

Demise of the American Dream: The French Experience of American Life in the Age of the French Revolution

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The French negative response to American life in the age of the French Revolution has been attributed to émigré and refugee disillusionment at the outcome of the social upheavals in France and America. My paper's thesis is that French negative reactions were also related to the exiles' day-to-day life experiences. The paper will thus attract attention to a complex of political, economic, social and psychological factors related to the country of origin, the process of migration and the receiving country, which affected the community of exiles in Philadelphia and in the Pennsylvania hinterland.

La tradition historique attribue aux bouleversements sociaux qui ont ébranlé la France et l'Amérique à l'époque de la Révolution française le mécontentement des exilés français face à l'Amérique. Estimant que leur insatisfaction était également le fruit de leurs difficultés journalières, l'auteure met en lumière les nombreux facteurs politiques, économiques, sociaux et psychologiques liés au pays d'origine, au processus de migration et au pays d'accueil; facteurs qui expliquent en partie les réactions des exilés français qui se sont établis à Philadelphie et dans l'arrière-pays de la Pennsylvanie.

Introduction

In the history of Franco-American relations, the utopian idea that America embodied the ideals of the Enlightenment has been well documented. Indeed, from early on, America was associated with various dreams: the lost paradise of Christian tradition, the enchanted island of ancient mythology, the “noble savage” and the “good Quaker”. Later, participation in the War of Independence added a note of realism to French views of America. Positive eyewitness reports of returning officers gave proof that religious toleration, wise legislation, simple living and agricultural pursuits had produced a society of good men such as the French thinkers had envisioned.¹ Events in America thus confirmed the philosophers' theory of progress. Subsequently, during the 1780s, Crèvecoeur's idyllic depiction of American life gave further credence

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1. Durand Echeverria, *Mirage in the West* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), chapter three.

to the belief that America had given birth to a society free of corruption, turmoil and poverty. In their yearning for a better world, French people came to see the United States as the torch bearer for tired and corrupt European society, lighting the way toward regeneration.²

In view of the positive image the French held of American society following their successful involvement in the American Revolution, it would seem that French people reaching American shores during the 1790s should have been able to adapt readily to American life. The reality, however, was quite different. The great majority of French exiles perceived America as an "alien and unfriendly land". They disliked the American character and manners, hated the language, were shocked by the vulgarity of the people, deplored the lack of culture, and condemned American materialism.³ Feeling unhappy and uncomfortable in the United States, few remained to become permanent settlers.

What conditions brought about this falling apart, this sudden change of heart among the French? Historians of Franco-American relations have suggested that the French people who reached American shores during the French Revolution suffered from an important handicap: unrealistic expectations. Indeed, French exiles hoped to find an asylum where equality, liberty, prosperity, virtue, progress and peace were firmly established. As Fa has said, "ils venaient en quête d'une vie simple et d'un idéal inspiré par la lecture de Rousseau."⁴ Chinard, Childs, Echeverria and Rice all agree that the exiles were disappointed at not encountering what they wanted. "When they discovered a land so different from Crèvecoeur's bucolic idyll, they were readily disillusioned."⁵ "Voyageurs ou... réfugiés... éprouvèrent une désillusion à leur arrivée, ... trouvèrent un pays qui n'était pas conforme à leur idée préconçue..."⁶ "The existence of the mirage meant... disillusionment for the many."⁷ And according to Childs, their inability "to go...beyond the illusion disillusion pattern" was the root cause for their blindness to the promise of life in America.⁸

Life in America was different both from the one the French exiles had left behind, and from their expectations. This gap between past experience, hopes, and reality is, alone, inadequate at explaining the French's obsession

2. *Ibid.*, chapter four.

3. *Ibid.*, chapter five.

4. Bernard Fa, *L'Esprit révolutionnaire en France et aux États-Unis à la fin du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1925), p. 227.

5. Echeverria, *Mirage*, p. 184.

6. Howard C. Rice, *Le Cultivateur américain* (Paris: Champion, 1933), p. 219.

7. Frances Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1940), p. 7.

8. Frances S. Childs, "A Special Migration: Refugees, Adventurers, and Commentators" in Nancy L. Roelker and Charles K. Warner, eds., *Two Hundred Years of Franco-American Relations* (Newport, R.I.: s.n., 1978), p. 157.

with and condemnation of the differences they noticed. After all, as Echeverria pointed out, before the Revolution, the contradictory evidence of reality did not deter such travellers and residents as Brissot and Crèvecoeur from presenting an idealized vision of America. According to Echeverria, however, a second handicap soon undermined the American model for the French émigrés, namely the failure of the French Revolution. American success became irrelevant when the universal principles of progress turned out to be false speculations. So, for many Frenchmen, the American experience itself became suspect, and they were happy to debunk what they considered false myths.⁹ In fact, events in France influenced French perceptions to such an extent that even liberal émigrés like De La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt and De Noailles,¹⁰ who had witnessed and personally suffered from outbreaks of violence brought on by the Revolution, were now inclined to distrust lofty ideals of equality.

Echeverria also suggested a personal reason the French were unable to embrace American life for what it was worth. According to him, most émigrés and refugees lacked the will and moral strength of a Brillat-Savarin or a M^{me} La Tour du Pin to adjust to an alien land and strange customs.¹¹ Unlike Brillat-Savarin, who upon arriving in the United States willingly and willfully rejected his French manners and sensitivities, the majority of the French clung to their ways and prejudiced opinions. This led to an "intense aversion of all things American."¹² In particular, most French people perceived American society as culturally unpolished and motivated by the love of material gain, apparently indifferent to distinction in learning and excellence in the arts. Chinard qualified the negative French reactions as arrogance, that is, a refusal to recognize that Americans were equally entitled to create a society and culture of their own as other nations had.¹³ However, it should also be pointed out that French commentators were not the only critics of American acquisitiveness. Others, both foreign and American born, disapproved of perceived

9. Echeverria, *Mirage*, pp. 183-184; Rice, *Cultivateur*, pp. 221-222.

10. François Alexandre F. de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, an honorary member of the Académie des Sciences, had been a delegate to the National and the Constituent Assemblies; Vicomte Louis de Noailles had been a General in De Rochambeau's army in the American Revolution.

11. Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, the gastronomist, and M^{me} La Tour du Pin are quoted in Echeverria, *Mirage*, pp. 181-183.

12. Echeverria, *Mirage*, p. 180.

13. Gilbert Chinard in Echeverria, *Mirage*, p. xii. Two historians interpreted the French refugee response to American life in somewhat kinder terms. According to Baldensperger, the debunking of American myths about liberty, equality and virtue was a welcome activity for people unhappy with recent social leveling tendencies in France. See Fernand Baldensperger, *Le Mouvement des idées dans l'émigration française, 1789-1815* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1924), I, pp. 105-110. Rice pointed out that the French "littérature de dénigrement" was milder than its British counterpart, and that French comments were in answer to such previous commentators as Crèvecoeur and Brissot. See Rice, *Cultivateur*, pp. 220-221.

excesses of materialism and worried about the effects that this new trend would have on the morality of American society.¹⁴

A student of the historians' interpretations of French responses comes away with the impression that the émigrés and refugees of the 1790s were in some ways a generation of unrealistic and limited men. But were these people really of a different fibre? Were they, for instance, less flexible or of a weaker character than earlier Huguenot immigrants who had established themselves permanently in the American colonies? Was their cultural ethnocentrism unusual, and was it the sole reason for their inability to prosper in the midst of a rapidly expanding country and society? Were their disappointments largely the result of a faulty, unrealistic view of America, or did factors beyond their control contribute to shaping their unfavorable responses?

For one, the French Revolution altered the privileged position French people occupied vis-à-vis the United States since France's participation in the American Revolutionary War: they were no longer members of a strongly organized group entrusted with an honorable mission, but were, instead, left to fend for themselves without guiding principles in a rapidly changing country. In his chapter on émigré views of America, Echeverria did allude to the humiliation, frustration, uncertainty and *dépaysement* the French refugees experienced. His study, however, merely touched upon the story of their survival, focusing instead on the flow, relationship and development of opinions and abstract ideas. As mentioned above, Echeverria considered the French Revolution as the watershed of French attitudes towards America since that event suddenly changed the vantage point of French observers, discrediting at once the idea of progress. He did not, however, examine to what extent the French Revolution and its aftermaths altered the very fabric of the émigrés' and refugees' lives. Yet, it seems probable that the daily business of surviving influenced the ways of feeling, thinking and, hence, adapting of most French exiles, and that the specific conditions which underlay their lives in America contributed indirectly to their views of the United States.

Studies dealing with more recent migrations have given insight into the problems involved in transplantation and adaptation to a foreign culture. Overall, the level of estrangement from either homeland or host country appears crucial.¹⁵ In particular, numerous specific factors play a role in the

14. Albert H. Bowman, *The Struggle for Neutrality* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), pp. 19-23; J. Thomas Jable, "Aspects of Moral Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century Pennsylvania", *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 102 (July 1978), pp. 344-345; John R. Howe, "Republican Thought and Political Violence" in L.W. Levy and C. Siracusa, eds., *Essays on the Early Republic: 1789-1815* (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden Press, 1974), pp. 150-151; Frederick B. Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 60-63, 121-122; contemporary publisher Mathew Carey quoted in Joseph Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J.J. McVey, 1909), p. 1386.

15. Neil Larry Shumsky, "European Migration to America: Representations and Realities" in *L'Amérique et l'Europe : réalités et représentations, actes du G.R.E.N.A.* (Aix-en-Provence, 1985), p. 120.

process of adaptation of an alien minority to a host country. Variables have to do with the nature and severity of the original crisis which caused emigration and the length of time it continues to provide a focus of identification for exiles. Other important factors are the size of the group, the process of migration, the cohesiveness of the group as well as the amount of shrinking of the social field. More variables relate to the intermeshing of the two communities, i.e. what opinions they hold of each other, what instrumental usage they can make of each other, how compatible they are at the outset, and how wide the differences are with respect to social organization, patterns of behavior, language, values, religious beliefs, etc. Finally, the stage of economic development of the host country, the economic integration of the guest community and the possibility for political participation all have an impact on the process of adaptation.¹⁶ How successfully an alien people assimilate reflects, therefore, to a significant extent the historical conditions under which they migrate and settle in the host country. Hence, in the light of the research on migrations, it is clear that the tenor and depth of French views of America during the revolutionary period are closely linked to the life experiences of the French emigrants. The reactions of the exiles from France and the colony of Saint Domingo cannot be fully grasped without a better understanding of the emotional dimension of their day-to-day life experiences.

The present paper will thus address a different level of social reality than Echeverria did. In doing so, it will consider the life circumstances as the participants probably saw and experienced them by drawing on the refugees' own testimonies.¹⁷ The study will focus on both the refugee community in Philadelphia — the capital during the Federal era and the recipient of the largest number of exiles — and settlements in the hinterland. It will show that most French emigrants of the 1790s were subjected to innumerable adverse forces and pressures of a political, economic, social, cultural and emotional nature over which they had little control, and that, in addition, the forces

16. See Maurice Ray Davie *et al.*, *Refugees in America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947); Shmuel M. Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1954); J. Ex, *Adjustment After Migration* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966); Marcus L. Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940); M.L. Kovacs and A.L. Cropley, *Immigrants and Society: Alienation and Assimilation* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

17. The study draws on published materials — journals, travellogs, collections of letters — as well as manuscript letters and diaries located in several repositories: the Alabama Department of Archives and Historical Library, the American Catholic Historical Society (ACHS), the American Philosophical Society (APS), the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library (EMHL), the Library of Congress, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP), the New York Historical Society, the Pennsylvania History and Museum Commission, and the Tioga Point Museum. I do not pretend to have exhausted the extant sources, but I have consulted and used a large and varied sample of materials. Beside specific letterbooks, numerous collections at APS, HSP and EMHL yielded individual letters. In my presentation, I have attempted to keep the quotes and references as balanced as I could from within the sample of materials at my disposal, trying to include people in different positions and at different locations.

resulted from unfavorable conditions in both the home country and the new American environment.

Francophone Migrations to America

Early French migrations appear to have been less constrained and traumatic than those of the revolutionary period. With respect to Huguenot refugees, for instance, several factors contributed to successful immigration and alleviated their pains of adaptation to America. For one, the Huguenots were highly estranged from France, entertaining no illusions of returning to an increasingly despotic homeland. They had broken all ties with France when they decided to emigrate to the American colonies from their forced exile in England. In fact, they were no longer fleeing from religious persecution, but were rather looking forward to improving their financial prospects and to settling down permanently. The move to America — their second migration — was thus both voluntary and economically motivated. A new and easier life than the poverty they experienced in London's restricted job market was beckoning in the colonies: the proprietary governments' propaganda pamphlets were full of promises, and contributions from English relief communities enabled them to emigrate as free men and women. Once in America, they received more relief, including land grants as well as political, economic and legal privileges that allowed them quickly to settle into productive lives. Other characteristics contributed to their successful adaptation. For example, their youth and acquired skills — this second Huguenot migration consisted of young and skilled people — increased their adaptability in new situations. Furthermore, the fact that they migrated in well-organized groups, motivated also by the desire to establish communities structured by Huguenot beliefs, worked to their advantage. Both organization and beliefs helped them maintain for some time a level of cohesion that provided reliable and familiar community support. As a result, the young Huguenot communities — except for two small settlements, defeated in one case by contested land titles and in the other by fear of Indian attacks in the wake of economic reverses — prospered and integrated themselves very quickly and successfully into the social, economic and religious life of the colonies.¹⁸

As for later emigrants — veterans of the American revolutionary wars, merchants hoping to capitalize on trading opportunities between the United States and the West Indies, language teachers and other migrants who arrived during the 1780s — they came in dispersed numbers and tended to settle individually rather than in larger groups. Extant records show that they shared

18. Charles W. Baird, *History of Huguenot Emigration to America* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1885); Jon Butler, *The Huguenots in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Gilbert Chinard, *Les Réfugiés huguenots en Amérique* (Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1925); James B. Laux, "The Huguenot Element in Pennsylvania", *Huguenot Society of Pennsylvania, Proceedings*, 26 (1955), pp. 11-26; George G. Struble, "The French Element Among Pennsylvania Germans", *Pennsylvania History*, 22 (1955), pp. 267-276.

certain characteristics which account for their successful adaptation to American conditions. First, like the Huguenots, they were mostly young, with their life paths still uncharted. Again, like their Huguenot predecessors, they did not flee from persecutions, but rather from a lack of opportunities at home: in fact, they were voluntary immigrants seeking to make a life for themselves. Hence, they prepared their departure carefully, leaving in the company of a friend or two, bringing with them useful books and tools, and seeking advice from knowledgeable people. Another important characteristic was that they married American wives. This fact helped them learn the English language and provided them with the support of a family, thus contributing in no small way to their adjustment and attachment to the new environment. Another positive factor was that they were generally not destitute upon arriving in the United States. Descended from bourgeois and working families and expecting no immediate rewards without work, they quickly settled into gainful activities much as other immigrants had done before them. And last, their number was small enough and sufficiently scattered that they neither attracted attention nor aroused fears and prejudices among the native population. So they were able to establish themselves successfully and to experience little alienation in their host country.¹⁹

Émigrés and refugees of the French Revolution, on the other hand, encountered hardships and frustrations on all sides — victims of conditions in both the homeland and the host country. If the early arrivals, reaching America through mid-1791, were voluntary émigrés, they had nevertheless left their homes out of fear of political violence and a resulting financial collapse. They came in search of lands where they could preserve their fortunes by establishing prosperous communities free from strife, hardship and corruption.²⁰ Some, according to Chateaubriand, had foolish dreams, “ils se faisaient précéder de plans de châteaux à bâtir chez les sauvages.”²¹ Yet, to make plans to insure economic security was not unwise at a time when the financial situation in Europe was known to be rapidly deteriorating.²²

19. Henry Adams, *The Life of Albert Gallatin* (New York: Peter Smith, 1943); *The Correspondence of John Badollet and Albert Gallatin*, edited by G. Thornbrough (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1963); Henry M. Dater, “Albert Gallatin”, *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 26 (1939-1940), pp. 21-38; Peter Stephen Duponceau, “The Autobiography of Peter Duponceau”, edited by J.L. Whitehead, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 63 (1939), pp. 189-227, 311-343, 432-461; John F. McDermott, “John B.C. Lucas in Pennsylvania”, *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 21 (1938), pp. 209-230; Howard C. Rice, *Barthélémi Tardiveau* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1938).

20. T.T. Belote, *The Scioto Speculation and the French Settlement at Gallipolis* (Cincinnati, Ohio: University of Cincinnati Press, 1907); Henri Carré, “Les Émigrés français en Amérique, 1789-1793”, *La Revue de Paris* (15 mai 1898); J.G. Rosengarten, *French Colonists and Exiles in the United States* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1907).

21. François-René Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (Paris: Garnier et Frères, 1925), I, p. 299.

22. New York Historical Society (hereafter NYHS), Albert Gallatin Papers (hereafter AGP), Gallatin to Badollet, March 8, 1790.

No doubt, their disappointments in America and subsequent negative reactions were the result of unrealistic expectations — but only up to a point. If it is true that the followers had been gullible, trusting the unrealistic visions of their leaders, and lending too eager an ear to the enticing descriptions of American land agents in Paris, it is nevertheless also true that they quickly ran into very real problems: a terrible and exhausting crossing of the Atlantic, delays and financial disappointments in American ports, an unexpectedly long and difficult journey over the Appalachians, the constant danger of Indian attacks along the Ohio and at Gallipolis (their final destination), an inability to secure the titles to their lands and, finally, the primitive state of the colony lost in the midst of vast forests with no links to the civilized world. To add insult to injury, within one year, the Scioto Company declared bankruptcy and the French funds were lost forever, the immigrants never having acquired titles to their lands.²³ It is, therefore, not surprising that the leaders abandoned the settlement and the colony broke up under the pressures.

Settlers of another colony — several middle-class families who had emigrated voluntarily and settled in upper New York state, close to the Pennsylvania border — also skirted disaster. Having bought land for what appeared a good price and favorable conditions, they fully expected to run a successful farm.²⁴ Soon after their arrival on the Chenango, however, they were assailed by problems similar to those experienced at Gallipolis — disputed land titles, threatening Indians, high cost of food, harshness of climate and primitive conditions of the settlement. In view of such hardships, it seems that the eventual failure of the two settlements was only in part caused by the French settlers' romantic visions and their subsequent disappointments. The conditions the colonists met on the Chenango and at Gallipolis were extreme since they reduced previously well-to-do participants to poverty. Given the harsh reality of those situations, negative reactions are certainly understandable and can hardly be dismissed as merely the expression of a natural human tendency to grumble in the face of life's day-to-day problems.

In fact, the conditions of the two communities were not so different from those at the two failed Huguenot settlements in New England. Like their predecessors, the later French exiles were helpless when confronted with disputes of land titles, or when faced with Indian attacks. But unlike the Huguenots who were able to move to nearby Boston, the later exiles could not join a close colony of successful compatriots. Although the settlers on the Chenango transferred to Asylum in Pennsylvania, their position was in no way comparable to that of the Huguenots who removed to Boston. Indeed, they did not associate with a successful support group, for the colony at Asylum was

23. Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP), Duponceau Letterbooks, 1792-1800, Duponceau to Congress, Feb. 2, 1795.

24. Childs, *French Refugee*, pp. 99-100; David Craft, "The French at Asylum", *Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Proc. and Collect.*, 5 (1900), pp. 95-96; Louise W. Murray, *The Story of Some French Refugees and Their "Azilum"*, 1793-1800 (Athens, Pa.: Tioga Point Historical Society, 1917), pp. 113-115.

also running into serious problems, as shown below. So, in spite of their hard work, the Chenango settlers could not prosper at Asylum either. As for the community at Gallipolis, it was too large and disparate to act as a homogeneous group. The members disbanded, some surviving at a subsistence level at Gallipolis, others turning up later in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh or Asylum in Pennsylvania, and still others floating down the Ohio and Mississippi in search of more established French settlements in the West or in the hope of finding a way to the West Indies or back to Europe. Thus, compared to the Huguenots whose original settlements failed, let alone to the entire Huguenot emigration to America, even the early émigrés of the French Revolution experienced more hardships.

Clearly, not all Francophone migrants of the 1790s endured equally desperate situations. Conditions at home varied from person to person, as did the opportunities in America. Those who came surrounded by family and friends or who, like the Catholic priests, relied on a guiding spirit larger than themselves generally fared better; likewise, those who had managed to bring along some revenues or who were proficient in English and had skills which they could put to use were able to adjust more easily. Younger men, in particular, if not completely destitute, were altogether more flexible and adaptable than older ones who had fallen from higher status and were more worn by age and ill-health. If such younger men also had ties with acquaintances or relatives previously established in the United States, they had even a better chance of making an acceptable life for themselves. A case in point is the example of the few men who co-operated in Gallatin's enterprise at New Geneva in western Pennsylvania. Two of them had left the free city of Geneva in 1794, motivated as much by hopes of advantageous financial prospects in America as by their distaste of the oppressive atmosphere in that city. They invested in the New Geneva company and together with others who settled in the area, contributed to developing the region and became permanent settlers. In the case of these migrants, besides their youth and relative freedom from the influence of their homeland when compared to French exiles, other major factors played a part in their decision to settle in America: lack of better prospects elsewhere or, inversely, foreseeable success and prosperity in Pennsylvania and, above all, marriage to American wives. Peter Duponceau described that very process of assimilation when he looked back on his own experience and noted the importance of feelings, in particular the instinct to form sentimental ties: "I was charmed with the beauty and amiability of the female sex to which I had never paid much attention. Thus, my *heart* [my emphasis] became American and my mind soon followed."²⁵

25. NYHS, AGP, Salomon to Gallatin, July 1, 1794; Badollet to Gallatin, Jan. 30, 1792, March 24, 1794; Gallatin to Badollet, Feb. 7, 1833; Quirin M.A. de Cazenove, *Quatre Siècles* (Nîmes: Imprimerie coopérative La Laborieuse, 1908), p. 132; Duponceau, "Autobiography", p. 333.

The case of French émigrés who arrived from late 1791 on and the waves of Saint Domingan refugees who escaped in mid-1792 and beyond was altogether different. They were victims of the increasing violence in France and Saint Domingo, many departing from their homelands under terrifying conditions. A number of émigrés told stories of desperate flights. For example, De La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt wrote that he had left France “sur l’avis certain qu’il y avait des ordres positifs d’assassiner M. De La Rochefoucauld, mon cousin, et moi. Mon cousin n’est pas sorti de la France et a été assassiné”,²⁶ Moreau de Saint-Méry had barely managed to elude his pursuers and to reach safety on an American ship;²⁷ De la Colombe escaped from a prison in Antwerp, armed with a dagger and a pistol, disguised as a Dutch priest. At the border, he and Pillet, another escapee, passed themselves off as persecuted French priests and got safely through.²⁸ Undoubtedly, such experiences continued to unsettle the escapees for a long time.

As for the Saint Domingans, the majority had fled slave uprisings, sporadic burning of plantations and canefields, and repeated raids on the cities. The years 1792 and 1793 witnessed the collapse of white power and the subsequent disorderly exodus of the white population taking flight on any available ship. First, hundreds, then, thousands of refugees reached American ports. A few had foreseen the approaching violence and had transferred funds which they planned to invest in the United States. Yet, if a good number had managed to smuggle out some possessions, hundreds had arrived completely destitute, having been stopped on the seas and robbed by British warships.²⁹ Surely, such traumatic dislocation affected the victims for months and years, if not the rest of their lives.

Fleeing for their lives under very difficult conditions was only the first stress the French émigrés and Saint Domingan refugees endured. Over the years, they were to suffer innumerable losses by the ongoing crises which utterly transformed their lives. Separation from former friends and family became the harsh everyday reality, a separation which was all the worse because of the imminent dangers to which the loved ones were exposed. Vicomte de Noailles, for instance, lost his parents and wife to the guillotine. Liancourt separated from his wife and sons to find refuge in England, then in America.³⁰ Beaumetz and De Talleyrand applied to Hamilton and then to

26. François A.F. de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Journal de voyage en Amérique et d’un séjour à Philadelphie*, edited by J. Marchand (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1940), p. 141.

27. Médéric L.E. Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage aux États-Unis de l’Amérique, 1793-1798*, edited by Stewart L. Mims (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1913), pp. 1-3. De Saint-Méry was a former President of Paris electors and member of the National and the Constituent Assemblies.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-105. De la Colombe and Pillet were veterans of the War of Independence.

29. Childs, *French Refugee*, chapter 2.

30. Liancourt, *Journal*, pp. 125-131.

Monroe in Paris to try to secure the release from prison of friends and close relatives.³¹ Numerous ads in the gazettes tell of letters sent "poste restante", the whereabouts of addressees unknown to the sender.

Added to the uncertainty about the welfare of friends and relatives was the hardship imposed by the slowness of transatlantic communications. Practically all the letters consulted, whether of a personal or business nature, make reference to this problem. For instance, De Talleyrand had to wait for several months before any of M^{me} de Staël's letters reached him, and more than six months to hear from Narbonne.³² Liancourt made repeated entries in his diary about the total lack of news from Europe.³³ D'Orlic, a planter from Saint Domingo, had to write numerous letters to different addresses to have a message forwarded. He was left for an entire year without information about the welfare of his wife and daughter.³⁴ And M. Perrin, having returned to the island in the hope of setting his affairs in order, expressed impatience and worry about the lack of news from his wife and children.³⁵

Even if no imminent danger was threatening former friends and relatives, separation from them meant relative isolation, a condition for which neither the upper-class Frenchmen nor the planters, nor any of the other Saint Domingans were prepared. Compared to their previous lives of professional, political or social activities, most exiles lived among a very reduced circle of friends and relatives. But beyond the loss of social interactions Baldensperger described,³⁶ one must keep in mind that at the time, the extended family played a crucial part in all aspects of the survival, wellbeing and prosperity of an individual. Relatives and close friends worried about, borrowed money from, and supported one another; they did business with one another, and they took care of one another's children and affairs. Under the present arduous conditions, they mostly bewailed their inability to do so. Whenever possible, they settled close to one another, as establishments in Wilmington, Delaware and Asylum in Pennsylvania show.³⁷ Those who were on their own experienced feelings of solitude and abandonment. De Talleyrand, for instance, spoke of his "longues soirées" when "j'étais si seul"; Liancourt wrote of a similar condition and so did Bonnet and Du Petit-Thouars. Although Du Petit-Thouars

31. Harold C. Syrett *et al.*, eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1979), XVI, pp. 474-476; Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, "Lettres de M. De Talleyrand à M^{me} de Staël, tirées des archives du Château de Broglie", *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 4 (1890), pp. 208-219.

32. "Lettres à M^{me} de Staël", pp. 212-213.

33. Liancourt, *Journal*, pp. 72-73.

34. American Catholic Historical Society (hereafter ACHS), Philadelphia, D'Orlic Letterbook (hereafter DOL), Oct. 17, 1794, March 16, May 16, 1795.

35. HSP, Claude W. Unger Collection, Perrin to Dutilh and Wachsmuth, April 14, 1795.

36. *Le Mouvement*, I, pp. 12, 117-118.

37. HSP and ACHS, DOL, Correspondence of the Gernon and Boislandry families. At least twelve families and individuals involved with or residing at Asylum had relatives or friends living with them.

was generally appreciated by his compatriots at Asylum for his energy and resourcefulness, he nevertheless wrote home, "si je n'étais si seul... qu'il serait doux... si vous étiez là."³⁸ Many had escaped alone and attempted to survive by themselves or with only one friend or relative. Young children arrived accompanied by a few servants or slaves, and numerous women and children were so helpless and alone that they had to be provided for by charity.³⁹ Dislocation and separation from familiar support groups were indeed widespread. Given the harsh conditions, it seems unfair to question the appropriateness of their complaints or the reality and sincerity of their pain.

Another important factor related to the crisis in the homeland which traumatized the emigrants was the fact that many had to flee their homes in a state of relative poverty, if not outright destitution. True, some had foreseen the impending doom and had managed to forward money which, if sufficiently abundant, provided a means of sustenance in the United States. Simon Chaudron, for example, a Saint Domingan watchmaker and silversmith who had received a large dowry from his wife, succeeded in placing ten thousand dollars with Stephen Girard in Philadelphia with which he set up a manufacture of silverware which prospered for a number of years.⁴⁰ No doubt, others were able to rescue some resources, attested to by the numerous pensions and cafes, boarding schools and board in houses, trading houses, farms, as well as by the existence of land speculations.⁴¹ Still others, mostly émigrés from France, had the possibility to collect the debt the United States owed French officers who had fought in the Revolutionary War. According to Treasury Secretary Hamilton, the United States government was to pay out interests plus principal, in America only, from October 15, 1792 on. Evidently, a good number of former officers availed themselves of that opportunity.⁴²

Nevertheless, the overwhelming impression given by those whose records survived and by reports of contemporary observers is one of great hardship resulting from partial or complete loss of fortune in the country of

38. Le Duc de Broglie, ed., *Mémoires du Prince de Talleyrand* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1891), I, pp. 242, 240; Liancourt, *Journal*, p. 87; J. Esprit Bonnet, *Les États-Unis de l'Amérique à la fin du 18^e siècle* (Paris: Maradan, 1802), I, p. 56; Bergasse du Petit-Thouars, *Aristide Aubert du Petit-Thouars, héros d'Aboukir, lettres et documents inédits* (Paris: Plon, 1937), p. 311.

39. Alexandre Laujon, *Souvenirs de trente années de voyages à Saint-Domingue et au continent d'Amérique* (Paris: Schwartz et Gagnot, 1835), II, pp. 1-52; HSP, Wallace Papers, Nisbet to Joshua Wallace, May 3, 1794; HSP, Port of Philadelphia, Papers, 1789-1865, Reports of Alien Passengers Arriving, 1798; Elizabeth Drinker, *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, 1759-1807* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1889), pp. 248-249.

40. Harriet Smith, "Jean Simon Chaudron: The Blind Poet of the Canebrakes, 1758-1845", *Bulletin de l'Institut Français de Washington*, nouv. série, 4 (1954), pp. 111-119.

41. See the files of the English- and French-language gazettes published in Philadelphia, such as the *American Star*, *Aurora*, *Courrier français*, *Courrier de la France et des Colonies*, etc.

42. Syrett, *Hamilton*, XII, pp. 371-373; XVII, p. 358.

origin. Even such individuals as Louis de Noailles and Omer Talon,⁴³ the founders of the Asylum colony in Pennsylvania, who had hoped to transfer funds from France, were unable to keep their financial engagement. Others fared less well: Liancourt was forced to live in a small room and to keep wearing the same shabby and washed out clothes; Du Petit-Thouars had to hire himself out at Asylum and was unable to acquire even the least bit of land where he might build himself a cabin; Volney kept alluding to his need of money in his letters to La Révellière-Lépeaux.⁴⁴ Innumerable French correspondents of financier and land speculator John Nicholson were driven to ask for small favors or support to enable them to start businesses, or to beg President Washington and other well-known American personalities for help.⁴⁵ An idea of the magnitude of the financial disaster which touched the refugees can be gleaned from the repeated needs to raise funds to help the destitute as well as the use of public money provided by the United States, as part of its payment of the war debt to France, to repatriate needy survivors. Finally, the ads in the gazettes calling upon the community to help recover lost or stolen possessions, including fugitive slaves, suggest that even those who managed to bring property with them did not have much to spare.⁴⁶

Loss of property in the homeland meant not only a change in life-style, but also loss of independence. Formerly, wealthy planters who had lived on spacious plantations in Saint Domingo, surrounded by servants and slaves, were now living in single rented or borrowed rooms, often dependent on the good will of others, mostly strangers, whether for actual survival or for support in their attempts at recovering a modicum of financial independence. This situation was fraught with problems, as Nicholson's numerous letters of rejection to his French correspondents show. Many were pained by their state. Liancourt felt frustrated at not being able to return the civilities shown him. Laujon saw himself reduced to a state of "abandon et faiblesse". Poirez wrote that the day he would be able to repay the generosity that was shown him would be the happiest day of his life, and D'Orlic confided, "j'évite, avec le

43. Omer Talon had been Chief Justice of the Criminal Court of France under Louis XVI.

44. De Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, p. 222; Liancourt, *Journal*, pp. 125-131; Henriette La Tour du Pin de Gouvernet, *Memoirs of M^{me} de La Tour du Pin*, translated by Felice Harcourt (New York: McCall Publishing Co., 1971), p. 267; Du Petit-Thouars to his sister, August 26, 1794, *Du Petit-Thouars*, p. 313; Constantin F. Volney, "Lettres de Volney à La Révellière-Lépeaux, 1795-1798", edited by A. Mathiez, *Annales Révolutionnaires*, 3 (1910), pp. 171-172, 180-181, 184.

45. HSP, Nicholson Letterbooks; Syrett, *Hamilton*, XV, pp. 601-602; John Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Gov't. Print. Off., 1931-1944), XXXIV, pp. 262-263; XXXIII, pp. 217-218.

46. For example, *Le Courrier français*, Jan. 23 and 26, March 14 and 27, May 6, 1795; June 6, 12, 18, 1798; *Courrier de la France et des Colonies*, Oct. 24, Dec. 22, 1795; Feb. 10, 1796.

plus grand soin, d'être importun et à charge à qui que ce soit, et je trouve consolant de contracter le moins d'obligations possibles."⁴⁷

Independence, besides insuring that personal survival would not be at the mercy of others, conveyed a sense of worth and status. It protected the individual from humiliation and saved his pride. Conversely, dependence, the need to accept charity, even when given with graciousness, reversed the roles of power and status: dispensers of charity became recipients of handouts. That such a predicament was humiliating is pointedly expressed by De Noailles' words, "je ne consentirais, sous aucun prétexte, qu'un de mes enfants devienne le gendre de M. Bingham. Je ne voudrais pas le réduire à la nécessité de recevoir ses bienfaits."⁴⁸ Frenchmen resented their relative poverty, perhaps all the more so because American society placed great emphasis on material wealth and attached a stigma to dependence and poverty. It is significant that even La Fayette, to whom the U.S. owed a great debt, refused to consider coming to America "until his wife succeeded in converting her own personal fortune into ready money...so as to be assured of some sort of independence."⁴⁹ Insecurity and dependence reduced heads of family to feelings of powerlessness and inadequacy. "Je n'ai plus d'azile, plus de ressources pour ainsi dire, afin de soutenir ma femme et mon enfant... ", D'Orlic bewailed, ashamed of having to receive them in a single room and worried about not being able to feed them.⁵⁰ Liancourt also remained deeply affected by his inability to aid his ruined son in Saint Domingo.⁵¹

For those who had occupied positions of importance at home, forced exile brought another loss of status vis-à-vis the homeland. Émigrés were reduced to commoners; and an émigré had no rights, as Liancourt was well aware, "comme émigré, je suis rayé de la liste des citoyens français : proscrit, banni."⁵² Frustration and feelings of wounded pride ran high. For instance, De Noailles, who to his American friends appeared to "bear...his private losses and depredation with great equanimity", felt humiliated by the French government's treatment of his family. Volney wrote him reassuringly, "je me

47. François A.F. de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Voyage dans les États-Unis d'Amérique, fait en 1795, 1796 et 1797* (Paris: DuPont, etc., l'an VII de la République, 1799), I, p. 3; Laujon, *Souvenirs*, II, p. 51; HSP, Claude Unger Collection, Dutilh and Wachsmuth Letters, 1794-1812, Poirez to Dutilh and Wachsmuth, August 16, 1795; ACHS, DOL, D'Orlic to Treuil, May 20, 1797.

48. De Noailles to Tilly, June 28, 1799, in Alexandre Tilly, *Mémoires du comte Alexandre Tilly pour servir à l'histoire des mœurs de la fin du 18^e siècle* (Paris: Chez les Marchands de nouveautés, 1828), III, p. 251. Bingham was a wealthy merchant and land speculator at whose house De Noailles had been a frequent guest.

49. DuPont de Nemours to Jefferson, Jan. 20, 1800, in *Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Pierre Samuel DuPont de Nemours*, edited by D. Malone (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930).

50. ACHS, DOL, D'Orlic to Caveau, July 29, 1793; D'Orlic to his brother, June 24, 1795.

51. Liancourt to his wife, March 20, 1796, in *Journal*, pp. 125-131.

52. Liancourt to Letombe, May 1797, in *Journal*, p. 141.

suis resouvenu que vous ne vouliez et ne deviez rentrer que par des portes d'honneur."⁵³ Naturally, not all experienced an equal loss, but according to Liancourt, all harbored tales of woe and felt resentful towards the authorities which had caused their fall from favor.⁵⁴

With respect to the political feuding at home, the position of the Saint Domingans was equally painful, if somewhat different. For one, the refugees had not been hounded out of the island for their political beliefs, but rather by the unexpected fury of the slaves. All classes and factions suffered destruction and sought refuge in America. Consequently, they were not only opposed to the government, but directed their anger at each other as well. In fact, political divisions were transplanted on American soil by the exiles themselves and the French ministers. As a result, the refugees were never able to adjust in peace. A variety of radical factions, each with its own cause to plead, kept alive the feuds by airing their viewpoints in the gazettes and by sending delegations and messages to the National Assembly in Paris.⁵⁵ The French ministers in Philadelphia, forever short of relief money, nonetheless kept on salary groups of loyal civil servants for use in revolutionary schemes; and at times, they used political criteria to grant relief or free passage on ships to the destitute.⁵⁶ In addition, the ministers encouraged and patronized public celebrations that commemorated the most violent events of the revolution. No wonder, then, that royalists and moderates were appalled and dejected by emotional popular demonstrations.

The ministers succeeded in frustrating their citizens in other ways. For example, they managed to keep presumed enemies from meeting with President Washington.⁵⁷ If such meddling was only minor, other interferences were more painful. Minister Genêt attempted to control the return of refugees, spied on individuals, and confiscated personal papers.⁵⁸ The silencing of Tanguy de la Boissière affected not only Tanguy himself, but other refugees as well who might have profited from his meticulously researched studies.⁵⁹ Exiles thus felt

53. HSP, Dreer Collection, Volney to De Noailles, August 11, 1800; Anne Wharton Wood, "The Robinson Family and Their Correspondence with the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Noailles", *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*, 42 (1922), p. 31.

54. Liancourt, *Voyage*, I, p. 35.

55. Childs, *French Refugee*, pp. 141-159.

56. *American Star*, Feb. 15, 1794. Under Minister Fauchet, the successor of Genêt and Adet, the official repatriation policy was changed so that any colonial refugee who desired or needed it could get free passage to France (Childs, *French Refugee*, p. 177).

57. J. Frederick Turner, ed., "Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-1797", *AHA Annual Report*, 2 (1903), pp. 378-381.

58. Childs, *French Refugee*, p. 55.

59. Childs, *French Refugee*, pp. 182-183. Tanguy had been charged by the French ministry to write a study of Franco-American economic and commercial relations, *Mémoire sur la situation de la France avec les États-Unis de l'Amérique depuis l'année 1775 jusque et y compris 1795* (Philadelphia: French Legation, s.l.n.d.). Upon seeing the results, the authorities feared the information would work to the advantage of the United States and, so, they suppressed its publication.

angered at the French authorities and blamed them for maintaining animosities and aggravating their predicament and misfortunes.

In addition to resenting being victims of governmental bungling, the exiles felt rejected and abandoned by their home country. As a result, they were subject to melancholy and dejection which rendered them unable to find a meaningful purpose in exile. Liancourt expressed the hopelessness of the state with the words, "toutes mes espérances se sont évanouies comme l'ombre, et je suis errant, isolé, sans patrie. La vie est-elle donc entièrement finie pour moi ?"⁶⁰ Exile touched others in a similar way: Antoine Jay noted, "far from my native land...it is not without effort that I fix my attention on things alien to the emotions which fill my heart."⁶¹ And others became obsessive about the homeland, making their homesickness all the worse. Even De Talleyrand admitted to some attachment to "la terre qu'on regrette, quoi qu'on fasse, toujours un peu."⁶² For some members of the privileged classes, such bonds were stronger than material interests. Hence, none of the exiled nobility could be counted on to invest in American lands according to De Talleyrand, for they merely wished to return home even if it meant great sacrifices.⁶³ Emotional attachment to what came to be called "la mère patrie" naturally arose in the physical separation from the native land. "Il faut se trouver hors de sa patrie", wrote Bayard, "pour apprécier tout..." Through their contact with a foreign people, the émigrés thus came to realize that France was "le seul pays qui puisse convenir à des Français", a realization that made adjustment to the United States all the more difficult.⁶⁴

For the Saint Domingans, the losses the home crisis caused were primarily of an economic nature — excepting of course the private human losses. They do not seem to have felt the separation from their land as the metropolitan French did. The pervasive exploitative attitudes and the temporary nature of life in the colony sheltered them from nostalgia.⁶⁵ A pamphlet shows how deeply an attitude of exploitation and personal gain, devoid of any attachment to the island itself, remained ingrained even in 1796; it recommended that the colonists should "faire le plus de sucre et le plus de café possible pour aller le plus tôt possible... jouir ailleurs... de la liberté qu'ils

60. Liancourt, *Voyage*, I, p. 33.

61. Quoted by Echeverria, *Mirage*, p. 187.

62. "De Talleyrand to M^{me} de Staël", p. 214.

63. Hans Huth and Wilma J. Pugh, eds., *Talleyrand in America as a Financial Promoter, 1794-96: Unpublished Letters and Memoirs* (Washington: U.S. Gov't. Print. Off., 1942), pp. 38-40.

64. Ferdinand M. Bayard, *Voyage dans l'intérieur des États-Unis à Bath, Winchester, dans la vallée de Shenandoah pendant l'été de 1791* (Paris: Chez Cocheris, 1797), pp. 323-324; Baldensperger (*Le Mouvement*, I, p. 306) noted that emigration caused the participants unexpectedly to become attached to the "petite patrie", the resting place of their ancestors.

65. Edner Brutus, *Révolution dans Saint-Domingue* (Paris: Éditions du Panthéon, 1973), pp. 220-224.

ainment pour eux."⁶⁶ Thus, the major frustration was the threat to future possibilities of wealth and instant social status on returning to the continent.

Finally, unlike the Huguenots' irrevocable position vis-à-vis their homeland, the uncertain outcome of the revolutionary situation made the exiles' adjustment to life in America problematic by riveting their attention to the evolving crisis at home. For Saint Domingans, the conflicting reports carried by the gazettes concerning the safety of returning to the island and recovering lost property kept the refugees in a constant state of suspense and prevented them from committing themselves to adapting to life in America. D'Orlic's correspondence reveals one man's anxious waiting for advice about his return home. Frequent newspaper reports about the latest developments on the island suggest that many colonists entertained similar expectations. In France, the continuously evolving political situation, i.e. the possibility of an allied intervention to overthrow the radicals in Paris, the fall of Robespierre and other Jacobins, in 1794, and the institution of the Directory, in 1795, contributed to fasten the émigrés' hopes on eventual reinstatement.

Clearly, the losses linked to the country of origin and the process of migration did arouse a whole complex of negative feelings for the refugees — anxiety about loved ones, feelings of isolation and abandonment, resentment at being victims of government bungling, and feelings of inadequacy and shame. Such victimization caused by the home crises would render adaptation to a foreign land difficult even if conditions in the host country worked in the exiles' favor and the receiving society was reasonably compatible with the refugees. In the 1790s, however, the intermeshing of the two communities was complicated by the fact that the refugee population was divided into several factions, each alienating a sector of American society, and that the revolutionary conflicts soon took on an international character. The Federalist administration and its supporters, rejecting both the ideals and the extremism of the French Revolution, began to mount a successful campaign against the imagined French threat of social revolution. They also resisted France's attempts to cajole, and later to coerce, the United States into an alliance that would have helped France retain the advantage gained in the American Revolution. In fact, during the 1790s, France's favorable position was reversed. She lost every diplomatic and commercial contest in her relation to the United States and her conflict with England: American contraband deprived her of revenues from commerce and taxes on commerce to and from Saint Domingo;⁶⁷ she failed to conclude a treaty of commerce with the United States with which to secure American markets for French commercial interests and with which to keep out the British; and last, British depredations at sea, resulting from France's open hostilities with England, and American partiality

66. *Courrier de la France et des Colonies*, Jan. 21, 1796.

67. Peter P. Hill, *French Perceptions of the Early American Republic, 1783-1793* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1988), pp. 82-83.

towards Britain inflicted such losses on France's naval powers in the Atlantic that she had difficulty keeping the sea lanes open for her merchant navy.⁶⁸ Such French setbacks in the international arena, naturally, deeply affected French refugees homesick for their "mère patrie". Moved by France's troubled position, refugees of different political persuasions thus rallied to rescue their country's honor by taking up the defense and justification of official French positions in several publications.⁶⁹

The Francophone Exiles' Difficulties in America

Besides the mounting problems related to France's losses in the international arena, the Francophone exiles of the 1790s encountered a variety of unfortunate and unfavorable circumstances in the United States which hindered their economic and social integration. First, they suffered great financial difficulties, in spite of the rapid growth of the American economy. Yet, if they experienced endless reverses, it was not because of restrictions or discriminatory practices in America. Indeed, foreign merchants wishing to engage in trade could associate with American partners until they had taken out citizen papers, and potential investors in American lands could buy Pennsylvania farms or virgin lands, unimpeded by restrictive state laws. Furthermore, Pennsylvania was full of enterprising land speculators eager to make contact with the refugees and other immigrants and incite them to settle on their land. Prosperity, however, was linked to widespread speculation, encouraged by federal policies which favored large property-holders and important financial interests. At the same time, market forces gave rise to increasingly rigid occupational differentiation leading to a decline in upward mobility and in participation in the general prosperity. In the seaport cities, a class of poor people, consisting mostly of the latest unskilled immigrants enjoying only temporary employment, was emerging.⁷⁰ Thus, even though shipbuilding, growing manufactures, diversified agriculture and booming exports provided income for most people, the general economic trend disempowered the mass of skilled and unskilled workers and concentrated money, power and prestige on a privileged elite.

The fact that money was the key to success, whether in trading or manufacturing, did not augur well for a successful integration of a large migrating population, mostly destitute. Actually, few Frenchmen managed

68. *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 68-78, 131-137.

69. See the files of the *Courrier français* for 1796-1798 and Tanguy de la Boissière, *Observations sur la dépêche écrite le 16 janvier par M. Pickering... à M. Pinkney* (Philadelphia: Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1797).

70. Edward Pessen, "The Egalitarian Myth and the American Social Reality", *American Historical Review*, 76 (October 1971), pp. 1014-1019; Richard K. Miller, "Gentry and Entrepreneurs", *Rocky Mountain Social Science Journal*, 12 (January 1975), pp. 71-84; David Montgomery, "The Working Classes of the Pre-Industrial American City, 1780-1830", *Labor History*, 9 (Winter 1968), pp. 3-22.

financial success, and most appeared to experience endless reverses. Business ventures which had attracted a number of people ended in partial or complete failure. Consider, for instance, the Asylum project, a colony set in motion in late 1793 by De Noailles and Talon, where perhaps thirty-five people, mostly Saint Domingan refugees, had acquired shares of land, hoping to safeguard rescued funds while spending their exile among friends and relatives and occupying their time in useful activities.⁷¹ In 1795, at the apex of its development, at least thirty houses with some stores and inns had been built, and some sixty French people had moved in. Very soon thereafter, however, the colony began to disintegrate to the extent that by the turn of the century, few settlers remained. British travellers pointed out that the French settlers were an "idle" and "dissipated set" preferring to amuse themselves with hunting and fishing than "to clearing the land and working the farms".⁷² Colbert de Maulevrier confirmed that most French people had little experience in frontier farming and house building.⁷³ Some worked very hard, however, and might have succeeded had not other problems defeated their efforts. The financiers who backed the project very quickly became insolvent, and the agents were unable to sell sufficient shares either in Philadelphia or on the European markets.⁷⁴ As a result, construction of roads and canals and payment of dividends were curtailed. This, in turn, discouraged potential buyers.⁷⁵ Land improvements undertaken under the direction of the settlers themselves were costing three to four times more than American promoters predicted, and worsened the farmer's fate.⁷⁶ The hired worker's propensity to alcoholism and laziness, as well as the distance separating the settlement from the nearest market, further strained the colonists' finances.⁷⁷

The settlers' bitterness about these unexpected financial reverses is visible in their woeful letters. Louis d'Autremont, for instance, was writing that because of inaccurate information on local conditions, his family's funds

71. Wishing to found a French settlement, De Noailles and Talon approached financiers and land speculators Robert Morris and John Nicholson who provided them with 200,000 acres of land in the Bradford-Wyoming area on the West Branch of the Susquehanna in northern Pennsylvania. Together, they founded the Asylum Company made up of 400-acre land shares and a number of town lots. European capital was to be invested in the colony and refugees were to people the settlement.

72. Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada During the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797* (New York: A.M. Kelley, 1970 reprint), II, p. 352, and Bulow, *Port Folio* (Nov. 16, 1802), p. 546.

73. Colbert de Maulevrier, *Voyage*, p. 35.

74. Robert D. Arbuckle, *Pennsylvania Speculator and Patriot: The Entrepreneurial John Nicholson* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1974), pp. 98-106.

75. Pennsylvania History and Museum Commission (hereafter PHMC), John Nicholson Papers, General Correspondence (hereafter GNP), La Rocque to Nicholson, May 9, 1795.

76. Asylum Settlement Papers (hereafter ASP), Tioga Point Museum (hereafter TPM), Louis d'Autremont to Boulogne, July 20, 1795.

77. Liancourt, *Voyage*, I, p. 168.

were now practically exhausted.⁷⁸ Lefèvre's predicament was compounded by his discovering, after clearing some twenty five acres for cultivation and building a house at a cost of four hundred dollars, that the plot he worked on did not belong to the Asylum Company and that he had no claim to it. The company would not come to his rescue, and he was forced to retire to Asylum itself, supporting his family on a mere four acres of land, and this did not dispose him favorably towards American land speculators.⁷⁹

In Lefèvre's case, as in the Gallipolis and Chenango projects, and in one Huguenot settlement, the setbacks were the results of title problems.⁸⁰ The French settlers who invested at Asylum were unaware of this drawback, financiers Morris and Nicholson having minimized the difficulties by taking it upon themselves to buy out owners of lands the French desired. Apparently, these problems were not resolved, for Talon, the chief French agent at Asylum, sold land shares carelessly without proper documents, and De Noailles complained that the company's refusal or inability to produce good titles was keeping him from making further sales.⁸¹ Given these troubles and others related to climate, isolation and inability, if not unwillingness to communicate with frontier neighbors, it is understandable that the people associated with the Asylum project — already victimized by their experiences related to their homeland — would harbor hostility toward land promoters, the country and Anglo-Americans. Furthermore, it seems natural that those who could afford to take a loss would leave the colony before they were completely ruined. The departure of the settlers, however, followed by that of their workers reduced the shop and innkeepers to poverty, as their livelihood depended on the existence of a substantial settlement.

Attaining financial independence in the United States was difficult for other French people as well. Publishers, printers and booksellers in Philadelphia saw their businesses falter or fail. Only one of the eight French-language gazettes published between December 1792 and July 1798 survived more than a few weeks, for instance.⁸² The desperate conditions of two newspaper men,

78. ASP, TPM, Louis d'Autremont to Boulogne, July 20, 1795; other complaints are found in JNP, PHMC, De Montullé to Nicholson, 1795-1796; Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greenville, Del. (hereafter EMHL), Régnier Letterbook, Régnier to Talon, June 17, 1797; Keating Journal quoted by Louise Murray, *The Story of Some French Refugees*, p. 37.

79. Asylum Company Papers (hereafter ACP), HSP, translation of Lefèvre's letter to Keating, sent to Nicholson, July 26, 1799.

80. The tract chosen by De Noailles and Talon was partially occupied by Connecticut claimants — farmers whose lands were vested with the state of Connecticut and who refused to sell out to Nicholson.

81. HSP, ACP, Keating to Nicholson, July 26, 1799; HSP, Gratz Collection, De Noailles to Nicholson, Jan. 2, 1794, Nov. 7, 1796; HSP, Society Collection, De Noailles to Nicholson, Jan. 10, 1794.

82. For a list and description of the Philadelphia gazettes, see Allen J. Barthold, "French Journalists in the United States, 1780-1800", *The Franco-American Review*, 1, no. 3 (Winter 1937), pp. 215-230; and George P. Winship, "French Newspapers in the United States Before 1800", *Bibliogr. Society of America, Papers*, 14, pt. 2 (1920), pp. 82-146.

Egron and Tanguy de la Boissière, can be gathered from their correspondence with financier J. Nicholson, who for some months aided in financing *Le Niveau de l'Europe*, a business paper intended to help commercial links between France and the United States. After twelve issues, Nicholson withdrew his support and the paper failed. Other ventures fared little better. Decombaz, who specialized in language learning books, went bankrupt and was investigated by a committee of the Grand Lodge of the Free Masons;⁸³ Moreau de Saint-Méry was able to make do for a short period thanks to the fortunate arrival of his boxes filled with manuscripts of studies ready to be printed and his connection to important émigrés who provided him with both subscribers and manuscripts; however, after barely two years, he was forced to move to a cheaper house and store, his situation worsened during the depression of 1796-97 and become critical prior to his return to France in summer 1798.⁸⁴ Parent, the editor of the *Courrier français*, had no great success either. Over the years, the publisher had to gradually curtail his output of pamphlets and advertisements of books and after four years, he gave up the publication of the gazette.⁸⁵

The situation of such Frenchmen was singularly precarious. They were hampered by the gradual dissolution of the French community as well as by insufficient business from the American public. Probably because they concentrated on French publications — English translations of French authors were largely produced by American publishers — the Frenchmen were unable to assert themselves in the American market. Their feelings about their experience can only be surmised. However, De Saint-Méry's conviction that passion for money dictated all transactions and Tanguy's condemnation of American land-speculation in relation to French buyers suggest that they did not approve of the business practices they witnessed.⁸⁶

The merchants' chances of success were determined by the size of their original operation and by the international connections they enjoyed. Important men like Stephen Girard, Dutilh and Wachsmuth, Rodrigue, Gernon and a few others were at first able to take part in the great American commercial expansion. Some were sufficiently broad-based to withstand British depredations on the seas and seizures of West Indian islands. Smaller entrepreneurs,

83. *Minutes of the Right Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of Pennsylvania*, comp. J.L. Lyle (Philadelphia: The Grand Lodge, 1895-1902), I, p. 280.

84. De Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, pp. 202, 207, 210-211, 219, 229-231, 233, 244-245, 255, 265. He had to sell many of his belongings, including his books, *Courrier français*, Nov. 21, 1797, June 12, 16 and 28, 1798.

85. *Courrier français*, Oct. 17, 21, Nov. 1, 1794, Feb. 9, April 23, May 19, Oct. 27, Nov. 29, 1795, June 18, 30, 1796, Feb. 15, August 12, 1797, Feb. 26, June 22, 1798. On May 1, 1798, Parent announced that he would continue to print all kinds of works in English and French — but only one is known and it may have been printed earlier.

86. De Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, pp. 66, 294; Tanguy, "Memoir on American Land Speculation", Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

however, suffered greatly. For instance, Baudry des Lozières lost most of his business because of depredations;⁸⁷ De Boislandry, who was running a store on borrowed funds, ended up in utter ruin.⁸⁸ D'Orlic, for lack of sufficient capital, had to rely on partners who failed him.⁸⁹ The many advertisements in the gazettes for the sale of "fonds de boutique", "épiceries", "boulangeries", "pensions" or "ateliers" do not testify to great financial successes, nor do the isolated ads for a variety of articles, including used furniture, bathroom fixtures, books and small shipments of edibles such as oil, vinegar, cheese and liquor.⁹⁰

How entertainers and teachers fared and perceived their lot can only be guessed. The former made real efforts to reach wider audiences by giving performances independent of the French language. They seemed to have failed nonetheless, because in 1797, ballets and *opéras comiques* performers were affiliated with a circus that went bankrupt in June of 1798.⁹¹ Widespread moral opposition to theaters and circuses in America resulted in poor attendance and in the entertainers leading miserable lives.⁹² As for teachers, those who had the means of opening schools for children were at least minimally successful since they advertised regularly over several years.⁹³ Nevertheless, the anti-French propaganda of the later years, the fear that French thinking might corrupt the morals of the young undoubtedly had an effect on the teachers.⁹⁴ Circumstantial evidence indicates that survival was not easy: Volney, De la Grange and others involved in disseminating French culture had financial problems.⁹⁵

87. De Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, pp. 242, 265.

88. HSP, Society Collection, Papers of Boislandry and Dumuys Estates, Pierre de Boislandry to M^{me} George, Oct. 17, 1797; Consular docum., Mar. 6, 1811.

89. ACHS, DOL, D'Orlic to Sorette, Sept. 14, 1795; D'Orlic to Dupuy, June 1, 1796; D'Orlic to Nagot, June 16, 1796; D'Orlic to Dubov, August 25, 1796; D'Orlic to Gayon, August 26, 1796; D'Orlic to brother, April 10, June 24 and Oct. 9, 1797; D'Orlic to Artaud, July 15, 1797; D'Orlic to Dubov, Sept. 21, 1795.

90. *Courrier français*, June 23, July 2, August 26, Sept. 22, Dec. 12, 1795; in 1796, sixteen such advertisements appeared in the same gazette; in 1797, twenty-nine of them, and until June 26, 1798, another fifteen.

91. Ellis P. Oberholzer, *Philadelphia: A History of the City and Its People* (Philadelphia: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1912), p. 392.

92. William Dunlap, *History of the American Theater* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832), pp. 402-406. Dunlap related the suicide of a pair to relieve their misery.

93. *Courrier français*, Oct. 1795, May 1796, May, Sept. and Nov. 1797, Jan. 1798; Howard M. Jones, "The Importation of French Books in Philadelphia, 1750-1800", *Modern Philology*, 32 (1934-35), p. 157.

94. Howard M. Jones, *America and French Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1927), p. 202.

95. Samuel Breck, *Recollections of Samuel Breck, with Passages from His Notebooks, 1771-1862*, edited by H.E. Scudder (London: S. Low, Merston, Searle and Rivington, 1877), p. 174; JNP, PHMC, De la Grange to Nicholson, Dec. 22, 1798; John Davis, *Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America* (London: H. Caritat, 1803), p. 241; Volney, "Lettres", *Annales Révolutionnaires*.

Thus, many of the French emigrants experienced economic difficulties during their stay in America. Naturally, those who had known more prosperous times felt depressed. Frustrations were no doubt increased by the evidence of prosperity in America. Unfortunately, the practices of land promoters made it appear that they were ready to take financial advantage of the emigrants at a time when the latter were most vulnerable.⁹⁶ The state of Pennsylvania's denial of ownership of slaves, at times the only property left to previously wealthy planters, caused resentment in the refugee population and increased the feelings of persecution when the law did not subject American citizens to the same restrictions.⁹⁷ Such conditions can hardly be expected to have endeared Americans to the refugees who remained a closely-knit community where news and rumours travelled fast.

Despite this gloomy picture, not all exiles suffered equally; personal circumstances and lifestyles varied substantially. Some people may even have been moderately prosperous, such as Maréchal de Camp Duportail who ran a comfortable farm near Valley Forge on the Schuylkil,⁹⁸ or the miniature painter De La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt encountered in Lancaster, or the successful goldsmith-watchmaker and the physician at Middletown,⁹⁹ or again the educators in Philadelphia who continued their boarding schools even after the wave of gallophobia unleashed by the XYZ Affair in 1798 and the exodus of large numbers of Francophone people.¹⁰⁰

Unfortunately, little is known about the aforementioned people's disposition towards life in America. So, we must refrain from making generalizations in the absence of specific information for, according to records of other settlers, the assumption that emigrants staying beyond 1798 were doing well or preferred living in the United States may be incorrect. The picture of attitudes and final settlement is very complex because the Francophone refugee community was less homogeneous than the small group of immigrants settled at New Geneva in western Pennsylvania previously mentioned. Refugees of both sexes and all ages and professions had sought asylum, not just young men with few well honed skills and no sentimental attachments elsewhere.

96. Several observers have pointed this out. Bayard, *Voyage*, p. 261; De Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, p. 66; Tanguy, "Land Speculation", DLC. Furthermore, François Marie Perrin du Lac (*Voyage dans les deux Louisianes*, Paris: Capelle et Renand, 1805, p. 97) stated that nineteen out of twenty Saint Domingan refugees were duped and robbed by crew members or captains of the ships which carried them to the U.S. Even if this is greatly exaggerated, it is important to remember that the smallest incidents would appear as major offenses to people in as vulnerable a state as that of the refugees.

97. EMHL, Papers of Victor Dupont, Journal of a Visit to Philadelphia, 1788.

98. Elizabeth S. Kite, "Duportail: American Citizen and Farmer, 1778-1802", *Pennsylv. Mag. of Hist. and Biogr.*, 56 (1936), pp. 348-352.

99. *Voyage*, I, pp. 38, 87.

100. Catherine A. Hebert, "The French Element in Pennsylvania in the 1790s: The Francophone Immigrants' Impact", *Pennsylv. Mag. of Hist. and Biogr.*, 108 (October 1984), p. 464; Childs, *French Refugee Life*, p. 191.

“Successful” immigrants, that is people who decided not to return to France nor to her West Indian colonies, remained in the United States for widely different reasons. Simon Chaudron, for instance, had managed to escape safely and had set up a prosperous manufacturing business in Philadelphia, as noted above. He soon joined various benevolent societies, becoming the orator for the “Loge l’Aménité”, composing and delivering, among others, the funeral oration to mourn and celebrate George Washington. From the *Oraison funèbre du frère George Washington*, we can see that the lodge’s leaders’ purpose had been to create an asylum of peace, untouched by the fray of political divisions, in order to be able to mobilize the members’ energies to scour the needy more effectively. Chaudron’s and his colleagues’ efforts were thus focused on the French refugee community. The loss of Washington, however, reawakened, for all, sacred feelings of brotherhood and liberty which the catastrophic events of the recent past had buried: “Il était réservé a [sic] ce Grand Homme d’être [sic] utile aux mortels, même par de làle [sic] tombeau. Tous les grands sentiments furent réveillés par le sentiment de la perte publique. La mort... vint pour un instant réunir les hommes de toutes les nations et de tous les systèmes politiques sur le cercueil du héros de la liberté.”¹⁰¹ For Chaudron, the feelings Washington’s death awakened revealed a new order of values in which the universal themes of brotherhood and liberty superceded exclusive French national attachments and concerns. Perhaps, in part as a result of the shift of allegiance he envisioned, Chaudron could later look back on his successful career in America and sing the goodness of the land that had received him: “One has let us enjoy in peace in this blessed America, the protection and advantages of this new Paradise....”¹⁰² In Chaudron’s case, however, as in many others, it was not only lofty ideals of brotherhood and liberty that kept him in America, but also, if not primarily, his personal financial success — at some point he apparently owned two country estates, one in Pottsgrove, Pa., and the other in Hamilton Village.¹⁰³

Other “successful” immigrants appear to have had more difficulty deciding where to settle. Whether they also shared in the ideals of universal brotherhood and liberty that Washington’s death aroused is mere conjecture. The available records consulted reveal that such immigrants’ decisions often entailed compromises and regrets, yet, at the same time, also relief and peace. Consider, for example, Marie Jacques Dominic D’Orlic, who escaped to America, in July 1793, from Saint Domingo. In early 1796, he still fully intended to return home, whether to Saint Domingo or France; in fact, he put off becoming an American citizen out of loyalty to his homeland, “n’ayant

101. *Oraison funèbre du frère George Washington, prononcée le premier janvier 1800, dans la loge française, l’Aménité* (Philadelphia: John Ormrod, 1800), pp. 31-32.

102. Quote from *L’Abeille américaine*, cited in Alabama Department of Archives and History Library, Montgomery, Alabama, Simon Chaudron Papers, P.W. Holt, typescript “Memoir in Alabama”.

103. *Ibid.*

point voulu renoncer à ma patrie pour devenir citoyen américain.”¹⁰⁴ One year later, he wished to escape the life of a refugee in Philadelphia, but felt a prisoner of his dismal financial situation.¹⁰⁵ Still, he clung to the hope of recovering some compensation for the loss of his sugar plantation on the island and in the meantime, he busied himself with small prospects to avoid having to accept charity.¹⁰⁶ By mid-1799, however, he was no longer drawn to Saint Domingo, even though his returning might have furthered his financial existence: “Je suis... résolu à rester ici tant que je pourrai m’y soutenir, même en bêchant un jardin comme j’ai fait cet été.”¹⁰⁷ The unstated reasons for his change of mind were that, on the one hand, in 1798, he had married his daughter to a moderately prosperous merchant residing in Philadelphia and was thus no longer burdened with providing for his whole family and that, on the other hand, he had managed to improve his finances just enough to be able to retire to the country during the yellow fever outbreak in summers 1798 and 1799.¹⁰⁸ So, he lost the will to leave his family in an effort to recover his fortune, preferring instead to remain near his daughter and her growing family. By late 1800, he had accepted his lot with stoicism, even enjoying his new resignation. In the final analysis, then, for people like D’Orlic, settlement in America represented a turning away from the world at large, similar to that of Voltaire’s *Candide*, at once a resignation and a means of surviving. No enthusiastic embrace of his adoptive country, no warm encomiums of blessed America dot his letters to friends and partners, just a touch of melancholy, regret and surrender now and then: “Je vous assure que nous avons plus ici qu’ailleurs de quoi dissiper l’Ennui; nous serions tous certainement mieux en France, mais pour y aller, il faut des moyens et y avoir une existence assurée, ce que quelques-uns ne peuvent se permettre...”¹⁰⁹ His decision to remain in the United States was, thus, taken not by choice but by necessity.

Chaudron and D’Orlic represent two opposite poles of “successful” immigrants, the first perpetuating the American dream of unlimited opportunity, the second trapped by limited circumstances. Between these two poles lie the varying shades of financial success and resignation which the “successful” immigrants embodied. For example, the few settlers who after the turn of the century had not removed from the abandoned colony of Asylum had resigned themselves to staying and surviving in isolation, having perhaps realized that the very process of desertion of the settlement would eventually work to their advantage. In the end, the few who remained were indeed able to buy improved lands at very low cost and, hence, to work good farms that produced an adequate, if not a good, life. The Laportes, who ended up

104. ACHS, DOL, D’Orlic to his brother, March 2, 1796; D’Orlic to Dubov, August 25, 1796.

105. *Ibid.*, D’Orlic to Dubov, April 8, 1797.

106. *Ibid.*, D’Orlic to B. Carrère, Feb. 26, 1798.

107. *Ibid.*, D’Orlic to Lamy, Sept. 19, 1799.

108. *Ibid.*, D’Orlic to Bourgevin, May 26, 1798; D’Orlic to Lamy, July 4, 1799.

109. *Ibid.*, D’Orlic to Lamy, Oct. 19, 1800.

managing the sale of town lots and adjacent farmlands, gradually put together a four hundred acre farm of their own, while the d'Autremonts eventually recovered their Chenango lands. The Laportes, perhaps because Barthélemy had married an English girl, are an example of a family that adjusted well to the new conditions on the frontier, managing to profit from the sorry state of the settlement and to make a comfortable life for themselves. The D'Autremonts, on the other hand, are an example of refugee immigrants whose early opportunities were so severely restricted by the home crisis and the problematic, if not fraudulent, circumstances in exile, that for several years, they were unable to relocate elsewhere, their original funds being exhausted. For them, original bitter complaints, recorded in the D'Autremont correspondence, eventually gave way to resignation; and with the passage of years and gradual improvement of their financial predicament came a measure of acceptance, but in their case, always mixed with a yearning for the ways and life left behind in the homeland.¹¹⁰

The few success stories, and even the resignations that turned into acceptance, should not hide the great financial hardships the great majority of Francophone exiles of the 1790s suffered during their stay in the United States. Generally speaking, it seems probable that economic reverses might have been endured with greater equanimity by the better sort of immigrants, had financial losses not simultaneously brought about a loss of status in American society. The exiles were clearly at a disadvantage in a society emphasizing accumulation and ostentation of wealth. D'Orlic told of the added difficulties encountered because of "le mépris qu'impose la pauvreté".¹¹¹ The unanimous condemnation of what the French perceived an inordinate interest in the pursuit of wealth reflects in part their frustrations at finding themselves in inferior social positions.¹¹² If for some members of the French upper classes, letters of introduction and titles of nobility gave access to well-placed Americans, these credentials did not help such Frenchmen acquire weight and worth. De La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt actually confided his feelings of frustration about wealthy American hosts' superficial interest in their occasional impoverished guests, noting that "le lendemain à peine, ce fêté de la veille est-il reconnu dans la rue, à moins qu'on ne le suppose riche, surtout en argent disponible."¹¹³ The position of people like Liancourt, forced to live on a restricted budget, yet expected to converse on a par with American social elites, was precarious since they were never able to meet their American counterparts on equal terms, having neither the means to reciprocate, nor a position to command respect.

110. EMHL, D'Autremont Family Papers; Murray, *French Refugees*, pp. 112-122, 279-279.

111. ACHS, DOL, D'Orlic to Dubov, April 8, 1797.

112. De Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, pp. 290-291, 321; Liancourt, *Journal*, p. 104, and *Voyage*, I, pp. 114-115; Bayard, *Voyage*, p. 260; AGP, NYHS, Gallatin to Badollet, Feb. 22, 1790.

113. *Voyage*, VI, p. 327.

Clearly, the clash between American and French cultural assumptions — American faith in the goodness of material pursuits as opposed to French attachments to artistic, intellectual and cultural sophistication — when experienced within the unequal social relations of French exiles and American elites, forever put the struggling French exiles at a disadvantage. Contact with the social groups that displayed the very characteristics the French lacked most — wealth, status and power —, yet failed to appreciate the qualities educated émigrés felt they had to offer — intellectual curiosity, experience in French culture and social and verbal facility — frustrated and upset the French. Liancourt's following words illustrate the demeaning and powerless position of one who could not bring his American colleagues to respect him and take his endeavours seriously: "On ne peut, en Amérique, se figurer qu'une autre intention détermine un homme à voyager, et ceux à qui nous répondons que nous voyageons pour notre curiosité (non pas pour acheter des terres) nous croyent bien sots quand ils nous font grâce de ne pas nous croire menteurs."¹¹⁴ The attitude, trivialized the Frenchmen's goals, confirmed their second-class position and further undermined a status already weakened by the events in their home country.

In fact, most interactions with Americans entailed a loss of status and power for the French exiles. The situation of the destitute whom circumstances forced to accept charity needs no emphasis. The business correspondence of refugees with American partners on whose co-operation they depended shows how little power and status the Frenchmen actually commanded.¹¹⁵ The same was true of the previously-mentioned entertainers whose efforts were insufficiently appreciated by Americans. The position of Blanchard is another case in point. Despite numerous ads in the papers, some popular curiosity, and interest from the President, Blanchard was unable to muster any real financial support for his aerial ascensions and balloon exhibits in Philadelphia. Instead, he met with the hostility of important personalities, among them Vice-President Adams himself.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile, professional people were unable to win the approval and respect of their American colleagues. First-rate doctors among Saint Dominicans were not sought out by their American counterparts. For instance, during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, Dr. Devèze's efforts at Bush-Hill Hospital in Philadelphia, using methods devised and tried in Saint Domingo, were ignored if not opposed, by the local medical establishment.¹¹⁷ Some of the military men were more fortunate, for their skills could be put to immediate

114. *Ibid.*, I, p. 108.

115. See, for example, JMP, PHMC, De Noailles' Letters to Nicholson.

116. Scharf and Wescott, *Philadelphia*, I, pp. 471-472; *Courrier de l'Amérique*, Dec. 25, 28, 1792; Jan. 8, 1793; William S. Baker, comp., *Washington after the Revolution, 1784-1799* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1898), p. 248.

117. John H. Powel, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Great Plague of Yellow Fever in Philadelphia in 1793* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949), p. 6.

use in the defenses of the ports and the frontier. But there were also problems: De La Rochefontaine felt dishonored by some Americans at Westpoint and Rivardi was ostracized during his inspection of fortifications in the North West territory.¹¹⁸

Finally, French émigrés and Saint Domingan refugees were subjected to growing rejection of things French and the French nation which compounded their economic and social difficulties.¹¹⁹ As mentioned above, American policies which appeared to be giving an edge to England in international politics and commerce angered many French who saw the steps as an expression of anti-French behavior.¹²⁰ They felt victimized by the anti-French propaganda put out by the Federalist administration and press. Thus, Parent exposed the bias of American writers who “peignent les Français comme une horde de brigands”, and Tanguy pointed out Secretary of State Pickering’s ill-willed and ill-founded attacks on France and the French.¹²¹ Many felt personally touched by the vindictiveness between the two nations. Moreau de Saint-Méry, for example, sought refuge for himself and his family with the French legation, and refugees left by the shiploads when the Alien and Sedition acts took effect following the XYZ Affair in summer 1798.¹²²

This unfavorable American reaction apparently came as a surprise to many refugees. Not unreasonably, they had expected to find a refuge from persecution, a “sol hospitalier” where differences of opinion in religion and politics did not cause turmoils.¹²³ Never had they dreamed that they and their homeland would be drawn into a political battle in America, and that they would become scapegoats for a moralistic and conservative movement. It is certain the French felt unwelcome in America, given the growing anti-French

118. HSP, James Laux Collection, De la Rochefontaine to Colonel B. Walker, May 10, 1796; Mary Johnson, “Madame Rivardi’s Seminary in the Gothic Mansion”, *Penna Mag. of Hist. and Biogr.*, 104 (Jan. 1980), pp. 8-9. Stephen de La Rochefontaine and J.J. Ulrich Rivardi were former engineers in the French army.

119. The course of neutrality taken by the Federalist administration in the disputes between France and England and, thereafter, the concluding of the Jay Treaty with England were contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Franco-American Alliance of 1778. The French generally felt betrayed by these developments. Furthermore, in their attempt to subdue the democratic movement in America, the Federalists and other conservatives resorted to an anti-French propaganda, exposing the threat of French immorality and depravity to American society. Such feelings gradually gained momentum and became generalized by mid-1798.

120. England blockaded and seized part of French Saint Domingo while the U.S. stepped in where French commerce was losing out.

121. *Courrier français*, 1796-1798; Tanguy de la Boissière, *Observation sur la dépêche écrite le 16 janvier 1797*.

122. De Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, p. 249; Childs, *French Refugee*, pp. 187-190.

123. De Talleyrand to M^{me} de Staël, May 12, 1794, “Lettres à M^{me} de Staël”, p. 210; Volney, *Œuvres complètes*, VII, pp. 1-11; Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, p. 3; American Philosophical Society, Miscellaneous Collections, Liancourt to Bentham, March 30, 1795; Bonnet, *États-Unis*, I, p. xxxviii; AGP, NYHS, Étienne Dumont to Gallatin, Feb. 20, 1794; Sylvestre to Gallatin, June 12, 1791; July 19, 1794; D’Ivernois to Gallatin, Oct. 14, 1794.

sentiments and political propaganda. Many noted American prejudice and ingratitude. Maulevrier, for example, contrasted Canada, a country "où je puis dire avoir reçu plus d'honnêteté et de marques de bienveillance et même d'amitié dans l'espace de deux mois environ, que je n'en ai éprouvées depuis près de trois ans en Amérique."¹²⁴

Conclusion

The extraordinarily difficult predicament of the majority of French-speaking refugees is clear. The Francophone exiles of the 1790s possessed few of the characteristics which had contributed to earlier French migrants' successful settlement and adaptation: for the most part, they were neither young, nor economically motivated, nor migrating in well-prepared and organized groups, nor completely cut-off from their homeland; nor did they take American spouses. They were, instead, exiles of a wide range of ages who had arrived in haphazard and disorderly fashion and who were still concerned with and attached to their homeland, which had rejected them only temporarily. Hence, they suffered blows from many sides. The multiple frustrations they experienced as a result of the French and Saint Domingan affairs were often reinforced by the foreignness of American society. During their stay in the United States, they endured dislocation and relative isolation on account of the political situation at home as well as the cultural and political realities in America. Many remained at the poverty or subsistence level despite their efforts to succeed, undoubtedly hampered by their poor grasp of the language and unfamiliar American customs. They were also politically tormented by extremists of both countries, and they were deprived of status and respect because of their very marginality. In addition, being rejected from the homeland aroused melancholy and anguish. Some were so affected by the hopelessness of their condition that they lost their own self-respect. The fact that the great majority returned to France or Saint Domingo when given the opportunity surely underscores the depth of their frustration as well as the extent of their financial, social and spiritual privations.¹²⁵

Thus, it seems undeniable that the whole complex of difficulties the refugees encountered at home and during their migration to and settlement in the United States played a part in shaping their unfavorable reactions to life in America. This is not to deny that some of the French opposition to American ways also stemmed from cultural prejudice, or even from a natural human tendency to complain, as for instance the negative feelings felt by many and reported by Du Petit-Thouars, i.e. "cette éternelle antipathie des Français pour les manières et la froideur américaines."¹²⁶ No doubt also, as Echeverria suggested, their response reflected a new sense of cultural relativism and the

124. Colbert de Maulevrier, *Voyage*, p. 69.

125. Perhaps the fact that relatively few French exiles settled permanently in the United States also has to do with the apparent historical French tendency not to emigrate.

126. Du Petit-Thouars, *Du Petit-Thouars*, p. 389

need to discredit ideals of social equality. In our assessment of French hostile reactions, however, it is essential to remember that people wounded by tragic experiences, as the émigrés and Saint Domingan refugees undoubtedly were, are doubly affected by unfamiliar and alien manners and by subsequent reverses in their attempts to survive. Furthermore, we must keep in mind that it was in the United States that the French personally experienced American antagonism and distrust towards France and French culture and that they lived out the painful years during which they lost control over their lives. Thus, it is not surprising that they focused on the observation that the Americans were different in their values and concerns from the French. That they were unable to appreciate the differences, but reversed the American Dream and spelled its demise instead, was undoubtedly related to the difficult circumstances they had endured.