

# Dangerous Liaisons. New light on the reasons for the expulsion of the violinist G.B. Viotti from Britain in 1798

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*In March 1798 the violinist Giovanni Battista Viotti was expelled from Britain, suspected of being a Jacobin sympathizer. He was allowed to return to England in the summer of 1799 under circumstances that have remained vague to this day. In 1811 he was granted British denizenship, but only after petitioning the Crown. To understand the British Government's determined stance against Viotti it is necessary to examine his life in Paris in the period 1789–92 – his friendship with the Jacobin journalist-diplomat Hugues Bernard Maret, his entrepreneurial activities, and his attempted takeover of the Paris Opera. These activities were remembered by two eccentric characters of the age, both spies for the British government. The first was an unscrupulous French ultraroyalist, the Comte d'Antraigues. The second was the dogmatic and at times irrational Englishman W.A. Miles, who was especially suspicious of Viotti's pupil Pierre Rode, who made an unexpected landing in Britain in early 1798. In this article I re-examine the question of Viotti's expulsion from Britain in light of new evidence against the violinist, some of it apparently damning, and attempt to determine once and for all whether the order was justified.*

In March 1798 the seemingly innocent violinist G.B. Viotti was expelled from Britain under orders from the Alien Office in the wake of persistent rumours and innuendo regarding his Jacobin sympathies, generated largely, but not exclusively, by fellow musicians. Viotti's innocence was loudly proclaimed by his supporters in London at the time; it was echoed in print by his contemporary biographers Eymar, Miel and Fétis<sup>1</sup> and in a contemporary German musical journal,<sup>2</sup> and it has been re-echoed by all his subsequent biographers, from nineteenth-century musicologist Arthur Pougin<sup>3</sup> to the most recent twenty-first-century scholars.<sup>4</sup> While each writer offers tentative reasons for Viotti's expulsion,

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<sup>1</sup> Ange-Marie d' Eymar, *Anecdotes sur Viotti, précédés de quelques réflexions sur l'expression en musique* (Geneva: Luc Sestié, an VIII [1799–1800]); E.F. Miel, 'Viotti, Jean Baptiste', in *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne*, ed. F. Michaud 45 vols (Paris: Chez Madame C. Desplaces, 1843–65): vol. 43, 585–90 at 588; F.J. Fétis, ed., *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 8 vols (Brussels: Leroux, 1835–44): vol. 8, 467–73 at 471.

<sup>2</sup> *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 14 August 1799, col. 762, which reported that Viotti had to leave England after an 'undeserved accusation'.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Pougin, *Viotti et l'école moderne du violon* (Paris: Schott, 1888): 77.

<sup>4</sup> Warwick Lister, *Amico: The Life of Giovanni Battista Viotti* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009): 218–23; Denise Yim, *Viotti and the Chinnerys: A Relationship Charted Through Letters* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004): 97–106.

none can find any evidence that the order was justified. Scholars have therefore generally accepted Viotti's own published and unpublished declarations of innocence,<sup>5</sup> and this period of Viotti's life has remained something of a mystery.

In this article I re-examine the events surrounding Viotti's expulsion order, up to the time of his ultimate vindication in 1811, when he was granted denizenship (a privilege accorded to aliens by the British, which gave them some, but not all, of the rights of a British citizen<sup>6</sup>). I also hope to determine to what extent, if any, the order was justified. Two men in particular, one English and one French, had a profound influence on Viotti's fate, yet their connection with the violinist has gone unnoticed by musicologists, although not by the historian J.R. Dinwiddy, whose article 'The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation Under the Aliens Act, 1793–1826' cites Viotti's case among others.<sup>7</sup> Here I shall expand on what Dinwiddy presented, and introduce new information which shows that in the years 1789 to 1793 Viotti was sailing very close to the revolutionary wind, and may have been more sympathetic to revolutionary principles than he owned to be.

Viotti's career path did not follow that of the typical eighteenth-century court musician, whose fortunes depended on the fortunes of his monarch patron, and who had to ride the waves of political ebb and flow uncomplainingly, as did Viotti's own Turinese teacher Gaetano Pugnani.<sup>8</sup> Viotti possessed a formidable intellect as well as musical talent, and this, combined with his own native ambition and the mind-broadening education given him by his Turinese patron the Prince Alfonso Dal Pozzo della Cisterna, meant that he could never be happy living in a state of dependency on a monarch or some other ruler. Indeed, it must be admitted that Viotti's temperament played no small part in leading him into trouble.

The problem of how to deal with the political environment in which they find themselves is one many musicians have faced, especially in the 1790s, when the French Revolution threw up its own peculiar set of problems. In Mark Darlow's *Staging the French Revolution*<sup>9</sup> we see whole companies of performers having to adapt to a rapidly shifting cultural environment, in which some fare better than others. Warwick Lister's biography of Viotti also highlights some of the pitfalls musicians faced in these turbulent times. In his study of the pianist H el ene de Montgeroult, J er ome Dorival reveals the significant interaction that took place between musicians and politicians.<sup>10</sup> Here I shall try to show how this interaction affected Viotti.

Surprisingly, the charge of Jacobinism, or an endorsement of the principles of the most radical of the revolutionaries, had been levelled at Viotti as early as his

<sup>5</sup> The first in the *Morning Herald*, 5 March 1798, the second in his *Pr ecis de la vie de J.B. Viotti depuis son entr ee dans le monde jusqu'au 6 mars 1798*, 23 March 1798, Viotti Papers, Royal College of Music, London, 1249 MS 4118.

<sup>6</sup> For example, a denizen could purchase land, but not inherit it. The status was obtained by letters patent granted by the king.

<sup>7</sup> J.R. Dinwiddy, 'The Use of the Crown's Power of Deportation Under the Aliens Act, 1793–1826', *Historical Research*, 41 (1968), 193–211, at 202.

<sup>8</sup> Pugnani lost his retirement savings when the King of Sardinia reduced the salaries of his court musicians by a quarter after large armies had to be raised to defend Piedmont against the French in 1793. See Pugnani to Viotti, 16 October 1793, transcribed in Yim, *Viotti and the Chimmerys*, 271–3.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution, Cultural Politics and the Paris Op era*, 1789–1794 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> J er ome Dorival, *H el ene de Montgeroult: la marquise et la Marseillaise* (Lyon: Sym etrie, 2006).

arrival in England in July 1792.<sup>11</sup> Did he deserve it? To answer this question we must look at Viotti's activities in Paris in the previous decade.

### The Paris Salons

When Viotti arrived in Paris he was bearing a letter of introduction, which had been given to him at the court of Frederick the Great, to no less a personage than the philosopher Jean-Baptiste le Rond d'Alembert, who was asked to help the young violinist 'try to merit the approbation of a nation that has become the dispenser of reputations in every field'.<sup>12</sup> In this Viotti was successful: his two seasons playing at the *Concert spirituel* were exhibitions of his superiority over his rivals.<sup>13</sup> But with fame comes controversy, and it is to this that Viotti probably referred when he told his old patron Cisterna that it was his 'miserable talent' that was the cause of his disgrace.<sup>14</sup> However, as we shall see, it was not fame alone that caused Viotti's 1798 woes.

The letter to d'Alembert gave Viotti immediate entrée into the world of the Paris salons, where he was made welcome by royalists (Mme de Richelieu, Mme de Rochechouart, Mme de La Briche, Mme Vigée-Lebrun) and philosophers alike. As he said in his *Précis*, he was 'received everywhere'. One of the earliest salons he attended was Mme Helvétius's famous literary and philosophical salon, which was attended by d'Alembert (until October 1783), Diderot (until July 1784), and Benjamin Franklin (until July 1785). According to Pougin, Viotti 'warmly embraced' the ideas of these *encyclopédistes*.<sup>15</sup> Here he might have heard Franklin express the desire to 'abolish monarchy, aristocracy, and hierarchy throughout the world'.<sup>16</sup>

Another salon where he might have heard similar views was that of Abbé Morellet, the man of letters, *philosophe*, and member of Adrien Duport's Constitutional Club. Morellet was fond of music and played the cello. Viotti, along with Piccini and his pianist friends Nicolas-Joseph Hüllmandel and Hélène de Montgeroult, were regulars, and it is likely the future British embassy secretary William Huskisson, whose unorthodox French education brought him into contact with these same liberal-minded men, also attended. Acceptance into this world had to be earned. According to one contemporary, 'People wishing to take their place in polite society had to have enough general knowledge to enable them to discuss the political and social problems debated by the "enlightened" world'.<sup>17</sup> Clearly Viotti was accepted not only for his musical talent, but also because he was able to hold his own among these fine minds. More significant, however, is that such discussions were *expected* of the participants. By taking part in these debates Viotti would have believed that he was doing no more than any other person

<sup>11</sup> Reported in the *Morning Herald*, 16 January 1798.

<sup>12</sup> Lagrange to d'Alembert, Berlin, 7 December 1781, cited in Warwick Lister, "'Mon cher et illustre ami': Viotti and the Mathematicians", *Ad Parnassum* 13/25 (April 2015): v–viii. Jean-Louis Lagrange (1736–1813) was a mathematician of note, and a native of Turin.

<sup>13</sup> See Lister, *Amico*, 69, 78.

<sup>14</sup> Viotti to Cisterna, 30 June 1798, cited in Warwick Lister, "'Suonatore del Principe": New Light on Viotti's Turin Years', *Early Music* 31 (2003): 232–46, at 244.

<sup>15</sup> Pougin, *Viotti*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> *Boston Patriot*, 15 May 1811.

<sup>17</sup> A. Laquante, ed. and trans., *Un Prussien en France en 1792: Lettres intimes de J.F. Reichardt* (Paris: Perrin, 1792): 6.

touched by the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment – in other words, that his actions were innocent.

Viotti may also have been admitted to the salon of the freethinking Mme de Staël, for she certainly knew him and had heard him play.<sup>18</sup> This salon had a strong political emphasis, and also welcomed musicians. The young librettist Jean-Nicolas Bouilly wrote of it (although he could have been writing of any of the salons Viotti frequented) that it contained the *crème de la crème* of Paris society, and that all attendees were celebrities in their own fields, and that there ‘one learned to judge men, not according to their rank, but according to their personal merit’.<sup>19</sup> Mme de Staël’s salon was the resort of constitutional monarchists, and by 1789–1790 (the dates of the salon) Viotti had made some good friends of this political persuasion. All were deputies in the Constituent National Assembly (Ange-Marie d’Eymar, Alexandre de Lameth, Adrien Duport, the Duc d’Aiguillon, Baron Menou). In his *Précis* Viotti refused to malign them, calling them ‘good and honest men’ (surely an implicit endorsement of their principles), whose acquaintance he had made in order to avert suspicion. This was not quite true, for according to his friend Edme Miel, Viotti shared their views. Like all generous-hearted men, Miel said, Viotti had applauded the early reform measures, and shared the reformers’ hopes for a better France. After all, a love of liberty went together with a love of the arts.<sup>20</sup> One can imagine Viotti getting caught up in the excitement of the early years of the Revolution when, as Mme de Staël wrote, politics was still in the hands of the liberal aristocracy, and ‘one breathed more freely, there was more air in one’s lungs, and the nation was seized with hopes of boundless happiness’.<sup>21</sup>

Viotti’s dearest friends of these years were the aristocratic amateur pianist Hélène de Montgeroult (herself a close friend of Mme de Staël),<sup>22</sup> who would go on to become a *professeur* in the newly founded Paris Conservatoire in 1795; her teacher Hüllmandel, who was the protégé of the *philosophe* Morellet; and her lover the constitutional monarchist (later Republican) and member of the Jacobin Club (until July 1791, when he helped found the breakaway Club des Feuillants), Hugues-Bernard Maret,<sup>23</sup> who went daily to the National Assembly to report proceedings.<sup>24</sup> Montgeroult and Viotti were close musical collaborators, and played together at the same Paris assemblies, as well as at the Montgeroult country estate, where they gave displays of their brilliant improvisational skills.<sup>25</sup>

It was not uncommon for artists and musicians to be close to prominent politicians in the early years of the Revolution.<sup>26</sup> Many of the latter were fond of

<sup>18</sup> Mme de Staël to Viotti, 28 June 1813, Viotti/Chinnery Correspondence, New York Public Library, JOB 97–52, item 29.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, ‘Soirées chez Mme de Staël, ou les Cercles de Paris en 1789 et 1790’, *Paris, ou le Livre des Cent-et-Un*, vol. 11 (Paris: Ladvocat, 1833): 231–58, at 243.

<sup>20</sup> Miel, ‘Viotti’, 588.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Maria Fairweather, *Madame de Staël* (London: Constable, 2005): 104–5.

<sup>22</sup> Dorival, *Hélène de Montgeroult*, 23, 44, 61, 91.

<sup>23</sup> On H.B. Maret (1763–1839), duc de Bassano (1809), see Alfred Auguste Ernouf, *Maret, duc de Bassano*, second edition (Paris, Perrin, 1884) and article in *Biographie universelle*, vol. 26, 527–40. Maret’s amorous liaison with Hélène de Montgeroult is revealed in their 1793 correspondence in the Vienna Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Frankreich Varia Box 48, Faszikel 60.

<sup>24</sup> His daily sheet became the *Bulletin de l’Assemblée nationale* (1789–1790), later *Le Moniteur*.

<sup>25</sup> Eymar, *Anecdotes sur Viotti*, 37–8.

<sup>26</sup> See Dorival, *Hélène de Montgeroult*, 109, 129.

the arts. Maret came from a cultured Dijon family, his father was the author of a panegyric on Rameau,<sup>27</sup> and he himself was a music connoisseur. In one of Montgeroult's letters to him she speaks of Gluck's *Orfeo* and of the castrato Guadagni, and reminds him feelingly of her favourite piano piece and of the correspondence between music and emotions.<sup>28</sup> Maret's own evidence, too, showed that he loved opera and enjoyed singing.<sup>29</sup> The young Bertrand Barère, who became more radicalized as the Revolution went on, was, according to the amateur musician and political intriguer Mme de Genlis, passionate about the arts.<sup>30</sup> Montgeroult was also on friendly terms with Barère, appealing to him for help at the time of her 1793 troubles (see below), when he was a member of the Committee of Public Safety.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time Viotti had strong connections to the queen. After his retirement from public performing he had been invited to join the prestigious masonic lodge, the *Société olympique*, and was a sometime leader of its admired orchestra, which performed in full court dress to a private audience in one of the rooms of the Tuileries Palace under the patronage of the queen. If, as Viotti says in his *Précis*, he gave up public performing to devote himself to the queen, the following anecdote recounted by Eymar seems curious, though possible, given Viotti's temperament, which was impetuous, and by his own admission, impatient.<sup>32</sup> Allegedly, the Comte d'Artois had rudely interrupted his playing at a concert in the queen's apartments, and Viotti had put his violin under his arm, folded his music, and walked out. Whether or not the anecdote is true, Viotti's reputation suffered by the telling of it. His behaviour was thought arrogant and disrespectful. Eymar described a second incident which he believed may have earned Viotti an anti-royalist reputation. Viotti was said to have refused to change the venue of a concert, which was to take place in a fifth-floor apartment (probably Eymar's own), for the benefit of the nobles who intended to come. Viotti was supposed to have said, 'For a long time we have stooped to them; now let them come up to us'.<sup>33</sup> Whether he did indeed say these words or not (his friend Miel believed he did not),<sup>34</sup> is immaterial. The point is, it was believed he said them.

The artists who took part in this concert were Viotti's soulmate Mme de Montgeroult, the queen's pianist Johann David Hermann, violinists Pierre Rode (Viotti's pupil) and Giuseppe Puppo, cellists Smerska and Bréval, pianist Daniel Steibelt, and the singers Garat, Mandini, Viganoni and Mme Morichelli. Their very participation shows the extent to which they had been touched by the spirit of the Revolution, and even perhaps, as Dorival suggests, that the concert was itself *un acte engagé*.<sup>35</sup> Like Rousseau, whose bust adorned Eymar's apartment,

<sup>27</sup> Hugues Maret, *Eloge historique de M. Rameau* (Paris: Desventes de La Doué, 1770).

<sup>28</sup> Mme de Montgeroult to Maret, 27 brumaire, an 2d de la République (17 November 1793), HHStA, 'Die Franzosin von Bassano [sic] an ihrer...', fol. 6v.

<sup>29</sup> *Biographie universelle*, vol. 26, 532.

<sup>30</sup> Félicité de Genlis, *Précis de la conduite de Mme de Genlis depuis la Révolution* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1796): 26.

<sup>31</sup> Dorival, *Hélène de Montgeroult*, 108–9; Léon G. Péliissier, 'Après l'attentat contre Sémonville et Maret', *Revue historique de la Révolution française* 1 (1910): 353–527, at 365.

<sup>32</sup> Viotti to Margaret Chinnery, 12 December 1821, Chinnery Family Papers, University of Sydney Library, Fisher 2000 – 2/4.

<sup>33</sup> Eymar, *Anecdotes sur Viotti*, 20–21; Miel, 'Viotti', 588, where he offers the story as a possible reason why Viotti might have been accused of being an anti-royalist.

<sup>34</sup> Miel, 'Viotti', 588.

<sup>35</sup> Dorival, *Hélène de Montgeroult*, 42.

Viotti believed in the equality of men irrespective of any hierarchies imposed by society. He disliked any form of constraint, was unwilling to compromise his principles, and was not shy in expressing his views. These beliefs led Viotti to behave in a way that was recklessly heedless of public opinion, but it should not necessarily condemn him, for, even if the concert were an *acte engagé*, it took place when men's hopes for reform were still pure, and untainted by the bloody events that followed.

As far as the politicians were concerned, two incidents may be cited to show that they believed that musicians fell into distinct categories, those who did, and those who did not 'meddle' in politics. The first incident took place a couple of years after the fifth-floor-apartment concert. Hermann was arrested when he attended a session of the Revolutionary Tribunal (these began in April 1793) dressed in elegant attire. Barère came to his aid and had him released. Barère wrote in his 1842 *Mémoires* that Hermann 'did not meddle in politics',<sup>36</sup> identical words to those written of Hüllmandel by Morellet in his letter introducing the pianist to Lord Lansdowne in 1786.<sup>37</sup> Clearly politicians thought it better that musicians did not 'meddle'. The fact that neither Hermann or Hüllmandel ever came to grief, shows that Viotti, who did, must have been perceived to be meddling. Unlike Viotti, Hüllmandel, who had also played at court for the queen, had managed to keep a low profile in revolutionary Paris, and his name was never to be found in the newspapers. He had much to lose from the Revolution, as he was married to the wealthy, now pregnant, niece of the Receiver General, and he quietly emigrated in 1790.

On the other hand, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, a German violinist whom Viotti would have known,<sup>38</sup> did, like Viotti, suffer for being seen to take a political stand. He was accused of having Jacobin sympathies, fell victim to the machinations of jealous musical colleagues, and lost his court post because of it. Reichardt had published a book on his travels in France, which was read as an apology for the French Revolution. According to the translator of the 1792/93 French edition, Reichardt had a cultured mind, that had [like Viotti's?] been 'seduced by Rousseau'.<sup>39</sup>

### Théâtre Feydeau and the Opéra bid

It was during the early years of the Revolution that Viotti's activities attracted most attention. In 1788, with unfortunate timing, Viotti decided to branch out into entrepreneurial activities. The queen desired a theatre for *opera buffa*. She obtained a *privilege*, which she awarded to Léonard Autié and Viotti, whom she must have forgiven for his previous breach of court protocol. A third person was named in the legal documents as a co-owner of the theatre. This was the wealthy

<sup>36</sup> Bertrand Barère, *Mémoires de Barère*, 4 vols (Paris: Jules Labitte, 1842–44): vol. 2, 199.

<sup>37</sup> In his letter Morellet said that he had known Hüllmandel for 20 years, that he was a highly esteemed harpsichord teacher and composer, and that he did not meddle in politics (Morellet to Lansdowne, 9 December 1786, in Dorothy Medlin and Jean Claude David, eds, *Lettres d'André Morellet*, 3 vols (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991–96): vol. 2, 24.

<sup>38</sup> Viotti would have met Reichardt in 1780–81, in Berlin, where he was Frederick the Great's Kapellmeister, and may have seen him again when Reichardt arrived in Paris around September 1791.

<sup>39</sup> Laquiante, ed. and trans., *Un Prussien en France*, 4.

manufacturer Bernard du Chaila des Arènes, who, quite possibly against his will, had been persuaded by 'un personnage distingué de la cour' (no doubt the queen) to provide financial backing to the new theatre. Although the queen was the real patron, the theatre was named for Monsieur, Comte de Provence, and housed in the Tuileries Palace.<sup>40</sup>

From the start the enterprise drew fear and distrust from the rival Paris theatres which operated under royal privilege (the Comédie-Italienne, the Comédie-Française, and the Académie royale de musique, or Opéra). As Darlow has pointed out, the governance of these theatres was already in a state of flux in the 1780s, with competing forces at work for their control.<sup>41</sup> Viotti's theatre opened right when this jostling was most chaotic. The absolute state control of the Opéra was lessening, yet Viotti's new privately run theatre enjoyed patent favouritism from the queen. The other theatres were resentful. In his study of the Italian opera at the Theatre de Monsieur from 1789 to 1792, Di Profio sets out their grievances.<sup>42</sup> One was that it was allowed to flout the time-honoured tradition then obtaining in royal theatres that no two theatres may present the same genre. Viotti presented four different genres (*opera buffa*, French *opéra comique*, French spoken plays and vaudeville). All except the *opera buffa* encroached on the territory of the other theatres. The Opéra was the theatre which stood to lose most from the new competition, for the Theatre de Monsieur presented its popular Italian opera on Tuesdays and Fridays, the same days as the Opéra's own French opera.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, generous funding allowed the theatre to outperform its rivals, both in public favour and in critical acclaim. The advantages enjoyed by Autié and Viotti were so injurious to the interests of the other theatres that it was inevitable enemies would be made.

Viotti was undaunted by the ill will borne him by the directors and personnel of the rival theatres, and seemed to want to press home his advantage. He set his sights on the Académie royale de musique, which he knew to be beset with financial difficulties. Within a few months of opening his Théâtre de Monsieur, Viotti had gathered together a group of investors and attempted to take control of the Opéra. It was an opportunistic bid by which he hoped to do away with the competition altogether. The bid was unsuccessful. Viotti's conduct during this brief episode (March–May 1789) has been criticized for being aggressive and tactless, and indeed he made enemies not only of the Opéra management, but also of the singers themselves. Moreover, at Viotti's own instigation, the whole affair was made public in his *Memorandum to the King*, which he published on 29 April 1789, along with his correspondence with the king's ministers.<sup>44</sup>

This seems to be yet another example of Viotti's lofty disregard for the harm his actions would do him. His assault on the Opéra caused outrage among the

<sup>40</sup> Courdemanche, Alphonse de, et al., *Mémoire pour M. Bertrand du Chaila des Arènes* (Paris: Imprimerie Moreau, [1825]): 1–2. This document was prepared by Chaila's lawyer and barrister in the case against Viotti's heirs in 1825, and contains, within the legal argument, a history of the theatre from its inception.

<sup>41</sup> Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*, 14, 36.

<sup>42</sup> Alessandro Di Profio, *La Révolution des Bouffons: L'Opéra italien au Théâtre de Monsieur 1789–1792* (Paris, CNRS Editions, 2003): 83–7.

<sup>43</sup> Di Profio, *La Révolution des Bouffons*, 84, 87.

<sup>44</sup> The best accounts of this bid are given by Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*, 64–75, and Lister, *Amico*, 136–44. The most critical of Viotti is Lionel La Laurencie, 'Débuts de Viotti comme directeur de l'Opéra', *Revue de Musicologie* 5 (1924): 110–22.

principals of the Opéra, who, in making their own submission to the committee of the Académie royale de musique, stated that Viotti's 'pretensions and projects' had caused them surprise and pain. In an invidious comparison with the hated tax farmers of the *ancien régime*, the principals, who affixed their signatures to the five-page *Réclamation*, wrote

We would make the same objections to the views and the behaviour of any entrepreneur or tax farmer who tried to turn our talents into a speculative venture, and to enrich himself by our labours, and to place artists into a tax farm, as one would a flock of sheep.<sup>45</sup>

By his exploitative methods, they implied, Viotti was an enemy of French musical artists.

After this ignominious episode Viotti concentrated on the running of his theatre. But animosity towards him continued. Michael McClellan describes how the controversy that swirled around his production of the Italian opera *Nina* was harnessed to the revolutionary struggle.<sup>46</sup> His theatre had become the object of criticism in the press for being under the queen's protection, and for being 'the rendez-vous of aristocrats'.<sup>47</sup> When Viotti was forced to move out of the Tuileries Palace to the rue Feydeau, he renamed his theatre, but not soon enough for some. The *Chronique de Paris* had already called on him to change the theatre's 'ridiculous' name.<sup>48</sup> The *Chronique* had also criticized the theatre for being elitist, and for acting against the spirit of liberty by forbidding its Italian singers to perform in the *Concert spirituel*.<sup>49</sup> Viotti had to steer a difficult course between pleasing the public and toeing the political line. To appease the Revolutionaries he put on plays by such radical playwrights as Fabre d'Eglantine and Collot d'Herbois.<sup>50</sup>

Gautier de Syonnet, the editor of an infamous anti-Jacobin newspaper, took exception to Viotti's perceived change of allegiance, attacking on the one hand Viotti's professional conduct, and on the other his personal life. He called Viotti a Jacobin violinist who did not appreciate the generosity of the queen.<sup>51</sup> Calling Viotti a 'Jacobin' was a calculated insult, for, far from being the simple descriptor it was when the first Jacobin Club was founded, the word had by now acquired pejorative overtones. The 'Jacobin' stigma would prove hard to shift, and the scurrilous piece would be remembered by a future Viotti doubter.

Another person who influenced Viotti's future fate was Antoinette Saint-Huberty, a principal singer at the Opéra in 1788–89. Described by the Opéra director Dauvergne as 'the most vicious woman in the Opera company', she was often mixed up in revolts and intrigues.<sup>52</sup> She was at the height of her popularity

<sup>45</sup> *Réclamation des principaux sujets de l'Académie royal de musique*, Paris, 20 April 1789, 5. See also Darlow's discussion of the principals' *Réclamation* in *Staging the French Revolution*, 67–75.

<sup>46</sup> Michael E. McClellan, 'The Italian Menace: Opera Buffa in Revolutionary France', *Eighteenth-Century Music* 1 (2004): 249–63.

<sup>47</sup> Viotti, *Précis*.

<sup>48</sup> *Chronique de Paris*, 28 June 1791, 718.

<sup>49</sup> *Chronique de Paris*, 3 March 1791, and 23 March 1790. The last was an unfair charge (see Lister, *Amico*, 154).

<sup>50</sup> See Lister, *Amico*, 149, 160–61.

<sup>51</sup> *Journal de la Cour et de la Ville*, 26 November 1791.

<sup>52</sup> Edmond de Goncourt, *La Saint-Huberty d'après sa correspondance et ses papiers de famille* (Paris, E. Dentu, 1882): 200, 206.



with audiences in 1782–83, at exactly the same time that Viotti was playing at the *Concert spirituel*. Indeed, the two performed on the same stage on five different occasions in this concert series.<sup>53</sup> The violinist and the singer thus certainly knew each other, and when Viotti chose to place his *opera buffa* in direct competition with the Opéra, Saint-Huberty would, like the other singers, have felt threatened. The only reason she was not one of the signatories to the Opéra principals' 1789 *Réclamation* was because she was out of Paris on tour at the time, or because she was by then planning to quit the Opéra and France. In 1790 she emigrated to Switzerland to join her lover, the ex-député Comte d'Antraigues, who had in 1789 changed his political colours from Revolutionary radical to ultraroyalist.<sup>54</sup> Before that Antraigues had moved in philosophic circles, and had also kept company with the actors of the Comédie-Française. He was in Paris in the spring of 1789, at the time of Viotti's very public takeover bid for the Opéra.

Unwilling to lose all that he had invested in his theatrical enterprise, Viotti remained in Paris until mid-1792. In January 1792 he decided to sell his theatre<sup>55</sup> and, six months later, to 'abandon a land where an honest man could no longer live in peace'. What he does not reveal in his *Précis* is that he emigrated under the protection of the Montgeroult couple. Hélène says in a 1793 letter that she departed for England in July 1792,<sup>56</sup> and a letter written a year later by a revolutionary called Aigoïn denouncing the Marquis and Marquise de Montgeroult claims that they were given false ambassadorial papers.<sup>57</sup> When Viotti and the Montgeroult arrived in London they were lodged by their old friend the pianist Hüllmandel at his house in Brompton.<sup>58</sup> Hüllmandel had by then ceased performing, and led an independent life supported by his wife. He was already well connected (and no doubt protected) in British society by his oldest acquaintance in England, the former Whig prime minister Lord Shelburne, now 1st Marquess Lansdowne, who was a good friend of Hüllmandel's old patron Morellet. It was at Hüllmandel's that Viotti met the Chinnerys, who became his benefactors and lifelong friends.

A month after Viotti's emigration the French monarchy was overthrown, the first French Republic was created, and the Legislative Assembly was replaced by a much more extreme body, the National Convention. Viotti may have protested in his *Précis* that he did not know a single member of 'that second Assembly', but he

<sup>53</sup> 29, 31 March, 9 May 1782, and 29 May, 8 June 1783. I thank Warwick Lister for providing these dates.

<sup>54</sup> On Antraigues see Colin Duckworth, *The d'Antraigues Phenomenon: The Making and Breaking of a Revolutionary Royalist Espionage Agent* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Averro Publications, 1986) and Jacques Godechot, *Le Comte d'Antraigues* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), in which Godechot systematically exposes Antraigues's lack of credibility. See also Goncourt, *La Saint-Huberty*, 209–58.

<sup>55</sup> The theatre had incurred huge debts. On 3 January 1792 Viotti and Autié sold it for a million livres, insufficient to cover the debts (Courdemanche, *Mémoire*, 10). On 1 September 1794 the theatre passed to M. Potarieux. See Aristide Douarche, ed., *Les Tribunaux civils de Paris pendant la Révolution, 1791–1800*, 2 vols (Paris: L. Cerf, 1905–07): vol. 2, pt 1, 561.

<sup>56</sup> Mme de Montgeroult to Count Litta, 28 July 1793, in Pélissier, 'Après l'attentat', 521.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Citizen Aigoïn, 1 August 1793, Archives nationales, Comité de sûreté generale F7 pièce 4720/1, cited in Dorival, *Hélène de Montgeroult*, 110. It also claims that the marquis soon returned to France to save his property from sequestration. This letter, unlike the one which denounced Viotti, contains many verifiable details.

<sup>58</sup> Denise Yim, 'Selected letters from G.B. Viotti to Mrs Margaret Chinnery, 1793–1798', in *Giovanni Battista Viotti: A Composer between the two Revolutions*, ed. Massimiliano Sala (Bologna: Ut Orpheus Edizioni, 2006): 395–423, at 397.

certainly had a close friend in the Convention in Hugues-Bernard Maret, who, in August 1792, was appointed Chief of the First Division in the Department of Foreign Affairs under the new foreign minister Lebrun-Tondu.<sup>59</sup> It was Viotti's association with this Jacobin official that would do him far more harm than his innocuous flirtation with early revolutionary ideals, which appears to have ended when the first National Assembly ended, in 1791.

### W.A. Miles<sup>60</sup>

One of the men who was influential in securing Viotti's 1798 exile order was the eccentric Englishman W.A. Miles, who in 1792 was employed by the British prime minister Pitt as a hired pen to help combat the spread of revolutionary doctrines in Britain.<sup>61</sup> Miles's prose was powerful and persuasive, and as a government writer he was extremely useful.<sup>62</sup> He was also Pitt's unofficial informant on French affairs, having been sent to France by Pitt in 1790–91. While there he had made some good friends, including some who would hold office in the most extreme revolutionary government. Yet Miles was untrustworthy, and Pitt steadfastly refused to give him official status.

When Maret – who had already proven his diplomatic skills in Belgium, where he had twice acted as a revolutionary agent<sup>63</sup> – was sent to London by Lebrun at the end of 1792 on a secret mission to try to prevent hostilities between France and England, his channel to Pitt was through Miles, who found him 'extremely affable, frank, and communicative'.<sup>64</sup> Maret was in London from 3 to 18 December,<sup>65</sup> and sometime during that period he visited Hélène de Montgeroult and Viotti at Hüllmandel's at 34 Curzon Street, Mayfair (his town house). The new laws regarding emigration that had recently been passed in France, forced Hélène, if she did not wish to become a *proscrite*, to return to France. She was chaperoned by Maret.<sup>66</sup>

Viotti's straitened circumstances obliged him to resume public performing in London, and on 1 January 1793 it was announced that he had been engaged for Salomon's concerts at Hanover Square.<sup>67</sup> The flood of emigrants from France had by now swollen to a degree that alarmed the Home Office secretary, the Duke of Portland, who was persuaded they would spread unrest in Britain. On 7 January parliament passed the Aliens Bill, designed to control immigration and the movement and activities of aliens already resident in Britain. Soon after,

<sup>59</sup> Frédéric Masson, *Le Département des Affaires Etrangères pendant la Révolution, 1787–1804* (Paris: Plon, 1877), 242.

<sup>60</sup> On Miles see Charles P. Miles, ed., *The Correspondence of William Augustus Miles on the French Revolution, 1789–1817*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1890), Howard V. Evans, 'William Pitt, William Miles and the French Revolution', *Historical Research* 43 (1970): 190–213, and Alfred Cobban, 'British Secret Service in France, 1784–1792', *The English Historical Review* 69 (1954): 226–61, at 244–8.

<sup>61</sup> See Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the Press: c.1780–1850* (London: Home and Van Thal, 1949): 78, 163–4. Miles wrote anonymously for the *Times*, the *Sun* and the *True Briton*.

<sup>62</sup> See Evans, 'William Pitt, William Miles and the French Revolution', 193, 199.

<sup>63</sup> Masson, *Le Département des Affaires Etrangères*, 242.

<sup>64</sup> Miles, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 368.

<sup>65</sup> Miles to Lebrun, 18 December 1792, in Miles, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 1, 397.

<sup>66</sup> See Aigoïn's letter of denunciation in Dorival, *Hélène de Montgeroult*, 110; and Pélissier, 'Après l'attentat', 521.

<sup>67</sup> *Morning Post*, 1 January 1793; *Courier*, 1 January 1793.

William Huskisson, who had returned to England in September 1792, was made the first 'Superintendent of Aliens', that is, head of the Alien Office, the innermost section of the secret service within the Home Office, created specifically to deal with the threat posed by undesirable foreigners.<sup>68</sup>

On 21 January 1793 Louis XVI was guillotined. Maret might have been a Republican but he did not vote for the death of the king. In a last-ditch attempt at diplomacy Lebrun sent Maret to replace Chauvelin as French ambassador in London, with Jean-François Noël as his first secretary.<sup>69</sup> But events moved faster than the diplomatic communications, and Maret arrived in London to find that Chauvelin had already been expelled. On 1 February France declared war on Britain, and on the 5th Maret himself was expelled, to taunts of 'Jacobin spy' from the British press.<sup>70</sup>

Unable to see Viotti on this visit, Maret wrote to him, addressing his packet to Miles. Miles summoned Viotti to his house to collect it. Miles had not met the violinist before, but he would have remembered him from Paris in 1790–91, as the owner of a theatre which put on Jacobin plays, and as the object of Gautier's libel. In his view, Viotti had been a Jacobin in Paris, and probably still was in London. Indeed, he seems to suggest in his letter to Maret that Viotti may have been a French agent:

Your packet, my dear Maret, arrived last evening, and I placed it faithfully this morning in the hands of your friend Viotti himself, whom I had summoned for the purpose to my house. You are too honorable to keep up a correspondence with the factions in this country – I believe you incapable of it – or with the secret agents of the Executive Power, if there are any such here.<sup>71</sup>

Miles refused to accept any further under-cover letters from Maret, but Viotti would have learned from the London newspapers that the radical Montagnards had gained control of the Convention, and that the purge of the Girondins (of which Maret was one) had begun. In his letter to Margaret Chinnery of 30 May<sup>72</sup> Viotti speaks of having 'a heavy heart', of being 'tormented', and of wishing to send an urgent letter to his friends. Clearly, although Maret was working for the Jacobin-controlled French Convention, Viotti remained attached to him on a personal level. When the tables turned on Maret in May 1793, Viotti's antipathy for the radical Jacobins increased. The events which took place in Switzerland in 1793 portray Viotti in a pro-revolutionary light. But appearances are deceptive. Viotti may have been against the excesses of the Revolution, but he retained his strong instinct for basic human rights, and therefore deplored the violent attack of the Austrians on the French Jacobin diplomats described below.

### Viotti in Switzerland

Just before Deforgues replaced Lebrun as French foreign minister on 21 June 1793, Lebrun appointed Maret ambassador to Naples and Noël ambassador to Venice.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> See Elizabeth Sparrow, 'Secret Service under Pitt's Administrations, 1792–1806', *History* 83 (1998): 280–94, at 282.

<sup>69</sup> Masson, *Le Département des Affaires Etrangères*, 243.

<sup>70</sup> *The Times*, 31 January 1793.

<sup>71</sup> Miles to Maret, 12 February 1793, in Miles, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 70–71.

<sup>72</sup> Transcribed in Yim, 'Selected letters from G.B. Viotti to Mrs Margaret Chinnery', 403–8.

<sup>73</sup> Masson, *Le Département des Affaires Etrangères*, 282.

Viotti claimed that this was Maret's 'one and only chance to obtain a passport and flee France, that land full of carnage and horror, a land where death is forever hovering over one's head, and from which one can escape only by a miracle'.<sup>74</sup> Hélène de Montgeroult and her husband were able to accompany him, for, according to Viotti, a fictitious post at the Naples legation had been created for the marquis.<sup>75</sup>

Maret was instructed to rendezvous in Geneva with another French diplomat, Charles-Louis Huguet de Sémonville, who, together with his family and a large retinue, was leaving his Genoan post for the Ottoman Porte, but who had had his sea route cut off by the Allied blockade of Toulon. In the event neither diplomat made it to his new post, for their caravan was ambushed by Austrian soldiers – in blatant contempt of Swiss neutrality – on 25 July at the village of Novate in Valtellina, an alpine valley that was strategically important to both France and Austria because of its mountain passes. Valtellina was situated in an area of Switzerland called the Three Leagues (les Grisons, or Graue Bünde), which were nominally independent but in fact were by then under Austrian control.

Viotti too was on the Continent that summer. He claimed in his *Précis* that he was visiting his hometown of Fontanetto (then in Austrian Lombardy) to settle family affairs after the death of his stepmother. Whether this was true we may never know, for his stepmother's death records have been lost.<sup>76</sup> He certainly did not go to nearby Turin, where his old master Pugnani waited in vain to embrace him.<sup>77</sup> The route he took through the Tyrol (as stated in his *Précis*) was not the most direct way of reaching Piedmont, which was on the extreme western side of Austrian Lombardy. It led him over the Alps by the Brenner Pass into the Republic of Venice, where he learned of the attack on his friends from the French ambassador Noël (see below). It is likely that Viotti had from the outset intended to meet Maret and Montgeroult in Venice before proceeding to Fontanetto.<sup>78</sup>

The Austrian attack on the French diplomats has been well documented,<sup>79</sup> but is barely remembered today, although it caused a sensation in Europe at the time. The richest source of information comes from the correspondence of the French ambassador in Switzerland, François Barthélemy, with the French foreign minister Deforgues, published by Kaulek in 1886.<sup>80</sup> Barthélemy's correspondence seems to give the lie to Viotti's protests of innocence of any Jacobin sympathies, and reveals that his activities in Venice and Switzerland were compromising to say the least.

On 24 August Barthélemy writes to Deforgues in Paris,

Citizen Viotti, who is a good friend of (*fort lié avec*) citizen Noël, arrived today from Venice. He left on the 13<sup>th</sup>. He says citizen Noël is in a dire predicament, that he

<sup>74</sup> Viotti to Mr and Mrs Chinnery, 4 September 1793, Chinnery Family Papers, Sydney, Powerhouse Museum, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/9.

<sup>75</sup> Viotti to Mr and Mrs Chinnery, 4 September 1793.

<sup>76</sup> Lister, *Amico*, 89.

<sup>77</sup> Yim, *Viotti and the Chinnerys*, 59, 271.

<sup>78</sup> Presumably to assure himself of his friends' wellbeing.

<sup>79</sup> Maret himself wrote an account which was never published, but which was incorporated into his grandson Ernouf's biography, and into the *Biographie universelle*, vol. 26, 529–33. The most reliable and comprehensive account is in Alfred Ruffer's *Novate: Eine Episode aus dem Revolutionsjahr 1793* (Zurich, Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1941).

<sup>80</sup> Jean Kaulek, ed., *Les Papiers de Barthélemy, ambassadeur de France en Suisse 1792–1797*, 6 vols (Paris: Alcan, 1886–1910).

hardly sets foot outside his house, that all those who visit him are expelled from the city the following day, that all letters addressed to him are intercepted [this was also the fate of the letter Viotti wrote from Venice to William Chinnery asking him to send a bank draft of £200<sup>81</sup>], and that citizen Sémonville and his entourage would have been permitted to stop in Venice for only four hours.<sup>82</sup>

So here we see Viotti in the guise of an outraged spectator, reporting to the Jacobin representative of the National Convention! The August correspondence of the British consul in Venice, John Watson, with foreign minister Grenville confirms all that Viotti says.<sup>83</sup> But the most striking part of the above extract is Viotti's supposed friendship with Noël, who is said to have been a friend of Robespierre.<sup>84</sup>

It is not entirely surprising that Viotti knew Noël, since the latter had been Maret's friend and colleague (Chief of the Second Bureau) in 1792 in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Paris. Both Maret and Noël had founded daily newspapers in 1789.<sup>85</sup> Ironically, it was Noël's *Chronique de Paris* 'which started as a constitutionalist newspaper, became democratic at the time of the Varennes flight, and Girondin after that'<sup>86</sup> (exactly mirroring Maret's career), that had printed the insinuating criticism of Viotti's theatre in 1790 and 1791. Presumably Viotti had made Noël's acquaintance after that. If he renewed contact with him – even innocently – in the brief period Noël was in London (August 1792–January 1793) at the French embassy, where he was a known secret agent,<sup>87</sup> the charge of Viotti also being a secret agent is thrown into an entirely new light.

There was another person who must have been a member of this circle of friends. This was a French merchant in Genoa by the name of André, who had previously been imprisoned for his democratic views. Hélène wrote to him at the time of Maret's arrest by the Austrians asking if he had any news of Viotti, from whom she had not heard for three months.<sup>88</sup> A certain Dominique André was later (March 1798) granted a permit to reside in Paris for the purpose of liquidating his trading company. He is described in the police document as being born French in Genoa, as holding a passport from the commune of Nîmes, and as having lived in Genoa for the previous 14 years, but he had clearly been in contact with Viotti, Maret and Montgeroult more recently than that.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Viotti to Mr and Mrs Chinnery, 4 September 1793, PHM 94/143/1–2/9. It was well known in the Venice diplomatic community that mail would not reach its destination without the payment of *douceurs* to the various post offices. In the British consul's list of disbursements, 17 August 1793, is the amount £132 for a year's worth of 'gratifications to the sundry post offices' (TNA, FO 81/9).

<sup>82</sup> Kaulek, ed., *Les Papiers de Barthélemy*, vol. 2, 476.

<sup>83</sup> 'Letters and papers from Mr Consul Watson at Venice to the Secretary of State', TNA FO 81/9.

<sup>84</sup> They may have been school friends, having both been at the collège Louis-le-Grand (Masson, *Le Département des Affaires Etrangères*, 463, 470).

<sup>85</sup> Maret's was the *Bulletin de l'Assemblée nationale*, and Noël's was the *Chronique de Paris*.

<sup>86</sup> Masson, *Le Département des Affaires Etrangères*, 164.

<sup>87</sup> Masson, *Le Département des Affaires Etrangères*, 164. See also Evans, 'William Pitt, William Miles and the French Revolution', 201.

<sup>88</sup> Pélissier, 'Après l'attentat', 360, 514, 517, 526–7.

<sup>89</sup> Paris, Archives nationales, F/7/10771/A. An online French genealogy site (Histoire et généalogie de la famille André par Marc Gauer, www.calameo.com), lists several members of the André family from Nîmes who were bankers and merchants in Genoa, including Dominique-Isabeau André (1766–1844).

The French diplomats were imprisoned in the Austrian-held citadel of Mantua, where Viotti tried unsuccessfully to visit them.<sup>90</sup> Aware of the Venetian authorities' distrust of Noël, as well as of the hostility of the other ambassadors towards France, he stayed away from the British embassy and did not meet the British minister Francis Drake, who had, in any case, already departed for his new post in Genoa.<sup>91</sup> Consul John Watson, who was keeping foreign secretary Grenville supplied with intelligence until Drake's replacement arrived, did not mention Viotti in his correspondence.

At this point Viotti seems to have abandoned his plans to go to Fontanetto, opting instead to assist H el ene de Montgeroult.<sup>92</sup> He therefore left Venice and pursued her into the mountains, finding her in the small spa town of Baden-im-Aargau (on the road between Zurich and Basel), where the French embassy was located, and where she had sought asylum from the French ambassador.<sup>93</sup> According to the historian Alfred Rufer, Viotti joined Mme de S emonville's public protest on his way to Baden, declaring that he had seen the people of the cantons through which he had passed ready to rise up in revolt against the Austrian violation of their neutrality.<sup>94</sup> Once again Viotti exhibited a careless disregard for how his outspokenness might be interpreted.

Viotti was in Baden for almost three months (24 August–15 November). Under normal circumstances he would then have been in summer recess in London, preparing for the start of the 1794 Hanover Square concerts, for which he had already been engaged by Salomon. Instead, he spent most of that time with H el ene: the two took lodgings just out of Baden, between the town and the baths.<sup>95</sup> Both remained in regular contact with Barth el emy – Viotti because he had asked the Chinnerys to send his bank draft under cover to him,<sup>96</sup> and Mme de Montgeroult in order to show the ambassador the letters she received from the prisoners. On 18 September H el ene learned from Barth el emy of the death of her husband in prison.<sup>97</sup> Presumably Viotti was with her at the time, and heard the ambassador express his growing dissatisfaction with the Three Leagues, which did not recognize the new French Republic, which took no action over the affront to the French nation, and whose Diet, supposedly independent, was intimidated by the Austrian minister.<sup>98</sup> Viotti would have also been aware that Barth el emy had applied to Deforgues for funds with which to pay for the repatriation of the two women to France.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Viotti to Mr and Mrs Chinnery, 4 September 1793, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/9.

<sup>91</sup> Drake arrived in Genoa on 15 August (Drake to George Aust, 17 August 1793, FO 28/6).

<sup>92</sup> Viotti to Mr and Mrs Chinnery, 4 September 1793, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/9.

<sup>93</sup> Kaulek, ed., *Les Papiers de Barth el emy*, vol. 2, 435; Mme de Montgeroult to Miles, 24 August 1793, in Miles, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 86–7.

<sup>94</sup> Rufer, *Novate*, 123.

<sup>95</sup> Mme de Montgeroult to M. de Montgeroult, 1 September 1793, HHStA, 'Schreiben privates Inhalts an Maret ...', fols 33–34.

<sup>96</sup> Viotti to Mr and Mrs Chinnery, 4 September 1793, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/9.

<sup>97</sup> Barth el emy to Deforgues, 18 September 1793, in Kaulek, ed., *Les Papiers de Barth el emy*, vol. 3, 61.

<sup>98</sup> Barth el emy to Deforgues, 23 September 1793, in Kaulek, ed., *Les Papiers de Barth el emy*, vol. 3, 82–3.

<sup>99</sup> The sum of 12,000 livres was granted (Deforgues to Barth el emy, 20 September 1793, in Kaulek, ed., *Les Papiers de Barth el emy*, vol. 3, 66–7).

Viotti remained at H el ene's side until she left for France on 22 October,<sup>100</sup> after which he lived in solitude, 'not seeing another living soul' (see Appendix). A sufficient number of letters from H el ene had reached Maret for him to know of Viotti's presence in Baden. Maret had heard of Viotti's rapturous reception in London the previous winter, and was confident that the praise would be just as fulsome in the coming concert season:

Dear good Gian is going to be honoured and feted, showered with a thousand compliments. He will forget us a little. He will do well to think of us only when we are in happier circumstances. He will be all the happier himself.<sup>101</sup>

When Viotti finally left Baden he lamented, 'Poor Viotti, now he too has departed. I shall not be able to write to him, nor he to me. For how long shall we remain strangers to each other?'<sup>102</sup>

Viotti remained in Baden until 15 November in order to wait for a second bank draft, and also to forward Maret's mail to H el ene. He waited in vain. Before setting off for England he wrote to the Milanese Capitano di Giustizia (Chief Justice) Don Francesco Bazetta, complaining that there had been no word from the prisoner for more than three weeks, and pleading for the return of Mme de Montgeroult's papers – the last will of her husband and the titles to her fortune.<sup>103</sup> (The French prisoners were allowed to send and receive letters through Bazetta, who intercepted most of them and handed them over to the Austrian authorities, as can be seen from the large number of them still in the Vienna State Archives today.)

Viotti's actions during this time might have been rash, and were certainly compromising, but they were motivated by friendship, not politics. We must believe Viotti when, in apologizing to the Chinnerys for the trouble caused by the lost bank draft, he said, 'You know that I live, that I exist, only for my friends. It is impossible for me to have a moment's peace knowing that my friends are suffering'.<sup>104</sup> Viotti's friend Miel vouched for the truth of this, saying that loyalty in friendship was 'one of the distinguishing features of his character',<sup>105</sup> and there is ample evidence of it in the Chinnery correspondence. Where friends were concerned Viotti was without self-interest. For example, the £200 – intended for his friends – that he asked William to send was money he could ill afford to lose: 'In my life I have been persecuted by so much misfortune, that I need to economise the little money I have left, so that in any future time of need I will have enough for the bare essentials'.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the time he spent in Baden was time lost to him for the writing of the new concertos which would be needed for Salomon's concerts, due to begin in early February 1794. Haydn had been invited to London, and Viotti was to share the stage with him as a featured soloist.

<sup>100</sup> Kaulek, ed., *Papiers de Barth el emy*, vol. 3, 164.

<sup>101</sup> Maret to Mme de Montgeroult, 6 November 1793, HHStA, 'Schreiben privaten Inhalts an Maret ...', fol. 64v.

<sup>102</sup> Maret to Mme de Montgeroult, 12 November 1793, HHStA, 'Schreiben privaten Inhalts an Maret ...', fols 62r–v.

<sup>103</sup> Viotti to Bazetta, 11 November 1793, HHStA, 'Schreiben privaten Inhalts an Maret ...', fols 31–32.

<sup>104</sup> Viotti to Margaret Chinnery, 4 September 1793, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/9.

<sup>105</sup> Miel, 'Viotti', 585.

<sup>106</sup> Viotti to Margaret Chinnery, 13 October 1793, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/11.

Viotti arrived at Ghent on 6 December, and landed at Dover a few days later without arousing the suspicion of the port authorities. Hüllmandel and the Chinnerys were the only people in England who knew what he had been doing during his five-month absence. Viotti was well aware of how the British would view his activities in Switzerland, telling Margaret Chinnery 'I have written to Salomon, but have not told him where I am or what I am doing. All I have told him is that I will soon see him again in England – and that is true. Oh, would that I could bring my poor friends back with me!'<sup>107</sup>

### The Comte d'Antraigues's accusation

The Comte d'Antraigues was the second person who helped condemn Viotti in the eyes of the British government in 1798. After emigrating, he and Mme Saint-Huberty had settled in Switzerland in the same canton where the Austrian attack had occurred, and so were well situated to follow events. Antraigues was at the time employed by Spain to spy on France,<sup>108</sup> but he was soon offering his services to any enemy of the French Republic who wanted information. Britain, whose legation personnel were already watching the French from the republics of Venice and Genoa,<sup>109</sup> accepted his overtures. Drake swallowed Antraigues's assurances that his reports, or bulletins, were reliable. In fact, they were an amalgam of fact and fiction, as, after deciphering the letters he received from his Paris agents, Antraigues reworked them to suit his own purposes.<sup>110</sup> Antraigues no doubt learned from his wife, who happened to be in Venice at the same time,<sup>111</sup> of Viotti's visit to Noël, and of his protests on behalf of the French diplomats. He therefore composed an entirely fabricated bulletin, which he sent to Drake, who enclosed it in a letter to Grenville, dated Genoa, 28 October 1793.

My Lord,

I take the liberty of laying before Your Lordship the following extract of a letter which has just reached me from Paris.

'There lives in London, where he was six weeks ago, an abominable monster, who is cunning and full of artifice, without seeming to be so, and who gives the appearance of being occupied only with his talent. He is in the pay of the Jacobins, and has been

<sup>107</sup> Viotti to Margaret Chinnery, 4 September 1793, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/9.

<sup>108</sup> Duckworth, *The d'Antraigues Phenomenon*, 203–4.

<sup>109</sup> Consul Watson submitted a bill for £1,848 for secret intelligence in the 14 months prior to 17 August 1793 (FO 81/9).

<sup>110</sup> See Godechot, *Le Comte d'Antraigues*, 120–21. Antraigues's credibility has been doubted by all the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars who have examined the so-called Dropmore Papers. These include H. Mitchell, 'Francis Drake and the Comte d'Antraigues: A Study of the Dropmore Bulletins 1793–1796', *Historical Research* 29 (1956): 123–44; Alfred Rufer, 'En complément des Dropmore Papers', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 41/4 (1958): 14–43; J.H. Clapham, 'A Royalist Spy during the Reign of Terror', *English Historical Review* 12 (1897): 67–84; F.A. Aulard, 'Les Bulletins d'un espion royaliste dans les papiers de Lord Grenville', *Revue historique de la Révolution française* 32 (1897): 121–8; and H. Glagau, 'Achtundzwanzig Bulletins über den Wohlfahrt-sausschuss', *Historische Zeitschrift* 78/2 (1897): 217–37. Surprisingly, neither Durey nor Sparrow (both cited elsewhere in this article) question his credibility.

<sup>111</sup> Las Casas to Antraigues, 4 May 1793, cited in Goncourt, *La Saint-Huberty*, 254.



placed at the head of their operations in London. His name is Viotti, one of the first violins of Europe. Last June he was in Paris, where he offered his services to blow up the shipyards of Portsmouth or Plymouth. This far-fetched project was put to the Secret Committee, and he also offered to assassinate Mr Pitt. But he demanded such an extravagant sum of money that he was not listened to. Nonetheless, he was sent back to London with a pension of 20,000 livres paid by the minister for Foreign Affairs, and 30,000 in cash, which he pocketed. He acts under the cover of his talent, and as an Italian, and indeed his art gives him the greatest cover. But he met with difficulties because several Frenchmen recognised him and watched him. So he then pretended to change his colours, and put it about that he had broken off all relations with his friends in Paris. But the ruse was not successful, and it was understood for what it was – a mere ruse. In a short while I shall send you more information on him’.

As the above intelligence comes from the same source as the bulletins which I have lately transmitted to Your Lordship’s office, the fullest reliance may be placed on it ...<sup>112</sup>

The dates given in the above bulletin are misleadingly precise and deliberately ambiguous, since the bulletin itself is not dated. The accusations are preposterous, but the charge that Viotti was a Jacobin spy in London is uncannily similar to Miles’s insinuations to Maret of February 1793 (see above). Strangely, Antraigues had composed at least two previous bulletins describing a similar plot, which had *not* mentioned Viotti. In the first, dated 2 September, it was an Englishman called Baldwyn who was prepared to assassinate the king and Pitt.<sup>113</sup> In his covering letter Drake underlines the name, continuing ‘I hope Mr Aust [British under-secretary of foreign affairs] has communicated to your Lordship the letter I wrote to him by Captain Cook [the one which accused Viotti]’.<sup>114</sup> The underlining of the name was presumably because, only 12 days before, Viotti’s name had been given as the would-be assassin. Drake appears to have noticed the anomaly. The second version of the same ‘intelligence’ was sent by Consul Watson, who had got it too indirectly from Antraigues.<sup>115</sup>

I would argue that Antraigues’s motives for accusing Viotti went back to 1789, when Viotti’s Opéra ambitions impinged on the interests of Mme Saint-Huberty. Antraigues’s friends in the Comédie-Française might have complained of Viotti’s disregard for their interests, too. Antraigues would also have known of the controversy surrounding Viotti’s Feydeau theatre. Viotti drew attention to himself by letting it be known that the French diplomats attacked by the Austrians were his friends. Yet in his bulletin Antraigues did not mention this fact, which would surely have counted against him. Perhaps it was contained in the ‘new information’ that Antraigues was to have offered on Viotti, and which either has not survived or never existed. Antraigues continued to send bulletins to Drake until 1796,<sup>116</sup> and since many are lost, it is possible that he mentioned Viotti again.

<sup>112</sup> Drake to Grenville, 28 October 1793, PRO, FO 95/5.

<sup>113</sup> *The Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue Esq preserved at Dropmore*, ed. Walter Fitzpatrick, Historical Manuscripts Commission, 14th Report. Appendix, Part V, 1894, vol. 2, 456–61.

<sup>114</sup> From Toulon, Cook carried despatches dated 24 and 27 October (*The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, vol. 93, (Nov 1793): 390). His ship would have touched at Genoa a day later to collect Drake’s mail.

<sup>115</sup> It had been communicated to him by the secretary at the Spanish embassy. Watson to Grenville, 27 September 1793, TNA, FO 81/9.

<sup>116</sup> Godechot, *Le Comte d’Antraigues*, 11.

Two things may have saved Viotti in 1793. The first was the inefficiency of British intelligence gathering in the first 12 months of the war against France. The earliest bulletins from Drake were received before a centralized agency had been created.<sup>117</sup> The Aliens Entry Books, which recorded the comings and goings of aliens in Britain, began to be kept only in 1794, after Viotti had re-entered England (December 1793). The second was the fact that Huskisson was then head of the Alien Office. Huskisson may have been sceptical of Antraigues's accusations, especially if he noticed the contradictory name given to the would-be assassin in the other bulletins, and more especially if he was personally acquainted with Viotti, as seems likely.

### W.A. Miles's influence on the exile order

After his return to England Viotti had barely seven weeks to compose the expected new violin concerto for the first of Salomon's concerts, advertised for 3 February. He performed it on 10 February, and both the composition and his playing were praised.<sup>118</sup> It was a creditable feat, for in the five months that he had been away he had not touched his violin: the high notes of the instrument affected his nerves, he told Margaret Chinnery.<sup>119</sup> He was still anxious about the fate of his friends, and may have dined at Lansdowne House on 3 April 1794, hoping to hear further news.<sup>120</sup> But he did not try to make further contact with Mme de Montgeroult.

Miles, on the other hand, with the full knowledge of the British Foreign Office, did remain in contact with his French acquaintances. On 26 December 1795, when Maret and Sémonville were freed in a prisoner exchange with the French Princess Royal, Miles heard the news from Maret himself, who told him that one of the first people he wrote to on gaining his freedom was Viotti.<sup>121</sup> Since Miles showed all his French correspondence to George Aust in the Foreign Office, Grenville would have taken note of Viotti's close friendship with Maret, who returned to France a hero.

So far Viotti had avoided any public criticism in Britain, but at the end of 1794 he found himself a subject of controversy when he became artistic director of Kings Theatre, and replaced Wilhelm Cramer as leader and musical director of the orchestra in the Opera Concert. It was rumoured that the lead singer at the Opera, Brigida Banti, had orchestrated the replacement. However, Viotti was deemed an innocent party, and he was able to continue in this role with no further trouble until 1798.<sup>122</sup>

In early 1798 the British Government was on high alert in expectation of a French invasion and a simultaneous Irish insurrection,<sup>123</sup> so Viotti's

<sup>117</sup> See Michael Durey, 'William Wickham, the Christ Church Connection and the Rise and Fall of the Security Service in Britain, 1793–1801', *English Historical Review* 121 (2006), 714–45, at 731, 734, 744.

<sup>118</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 11 February 1794.

<sup>119</sup> Viotti to Margaret Chinnery, 6 December 1793, PHM 94/143/1 – 2/14.

<sup>120</sup> On Thursday 3 April 1794 there was a guest entered in the Lansdowne House Dinner Books as 'Mr Voute'. With thanks to Kate Fielden, Bowood archivist, Bowood House, Calne, Wiltshire.

<sup>121</sup> Maret to Miles, 26 December 1795, in Miles, ed., *Correspondence*, vol. 2, 273.

<sup>122</sup> William Parke, *Musical Memoirs*, 2 vols (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830): vol. 1, 254; *New Briton*, 27 December 1794.

<sup>123</sup> Durey, 'William Wickham', 717.

announcement that he intended to go to Dublin to participate in Mrs Second's musical concerts<sup>124</sup> was badly timed. The operations of the Home Office had been streamlined, and stringent measures put in place to prevent undesirable aliens from entering the country, and to search suspicious persons leaving. In March 1797 the Home Secretary had distributed a circular designed to ascertain the number of foreigners who had come into Britain since May 1792.<sup>125</sup> Printed registration forms had to be filled in by aliens. Some of the forms filled in by acquaintances of Viotti survive in the London Metropolitan Archives,<sup>126</sup> but Viotti's is not among them. In December 1797 there was a further circular from the Home Secretary to his agents on the coast: 'Aliens not making themselves known and obtaining their passport within 14 days will in all cases be required to depart by the first opportunity'.<sup>127</sup>

It happened that Viotti's pupil, the gifted young French violinist Pierre Rode, was washed ashore on the English coast at this time, while returning to Bordeaux from a performing tour in Hamburg,<sup>128</sup> and so was without a passport. He nevertheless made his way to London to visit his old master. Rode's untimely arrival gave rise to an acrimonious exchange of letters in the press, which lasted from beginning of January to end February 1798. Miles, writing anonymously in the Tory mouthpiece the *True Briton*, spread the rumour that Rode had served in the Republican armies:

There is a pupil of Viotti now in this country, who is said to have served in the troops of the Gallic Republic. We hope that this report is not true, for we have too many dangerous emigrants among us already.<sup>129</sup>

A certain Antemidas wrote in Rode's defence, asking sarcastically if the writer believed that they should be 'infected with Jacobinism by melody and sweet sounds' and suggesting that 'a scraper near the throne' was responsible for the rumours.<sup>130</sup>

Miles persisted: 'As a *Performer*, Viotti is justly a subject of the highest admiration in his profession: as a *Politician* it is to be hoped that he will never think of coming forward'. His remarks about Rode, he said, arose

from a proper regard to the situation of Great Britain, menaced by the most awful, the most savage, and the most atrocious Power that the World ever heard of, infested by a horde of *domestic enemies*, and overloaded with a tribe of *Foreigners* from all Countries, too many of whom are devoted to *French Principles*. In this situation, with all the horrors of French Doctrines before our eyes, it is the duty of every man to be upon his guard, to give notice of every thing that may affect the National Interest, and to excite the vigilance of our State Guardians against the danger that may threaten from *within*, as well as from *without*.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>124</sup> *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 11 January 1798; *Morning Herald*, 29 March 1798.

<sup>125</sup> London Metropolitan Archives, MR/A/053.

<sup>126</sup> Those of the Chinnery children's future drawing master Antonio Celli (LMA WR/A/029) and the amateur violinist John Baptist Cimadore (LMA WR/A/039).

<sup>127</sup> Circular letter from Whitehall, 26 December 1797, TNA, HO 5/003.

<sup>128</sup> Fétis, ed., *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, vol. 7, 447.

<sup>129</sup> *True Briton*, 9 January 1798.

<sup>130</sup> *Morning Herald*, 16 January 1798.

<sup>131</sup> *True Briton*, 17 January 1798.

The extravagant language of the above diatribe was typical of that of Government hirelings, but here the prejudices against foreign *émigrés* were Miles's own.<sup>132</sup> In eighteenth-century Europe the press was an open forum for those with a cause to champion. Rousseau, who spoke from bitter experience, believed that public prosecution by the press was much worse in England than in Paris.<sup>133</sup> Handel's operas were used as political footballs in the partisan politics of his day,<sup>134</sup> and Haydn experienced a 'sudden outburst of musical hostilities' during his 1791 visit to London, when 'even a temper as equable as his found it hard to tolerate the machinations of the musical factions at work in the concert world'.<sup>135</sup> The rivalry between two concert series, Salomon's and the Professional Concert, caused Haydn and his pupil Ignaz Pleyel to be pitted against each other in a hurtful comparison in the press. In Paris the same thing happened to Rameau in 1752, when the so-called *querelle des Bouffons* broke out between partisans of the French and Italian opera, and a few years later to Gluck and Piccini during a similar public squabble. None of these musicians – except Rousseau, who suffered for it – risked his livelihood by objecting publicly to his treatment.

Miles's attack on Rode and Viotti carried on through the whole month of February. Antemidas's last rejoinder, 'Some disappointed Fiddlers have been endeavouring to screw the Duke of Portland up to concert pitch with their design to banish Viotti from this country under the false insinuation that he is Jacobinistically inclined',<sup>136</sup> makes it clear that rumours about Viotti were rife in musical circles. Viotti's two contemporary biographers, while dismissing the idea of his guilt out of hand, throw some light on why. The first, Miel, writes vaguely that Viotti was a victim of a mistake, and that some jealous musician(s) took advantage of this.<sup>137</sup> The second, Fétis, reveals what this 'misunderstanding' was. 'There was a rumour circulated among the *émigrés*, of whom there were large numbers in London, that the French Executive Council had employed him [Viotti] as a secret agent on several occasions'.<sup>138</sup> This was the third time that such a thing had been suggested, and while the assertions of two untrustworthy characters and those of a cabal of musicians is hardly proof of guilt, it presents too much of a coincidence for it to be ignored. It is unlikely that the *émigré* musicians would have known of Antraigues's accusation. What is more likely is that Viotti's friendship with Maret, and possibly with Noël, had been noticed.

Rode's attempt to combat the campaign against him in the press by giving a charity concert on 22 February failed. The concert got only a lukewarm reception.<sup>139</sup> By the end of February the Duke of Portland had drawn up a

<sup>132</sup> Pitt had broken with Miles in 1794 (Evans, *William Pitt*, 209). William Doyle makes the point in *The French Emigrés in Europe and the Struggle against Revolution, 1789–1814*, ed. Kirsty Carpenter and Philip Mansel (London, Macmillan, 1999): xvi–xvii, that most emigrants who left France after 1792 were not Jacobin agitators, but ordinary people fleeing the consequences of civil war.

<sup>133</sup> See Jurgen Oelkers, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2008): 12–13.

<sup>134</sup> Especially his oratorio *Deborah*. See Thomas McGeary, *The Politics of Opera in Handel's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 135–42.

<sup>135</sup> Christopher Hogwood, *Haydn's Visits to England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009): 53.

<sup>136</sup> *Morning Herald*, 28 February 1798.

<sup>137</sup> Miel, 'Viotti', 588.

<sup>138</sup> Fétis, ed., *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, vol. 8, 471

<sup>139</sup> *Morning Herald*, 19 February 1798; Fétis, ed., *Biographie universelle des musiciens*, vol. 7, 447.

banishment order against Rode and Viotti. The Opera Concert had opened on 5 February 1798 at the King's Theatre, with Viotti still leader of the band. He had given only three performances, when Thomas Carter of the Alien Office wrote to Taylor, the manager of the theatre, on 26 February:

I have the honor of your letter of yesterday which I immediately laid before the Duke of Portland, and I beg to assure you that your representations relative to M. Viotti and the other performers at the Opera will receive every possible attention consistent with the public welfare and security. As far as relates to the particular case of M. Viotti, I must not however give you any reason to suppose that any change can take place in the resolution which has been adopted. With regard to the claim of protection for the property engaged in the Opera house which you think it necessary to advance, I believe the best and most satisfactory answer will be a reference to the conduct of Government from the time when the Alien Act passed. During the whole of that period I am inclined to think that no one performer has been sent out of the country; not from want of sufficient information that the conduct and reputation of some of them would justify such a measure, but from a reluctance on the part of Government to proceed to a severity which would be attended with inconvenience and loss to those with whom these persons were under engagements as long as it did not appear that immediate danger was to be apprehended from them. It must however be almost unnecessary for me to add that under the present circumstances of the country an increased degree of vigilance with respect to such people becomes an indispensable duty of Government, and that the public safety alone can now be considered in determining upon the measures to be pursued towards those who shall appear upon the enquiry which I must fairly tell you is set on foot to have manifested sentiments of disaffection.<sup>140</sup>

It is clear from the first two sentences of the above that Taylor had tried to defend the musicians accused, but in the case of Viotti, had failed.<sup>141</sup> Viotti's and Rode's banishment order was first reported in the *Mirror of the Times*, 24 February–3 March. The *True Briton* and the *Sun* triumphantly announced themselves vindicated. 'We are happy to see the vigilance and energy of the Government properly exerted'.<sup>142</sup> The *Morning Herald* continued to believe that a musical cabal was to blame. Viotti was supposed to have made a Jacobinical declaration in the Orange Coffee House, when in fact he had never set foot in that place. Some of the most zealous friends of the Government were prepared to come to his defence.<sup>143</sup> Among them were the Chinnerys.

On about 5 March Viotti left London escorted by a king's messenger. On the same day Thomas Carter wrote to his agent at Yarmouth, to expect M. Bellamy a Swiss gentleman, and M. Viotti an Italian, who were ordered out of the kingdom, and who would arrive the following day or the day after, to take the first packet to Hamburg. Carter was to be informed as soon as they had sailed.<sup>144</sup> Rode's case

<sup>140</sup> Carter to Taylor, 26 February 1798, TNA, HO 5/003.

<sup>141</sup> Presumably the suspicion of the authorities fell on foreign artists working at the Opera, among whom were singers Brigida Banti, Signora Angelelli, Giovanni Morelli, Carlo Rovedino, Giuseppe Viganoni (the last three previously members of Viotti's Théâtre Feydeau), and instrumentalists Federici, Steibelt, and Mme Krumpholz. The young violinist Julian Baux is the only other musician whose expulsion orders I have found. 'I have consented to grant him the usual expenses of a passage to Hamburg', Thomas Carter wrote to his agent Mazzinghi, 21 February 1798, TNA, HO 5/003.

<sup>142</sup> *True Briton* and *Sun*, 3 March 1798.

<sup>143</sup> *Morning Herald*, 1 March 1798.

<sup>144</sup> Thomas Carter to Walsh Jnr, 5 March 1798, TNA, HO 5/003.

had merited a much longer letter three days earlier. Carter wrote that if Rode had not sailed by the time Walsh received this letter, his baggage and papers were to be strictly searched, and if any suspicious items were found, he was to be detained until the Alien Office had inspected them. 'You will be particularly careful to examine whether there is any false bottom, or false sides to his trunk'.<sup>145</sup> So Rode was their principal suspect. Viotti was apparently guilty by association.

It was in Hamburg that Viotti wrote his justificatory *Précis*. The piece began with a plea to those who had condemned him: 'The idea of having been misunderstood and misjudged weighs too heavily on my heart for me not to attempt, by all possible means, to clear myself of the sinister interpretation that a stroke of bad luck gave to my actions'.<sup>146</sup> Which actions? Is he referring to his impetuous behaviour at court in Paris, his protests on behalf of his Jacobin friends in Switzerland, or his long association with Maret, and perhaps also with Noël?

### C.W. Flint's reversal of the exile order

For Viotti to be permitted to return to England he had to provide the Government with compelling proof of his innocence. The only evidence that carried any weight for the Duke of Portland, however, was from his own Home Office. Four months later he had it. One of the Chinnerys' closest friends, Charles William Flint (1777–1834),<sup>147</sup> who had been serving as secretary to the British legation at Berne in Switzerland with William Wickham, the government's chief intelligence adviser until the mission ended in December 1797, returned to England with Wickham to occupy a position in the Alien Office. In February 1798 Wickham was appointed undersecretary of state in the Home Department.<sup>148</sup> Five months later Flint was made Superintendent of Aliens.<sup>149</sup> He began signing letters issuing instructions to the port authorities on behalf of the Alien Office on 1 September 1798.<sup>150</sup> He had more than enough power to overturn the order against Viotti. But since there is no official letter from Flint, or anyone else from the Alien Office, in the Aliens Entry Books or in the correspondence of the British minister in Hamburg with Grenville, the instruction to overturn his exile order must have been given quietly and no official record kept.<sup>151</sup>

To assure his security as a British resident Viotti decided 12 years later to apply for British denizenship. But his application, supported by William Chinnery, was knocked back on 15 June 1811. The secretary of the Home Office Richard Ryder

<sup>145</sup> Thomas Carter to Walsh Jnr, 2 March 1798, TNA, HO 5/003.

<sup>146</sup> Viotti, *Précis*.

<sup>147</sup> On Flint see *The Annual Biography and Obituary*, 21 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, 1817–37): vol. 19 (1835), 416; Sparrow, 'Secret Service under Pitt's Administrations', 280–94.

<sup>148</sup> Circular letter from Whitehall, 28 February 1798, TNA, HO 5/003.

<sup>149</sup> Elizabeth Sparrow, 'The Alien Office 1792–1806', *The Historical Journal* 33/2 (1990), 361–84, at 375.

<sup>150</sup> Aliens Entry Books, TNA, HO 5/004.

<sup>151</sup> I have searched 'Letters and papers from Sir James Craufurd to the Secretary of State', TNA, FO 33/17 (18 Dec 1798–29 Mar 1799), FO 33/18 (2 Apr–30 June 1799), FO 33/19 (2 Jul–27 Dec 1799). The reason no record was kept may have been because Flint's promotion had been 'outside normal government practice' (Sparrow, 'The Alien Office', 375), or, more likely, because deportation orders were rarely, if ever, overturned.

replied through his undersecretary, John Beckett, that he did not consider 'the grounds upon which Mr Viotti solicits the privilege of denizenship as sufficient to entitle him to that indulgence'.<sup>152</sup>

But by 1811 Viotti had powerful friends. He was known and liked by the prince regent, having played at his Pavilion concerts in Brighton in the autumn of 1803, 1804 and 1805, and had given violin lessons to the prince's brother, the Duke of Cambridge, for the previous four years.<sup>153</sup> So Viotti addressed a petition to the prince regent, which he gave to the Duke of Cambridge to deliver to his brother. The prince acted quickly to overturn the Home Office's decision. On 25 July Viotti was informed by the Duke of Cambridge that his request had been granted. 'Knowing the prince's kindly sentiments towards you I am sure that he gave the order for your denizenship with great pleasure, and I am delighted to have been given the charge of being the bearer of your petition'.<sup>154</sup> Viotti was required to travel up to London to take the oath, and on 12 August a formal report was filed by the attorney-general, Sir Vicary Gibbs. Gibbs wrote that the petitioner's reasons for applying for denizenship were 'for his greater encouragement to settle here and to enable him to purchase and enjoy such estates and privileges as denization may have by law'. Viotti's attached affidavit added that he had resided in the United Kingdom for more than 18 years, and that he was 'well affected to Your Majesty's person and Government'. Gibbs saw no objection to the granting of the petitioned Letters Patent.<sup>155</sup>

On 14 September 1811 denizenship was formally bestowed.<sup>156</sup> On the same day Viotti wrote to Flint to tell him of it. In mid-October Viotti received his patent, and wrote letters of acknowledgement to the prince regent and the Duke of Cambridge.<sup>157</sup> On 24 September Flint, in an unambiguous reference to the events of 1798, wrote to congratulate his friend:

My dear Amico,

I had the supreme satisfaction of receiving your most kind and welcome letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> instant on my return from Hampshire. Accept my best thanks for it as well as my sincere and cordial congratulations on your becoming a subject of old England. Long may you live to enjoy the advantages of a right which you so well deserve.

Our friend [William Chinnery] told me all that had passed on the subject. Nothing could be more flattering or gratifying than the manner in which the Pr. Regent supported your Claim. Without his powerful aid you would once more have fallen a sacrifice to Prejudice and Obstinacy. When we meet we will talk over all these

<sup>152</sup> John Beckett to William Chinnery, 15 June 1811, TNA, HO 5/036.

<sup>153</sup> Viotti seems to have begun giving lessons to the duke in 1807 (see Adolphus Frederick to Margaret Chinnery, 23 May 1807, University of Sydney Library, Fisher 2000 – 25/1).

<sup>154</sup> Adolphus Frederick to Viotti, 25 July 1811, University of Sydney Library, Fisher 2000 – 38/3.

<sup>155</sup> Report on petition for denization of Jean Baptiste Viotti, 12 August 1811, TNA, HO 44/46, fols 162–163.

<sup>156</sup> Lists of grants by letters patent, 1801–1873, PRO, HO 4 C97.

<sup>157</sup> Margaret Chinnery to George Robert Chinnery, 14 October 1811, Chinnery Correspondence, 1808–1811, University of Oxford, Christ Church Library, MS xlviia. 42a–a. 55.

matters – it will afford us both all the pleasure and satisfaction which naturally result from a well earned Triumph.

I am just on the point of leaving Town, therefore I write to you in a great hurry and am prevented from saying many Things I have at the end of my pen. Let me assure you however of my warm friendship for you which I well know to be as sincere on your part; and with the united good wishes of my Wife and myself to all your dear [ones] believe me always Your most affectionate Friend W C Flint.<sup>158</sup>

The ‘prejudice and obstinacy’ mentioned by Flint no doubt refers to the Home Office’s willingness to believe the rumour-mongering of Antraigues and Miles. Both these men were prone to exaggeration and to wild flights of fancy, and both harboured illogical aversions. The Comte de Provence (future Louis XVIII), whose emissary Antraigues sought to be, did not trust him, and neither did Pitt trust Miles. Yet both Miles and Antraigues wielded great influence on the governments they acted for, and both certainly contributed to Viotti’s guilty verdict.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Viotti was close to men who were regarded by Britain as the worst kind of Jacobins. He was a very dear friend of Maret, at the very least an acquaintance of Noël, and, because of his friendship for Maret, was thrown into a dangerous association with Barthélemy. Although all three of these men may have been moderate in their personal views, they did, to all intents and purposes, serve the most extreme revolutionary government during the period of the Terror. Barthélemy was deemed a person of bad character and denied entry when he attempted to come to Britain in July 1799. ‘It would be shocking’, Windham wrote to Pitt, ‘if the volunteer servant of Robespierre, during the time that Robespierre was travelling with his guillotine through all the highest and most respectable orders in France, should be received here’.<sup>159</sup>

As has been shown above, Viotti was a man of strongly held principles, who abhorred injustice, and who made his views known. But his defining character trait was loyalty in friendship, and in the end it was this that harmed him most. His assertion in his *Précis* that he had ‘never meddled in revolution or politics, either directly or indirectly’ is patently not true. It is clear from his Swiss adventure that Viotti *did* meddle in politics, although he may not have viewed it as such.

In spite of this I do not believe, any more than Flint or the Chinnerys or the prince regent believed, that Viotti was a Jacobin or was in favour of revolution: as Miel says, he had nothing to gain by it.<sup>160</sup> He lived quite happily under a constitutional monarchy in Britain, was on friendly terms with some members of the royal family, and was well treated by them. But he had been a controversial figure in revolutionary Paris, had associated with French secret agents, and had also been a vociferous protester against the wrongs suffered by two Jacobin diplomats in 1793. To cap off his apparent guilt, he had welcomed a (wrongly) suspected Jacobin (Rode) in London in 1798. The Home Office’s order against Viotti took place in an atmosphere bordering on paranoia, based on the all-consuming fear that the French Revolution would spill over into England. Its suspicion of Viotti is therefore understandable. But to the question of whether Viotti was a threat to British security, and deserved to be deported, the answer is most certainly no.

<sup>158</sup> Flint to Viotti, 24 October 1811, NYPL, JOB 97–52 item 27.

<sup>159</sup> Windham Papers, BL Add. MS 37844 fol. 191, cited in Dinwiddy, ‘The Use of the Crown’s Power of Deportation’, 198.

<sup>160</sup> Miel, ‘Viotti’, 588.



## Appendix

Letter [original in French] from G.B. Viotti (in Baden-im-Aargau) to H.B. Maret (imprisoned in the citadel of Mantua), HHStA, Frankreich Varia Box 48, Faszikel 60, 'Schreiben privaten Inhalts an Maret ...'), fol. 11.

Baden, 11 November 1793

It has been more than three weeks since we received anything from you, my dear Hugues. Your silence worries us. Are you ill, or can you not write? Where have your letters got to? Heaven forbid that we have anything more to fear than the unreliability of the post. Dame H el ene [de Montgeroult] has been gone for some time. I am here alone, buried in Baden, in this spa where previously I had a companion to weep with, and where now I spend my life in profound sadness, not seeing a living soul. I stayed on to wait for your letters, and to send them on their way to the kind and sensitive person to whom they were addressed. But now the time has come for me to return to my destination. Alas, it is with a heavy heart that I leave my sombre dwelling. But I must. I shall leave here on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> of this month. Instead of one letter, you might send two. I would be overjoyed to receive mine at no. 5 Mortimer Street, London [the Chinnerys' address], but if you are permitted to write to one person only, let it be to poor Dame H el ene.

For a long time I have been in the habit of depriving myself of everything for her sake, and to take away from her the good that [your letter] would do her would distress me too much, even while giving me pleasure. She has arrived at Dijon. Her health is quite good. She is staying at your brother's place, where she was received extremely kindly by all your relatives.<sup>161</sup> She is there at this present moment, and all the people whom we love so dearly spend their days talking of you. Keep on sending your letters here, care of M<sup>r</sup> Goubler, Conseiller du Petit Conseil in Baden, Switzerland, and write 'Mantua' in a corner of the envelope. Never forget to do this, nor that I have put you in one of the best places in my heart, where you will remain forever.

Adieu. I embrace you. Viotti.

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<sup>161</sup> H el ene arrived in Dijon on 26 October and gave a tearful rendition of her signature piano piece, which she describes in a letter to Maret, 27 brumaire, an 2d de la R epublique (17 November 1793) (HHStA, 'Die Franzosin von Bassano an ihrer in Mantua gewahrnsam lebenden Gemahl [sic]', fol. 6v. (The archivist who labelled this folder mistook H el ene for Maret's wife.)