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Timothy Tackett, *The Glory and the Sorrow: A Parisian and His World in the Age of the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 360 pp. Appendix, notes, bibliography, and index. \$24.95 U.S. (cl.). 9780197557389. \$9.99 U.S. (eb). 9780197557402.

Review by Marisa Linton, University of Kingston

There are few historians of the French Revolution whose work attracts attention outside the ranks of scholarly professionals in the field. Tim Tackett is a notable exception. I can remember two occasions in particular when I personally witnessed the extent to which an appearance by Tim Tackett generates the kind of buzz of excitement that is accorded to the work of very few historians. The first time was when I invited Tim to give a paper at the Institute of Historical Research in London. So many people turned up to hear him that we had to abandon the seminar room where the event was scheduled and decant into one of the main lecture theatres. On that occasion Tim was talking about his project on the genesis of the French revolutionary terror, which he was to publish under the title, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution*.^[1] The second time was in 2019, when, at a conference held in Melbourne in honour of Peter McPhee, an audience of several hundred people came to hear Tim talk about his new project, which was subsequently published as, *The Glory and the Sorrow: A Parisian and His World in the Age of the French Revolution*.^[2] There are many reasons why Tim Tackett's contribution to our knowledge of the French Revolution commands such attention, but here I want to concentrate on one aspect in particular: the place of *The Glory and the Sorrow* in scholarship on emotions in the Revolution.

Revolutions are profoundly emotional events, both for the people who take part, and for those who oppose them. This discovery should not surprise us. Anyone who has seen the political destabilisation of our own world in recent years can readily appreciate that emotions count for a great deal in politics, not only on the streets but also in the corridors of power. Why would the emotional experience of the first French revolutionaries have been any less intense? This does not mean that the revolutionaries themselves were captives of their emotions to the exclusion of their reason or their ideological commitment. On the contrary, we need to acknowledge the interconnectedness of reason and emotion, to appreciate that both these forces act in concert within us.^[3]

In recent years, the historiography of emotions in the French Revolution has come into prominence as a way of understanding politics and political decision-making, particularly the vexed question of the relationship between emotions and the politics of terror.^[4] Here we might think of the work of a number of historians, including William Reddy, Sophie Wahnich, Howard Brown and Sophia Rosenfeld. Whilst the historiography of emotions can be heavily theoretical, it also connects with such categories as the study of revolutionary experience and revolutionary lives, which put a greater emphasis on how politics and experience felt to people at that time, and influenced their actions, particularly on biography as a way of understanding politics. Examples of this kind of

approach include the collection edited by David Andress, *Experiencing the French Revolution* (2013) and, more recently, the collection edited by Jennifer Heuer and Mette Harder, *Life in Revolutionary France* (2020).[6]

Tim Tackett has been very much to the fore of the historiography of emotions, in part because he appreciates that we cannot fully reconstitute the lives of people in revolutionary France without acknowledging that they were beings of emotion as well as reason. As Tim states in the French edition of *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (entitled: *Anatomie de la Terreur*) we need a major rethinking of the factors that gave rise to terror, a rethinking which takes into account the emotions of revolutionaries:

[...] any interpretation of the Revolution and the Terror must take into account the influence of emotions on the psychology and behaviour of revolutionaries [...]. Revolutionaries were not gods, but men and women struggling to create a new political and social world in the midst of a series of events that they never anticipated and that were often very destabilizing.[7]

The Coming of the Terror is, amongst many things, a study of the part played by emotions in the decision-making of the deputies of the National Convention. Emotions here figured on a big scale, with ramifications for the lives—and deaths—of many. *The Glory and the Sorrow*, takes a different, but complementary, approach, focusing on one individual, and using his lived experience as a prism through which to understand the Revolution. While *The Glory and the Sorrow* centres on the life of one man, our understanding of his experience of the Revolution is couched very much in terms of his profound and shifting emotions—from the dizzying heights of 1789, the “glory” of the title, when hopes were high that the Revolution would forge a better and happier world—to the “sorrow” of 1794, as the intense expectations of the early years foundered against the crashing impact of war, betrayal and fear. Tim’s unfolding of the events of the Revolution through the emotional registers of one man, offer us, as readers in the twenty-first century a way into understanding what the Revolution meant for the generation that lived through it.

So, who was this one individual, and what can we learn from his emotional responses to the seismic events through which he lived? Tim calls Adrien-Joseph Colson “an ordinary citizen in extraordinary times” (p. 5), yet Colson was in many ways an extraordinary figure in the way that we are all of us extraordinary, or would be, if enough was known about our thoughts, our experiences, our lives. This brings us to the source material. Whilst thousands of voices flash in and out of the documentary material that we have on the Revolution, it is rare to find such a sustained body of sources, through which we can see the revolutionary experience as it developed over several years, seen through the eyes of one man. We learn from Tim that Colson never held office, or had his portrait painted, or published anything, “and his name can be found scarcely a dozen times in the official records of the period” (p.3). A lifelong bachelor, he also left no known descendants. For all these reasons, his very memory would have long since been swallowed up in the mists of time had it not been for a cache of over 1,000 letters that Colson wrote to his friend, Roch Lemaigre, living in Berry.

Colson’s perspective is that of a Parisian (by adoption, not birth), older, middle class, he was a lawyer who became pro-revolution. In several respects Colson defies any simple assumption of what a typical revolutionary might be, particularly with regards to his being considerably older

than the great majority of committed revolutionaries. We learn that every one of Colson's eight siblings died in early childhood, followed by their mother at the age of 51. Whilst this was a huge tragedy for the family, and meant that Adrien-Joseph was without close ties (his father died shortly after the son left for Paris), it did mean that all the family resources were concentrated on him as the sole remaining child, making it easier for him to make the pivotal leap from the artisanal to the professional classes. He was, however, well integrated in Parisian society. We learn absorbing detail about his apartment, his friends, the surrounding streets and streetlife close by the Châtelet. Despite being a man of the professional class, he had no servant, no cook, and took all his meals at a *traiteur*. He went to most places on foot, and probably only occasionally paid for a hackney cab, all of which help us go with him, and to experience revolutionary Paris as he did. We also get a sense through the letters of differing attitudes and responses: while Colson saw the Revolution as a positive experience, for the Longaunay family, the sword nobles with whom he had been closely involved, the experience was far different.

There is no such thing as a typical revolutionary, only limited or inadequate information. The extent of the source material means that we get a very rounded picture of Colson, enabling us to hear in depth about the beliefs that moved and motivated him. Tim brings his considerable expertise on the complex relationship between religious belief and revolution into his account of Colson, and helps us to avoid making easy or over-simplified judgements. We learn that Colson would "reveal signs of strong Catholic piety throughout his years in Paris under both the Old Regime and the Revolution" (p. 13), that he had a collection of books "of considerable sophistication" (p. 13) on religious devotion, and that, at least until 1793, he saw loyalty to the Catholic church as compatible with his support for the ideas of the Revolution.

In an interview in March 2022, Tim addresses the extent to which Colson was moved by emotions: "Emotions always played a major role in [Colson's] life." These emotions were both positive—"his enthusiasm, his joy, his love in the collective sense of fraternity"—and, at moments of revolutionary crisis, negative, marked by "terrible fear and hatred." Colson himself was conscious of his own emotions in a way that we associate with the cult of sensibility and of self-conscious natural virtue: he spoke of the importance of having "a sensitive heart" (p. 55) and he expressed many of the positive emotions associated with revolutionary politics, including the patriotic fervour that characterised the opening phases of the Revolution. The emotions stirred up by the events of 1789, along with Colson's reactions, are particularly illuminating. Colson reflected on his own feelings, and was struck by how unprecedented they were, "this Revolution, as stunning as it has been unexpected, both astonishes me and enormously moves me" (p. 80). Colson was particularly impressed by the way in which social distinctions, hitherto rigidly imposed, seemed to melt away in a moment of fraternity and fusion. On 22 June 1789 he visited the Palais Royal and was struck by the extent to which crowds were enacting the breaking down of hierarchies, so that "there was no longer any division between the three estates" (p. 83).

We also see how Colson's emotions vacillated in response to changing political circumstances. He greeted the events of 1789, the creation of the National Assembly, the storming of the Bastille, with excitement, joy and hope for the future. But these positive emotions came as Colson—like so many others—observed the negative reaction of the monarchy and much of the old elite to the upheavals of 1789. Tim describes Colson's sudden change of opinion on the king, and the widespread escalation of fear—a fear in which Colson fully shared—of an "aristocratic plot." It is

notable that despite Colson's social and cultural background—professional middle class, rather than “a man of the people”, and his “generally disapproving accounts of public executions under the Old Regime” (p. 90), fear made Colson much more accepting of popular and retributive violence. As Tim shows us, though Colson himself did not take part in violent acts, he appears to have shown “complete sympathy” (p. 92) for the lynching of Bertier de Sauvigny, intendant of Paris, and Foulon, the conservative minister, in the aftermath of the storming of the Bastille, events which he may well have personally witnessed. In Colson's words describing their fate: “Everyone accused them of having criminally used every means available to create a famine and of having taken part in the plots conspired against the nation and especially against Paris. Thus, the people hanged them four or five hours apart ... and paraded their heads on the ends of pikes” (p. 93).

In contrast to Colson's openness in writing about the emotions aroused by the shifting political situation, he was much more reticent with regards to many aspects of his personal life. He committed little to paper about his feelings regarding the deepest and most personal aspects of his own life. Tim speculates on the reasons why Colson never married, but admits that evidence from Colson's own words is thin on the ground. Poignantly, we learn that Colson had “two impressive gold rings” in an armoire “at the time of his death” (p. 64). But whether the rings were a keepsake of his mother, who died young, or had been brought in preparation for a marriage that never took place, Colson's biographer cannot say.

Chapter 7, “Rumour and Revolution”, is particularly illuminating for its insights into rumour and fear of conspiracy on the streets of Paris, especially in the context of the October Days of 1789 and the king's flight in June 1791. Colson describes the scenes when the king was brought back to Paris in disgrace, how no one shouted, “long live the King,” instead there was “general indignation” (p. 122) that the king had perjured his oath to the constitution, with many calling for the monarchy to be abolished. Weeks later, on 10 July, Colson relates that emotions were still running high: “The public continues to be passionately opposed to the king [...]. And a large number think he should be deposed without naming any successor” (p. 122). Colson was not a man of the clubs, he was not a Jacobin and Tim says there is no mention of his ever having attended one of the meetings of the Jacobins (p. 122), nor did Colson state which side he was on when fraught debates were held on the fate of the king, but he appears to have been, tacitly at least, judging by his words and his actions, in the republican camp.

Belief in the existence of conspiracies was prevalent throughout the Revolution. It could be found at every stage and amongst every group. Revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries believed in conspiracies, and several historians have turned their attention to fear of conspiracy in recent years, not least Tim himself. Here we should note that belief in political conspiracies ebbs and flows, but is particularly powerful when joined with fear and political fragility, and in a context where people struggle to explain or understand forces at work in politics. Colson's letters bear witness to this potential for fluctuating fear of conspiracy.

Emotions played a key part in the radicalization of Colson, as we see when he described the terrified reaction of himself and his neighbours to the news that General Dumouriez had turned traitor, and was attempting to lead French soldiers in a march on Paris to overthrow the Convention and the Republic. The aftermath of this fear, and the rumour (widely circulated and believed) that Dumouriez was in league with the Girondin deputies played its part in Colson's decision to become

an active participant in the radicalization of the Revolution. He joined the national guard contingent of the Lombards in the mass surrounding of the Convention, and the demand for the arrest of the Girondin deputies. It was an active choice on Colson's part, as Tim makes clear: "He chose to participate, even though at the age of 66 he might easily have remained in his apartment without criticism" (p. 146). Colson viewed the events of 2 June 1793, that saw the arrest of the Girondin deputies under pressure from 25,000 armed men as evidence of fraternity in action, the unifying principle of the Revolution at work. According to Colson's perspective, the deputies saw the "fraternal attitude of the guardsmen, who took care to present only the most moderate respect toward the Convention, they were compelled to attest their admiration for us" (p. 147).

It is instructive to see the slow tentative steps whereby Colson, a gentle man in late middle age, became a radical revolutionary. Yet we also see the negative emotions that were experienced by Colson in the convulsive period of 1792 to 1794. It is disappointing for the historian—though hardly surprising—that Colson's letters ceased to speak about politics over the fateful months of the summer to autumn of 1793. Colson had much personal cause for the "sorrow" in the title. Tim gives full space to Colson's religious commitment, and his struggle to balance his faith against his support for the Revolution. Although Colson himself had grown reticent, Tim points to the grief he must have suffered at the closure of the church of Saint-Jacques, the church where he had regularly worshipped, along with all the churches in his section in November 1793, at the height of the Parisian de-Christianisation movement. Saint-Jacques was demolished in 1797, as Colson lay, close by in his apartment, at the point of death. We also see the deterioration of many of Colson's friendships under the strain of revolutionary politics, including that with the marquis de Longaunay and with Roch Lemaigre. Colson destroyed Lemaigre's letters so that we retain only his side of the correspondence. There is so much to be learned, both from Colson's letters and from the profound knowledge with which Tim accompanies this book, that we must be grateful that Lemaigre did not retaliate in kind, and that Colson's letters remain to us as a window on a tumultuous time in world history.

NOTES

[1] Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[2] Timothy Tackett, *The Glory and the Sorrow: A Parisian and His World in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[3] This subject is considered at greater length in Michel Biard and Marisa Linton, *Terror: The French Revolution and its Demons* (2021), esp. chap. 3, "Terror in the Heart: The Weight of Fears and Emotions".

[4] For an extended consideration of how the historiography of the emotions affects our understanding of the *conventionnels*, see Marisa Linton, "The Power of Emotions: New Light on the *Conventionnels* and the Process of the Terror", *H-France Salon*, vol. 11 (2019), 4,700 words, at: <https://h-france.net/h-france-salon-volume-11-2019/#1101>.

[5] See, amongst others: William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of the Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Sophie Wahnich, *La liberté ou la mort, essai sur la Terreur et le terrorisme* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2003); and Howard G. Brown, *Violence and the Self: Personal Suffering and Collective Trauma from the French Wars of Religion to the Paris Commune* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019). See too, Marisa Linton, *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship and Authenticity in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[6] David Andress (ed.), *Experiencing the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford, Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, 2013); and Jennifer Heuer and Mette Harder (eds), *Life in Revolutionary France* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

[7] Preface to the French edition of Tackett, *Anatomie de la Terreur: Le processus révolutionnaire 1787-1793* (Paris: Seuil, 2017), p. 11. Translation is my own.

[8] Amongst Tim Tackett's considerable body of work on the often fraught relationship between religion and revolution, see Timothy Tackett, *Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[9] 'Experiencing the Glory and the Sorrow of the French Revolution: an Interview with Timothy Tackett', interviewed by Katlyn Carter, for *Age of Revolutions*, 8 March 2022 : <https://ageofrevolutions.com/2022/03/08/experiencing-the-glory-and-the-sorrow-of-the-french-revolution-an-interview-with-timothy-tackett/>

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Here the account of Colson's sense of betrayal at Louis XVI's flight in June 1791, complements Tim's full-length study of the subject in Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[12] On fear of conspiracy in the Revolution, see Peter R. Campbell, Thomas E. Kaiser, and Marisa Linton (eds.), *Conspiracy in the French Revolution*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007; along with Tim Tackett's own works: Timothy Tackett, 'Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792', *American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 691-713; and Timothy Tackett 'Collective Panics in the Early French Revolution, 1789-1791: A Comparative Perspective,' *French History* 17 (2003), pp. 149-171.

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