditions for change that excited reformers and commentators all over Europe, and Lansdowne did not accept that the reluctance of the Clergy and the Nobility in the Second Assembly of Notables in December 1788 to recommend the doubling of the Third Estate would be able to thwart the will of the French nation.⁷⁷ He was not alone in considering that financial crisis might compel France towards altering her monarchical constitution and imitating Britain's century-old 'Revolutionary' model.⁷⁸

Though deciding against travelling to Paris himself (his wife was mortally ill for much of 1789),⁷⁹ Lansdowne's fascination with the electoral prelude to the meeting of the Estates-General compelled him to make the most of his cosmopolitan advisers. Dumont had already arrived in Paris in the summer of 1788 to lobby for a restoration of the

Genevan *représentants* ejected in 1782⁸⁰. Dumont was also there to serve Lord Lansdowne's interests, as was, indirectly, Samuel Romilly, who experienced for himself in August-September the drama surrounding the end of Brienne's time as Principal Minister, the return to power of Necker, and the summoning of the Estates-General for the following spring. On his return, Romilly saw the urgency of offering the French public some guidance on the transferability of British constitutional ideas writing the *Règlements observés dans la Chambre des Communes, pour débattre les matières et pour voter*. He also influenced Jeremy Bentham (a well-established protégé of Lansdowne, close to his son and sister-in-law)⁸¹ in his decision to compose the *Political Tactics*, a work on parliamentary practice designed to help French legislators create peaceful forums for constitutional and legislative debate;⁸² Vaughan, meanwhile, was editing a progressive London journal called *The Repository* - material that might be serviceable to French 'patriots.' Between them, they were offering a loose blueprint for French constitutional reform that had been drawn up in the library of Lansdowne House, and in effect agitating behind the scenes for the kind of libertarian freedoms that members of this 'second' Bowood Circle believed either characterized the contemporary British polity or were attainable objectives with the right kind of government in office (i.e. not Pitt's).⁸³ As Lansdowne told Bentham on 3 January 1789: 'Nothing can contribute so much to general humanity and civilization as for individuals of one country to be interested for the prosperity of another; I have long thought that the people throughout the world have the same interest – it is governments that have different ones.'⁸⁴

-IV-

The advent of the French Revolution would turn out to be another false dawn for Lansdowne and his circle, just as 1772, 1783, and 1786 had been, and it brought no

political benefits. Francophilia had always compounded his oily public reputation and, as early as 1790 he and his friends were further arraigned by Edmund Burke in the hugely influential *Reflections* through their depiction as sinister, subversive outsiders conspiring to turn Britain into a Revolutionary laboratory inspired by France.⁸⁵ Lansdowne neither deigned to reply nor wavered in his hope – finally dashed by war in 1793 – that Britain and France would somehow act as exemplars to the rest of the continent through their shared constitutional achievements. His stance embodied a preference that was not new; he had been consistent since the early 1770s in urging conciliation with France as the best way to advance the interests both of Britain and of Europe at large.⁸⁶ Lansdowne considered it compatible with wanting the best for his own country, yet the majority of eighteenth-century Britons and Irish deemed it wholly off the patriotic register, in war-time little better than treasonable.

To have any impact, his enlightened brand of patriotism required acceptance alike from the politicians at the top and the British public at large. And that he was its advocate only hobbled what he stood for and sought to achieve. For, among both audiences, Shelburne's perceived awkwardness of character and apparent untrustworthiness tended to count against anything he said.⁸⁷ As a result, he lacked the political traction to propel himself into office and to hold on to it sufficiently long to deliver lasting policy change. Even when he was in power, the generous vision of this advanced politician was habitually undermined by streaks of misjudgement that amounted to self-destructiveness, such as failing to secure a parliamentary majority for his government in the winter of 1782-3, and offering explanations for his own conduct that seldom convinced his hearers, as in the crucial decision to resign on 24 February 1783.⁸⁸ Lansdowne could so easily act as his own worst enemy at such junctures, when temperamental weaknesses combined with his aversion to party politics wrecked his prospects and upset those doing their best to work with him. He was no more willing to cultivate a party connection,⁸⁹ charm

malcontents, or devote time to parliamentary arithmetic, than he was to make concessions to popular British opinion. As an intelligent man, there are signs that he sensed the deficiency but, from a combination of principle and perverseness, he either would not or could not do anything about it.

Lansdowne not only took little interest in the House of Commons, he came actively to dislike it as a disruptive force in the constitution only too keen to encroach into the proper sphere of the executive. By the time of his resigning as Premier, Shelburne had decided these inroads of the Commons were to be terminated and, as the other essential in his one-man scheme to end ‘the false system of Government’ which had grown up since 1714, there was to be a real first minister, on whom the king could rely for advice and support.⁹⁰ Indeed, as has been suggested, Lansdowne rather envied ministers in other European monarchies whose scope for initiative depended on managing a monarch rather than a legislature, and there are signs that it informed his francophilia.⁹¹ As Edmond Dziembowski has observed, ‘Reste que cette conduite autoritaire, en 1766 comme en 1782, bousculait les habitudes et, partant, ne pouvait qu’indisposer le monde politique’.⁹² One finds him in 1778, when intemperately pouring scorn on Lord North and his Cabinet as the ‘tools of their secret employers,’ speaking up for the ministerial integrity of those serving the Bourbon and Habsburg monarchies, and comparing them favourably with George III’s government, noting: ‘...the firm and manly conduct of modern ministers, in countries deemed despotic; in the persons of count Kauntitz⁹³ and the duke of Choiseul, who, sooner than break their words, or act contrary to their own judgment, opposed the will of their respective sovereigns; and suffered what, in the language of the court of Vienna and Versailles, is termed being disgraced; but which in fact, was looked upon by their fellow subjects, in a very different light.’⁹⁴

The fact was that when Shelburne's time came to serve his country, in 1782-3, much of his conduct was judged to be far from either 'firm' or 'manly' by his fellow countrymen. And his willingness to make what could all too readily be passed off as excessive concessions to France was a substantial part of the problem.⁹⁵ In explaining his parliamentary defeats in February 1783, a verdict that 'It was Shelburne the francophile, rather than Shelburne the administrative reformer or even Shelburne the king's friend' has much to be said for it.⁹⁶ Neither in government nor opposition did Shelburne evince much awareness of francophilia's political risks or make adequate gestures to mollify those who disliked it. He never conceded that his endorsement of a diplomatic alliance might be deemed an unrealistic policy objective, with Anglo-French rapprochement unlikely while colonial rivalry and policy differences persisted. Particularly after 1783, he was arguably too hasty to see unambiguous merit in a positive approach to France though, had Pitt brought him back into Cabinet, it is arguable that his sound working relationship with Vergennes could have borne further fruit. At least in this stance, his policy advocacy was for once unqualified and his utterances were not attended by the usual qualifications, half approvals and rodomontade that made him such an easy target for critics.

Neither he nor anyone in his 'Bowood Circle' ever succeeded in conveying to the public their underlying conviction that Britain had declined quickly from the high point of 1763 and the economic future might well belong to France unless something dramatic was done in foreign policy terms. France was a large, wealthy country and making friends with it was preferable to the financial and social costs of conflict. What Shelburne proposed was a hard headed but imaginative amity, one that included occasional nods in the direction of francophobia, but would best offer British governments a viable way of monitoring French power. It was an enlightened francophilia, a rarified patriotism that circumstances and his own character gave him no time to embody in policy making in 1782-3, but it was also never going to be an approach that would comfortably trump entrenched antagonisms that the war of 1778-83 had left slumbering rather than

dismantled. In any attempt to understand the various reasons for his failure in public life, this pro-French stance should be considered one of the most significant.

Notes

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1. Shelburne received a promotion in the British peerage to the Marquessate of Lansdown(e) in Dec. 1784 and is here referred to under that title from that date.
2. Stockley, *Britain and France at the Birth of America: The European Powers and the Peace Negotiations* (Exeter 2001); Whatmore, *Against War and Empire. Geneva, Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven 2012); des Champs, *Jeremy Bentham and France* (New Haven 2016). See also the essays in N. Aston and C. Campbell Orr, eds, *An Enlightenment Statesman in Whig Britain: Lord Shelburne in Context, 1737-1805* (Woodbridge 2011).
3. He was, of course, Anglo-Irish. For this Irish background see M.J. Powell, 'Shelburne and Ireland: Politician, Patriot, Absentee', in *ibid.*, 141-59; N. Aston, "Irish or English? The Rise and Rise of John Fitzmaurice Petty in the 1750s", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, Vol. 39 (2015), 155-82.
4. See William Cobbett and J. Wright, eds, *The Parliamentary History of England* (36 vols., London, 1806-20) [hereafter *PH*], 19, col. 1038, 8 April 1778; col. 20, 889, 17 June 1779. His observation that even women could repulse the French if they should attempt an invasion of England was well-publicised. *Wits museum, or the new London jester; a collection by the choice spirits of the present age* (London 1780), 2-3.
5. cf. Robin Eagles, "'Opening the Door to Truth and Liberty": Bowood's French Connection', in Aston and Campbell Orr, *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 197-214.
6. Derek Jarrett, *The Begetters of Revolution: England's involvement with France, 1759-1789* (London 1973), 219; Jeremy Black, *Natural and Necessary Enemies. Anglo-French relations in the eighteenth century* (London 1986), 68. See generally G. Newman, *The Rise of English nationalism. A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London 1987), 74-9; R. and I. Tombs, *That Sweet Enemy. The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (London 2006), 54-152; L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven 1992).
7. eg *Public Advertiser*, 14 Dec. 1770: 'He [Shelburne] never walks in a strait Path. Where others take the direct Road, he always prefers the crooked, serpentine Way. He cannot go directly to the Point, even when it leads in a right Line to what he himself wishes. So excentric a Genius was never seen.' cf. *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1779, 19 Sept. 1783, 17 Dec. 1783.

8. For instance, the 2nd Viscount Palmerston recorded: ‘The old Lord Holland used to say that many people were bred Jesuits but that Lord Shelburne was born one’. Anecdotes, in Broadlands Papers: estate and family, MS 62, BR12 Box 4/8 University of Southampton Library. For a visual depiction of Shelburne as a Jesuit, see *The shell-born Jes-t* (British Museum Collection, 18 Dec. 1782, anonymous artist). His inveterate enemy, Edmund Burke, was even more popularly cast as a Jesuit.
9. H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison, eds, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [hereafter ODNB] (Oxford, 2004) Vol. 43, 951-61.
10. *Shakespeare’s History of the Times: or the original portraits of that author. Adapted to modern characters, with notes and observations* (London 1778), 58n.
11. To C. Jenkinson, 13 Sept. 1782, British Library (henceforth BL) Loan 72/29, ff. 104-12.
12. C. Campbell Orr, ‘Aunts, Wives, Courtiers’, in Aston and Campbell Orr, *Enlightened Statesman*, 54. Mlle de l’Espinasse thus described him: ‘Il est simple, naturel; il a de l’âme, de la force [...]. il a de l’esprit, de la chaleur, de l’élévation’. To Guibert, 22 Oct. 1774, in E. Asse, *Lettres de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse* (Paris 1876), 136.
13. John Norris, *Shelburne and Reform* (London 1963), 22, 46-7.
14. G. M. Ditchfield, ‘A Christian Whig: Lord Shelburne and the Latitudinarian Tradition,’ in Aston and Campbell Orr, *Enlightenment Statesman*, 86; diary of 1st earl of Ailesbury, 8 Feb. 1787, *HMC 15th Report, Appendix, Part VII. The MSS of Marquis of Ailesbury* (London, 1898), 277.
15. Patrick Pilkington, ‘Thomas Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd Earl of Kerry 1740-1818, The Extravagance of an Irish Émigré’ (MA diss., University of London, 2005).
16. Morellet ordered books published in Paris for the Bowood library, as well as helping him find French servants and luxury items for Shelburne House. See, for instance, his letter to Shelburne, c. 15 Jan. 1774, D. Medlin, J.-C. David, P. Leclerc, eds, *Lettres d’André Morellet* (Oxford, 1991), Vol. II, 217-8.
17. D. Stillman, ‘The Gallery for Lansdowne House: International Neoclassical Architecture in Microcosm’, *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 52 (1970), 69-80; B. Cassidy, *The Life and Letters of Gavin Hamilton (1723-1798): Artist and Art-Dealer in eighteenth-century Rome* (London 2012) .
18. Bentham to George Wilson, 25-28 Aug 1781, in J.H. Burns, ed., *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham. Correspondence.*, I.R. Christie, ed. (London 1971), Vol. III, 61.
19. G.Goggi, ‘Autour du voyage de Raynal en Angleterre et en Hollande: la mise au point de la troisième édition de *l’Histoire des Indes*,’ in G. Bancarel & G.Goggi, eds, *Raynal: De la polémique à l’histoire* (Oxford 2000), 374-6, 381-3; idem., ‘Le voyage de Raynal en Angleterre et Hollande,’ *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l’encyclopédie* (1987), 86-117. Correspondence between Shelburne and Raynal has not survived.
20. Morellet to Shelburne, [4 May 1777], [3 June 1777], [12 May 1779], *Lettres*, Vol. 1, 55, 361, 391.
21. According to Derek Jarrett, it entitled him to notice as ‘England’s most internationally-minded statesman’. *The Begetters of Revolution*, 194.
22. Dorothy Medlin and Arlene P. Shy, ‘Enlightened Exchange: The Correspondence of André Morellet and Lord Shelburne,’ in Kathleen Hardesty Doig and Dorothy Medlin, eds, *British-French Exchanges in the Eighteenth Century* (Newcastle 2007), 34-63.
23. Morellet to Shelburne, [12 Oct. 1775], *Lettres*, Vol. 1, 287.

24. See Mlle de Lespinasse to Guibert, 4 Nov. 1774, in Asse, *Lettres de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse*, 149; F.W. Gibbs, *Joseph Priestley, Adventurer in science and champion of truth* (London 1965), 90-1.
25. Discussed most recently in Craig Beeston, “‘Theorists and Politicians’: The Earl of Shelburne and the Bowood Circle, c.1760-1783” (D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 2006), 1-2, 9-13, chaps. 2, 3, and passim.
26. Thomas Park, *Royal and Noble Authors of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London 1806), Vol. IV, 471-2. Wraxall even attributed Shelburne’s knowledge to a private espionage system. *The Historical and posthumous memoirs of Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall, 1772-1784*, H.B. Wheatley, ed. (London 1884), Vol. 2, 61-2.
27. Duc de Lévis, *L’Angleterre au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris 1814), 246. Thus Shelburne received at Loakes (his estate in High Wycombe, Bucks.) the marquis de Bombelles, formerly French minister to Ratisbon, on his way to Scotland and Ireland and gave him letters of introduction to his protégé, the duke of Rutland, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Shelburne to Rutland, 23 Aug. 1784, in *Historical Manuscripts Commission, 14th Report, Manuscripts of the Duke of Rutland...* (London 1894), Vol. 3, 133. Such hospitality was typical. When the Neckers were travelling to England in 1776 Morellet observed: ‘vous etes si obligeant[,], si noble[,], si french-loving que vous les acceuillerez bien sans ma recommandation’. To Shelburne, [12 Apr. 1776], *Lettres*, Vol. 1, 337.
28. Y. Lagadec, S. Perréon, D. Hopkin, *La bataille de Saint-Cast (Bretagne, 11 Septembre 1758). Entre histoire et mémoire* (Rennes 2009); Lord Fitzmaurice, *Life of William Earl of Shelburne* (London 1912), Vol. 1, 72-3.
29. For Shelburne’s often awkward association with Chatham see Frank O’Gorman, ‘Shelburne: A Chathamite in Opposition and in Government 1760-82?’, in Aston and Campbell Orr, *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 117-39.
30. *PH*, 15, cols. 1218-22; K. W. Schweizer, ‘The Bedford Motion and House of Lords Debate 5 February 1762,’ *Parliamentary History* 5 (1986), 115; Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat. The Rise and fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783* (Harmondsworth 2008), 487.
31. John Brooke, *The Chatham Administration 1766-1768* (London 1956), 16.
32. Public anxiety about the threat to British trade in the Mediterranean posed by any French annexation of Corsica was reflected in the press and pamphlets such as [anon.], *A Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Shelburne, on the Fatal Consequences of Suffering the French to Invade Corsica, and Possess the Sovereignty of the Mediterranean Seas* (London 1768).
33. Memo. by Shelburne on Corsica, 13 May 1768, The National Archives, SP 78/275/7; 78/275/34; 78/275/4; L.G. Wickham Legg, ed., *British Diplomatic Instruction, 1689-1789, vol. vii, France, Part IV, 1745-1789* (Royal Historical Society, ser 3, vol. 49), 1934, xviii-xix; John Fraser Ramsey, *Anglo-French Relations 1763-1770. A Study of Choiseul’s Foreign Policy* (Berkeley CA, 1939), 187-91; L.Bély, ‘Aux origines de la présence anglaise en Méditerranée,’ in M. Verg-Franceschi, ed., *La Corse et l’Angleterre xvi-xix^e siècle* (Ajaccio 2005), 13-27.
34. Norris, *Shelburne and Reform*, 53-4; Peter Brown, *A Study in the Relationship between Personalities and ideas in the second half of the Eighteenth Century* (London 1967), 54. Shelburne’s firm anti-French stance over Corsica contributed to his forced

- resignation. N. Tracy, 'The Administration of the Duke of Grafton and the French Invasion of Corsica,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* Vol. 8 (1974-75), 165-82.
35. Eagles, "'Opening the Door to Truth and Liberty'", 202-3.
36. Fitzmaurice, *Life*, Vol. I, 425-8. He once declared 'if ever I accomplish anything great in what remains of my life, I shall do so encouraged by my recollection of M. de Malesherbes.' *ibid.*, Vol. I, 428. J. Des Cars, *Malesherbes: gentilhommes des Lumières* (Paris 1994); Marek Wyrwa, *Malesherbes: le pouvoir et les Lumières* (Paris 1989). For d'Holbach's salon, see A.C. Kors, *D'Holbach's coterie: an Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton 1976), 83.
37. *Mémoires de l'abbé Morellet* (2 vols., Paris, 1821), Vol. 1, 201; D. Medlin, 'André Medlin and the Trudaines,' in *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford 2005), no. 12, 117-27.
38. Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Science and the Polity in France: The End of the Old Regime* (Princeton 1980), 3-12.
39. Jeremy Black, *Politics and Foreign Policy in the Age of George I, 1714-1727* (Farnham 2014), 99-100; M. Roberts, 'Great Britain and the Swedish Revolution, 1772-73,' *HJ* Vol. 7, (1964): 17n.; *idem.*, *Essays in Swedish History* (London 1967), 337, n.73; B. de Fraguier, 'Le duc d'Aiguillon et l'Angleterre (juin 1771-avril, 1773),' *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* Vol. 26 (1912), 607-27.
40. 'A bold, imaginative, but risky policy,' as it has been called Geoffrey W. Rice, 'Nassau van Zuylestein, William Henry van, fourth earl of Rochford (1717-1781),' *ODNB*, Vol. 40, 260-7; Scott, *British foreign policy*, 181-91; M. Roberts, *British diplomacy and Swedish politics, 1758-1773* (Minneapolis MN 1980); *idem.*, *Splendid Isolation, 1763-80* (Reading 1970); J. Black, *From Louis XIV to Napoleon: The Fate of a Great Power* (London, 1999), 120-1.
41. Thus in Chatham's motion of 30 May 1777 demanding an end to hostilities in America, Shelburne 'denied in the most positive terms her [France] being ingenuous in her profession of friendship'. *PH*, 19, col. 345.
42. *PH*, 19., col. 1045. 8 Apr. 1778.
43. Richmond, later Shelburne's uneasy Cabinet colleague 1782-3, was disparagingly referred to by Henry Bate in the *Morning Post*, 3 June 1780, as 'the Anglo-Gallic Duke' because of his French titles and seat at Aubigny.
44. The charge was loosely connected with the Montagu Fox peace feelers, which included probable forgeries of Shelburne's and Richmond's signatures. Ronald Seth, *The Spy in Silk Breeches. The story of Montagu Fox, 18th century Admiralty agent extraordinary* (London 1968).
45. *A letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Shelburne, on the motives of his political conduct, and the principles which have actuated the opposition to the measures of administration in respect to America* (London, 1776), 5. The charge of Jesuitism made against Shelburne had become a standard jibe by this date, for instance, when the earl spoke in favour of North's conciliatory proposals on the colonies on 10 Mar. 1778, the *Morning Post* commented: 'But after all, the insidious views of the jesuitical politician can be easily perceived, even through the ornaments, and graces of studied declamation'.
46. [Richard Tickell], *The green box of Monsieur de Sartine, found at Mademoiselle du The's lodgings. From the French of the Hague edition. Revised and corrected by those of Leipsic and Amsterdam* (London 1779), 13.

47. *Political Magazine*, Vol. 1, (1780), 428; Lord Sandwich to George III, 31 May 1780, in *The Correspondence of King George the Third from 1760 to December 1783...* (London, 1967), ed. Hon. Sir John Fortescue, Vol. V, 69.
48. Scott perhaps exaggerates Grantham's nominal influence in his office. *British Foreign Policy*, 325 and n.
49. The negotiation of the Peace is authoritatively considered in Stockley, *Britain and France at the Birth of America*, and Scott, *British Foreign Policy*, 319-35.
50. Discussed in Norris, *Shelburne and Reform*, 266-70, who observed, 'By the time the Coalition came to office the King and Shelburne were each convinced that he had been deserted by the other,' *ibid.*, 270. Shelburne seems to have taken the Commons majority against the Peace Preliminaries as an affront George III had not discouraged because it was a means of signalling royal displeasure at having to make Peace with the victorious colonists. John Nicholls, *Recollections and Reflections, Personal and Political, as Connected with Public Affairs, during the reign of George III* (2nd ed., 2 vols., London, 1822) i. 50-1, 389-90.
51. For instance, Beeston, "'Theorists and Politicians'", 56, 259.
52. B. Broughton to William Chaytor, 26 June 1783, North Yorkshire Record Office, ZQH Chaytor of Spennithorne papers
53. Black, *A System of Ambition?*, 225-7. Adhémar, admittedly a friend of Fox, thought Carmarthen a lightweight: 'Le jeune ministre... n'ose rien et ne sait rien.' To Vergennes, Londres, 3 Jan. 1784, CP Angleterre, 547, fol. 22r, Paris, Quai d'Orsay, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères [hereafter AE]
54. Pitt's domestic preoccupations kept him largely away from foreign policy concerns until 1786. Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions*, 479.
55. 'Fifteen years before his time he [Pitt] was called to one of the first offices in the British government by the Earl of Shelburne, and in return, he has laid this nobleman upon the shelf, to grow reverend from rust, like a piece of vertu.' [Thomas Lewis O'Beirne] *A Gleam of Comfort to this distracted Empire, in despite of faction, violence, and cunning, etc.* (London 1785), 134.
56. Morellet to Shelburne, 'Les personnes de ce pays cy qui ont eu le bonheur de vous connoitre ne vous oublient pas,' Morellet to Shelburne, 10 [6-9] Mar 1784, *Lettres*, Vol. 1, 508.
57. Vergennes' memo to LXVI of Nov 1784 on 'Le coup de Canon tiré sur l'Escaut' contains a wary view of British policy direction 'La jalousie de la nation anglaise contre la France est si active, qu'elle croit servir ses intérêts en précipitant sa ruine pour nuire à sa rivale.' ed. Comte de Ségur, ed., *Politique de tous les Cabinets de l'Europe, pendant les règnes de Louis XV et de Louis XVI* (Paris 1824-5) Vol. III. 208-218.
58. Dorset to Pitt, Paris, 20 Jan. 1785, HM 26030, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.
59. Lord J. Russell, ed., *Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox* (London 1853-7), Vol. II, 273. For Fox's consistently anti-French line in the 1780s, see Black, *Natural and Necessary Enemies*, 70.
60. For Lansdowne's fear in 1784-5 that ministers had lost their appetite for dismantling the mercantile system see Whatmore, *Against War and Empire*, 202.
61. For Pitt's careful, pragmatic diplomacy see John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt. The Years of Acclaim* (London 1969), 483-92. Carmarthen, meanwhile, remained insistent in 1785 that France was 'our natural and inveterate rival,' quoted in *ibid.*, 493.

62. He received first-hand information from some engaged in Anglo-French trade in France. See, for instance, letters sent from Montpellier by James Ireland in 1785. BL, Bowood papers Vol. 55, fols. 156-63.
63. The Opposition Whig, Lord Porchester, considered Lansdowne had spoken on both sides of the question. *PH*, 26, 1 Mar. 1787, col. 571.
64. *PH*, 26, 1 Mar. 1787, cols. 554-66, at cols. 558-9.
65. J. Hardman, *Overture to Revolution. The 1787 Assembly of Notables and the Crisis of France's Old Regime* (Oxford 2010), 224-9. Morellet expected Lansdowne to be pleased with the choice of Brienne 'parce que vous etes ainsi que moi cosmopolite en même tems que patriote.' *Lettres*, Vol. II, 50 [c. 7 May 1787].
66. On Dumont generally Whatmore, *Against War & Empire, passim*; Jefferson P. Selth, *Firm Heart and Capricious Mind: The Life and Friends of Etienne Dumont* (Lanham MD, 1997).
67. W.R. Fryer, 'Mirabeau in England, 1784-1785,' *Renaissance and Modern Studies*, Vol. 10 (1966), 63-4; François Quastana, *La pensée politique de Mirabeau (1771-1789): Républicanisme classique et régénération de la monarchie* (Aix-en-Provence 2007), 328-35.
68. *Douts*, 7-8, 17-22, quoted in *ibid.*, 199. Praise from one recently released from the Bastille, as Mirabeau had been, was perhaps a dubious endorsement.
69. Munro Price, 'The Dutch Affair and the Fall of the Ancien Régime,' *HJ* Vol. 38 (1995), 875-905; T.C.W. Blanning, *The origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London 1986), 36-52; Black, *From Louis XIV to Napoleon*, 137-40.
70. He was relatively well-informed. The pro-Dutch Calne MP, Lansdowne's banker, Francis Baring, closely connected with the Hope banking dynasty in Holland, passed on information to Lansdowne. Philip Ziegler, *The Sixth Great Power. Barings 1762-1929* (London 1988), 31. Thomas Hope wrote to him from Amsterdam in 1787 with up-to-date information on the political crisis as it broke. BL, Bowood Papers, Vol. 36, fols. 151-56, and he received detailed accounts of the volatile situation in Brussels from a correspondent there. Misc unsigned and anonymous papers 1760-1804, 5 Oct. 1787, BL Add. MS. 88906 /4/7, fols. 121-4.
71. 'My friend Lord Lansdowne makes his appearance frequently in town; some say he was with the King, and that from that time Mr Pitt took up the Stadtholder's cause with much spirit and energy, which sent the Marquis back to the country, disclaiming connection with Ministers.' Gen James Cuninghame to William Eden, 28 Aug 1787, in Bishop of Bath & Wells, ed., *The Journal and Correspondence of William, Lord Auckland* (London, 1861), Vol. I, 443.
72. Barthélemy to Montmorin, 24 July 1787, Paris, AE, CP Angleterre, 560, fol. 193, quoted in Alfred Cobban, *Ambassadors and Secret Agents* (London 1954), 132.
73. For Bentham's fulmination against 'Pitt's Machiavellian System' and his own scheme for perpetual peace see S. Conway, 'Bentham versus Pitt: Jeremy Bentham and British Foreign Policy 1789,' *HJ* Vol. 30 (1987), 791-809.
74. Lansdowne repaid the compliment in the House of Lords on 19 Mar. 1788 when he called Necker 'that great financier.' *PH*, 27, col. 257. They had long been known to each other through the intermediaryship of Morellet who ensured that Shelburne had his own copy of Necker's *Compte rendu*. *Lettres*, Vol. I, 441-3, 19 and 23 Feb. 1781.

75. Eagles, “Opening the Door to Truth and Liberty”: 210-11, for details. He notes that Wycombe admitted to his father that he could not share the latter’s belief ‘in the wisdom or even the liberality of administration here.’
76. Lansdowne to Bentham, 16 June 1788, Bentham, *Correspondence*, Vol. III, 621.
77. ‘I wish we may not count too much upon the appearance of distraction in France. I do not conceive that the Clergy and the nobility can make a stand in any Country in Europe against the King and People united, particularly in France, where these classes are far from unanimous, and too much civiliz’d to have recourse to violent measures. It might have been different in feudal times’. Lansdowne to Adm. Sir William Cornwallis [Jan. 1789], quoted in G. Cornwallis-West, *The Life and Letters of Admiral Cornwallis* (London 1927), 147.
78. Whatmore, *Against War and Empire*, 13.
79. Louisa, Lady Lansdowne, died in Aug. 1789. Bentham, *Correspondence*, Milne, ed., Vol. IV, 22.
80. Dumont, *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau*, 51. See also R. Whatmore, ‘Etienne Dumont, the British Constitution and the French Revolution,’ *HJ* Vol. 50 (2007), 23-47; Janet Polasky, ‘Revolutionaries Between Nations, 1776-1789’, *Past & Present*, 232 (2016) 165-201, at 191-2.
81. Bentham joked with Lord Wycombe that his father had ‘taken me into the Cabinet-circle’, 1 Mar. 1789, Bentham, *Correspondence*, ed. Milne, Vol. IV, 33.
82. See Bentham, *Political Tactics*, Michael James, Cyprian Blamires, and Catherine Pease-Watkin, eds, (Oxford 1999); Bentham, *Correspondence*, Milne, ed., Vol. IV, 17-18n.
83. Whatmore, *Against War and Empire*, 53, talks of the Circle’s interests ‘in parallel political systems in each nation.’
84. Bentham, *Correspondence*, ed. Milne, Vol. IV, 21.
85. N. Aston, ‘Burke and the Conspiratorial Origins of the French Revolution: Some Anglo-French Resemblances,’ in Coward and J. Swann, eds, *Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theory in Early Modern Europe. From the Waldensians to the French Revolution* (Aldershot 2004), 219-20; Jarrett, *The Begetters of Revolution*, 285.
86. cf. Stockley, who dates this ‘sea change in his attitudes’ to 1782-3. ‘Shelburne, the European Powers, and the Peace of 1783’, in Aston and Campbell Orr, *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 177-94, at 188.
87. Lord Rosebery’s observation ‘The English love a statesman whom they understand, or at least think that they understand. But who could understand Shelburne?’ retains its value. *Pitt* (London 1899), 51.
88. See his comments in the Lords’ debate on the Loan Bill, 5 May 1783: ‘He said again, with regard to himself, he had gone out of office holding up his head higher than those who came in. He thanked God he remained independent of all parties.’ *PH*, 23, col. 824.
89. ‘He despised faction, whether in a court or elsewhere; and always set his face against the narrow prejudices of party.’ Speech on the Chatham annuity bill, 2 June 1778, *PH*, 19, col. 1249.
90. Denis O’Bryen, *A Defence of the Right Honourable the Earl of Shelburne* (London, 1782), 53-4. Ironically, despite his high view of prerogative power, Shelburne had found it hard to work with George III while Premier. He was reported as saying of the king, that he ‘possessed one art beyond any man he had ever known; for that, by the familiarity of

his intercourse, he obtained your confidence, procured from you your opinion of different public characters, and then availed himself of this knowledge to sow dissension’.

Nicholls, *Recollections and Reflections*, i. 389; Fitzmaurice, *Shelburne*, Vol. I, 16 et seq.; Vol. II, 244-5.

91. For Shelburne’s views on the constitution as communicated at Spa to Morellet in Aug. 1783 see E. Dziembowski, ‘Lord Shelburne’s Constitutional Views in 1782-3,’ in Aston and Campbell Orr, *An Enlightenment Statesman*, 215-32. These included strictly limiting the powers of the Commons to scrutiny of the national finances. In the immediate aftermath of the Gordon Riots, he was also keen on creating a police force on the French model and later, while in office, approached some of the French living in London to ask for their help. *ibid.*, 225; 3 June 1780, *PH*, 21, col. 680.

92. Edmond Dziembowski. ‘Le ministère Shelburne et la réforme de la Constitution britannique’, in eds. R. Abad, J.P. Bardet, J.F. Dunyach, and F.-J. Ruggiu, *Les passions d’un historien. Mélanges en l’honneur de Jean-Pierre Poussou* (Paris, 2010), 315-24, at 317.

93. State Chancellor of the Habsburg Empire, 1753-93.

94. 5 Mar. 1778, *PH.*, 19, col. 855-6. Shelburne always took an interest in the career of his opposite number during the Corsican crisis of 1768 noting, critically, in 1783: ‘There were persons in the French Court, of more ability than the Duke de Choiseul, & in no respect his inferiors except in boldness& promptitude for action, who had no success in their Political pursuits.’ Draft MS autobiography of Henry Beaufoy, describing his interview with Shelburne, Hampshire Record Office, 10M57/29. Shelburne’s ‘retirement’ to Bowood after 1783 bears some comparison to Choiseul’s hosting celebrity visitors and political followers ‘in exile’ at Chanteloup after his dismissal in 1770.

95. A minority were ready to give him the benefit of the doubt, thus: ‘Lord Shelburne, however, fares as well in this Metropolis, as Mr. de Vergennes does in Paris, d’ou je conclus, without the least pretence to be a Politician, that the Peace is a fair, and equitable one.’ 10th earl of Pembroke to James Boswell, 11 Feb. 1783, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, MS C 2213.

96. Jarrett, *Begetters of Revolution*, 196.