

The British *Ça Ira*, and the Carmagnole, 1790-1837

Ça Ira and la Carmagnole emerged early in the French Revolution, in 1790, and by 1791 had evolved into a more threatening song incorporating notorious lines about hanging aristocrats at the lamp-post. This paper examines British appropriations of, and reactions to, *Ça Ira* and, to a lesser extent, the Carmagnole, two songs that crystallised oppositions over the French Revolution, from 1790 to Carlyle's *French Revolution* (1837). *Ça Ira* was adopted into what Iain Newman has called the "convivial publish sphere". It was possible for Whig grandees to sing it on Bastille Day dinners, and for ladies to play it on the harpsichord. It soon became a tag, a slogan than went well beyond the world of dancing and came to define people's stance to the Revolution. British loyalists recognized the potential of song and dance to energize crowds into mass action, while radicals played *Ça Ira* during election rituals and dinners in the early nineteenth century. Both the singing (involving parodies and variations) and the dancing (permitting representations as contagion or satanic dancing) mattered to Britons. The two songs became a metaphor of the energy and hectic course of the Revolution. By Carlyle's time, demeaning loyalist representations had won the day and the Carmagnole appeared as a satanic dance calling forth the evil energies of the people, which virtuous elites should try to channel and order.

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