As one publisher recently trumpeted when announcing a new book, 'Get Ahead with the French Revolution!', and this round-up, although necessarily selective, is intended to serve as an aperitif to the banquet of works due to be laid before the (it is to be hoped) hungry public. The range of approaches is very wide, and although there are certainly books on The Years 1774-1815. There are very many which approach the subject from a more crab-like gait, dealing with smaller segments of the topic, varied facets and even single events.

To start with the 'histories', Oxford University Press have produced The Oxford History of the French Revolution, if. With David Dreyfus, this opens with the accession of Louis XVI in 1774 and runs through to 1802 and Napoleon's triumph. Oxford have also taken the opportunity to reprint Thomas Carlyle's classic 1857 account (The French Revolution, edited by K. J. Fielding and David Sorenson, £7.95). Richard Cobb and Colin Jones go to the letters and diaries and chronicles of the men and women who lived through the events in The French Revolution, Voices from a Momentous Epoch 1779-1799 (Simon and Shuster, £14.95). They divide the period into six sections and draw on the writings of people from all walks of life, mostly French, but with one or two outside views from England and America. This is also, in the time-worn phrase, lavishly illustrated. Joe Kircherger's selection, Eyewitness to the French revolution and the Napoleonic Era (Facts on File, £18.95) also uses the words and illustrations of contemporaries to tell the dramatic story of the years 1789-1815. There are two Companions to the French Revolution, Longman's is by Colin Jones (£40) and Facts on File have John Paxton's compilation (£11.95). Paxton's work is closer to a dictionary, while Jones tackles the subject in a series of sections which are in turn broken down into detailed explanations of events, lists of personalities, graphics, and analyses. Both books have chronologies. Finally, in this general section is Simon Schama's doorstep of a book, Citizens, A Chronicle of the French Revolution (Viking, £17.95). Schama's work encompasses years that saw the transformation of a country, and that turned subjects into citizens, but which was followed by a terrifying plunge into chaos which he sees as culminating in the death of Robespierre.

Of the more specific books there is Norman Hampson's Prelude to Terror (Blackwell, £19.50), George Rudé The Face of the Crowd (Havestraw, £25), Peter Jones Peasantry in the French Revolution (Cambridge University Press, £27.50 clothbound, £9.95 paperback), and Gwyn A. Williams Artisans and Sans-Culottes (Libris, £7.95). A different aspect is looked at by Hugh Gough in The Newspaper Press in the French Revolution (Routledge, £30). Daniel Arasse's La Guillotine and L'Imaginaire de la Terreur (Viking, £9.95) concentrates on what is perhaps the most famous symbol of the Revolution, asking why did the guillotine inspire such fear, and looking at not just the history, but the 'mythology' of the 'great machine'.

Cultural history is well covered in two offerings from Yale University Press: Emmet Kennedy A Cultural History of the French Revolution (£19.95), and Dorinda Outram, The Body and the French Revolution, Sex, Class and Political Culture (£22). Outram's work traces the effects of the revolution on the behaviour of both men and women in the new world it created.

Not surprisingly, there are a number of books which look at the Revolution from the English (and American) perspective. A book which combines all three countries is Derek Jarrett's Three Faces of Revolution (George Philip, £14.95). Jarrett takes Paris, London and New York in the year 1789 and recounts the effect of Revolution on three very different parts of the world. David Bindman's The Shadow of the Guillotine, Britain and the French Revolution (British Museum Publications, £14.95) is, in fact, the catalogue for the Museum's exhibition and it concentrates on the visual images produced in response to events across the Channel. On the other hand Peter Burley goes to the despatches of British and Americans living in France during the years 1788-94 (Witness to the Revolution, Weldenfield and Nicolson, £16.95). Burley's selection is chosen with an eye to analysis through commentary, and to that end he is more selective in extracts than his predecessors have tended to be. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Godwin, Burns and Southey, join forces with Burke, Blake, Paine and Price in England and the French Revolution (Macmillan, £25 clothbound, £7.95 paperback), where Stephen Pickett has collected reactions from within England to events across the Channel for this volume in the 'Context and Commentary' series aimed at students of both history and literature. A new look at Edmund Burke's reactions to the Revolution is presented by Steven Blakemore in Burke and the Fall of Language (University Press of New England, £10), who examines the development by Burke of a theory of language to explain the Revolution.

Three books which go further than the immediate events of the Revolution are The Impact of the French Revolution on European Consciousness, edited by H.T. Mason and W. Doyle (Alan Sutton, £17.95), Marx and the French Revolution, by François Furet (University of Chicago Press, £27.95), and The Permanent Revolution, The French Revolution and its Legacy, edited by Geoffrey Best (Fontana, £4.95); the latter expressly states that it is 'not about the French Revolution then, but about the French Revolution now'. Mason and Doyle, however, chart the effects of 1789 and after on Europe throughout the nineteenth century and to the present day. Women's history is covered by Hamish Hamilton in Women of the French Revolution, by Linda Kelly (£6.95 paperback). Quiller Press The French Revolution as seen by Madame Tussaud, Witness Extraordinary, by Pauline Chapman (£12.95), is an account of Marie Grosholtz who survived the upheaval, unlike Madame Roland who wrote her memoirs in 1793 whilst in prison awaiting execution (The Memoirs of Madame Roland, Barrie and Jenkins, £15). Women also loom large in Aileen Ribeiro's Fashion in the French Revolution (Batsford, £14.95), but by no means exclusively - the book covers men, women and children of all classes and ages and is well and attractively illustrated.

These books will undoubtedly be followed by more later this year and in years to come - the French Revolution has always been fertile ground for historian and publishers and will no doubt continue to be so long after the celebrations are over.