

## **From Provincial savant to Parisian naturalist**

the recollections of Pierre-Joseph Amoreux (1741-1824)

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Pierre-Joseph Amoreux of Montpellier was a Linnaean naturalist, agronomist and bibliographer whose adult life spanned the last decades of the ancien régime, the French Revolution, the age of Napoleon and the Restoration. Thanks to his many publications and contacts, he was a well-known figure in his own day, not just in the Midi but in Paris and beyond. His autobiography, published here for the first time along with a substantial introduction, provides the fullest first-person account of the life of a provincial man of science during this tumultuous period of France's history.

Before the French Revolution, Amoreux used his Montpellier base and the new prize-essay contest to become a renowned and respected figure in the multi-centred Republic of Letters. Post-Revolution, when French science became exclusively centred on Paris, he succeeded in relaunching his scientific career through frequent visits to the capital where he cultivated the leading lights of the Institut and the Jardin des plantes. Laurence Brockliss opens this volume by providing an in-depth analysis of the context of Amoreux's life and work, based on his surviving letters, printed and manuscript books and articles, and his autobiographical *Souvenirs*. Amoreux emerges as a driven, often ruthless, man of science, wealthy enough to devote the majority of his life to his intellectual pursuits, keen to retain his independence, and more interested in worldly success than he pretended.

The following fully annotated transcription of Amoreux's *Souvenirs* provides an unparalleled insight into the world of the minor intellectual in the Age of Enlightenment and Revolution, where success or failure could turn on the whims of publishing fashion and the vagaries of the postal service. The *Souvenirs* also offer novel access to the vibrant underbelly of intellectual life in early nineteenth-century Paris as Amoreux introduces us to a little-known world of

libraries, museums, booksellers, collectors, nurserymen and dealers.

Preface

List of abbreviations

Abbreviations used by Amoreux

Note on conventions

Introduction: the Republic of Letters and the French Revolution

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1. The autobiography

2. Family

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